The beginnings of a monastic reformer: the younger years of Poppo of Stavelot (Lotharingia, 978-1020)

Summary - This paper investigates the underlying mechanisms and different contexts which played a decisive role in the advancement of the pre-abbatial monastic careers of adult converts living in the eleventh century. Whereas most studies on these individuals have focused primarily on their abbatial careers, this article will consider the years preceding their attaining an influential monastic leadership position. Based upon the case of Poppo of Stavelot, traditionally regarded as one of the principal proponents of monastic reform in early-eleventh-century Lotharingia, this paper argues that the key factor leading up to a person's nomination as abbot was not so much his religious reputation, extraordinary character, or even the result of his accumulated experience. Rather, the evolution of an individual's pre-abbatial career depended to a large extent on how his social identity was perceived by others, as well as on the confrontation between his social capital and the concrete and short-term political context of the time.

Think and Grow Rich – that was the title of Napoleon Hill's best-seller from 1937, one of the first self-help books on how to become successful in life.[1] This, and the many such guides that have flooded the book market since, reveal how having a prosperous career is considered primordial in our modern meritocratic society. Such guidelines would have been of little use around the year 1000, as the criteria for achieving success were largely determined by a person's ancestry, and less by an individual's personal achievements. Of course, being able to wield a sword and to command troops, as well as to network and think pragmatically, were useful skills but, without the required familial 'baggage', prospects for a powerful position remained somewhat limited. This applied not only to the secular, but also to the ecclesiastical world. While many members of cathedral chapters came from the lower aristocracy, belonging to a more prestigious family was still a requisite when seeking a

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[1] N. HILL, *Think and Grow Rich*, Cleveland, 1953.

prominent position, such as the episcopal office.[2] However, it seems that monastic environments constituted an important exception to this, as during the later-tenth and eleventh centuries, increasingly more abbots were recruited from the middle to lower ranks of the aristocracy.[3] An even more interesting observation is that some of these abbots had been adult converts, an evolution particularly evident in the context of so-called reformist monasticism.[4] This is quite remarkable as monks with a former secular career were still outnumbered in most abbeys, with child oblation remaining common practice until later in the eleventh century.[5] Consequently, having some secular experience had rendered these relatively few people more attractive to monastic recruiters looking for potential abbatial leaders than the abundant supply of monks who had received a sophisticated religious training since their childhood. Furthermore, it means that for certain ambitious young adults, monastic conversion could provide a stepping stone to rather influential positions.

One example of such adult converts is Poppo of Stavelot (978-1048), whose seemingly relatively modest Flemish background had not prevented him from becoming one of the most powerful abbots in the German empire.[6] Although cases such as Poppo have already received a fair amount of scholarly attention, many studies have limited themselves to the modalities and impact of their abbatial policies, thus largely ignoring their pre-abbatial careers.[7] Explanations on their eventual

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[2] C. B. BOUCHARD, *Sword, miter, and cloister: nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198*, Ithaca, 1987, p. 65-87.

[3] H. SEIBERT, *Abtserhebungen Zwischen Rechtsnorm Und Rechtswirklichkeit,* Mainz, 1995, p. 246; V. GAZEAU, *Normannia monastica. Princes normands et abbés bénédictins (Xe-XIIe siècle)*, Turnhout, 2007, p. 167-183; also S. VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic reform as process: realities and representations in medieval Flanders, 900-1100*, Ithaca, 2013, p. 32-70. It should be mentioned that 'the aristocracy' did not yet exist as a fixed and well-defined group, see on this matter for example A. J. DUGGAN, *Introduction: concepts, origins, transformations*, in DUGGAN (ed.), *Nobles and nobility in medieval Europe*, Woodbridge, 2000, p. 1-14.

[4] See, for example, Richard of Saint-Vanne and his collaborators, VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining Religious Leadership in the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform*, Ithaca, 2015, p. 121-4, 129-30, 133-7. It should be mentioned that the concept of monastic reforms has increasingly come under pressure in recent years, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3].

[5] J. WOLLASCH, *Parenté noble et monachisme réformateur,* in *Revue historique*, 246 (1980), p. 6-7; C. DE MIRAMON, *Embrasser l'état monastique à l'âge adulte (1050-1200),* in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 4 (1999), p. 826-7; F. MAZEL, *Monachisme et aristocratie aux Xe-XIe siècle*, in VANDERPUTTEN and B. MEIJNS (eds.), *Ecclesia in Medio Nationis,* Leuven, 2011, p. 63-4; VANDERPUTTEN, *Then I received the habit of holy religion*, in *Sacris Erudiri*, 49 (2010), p. 380.

[6] At least from a quantitative point of view, as his influence had prevailed in approximately 27 institutions, which will be discussed further.

[7] An exception to this is Isabelle Rosé's study on Odo of Cluny (879-924), as she devoted a great deal of attention to Odo's youth and training. See I. ROSÉ, *Construire une société seigneuriale,* Turnhout, 2008, especially p. 45-158. A few other authors who devoted attention to the early careers of reformist leaders include N. BULST, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms von Dijon (962-1031)*, Bonn, 1973; V. GAZEAU, *Guillaume de Volpiano en Normandie*, in *Tabularia "Etudes"*, 2 (2002), p. 35-46; GAZEAU and M. GOULET, *Guillaume de Volpaino,* Turnhout, 2008; VANDERPUTTEN & MEIJNS (eds.), *Realities of Reformist Leadership in Early*

emergence as prominent monastic leaders derive mainly from a *post-hoc* perspective, often limited to statements such as "being a very religious person and competent leader" and "possessing an exceptional personality", thereby implicitly referring to their presumed charismatic personalities. Recently, there has been some interest in the motives of certain monastic recruiters headhunting people with worldly contacts and experience.[8] However, no satisfactory answer has yet been given to the question as to what exactly distinguished these few people from other talented and experienced candidates, and what made their profiles so attractive to the people training them as monastic leaders and eventually bestowing on them the role of leader.

Based upon the case of Poppo of Stavelot (978-1048), this article will investigate how an ambitious person from relatively mediocre aristocratic origins, living in the eleventh century, could develop a successful monastic career and become a leader. Whereas most authors have started their analysis after Poppo's abbatial nomination, this study will end with that event. The goal is not to draft a 'medieval roadmap to success', but to investigate the underlying mechanisms and different contexts involved in the advancement of Poppo's monastic career. Central to this is how his social identity was perceived by others, as this will provide the key to understanding the recruiters' interest in him. Therefore, any subjective qualities attributed to his personality will be left out of the analysis, regardless of their relevance to the subject in hand.

Introducing Poppo of Stavelot (978-1048)

The story of Poppo's life and how his career developed is almost as impressive as it is curious.[9] Born in 978 from rather obscure aristocratic origins, Poppo soon entered into military service of the then minor Count of Holland, Thierry III (c. 982-1039).[10] After a pilgrimage to Palestine and Rome, he decided to renounce the secular life and entered the monastery of Saint-Thierry, near Reims.[11] Shortly after, he met Richard of Saint-Vanne, traditionally regarded as one of the principal

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Eleventh-Century Flanders, in *Traditio*, 65 (2010), p. 47-74; VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4]. Some studies dedicated to Poppo include P. LADEWIG, *Poppo von Stablo,* Berlin, 1883 ; D. SCHÄFER, *Studien zu Poppo von Stablo und den Klosterreformen im 11. Jahrhundert*, München, 1991; C. SCHMIDTMANN, *Poppo von Stablo: Sein Abbatiat in St. Maximin*, in *Landeskundliche Vierteljahresblätter*, 42 (1996), p. 69-82; P. GEORGE, *Un réformateur lotharingien de choc,* in *Revue Mabillon*, 71 (1999), p. 89-111; S. KRAUSS, *Christi iugum leve sub monastica institutione ipsis iniecit*, in W. HASBERG and J. SCHRÖDER (eds.), *Flores considerationum amicorum,* Gleichen, 2006, p. 281-314.

[8] See for example VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 121-4, 129-130, 133-7; VANDERPUTTEN, *Communities of practice and emotional aspects of loyalty in tenth and eleventh century monasticism*, in J.SONNTAG and C. ZERMATTEN (eds.), *Loyalty in the Middle Age,* Turnhout, 2015, p. 279-98.

[9] For an introduction on Poppo, see also GEORGE, *Poppo von Stablo*, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 7, Stuttgart, 1995, col. 102.

[10] EVERHELM, *Vita Popponis abbatis Stabulensis*, ed. D. W. WATTENBACH (MGH, SS, 11, Hannover, 1854), c. 2 p. 295 [hereafter referred to as *Vita Popponis*].

[11] *Vita Popponis,* c. 3 p. 295-6, c. 4 p. 296, c. 7 p. 297-8.

proponents of monastic reform in early-eleventh-century Lotharingia, and gradually became his main collaborator in the monasteries of Saint-Vanne, Saint-Vaast and Beaulieu.[12] When the German Emperor Henry II offered Poppo the post of abbot of Stavelot-Malmedy in 1020, and of Saint-Maximin in Trier, in 1023, his career took a decisive turn.[13] During the reign of Emperor Conrad II (1024-1039), his influence reached an unprecedented level as many vacant abbatial positions in the western parts of the empire became entrusted either to Poppo, or to a monk from one of his institutions. During that time, Poppo also left his mark on worldly politics – for example, by playing a key role in 1025 in the acceptance by the Lotharingian nobility of Conrad II as the new German king.[14] When he died in 1048, he had been abbot in six different abbeys, had appointed an abbot in 11 other monasteries, while ten more institutions had received an abbot from one of his institutions.[15] Consequently, his influence had prevailed in approximately 27 male Benedictine institutions, covering a fairly broad geographic area in Western Germany.[16]

Poppo's post-mortem reputation is marked by an evolution almost as intriguing as his actual life.[17] Already, during the first two decennia after his death, a fairly elaborate *Vita* about him was ordered and co-authored by Abbot Everhelm of Hautmont († 1069), who claimed to be a nephew and former pupil of Poppo.[18] Onulf, a monk from Saint-Peter in Ghent and the *Vita*'s actual author, stated in the *Vita Popponis*' prologue that this text related Poppo's lifestory as gathered and told by Everhelm, which Onulf "*iustitia et fide late divulgati scribere*[t]".[19] Even though the *Vita Popponis*, like

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[12] *Vita Popponis,* c. 9 p. 298-9, c. 11 p. 300, c. 13 p. 301. For a comprehensive study of Richard of Saint-Vanne, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4].

[13] *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 302-3, c. 16 p. 303.

[14] KRAUSS, *Christi iugum…* [see no. 7], p. 291-2.

[15] On Poppo's death, see also GEORGE, *Un moine est mort: sa vie commence*, in *Le Moyen Age*, 108: 3-4 (2002), pp. 497-506.

[16] In Lotharingia: Beaulieu, Bouzonville, Brauweiler, Echternach, Hautmont, Mouzon, St Agerich, St Ghislain, St Laurent, St Truiden, Stavelot-Malmedy, St-Eucharius, St-Martin (Trier), St-Maximin, St-Vincent (Metz), Waulsort-Hastière. In Francia: Fulda, Hersfeld, Limburg, Weissenburg. In Saxonia: Bergen, Nienburg. In Alemania: St-Gallen. In Flanders: Marchiennes, St-Vaast. In France: St-Martin (Laon). In Frisia: Hohorst. Poppo's influence in these institutions is discussed thoroughly in my doctoral dissertation which will be completed by mid-2016, before this article's publication. See also SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7].

[17] For a discussion on how the post-mortem reputation of certain abbots has compromised our understanding of 'monastic reforms', see VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3], p. 1-8, 14-30.

[18] *Vita Popponis*, p. 293, c. 33 p. 315, c. 35 p. 315-6. According to the *Vita Popponis*, Poppo had appointed Everhelm as abbot of Hautmont, see *Vita Popponis*, c. 19 p. 305. On the dating and authorship of the *Vita Popponis*, see amongst others LADEWIG, *Poppo…* [see no. 7], p. 154-5; E. SABBE, *Deux points concernant l'histoire de l'abbaye de S.-Pierre du Mont-Blandin*, in *Rebue Bénédictiné*, 47 (1935), p. 65 note 6. In 1059, Everhelm also became abbot of Saint-Peter in Ghent, see *Annales Blandinienses*, ed. L. BETHMANN (MGH SS 5, Hannover, 1844) p. 26.

[19] *Vita Popponis*, p. 293. Onulf's identification has been the subject of discussion. For two different opinions, see for example O. A. OPPERMANN, *Die älteren Urkunden des Klosters Blandinium*, Utrecht, 1928, p. 160-92; F. J.

any other hagiographic text, contains several *topoi* and miracle stories, present day's consensus is that this source is credited with a certain degree of reliability.[20] This is mainly due to Everhelm's closeness to Poppo and to the relatively small time between the redaction and Poppo's death, which meant that several of Poppo's relatives, friends and acquaintances were still alive during the text's redaction. Furthermore, several affairs and details told by the *Vita* have been confirmed by complementary sources. Notwithstanding, this source should be considered with a degree of criticism, all the more so since Everhelm's motivations for ordering the *Vita Popponis* are a matter for speculation.[21]

Although the *Vita Popponis* seems to have enjoyed a limited popularity, with Poppo's name being mentioned in several other eleventh- and twelfth-century sources, medieval authors lost interest in this abbot some 150 years after his death.[22] In 1624, this situation changed quite abruptly, due to Poppo's canonisation.[23] Following a few more centuries of neglect, Poppo was 'resurrected' at the end of the nineteenth century by historians who recognised him as a supporter of the Cluniac reforms in Lotharingia.[24] In these works, explanations on Poppo's accession to power were implicitly, and often explicitly, inspired by the rhetoric of the *Vita Popponis*, as they referred to his 'special' and even saintly qualities.[25] From the mid-twentieth century onwards, scholars abandoned the idea that Poppo had been inspired by Cluny, and focused more on his position of trust with Richard to explain

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VAN DROOGENBROECK, "Onulfus van Hautmont (ca. 1048)", in *Eigen Schoon en De Brabander*, 93 (2010), p. 637-41.

[20] See for example SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7], p. 5; GEORGE, *Un réformateur…* [see no. 7], p. 89.

[21] For example, Vanderputten suggested Everhelm wanted to use this text to counter any criticism on his possible simoniac appointment as abbot in Saint-Peter in Ghent, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3], p. 177. However, it is not inconceivable that the *Vita*'s redaction was being supported by a broader group of people. On Everhelm's simoniac appointment in Ghent, see amongst others N.-N. HUYGHEBAERT, *La 'Vita secunda sancti Winnoci' restituée à l'hagiographie gantoise*, in *Revue Bénédictine*, 81 (1971), p. 247-51.

[22] Five copies of the (now lost) original are still preserved: Chantilly, *Musée Condé*, 740 (eleventh century, Stavelot); Paris, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Latin 9741 (twelfth century, Saint-Maximin); Arras, *Bibliothèque municipale*, ms. 450 (569) (twelfth century, Saint-Vaast); Liège, *Archives de l'état*, Principauté de Stavelot 841 (twelfth/thirteenth century, Stavelot); Brussels, *Bibliothèque royale*, ms. 7503-7518 (fifteenth century, Paderborn). A detailed list of all medieval sources mentioning Poppo is discussed in my doctoral dissertation, which will be completed by mid-2016, before this article's publication.

[23] This happened in the aftermath of an *elevatio* of Poppo's relics by the bishop of Liège, see W. LEGRAND, *Notes sur le culte de saint Poppon, abbé de Stavelot*, in *Chronique archéologique de Pays de Liège*, 33: 4 (1942), p. 34-48 and 34: 1 (1942), p. 1-18, 25-44.

[24] LADEWIG, *Poppo* [see no. 7]; E. SACKUR, *Die cluniacenser in ihrer kirchlichen und allgemeingeschichtlichen Wirksamkeit bis zur Mitte des elften Jahrhunderts*, Halle/Saale, 1892; H. DAUPHIN, *Le bienheureux Richard*, Louvain, 1946.

[25] This is most obvious in F. A. VILLERS, *Histoire chronologique des abbés-princes de Stavelot et Malmedy*, 1879, p. 100-4, but also in LADEWIG, *Poppo…* [see no. 7] (for example, p. 22, 32); DAUPHIN, *Le bienheureux…* [see no. 24] (for example, p. 183).

his career.[26] Since his reputation as a monastic reformer had been firmly established by then, the need to provide any further elucidation on his success was often ignored.[27] Most authors studying monastic history limited themselves by referring vaguely to Poppo's presumably exceptional personality.[28] In the meantime, he had also attracted the interest of several institutional historians who saw him as a key figure in the imperial church policies. During the first half of the twentieth century, Poppo was mainly portrayed as an instrument in the hands of the German emperors, who were trying to reinforce their grip on the so-called *Reichskirche*.[29] However, with the concept of an 'imperial church system' coming under greater pressure after the 1970s, Poppo's reputation as an imperial 'puppeteer' was replaced to a degree by the idea of a more mutual understanding between Poppo and the emperors.[30] In exchange for a quasi carte blanche to introduce his presumed religious reforms in many different institutions, Poppo proved willing to allow more imperial control over the monastery's worldly capital.[31] Consequently, his widespread influence was explained by depicting him mainly as a political opportunist.

Social origins as *conditio sine qua non*

Despite the noteworthy degree of scholarly attention invested in Poppo's influence, a satisfactory answer has yet to be found as to how Poppo became an abbot in the first place. This missing element is mainly due to the fact that most authors approached Poppo from a *post-hoc* perspective, identifying him primarily as an abbot and reformer. Instead, in this article Poppo will be studied first

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[26] K. HALLINGER, *Gorze-Kluny. Studien zu den monastischen Lebensformen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter*, Rome, 1950-1951; H. GLAESENER, *Saint Poppon, abbé de Stavelot-Malmédy*, in *Revue Bénédictine*, 60 (1950), p. 163-79; SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7]*;* SCHMIDTMANN, *Poppo…* [see no. 7]; George, *Thierry de Leernes chez Poppon de Stavelot-Malmedy*, in *Folklore. Stavelot-Malmédy, Saint-Vith*, 57 (1998), p. 77-87; GEORGE, *Un réformateur…* [see no. 7]; KRAUSS, *Christi iugum…* [see no. 7], p. 281-314. For the most recent appreciation (and deconstruction) of these 'Lotharingian reforms' and a discussion on the different scholarly traditions dealing with them, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 1-6, 36-41.

[27] For example, A. WAGNER, *Gorze au XIe siècle*, Paris, 1996, p. 196.

[28] For example, SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7], p. 139; E. HOCHHOLZER, *Die Lothringische ("Gorzer") Reform*, in U. FAUST and F. QUARTHAL (eds.), *Die Reformverbände und Kongregationen der Benediktiner im deutschen Sprachraum*, St. Ottilien, 1999, p. 78; P.G. JESTICE, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century*, Leiden, New York and Köln, 1997, p. 194. It should be noted that Jestice repeatedly mistakes Bishop Poppo of Lorsch for Poppo of Stavelot.

[29] A. HAUCK and H. BOEHMER, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, Leipzig, 1904, p. 478-507; R. SCHIEFFER, *Heinrich II und Konrad II*, in *Deutches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 8 (1951), p. 402.

[30] J. FLECKENSTEIN, *Zum begriff der ottonisch-salischen Reichskirche*, in E. HASSINGER, J. H. MÜLLER and H. OTT (eds.), *Geschichte, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft,* Berlijn, 1974, p. 83-98; T. REUTER, *The 'Imperial Church System' of the Ottonian and Salian Rulers*, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33 (1982), p. 347-74.

[31] H. HOFFMANN, *Mönchskönig und 'rex idiota'*, Hannover, 1993, p. 35-39; SEIBERT, *Abtserhebungen…* [see no. 3], p. 523; F.-R. ERKENS, *Konrad II. (um 990-1039)*, Regensburg, 1998, p. 204; T. VOGTHERR, *Die Reichsabteien der Benediktiner und das Königtum im hohen Mittelalter (900-1125)*, Stuttgart, 2000, p. 115-6; KRAUSS, *Christi iugum…* [see no. 7], p. 303-304, 313.

and foremost as a social human being who was embedded in specific contexts. Drawing inspiration from the theory of social network analysis, the most important context to consider is Poppo's social environment.[32] This means that Poppo's behaviour and identity should be considered from the perspective of his social relations.[33] After all, Poppo's integration into medieval society could only take place through contact with other people, with his position within different groups and networks largely defining his social identity.[34] Since these contacts served not only as channels of different resources, such as information, but could also restrain future possibilities, they had a significant impact on his future career.[35] As all of Poppo's actively maintained early social contacts, which can be referred to as his 'social capital', came mainly from familial origins, Poppo's ancestry is the first thing to consider.[36]

Despite its problematic nature, the *Vita Popponis* is the only source which allows us to retrieve some information on Poppo's origins. Everhelm informed us that Poppo was the first-born child of freeborn parents.[37] His mother was called Adelwif, and his father, Tysekin, must have been in military service since the *Vita Popponis* claims he died one month after Poppo's birth in the 'war of Haspengouw'.[38] Even though no further information on his parent's ancestry is provided, it is interesting to note that Poppo's mother was referred to as an '*illustrissima*', while no qualification was being given to his father. Furthermore, in chapter 19 of the *Vita,* the authors reveal that Poppo

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[32] As the specific methodly of social network analysis will not be used, this article cannot be considered as an application of historical social network analysis. For an introduction to social network analysis, see A. Marin and B. Wellman, *Social Network Analysis: An Introduction*, in J. Scott and P. J. Carrington (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis*, 2011, p. 11-26. On historical social network analysis, see mainly C. Wetherell, *Historical social network analysis*, in M. Van der Linden and L. J. Griffin (eds.), *New Methods for Social History*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 125-44; C. Lemercier, *Analyse de réseaux et histoire*, in *revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 52 (2005), p. 88-112; C. Lemercier, *Formal network methods in history: why and how?,* in G Fertig (ed.), *Social networks, political institutions, and rural societies*, Turnhout, 2015, p. 281-310. On the difficulties for combining social network analysis with medieval research, see Rosé, *Reconstitution, Représentation Graphique et Analyse des Réseaux de Pouvoir au Haut Moyen Âge*, in *Redes, Redes sociales e Historia*, 21 (2011), p. 200-14.

[33] With her work on Odo of Cluny, Isabelle Rosé had already demonstrated how the behaviour of Cluny's second abbot was partially shaped by his early relationship with several aristocratic groups: Rosé, *Construire…* [see no. 7], p. 363-8.

[34] Scott, *Social network analysis: a handbook*, London, p. 20-1. The interdependence of interpersonal relations and identity is studied by relational sociology, see J.A. Fuhse, *Theorizing social networks: the relational sociology of and around Harrison White*, in *International review of sociology*, 25:1 (2015),p. 15-44.

[35] Wetherell, *Historical…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 126.

[36] The term 'social capital' derives from Bourdieu, see P. Bourdieu, *Le capital social*, in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 31 (1980), p. 2-3. see also Rosé, *Construire…* [see no. 7], p. 50, 363-4.

[37] *Vita Popponis*, c. 1 p. 294.

[38] *Vita Popponis*, c. 1 p. 294-5, c. 19 p. 304-5. Ladewig identified the '*bellum Hasbaniensi*' as the invasion of the French King Lothair in Lower Lotharingia, in 978; see Ladewig, *Poppo…*[see no. 7], p. 24-25. On the 978 invasion, see R. Holtzmann, *Geschichte der sächsischen kaiserzeit (900-1024)*, München, 1941, p. 266-71; T. Riches, *The Carolingian capture of Aachen in 978 and its historiographical footprint*, in P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (eds.), *Frankland*, Manchester and New York, 2008, p. 191-208.

was the son of 'a noble laywomen and an exceptional soldier'.[39] These details create suspicion that his mother's marriage might have been a case of hypogamy.[40] As to Poppo's geographical origins, the *Vita Popponis* mentions that he was born in the Listrigau region between Ghent and Courtrai, in Flanders.[41] Since, following a pilgrimage to Palestine, Poppo had donated some relics to the Saint Maria church in Deinze, situated in the Listrigau, it has often been assumed that this village was his ancestral home.[42] One last clue the *Vita Popponis* provides on his familial origins is the mention in chapter 12 that one of his relatives lived in the Betuwe region, near Nijmegen.[43] Although these are somewhat scant indications, they enable us to look for complementary information in other sources. Arguably, Poppo's mother can be identified as the 'Adalwif' mentioned in a charter from 989 as the first of three people – an indication of her relatively high status – who made a donation to the Saint-Peter abbey in Ghent.[44] Thanks to this charter, we know that she may have had some possessions in Hoetsel, near Zomergem, north west of Ghent. An anecdote in the *Vita Popponis* seems to confirm that Poppo's mother owned properties west of the Scheldt, as it recounts how several of Adalwif's free men, servants and serfs of her lands had to cross this river while trying to prevent her from becoming a recluse in Verdun.[45] Poppo's father is harder to trace in other sources. In 951-962, a certain 'Gysekinus', and in 962 a 'Tiezelinus' appear in witness lists of charters containing donations to the Saint-Peter abbey in Ghent.[46] It is uncertain whether these are variations of Poppo's father's name, but both charters also mention Thierry II of Holland, the grandfather of Poppo's military lord Thierry III, as a witness. Thierry II of Holland, count of Ghent from 965, was an imperial vassal, which

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[39] *Vita Popponis*, c. 19 p. 305.

[40] On the issue of noble women marrying men of lower social status, see R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde Franc (VIIe-XI siècle).* Paris, 1995, p. 303-5.

[41] *Vita Popponis*, c. 1, p. 294. The Listrigau is the region between the rivers Scheldt and Leie, see L. Vanderkindere, *La formation territoriale des principautés Belges au Moyen Age*, vol. I, Brussel, 1902, p. 280.

[42] *Vita Popponis*, c. 3, p. 295. See for example, George, *Un réformateur…* [see no. 7], p. 90.

[43] *Vita Popponis,* c. 12 p. 300-1.

[44] A. Fayen, *Liber traditionum sancti Petri Blandiniensis*, Gent, 1906, no. 97 p. 93-94. The charter only states *"quaedam Adalwif tradidit sancto Petro possessionem suam* […]", without giving further information on this woman. However, several indications support the hypothesis that this 'Adalwif' can be identified as Poppo's mother. First of all, the fact that this Adalwif acts as an independent donor indicates that she was widowed. This corresponds with the fact that Poppo's father died in 978. Second, the geographic region of Hoetsel and the Saint-Peter abbey correspond with the region where Poppo was born. Third, this charter is the only mention of a 'Adalwif' (or name variations) in any charter or narrative source (apart from the *Vita Popponis*) from the low countries up till 1200. On the issue of widows as independent donors in charters, see Le Jan, *Famille…* [see no. 40], p. 365-79.

[45] *Vita Popponis*, c. 10 p. 299.

[46] A. F. C. Koch, *Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland tot 1299. 1.* 'S-Gravenhage, 1970, no. 37 p. 63-4; no. 41 p.73-7.

means that he had most likely participated in the 'war of Haspengouw'.[47] Therefore, it is not unthinkable that Poppo's father had also served the count of Holland, fighting and eventually perishing under his command in 978. To summarise, it seems that Poppo's parents had some influence locally in the regions north and south west of Ghent, with his father arguably serving with the counts of Holland. Furthermore, the geographic distance from one of their family members indicates that the family enjoyed a degree of regional mobility. As far as can be ascertained, such facts constitute the ancestral 'foundations' upon which Poppo could start to build his life.

Early social contacts as identity creators

The *Vita Popponis* provides us with information not only on Poppo's familial origins, but also on his early social contacts. Since, in a way, most of Poppo's early social environment was inherited, this information provides futher insight into his family's social position.[48] In addition, these contacts might also reflect the societal groups to which Poppo belonged during his youth and adolescence. After all, as authors such as Gerd Althoff and Régine Le Jan demonstrated, high medieval society was structured into different groups.[49] With kinship being the most important organisational principle of this society, local and regional politics were dominated by kindred-based power groups, whose core comprised members of a few high-status aristocratic families.[50] Through ties with family, *amicitia* and loyalty, everyone was linked to one or more of these so-called power networks.[51] Being able to position Poppo within these groups would help to clarify his early career. After all, as Le Jan argued, a medieval person's individual trajectory can only be understood by positioning him or her within certain intermediary aristocratic relational spaces.[52] Furthermore, social network theories remind us that a person's deeds and identity were often based upon (loyalty towards) one's position within groups, rather than upon rationality or independent choice.[53]

An important indication of Poppo's early social environment concerns his entry into the military service of Count Thierry III of Holland on coming of age in 994.[54] While this vassal relationship was most likely the result of Poppo following in his father's footsteps, it was to define his

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[47] See A. F. C. KOCH, *De betrekkingen van de eerste graven van Holland met het vorstendom Vlaanderen*, in *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* (1948), p. 32-8; see also note 38.

[48] See note 36.

[49] G. ALTHOFF, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue,* Darmstadt, 1990, p. 1-13, 212-7; LE JAN, *Famille…* [see no. 40]*,* Parijs, 1995, p. 9-16, 429-35.

[50] H .J. TANNER, *Families, friends and allies,* Leiden, 2004, p. 4-11, 286-8; G. LIND, *Great friends and small friends*, in W. REINHARD (ed.), *Power elites and state building*, Oxford, 1996, p. 139.

[51] ALTHOFF, *Verwandte…* [see no. 49], p. 31, 85, 134-5, 249; LE JAN, *Famille…* [see no. 40], p. 1-4, 144-53 403, 432; LIND, *Great friends…* [see no. 50], p. 123-5.

[52] LE JAN, *Famillie…* [see no. 40], p. 381-427.

[53] MARIN and WELLMAN, *Social…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 17-8.

[54] *Vita Popponis*, c. 3, p. 295. The fact that Poppo came of age in 994 is based on him becoming 16 in that year.

identity to a large extent over the next few years. However, an even more important observation is that when Poppo took up arms in 994, Thierry III of Holland was still a minor.[55] It is not unthinkable that, by allowing her son to serve a minor count, Poppo's mother hoped to create a horizontal tie based upon age between Poppo and Thierry III. In any case, during that time it was actually Thierry III's mother, Lutgard of Luxembourg, a daughter of Count Siegfried of Luxembourg and sister-in-law of the future Emperor Henry II, who acted as Thierry III's regent.[56] Consequently, although Poppo officially served Thierry III, he was actually receiving his orders from Lutgard, thereby becoming closely connected to a member of the powerful Ardennes-Luxembourg family.[57] Likewise, as Isabelle Rosé demonstrated for Odo of Cluny's younger years, such a vassal relationship enabled Poppo to access part of the Luxembourg family's social capital, with Lutgard acting as a broker between Poppo and this aristocratic group.[58] As the *Vita Popponis* mentions a joint pilgrimage by Poppo and Thierry III to Rome around 1005, Poppo might have gained a position of trust within the comital entourage and thus with Lutgard of Luxembourg.[59] Nevertheless, this might also be a hagiographic *topos*.

According to the *Vita Popponis*, prior to his trip to Rome, Poppo had already been on another pilgrimage, having travelled to the Holy Land with at least two other companions, named Robert and Lausus.[60] The latter can be identified as the master builder of the church of Saint-Jean in Ghent, which means that he enjoyed a relatively high status in this city. Robert, on the other hand, is more difficult to identify due to the popularity of this name in medieval Flanders. However, assuming that the 989 charter did indeed mention Poppo's mother, Robert can arguably be identified as the 'Rotbertus' who appears as second donator in this charter.[61] Thanks to this charter, we know that

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[55] Arnulf, Thierry III's father, had died in 993. Although Thierry III's exact year of birth is unknown, he stood under his mother's regency for several years. A. W. E. DEK, *Genealogie der graven van Holland*, Zaltbommel, 1969, p. 2; D. E. H. DE BOER & E. H. P. CORDFUNKE, *Graven van Holland: middeleeuwse vorsten in woord en beeld (880-1580)*, Zutphen, 2010, p. 29.

[56] E. H. P. CORDFUNKE, *Gravinnen van Holland*, Zutphen, 1987, p. 37-8.

[57] On this family, see H. RENN, *Das erste Luxemburger Grafenhaus (963-1136)*, Bonn, 1941; M. TWELLENKAMP, *Das Haus der Luxemburger*, in S. WEINFURTER and H. KLUGER (eds.), *Die Salier und das Reich,* vol. 1, Sigmaringen, 1991, p. 476-502.

[58] ROSÉ, *Reconstitution…* [see no **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 232. 'Broker' is a term used in social network analysis, denominating people who connected different core groups within networks. Since these people are the main channels of information and other resources between different groups, they fulfil an important position within social networks. See LEMERCIER, *Analyse…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 93.

[59] *Vita Popponis*, c. 4 p. 296. Although the year 1005 is not mentioned in the sources, Lutgard of Luxembourg called upon Emperor Henry II during this year for help against a Frisian uprising while Thierry III was absent, possibly due to his pilgrimage to Rome. See KOCH, *Oorkondenboek…* [see no. 46], no. 62 p. 117; DE BOER & CORDFUNKE, *Graven…* [see no. 55], p. 29.

[60] *Vita Popponis,* c. 3 p. 295. The date of Poppo's pilgrimage is unknown, although it probably took place before 1005, see note 59.

[61] FAYEN, *Liber traditionum…* [see no. 44], no. 97 p. 93-94.

this Robert owned some properties in Berchem, near Oudenaarde. Because of its proximity to the River Scheldt and the county of Flanders, Berchem was a strategic place in the German margrave Ename, controlled at that time by Count Godfrey I of Verdun, a member of the Ardennes-Verdun family.[62] Consequently, this could indicate that this Robert maintained some contacts with members of the Verdun family. Since the *Vita Popponis* indicates that, a few years later, Poppo's co-traveller Robert entered the monastery of Beaulieu, which is situated near Verdun, there is a reasonable chance that both the 'Rotbertus' from the charter and the 'Rotbertus' from the *Vita Popponis* refer to the same person.[63]

The last person who can be identified as one of Poppo's close contacts during his secular career is Frumold, a member of the Flemish Count Baldwin IV's entourage.[64] The *Vita Popponis* tells how Frumold, who was a lord in Sithiu, near the abbey of Saint-Bertin, offered his daughter's hand to Poppo in marriage.[65] However, during Poppo's journey to Sithiu, where preparations for the wedding were being made, his lance was struck by lightning.[66] Poppo interpreted this as a heavenly sign, turned his horse around, said farewell to his co-travelling *milites*, and set off for Reims where he entered the monastery at Saint-Thierry, thereby ending his secular life.[67] Even though the lightning story can easily been rebutted as a *topos*, there is a reasonable chance that the story about the wedding is true in part, as it could still have been remembered by some people or their offspring who had been involved in this event when the *Vita* was redacted. And even if it was not, the authors wanted to demonstrate Poppo's social status as he could marry a girl from relatively high birth, a marriage that might as well be considered hypergamic. By so doing, the authors indicated that Poppo's conversion was not the result of a lack of worldly career options, even though Poppo's motivations for chasing a religious career remain uncertain. Thus, by the time he had reached Saint-Thierry, his social identity had been partially shaped by his association with the count of Holland and Lutgard from the Ardennes-Luxembourg family, with an architect in Ghent, with an aristocrat from the Ename region, connected to the Ardennes-Verdun family, and with an influential Flemish lord.

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[62] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 73.

[63] *Vita Popponis*, c. 3 p. 295. Everhelm informs us that he entered Beaulieu during Richard's abbacy, thus after 1015.

[64] *Vita Popponis*, c. 5-6. According to Everhelm, Frumold was a personal advisor of Baldwin IV. In a charter from Baldwin IV in 988, a certain Frumold is mentioned as the 18th witness among 30 prominent people, with Baldwin IV himself being the 9th witness. GYSSELING & KOCH, *Diplomata Belgica…* [see no. 41], no. 71 p. 175. On the importance of this charter: KOCH, *De betrekkingen…* [see no. 47], p.36-7. Using the *Diplomata Belgica* database, three more charters from 981 until 996-1029 can be found which mention 'Frumold'; see GYSSELING & KOCH, *Diplomata Belgica…* [see no. 41], no. 68 p. 170-1, no. 69 p. 171-3, no. 83 p. 189.

[65] *Vita Popponis,* c. 5 p. 297.

[66] *Vita Popponis,* c. 6 p. 297.

[67] *Vita Popponis,* c. 5-6 p. 297.

Laying down worldly arms by joining the heavenly battle

Having gained some limited insights into Poppo's early social environment, questions should be asked as to how this information might enhance our understanding of Poppo's early monastic career. When he took up the monastic habit in Saint-Thierry near Reims, somewhen between 1005 and 1008, he was already in his late 20s.[68] While his conversion might have been on his own initiative, several indications suggest that his choice of monastery was probably less so.[69] Since Poppo's ancestral regions were located near to Ghent's influential abbeys Saint-Baafs and Saint-Peter, with his mother arguably having donated to the latter, and since Poppo's calling happened during a travel to the influential Flemish abbey of Saint-Bertin, his decision to go to Reims seems quite strange. Surely, this city was one of Western Europe's most thriving educational centres, although this cannot have been the only motive.[70] Even more odd than his going to Reims, is his entry into Saint-Thierry. In contrast to the prestigious Saint-Remy abbey in Reims, which had long-standing links with the Flemish nobility, Saint-Thierry was rather small and poor, at first sight offering few prospects for someone from the lower Flemish nobility.[71] As to why Poppo went to Saint-Thierry rather then Saint-Remy, the *Vita Popponis* only gives one clue. In chapter four, recounting Poppo's joint pilgrimage to Rome with Count Thierry III, the authors claim that both travellers had spent some time in Saint-Thierry due to the latter's poor health. Having been healed, Thierry III promised to send his unborn son to this monastery.[72] Consequently, this confirms that Poppo's early social environment also favoured Saint-Thierry, which may have played a decisive role in Poppo's choice of monastery.[73]

To fully understand exactly how Poppo's social contacts impacted his 'choice' of Saint-Thierry, not only his social environment but also the local and regional socio-political context at that

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[68] When Poppo met Richard of Saint-Vanne in 1008, he was already a monk in Saint-Thierry. Assuming that his journey to Rome took place around 1005, Poppo must have been between 27 and 30 years old. See also note 59.

[69] Cochelin has demonstrated that Odo of Cluny's conversion and his choice of monastery had also been determined by his pre-monastic social contacts, while Vanderputten proved the same about Richard of Saint-Vanne. See I. COCHELIN, *Quête de liberté et réécriture des origines,* in M. LAUWERS (ed.) *Guerriers et moines*, Antibes, 2002, p. 200-1; VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 78-83.

[70] C. S. JAEGER, *The envy of angels: cathedral schools and social ideals in medieval Europe 950-1200*, Philadelphia, 1994, p. 56-62; J. K. GLENN, *Master and community in tenth-century Reims*, in S. N. VAUGHN and J. RUBENSTEIN (eds.), *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000-1200*, Turnhout, 2006, p. 51-68.

[71] F. POIRIER-COUTANSAIS, *Les abbayes bénédictines du diocèse de Reims*, Paris, 1974, p. 25; M. BUR, *Saint-Thierry et le renouveau monastique dans le diocèse de Reims au Xe siècle*, in BUR (ed.) *Saint-Thierry: Une Abbaye Du VIe Au XXe Siècle*, Saint-Thierry, 1979, p. 40-4.

[72] *Vita Popponis,* c. 4 p. 296.
This son, Thierry, would later succeed Poppo in Saint-Maximin and Stavelot.

[73] Recent Byzantine studies have been characterized an awareness of the impact of social networks in medieval conversions. See M. C. BAER, *Honored by the glory of Islam*, New York, 2008, p. 14-5; T. KRSTIĆ, *Contested conversions to Islam*, Stanford, 2011, p. 72-3. See also note 69.

time should be taken into account. Therefore, the turbulent political situation around Reims must be taken into consideration. During the last few decennia of the tenth century, this city had witnessed a power struggle between pro-Frankish/Carolingian and pro-imperial/Ottonian groups. The imperial party was mainly represented by Archbishop Adalbero of Reims (959-989), who was the brother of Count Godfrey I of Verdun and thus a member of the powerfull Ardennes-Verdun family.[74] Their father Gozlin was the son of Wigeric of Lotharingia (d. before 913), while two of their father's brothers, Frederic and Siegfried, came to be known as the progenitors of the Ardennes-Bar and Ardennes-Luxembourg families. Being faithful allies of the German emperors, these three families largely dominated political life in Lotharingia during the tenth and eleventh centuries.[75] During his term of office as archbischop of Reims, Adalbero had 'reformed' two monasteries in his diocese by replacing the residing canons with a group of Benedictine monks from Saint-Remy.[76] These institutions were Mouzon and, in fact, Saint-Thierry.[77] Since Adalbero had entrusted the advocacy of Mouzon to his brother, Godfrey I of Verdun, and had removed the former (lay) Abbot Roger III, who had been a confidant of the Carolingian King Lothair IV, from Saint-Thierry, both reforms can be seen partly as anti-Carolingian acts.[78] While sources do not reveal who became Saint-Thierry's advocate after Adalbero's reform, it goes without saying that it was highly likely that this institution had also come under the influence of the Ardennes-Verdun family.

Since 978, tensions had increased between the pro-imperial and the pro-Carolingian groups in Reims. During King Lothair IV's invasion of Lotharingia, Adalbero of Reims had chosen the side of his pro-imperial family by turning his back on his Carolingian king.[79] Following Lothair IV's death in 986, Adalbero of Reims had supported Hugh Capet's successful candidacy for the throne.This earned him even more hostility from the pro-Carolingian group, who had supported the candidacy of Lothair IV's brother Charles.[80] Consequently, when Adalbero died in 989, the pro-Carolingian groups in Reims

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[74] M. BUR, *Adalbéron, archevêque de Reims reconsidéré.*, in M. PARISSE and X. BARRAL I ALTET (eds.), *Le Roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an Mil,* Paris, 1992, p. 55.

[75] RENN, *Das erste Luxemburger…* [see no. 57]*,* p. 22-5, 28-56; M. PARISSE, *Généalogie de la maison d'Ardenne*, in *Publications de la Section historique de l'Institut grand-ducal de Luxembourg*, 95 (1981), p. 19-23; TWELLENKAMP, *Das Haus…* [see no. 57]*,* p. 63; POULL, *La maison souveraine et ducale de Bar*, Nancy, 1994, p. 3.

[76] BUR, *Saint-Thierry…* [see no. 71], p. 42-3.

[77] For an interpretation of Adalbero's monastic reforms as a dynastic territorial strategy, see O. HUYSMANS, *Pious foundation or strategic masterstroke*, in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 110: 1-2 (2015), p. 103-34.

[78] See J.-P. EVRARD, *Les comtes de Verdun aux Xe et XIe siècles*, in *Publications de la Section historique de l'Institut grand-ducal de Luxembourg*, 95 (1981), p. 167; BUR, *La formation du comté de Champagne, v.950-v.1150*, Nancy, 1977*,* p. 132-3. Roger III was the son of Count Roger II of Laon and would later support the pro-Carolongian uprising of Charles, brother of Lothair IV, in 989-991.

[79] This was the 'war of Haspengouw' in which Poppo's father died, see note 38. BUR, *Adalbéron…* [see no. 74], p. 57-8*.*

[80] BUR, *Adalbéron…* [see no. 74], p. 57-61.

must have been eager to reassert their influence in the city. Shortly before dying, Adalbero of Reims had expressed his will to be succeeded by Gerbert of Aurillac. This person also had a distinct pro-imperial profile and was a close friend of several of Wigeric's descendants, such as Siegfried of Luxembourg and Godfrey I of Verdun.[81] However, in order to calm down an uprising of pro-Carolingian rebels, King Hugh Capet decided instead to grant the vacant episcopal office in Reims to the Carolingian Arnulf, bastard son of Lothair IV.[82] Nonetheless, Arnulf proved himself unworthy of Hugh's trust and shortly afterwards started to support the rebellion of the Carolingian Charles, which earned him a place in prison.[83] As a consequence, Gerbert of Aurillac was installed as archbishop of Reims in 991, which marked a victory for the pro-imperial groups in Reims.[84] Unfortunately for them, this situation was short-lived. In 997, Gerbert lost the king's favour, after which Arnulf was reinstalled on the episcopal throne of Reims in 999.[85] This marked the definitive ending of a period of pro-imperial influence in the region.

On the other hand, influential supporters of the pro-Carolingian group in Reims were the counts of Roucy, who were also the viscounts of Reims.[86] In 989, Count Giselbert of Roucy and his brother Bruno, bishop of Langres, had supported Arnulf's candidacy for the episcopal office in Reims, while in 991, Count Giselbert had supported the uprising of the Carolingian Charles.[87] Furthermore, shortly after the year 1000, Ebles, the new count of Roucy, had married Beatrix, the daughter of Reginar IV of Hainaut.[88] Along with his brother Lambert of Louvain, Reginar IV of Hainaut had challenged the claims to power by several of Wigeric's descendants ever since their father, Reginar III of Hainaut, had been banished from Lotharingia in 956.[89] To this end, they had become allies with Lothair IV and his brother Charles several times, thereby participating in the Carolingian invasion of

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[81] Before going to Reims, Gerbert of Aurillac had been the personal teacher of Emperor Otto II. On Gerbert, see P. W. KNOLL, *Sylvester II: Frankish pope (999-1003)* in S. Wolbrink (ed.) *Great lives from history: the middle ages, 477-1453,*Pasadena, 2005, p. 983-7.After Lothair IV had captured several family members of the 'Wigeric-clan' (Godfrey I of Verdun, his son Frederic, Siegfried of Luxembourg, and the brothers Bardo and Gozelo of Bastogne) in 985, it was Gerbert of Aurillac who visited and supported them during their captivity. See EVRARD, *Les comtes…* [see no. 78]*,* p. 156-7; BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 118.

[82] BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 118-20.

[83] BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 121; V. HUTH, *Erzbischof Arnulf von Reims und der Kampf um das Königtum im Westfrankenreich,* in *Francia*, 21 (1994), p. 88-121.

[84] BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 123. Gerbert even accompanied Emperor Otto III to Rome in 996.

[85] BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 123.

[86] BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 159.

[87] H. MORANVILLÉ, *Origine de la maison de Roucy*, in *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 83 (1922), p. 18-9; BUR, *La formation…* [see no. 78], p. 120-121, 134-137.

[88] MORANVILLÉ, *origine…* [see no. 87], p. 34. On Ebles' origins, see J.-N. MATHIEU, *La succession au comté de Roucy aux environs de l'an mil*, in K.S.B. Keats-Rohan & C. Settipani (eds.), *Onomastique et Parenté dans l'Occident médiéval*, Oxford, 2001, p. 75-84.

[89] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 67.

Lotharingia in 978, until they finally succeeded in retaking control over the county of Hainaut, near the end of the tenth century, which happened at the cost of Godfrey I of Verdun.[90] This meant that the main holder of secular power in Reims had strengthened his alliance with one of the arch-enemies of the 'Wigeric clan'.[91] As a result, around the year 1000, the main political climate in Reims had become distinctly anti-imperial, with some of the main opponents of the Ardennes-Verdun family now holding both secular and spiritual power.

Consequently, during the first decennium of the eleventh century, the small abbey of Saint-Thierry was probably one of the last pro-imperial strongholds for members of the Wigeric clan near Reims, due to its links with the Ardennes-Verdun family. This is confirmed by the fact that according to the *Vita Popponis*, Poppo's mentor in Saint-Thierry had been Eilbert of Florennes, grandson of Count Godfrey I of Verdun.[92] Furthermore, Saint-Thierry's abbot, Josbert, had been nominated by Gerbert of Aurillac in 992, which means that he probably acted favourably towards the interests of the Ardennes-Verdun family.[93] Also, the Saint-Thierry obituary mentions Thierry III as the donor of Villers-Franqueux, one of the abbey's most important domains, reaffirming the suspicion that Thierry III and his mother favoured this institution.[94] Finally, Saint-Thierry's only three surviving charters from the period 974-1049 all testify to a continuous effort to extract Saint-Thierry from any pro-Frankish interference, first from the counts of Roucy, then, after the year 1000, from the bishop of Reims.[95]

It is impossible to understand Poppo's going to Reims and his entry into Saint-Thierry without taking this political context into consideration. Consequently, his choice of this specific abbey should

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[90] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 76-9. On their participation in the 978 invasion, see *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. E. VON OEFELE (MGH SRG, Hannover, 1891), p. 13-4.

[91] The mother of Count Giselbert of Roucy was a niece of Reginar III of Hainaut. See MORANVILLÉ, *origine…* [see no. 87], p. 15, 38.

[92] *Vita Popponis*, c. 7-8 p. 297-8. Eilbert was the porter at Saint-Thierry; on this function see C. H. LAWRENCE, *Medieval monasticism*, London, 1984, p. 118.

[93] BUR, *Saint-Thierry…* [see no. 71], p. 45. the *Gallia Christiana* erroneously identifies Josbert as a brother of Gerard of Florennes, *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 9, col. 184.

[94] Reims B.M., ms. 349, fol. 118r. BUR, *Saint-Thierry…* [see no. 71], p. 46.

[95] A charter from 974 confirms the immunity of Saint-Thierry from the power of the count and vice-count, as the counts of Roucy. The papal charter from 1004-8 does the same, but also adds immunity from the archiepiscopal power (at that time Arnulf of Reims). Finally, a charter from 1049 mentions how Villers-Franqueux had been seized sometime before 1033 by the bishop of Reims, which was either Arnulf or his successor, Ebles, former count of Roucy. L. HALPHEN and F. LOT, *Recueil des actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, 1908, no. 63 p. 149-152; H. MEINERT, *Papsturkunden in Frankreich, Champagne und Lothringen*, 1932, no. 4 p. 178-9. On the 1049 charter, see F. SOEHNÉE, *Catalogue des actes d'Henri Ier*, 1907, no. 89 p. 93. The first two charters are partly apocryphal, see BUR, *Saint-Thierry…* [see no. 71], note 27.

not be considered as resulting from purely religious considerations.[96] Rather, it indicates that his *amicitia* and loyalty ties with Thierry III and especially with Thierry's mother, Lutgard of Luxembourg, had stopped him from choosing Saint-Remy, despite Poppo's Flemish background. After all, both Arnulf of Reims and the counts of Roucy maintained strong relations with this pro-Carolingian abbey.[97] If the different families descending from Wigeric wanted to maintain, and perhaps even reinforce some of their influence in the Reims region after the year 1000, then it was all hands on deck to support the small community of Saint-Thierry. Thus, the fact that Poppo went to this small abbey near Reims seems to indicate that his connection with Lutgard, a sibling of the Ardennes-Luxembourg family (strongly allied to the Ardennes-Verdun family at that time) had been decisive enough to render him a useful reinforcement for Saint-Thierry's imperial-minded convent.[98] From Poppo's point of view, his entry into Saint-Thierry gave him direct access to different members of this familial power group, which could be considered as concretisation of his initial social capital.[99] Moreover, by proving his ability to function in a politically sensitive situation, Poppo might have attained a position of esteem within this group, which would have been less likely to happen if he had opted for a more 'comfortable' position in a Flemish monastery.

Leadership training under Richard of Saint-Vanne

From the moment Poppo entered Saint-Thierry, his identity altered fundamentally as his conversion changed him from a *miles* by arms into a *miles* by prayers. However, this did not mean that he had 'shaken off of his worldly skin' when passing through Saint-Thierry's doors, as some medieval authors would like us to believe.[100] After all, even after taking up the monastic habit, his social identity remained largely dependent of his former social environment. Nevertheless, his conversion certainly implied a reorganisation of his egocentric social network.[101] As the evolution of his career during the

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[96] See also note 73.

[97] Count Gislebert of Roucy had donated half of Reims' vice-county to Saint-Remy in 986-1005, see P. Varin, *Archives administratives de la ville de Reims*, 1839, vol. 1, p. 85; also Huth, *Erzbischop Arnulf…* [see no 83]., p. 107.

[98] Cohesion between both families had only collapsed between 1008 and 1012. See H. Jongbloed, *Autour d'un millénaire,* in *Revue du Nord*, 1 (2013), p. 33. On the issue of family members seeking each other's support in the pursuit of common goals, see H. J. Tanner, *Families…* [see no. 50], p. 9-13. On the importance of client relations for aristocratic families to preserve their range of influence in peripheral areas, see Lind, *Great friends…* [see no. 50], p. 134-6.

[99] As a comparison, Rosé demonstrated how Odo of Cluny's conversion to a monk led to the concretisation of social contacts, which previously had only been accessible to Odo through intermediaries. See Rosé, *Reconstitution…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 235-40.

[100] G. Melville, *Inside and Outside*, in Vanderputten and Meijns (eds.), *Ecclesia…* [see no. 5], p. 167-9.

[101] 'Egocentric social network' is a term used by social network analysts to denominate all social bonds, and its global structure, from one individual. See also Wetherell, *Historical…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 127-8; Marin and Wellman, *Social…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 19. Several authors have demonstrated how conversions did not mean a 'dissolution' of one's former social

subsequent years indicates, it seems that in particular Poppo had been able to enrich his contacts with members of the Ardennes-Verdun family.

According to the *Vita Popponis*, it was under the supervision of Eilbert of Florennes, whose mother was a sibling of the Ardennes-Verdun family, that Poppo soon became the monastery's almoner.[102] However, his career would soon take another turn. When Abbot Richard of Saint-Vanne visited Saint-Thierry in 1008, the latter persuaded the monastery's abbot to entrust Poppo to his own care.[103] Richard's interest in Poppo, which might seem strange at first sight, can only be understood by considering both the political backdrop of Richard's activities and his social connections. Since his education in Reims under Bishop Adalbero, Richard of Saint-Vanne had maintained contact with Count Frederic of Verdun, who joined Richard when the latter entered the monastery at Saint-Vanne in Verdun in 1004.[104] During his subsequent abbacy in Saint-Vanne, Richard maintained his good relations with the Ardennes-Verdun family, while strengthening the relations between Saint-Vanne and this family.[105] Then, in 1008, shortly before his visit to Reims, Richard of Saint-Vanne became abbot of the important Flemish monastery of Saint-Vaast in Arras, a politically motivated nomination by the pro-imperial Bishop Erluin of Cambrai.[106] Consequently, when Richard met Poppo shortly afterwards, the latter must have seemed the ideal candidate to cooperate in his monastic policies in both Verdun and in Flanders. This was thanks to Poppo's pro-imperial profile as a monk of Saint-Thierry, his close ties with an influential member of the Ardennes-Luxembourg family and with relatives of the Ardennes-Verdun family as well as his Flemish background and secular experience.[107]

For the next four to five years, Poppo stayed at the Saint-Vanne monastery in Verdun under Richard's auspices. There is little doubt that this period offered Poppo great opportunities, concerning both the monastic training as a pupil of one Lotharingia's most competent abbots as well as the possibilty to benefit from Richard's extensive social capital. For his part, Richard most likely exploited this period for preparing Poppo to take up monastic leadership positions.[108] According to Steven Vanderputten, an essential part of such training was to connect Poppo with other leadership

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networks, but rather their reorganisation. See for example Rosé, *Reconstitution…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 235-41; J. Preiser-Kapeller, *Webs of conversion*, working paper, Bamberg, 2012, p. 16.

[102] *Vita Popponis*, c. 8 p. 298. On the function of almoner, see Lawrence, *medieval monasticism…* [see no. 92], p. 118.

[103] *Vita Popponis*, c. 9 p. 298-9.

[104] Vanderputten, *Imagining…* [see no. 4]*, p. 7.

[105] Evrard, *les comtes…* [see no. 78], p. 157-8 ; Vanderputten, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 99-105.

[106] Vanderputten, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3], p. 83-5.

[107] Steven Vanderputten also argued that Richard actively headhunted people with worldly experience to be trained as monastic leaders. See Vanderputten, C*ommunities…* [see no. 8], p. 292-5.

[108] Vanderputten, C*ommunities…* [see no. 8], p. 293.

figures.[109] Indeed, the authors of the *Vita Popponis* stressed that Poppo, during his years in Saint-Vanne, built a close friendship with Frederic, former count of Verdun and brother of Count Godfrey II of Verdun.[110] As a side note, if we are to believe this source, during that time Poppo convinced his mother to become a recluse in Saint-Vanne.[111] This can also be interpreted as an active investment in his monastic career.[112]

In 1012-3, at around 33 years of age, Poppo's career really took off, as the *Vita Popponis* claims that Richard promoted him to prior in the Flemish monastery of Saint-Vaast in Arras.[113] To understand this promotion, it is important to note that Richard's preceding nomination as abbot in Arras, in 1008, had been politically motivated. This must be seen in the context of a power struggle between the Flemish Count Baldwin IV and the imperial-minded Bishop Erluin of Cambrai.[114] Due to this struggle, the abbatial position of Saint-Vaast had been vacant for three years prior to Richard's arrival. When the Flemish count was defeated by the imperial troops in 1007, Erluin of Cambrai took advantage of the count's weakened strength to put Richard in Saint-Vaast's abbatial position.[115] Needless to say, Richard encountered several difficulties during the first few years of his abbacy in Arras.[116] When Bishop Erluin of Cambrai died in 1012, Emperor Henry II nominated Gerard of Cambrai as Cambrai's new bishop, partly as a result of the Verdun family's influence. Gerard was not only the brother of Poppo's former mentor Eilbert of Florennes, but was also a nephew of Count Godfrey I of Verdun.[117] In the aftermath of these events, Baldwin IV gave up his resistance and became a vassal of Emperor Henry II.[118]

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[109] VANDERPUTTEN, *Communities…* [see no. 8], p. 293-4.

[110] *Vita Popponis*, c. 9 p. 299, c. 11 p. 300.

[111] *Vita Popponis*, c. 10, p. 299. As his mother's conversion is not confirmed by any other source (such as the *Necrologium Sancti Vitoni*), this story might also be considered a *topos*, to illustrate how his carnal parentship was absorbed into his spiritual parentship.

[112] Familial capital being invested in monastic careers was no exception during the high middle ages, see WOLLASCH, *parenté noble…* [see no. 5], p. 21. It should also not be discounted that Verdun was his mother's ancestral region, although this remains conjecture.

[113] *Vita Popponis*, c. 11, 300. The exact year of Poppo's nomination is not mentioned in the sources, although most authors agree it was 1012; see for example SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7], 14; GEORGE, Un *réformateur…* [see no. 7], 92. It was certainly before 1013, when Richard was sent out to reform Saint-Amand.

[114] For a more detailed discussion of this power struggle, see D. C. VAN METER, *Count Baldwin IV, Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Inception of Monastic Reform in Eleventh-Century Flanders*, in *Revue Bénédictine*, 107 (1997), p. 141.

[115] VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3], 83-4.

[116] Hugo of Flavigny's chronicle mentions a murder attempt on Richard. HUGO OF FLAVIGNY, *chronicon*, ed. H. PERTZ (*MGH SS*, 8), Hannover, 1896, 377-9; see also VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 78-83.

[117] Hermann of Ename, the brother of Godfrey I of Verdun, had also escorted Gerard when entering the city of Cambrai, see VAN METER, *Count…* [see no. 114], p. 133-9.

[118] VAN METER, *Count…* [See no. 114], p. 139-47; VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. I, p. 92 . See also F. HOFMANS, *La date d'infeodation de Valenciennes au comte de Flandre Baudouin IV*, in *Annales de la société*

As this changing political climate in Arras after 1012 allowed Richard to shift his priorities elsewhere, he could now bestow the abbey's daily government into the hands of one of his confidents.[119] While Richard was aiming for a continuation of the episcopal and Ardennes-Verdun-family's interests in Saint-Vaast, his prior had to be acceptable to the Flemish parties in Arras so as not to disturb the freshly made peace. Poppo emerged as the ideal candidate for both the imperial and Flemish parties, thanks to his connections with important members of both the Verdun and the Luxembourg families, with Gerard of Cambrai's brother, as well as his Flemish background and contacts.[120] As for Poppo, this function provided him with an excellent opportunity to turn his former Flemish social capital to good account and to validate his acquired monastic experience in an influential leadership position.[121] In addition, due to his social capital, Poppo's nomination in Saint-Vaast most likely put him in a 'broker' position between the different power groups involved in Arras at that time, which undeniably enhanced his local influence.[122]

Then, in 1015, and still Saint-Vaast's prior, Poppo travelled to Nijmegen in the Netherlands to attend Henry II's imperial court.[123] According to his biographers, Poppo brought himself to the notice of Emperor Henry II by openly criticising an event whereby a man who had been rubbed with honey was exposed to a bear.[124] Obviously, the truth behind this anecdote is somewhat questionable. Rather, with this story, the authors of the *Vita Popponis* wanted to demonstrate that Poppo had proven himself capable enough to represent Saint-Vaast in regional political affairs. It leaves little doubt that, taking Poppo's visit at the imperial court for granted, such a gathering of regional

d'archéologie de Bruxelles, XLVI (1942-43), p. 139-49; F. L. GANSHOF, *Les origines de la Flandre impériale*, in *Annales de la société d'archéologie de Bruxelles*, XLVI (1942-42)*,* p. 117-8; C. LAYS, *La mort d'Arnoul de Valenciennes et l'Inféodation de Valenciennes à Baudoin IV, comte de Flandre*, in *Le Moyen Age*, 54 (1948), p. 57-75.

[119] See VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 110-1.

[120] The marriage between Count Baldwin IV of Flanders and Ogive of Luxembourg, a niece of Lutgard of Luxembourg, may also have favoured Poppo's nomination. Although the exact year of this marriage is not known, it is commonly assumed that it happened in the aftermath of the peace process, which is reinforced by the fact that their son, Baldwin V, was born around 1012-1013. Nonetheless, Ganshof and Renn have assumed that Baldwin IV was already engaged to Ogive before his usurpation of Valenciennes in 1006. GANSHOF, *Les origines…* [see no. 118]*,* p. 108; RENN, *Das erste Luxemburger…* [see no. 57], p. 115-116. Also BRANDENBURG, *Die Nachkommen Karls des Grossen: 1.-14. Generation*, Leipzig, 1935, p. 96 no. 51; E. LE GLAY, *Histoire des comtes de Flandre jusqu'à l'avénement de la maison de Bourgogne*, Bruxelles, 1843, p. 144.

[121] Poppo's Flemish connections would soon prove their usefulness as the *Vita Popponis* claims that he received the Count of Flander's military support against a local *miles* who had violated Saint-Vaast's possessions. *Vita Popponis*, c. 11, p. 300.

[122] See note 58.

[123] *Vita Popponis*, c. 12, p. 300-1. Although Poppo's *vita* does not give the exact date or location of this imperial court, it tells how Poppo passed the Betuwe region, which is close to Nijmegen, when going to a court. A Saint-Vanne charter from 1015 relates the presence of the imperial court in Nijmegen in 1015, see H. BLOCH, *Die älteren Urkunden des Klosters Saint-Vanne*, in *Jahr-Buch der Gesellschaft für Lothringische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 10 (1898), n. 24 p. 419-24.

[124] *Vita Popponis*, c. 12, p. 301.

ecclesiastical and secular magnates also gave Poppo an opportunity to acquaint himself with the regional elite.

Following the *Vita Popponis*' chronology, shortly after his trip to Nijmegen, Poppo was discharged as Saint-Vaast's prior and ordered by Richard to return to Saint-Vanne to perform "*omnis infimarum rerum monasterii*".[125] While the authors of the *Vita Popponis* claim that Richard wanted to test Poppo's obedience and humility with this order, it seems that Richard's decision might rather have been motivated by the concrete political context in Flanders at that time.[126] First of all, in September 1015, the battle of Florennes had taken place, in which Count Godfrey I of Verdun and his brother Hermann of Ename had killed their long-time opponent Lambert of Louvain and defeated Count Reginar V of Mons, son of the above-mentioned Reginar IV of Hainaut.[127] Since Lambert of Louvain and Count Baldwin IV of Flanders had once been allied in 1006, it is not inconceivable that in the battle of Florennes, too, Baldwin IV and his vassals had been inclined to side with Lambert of Louvain against the Count of Verdun.[128] After all, in the years to come, Baldwin IV would continue to prove himself an unfaithful vassal of the German emperor.[129] In this context, Poppo's Flemish background and contacts may have become a restraint rather than benefiting his position in Saint-Vaast. Secondly, Poppo's association with an important member of the Luxembourg family may also have rendered his position in Flanders less tenable. Since 1008, the siblings of this family had been rebelling against both Emperor Henry II and their nephews from the Ardennes-Bar family.[130] The Verdun family had been involved in this struggle on the imperial side arguably since 1012 and certainly after 1015.[131] In this context, if Richard of Saint-Vanne and Gerard of Cambrai wanted to maintain Saint-Vaast's profile as both an imperial and Verdun stonghold in Arras, Poppo's initial social capital had prevented him from being the ideal person to rule this monastery. The fact that it

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[125] *Vita Popponis*, c. 13, p. 301.

[126] See also VANDERPUTTEN, *Oboedientia. Réformes et discipline monastique au début du XIe siècle*, in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 53 (2010), p. 260-6.

[127] F. G. HIRSCH, H. PABST and H. BRESSLAU, *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reichs unter Heinrich,* vol. III (Leipzig, 1875), p. 26.

[128] Even though sources on this battle make no mention of the Count of Flanders, Baldwin IV had no interest in a pacified Lotharingia on his eastern border; see HOFMANS, *La date…* [see no. 118], p. 149. Hofmans proposed that Henry II had convinced Baldwin IV to give up his support to Reginar V by ceding Valenciennes to him at the end of 1015.

[129] GANSHOF, *Les origines…* [see no. 118], p. 108; TANNER, *Families…* [see no. 50], p. 77.

[130] Although there is no direct evidence that Lutgard of Luxembourg had been involved in this rebellion, it was not uncommon for families in such a situation to 'bind' together. On the issue of binding, see MARIN and WELLMAN, *Social…* [see note **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 18.

[131] H. WOLTER, *Die Synoden im Reichsgebiet und in Reichsitalien von 916 bis 1056*, Paderborn, 1988, 245-51. For a more detailed overview of this struggle, see K. VANHEULE, *Politicizing hagiography: the life of St Roding of Beaulieu and the struggle for power in early eleventh-century Lotharingia*, in *Journal of medieval history*, to be published in 2016.

was Frederic, a member of the Verdun family, who became Saint-Vaast's new prior supports this hypothesis.[132] Consequently, this indicates that Poppo's social identity was still closely linked to his early social contacts, despite his subsequent monastic career and the social capital this career had yielded for him.[133]

Soon after his arrival in Verdun, Richard once again awarded Poppo with another important leadership function. This time, he was nominated as the prior of the remote monastery of Beaulieu-en-Argonne, at that time still called 'Wasloi' or 'Wasloges', situated in the borderland between the counties of Verdun and Bar.[134] Indeed, even more so than in the case of Saint-Vaast, it was the confrontation between Poppo's initial social capital and the regional political context which helps to explain Richard's motivations for bestowing this function upon Poppo.[135] At the end of 1015 or the beginning of 1016, Bishop Haimo of Verdun had entrusted this small institution to Richard of Saint-Vanne. This nomination must be considered as a tactical move to strengthen the episcopal sphere of influence in the south-western parts of his diocese.[136] By so doing, the bishop was challenging the claims of the neighbouring counts of Bar who considered a certain degree of control over this monastery was theirs by right of inheritance, thereby almost treating this institution as an *Eigenkirche*.[137] Although Richard was undeniably competent enough to resist the Bar family's claims and restore the abbey's independence while reinforcing a degree of episcopal influence over this institution, his close relationship with the Verdun family actually prevented him from taking too staunch a position against the counts of Bar.[138] After all, between 1015 and 1017, the Count of Verdun had been involved in the aforementioned regional conflict between the Ardennes-Bar family and the Ardennes-Luxembourg family. During these struggles, the Count of Verdun had sided with the Count of Bar against the siblings of the Luxembourg family.[139] As this alliance could not be jeopardised by a 'minor' issue such as the abbey of Beaulieu, and since Richard of Saint-Vanne had to

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[132] EVRARD, *Les comtes…* [see no. 78], p. 158-9.

[133] Similar observations on Odo of Cluny were being made by Isabelle Rosé, who demonstrated that the social groups from Odo's youth and from ancestral origins continued to play a key role throughout his subsequent career, even remaining as Odo's most important social bonds near the end of his life. See ROSÉ, *Reconstitution…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 227-52.

[134] *Vita Popponis*, c. 13 p. 301. Schäfer and Krauss erroneously assumed that Poppo had been abbot in Beaulieu, although Poppo's *Vita* clearly states that Richard placed him 'second' there. *Vita Popponis*, c. 13, 301; SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7], p. 34-5; KRAUSS, *Christi iugum…* [see no. 7], p. 291.

[135] For a detailed discussion of Poppo's nomination in Beaulieu, see VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming.

[136] VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131]. On Richard's abbacy in Beaulieu, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 53-61; 125-8.

[137] VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming.

[138] VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming.

[139] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 29; HIRSCH, PABST and BRESSLAU, *Jahrbucher…* [see no. 127], vol. III, p. 26.

take the Count of Verdun's interests into account in his monastic policies in Saint-Vanne, he needed to leave Beaulieu's daily charge to someone else.[140] This person required the necessary experience and social capital to effectively withstand the efforts of the Bar family who were trying to maintain their interference in some of the monastery's affairs.

This is where Poppo came into play. His connection with an important member of the Luxembourg family who, at that time, were sworn enemies of the Count of Bar, gave him access to the necessary social capital to repulse the Count of Bar's influence in Beaulieu.[141] Consequently, Poppo's nomination as Beaulieu's prior should be seen as a strategic move by Richard of Saint-Vanne, who used this regional conflict to safeguard Verdun's episcopal interests at the local level in Beaulieu.[142] For his part, Poppo seems to have grasped this opportunity with both hands. During his few years in Beaulieu, he started to redefine Beaulieu's former identity by constructing new buildings and changing the abbey's former name of 'Wasloi' into the current 'Beaulieu', thereby increasingly dissociating the Bar family from the institution's identity.[143] In addition, the arrival of Robert, Poppo's co-traveller to Palestine, might be credited to Poppo's initiative.[144] Finally, during his first year of office as Beaulieu's prior, Poppo paid the imperial court a second visit, this time in Strasbourg, as the result of which he was undeniably able to extend his social capital even further.[145]

As a side note, these findings confirm Vanderputten's observations that Richard, when choosing his collaborators, valued worldly experience and contacts more than extensive spiritual training.[146] This is further reinfonced by a passage in the *Vita Popponis* which claims that Poppo's transfer to Saint-Vanne happened shortly after he had a vision in which he saw a priestly garment shining near Saint-Vaast's altar. Everhelm explained this by stating that Poppo deserved the priestly garment thanks to his deeds, even though he lacked a formal blessing. Consequently, this passage

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[140] In 1015, Saint-Vanne received a significant donation from members of the Verdun family; see MGH, *Diplimata Heinirch II* (DD HII), 431–5, no. 340; also VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 99.

[141] On the conflict between the Bar and Luxembourg families, see F.-R. ERKENS, *Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch-salischer Zeit,* in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 64 (1982), p. 349-52; C. WAMPACH, *Urkunden- und Quellenbuch zur Geschichte der altluxemburgischen Territorien bis zur burgundischen Zeit*, vol. I (Luxembourg, 1935), 312 [referred to hereafter as UQB]; VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming. On the issue of how Poppo's contact with Lutgard gave him access to part of the Luxembourg power group, see notes 58 and 130.

[142] VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming.

[143] *Vita Popponis*, c. 13 p. 301.

[144] *Vita Popponis*, c. 3 p. 296; see also note 63.

[145] *Vita Popponis*, c. 14 p. 302. Although Wattenbach placed this event in 1018, it probably happened in 1016, as argued by LADEWIG, *Poppo…* [see no. 7], p. 36 note 3.

[146] VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 121-4, 129-30, 133-7.

confirms that although Poppo lacked a priestly education, this had by no means hindered his later career.[147]

Becoming an imperial abbot

Enjoying the comfortable position of Beaulieu's prior, Poppo could have been quite close to the glass ceiling of his monastic career. Unless Richard had an interest in transferring him once again to another monastery, there was a significant chance that Poppo would remain in this position for several years, being the first in line to succeed Richard as Beaulieu's abbot. However, in 1020, Emperor Henry II was to change Poppo's career drastically by nominating him as abbot in the imperial double monastery Stavelot-Malmedy in the Ardennes.[148] For Poppo, who was between 41 and 42 years old at that time, this event marked a turning point in his life as it rendered him abruptly into a regional magnate and an imperial vassal.[149] While his promotion to abbot might not have appeared particularly odd, because of his previous experience, the nature and location of his new function certainly was. After all, it marked a radical relocation of Poppo's geographical focus and a cutting off from his previously built local social capital. Having spent the most of his life in Flanders (during his pre-monastic youth and in Saint-Vaast in Arras), in Northern Francia (Saint-Thierry in Reims), and in the western part of Upper Lotharingia (Saint-Vanne, Beaulieu), he had now attained a highly influential position of power in the south of Lower Lotharingia, as a newcomer for the local elites.

Since Bertrand, Poppo's predecessor in Stavelot, had left little trace of any worldly or religious activities, Poppo's nomination has often been explained as a monastic reform instigated by Emperor Henry II.[150] However, such statements ignore the question why Henry II opted for Poppo to perform this 'reform'. Indeed, it seems doubtful that Poppo's two appearances at an imperial court were sufficient ground for the emperor to entrust him with one of his imperial institutions. If we are to believe the *Vita Popponis*, Richard had been very reluctant to cede Poppo into imperial hands, which also renders it unlikely that the latter's nomination resulted from the former's influence.[151] Rather, in order to grasp the rationale behind Henry II's decision, we must look once more at the

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[147] Having a priestly qualification became one of the main conditions for becoming an abbot in the later eleventh century, see SEIBERT, *Abtserhebungen…* [see no. 3], p. 260-1.

[148] *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 302.

[149] Stavelot-Malmedy was an imperial monastery under the direct protection of the German emperor, with its abbots standing in a direct vassal relationship with the emperor; see VOGTHERR, *Die Reichsabteien…* [see no. 31], p. 1-2, 19.

[150] For example, J. YERNAUX, *Les premiers siècles de l'Abbaye de Stavelot-Malmedy, 648?-1020*, s.l., 1910, p. 389-91; F. BAIX, *Étude sur l'abbaye et principauté de Stavelot-Malmédy*, Paris, 1924, 149-51; GEORGE, *un réformateur…* [see no. 7], p. 94-5.

[151] *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 302.

confrontation between Poppo's social capital and the local political context. This time, it was the Luxembourg family's territorial ambitions above all else that influenced Poppo's change of career.

Central to this story is the struggle for control over the northern Ardennes. It is not easy to work out which count controlled these regions, but since the northern Ardennes made up a large part of Stavelot's domains, knowing which count held the title of Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate, and thus who exercised indirect control over the monastery's extensive estates is key to understanding who controlled these regions.[152] According to tradition, the German emperor allocated this prestigious function to the count whose power was most firmly anchored in the abbey's surroundings.[153] Indeed, no count would accept another's interference in the worldly affairs of a monastery located within his territories. As the result of Stavelot-Malmedy's status as a double monastery, its advocate could exercise a certain degree of control over both institutions, even though they were located in different dioceses (Stavelot in Liège and Malmedy in Cologne) and counties (Stavelot in the northern Ardennes and Malmedy in the Zülpichgau).[154] With Stavelot being the *primus inter pares* of both institutions, generally speaking, the ruler of the northern Ardennes held the function of advocate in both institutions.

Although this situation might seem a recipe for conflict, it was not particularly problematic between 943 and 959-965. During that time, both abbeys were situated within the territories of the same count, namely Count Ehrenfried of Zülpich (until 959) and his successor Count Garnier of Zülpich (until 959-965), who both held the title of Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate.[155] However, following the death of Garnier, this situation changed abruptly as his son, Herman of Zülpich, no

[152] VANDERKINDERE, *la Formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 229-30. On the issue of the 'counts' of the Ardennes, see M. Margue, *Pouvoir et expaces comtaux. Le cas des comtés ardennais (Xe-XIIIe siècle)*, in *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 89 (2011), p. 509-15. On Stavelot-Malmedy's advocates, see R. PETIT, *L'avouerie de l'abbaye de Stavelot*, in J. BEFFORT (ed.) *L'Avouerie en Lotharingie*, Luxembourg, 1984, p. 137-40, 157; H.-P. WEHLT, *Reichsabtei und König dargestellt am Beispiel der Abtei Lorsch mit Ausblicken auf Hersfeld, Stablo und Fulda*, Göttingen, 1970, p. 228-33; E. LINCK, *Sozialer Wandel in klösterlichen Grundherrschaften des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, 1979, p. 74-9.

[153] WEHLT, *Reichsabtei…* [see no. 152], p. 229; VANDERKINDERE, *la Formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 236.

[154] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 231-2.

[155] PETIT, *L'avouerie…* [see no. 152], p. 137. Ehrenfried also controlled Huy, Bonn, Eifel and the Keldahgau; see VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 231, 248-9. After his death, Garnier inherited the Zülpichgau, Eifel and Bonn. Since a charter from 959 records that the castle of Bodeux, situated ten kilometres to the west of Stavelot, also belonged to Garnier, this means that secular control around Stavelot belonged to him, too. J.-C. HALKIN and G. ROLAND, *Recueil des Chartes de l'abbaye de Stavelot-Malmédy*, Brussel, 1909, no. 74 p. 169-71 [referred to hereafter as HR]. See also P. MARGUE, *Les biens du comte Sigefroid*, in *Publications de la section historique de l'Institut Grand-Ducal de Luxembourg* 95 (1981), p. 305; A. JORIS, *La ville de Huy au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1959, p. 96-7.

longer appears as Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate.[156] Instead, four subsequent charters from 965 until 991 reveal that a certain 'Gozelo' now occupied this function.[157] Consequently, from then on, the counts of Zülpich no longer controlled the northern Ardennes and, even worse, they had to allow another count to be the advocate of Malmedy, even though this institution remained within their own territories.[158] Without doubt, this situation was partly to blame for Malmedy's continuing separatist inclinations which dated back to the second half of the tenth century.[159] After all, both the Count of Zülpich and the Bishop of Cologne would be better off with an independent Malmedy, because of its strategic position on their borders and its economic wealth.

The question now remains which count controlled the northern Ardennes from at least 965. Although the sources mentioned Gozelo (*Gozilo*) as Stavelot-Malmedy's advocate, Vanderkindere suggested that it was Siegfried of Luxembourg, son of Wigeric and father of Lutgard, who controlled the northern Ardennes in the second half of the tenth century.[160] His assumption was based upon a charter from 959 which records that Siegfried of Luxembourg was trying to seize the castle of Bodeux, situated approximately ten kilometres to the west of Stavelot.[161] The problem that Siegfried is not mentioned anywhere in the sources as Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate was solved creatively by Vanderkindere who suggested that the abbey had two high advocates, one being Gozelo and the other Siegfried.[162] However, contrary to Vanderkindere's suggestion, the 959 charter does not prove that Siegfried held any power in the northern Ardennes, but rather that he was trying to expand his influence into these regions.[163] Since no other source mentions Siegfried's involvement in these regions after 959, his attempt must have failed. Furthermore, a glance at Siegfried of Luxembourg's other possessions reveals that his closest domains to Stavelot were actually situated more than 80 kilometres to the south of the abbey.[164] Thus, it would seem that until 991 at least, it

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[156] Herman had inherited the Zülpichgau, Eifel and Bonn from his father; see VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 249.

[157] HR, no. 80 p. 180-1, no. 82 p. 183-5, no. 83 p. 185-7; no. 88 p. 194-5; see also PETIT, *L'avouerie…* [see no. 152], p. 140-1.

[158] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 231.

[159] The first signs of Malmedy's separatist inclinations date from Werinfrid's abbacy (954-980). See BAIX, *Etude…* [see no. 150], p. 140-146; N. SCHROEDER (2012) *Terra familiaque Remacli*, unpublished PhD thesis, Faculty of philosophy and literature, (Université libre de Bruxelles), p. 98-9.

[160] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 231. For other misconceptions about Siegfried of Luxembourg's possessions, see MARGUE, *Les biens…* [see no. 155], p. 299-310.

[161] HR, no. 74 p. 169-171; VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 231.

[162] VANDERKINDERE, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 235-6.

[163] RENN, *Das erste Luxemburger…* [see no. 57], p. 71. Margue also considered it unlikely that Siegfried had any possessions in the northern Ardennes; see MARGUE, *Les biens…* [see no. 155], p. 307-8.

[164] Feulen, Mersch and Essingen; see MARGUE, *Les biens…* [see no. 155], p. 307 note 27.

was not the Luxembourg family but Gozelo who was controlling the northern Ardennes.[165] As to whom Gozelo actually was, he has been identified as the Count of the southern Ardennes, a great-grandson of Wigeric and a son of Reginar of Bastogne, Count Godfrey I of Verdun's brother.[166]

Nevertheless, it seems that Siegfried of Luxembourg's offspring still cherished their father's ambitions to extend their control into the northern Ardennes. Since a charter from 1033 mentions Frederic II of Luxembourg, grandson of Siegfried, as Stavelot-Malmedy's new high advocate, the Luxembourg family must have finally succeeded in taking control of the northern Ardennes some when between 991 (the last mention of Gozelo of Bastogne as high advocate) and 1033.[167] Unfortunately, we do not know exactly how and when this happened. Based on a charter from 1004 mentioning Frederic I of Luxembourg, the son of Siegfried, as Stavelot-Malmedy's advocate, some authors have assumed that this took place before 1004.[168] However, as Lejeune demonstrated, since this charter is a forgery from the twelfth century, it cannot be relied upon.[169] In any case, it was during this same period that Siegfried's sons and daughters were busy extending their influence. We are already familiar with Lutgard, daughter of Siegfried, who had married Thierry III of Holland, but her sister Cunégunde, who was married to Henry II, German king since 1002 was even more influential.[170] Consequently, the Luxembourg siblings had become the emperor's main counsellors in Western Germany.[171] Henry of Luxembourg was appointed Duke of Bavaria in 1004, with his younger brother Frederic I becoming the new Count of Luxembourg. Their brother Thierry had become Bishop of Metz in 1006, while their other brother Adalbero elected himself as Bishop of Metz in 1008, even though this took place without imperial approval.[172] However, if they were also ambitious about

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[165] Margue, *Pouvoirs…* [see no. 152], p. 513.

[166] This identification is based upon mention of a 'Gozelo de Bastonia' in 1028, although it has been (unconvincingly) criticised by Laret-Kayser and Dupont; see MGH, *Diplomata Conradi II*, no. 116, p. 161-2; Vanderkindere, *La formation…* [see no. 41], vol. II, p. 234-6; UQB no. 177, p. 241-2; L. Lefebvre, *Le comté d'Ardenne ou de Bastogne*, in *Annales de l'Institut archéologique du Luxembourg*, 83 (1952), p. 181; A. Laret-Kayser and C. Dupont, *A propos des comtés postcarolingiens,* in *revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 57 (1979), p. 308-9 Margue, *Les biens…* [see no. 155], p. 307-8, Margue, *Pouvoirs…* [see no. 152], p. 513.

[167] UQB, no. 245 p. 341-3. See also Margue, *Pouvoirs…* [see no. 152], p. 519-21.

[168] UQB, no. 217, p. 307; HR, no. 93 p. 201-2; see Renn, *Das erste Luxemburger…* [see no. 57], p. 106; J. Vannérus, *La première dynastie Luxembourgeoise,* in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 25 (1946-47), p. 807-19; Wehlt, *Reichsabtei…* [see no. 152], p. 229; T. Kölzer, *Studien zu den Urkundenfälschungen des Klosters St. Maximin vor Trier (10.-12. Jahrhundert)*, Sigmaringen, 1989, p. 269; M. Clauss, *Die Untervogtei*, Siegburg, 2002, p. 107.

[169] P. Lejeune, *Etude sur la villa et le domaine de Glain (Bovigny) jusqu'aux XIe siècle*, in *Annales de l'Institut archéologique du Luxembourg*, 8-9 (1972-1973), p. 76-9. See also E. Renard, *Le domaine de Stavelot à Glain (Bovigny) au Xe siècle*, in *Bulletin de la Société de l'art et d'histoire du diocèse de Liège*, 65 (2001), p. 137-8.

[170] Vannérus, *La première dynastie…* [see no. 168], p. 815.

[171] Vannérus, *La première dynastie…* [see no. 168], p. 815-6.

[172] Twellenkamp, *Das Haus…* [see no. 57], p. 480-1.

extending their power into the northern Ardennes and becoming Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate, they had to be on good terms with the monastery's abbot. After all, as Petit also indicated, the abbot played an important role in allocating the monastery's advocacy.[173] Consequently, a closer look at Bertrand, Stavelot-Malmedy's abbot from 1007-1020 and Poppo's predecessor in Stavelot-Malmedy, might provide us with a greater insight.

Having been Stavelot's prior, Bertrand had been elected as Stavelot-Malmedy's abbot by both convents in 1007.[174] Surprisingly enough, Emperor Henry II initially refused to recognise him as the abbey's new abbot and ordered another – unknown – abbot to rule the monastery instead.[175] This is quite remarkable since it appears that Bertrand's election was executed in accordance with the rules established in 980, according to which the abbot should be chosen by unanimous agreement of both convents, and preferably should originate from Stavelot, or from Malmedy if no suitable candidate could be found in the former institution.[176] According to a charter from 1011, Henry II's refusal had been motivated by "bad rumours" about Bertrand.[177] Indeed, since the Luxembourg siblings were Henry II's closest counsellors at that time, it is easy to believe that such rumours originated from the emperor's in-laws. When identifying the main reason for the negative advice about Bertrand, the most likely option would be that he represented a group who were not in favour of too great a degree of Luxembourgish influence in the northern Ardennes. Consequently, if Bertrand was to become abbot in Stavelot-Malmedy, this could restrict the Luxembourg siblings' ambitions in these regions for several years.

While this may seem little more than a hypothesis at first sight, it is supported by subsequent events. In 1007, shortly after Bertrand's election, a charter from Archbishop Heribert of Cologne to Bertrand confirmed Malmedy's possession in the Ardennes forest.[178] Since Heribert was at odds with the emperor at that time, this confirmation could be seen as a straightforward political statement by the bishop that, against the imperial wishes, he was recognising Bertrand as the legitimate abbot after all.[179] Furthermore, this confirmation indicates that Bertrand was focusing more on Malmedy than on Stavelot, possibly because the 'imperial abbot' occupied the latter. This was undoubtedly

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[173] Petit, *L'avouerie…* [see no. 152], p. 142-3.

[174] For his mentions as prior, see HR no. 88 p. 194-5, no. 93 p. 202. Baix, *Etude…* [see no. 150], p. 149.

[175] HR, no. 95 p. 204-5.

[176] HR, no. 85 p. 189-91. See also Baix, *Etude…* [see no. 150], p. 146.

[177] HR, no. 95, p. 205.

[178] HR, no. 94, p. 202-4.

[179] Schroeder also remarked that this charter most likely veiled a political meaning, although he interpreted it as support from Heribert for Malmedy's separatist group, Schroeder, *Terra familia…* [see no. 159], p. 89. On the relationship between Henry II and Heribert of Cologne, see H. Müller, *Heribert von Köln (um 970-1021)*, in *Rheinische Lebensbilder*, 8 (1980), p. 12-5.

welcomed by both the separatist group within Malmedy's convent and by Ehrenfridus, the then Count of Zülpich, who might have seen this as an opportunity to recover the Count of Zülpich's former position as Stavelot-Malmedy's high advocate.[180] However, in a charter from 1011, Henry II finally acknowledged Bertrand as Stavelot-Malmedy's abbot, while also confirming Stavelot's supremacy and reaffirming the regulations from 980 concerning the abbatial choice.[181] Although this might seem strange, it is easier to understand by looking at the political context. Since 1008, the relationship between the emperor and the Luxembourg siblings had deteriorated, due to the Luxembourg family's rebellion against the emperor and the Count of Bar, which lasted until 1017. During this rebellion, the Luxembourg brothers had allied themselves with Ezzo, Count Palatine of Lotharingia and his brother Ehrenfried of Zülpich, as well as with the Count of Metz, their brother-in-law.[182] This conflict had reached its apotheosis in 1011 when the Luxembourg insurgents, together with Ezzo and Ehrenfried, had ambushed the Upper Lotharingian Duke Thierry I of Bar and imprisoned him.[183] Consequently, when Henry II approved Bertrand as Stavelot-Malmedy's abbot shortly thereafter, this could be seen as a symbolic reaction by Henry II to the Luxembourg rebels.

Then, in 1020, Abbot Bertrand died. Of course, this was a huge opportunity for the Luxembourg siblings finally to have someone of their own choosing elected as Stavelot-Malmedy's new abbot. At the end of their rebellion in 1017, they were once again in a position to lobby Henry II freely.[184] What happened next is history. Henry II ignored the convent's right to freely elect their abbot, despite having confirmed it himself in 1011, and imposed Poppo on the abbatial chair.[185] According to the *Vita Popponis*, the emperor even had to call in the help of Archbishop Heribert of Cologne, who had been reconciled with the emperor in 1015, and of Bishop Wolbod of Liège to convince Richard to cede Poppo into imperial command.[186]

Although we have no direct evidence of this, it is not hard to imagine that Luxembourg family's influence was behind Henry II's remarkable act. As to why Poppo emerged as their preferred

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[180] E. KIMPEN, *Ezzonen und Hezeliniden in der rheinischen Pfalzgrafschaft*, in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 12 (1933), p. 190-1.

[181] HR, no. 95, p. 204-5.

[182] For an overview of the conflict, see VANHEULE, *Politicizing…* [see no. 131], forthcoming. See also note 141.

[183] *Chronicon Thietmari*, book 6, c. 52, 340. Also *Chronicon Herimanni,* a. 1011, 119; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. M. GIESE (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 72, Hannover, 2004), 532; *Annales Brunwilarenses*, ed. G. H. PERTZ (MGH, SS, 16, Hannover, 1859), 132. See also HIRSCH, PABST AND BRESSLAU, *Jahrbücher…* [see no. 127]*,* vol. II (Berlin, 1862), 309-11; KIMPEN, *Ezzonen…* [see no. 180], p. 190.

[184] TWELLENKAMP, *Das Haus…* [see no. 57], p. 483, U. LEWALD, *Die Ezzonen. Das Schicksal eines rheinischen Fürstengeschlechtes*, in *Rheinische Viertaljahrsblätter*, 43 (1979), p. 133.

[185] HR, no. 95, p. 204-5.

[186] *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 302. See also MÜLLER, *Heribert…* [see no. 179], p. 13-4. On Wolbod; see J.-L. KUPPER, *Liège et l'église impériale XIe-XIIe siècles*, Paris, 1981, p. 122-3.

candidate, it seems most likely that a multiplicity of factors played their part. However, of all the motives, Poppo's history of contacts and loyalties with members of this familial group should not be underestimated. Arguably, his nomination comprised a deal between Poppo and the Luxembourg siblings. In exchange for Luxembourgish support in achieving an influential abbatial position, Poppo would allow this family to have a greater influence in the northern Ardennes. The subsequent course of history seems to support this hypothesis as a few years after Poppo's nomination, Frederic II of Luxembourg emerged as Stavelot-Malmedy's new high advocate, which was undeniably mainly due to Poppo's initiative.[187] In turn, this means that Poppo's social identity and loyalties became increasingly tied to the interests of the Luxembourg 'clan', even more so when Poppo had entered into service of Lutgard of Luxembourg during his youth.[188] Of particular interest is a passage in the *Vita Popponis* which recounts that Poppo's entry into Stavelot was followed by an armed uprising of the local laity.[189] Two knights who were accompanying Poppo had to take their forces to Stavelot to put an end to the uprising.[190] The fact that it was not the monks but the local nobility who were revolting against Poppo's abbacy clearly indicates that political changes in Stavelot's surroundings were at stake much more than any internal or religious reform.[191]

There is little doubt that, having become Stavelot-Malmedy's abbot, Poppo's egocentric network changed quite fundamentally.[192] Nevertheless, during the subsequent years, his initial and previously created social capital undoubtedly maintained its important role.[193] During his term of office as abbot, Poppo enhanced the abbey's attraction to pilgrims by building a new church and crypt, invested further efforts into suppressing Malmedy's separatist inclinations, and oversaw a reorganisation of the abbey's domains.[194] As regards the first task, his previously constructed social capital in Verdun proved fruitful, since Herman of Ename, brother of Count Godfrey I of Verdun, restored several of the domains he had previously usurped to Stavelot.[195] Similarly interesting is the fact that Poppo's restitutions and exchange of domains happened at a time when the emperor was

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[187] UQB, no. 245, p. 341-3. This has also been argued by PETIT, *L'avouerie…* [see no. 152], p. 142-3.

[188] See note 133.

[189] *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 302-3.

[190] As a side note, one of the two knights who helped Poppo, namely Boso, can arguably be identified as the abbey's later sub-advocate; see *Vita Popponis*, c. 15 p. 303; HR, no. 104, p. 221. See also PETIT, *L'avouerie…* [see no. 152], p. 107.

[191] According to Philippe George, the local nobility was averse to too much imperial interference in Stavelot; see GEORGE, *Un réformateur…* [see no. 7], p. 94.

[192] As a comparison, see ROSÉ, *Reconstitution…* [see no. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**], p. 241.

[193] See note 133.

[194] GEORGE, *Un réformateur…* [see no. 7], p. 94-104; L.-F. GENICOT, *Entre France et Rhénanie, l'abbatiale de Poppon à Stavelot*, in J. SCHROEDER (ed.) *Productions et échanges artistiques en Lotharingie médiévale*, 1994, p. 47-62; SCHROEDER, *Terra familia…* [see no. 159], p. 91-100.

[195] MGH, Diplomata Heinirch III (DD HIII), no. 51 p. 64-5; see SCHROEDER, *Terra familia…* [see no. 159], p. 92-4.

trying to tighten his grip on his monasteries' domains, with Poppo indeed showing particular interest in the demarcation of the *mensa abbatialis*.[196] Consequently, even though Poppo's nomination had probably involved a mutual agreement with the Luxembourg family, imperial interests also seem to have been included in this deal. Furthermore, other people involved in Poppo's nomination in Stavelot also seem to have profited from his policies afterwards, as shortly after his nomination he was entrusted – almost rewarded – with the responsibility of other prestigious institutions. In 1023, he became abbot in Saint-Maximin (Trier) and in 1028 he was able to appoint the new abbot of Echternach, with the Count of Luxembourg being the high advocate of both monasteries.[197] Wolbod, the Bishop of Liège who had helped the emperor to convince Richard, entrusted Poppo with the task of founding the Saint-Laurent monastery in Liège, in 1021.[198] Even Ehrenfried, the Count of Zülpich, must have been pleased with Poppo's policies as his brother, Ezzo of Lotharingia, asked Poppo to found his familial monastery in Brauweiler.[199]

Conclusions

Behind the start of Poppo's abbacy in Stavelot-Malmedy lies a much more complex story than previously thought. It was the result of more than 40 years of secular and monastic experiences, during which Poppo had been able to extend his social capital. His service in Saint-Thierry, Saint-Vanne, Saint-Vaast and Beaulieu, as well as his leadership training under Richard of Saint-Vanne, had provided him with the required skills to rule a prestigious monastery such as Stavelot-Malmedy. Furthermore, his former experience as *miles* should not be underestimated as in most of his interventions he had proven himself able to deal with conflicts and operate within politically sensitive contexts. However, his acquired experience was not decisive in Henry II's decision to entrust Poppo with the responsibility of this, and other, imperial institutions. Indeed, the key factor leading up to his election, as well as to his recruitment by Richard, was his social capital and social identity. Thus, it was not so much the social capital acquired through his roles as monk and prior that proved decisive, but rather his initial social capital. In particular, his connection with certain high-status descendants of Wigeric, which was partly the result of his familial background, seems to have played a primordial role. During the first few decades of his life, when cohesion between the different 'Ardennes families' was still strong, it were mainly the relatives of both the Verdun and Luxembourg branches who impacted the direction his career was to take. However, subsequently,

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[196] While the *mensa conventialis* were of benefit to the convent, the *mensa abbatialis* remained at the disposal of the abbot and the emperor; VOGTHERR, *Die Reichsabteien…* [see no. 31], p. 155-63, especially p. 161.

[197] *Vita Popponis*, c. 19 p. 305; SCHÄFER, *Studien…* [see no. 7], 48-54, 72-75; RENN, *Das erste Luxembourger…* [see no. 57], p. 116.

[198] *Chronicon Sancti Laurentii Leodiensis*, ed. W. WATTENBACH (MGH, SS, 8, Hannover, 1848), c. 23 p. 269-70.

[199] P. SCHREINER, *Die Geschichte der Abtei Brauweiler bei Köln 1024-1802*, Pulheim, 2001, p. 17-8.

when the different core families began to focus much more on their own interests, it emerged that Poppo's identity and loyalty was tied first and foremost to the Luxembourg family's siblings. Nonetheless, Poppo was still able to maintain good relations with other families, insinuating that he may have fulfilled a broker role between several powerful groups.[200] However, this does not imply that Poppo's nomination in Stavelot-Malmedy was either the 'logical' outcome of any convergence between previously discussed elements, or the result of any pre-defined 'master plan'. Rather, it was mainly the result of him being the right person, with the right connections and experience, in the right place, at the right time. Furthermore, it should be remembered that a diversity of other factors might also have been involved. Indeed, the 'real' story behind Poppo's nomination is undoubtedly much more complicated than we can possibly hope to recreate some 1000 years later.

To summarise, Poppo's story demonstrates that when studying monastic careers it is necessary to understand how an individual's identity was shaped by his or her early social environment. While recent studies have shown a growing interest in the influence of networks of power and of a person's ecclesiastical connections when dealing with monastic reforms or conversions, his or her pre-abbatial secular connections have often still implicitly been considered as remaining somewhat extraneous to an individual's identity as a monk or abbot.[201] However, the interaction between individuals and their initial social environment should be considered as something more than a mere 'give-and-take' relationship from one or the other. Rather, such an interaction defined a person's multi-layered identity to a great extent, and constituted the framework in which individual agency could be developed. Consequently, even before reaching a position of influence, the evolution of someone's career depended largely on the confrontation between his/her social capital and the concrete and short-term political context at that time. In this way, in contrast to certain subjective qualifications which are sometimes used too freely, the social identities of those being studied are able to enhance our understanding of the complexity behind historical phenomena.

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[200] See note 58. For other examples of abbots whose position within local networks of power influenced their monastic careers, see VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 129-30.

[201] To a large extent, this is caused by the nature of medieval sources which tend to minimise the influence of secular contacts. For the impact of networks of power on monastic reforms, see for example VANDERPUTTEN, *Imagining…* [see no. 4], p. 128-133; Idem, *Monastic reform…* [see no. 3], p. 77-8, 130; MAZEL, *monachisme…* [see no. 5], p. 49-53, 65-73; ROSÉ, *Circulation abbatiale et pouvoir monastique de l'époque carolingienne au premier âge féodal (IXe-XIe siècles)*, in *Des sociétés en mouvement,* Paris, 2010, p. 251-66; G. KOZIOL, *The politics of memory and identity in Carolingian royal diplomas*, Turnhout, Abingdon, 2012, p. 263-279.