

# **The Cult of Saint Petronius of Bologna in the Later Middle Ages**

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## Contents

Abbreviations.....	3
Figures.....	6
Abstract.....	7
Declaration.....	8
Copyright Statement.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
Introduction .....	11
Chapter 1 – The ‘Historical’ Petronius and the Early History of his Cult.....	28
i. The ‘Historical’ Petronius .....	28
ii. A Petronian cult before 1141? .....	37
iii. The 1141 <i>inventio</i> of Petronius of Bologna .....	44
iv. Conclusion .....	62
Chapter 2 – The First Hagiography: The <i>Vita Sancti Petronii</i> .....	64
i. The <i>Vita Sancti Petronii</i> in summary .....	65
ii. The textual relationship between the Petronian <i>Vitae</i> .....	66
iii. The <i>Vita Sancti Petronii</i> in context .....	71
iv. Conclusion .....	103
Chapter 3 – Custodians of the Cult: The Commune, and the Abbots and Monks of Santo Stefano ..	106
i. A short history of Bologna in the later Middle Ages .....	107
ii. The Commune .....	121
iii. The abbots and monks of Santo Stefano .....	165
iv. Conclusion .....	174
Chapter Four – The Significant Social Institutions of the City: The Bishops of Bologna, the <i>Studium</i> , the <i>Signori</i> and the Guilds.....	177
i. The bishops of Bologna .....	179
ii. The <i>Studium</i> .....	189
iii. The <i>signori</i> .....	198
iv. The guilds .....	207
v. Conclusion .....	221
Conclusion.....	223
Bibliography .....	232

This thesis is 87,723 words in length

## Abbreviations

- Atti e memorie (Romagna)*      *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna.*
- Ambrose, Ep.*      *Sancti Ambrosii opera. 10, Epistulae et acta, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latina* 82, eds. O. Faller and M. Zelzer, 3 vols. (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1968-90).
- CCSL*      *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
- Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*      *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis. Documenti per la storia dell'Università di Bologna dale origini fino al secolo XV*, 15 vols. (Bologna: Istituto per la storia della'Università di Bologna, 1909-87).
- CMRB*      *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna*, ed. Sarah Rubin Blanshei (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
- Cronaca A*      'Cronaca A detta volgarmente Rampona', in *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, 3 vols., RIS 18.1 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1906).
- Cronaca B*      'Cronaca B detta volgarmente Varignana', in *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, 3 vols., RIS 18.1 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1906).
- Cronica Bolognetti*      'Cronica detta dei Bolognetti', in *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, 3 vols., RIS 18.1 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1906).
- Cronica Villola*      Pietro and Floriano Villola, 'Cronica Villola', in *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, 3 vols., RIS 18.1 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1906).
- CSEL*      *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften/De Gruyter, 1866--).
- Ghirardacci, Historia di Bologna*      Cherubino Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna; corredata delle Tavole de' cognomi bolognesi e forestieri compilate da Gaspare Bombaci; introduzione di Mario Fanti* (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 2005).
- Matteo Griffoni, Memoriale*      Matthaedi de Griffonibus, *Memoriale historicum de rebus Bononiensium (aa. 4448 a.C. – 1472 d.C.)*, eds. Luigi Frati and Albano Sorbelli, RIS 18.2 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1902).

- Petri Cantinelli, *Chronicon*                      Petri Cantinelli, *Chronicon, aa. 1228-1306*, ed. Francesco Torraca, RIS 28.2 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1902).
- Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*              *Cronaca bolognese di Pietro di Mattiolo*, ed. C. Ricci (Bologna: G. Romagnoli, 1885).
- PL*    *Patrologia cursus completes, series Latina*, ed. J-P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1865).
- Salimbene, *Cronica*                                      Salimbene de Adam da Parma, *Cronica; testo latino a cura di Giuseppe Scalia; traduzione di Berardo Rossi; prefazione di Luigi Malerba*, 2 vols. (Parma: Monte Università Parma, 2007).
- Sermo de inventione*                                      *Sermo de inventione sanctarum reliquiarum*, in Enzo Lodi, *San Petronio: Patrono della città e Diocesi di Bologna* (Bologna: Renografia, 2000), pp. 120-6.
- Statuta Civitatis Mutine 1327*                      *Statuta Civitatis Mutine Anno 1327: Testo*, ed. Cesare Campori (Parma: Fiaccadori, 1864).
- Statuta Communis Parmae 1347*                      *Statuta Communis Parmae anni MCCCXLVII: accedunt leges vicecomitum Parmae imperantium usque ad annum MCCCLXXIV*, ed. Amadio Ronchini (Parma: ex officina Petri Fiaccadorii, 1860).
- Statuta Ferrariae 1287*                                      *Statuta Ferrariae Anno MCCLXXXVII*, ed. William Montorsi (Ferrara: Cassa di risparmio di Ferrara, 1955).
- Statuti del comune di San Gimignano 1255*      ‘Statuti del comune di San Gimignano compilati nel 1255’, in *Storia della terra di San Gimignano*, ed. Luigi Pecori (Florence: Galileiana, 1853), pp. 662-741.
- Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389*      *Gli Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389 (Libri I-III)*, ed. Valeria Braidì, 2 vols. (Bologna: Deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna, 2002).
- Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*              *Lo Statuto di Comune di Bologna dell’anno 1335*, ed. Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, 2 vols. (Rome: Istituto storico italiano, 2008).
- Statuti della società*                                      *Statuti delle società del popolo di Bologna*, 2 vols. ed. Augusto Gaudenzi. Vol. 1: *Società delle armi* (Rome: Forzani, 1889). Vol. 2: *Società delle arti* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1896).
- Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*                              *Statuti di Bologna dall’anno 1245 all’anno 1267*, ed. Luigi Frati, 3 vols. (Bologna: Regia Tipografia, 1869-77).

- Statuti di Bologna 1288*                      *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288*, eds. Gina Fasoli and Pietro Sella, 2 vols. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1937-9).
- Statuti Veronesi del 1276*                      *Gli statuti Veronesi del 1276 colle correzioni e le aggiunte fino al 1323 (Cod. Campostrini, Bibl. Civica di Verona)*, vol. 1, ed. Gino Sandri (Venice: Deputazione di Storia Patria, 1940).
- Statuto di Bologna 1376*                      Maria Venticelli, *Metodologia elettroniche per l'edizione di fonti: lo statuto del comune di Bologna dell'anno 1376*, 2vols., Unpublished PhD, University of Bologna, 1999, vol. 2. Accessed online at [www.site.unibo.it/destatutis/it/convegni-e-pubblicazioni/statuto-del-comune-di-bologna-dell-anno-1376](http://www.site.unibo.it/destatutis/it/convegni-e-pubblicazioni/statuto-del-comune-di-bologna-dell-anno-1376). Last accessed online on 15.01.2022.
- Vita Ambrosii*                                      Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, in *Vite dei Santi*, vol. 3, ed. A. A. R. Bastiaensen (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla/Mondadori, 1975), pp. 54-124.
- Vita di San Petronio*                              *Vita di San Petronio, con un'appendice di testi inediti dei secoli XIII e XIV*, ed. Maria Corti (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1962).
- Vita Sancti Petronii*                              *Vita Sancti Petronii*, in Enzo Lodi, *San Petronio: Patrono della città e Diocesi di Bologna* (Bologna: Renografia, 2000), pp. 85-119.

## Figures

Figure 1	<i>De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae</i>	41
Figure 2	Map of Byzantine and Lombard Italy, c. 616	45
Figure 3	Map of early medieval Bologna with Selenite walls	46
Figure 4	Tomb aedicula in the Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano	94
Figure 5	Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano	95
Figure 6	Ebstorf <i>mappa mundi</i> , c. 1250	96
Figure 7	Map of northern Italy in 1310	119
Figure 8	Map of major Italian cities, c. 1340	120
Figure 9	Map of late medieval Bologna	121
Figure 10	Reproduction of Bologna's first <i>carroccio</i> , c. 1170	146
Figure 11	The Cross of the Apostles and the Evangelists. Basilica of San Petronio	151
Figure 12	The Cross of the Virgins. Basilica of San Petronio	151
Figure 13	The Cross of the Saints. Basilica of San Petronio	151
Figure 14	The Cross of the Martyrs. Basilica of San Petronio	151
Figure 15	Jacopo Roseto, Reliquary of St Petronius, 1380	156
Figure 16	Basilica of San Petronio	160
Figure 17	The Column of Flagellation, Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano	167
Figure 18	Tomb of Rolandino Passaggeri in front of the Basilica of San Domenico	190
Figure 19	Illuminated miniature of St Petronius. <i>Libri dei creditorum del Monte di pubbliche prestanze</i> , 1394	212

## Abstract

This thesis is a study of the creation and development of the cult of St Petronius of Bologna in the late medieval period. It uses a saint's cult as a focal point through which to write a political and cultural history of medieval Bologna. It starts in Late Antiquity, examining the evidence that survives on the 'historical Petronius'. It shows that very little can be known about Petronius the man, and establishes that there existed no Petronian cult at Bologna until the discovery of his relics in 1141. Petronius only became a saint in the twelfth century and his first hagiography, the Latin *Vita Sancti Petronii*, was shaped by the issues confronting the Bolognesi in the c.1170s, chief among which was the wars of the Lombard League against Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The study then assesses the relationship six of Bologna's most prominent social, political and religious institutions had with the Petronian cult from the late twelfth century through to the middle of the sixteenth century. These are the various iterations of the Bolognese Commune, the abbots and monks of the Santo Stefano monastic complex, the bishops of Bologna, the *signori* who ruled the city at various junctures, the scholars and students of the *Studium*, and the Bolognese guilds. It demonstrates that the figure of Petronius and the study of his cult provides a prism to study pre-modern Bologna in a way that cannot be achieved by reference to any other body or social formation in the city. At the study's centre is the recognition of the diverse complexity of an urban community, and the multiple and varied influences behind the formation and evolution of a saint's cult. It explores the nuances of an urban cult in real depth, examining its contested and uneven development across a set of communities within one urban space in fine detail, and having recourse to a wide and diverse body of sources. It shows the multivalent significance of urban cults in medieval urban life to a degree not yet achieved, and in doing so establishes a new method or way of studying cities in the Middle Ages by positioning sanctity at the centre of medieval urban life and showing its interdependence to multifarious social, political, economic, religious and cultural factors.

## Declaration

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## Introduction

In November 2019, the city council of Calderara di Reno, a small town 10km to the northwest of Bologna, approved a resolution that changed the municipality's patron saint. In collaboration with the Commune and the territory's parishes, it was decided that the martyr St Vitalis would be the new saintly protector of Calderara from 2020. From now on, his feast day, falling on 4 November, would be marked each year with official celebrations that brought together the civil and the religious in a public show of the Calderarese community's identity. According to the minutes of the meeting, the previous occupant of the office, St Petronius of Bologna, had never truly inspired devotion among the Calderaresi. The people of the town had historically paid lip service to the Petronian cult for reasons of expediency. The Bolognesi, as the Calderaresi's hegemony, had pressed their man on the town to the detriment of its authentic patron saint. The decision to change, then, represents a return to the Calderaresi's ancient roots and marks the restoration of St Vitalis to his rightful place as the heavenly protector of Calderara di Reno.<sup>1</sup>

From the deliberations of the city council of Calderara di Reno, it is clear that in the cities and towns of modern-day Italy the medieval cult of saints is well and truly alive. But how did we reach this saintly impasse? Who exactly was Saint Petronius of Bologna and how did it become so that the Bolognese pushed his cult into their city's surrounding territory? Had he always been the patron saint of Bologna? And particularly for those of us in countries most strongly affected by the Protestant reformations of the early modern period, why does the question of who is or was the patron saint of an Italian city or town even matter? These are just some of the questions this thesis will explore.

In recent years, there has been much exceptional scholarship on the medieval cult of saints. To name just a few, Peter Brown, André Vauchez, Alba Maria Orselli, Simon Yarrow and Robert Bartlett have all furthered our understanding of the genesis and then evolution of a Christian conception of sanctity in the Late Antique and early medieval worlds to the crystallisation of the institution of canonisation in the later Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> What emerges from

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<sup>1</sup> 'Calderara cambia Santo Patrono, ora festeggia San Vitale', *Bologna Today*, 1 November 2019. Accessed online at [www.bolognatoday.it/attualita/calderara-santo-patrono-san-vitale.html](http://www.bolognatoday.it/attualita/calderara-santo-patrono-san-vitale.html) on 05.11.2019

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity, Enlarged Edition* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); André Vauchez, *Tra santi e città: Luci e ombre del Medioevo* (Novara: Interlinea, 2019); Alba Maria Orselli, *L'immaginario religioso della città medievale* (Ravenna: Mario Lapucci, Edizioni del Girasole, 1985); Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in*

these works is that sanctity was a human as much as it was a supernatural phenomenon. People decided, based on a wide variety of reasons, to venerate a certain individual, typically after their death. This gave birth to a cult. So it is not the saint that makes the cult but his or her followers or worshippers, either beginning immediately *post-mortem* or many centuries later. Whether in the Greek East or in the far reaches of medieval Iceland, this remained a constant: the cult of saints was built on the actions of countless, mostly unnamed, individuals who first gathered together at graves of those martyred, or thought to have been martyred, during the persecutions perpetrated by Roman Emperors, and who continued to do the same hundreds of years later, only now celebrating a larger variety of individuals beyond witnesses to the faith, in great cathedrals and basilicas across the Christian world and with the full support of public authorities.<sup>3</sup>

To study sanctity, therefore, is to study society and the people that constitute it. Societies make saints in their own image. Where this can appear very clearly is in the locus of sanctity. In the Early Medieval period, as cities and towns in the west shrank in size and social complexity, or disappeared altogether, saints were overwhelmingly a rural occurrence. In the foothills of the Jura mountains or in the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, saints found the solitude of the “desert” that had motivated Saints Anthony and Paul, the founders of the monastic way of life. The affinity between sanctity and the countryside persisted up to the end of the twelfth century.<sup>4</sup> With the Latin West witnessing levels of urbanisation not seen since the fifth century, there was a sharp change in mental attitudes towards the possibility of living a moral life in an urban setting in the period 1170-1230. In the age of Innocent III, starting with his canonisation of Homobonus of Cremona in 1199 – the first married layman, and a town dweller, to become a saint – and then the mendicant orders and the Humiliati, the city as a suitable location for sainthood was revalorised. Many saints in the later Middle Ages were city dwellers. Notably, the communal cities of central and northern Italy were early pioneers in this regard. No longer exclusively considered foci of vice, the urban settlements of the Italian peninsula produced hundreds of saints. This is amply demonstrated by the hagiography of Margaret of Cortona (d. 1297). Wishing to emulate the hermitage of Mary

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*Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Simon Yarrow, *The Saints: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> On the apocryphal nature of many of the martyrdoms, see G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, ed. Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 35-228; Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (London: HarperCollins, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Fouracre, ‘Town and Country in Merovingian and Early Carolingian Hagiography’, unpublished article.

Magdalene, Margaret wanted to leave her city of Cortona and live as a recluse in the *contado*. But according to her hagiographer, in a vision where Christ appeared to Margaret, he advised her: ‘Deserts are not relevant today; you can remain solitary in your own land, as if you were in a vast desert’.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the city, now more visible than it had been for almost a millennium, was no obstacle to a citizen’s sainthood.

It is in this urban world of the Italian communes that the cult of Petronius of Bologna was first born and then developed. Inherited from and sharing the language of the Roman patron (*patronus*) and client (*cliens*) relationship, the celestial beings identified as civic patrons were expected to protect and act as a benefactor for their cities in return for devotion and organised public worship.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this tradition, cities legislated for largescale feast day celebrations, they attributed grandiose foundation legends to their saints, placed their likeness on coinage, carried images of them on banners as they marched to war and pushed their saints’ cults into their surrounding hinterlands. Across the Italian peninsula, rulers, be they communes or individual lords, found legitimation in sanctity: Robert Guiscard, having newly conquered Salerno, rebuilt the city’s cathedral and staged an *inventio* of its patron, St Matthew, in 1080. This act attempted to obscure the obvious political disjuncture that had just occurred, and it was an action not unique to the Norman lords of Italy’s *Mezzogiorno*.<sup>7</sup> The saints were thus central to the social, cultural and political life of the Italian communes, and the question of who was a respective city’s principal saint was a matter of some salience. For some cities, such as Milan and Vercelli, the identity of the patron had been long settled: St Ambrose and St Eusebius respectively. At other places, Bologna being the most famous, the question of the city’s principal saint was a more open and contested issue. Indeed, at Bologna it would take several centuries to resolve the controversy in Petronius’ favour. At times and locations where there was such an unsettled situation, saints’ cults could acquire a political or factional dimension. Nevertheless, whether there was a disputed candidacy or an established occupant, all could agree that having a patron saint was of the utmost importance.

Yet despite the fundamental role of sanctity in city life and it being one of the best documented examples of saints’ cults in the Italian Communes, the cult of Petronius has attracted very little interest in anglophone scholarship. It receives its most extensive treatment

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<sup>5</sup> ‘cum deserta non sint his apta temporibus, ita siluestris maneat intra terram, sicut si intra uasta deserta maneres’. Quoted in Mary Harvey Doyne, *The Lay Saint: Charity and Charismatic Authority in Medieval Italy, 1150-1350* (London: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 210.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Cult of Saints*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Oldfield, *City and Community in Norman Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 25.

in the works of Diana Webb, Augustine Thompson and Paul Oldfield.<sup>8</sup> This, however, amounts to fewer than thirty pages in total. Given that their works respectively deal with the cult of patron saints in communal Italy, urban religiosity in the Italian communes and the traditions of urban panegyrics in the medieval west, brief coverage is to be expected. Even in Gabriella Zarri's essay on the Bolognese Church and civic religion in the recently edited collection on late medieval and renaissance Bologna, Petronius barely features.<sup>9</sup> Beyond that, odd references to Petronius' cult appear in other contexts, but that is the extent of his cult's coverage in the English language historiography.<sup>10</sup> Slightly more has been said about the Santo Stefano monastic complex, Bologna's replica of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which Petronius was later credited with having constructed. Robert Ousterhout, Colin Morris, Kathryn Blair Moore and Emanuele Lugli have all produced valuable studies of Bologna's "imagined Jerusalem".<sup>11</sup> But seeing as their interests lie in architectural recreations of the Holy City in lands far removed from Palestine, the Petronian cult is only tangential to their primary focus.

Of course, the paucity of attention is not reflected in the Italian scholarship. Writing from 1573 until his death in 1598, the Augustinian friar Cherubino Ghirardacci, Bologna's first "monumental" historian, authored an epic three-volume chronicle, which remains indispensable for modern historians of the city.<sup>12</sup> Among the many other things included in Ghirardacci's work, there are numerous references to the ancient bishop and his late medieval

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<sup>8</sup> Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City States* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), pp. 77-8, 107, 136, 174-80, 216, 233, 319; Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 16, 42-4, 116-9, 209-10, 383-4; Paul Oldfield, *Urban Panegyric and the Transformation of the Medieval City, 1100-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 26, 34, 41, 52, 71-3, 122, 133, 155-7, 164. See also Paul Oldfield, 'Hagiography and Urban Life: Evidence from Southern Italy', in Samantha Kahn Herrick (ed.), *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500-1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 314-332 (pp. 329-30).

<sup>9</sup> Gabriella Zarri, 'The Church, Civic Religion, and Civic Identity', in *CMRB*, pp. 361-85 (pp. 361-4, 373).

<sup>10</sup> Vauchez, *Sainthood*, p. 189; Alison Knowles Frazier, *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano: A "Jerusalem" in Bologna', *Gesta* 20 (1981), pp. 311-21; Robert Ousterhout, "'Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination": Remembering Jerusalem in Words and Images', *Gesta* 48 (2009), pp. 153-68 (pp. 162-4); Colin Morris, 'Bringing the Holy Sepulchre to the West: S. Stefano, Bologna, from the Fifth to the Twentieth century', *Studies in Church History* 33 (1997), pp. 31-60; Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 67, 120-1, 124, 126, 159, 173, 176, 235-6, 239, 291, 326, 372-3; Kathryn Blair Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land: Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 100-3; Emanuele Lugli, *The Making of Measure and the Promise of Sameness* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 156-8.

<sup>12</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*; Gina Fasoli, 'La storia delle storie di Bologna', in Francesca Bocchi, Antonio Carile and Antonio Ivan Pini (eds.), *Scritti di storia medievale* (Bologna: La Fotocromo Emiliana, 1974), pp. 663-81 (pp. 677-8); Sarah Rubin Blanshei, 'Introduction: History and Historiography of Bologna', in *CMRB*, pp. 1-25 (pp. 6-7).

cult, and we will have much recourse to this source in what follows. In the late eighteenth century, the Bolognese antiquarian Giovambattista Melloni had much to say about Petronius in his history of Bolognese holy men and women and famous saints who had lived in the city.<sup>13</sup> But it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the rigours of modern historical scholarship were first applied to Petronius of Bologna. In 1907, Francesco Lanzoni published his monograph *San Petronio*. By his own admission heavily influenced by the Bollandists, Lanzoni sought to dispel many of the myths associated with Petronius. Erudite and scholarly, over a century later it remains the standard work on Petronius and his cult at Bologna.<sup>14</sup>

In the 115 years since Lanzoni's *San Petronio* appeared, research on the Petronian cult has not been as forthcoming as one would anticipate. Very shortly after its publication, Alessandro Testi-Rasponi had reason to discuss the Petronian cult in preparation for his edition of the *Liber pontificalis Ravennatensis ecclesiae*.<sup>15</sup> Yet his coverage of the cult was limited. He focused on the Santo Stefano legendary, the manuscript which contains the earliest version of Petronius' hagiography, the *Vita Sancti Petronii*. This meant that Testi-Rasponi's discussion of the Petronian cult did not venture beyond the twelfth century. After Testi-Rasponi, Lanzoni returned to the subject with a short article on the intertextuality of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, which showed how extensively the author of the *Vita* drew on other hagiographical texts in his construction of Petronius' life.<sup>16</sup> The next significant work on Petronius of Bologna was by Francesco Filippini, in 1948.<sup>17</sup> Whilst acknowledging his indebtedness to Lanzoni, Filippini was critical of the way Lanzoni had discounted large parts of the Petronian legend, particularly as it related to the "historical" Petronius. For Filippini, the subject was as much a matter of faith as it was historical research; he, after all, believed the urban fabric of Bologna had been largely unscathed from the destructive horrors of World War Two because of Petronius' divine intercession.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Giovambattista Melloni, *Atti e memorie degli uomini illustri in santità nati o morti in Bologna* (Bologna, 1788).

<sup>14</sup> Francesco Lanzoni, *San Petronio, vescovo di Bologna nella storia e nella leggenda* (Rome: Libreria Pontificia, 1907), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Alessandro Testi-Rasponi, 'Note marginali al L.P. Agnello: leggende del passionario del monastero di Santo Stefano di Bologna', *Atti e memorie (Romagna)*, sr. 4, 1 (1910/11), pp. 397-464; Alessandro Testi-Rasponi, 'Note marginali al L. P. di Agnello', *Atti e memorie (Romagna)*, sr. 4, 2 (1911/12), pp. 120-262.

<sup>16</sup> Francesco Lanzoni, 'Le fonti della "Vita Sancti Petronii"', *La Romagna* 8 (1910), pp. 269-77.

<sup>17</sup> Francesco Filippini, *S. Petronio vescovo di Bologna. Storia e leggenda* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1948).

<sup>18</sup> Filippini, *S. Petronio*, p. 122.

Two further works appeared in the 1960s. The first, by Maria Corti, was an edition of the Old Italian Petronian hagiography, the *Vita di San Petronio*.<sup>19</sup> In a lengthy introduction to the text, Corti suggested that this *Vita* contained the core of an older and more accurate rendition of a lost hagiography that pre-dated the Latin *Vita Sancti Petronii*, which itself was based on the no longer extant original Petronian *Vita*, thus rendering the Old Italian version more important for understanding the inception and development of the Petronian cult. In doing so, she based her arguments on historical and philological grounds, and a large number of Bolognese scholars have accepted her conclusions.<sup>20</sup> The second was by Enzo Lodi. In 1967, he published an article which concerned the provenance of two sermons from the fifth century, which could either be the work of Petronius of Bologna or that of a certain Petronius of Verona. Lodi argued for the Bolognese Petronius' authorship.<sup>21</sup>

Then, in the following decade, two of the most important articles on the Petronian cult were published by Alba Maria Orselli and Antonio Ivan Pini. Orselli's and Pini's articles, both delivered as papers at an academic conference at Todi in 1972, represented the first significant engagement with Petronius' cult in late medieval Bologna since Lanzoni in the first decade of the twentieth century. Pini used the existence of the Petronian cult to act as a corrective to the apparent absence of an indigenous chronicle or panegyric at Bologna in the twelfth century, showing how Petronius' legend was an expression of civic pride.<sup>22</sup> Orselli argued that Petronius' cult was not as popular at Bologna in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as hitherto had been thought. She identified four discrete phases of the cult's development, beginning with a shadowy proto-cult in the early Middle Ages and reaching its zenith in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

After their initial foray into the history of Petronius' cult, Pini and Orselli authored further articles on various aspects of the ancient bishop's cult and on its relationship with other Bolognese saints' cults.<sup>24</sup> Lodi, in a manner quite similar to the antiquarian Melloni, also produced a study of Bologna's many holy men and women, Petronius included, and he brought together his various writings on the topic and an edited collection of documents

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<sup>19</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter 2 for a full discussion of this matter and references.

<sup>21</sup> Now published and incorporated with Lodi's most recent articles on the matter in Enzo Lodi, *San Petronio: Patrono della città e Diocesi di Bologna, con due saggi by L. Mirri and F. Facchini* (Bologna: Renografica, 2000), pp. 7-53.

<sup>22</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici in Bologna medievale* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1999), pp. 193-232.

<sup>23</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 183-241.

<sup>24</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 251-279, 281-304; Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 437-56.



pertaining to Petronius and his cult from the fifth century up to the translation of his relics in 2000.<sup>25</sup> In 2001, to coincide with an exhibition held at Bologna in that year, *Petronio e Bologna. Il Volto di una storia* was published.<sup>26</sup> In its favour, the collection contains many excellent photographs of Petronian material culture, which is of enormous value. Yet its short essays, of markedly varying quality, do not really advance our understanding of the ancient bishop's cult at Bologna. The most recent contributions to the study of Petronius' cult are those by Massimo Giansante. Since the early 2000s, he has authored several highly original articles showing how the medium of manuscript illuminations that either included or excluded Petronius in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could articulate or embody wider socio-political and ideological disputes present in the city at the time of their creation.<sup>27</sup>

Bolognese historians continue to be interested in the life of the "historical Petronius" and the sermons he may have delivered.<sup>28</sup> The Basilica of San Petronio, Bologna's largest church which started to be built in 1390, and the Santo Stefano monastic complex likewise continue to be studied in great detail.<sup>29</sup> But other than in the article-length works of Orselli, Pini and Giansante, scholarship on Petronius' cult in the late medieval period has not really advanced

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<sup>25</sup> Enzo Lodi, *I Santi della Chiesa bolognese nella liturgia e pietà popolare* (Bologna: A.C.E.D, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1994); Lodi, *San Petronio*.

<sup>26</sup> *Petronio e Bologna: il volto di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono*, eds. Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Massimo Giansante, 'Miniatura e potere a Bologna in età comunale (secoli XIII-XIV)', in Francesca Boris, Massimo Giansante and Diana Tura (eds.), *La memoria ornata: miniature nei documenti bolognesi dal XIV al XVIII secolo: Bologna, Archivio di Stato, 16 settembre- 30 ottobre 2004* (Bologna: Trident, 2004), pp. 13-24; Massimo Giansante, 'Politica in miniature. Nicolò di Giacomo e la restaurazione comunale bolognese del 1376', in Tiziana Lazzari, Leardo Mascanzoni, Rosella Rinaldi (eds.), *La norma e la memoria: studi per Augustp Vasina* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2004), pp. 513-48; Massimo Giansante, 'Petronio e gli altri. Culto civici e culti corporativi a Bologna in età comunale', in Francesca Bocchi and Gian Maria Varanini (eds.), *L'eredità culturale di Gina Fasoli: atti del convegno di studi per il centenario della nascita, 1905-2005: Bologna-Bassano del Grappa, 24, 25, 26 novembre 2005* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2008), pp. 357-77.

<sup>28</sup> Luciana Mirri, 'Petronio omileta nell'elogio di S. Zenone', in Lodi, *San Petronio*, pp. 54-71; E. Melli, 'Sull'attribuzione di due sermoni a San Petronio. La documentazione storica dopo il V secolo', *Atti e memorie (Romagna)*, n.s., vol. 53 (2003), pp. 59-68; Mario Fanti, 'Petronio! Chi era costui?', *Strenna storica bolognese* 57 (2007), pp. 115-36. See also Lorenzo Paolini, 'Petronio, santo', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 82 (2015). Accessed online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/santo-petronio\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/santo-petronio_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) on 07.05.2018

<sup>29</sup> On the basilica, see Mario Fanti, *La fabbrica di San Petronio in Bologna dal XIV al XX secolo. Storia di una istituzione* (Rome: Herder, 1980); Mario Fanti and Carlo degli Esposti, *La Basilica di San Petronio in Bologna. Guida a vedere e a comprendere* (Bologna: Silvana Editoriale, 1986); *Una basilica per una città. Sei secoli in San Petronio. Atti del convegno di studi per il sesto centenario di fondazione della basilica di San Petronio, 1390-1990*, eds. Mario Fanti and Deanna Lenzi (Bologna: Fabbriceria di San Petronio, 1994). On Santo Stefano, see Enrichetta Cecchi Gattolin, *Il santuario di Santo Stefano in Bologna* (Modena: Artioli, 1976); William Montorsi, *Santo Stefano in Bologna: Bizantini, Longobardi, Benedettini* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1980); *Stefaniana: contributi per la storia del complesso di S. Stefano in Bologna*, ed. Gina Fasoli (Bologna: Deputazione di storia patria, 1985); *7 colonne e 7 chiese: la vicenda ultramillenaria del Complesso di Santo Stefano in Bologna*, ed. Francesca Bocchi (Casalecchio di Reno: Grafis, 1987); *La Basilica di Santo Stefano a Bologna. Storia, arte e cultura*, ed. Paola Foschi (Bologna: Gli Inchiostri Associati, 1997); Beatrice Borghi, *In viaggio verso la Terrasanta. La basilica di Santo Stefano in Bologna* (Bologna: Minerva Edizioni, 2010).

since Lanzoni published his monograph over 115 years ago. Much of what has been published in the intervening period is derivative and repetitious, or simply cursory. Augusto Vasina only briefly covers the Petronian cult in his survey of the Bolognese church between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup> In the same volume, Paolo Golinelli discusses every Bolognese saint's cult except that of Petronius' in his chapter on the subject.<sup>31</sup> Rolando Dondarini's history of medieval Bologna contains very little on the Petronian cult.<sup>32</sup> The same is true for Giuliano Milani's introductory history of the city.<sup>33</sup> The excellent second volume of the *Storia di Bologna*, which chronologically covers the city from Late Antiquity up to the early sixteenth century, is similarly sparse in detail on the ancient bishop's cult. Lorenzo Paolini's contribution is the most comprehensive; though in no way is it exhaustive, and his chapter closes in the 1270s, just as the Petronian cult was witnessing an especially intense phase of development.<sup>34</sup> In a comparable fashion, the *Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Bologna* is similarly sparse on the Petronian cult.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, scholarship on the ancient bishop's cult is lacking, and there is still much to be done. Most of the earlier work mentioned above has placed too great an emphasis on the "historical Petronius" or has focused only on the development of the Petronian cult in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Studies on Petronius either do not continue into the fourteenth century, or if they do, they abruptly jump ahead to 1376, where it is quickly stated that his cult was dominant at Bologna. No real attempt is made to show how this was the case and unpack in detail the various Petronian policies of the Bolognese Commune at this time. Neither has any work explored the cult in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period when it was built upon and reshaped to conform to changing political horizons in the city of Bologna. Alongside these chronological shortcomings, there has been little sustained attempt to examine the Petronian cult holistically. Pini, Orselli and Giansante have all mentioned

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<sup>30</sup> Augusto Vasina, 'Chiesa e comunità dei fedeli nella diocesi di Bologna dal XII al XV secolo', in Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (eds.), *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, vol. 1 (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), pp. 97-204 (p. 105, 111, 157, 167, 170, 182).

<sup>31</sup> Paolo Golinelli, 'Santi e culti bolognesi nel Medioevo', in Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (eds.), *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, vol. 2 (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), pp. 11-44.

<sup>32</sup> Rolando Dondarini, *Bologna medievale. Nella storia delle città* (Bologna: Pàtron, 2000), p. 100, 125, 126-7, 131-4, 135, 188-9, 211, 241, 245, 249, 299, 303.

<sup>33</sup> Giuliano Milani, *Bologna* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012), p. 20, 57, 58, 85-6, 168.

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo Paolini, 'La Chiesa e la città (secoli XI-XIII)', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 653-759 (pp. 677-80, 684, 689, 693, 694-8).

<sup>35</sup> Beyond Zarri's short section, Petronius' cult hardly features. References to it in the various essays are at *CMRB*, p. 58, 62, 278, 387-8, 490, 539-40, 547, 550, 561, 565, 576, 580, 589.

various sub-groupings of Bolognesi in relation to the ancient bishop's cult. But no study, of any length, has systematically assessed how each of the main institutions or social formations that existed at Bologna interacted with the Petronian cult. With Bologna having been one of the largest and most socially diverse cities of the Latin West, and having notably high levels of social violence and political conflict, this failure to recognise that there could be significant variation in the status of Petronius' cult among the Bolognesi is in need of revision.

Given the limited and, in some places, flawed previous works, it is well time for a specialised study of the cult of St Petronius of Bologna in the later Middle Ages. Although there have been some learned contributions, the state of Bolognese historical research is very different from when Lanzoni published his monograph, or even when Orselli and Pini presented their articles in the 1970s. In the intervening period, much excellent work has been undertaken on the city's medieval history. Particularly in recent years, this development has been felt mostly strongly for the fourteenth century. Juxtaposed with the thirteenth century, considered Bologna's 'golden century', the fourteenth had been long regarded as the city's 'black century'. This dichotomy is principally based on political and constitutional factors. The thirteenth century witnessed the birth of the *popolo*, a broad and popular based representative Commune, and a flourishing of ideas of civic liberty. Coupled with this, the city reached its highest levels of population for the medieval period, had success against German emperors, fought for and maintained its autonomy against external foes, was the most powerful city in the Romagna, and the *Studium* was at its apogee. In contrast, the following century was characterised by *signori*, defeat in war, a diminishing of influence in the region, a lessening of the university's status, and of course, the Black Death.<sup>36</sup> With its negative associations, fourteenth-century Bolognese history consequently attracted far less interest.

This is no longer so. Guido Antonioli and Giulia Lorenzoni have, for example, published on the *signorie* at Bologna of Taddeo Pepoli and Giovanni Visconti; Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, Rolando Dondarini and Angela de Benedictis have discussed various aspects of Bologna's social, political and cultural history in the Trecento and Quattrocento; and Giorgio Tamba has written on the Bolognese "Second Commune" in the final decades of the

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<sup>36</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini's characterisation of the two centuries. Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Bologna nel suo secolo d'oro: da "comune aristocratico" a "repubblica di notai"', in Giorgio Tamba (ed.), *Rolandino e l'ars notaria da Bologna all'Europa: atti del convegno internazionale di studi storici sulla figura e l'opera di Rolandino: Bologna, città europea della cultura, 9-10 ottobre 2000* (Milan: A. Giuffrè, 2002), pp. 1-20.

fourteenth century.<sup>37</sup> On top of individual monographs and chapter contributions, new edited editions of documentation in Bologna's Archivio di Stato have appeared. Chief among these are the Bolognese civic statutes for the years 1335, 1352, 1357, 1376 and 1389.<sup>38</sup> The same is also true for our understanding of sanctity and one of its main components, hagiography. Fundamental though it was, the Bollandists' quest for historical truth in the accounts of saints' lives has now become more nuanced. The contemporary concerns of the authors of *vitae* had a greater bearing on the narrative and on the deeds that saints were said to have performed than had hitherto been appreciated. Indeed, the hagiographer was not writing a text to record historical truth; his, or in very few cases her, intention was to establish his subject's sanctity, manipulating the past and imposing the issues of the present day onto his older source material.<sup>39</sup> In cases such as Petronius', where there were hundreds of years separating the life of the historical individual and the literary production of his *vitae*, recognition of this authorial working takes on added significance.<sup>40</sup>

Intellectually, this thesis comes at an exciting time in Bolognese scholarship. As just discussed, Italian scholars are greatly enriching our knowledge of late medieval Bologna. So too are their colleagues in other countries. Not too long ago, Sarah Blanshei remarked that English speaking historians of medieval and early modern Italy had tended until only very recently to follow the art historians to Florence, Venice, and Siena.<sup>41</sup> Bologna, by comparison, was neglected. At the time, Blanshei did acknowledge the winds were slowly changing. She referenced the works of Carol Lansing, Trevor Dean, Guy Geltner and Shona

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<sup>37</sup> Guido Antonioli, *Conservator pacis et iustitiae: La signoria di Taddeo Pepoli a Bologna (1337-1347)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2004); Giulia Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare la città. Forme di potere e istituzioni nel primo anno della signoria viscontea a Bologna (ottobre 1350-novembre 1351)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2008); Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, 'Bologna 1334-76', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 761-866; Rolando Dondarini, 'La crisi del XIV secolo', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 867-97; Angela De Benedictis, 'Lo "stato popolare di libertà": pratica di governo e cultura di governo (1376-1506)', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 899-950; Giorgio Tamba, *Il regime del popolo e delle arti verso il tramonto. Innovazioni e modifiche istituzionali del comune bolognese nell'ultimo decennio del secolo XIV* (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335; Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389; Statuto di Bologna 1376.*

<sup>39</sup> Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 28 n. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Rubin Blanshei, *Politics and Justice in Late Medieval Bologna* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 13. A similar point has been made by Carrie Beneš, 'Introduction', in Carrie Beneš (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Genoa* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 1-14 (pp. 1-2.)

Kelly Wray as evidence of this.<sup>42</sup> Yet since then, the gentle breeze has become something much stronger. Under Blanshei's own direction, *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna* has been published, introducing for the first time for those without Italian the city's history and the latest scholarship on medieval and early modern Bologna.<sup>43</sup> She also co-edited a collection of essays on violence and the practise of justice in Bologna.<sup>44</sup> Sherri Franks Johnson has written on female monastic orders in the city.<sup>45</sup> Samuel Cohn and Patrick Lantschner have dedicated considerable space to social revolt and political conflict in the Bolognese context.<sup>46</sup> Guy Geltner used Bolognese examples in his history of medieval prisons, and has focused on the management of the Bolognese landscape and its connection to the health and wellbeing of its citizens.<sup>47</sup> Colin Arnaud has explored the topography of urban neighbourhood communities at Bologna in a comparative context with the city of Strasbourg.<sup>48</sup> Kira Robison has looked at the provision of medical education at Bologna's *Studium* in the late medieval period.<sup>49</sup> A catalogue to accompany an exhibition to be held at the Frist Art Museum, in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2021-22 on manuscript illuminations, paintings and sculpture produced at Bologna between 1200 and 1400 is due to be published later this year.<sup>50</sup> Gregory Roberts used Bologna as a case study to reassess ideas of medieval

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<sup>42</sup> Carol Lansing, *Power and Purity: Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Trevor Dean has authored numerous articles on issues of crime, homosexuality, gender and minority groups at Bologna; for Guy Geltner, see below; Shona Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crises: Bologna During the Black Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Shona Kelly Wray, 'Instruments of Concord: Making Peace and Settling Disputes through a Notary in the City and Contado of Late Medieval Bologna', *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009), pp. 733-60.

<sup>43</sup> *CMRB*.

<sup>44</sup> *Violence and Justice in Bologna: 1250-1700*, ed. Sarah Rubin Blanshei (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Sherri Franks Johnson, *Monastic Women and Religious Orders in Late Medieval Bologna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Cohn, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200-1425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 19-20, 44, 57-8, 70-1, 77, 116-8, 123-4, 225-7; Patrick Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370-1440* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 95-130; Patrick Lantschner, 'Fragmented Cities in the Later Middle Ages: Italy and the Near East Compared', *English Historical Review* 130 (2015), pp. 546-82.

<sup>47</sup> Guy Geltner, *The Medieval Prison: A Social History* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); Guy Geltner, 'Finding Matter out of Place: Bologna's fango ('dirt') notary in the history of premodern public health', in R. Smurra, H. Houben, and M. Ghizzoni (eds.), *Lo sguardo lungimirante della capitali: saggi in onore di Francesca Bocchi: The Far-Sighted Gaze of Capital Cities: essays in honour of Francesca Bocchi* (Rome: Viella, 2014), pp. 307-321; Guy Geltner, *Roads to Health: Infrastructure and Urban Wellbeing in Later Medieval Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 85-112; Taylor Zaneri and Guy Geltner, 'The Dynamics of Healthscaping: Mapping Communal Hygiene in Bologna, 1287-1383', *Urban History*, First View (2020), pp. 1-26.

<sup>48</sup> Colin Arnaud, 'Mapping urban communities. A comparative topography of neighbourhoods in Bologna and Strasbourg in the late Middle Ages', in Justin Colson and Arie van Steensel (eds.), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 60-78.

<sup>49</sup> Kira Robison, *Healers in the Making: Students, Physicians and Medical Education in Medieval Bologna (1250-1550)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

<sup>50</sup> *Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City*, ed. Trinita Kennedy (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2021).

policing, and Lorenzo Caravaggi has written on peace-making and civil conflict at Bologna in the age of Dante.<sup>51</sup>

Bologna is attracting a local and international scholarship commensurate to its former standing as one of the most important cities of the medieval West. That is, as a city that pioneered autonomous forms of urban government, that was home to Europe's first university and one where its citizens played a part in many of the greatest events of the day, from the wars against Frederick Barbarossa to the Great Schism of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. And, to a greater or lesser extent, the Petronian cult featured in all of the above. In fact, as Antonio Ivan Pini commented in one of the final articles he wrote, the more time he spent researching the city's history the more he was convinced that the cults and hagiographical texts of Petronius and Proculus, another Bolognese saint, were crucial to unlocking the dynamics of Bologna's medieval history.<sup>52</sup>

All the more reason, therefore, to return to the Petronian cult and write a history of it in the later Middle Ages, bringing together the latest scholarship on the city, sanctity and hagiography and recently published archival documentation. In doing so, historians of Petronius' cult have at their disposal a very great quantity and variety of source material on which to draw. There are, of course, the two *vitae*, the first in Latin and the second in the Bolognese dialect of Italian, and other associated Petronian hagiographical material. Beyond the specifically Petronian corpus, hagiographical texts for other saintly figures in the Bolognese civic cult, including *vitae*, *miraculæ* and *translatio* accounts, are also of value. The many late medieval and early modern Bolognese chronicles contain lots of information on Petronius' cult, and they can be usefully supplemented for the earlier period by contemporary or near-contemporary chroniclers who wrote on Bologna or matters pertaining directly to it, be they Latin authors like Otto of Freising and Salimbene da Parma, or Byzantine writers such as John Cinammus or Niketas Choniates. Additionally, there are the various recensions of Bologna's civic statutes, with the oldest surviving ones dating from 1250 and the latest being promulgated in 1454, and other documentation emanating from the city's government. Petronius' cult also appears in charters, papal letters and bulls, last wills

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<sup>51</sup> Gregory Roberts, *Police Power in the Italian Communes, 1228-1326* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019); Lorenzo Caravaggi, *Keeping the Peace in a Late-Medieval Polity. Conflict and Collaboration in Bologna in the Age of Dante (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2021; Lorenzo Caravaggi, 'Tra dialogo e conflitto. Controllare lo spazio e mantenere la pace a Bologna alla fine del Duecento', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 178 (2020), pp. 677-712.

<sup>52</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, p. 251.

and testaments, letters of instruction to Bolognese ambassadors, onomastic patterns, the statutes of Bologna's guilds and calendars. And there is material culture, including coins, seals, medals, reliquaries, banners and flags, statues, miniatures in illuminated manuscripts, monumental crosses, the past and existing iterations of the Santo Stefano complex, and the Basilica of San Petronio. As this thesis develops, we shall have recourse to all of this rich and manifold material.

The present study is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 begins in Late Antiquity. This thesis is on the Petronian cult in the later Middle Ages, but it is necessary to examine the life of the "historical Petronius" at the outset. From there, it turns to the early history of the Petronian cult, considering whether the evidence for any form of worship towards him before 1141 is of probative value. The final part of the chapter concentrates on the *inventio* of Petronius' relics in 1141. This discovery is situated alongside the growth of two of Bologna's other great creations of the twelfth century, the Commune and the *Studium*.

If in chapter 1 Petronius the man was the subject, in chapter 2 it is Petronius the saint. The chapter is a close and detailed study of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, the saint's first hagiography. It opens with a short synopsis of the *Vita* so that readers unfamiliar with the Petronian legend can orientate themselves in the following discussion. After this, the textual relationship between the Latin *Vita Sancti Petronii* and the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio* is explored. The third, and by far the longest, section of the chapter is a critical examination of the Latin *Vita*. Situating it in the historical context of its production and drawing upon advances in the study of hagiography, we shall see that the *Vita Sancti Petronii* is one of the most important extant sources for city's late twelfth-century history, and that it is not an exaggeration to say that it has a relevance extending far beyond the confines of a specific saint's cult.

Thereafter, chapters 3 and 4 examine the Petronian cult at Bologna from the late twelfth up to the early sixteenth century. They are not, however, organised chronologically. Instead, the chapters treat the cult along thematic lines. In turn, they assess the unique relationship which a given institution or subset of the Bolognese population had with Petronius' cult. The chapters are written, as far as possible, from the perspective of each of those urban substrata, examining their specific actions towards the Petronian cult, be that positive or negative. Six in number, these subsets are: the Bolognese Commune, the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano, the Bolognese bishops and the cathedral canons, the *Studium*, the *signori* who governed Bologna at various junctures, and the Bolognese Arts Societies, that is the city's

guilds. By addressing the subject in this manner in the final two chapters, a richer and more nuanced history of the Petronian cult emerges. Rather than treating the Bolognesi as a homogenous bloc who consistently acted in unison, we shall see the city's population did not all worship Petronius with equal intensity at the same historical moment for much of the medieval period. Prior to the government of the "Second Commune", the significant and sometimes sustained disparities in levels of devotion towards the ancient bishop's cult from various groupings across the city were a consequence of socio-political differences or institutional competition.

Chapter 3 addresses the first two subgroups, the Commune and the brothers of Santo Stefano. Of the six, these two are grouped together since they were the only ones to ever claim ownership of the Petronian cult. They both, therefore, had the most sustained level of engagement with the ancient bishop and did the most to promote his cult in the city. It is for this reason they are situated together. Chapter 4 concerns the other four groups: the bishops of Bologna and the cathedral canons, the *Studium*, the *signori* and the guilds. In contrast to those under discussion in chapter 3, none of these groups ever attempted to establish custodianship over Petronius; indeed, before the cult had become irreplaceably imprinted onto the Bolognese landscape and civic psyche, some of them actively disregarded it and tried to champion other Bolognese saints' cults in its place. Still, among these groups and social formations, there was multiple and varied engagement with the cult, and some of them, despite never establishing stewardship of the ancient bishop, inspired innovation in the Petronian cult, nonetheless.

With the fortunes of Petronius' cult being so intimately connected to broader developments in the city's history, it will quickly become apparent that this thesis is more than an isolated study of an ancient episcopal saint's cult. Petronius is at its centre, but it is a wider investigation of the political and cultural life of Bologna at a decisive stage in the city's history. From the birth of the Bolognese Commune through to the Bolognesi's final submission to the papacy in the early sixteenth century and beyond, the Petronian cult was embedded into the city's fabric and influenced how the city's residents reacted to and interpreted events. As the Bolognesi went on crusade or welcomed delegates of the Council of Trent to Bologna in 1548, the presence of Petronius was strongly felt. Particularly by the end of the later Middle Ages, Bolognese life revolved around Petronius.



This thesis, then, establishes a new methodology for studying urban communities in the Middle Ages. No other Bolognese institution or collectivity can offer an interpretive lens as encompassing as Petronius' cult in exploring the history of medieval Bologna. Using the ancient bishop and his cult as a prism provides the historian with many possible entry points into Bolognese urban life and the multiple layers of Bolognese society in what was a large and very socially complex city. We will see how, with recourse to Petronius, the past was memorialised at Bologna, how his cult was caught up in the messy and very complicated political disputes occurring within the confines of the city and across the Italian peninsula, and how Bolognese churches and religious institutions jostled for influence either with the aid of the ancient bishop's cult or in opposition to it. Moreover, political and non-political institutions alike sought legitimation from the alleged deeds of this long-dead civic bishop, and key architects of the cult as it developed shaped it so that Petronius was increasingly identified as a synecdoche for Bologna. All of this points to the fact that saints' cults were about much more than religious belief. Of course, at their core the sincerity of a community's Christian faith was essential to any one cult's functioning. But by employing a deeper and more nuanced perspective, it is evident that saint's cults served as markers of social and urban identity, instruments of socio-political negotiation and agents that inspired cultural change and artistic creativity. They were multimedia phenomena, and the range and breadth of their representation, be it in coin, statue or hagiography, was matched by the uses to which they were put and the meanings they embodied.

So this thesis operates at two levels. At the more general, it shows that urban religion and the cult of saints is fundamentally important to the study of medieval urban communities. If a given city is to be examined and its own dynamic history is to be unpacked in all its various commonalities and peculiarities, then sanctity and its civic cults must be considered. Saints and their cults occupied too central a place in the civic landscapes across the Latin West to be ignored or treated in a separate or cursory manner. At the local level, the thesis demonstrates that the figure of Petronius and the study of his cult provides a focal point to study pre-modern Bologna in a way that cannot be achieved by reference to any other body or social formation in the city. It enables us to move beyond the determinism of dates and the limiting analysis which that imposes. There are certainly cases where such an approach is sensible, such as with political and institutional histories. However, a phenomenon such as a saint's cult extends beyond the rigid and artificial demarcations of historical time into discrete junctures based on structures of government or individual rulers. By following the Petronian

cult chronologically and thematically across the entire span of the later Middle Ages, wider trends and patterns can be discerned, thereby presenting a more holistic and richer understanding of the Petronian cult and Bolognese urban society in the later Middle Ages.

### Addendum

The research and writing of this thesis have been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to restrictions imposed by governments on international travel from March 2020, I was unable to take up a Visiting Studentship at the University of Bologna. Among other things, this denied me the opportunity to undertake research in the Archivio di Stato di Bologna, where I had intended to conduct research on the many editions of the fourteenth and fifteenth century statutes of the Bolognese guilds insofar as they related to the Petronian cult.<sup>53</sup> In their absence, I have used the thirteenth-century statutes published by Augusto Gaudenzi, and later statutes of individual guilds published in various studies on specific guilds.<sup>54</sup> For reasons that will become clear to the reader, as far as Petronius' cult is concerned, the earlier statutes are largely of limited utility except for establishing a negative. Additionally, I hoped to examine material relating to the Santo Stefano monastery in and around the year 1141, the time of the *inventio* of Petronius' relics. The monastery's charters have been edited up 1125, but the promised second volume covering the later period has not been forthcoming.<sup>55</sup> I had also wished to consult the 1454 edition of Bologna's city statutes, which are mostly unedited.<sup>56</sup> I have managed to make use of parts which are available, but the thesis would have been richer if the manuscript had been consultable. The closure of libraries here in the United Kingdom and in Italy has also frustrated my work. Being unable to access physical books on library shelves, and being unable to order copies of books or utilise the Inter-Library Loan scheme has caused significant delay or made reading certain works very challenging. This has been particularly tough as many Italian publishers do not sell electronic editions of their books, and a high proportion of Italian academic journals are not digitised. As a case in point, the three principal scholarly journals for Bolognese history – *Atti e memorie. Deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna, Strenna storica bolognese* and *Il Carrobbio* – are only in print and difficult to access in the UK. If I had not

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<sup>53</sup> Conserved in Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Comune, Capitano del Popolo, Società d'Arti e d'Armi*.

<sup>54</sup> *Statuti delle società del popolo di Bologna*, 2 vols. ed. Augusto Gaudenzi. Vol. 1: *Società delle armi* (Rome: Forzani, 1889). Vol. 2: *Società delle arti* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1896); see the section on the guilds in chapter 4.

<sup>55</sup> Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Santo Stefano*.

<sup>56</sup> Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Comune, Governo*.

known of or considered a given article or book relevant or thought that I would consult it in due course prior to March 2020, it has proved either personally very costly and/or especially hard to obtain.

## Chapter 1 – The ‘Historical’ Petronius and the Early History of his Cult

The cult of St Petronius in late medieval Bologna is the subject of this thesis, but it cannot be understood without a foregrounding of what came before. In this opening chapter, this shall be our concern. Chronologically, then, this first chapter covers a broad historical sweep, running from the early fifth century up to 1141 and the decades immediately after: that is, from Petronius the man to the beginnings of Petronius the saint. It has three sections. The first deals with Petronius of Bologna as a historical person. There is much mythologising about Petronius, which either attempts to construct for him elaborate social and professional networks with the dominant figures of his day or which recognises a leading role for him in the great events of Late Antiquity. We shall investigate the validity of these claims and discount almost all of them. It will demonstrate that very little, and with much qualification, can be known of the ‘historical’ Petronius. Section two considers whether there was a Petronian cult at Bologna from the moment of his death or in the centuries that followed up to the discovery of his relics in 1141. It answers in the negative. In this period, the Bolognese sources are silent on Petronius and there is no evidence of devotion towards him until 1141. Other saints were worshipped in his place. The last section addresses the *inventio*. It is prefigured by a short political and institutional history of the Commune and the *Studium*, the two main bodies in twelfth century Bologna. After this quick foray through their respective histories, the *inventio* and our main source for it, the *Sermo de inventione sanctorum reliquiarum*, are analysed in detail. It explores the local and regional background to the discovery, Bishop Enrico’s motivations for staging the *inventio*, and questions why he settled upon Petronius as his candidate for rediscovery. This chapter, therefore, establishes much of the groundwork for what follows in the thesis. It shows that the legends which developed later were not based on anything the historical Petronius may have done in his lifetime, that there was no incipient history to Petronius’ cult prior to 1141, and that, much like the Commune and *Studium*, it was a novel creation of the twelfth century.

### i. The ‘Historical’ Petronius

Whether a man called Petronius was the bishop of Bologna in the first half of the fifth century is a question that continues to animate Bolognese historians. In a recent discussion, Mario Fanti, without citing any examples, criticised those who express reservations about the

existence of Petronius. He claimed that those who doubt the historical actuality of the city's ancient bishop are 'unqualified or unlearned', and he believed that their arguments are part of the same intellectual tradition or methodology of 'historical revisionism' that seeks to deny the irrefutable reality of the Nazi extermination camps.<sup>1</sup> Even among more sober judgements, there is a real reluctance to accept a reduction in the perceived "historically important" role Petronius played in Bologna's early history, a hesitancy that might be understood as a continuing product of what is believed to be the 'the bond which connects the memory of St Petronius to the citizens and faithful of Bologna [which] is ancient and profound'.<sup>2</sup>

It is nevertheless the case that Petronius was a bishop of Bologna and it is a fact that can be stated with some certainty. But while the actual existence of Petronius of Bologna is a matter difficult to dispute, it is far more challenging to provide anything but the simplest, approximate and necessarily incomplete outline of his life and period of office. Much of the biographical information contained in the Latin *Vita* from the late twelfth century and the Old Italian *Vita* from the late thirteenth century has no utility for reconstructing the life of the 'historical' Petronius.<sup>3</sup> As are many of the traditions that have developed and are associated with his life: there is no evidence that Petronius was influenced by or connected to either Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397) or Augustine of Hippo (354-430), that he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, that he was a great opponent of heresy, of the Nestorian or Arian kind, that he completed the Christianisation of Bologna or that he invented the Stations of the Cross ceremony.<sup>4</sup> Instead, fragments of Petronius' life must be pieced together from the limited surviving testimony, the sum of which is a fourteenth-century list of Bolognese bishops, two fifth-century accounts by fellow churchmen, the archaeological remnants of a monastic complex and later hagiographical works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and two sermons authored by a certain Petronius, the provenance of which is much disputed.

In reconstructing the ancient bishop's biography, the logical place to begin with is the *Elenco Renano* since it allows us to situate Petronius within the city's early episcopal history. The

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<sup>1</sup> Fanti, 'Petronio! Chi era costui?', p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Salvatore Cosentino, 'Bologna tra la tarda antichità e l'alto medioevo', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 7-104 (p. 45); Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> A position firmly rejected by Filippini, *S. Petronio, passim*.

<sup>4</sup> For Petronius' connections to Ambrose and Augustine, see Filippini, *S. Petronio*, pp. 11-2, 42-3; for Petronius completing the Christianisation of Bologna and for his supposed pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 410, see Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 59 and 200; for the suggestion that Petronius first invented the Stations of the Cross, see Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 200, and Barbara Frale, *La Sindone di Gesù Nazareno* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), pp. 91-2.

*Elenco Renano* is a list of Bolognese bishops probably produced under the auspices of Bishop Aimerico Cathy (1361-71), and is so called because the manuscript originates from the monastery of San Salvatore di Reno. It records that Petronius was Bologna's eighth bishop.<sup>5</sup> Although it is a much later production, the *Renano List* seems to reproduce a faithful record of ancient episcopal documents which are no longer extant and, for Petronius' three predecessors, can be substantiated by reference to other coeval sources. For example, the *List* places Eusebius as the city's fifth bishop. He participated in the Synod of Aquileia in September 381 (*Eusebius episcopus Bononiensis*), disdainfully accused by Palladius of Ratiaria as acting as Ambrose of Milan's 'assessor' (*Euseuio uero adsessore tuo*), and it is possible that the Eusebius referred to in Ambrose's letters and the dedicatee of his *De Institutione Virginis* was the same Bolognese bishop.<sup>6</sup> Sixth on the *List* is Bishop Eustasius. He was probably the city's prelate when Ambrose came to Bologna in the spring of 393; presumably both men were present at the *inventio* of Vitalis and Agricola's relics, an event the Milanese bishop recorded in a sermon he subsequently delivered at Florence, but for which neither he nor his later biographer cared to supply the name of the Bolognese bishop in attendance.<sup>7</sup> A certain Eustasius also appears undersigned in a synodal letter sent by Ambrose to Pope Siricius from the Council of Milan in 393, and this Eustasius could be the Eustachius who was the recipient of praise from Victricius of Rouen in c.396.<sup>8</sup> Finally, at number seven and Petronius' immediate predecessor is Bishop Felix. Felix, initially a deacon in the Milanese Church, served as an ambassador for Ambrose, likely was present in the city at the bishop's death in 397, and was named as the incumbent bishop of Bologna (*Felix vero nunc usque Bononiensem regit ecclesiam*) in Paulinus the Deacon's *Vita Ambrosii*, written in either 412/3 or 422.<sup>9</sup> Since the late fourth and early fifth-century literary material associated with the Milanese curia which makes reference to the Bolognese ecclesiasts appears to corroborate

<sup>5</sup> Cosentino, 'Bologna tra la tarda antichità', pp. 39-40.

<sup>6</sup> *Gesta concili Aquileiensis (Epp. 1-2; Acta)*, ed. M. Zelzer. CSEL 82.3 (1982), pp. 325-368 (ch. 57, p. 360); Palladius of Ratiaria, 'Apologia', *Scolies Ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée*, ed. Roger Gryson. Sources chrétiennes, no. 267 (Paris: Cerf, 1980), pp. 264-325 (ch. 117, p. 300). On this text, see Neil McLynn, 'The "Apology" of Palladius: Nature and Purpose', *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (1991), pp. 52-76; Ambrose, *Ep.* 38, vol. 2, pp. 23-26; Ambrose, *Ep.* 26, vol. 1, p. 179; Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, *PL* 16, cols. 321-348.

<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, *Exhortatio virginitatis*, *PL* 16, cols. 351-64, 1-8; *Vita Ambrosii*, ch. 29, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Ambrose, *Ep. extra coll.* 15, vol. 3, pp. 302-11 (ch. 14, p. 311); Victricius of Rouen, *De laude sanctorum*, ed. Jacob Mulers, *CCSL*, vol. 64 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), pp. 53-93 (pp. 71-2).

<sup>9</sup> *Vita Ambrosii*, ch. 46.1-2, p. 112; Ambrose, *Ep. extra coll.* 3, vol. 3, pp. 180-1. On the dating of the *Vita Sancti Ambrosii*, see Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 370; *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, trans. with an introduction and notes by J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz with the assistance of Carole Hill (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 27.

the chronology set out in the *Elenco Renano*, it indicates that Petronius would have begun his tenure of office as Bologna's eighth bishop in the 420s or early 430s.<sup>10</sup>

Two surviving contemporary or near-contemporary references attest to the existence of the 'historical' figure of Petronius of Bologna and to his holding of the city's bishopric, either immediately following Felix's death or after a brief interregnum. The first is contained in the letter Eucherius, bishop of Lyon (c. 433-450), sent to his relative, Valerian. Writing in 432, Eucherius beseeched Valerian to emulate the examples set by distinguished churchmen like Ambrose and Paulinus of Nola, individuals who were descended from aristocratic families of the later Roman Empire and who had held senior offices in the Imperial administration but who abandoned the secular world for a life in the Church.<sup>11</sup> To develop his point, Eucherius provided Valerian with two further living examples: 'recently Hilary [of Arles] and now in Italy, Bishop Petronius'.<sup>12</sup> Since Hilary became bishop of Arles in 429 and Eucherius' letter uses language that suggests Petronius had newly been elected to his see, his episcopate is likely to have commenced just after Hilary of Arles', either in 431 or 432.<sup>13</sup>

Gennadius of Marseille, the continuator of St Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, is the second fifth-century writer who mentions Petronius of Bologna. Though scant biographical information about Gennadius survives, he was active from the 470s and was a presbyter in Marseille from 492 until his death in 496. Gennadius included among his catalogue of 99 illustrious Roman and Greek men of the Late-Antique Church 'Petronius the Bishop'. He tells us that Petronius was 'the Bishop of Bologna in Italy, a man of holy life and from his youth practised in monastic studies'.<sup>14</sup> He continues, informing the reader that Petronius was the son of a praetorian prefect, also named Petronius, and that Petronius of Bologna died during the joint-reigns of Emperors Theodosius II (r.402-50) and Valentinian III (r.425-55).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bologna was a suffragan of Milan at this time, so the concentration of information found on Bolognese bishops in Milanese sources is not surprising. For the early history of the Bolognese church, see Amedeo Benati, 'La Chiesa bolognese nell'Alto Medioevo', in Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (eds.), *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna, vol. 1* (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), pp. 7-96

<sup>11</sup> Evidence that Eucherius was writing in 432 is contained within the letter. The traditional year for the foundation of Rome was 753BC, and so the year 1185 *ab urbe condita* was 432 AD: 'ab ortu regni hujus centesimus et octogesimus quintus fere supra millesimum veratur annus'. Eucherius of Lyon, 'epistola paraenetica ad Valerianum cognatum de contempt mundi et saecularis philosophiae', *PL*, vol. 50, col. 722.

<sup>12</sup> 'Hilarius nuper, et in Italia nunc antistes Petronius'. Eucherius of Lyon, *PL*, vol. 50, col. 719.

<sup>13</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> 'Petronius, Bononiensis Italiae episcopus, vir sanctae vitae et monachorum studiis ab adulescentia exercitatus', Jerome-Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, ed. E. C. Richardson, *Hieronymus, Liber de viris illustribus Gennadius de viris illustribus*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), ch. 42, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, ch. 42, p. 77

In the absence of any specific date, Petronius' death is taken to have occurred in 449 or 450. Lanzoni, for example, believed that Petronius died on 4 October 449. This assumption was based on his speculation that that date was not first connected with the *inventio* of his relics in 1141 and had in fact been celebrated as Petronius' feast day since his death. Thus, the October of 449 was the last possible date when this could have happened before Theodosius II's death on 28 July 450.<sup>16</sup> This decision is not based on any explicit evidence at our disposal, and nothing is known of Petronius' successor, Marcellus. Rather it is simply the terminal point within the parameters provided by Gennadius when it could have happened; so chosen, one suspects, to dignify Bologna's patron saint with a suitably lengthy period of service. But while it is not possible to give Petronius' year of death with any greater precision than occurring at some point between 432 and 450, it should be noted that the fact both Eucherius and Gennadius refer to Petronius, respectively as a model to be imitated and as a figure worthy of inclusion beside other more distinguished individuals, suggests that he had had enough time, either before taking up his see or during the up to eighteen or nineteen years of holding it, to impress his contemporaries.

Of the many deeds performed by Petronius during his lifetime that are attributed to him in the *Sermo de inventione* and *vitae* of the Communal period, there is perhaps only one that is not entirely a later fiction of the hagiographers' imagination. In these texts, Petronius is recognised as the founder of the Santo Stefano monastic complex, situated to the east of the city and outside of the boundaries of Bologna's Selenite walls. Yet while this tradition was first attested at the discovery of his relics in 1141, later described in the *Sermo de inventione* and then expanded upon in the Latin *Vita*, the archaeological record of the complex, imperfect as it is, could support the suggestion that Petronius may have had a role in constructing or expanding the complex.<sup>17</sup> Prior to there being any Christian building where Santo Stefano now stands, the area was originally the location of a Roman temple dedicated to the deity Isis.<sup>18</sup> In close proximity to this ancient shrine, there was a Jewish cemetery where many of the city's early Christians were buried. In 393, as Ambrose fled Milan from the usurper Eugenius, he passed through Bologna and participated in the *inventio* of the relics of the Bolognese martyrs Vitalis and Agricola, whose remains were discovered in this

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<sup>16</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Restoration works were carried out on Santo Stefano between 1878 and 1920, with the intention of restoring the buildings to their 'original' condition. This work so disturbed the site's archaeological record that it has been impossible for modern excavations to determine the complex's exact early history. Guido Zucchini, *La verità sui restauri bolognesi* (Bologna: Tipografia Luigi Parma, 1959), pp. 26-30, 104-5.

<sup>18</sup> Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, pp. 44-50.



cemetery. The archaeological evidence indicates that the oldest Christian buildings date from the early fifth century, so a basilica was likely built *in situ* to honour the martyrs following Ambrose's intervention, with part of the Roman temple being repurposed for the structure.<sup>19</sup> Then with the discovery in the Holy Land of St Stephen's relics in 415, whose cult spread rapidly throughout the Christian world, it is possible that Petronius decided to add a second building, one perhaps circular in design and dedicated to the proto-martyr, alongside the recently constructed basilica.<sup>20</sup> Upon his death, at least according to the much later hagiographical tradition, Petronius elected to be entombed at Santo Stefano, unlike his predecessors who were interred at the suburban Basilica of SS. Nabore e Felice. Because it was not uncommon for the bishop builders of Late Antiquity to request that they be buried in their own churches, it is held that the finding of Petronius' relics at Santo Stefano is a sure sign that he sponsored the complex's first phase of construction.<sup>21</sup>

While the existence of the Petronian structure is speculative and the tradition is based on the late twelfth-century *Sermo* and Latin *Vita*, evidence for his building activities may be inferred from the writings of Gregory of Tours (d. 594). He tells us that by the late 450s, the church that housed the tombs of Vitalis and Agricola welcomed a priest and his companions, sent by Bishop Namatius of Clermont. He had dispatched his colleagues to Bologna to obtain some of Vitalis and Agricola's relics in order to adorn his new cathedral. Namatius' representatives successfully performed their task and returned to the Auvergne with their precious cargo, performing a miracle en route; that iteration of the cathedral, thereafter, was named in honour of the Bolognese martyrs.<sup>22</sup> But Gregory also records that Namatius' wife constructed her own church in Clermont's hinterland. Her suburban church was dedicated to St Stephen.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore possible that Namatius' embassy returned from the Romagna and informed their

<sup>19</sup> Cecchi Cattolini, *Il santuario di S. Stefano*, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> I Nikolajevic, 'L'architettura di Santo Stefano nelle più antiche planimetrie (1547-1799)', in Francesca Bocchi (ed.), *7 colonne e 7 chiese: la vicenda ultramillenaria del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Bologna: Grafis, 1987), pp. 71-88 (pp. 72-3); Cosentino, 'Bologna tra la tarda antichità', p. 49. For the origin and evolution of Stephen's cult, see Francois Bovon, 'The Dossier on Stephen, the First Martyr', *Harvard Theological Review* 23 (2003), pp. 279-315.

<sup>21</sup> Benati, 'La Chiesa bolognese nell'Alto Medioevo', p. 24; Fanti, 'Petronio! Chi era costui?', pp. 131-2; Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 95-7. For the example of Ambrose, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 55-56, 226-37, 366-7. For the phenomenon more widely, see Jean-Charles Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques: Sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du nord des origines au Xe siècle*. Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 268 (Rome: Écoles française de Rome, 1988), pp. 327-85.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, eds. B. Krusch and W. Levison. MGH, *SRM* 1.1 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1951), bk. 2, ch. 16, p. 64; Gregory of Tours, 'Liber in gloria martyrum', in *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. 2: Miracula et opera minora*. MGH, *SRM* 1.2 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1969), pp. 34-111 (ch. 43, p. 67).

<sup>23</sup> 'Cuius coniux basilicam sancti Stephani suburbano murorum aedificavit'. Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, bk. 2, ch. 17, pp. 64-5.

prelate of the architectural arrangements in place at Vitalis and Agricola's tombs, which in turn inspired the bishop and his wife to ensure that Clermont possessed a church to Stephen in addition to Vitalis and Agricola, just as potentially could have been the case at Bologna in the fifth century.

The final pieces of evidence with which we can piece together part of Petronius' life and his familial networks are two sermons, copies of which are both preserved in two separate codices held respectively in Munich and Vienna.<sup>24</sup> Entitled *Sermo in natale sancti Zenonis* and *Sermo in die ordinationis vel natali episcopi*, the sermons are typically considered to be the work of Bishop Petronius of Verona (411-429), that city's thirteenth prelate.<sup>25</sup> This attribution is made all the easier by the fact that the manuscript in Munich, dating from the tenth century, seems to be of Veronese origin and acknowledges '*Petronius episcopus Veronensis*' as their author. However, the Benedictine scholar who first published the homilies, Germain Morin, suggested they were the work of Petronius of Bologna, and his arguments have been added to by Enzo Lodi, Luciana Mirri and Elio Melli.<sup>26</sup> Their reasons for preferring the Bolognese bishop over his Veronese counterpart largely rest on internal evidence contained within the sermons: principally, the language used by the preacher of the *Sermo in natale sancti Zenonis* gives the impression that he was not Verona's resident bishop; secondly, following the first premise, the writing styles and the similarities in biblical passages cited and metaphor employed across the two homilies supports the conclusion that both were written by the same non-Veronese author. Ergo, Petronius of Bologna.

There could be some merit to the first strand of the argument. The preacher of *Sermo in natale sancti Zenonis* opens his address by informing his assembled audience that:

'I am amazed that you, most holy and dear brothers, and you holy people of the Lord, who expect to quench your thirst at the dried up streams of my mediocrity when you could draw

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<sup>24</sup> The manuscripts are Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14386, ff. 31-33; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Lat. 1557 (Rec. 3305). The connection between the two manuscripts was first noted by François Dolbeau, 'Une ancienne édition et un manuscrit oubliés des Sermons de l'évêque Petronius', *Revue Bénédictine* 96 (1986), pp. 27-9.

<sup>25</sup> The sermons are printed in Germain Morin, 'Deux petits discours d'un évêque Petronius, du Ve siècle', *Revue Bénédictine* 14 (1897), pp. 3-8 (pp. 3-6) and Lodi, *San Petronio*, pp. 7-10, with a facsimile of the sermons in the Munich manuscript as an appendix at pp. 301-4.

<sup>26</sup> Morin, 'Deux petits discours', pp. 6-8; Lodi, *San Petronio*, pp. 12-53; Mirri, 'Petronio omileta', pp. 54-71; Melli, 'Sull'attribuzione di due sermoni', pp. 59-68.

more profusely from your own springs. Why are you looking for a drop, you who are flooded by the water of flowing streams?'.<sup>27</sup>

Setting aside the self-deprecating literary flourish, this opening would be a rather strange one for a bishop to make to his own flock. Since the author contrasts his own 'dried up streams' capable of providing only a 'drop' with the bountiful waters of Verona's 'own springs' and 'flowing streams', he appears to be an itinerant preacher unfamiliar with his audience and was thus praising Verona's prelate and clergy in comparison to himself, the visiting preacher. Being a non-resident, its author may well have been Petronius of Bologna. But the second strand is less convincing. The similarities between the two sermons are not so great to make one think they have to be the work of the same author, and the *Sermo in die ordinationis vel natali episcopi* does not contain a comparably helpful passage to aid identification. So we shall return to the prosopographical information provided by Eucherius of Lyon and Gennadius of Marseille to shed further light on this disputed authorship.

Both writers were in agreement about Petronius' social origins. He belonged to an aristocratic, office-holding family of the western part of later Roman Empire. Eucherius says that Petronius was from the 'seat of worldly power' and, as we have already noted, Gennadius tells us he was the son of a praetorian prefect, also called Petronius, who, according to the presbyter from Marseille, was the author of a *tractatus* entitled *De ordinatione episcopi*.<sup>28</sup> This man, the father of Petronius of Bologna, has been identified as the Petronius who was *vicarius Hispaniarum* from 395 to 397 and then *praefectus praetorio Galliarum* from 402 to 408.<sup>29</sup> His brother, and the bishop of Bologna's uncle, was Patroinus, the *comes sacrarum largilionum* from 401 until his death in 408, when he fell victim to the reprisals perpetrated against Stilicho and his supporters.<sup>30</sup> Yet if Petronius the father was the author of *De ordinatione episcopi*, it is very likely that he became a bishop after his period of office as praetorian prefect of Gaul ended; otherwise, we must accept, most unusually, that a work on episcopal ordination was the product of a secular figure with no experience of such matters. Accepting this contention, one can postulate that Petronius, ex-prefect and father of

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<sup>27</sup> 'Admiror, sacratissimi atque karissimi fratres, et uos beata plebs Domini, pusillanimitatis meae arentes riuulos praestolari, cum possitis uberius propriis haurire de fontibus. Quid guttam quaeritis, quibus torrentium fluentorum uena blanditur'. Lodi, *San Petronio*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> 'mundanae potestatis sede', Eucherius of Lyon, *PL*, vol. 50, col. 719; Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, ch. 42, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 19-23; *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2: A.D. 395-527, ed. J. R. Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Petronius 1, pp. 862-3.

<sup>30</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 22; *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2, Patroinus, pp. 843-4.

the Bolognese bishop, was also Petronius, bishop of Verona (411-429), and the *De ordinatione episcopi* to which Gennadius refers is the second Petronian homily, *Sermo in die ordinationis vel natali episcopi*.<sup>31</sup>

As such, the two Petronian sermons had two Petronian authors. In advancing this position, a possible objection we must address is a linguistic one. When Gennadius cites the *De ordinatione episcopi*, he specifically calls it a ‘tractatus’, not a *sermo*.<sup>32</sup> However, *tractatus* can also mean sermon, and ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century such as Augustine of Hippo, Peter Chrysologus and Gaudentius of Brescia had liberally used the word *tractatus* as a synonym for *sermo*.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the difference in title between the text Gennadius had sight of and the later Veronese manuscript could simply reflect the scribal preference of the tenth-century copyist.

There are, moreover, sound reasons for identifying Petronius the Prefect with Petronius of Verona, for postulating a father-son relationship between the Veronese and Bolognese *Petronii* and for reasoning that Petronius of Bologna was the author of the *Sermo in natale* and Petronius of Verona was the author of the *Sermo in die ordinationis*. To begin, Petronius’ prefecture terminated in 408, coinciding with the fall of Stilicho and the murder of his brother, Patroinus. During this period of political realignment, Petronius appears to have made the decision to momentarily retire from public life before taking up the bishopric of Verona in 411, a city where he may have had family ties if he were related to Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus and *gens Petronia*.<sup>34</sup> When in post, Petronius, so local tradition holds and recent archaeological studies may corroborate, constructed a church dedicated to St Stephen.<sup>35</sup> Just as was the case at Bologna, the Veronese Santo Stefano was built on a burial ground in the city’s suburbs, on the same site as a Roman temple dedicated to Isis and on top

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<sup>31</sup> For Petronius’ father as Petronius, Bishop of Verona, see Ralph W. Mathisen, ‘Petronius, Hilarius and Valerianus: Prosopographical Notes on the Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy’, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* Bd. 30 (1981), pp. 106-12 (pp. 106-10); and more tentatively Valerio Neri, ‘Bologna tardoantica’, in Giuseppe Sassatelli and Angela Donati (eds.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 1: Bologna nell’anichità* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005), pp. 679-714 (p. 702).

<sup>32</sup> ‘*De ordinatione episcopi* ratione et humilitate plenum tractatum’. Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, ch. 42, p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> *Saint Peter Chrysologus Selected Sermons and Saint Valerian Homilies*, trans. George. E. Ganss (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, vol. 1: A.D 260-395*, eds. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus 5, pp. 736-40.

<sup>35</sup> For Petronius of Verona as founder see Cinzia Fiorio Tedone, ‘Il complesso paleocristiano e altomedievale’, in Pierpaolo Brugnoli (ed.), *La cattedrale di Verona nelle sue vicende edilizie dal secolo IV al secolo XVI* (Verona: EBS, 1987), pp. 19-97. For the Church of Santo Stefano in Verona see Meredith Fluke, *Building Across the Sacred Landscape: The Romanesque Churches of Verona in their Urban Context*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2012, pp. 96-176.

of a natural spring.<sup>36</sup> Both *Petronii* bishops seem to have been keen supporters of Stephen's cult and it would appear that Petronius the son may have wished to recreate at Bologna what his father had accomplished at Verona given that the parallels between the *Santi Stefani* are compelling. Furthermore, recognising that the two sermons had two different but related father-son authors could explain the linguistic similarities across the homilies without pushing their likeness beyond what the evidence can sustain. And if Petronius of Bologna was the son of Petronius of Verona and had wider kinship networks in that city, then we are provided with a more plausible reason for the Bolognese bishop's appearance on St Zeno's feast day than simply one of geographic proximity.<sup>37</sup>

Here we can summarise the preceding discussion. Petronius was the eighth bishop of Bologna, assuming office in 431 or 432 and holding it until 450 at the very latest. His father, also called Petronius, was a praetorian prefect until 408 and then likely became the bishop of Verona in 411. During his period of office, he possibly delivered a sermon entitled *Sermo in die ordinationis vel natali episcopi* and may have constructed a church at Verona dedicated to St Stephen. His son, Petronius of Bologna, could also have overseen in his own diocese the building of a church dedicated to St Stephen and he may have visited Verona to preach the *Sermo in natale sancti Zenonis* at some point during his episcopacy. Lacking any further or more detailed evidence, it is impossible to say anything more; this is the extent of Petronius of Bologna's biography.

## ii. A Petronian cult before 1141?

So far, much of our analysis on the 'historical' Petronius has been cast in the subjunctive, with qualifiers such as 'possibly' featuring frequently. As we move from his biographical life to the posthumous cult which developed in the centuries that followed, we can speak with more conviction. Petronius enjoyed no recognised cult at Bologna before the *inventio* of his relics on 4 October 1141. Any memory of him which persisted in the city, or at Santo Stefano more specifically, did not attract organised devotional activities, and there is no trace of Petronius of Bologna in the historical record for seven centuries. For instance, a feast day for him does not feature in the ninth-century Carolingian liturgical calendar, likely of Bolognese

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<sup>36</sup> Architectural characteristics that were also common to former temples to Isis that became churches dedicated to St Stephen at Rome and Benevento in the fifth century. Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>37</sup> As suggested by Mathisen, 'Petronius, Hilarius and Valerianus', p. 110.

origin.<sup>38</sup> Neither is there place for Petronius in the Codex Angelicus 123, an early eleven-century liturgical calendar which was produced under the direction of Bishop Adalfredo (1031-1055).<sup>39</sup> Moreover, in the surviving Bolognese title list from 1300, which lists all of the over 760 churches and chapels in Bologna and its *contado*, there is not one dedicated to Petronius.<sup>40</sup> Many of these were established during the early medieval period and show the influence of the Goth and Lombard peoples, the churches' and chapels' proximity to other urban centres, and the influence of Bologna's most important churches. Forty were dedicated to St Michael and thirty-two to St Martin, who were both popular saints among the "barbarians". Of the parishes bordering Ravenna, six were dedicated to that city's principal saints: four to St Apollinaris and two to St Vitalis. Nearing Modena, three were named after St Geminianus; by Reggio Emilia, St Prospero was the patron of five. Six parishes neighbouring Fidenza were titled to St Dominus and for three approaching Imola, they were dedicated to St Cassianus. The patron of Bologna's cathedral, St Peter, had twenty-one such dedications and there were twelve to Stephen, probably a consequence of the important position Santo Stefano occupied.<sup>41</sup> Yet among all these various cults, there is not one to Petronius who appears conspicuous by his absence in the diocese's religious landscape. Whilst caution should be exercised when advancing arguments from silence, it is nevertheless the case that Santo Stefano's monastic archive is our best source for eleventh- and early twelfth-century Bolognese history.<sup>42</sup> Further, the monastery's brothers were either commissioning or producing liturgical manuscripts of their own at this time.<sup>43</sup> If its monks were sponsoring a cult for Bologna's ancient bishop, one could reasonably assume that there would be some lasting trace of pre-1141 devotional activities.

Recognising this lengthy Petronian lacuna has, however, been complicated by the existence of a series of papal bulls which have been interpolated or falsified, an eighteenth-century

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<sup>38</sup> Printed in Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 87-9. His attribution of the calendar to the Church of Faenza has not received much support. Lodi, *I santi della Chiesa bolognese*, p. 32 n. 3.

<sup>39</sup> On the Codex Angelicus 123, see the essays by Paola Porta, Laura Marchesini, Silvia Battistini, Laura Pasquini, Cesarino Ruini and Massimiliano Locanto in *Bologna e il secolo XI. Storia, Cultura, Economia, Istituzioni, Diritto*, eds. Giovanni Feo and Francesca Roversi (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Published in *Rationes decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV. Aemilia*, eds. A. Mercati, E. Nasalli-Rocca and P. Stella (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933), pp. 225-70.

<sup>41</sup> Golinelli, 'Santi e culti bolognesi', pp. 33-4.

<sup>42</sup> Milani, *Bologna*, p. 95. On the Santo Stefano archive in the tenth and eleventh centuries, see Tiziana Lazzari, *"Comitato" senza città. Bologna e l'aristocrazia del territorio nei secoli IX-XI* (Turin: Paravia Scriptorium, 1998), pp. 14-21.

<sup>43</sup> The eleventh century manuscript 1576 in the Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna. On this, see Milena Basili, *Il manoscritto 1576 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna e il Codice Angelica 123: indagine storica e notazioni a confronto*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Bologna, 2020.

forgery of an eleventh-century hagiographical manuscript, and a misreading of the late twelfth-century *miracula* of Vitalis and Agricola. The two bulls, alleged to have originated from the pontificates of Popes Gregory VII (1073-1085) and Paschal II (1099-1118), are part of a series of five which only survive in a copy produced in the early fifteenth century by Rolando Castellani, a notary of the Bolognese Church from 1403 to 1409. The Gregorian bull of 1074, possibly a mid-twelfth century reworking of an authentic bull issued by anti-Pope Clement III in 1084, and the 1114 bull of Paschal II, almost certainly a fake dating from the late twelfth or thirteenth century, both recognise Petronius as the founder of Santo Stefano, thereby suggesting the existence of a cult in the eleventh century, if not earlier: ‘Santo Stefano which is called Jerusalem and which lord Petronius had built’ and ‘Santo Stefano which is called Jerusalem, constructed by St Petronius, bishop’.<sup>44</sup> However, since the two bulls were substantially interpolated or invented subsequent to the discovery of Petronius’ relics in 1141, his inclusion in them reflects the post *inventio* context and does not provide support for an earlier cult tradition.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, the supposed reference to Petronius in the eleventh-century *Vita* of St Bononius (d. 1026) is the product of an early modern deception. The genuine *Life* of Bononius, dating c. 1030, was most likely produced under the direction of Bishop Arderic of Vercelli (1026/7-1044), and was later transcribed into the Santo Stefano legendary in c. 1180.<sup>46</sup> It records that Bononius, Bolognese by birth, entered Santo Stefano as a child oblate at some point in the latter half of the tenth century. Passing his formative years at the monastery, Bononius then embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.<sup>47</sup> There is no further mention of Bologna and Petronius does not feature. Yet in the hagiography that the eighteenth-century Camaldolian abbot, Guido Grandi, claimed to have found, Bologna’s future patron is recorded as Santo Stefano’s builder: ‘which the most blessed Petronius had constructed in his country in the image of Palestine’.<sup>48</sup> This dishonesty successfully misled Testi Rasponi, who, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, unknowingly preferred the more detailed forgery and

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Sancti Stephani quod vocatur Hierusalem et quod domnus Petronius edificavit’ and ‘Santi Stephani quod vocatur Iherusalem, constitutum a sancto Petronio episcopo’. The bulls are edited in *Codice Diplomatico della Chiesa bolognese. Documenti autentici e spuri (secoli IV-XII)*, eds. L. Paolini and M. Fanti. Regesta chartarum 54 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2004), n. 52, pp. 138-42 and n. 67, pp. 165-8.

<sup>45</sup> My interpretation of these papal bulls follows Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 119-55.

<sup>46</sup> *Vita et miracula Sancti Bononii Abbatis Locediensis*, ed. G. Schwartz and A. Hofmeister, *MGH Scriptores* 30, 2 (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1934), pp. 1026-33. For the background to Bononius’ hagiography see Teemu Immonen, ‘A Saint as a Mediator between a Bishop and His Flock: The Cult of Saint Bononius in the Diocese of Vercelli Under Bishop Arderic (1026/7-1044)’, *Viator* 39 (2008), pp. 65-91.

<sup>47</sup> *Vita et miracula Sancti Bononii*, pp. 1026-7.

<sup>48</sup> ‘quae ad imaginem Palaestinae beatissimus Petronius in patria constituerat’. Printed in Testi Rasponi, ‘Note marginali’, (1911), p. 403.

noted that this was the earliest reference to Petronius since Late Antiquity.<sup>49</sup> His conclusions concerning the *Vita* of Bononius continue to be cited by scholars working on Santo Stefano and the cult of Petronius.<sup>50</sup> This is despite the fact that Giovanni Tabacco conclusively showed in 1954 that Guido Grandi was the fraudulent author of the lost *Vita* and the authentic eleventh-century hagiography contains no such prescient allusion to a Petronian cult.<sup>51</sup>

Lastly, the *miracula* of Vitalis and Agricola.<sup>52</sup> Contained in the same manuscript as the Latin hagiography of Petronius, which was completed in 1180, the miracle stories record the thaumaturgic power of the Bolognese martyrs following the translation of their relics to new tombs in Santo Stefano, performed in 1019. The first such story concerns a possessed woman from the village of Pizzocalvo, located six miles to the west of Bologna, who travelled to the monastery over a period of many days and was exorcised of her demons ‘on the feast day of St Petronius, bishop and confessor, whose body is held in the same place where the bodies of the holy martyrs Vitalis and Agricola rest’.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the third story, which we are told happened at the time of Abbot Landolfo (in office from 1162), the first contains no explicit chronological guide, although the miracle account must have been written after 1141 as its author was aware of the location of Petronius’ tomb and feast day celebrations, otherwise unknown and not celebrated before the *inventio* of that year.<sup>54</sup> This is not evidence of Petronius featuring in a liturgical calendar of 1019; it is instead a sign of a burgeoning cult in the late twelfth century.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Testi Rasponi, ‘Note marginali’, (1911), p. 444.

<sup>50</sup> Ousterhout, ‘The Church of Santo Stefano’, p. 313 and p. 319 n. 25; Morris, ‘Bringing the Holy Sepulchre’, p. 51; Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*, p. 124; Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian*, p. 100 and p. 316 n. 47.

<sup>51</sup> Giovanni Tabacco, *La vita di S. Bononio di Ratberto Monaco e l’abate Guido Grandi* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1954).

<sup>52</sup> The *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae* and *miracula sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae* are printed as an appendix with a parallel facsimile of BUB Ms. 1473, ff. 325r-329v in G. Ropa and G. Malaguti (eds.), *Vitale e Agricola “sancti doctores”*: *Città, Chiesa, Studio nei testi agiografici del XII secolo* (Bologna: EDB, 2001), pp. 178-197.

<sup>53</sup> ‘in celebri die sancti Petroni episcopi et confessoris, cuius sacrum corpus eodem habetur loco, in quo et sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae corpora quiescunt’. *miracula sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae*, p. 191.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Tempore domini Landulfi abbatis fuit’. *miracula sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae*, p. 193.

<sup>55</sup> Against Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 35; Orselli, *L’immaginario Religioso*, p. 192 n. 10; Thompson, *Cities of God*, p. 116.



Photo of *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae* removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 1 – *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae*. Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms 1473, f. 325r. From *Vitale e Agricola “sancti doctores”*, p. 178

Prior to 1141 and indeed for some time thereafter, Bologna's two principal saints' cults were those of Vitalis and Agricola, and St Peter, titular of the city's cathedral.<sup>56</sup> It was with these two cults and not Petronius that the first intersections between the cult of saints and city politics first touched Bologna, adding further support to the position that there was no pre-1141 Petronian cult. At the beginning of the eleventh century, Vitalis and Agricola were pawns in the negotiation of urban social relations.<sup>57</sup> In 1019, Bologna's two most influential religious centres, the cathedral and Santo Stefano, underwent extensive building renovations.<sup>58</sup> For the latter, the *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae* records that the abbot of Santo Stefano, Martinus, was unhappy with the decrepit state of the martyrs' tombs and so ordered the construction of a new crypt to house their relics in the newly built Church of San Giovanni Battista, part of the same monastic complex. A donation had been made two years before to finance the works and they were completed in 1019; on 3 March the precious cargo was faithfully transferred to the abbot's new crypt.<sup>59</sup> It would, however, appear that the proposed building work and translation was not without controversy. The *translatione* states that Martinus first had to obtain permission for the

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<sup>56</sup> Golinelli, 'Santi e culti', p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Bolognese historians often reference an earlier example of saints being used in the articulation of political disputes by the peoples of the Emilia-Romagna. They point to two pseudo-Ambrosian letters, supposedly authored in the fifth and sixth centuries respectively. The first letter claimed that St Vitalis was a military martyr who was born in Milan but buried in Ravenna. It continued by stating that this Vitalis was the husband of St Valeria, herself martyred, and that they were the parents of the Milanese martyrs, Ss. Gervasius and Protasius. It is argued by Bolognese historians that this letter shows the act of appropriation of the authentic Vitalis and Agricola cult by the Ravennesi, probably to coincide with their city becoming an archbishopric. The second letter, it is suggested, was a Bolognese response to the actions of the Ravennesi. Among other things, this letter stressed the connection between Vitalis and Agricola and claimed they were victims of Diocletian's persecutions. Both pseudo-Ambrosian letters are edited in *PL*, vol. 17, cols. 743-7 and 825-7. For the most recent statement of this position, see Giampaola Ropa, 'Momenti nel culto dei martiri Vitale e Agricola: Le epistole pseudoambrosiane', in Giulio Malaguti (ed.), *Martirio di pace. Memoria e storia del martirio nel XVII Centenario di Vitale e Agricola* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2004), pp. 61-104.

However, Cécile Lanéry has shown clearly that this approach is mistaken. She powerfully argued that the first letter, the alleged fifth-century Ravenese pseudo-Ambrosian text, is in fact a forgery by the sixteenth-century editors of Ambrose's work. They based this forgery on the second letter, the so-called sixth-century Bolognese response. According to Lanéry, this attribution is also erroneous. The second of our two pseudo-Ambrosian letters dates most probably from the ninth century and is not Bolognese in provenance. She stresses that there is absolutely no manuscript evidence for the first pseudo-Ambrosian letter. Cécile Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan hagiographe* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2008), pp. 445-464.

<sup>58</sup> For Santo Stefano and the Cathedral as institutions in the social and political fabric of the city, see Lazzari, "Comitato" senza città, pp. 105-150.

<sup>59</sup> *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae*, pp. 185-7; *Le carte del monastero di S. Stefano di Bologna e di S. Bartolomeo di Musiano*, vol. 1: 1001-1125, eds. R. Rinaldi and C. Villani (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte, 1984), n. 1, pp. 1-3. (p. 1).

project from Bishop Frogerius (1017- c. 1029) and the cathedral chapter, perhaps a sign of tension and ongoing discussions that are beyond this fleeting remark hidden to us.<sup>60</sup>

If Frogerius was hesitant to support the building works at Santo Stefano for fear that the complex might eclipse his cathedral church, then the timing of his own construction activities of that year can be better understood. No less than three months after the translation of Vitalis and Agricola's relics, works began on enlarging the city's cathedral. Property was donated by the canon Oddone. Frogerius then commenced the development, which Oddone's charter of donation records that it was 'for the honour of St Peter' and the foundations were laid in the year '1019, on the feast day of St Peter'.<sup>61</sup> It was a date no doubt consciously chosen to concentrate in the figure of Peter the rhythms of the liturgical calendar, the spatially imposing cathedral, the office of the bishopric and, in a more general sense, the relationship between him as its patron, the bishop as his intermediary and the city of Bologna. So unless the parallel building projects were a most fortuitous coincidence, this charged architectural undertaking was surely motivated by the desire on Frogerius' part to assert the primacy of the bishop and his cathedral church in the cityscape and serve as a rebuttal to the very public and celebrated reinterment of Vitalis and Agricola enacted by Abbot Martinus earlier that year.

In this early battle of saintly politics, there had been no place for Petronius. If there had been a cult to the ancient bishop at the turn of the millennium, then his absence in the early eleventh-century dispute is pressing. This observation might appear to be predicated on a search for evidence in contexts where no such material would or indeed should have been produced. Still, it remains the case that not one legitimate reference to Petronius in a Bolognese context survives after the very limited biography provided for him by Gennadius of Marseille at the end of the fifth century until the *inventio* of his relics by Bishop Enrico. Not in hagiography, not in liturgy, not in toponymy. Where we have information on Bolognese cults and the involvement of its saints in urban life, it shows that the city's ancient bishop was entirely obscured by other more prominent figures. It has been important to

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<sup>60</sup> 'dominique Frugerii, venerabilis eiusdem sanctae Bononiensis ecclesiae episcopi, accepta licentia canonicorumque eiusdem sacrae sedis consensu'. *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Vitalis et Agricolae*, p. 187

<sup>61</sup> 'olim domno F<rogerio> episcopo Bononie in millesimo XVIII. ad honorem Sancti Petri et pro laborerio et fundatione dicte ecclesie facte in dicto millesimo decimo nono in festivitate dicti sancti Petri'. *Codice diplomatico della Chiesa bolognese*, n. 44, p. 119-20. The provenance of this document has been questioned, including by its most recent editors. However, Giovanni Feo has convincingly argued that the document is a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century copy of an authentic charter of 1048. Giovanni Feo, 'La Chiesa di Bologna e i suoi documenti', in Giovanni Feo and Francesca Roversi Monaco (eds.), *Bologna e il secolo XI. Storia, Cultura, Economia, Istituzioni, Diritto* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2011), pp. 573-601 (pp. 597-601).

underline this point not for reasons of iconoclasm. Rather, clarifying that 1141 was not the point of crystallisation for a pre-existing yet ethereal Petronian cult, but instead its moment of invention, permits recognition of its radical novelty and better explains the contours of its subsequent development.

iii. The 1141 *inventio* of Petronius of Bologna

Photo of map of Byzantine and Lombard Italy, c. 616 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 2 – Map of Byzantine and Lombard Italy, c. 616. From John. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: The Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000-1350* (London: Macmillan, 1973), Map. 1.

Photo of reconstruction of map of early medieval Bologna with Selenite walls removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 3 – Reconstruction of map of early medieval Bologna with Selenite walls. From Francesca Bocchi, ‘Lo sviluppo urbanistico’, in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 1: Bologna nel medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 187-308, p. 191.

At around the same time that Petronius’ cult was created and first taking shape, the city of Bologna, after centuries of decline and stagnation, was fast becoming one of Latin Europe’s most dynamic social, cultural and political metropolises. With the collapse of the Roman imperial system in the western part of the Empire in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, Bologna, just as every urban centre in Italy and more profoundly for those beyond the Alps, significantly contracted in terms of geographic area, population size and density, and socio-economic complexity.<sup>62</sup> As early as the late fourth century, the cities along the Via Emilia

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<sup>62</sup> Bocchi, ‘Lo sviluppo urbanistico’, pp. 187-308. For the phenomenon more widely, see Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 591-692.

were described by Ambrose as ‘cadavers of semi-destroyed cities’ and the depredations of Justinian’s Gothic Wars (535-53) brought to a conclusion this large-scale process of deurbanisation.<sup>63</sup> Bologna remained a very small town, being under Byzantine control until conquered by the Lombards in 727.<sup>64</sup> In fact, as late as 967 Pope John XIII referred to Bologna as an ‘*oppidum*’ (town) rather than a *urbs* (city) and parts of the city were still being described as *civitas antiqua rupta* in the eleventh century.<sup>65</sup> However, around the turn of the millennium, when the lands of Latin Christendom started to witness population growth, territorial expansion, a quantitative and qualitative increase in trade and the beginnings of a sophisticated monetary economy, Bologna was one of the cities most attuned to these developments.<sup>66</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century, it was among the five or six largest cities of western Europe, of international repute and with a population numbering over 50,000 people.<sup>67</sup>

Central to Bologna’s growth were two institutions, the Commune and the *Studium*. For both, their origins are obscure but by the time of Petronius’ *inventio* they were approaching maturity and would come to exercise a considerable influence on his cult. In short, the medieval commune was originally a semi-private association of a significant percentage of the adult male population of a given city, typically bound together by the swearing of a public oath. This collectivity nominated or confirmed in office magistrates who exercised their function for a defined period, which over time usually came to be a period of six months. They were responsible for the administration of government. This consisted principally in warfare, justice, taxation and legislation, the key strands of medieval governance.<sup>68</sup> Some 200 to 300 city-communes were to be found in central and northern Italy by the close of the twelfth century.<sup>69</sup> At Bologna, the earliest evidence we have for the Commune dates from 15 May 1116.<sup>70</sup> On that day a collection of Bolognese *concives* obtained from Emperor Henry V

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<sup>63</sup> ‘semirutarum urbium cadavera’. Ambrose, *Ep.* 8, vol. 1, p. 68; Wickham, *Framing the Early*, pp. 34-7, 649, 654.

<sup>64</sup> Cosentino, ‘Bologna tra la tarda antichità’, p. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 32; Salvatore Cosentino, ‘Aspetti dell’economia di Bologna tra l’VIII e l’XI secolo’, in Giovanni Feo and Francesca Roversi Monaco (eds.), *Bologna e il secolo XI: Storia, Cultura, Economia, Istituzioni, Diritto* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2011), pp. 485-548 (p. 486).

<sup>66</sup> For the wider societal developments, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (London: Penguin, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, ‘Problemi demografici bolognesi del Duecento’, *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)*, n.s., 17-19 (1965-68), pp. 147-222 (p. 216)

<sup>68</sup> Chris Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of the Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Danley Waley and Trevor Dean, *The Italian City-Republics* (Harlow: Longman, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2010), p. xvii.

<sup>70</sup> For the origins of the Bolognese Commune, the classic account is Alfred Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna dal 1116 al 1280*, trans. Gina Fasoli (Bologna: Alfa, 1975), pp. 27-77. See also Giuseppe Rabotti, ‘Note

at Governolo a diploma, one in which Henry pardoned them for their earlier destruction of the city's imperial *Rocca*, required them to pay a tribute and confirmed their already established customs.<sup>71</sup> Seven years later, on 11 June 1123, the Bolognese made a protective pact with the rural castles of Rodiano, Sanguineta and Capriglia – in the Upper Valley of the Reno river – in which the office of the Bolognese consul is first mentioned and an obligation was imposed on the *comune* of Bologna.<sup>72</sup> In December 1131, we see the swearing of an oath by the Bolognese *populus* with the rural community of Nonantola and the earliest example of Bologna's intervention in fiscal policy is attested.<sup>73</sup> By 1149-51, a communal juridical tribunal had been established and a *contio* (assembly) is recorded for the first time in Bolognese sources in 1156.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, by the 1150s the Bolognese Commune was fully established. Assured of its right to self-government, Bologna joined the Lombard League in 1167 to resist the advances of Frederick Barbarossa and it, along with her allies, emerged from the Peace of Constance in 1183 with the recognition of the Commune's *de jure* as well as *de facto* existence.<sup>75</sup>

There is even less evidence for the embryonic stages of Bologna's *Studium*, although, in the sense that it began life as a collection of informal or private entities in the late eleventh century and slowly acquired a corporate nature in the later twelfth century, its course of development closely mirrors that of the Commune. The traditional date of foundation for the *Studium* of 1088 is not one borne out by the evidence; it was instead settled upon during the Risorgimento as a convenient moment around which an eight-hundredth anniversary could be

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sull'ordinamento costituzionale del comune di Bologna dalle origini alla prima lega lombarda', *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)*, ns., 9 (1957-58), pp. 51-89; Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale*, pp. 180-93; Augusto Vasina, 'La città e il contado dagli albori del Comune alla pace di Costanza (1116-1183)', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 439-76; Milani, *Bologna*, pp. 31-8; Chris Wickham, 'Sulle origini del comune di Bologna', *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 119 (2017), pp. 209-37; Giorgio Tamba, 'Civic Institutions (12<sup>th</sup>- early 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries)', in *CMRB*, pp. 211-38.

<sup>71</sup> Lodovico Vittorio Savioli, *Annali Bolognesi*, vol.1, part. 2 (Bassano, 1784), pp. 155-7.

<sup>72</sup> Savioli, *Annali Bolognesi*, vol. 1, part. 2, p. 173.

<sup>73</sup> Savioli, *Annali Bolognesi*, vol. 1, part. 2, pp. 178-81.

<sup>74</sup> Wickham, 'Sulle origini', p. 217.

<sup>75</sup> On the Lombard League, see Gina Fasoli, 'La lega lombarda. Antecedenti, formazione, struttura', in Francesca Bocchi, Antonio Carile and Antonio Ivan Pini (eds.), *Scritti di storia medievale* (Bologna: La fotocromo Emiliana, 1974), pp. 257-92 and Gianluca Raccagni, *The Lombard League, 1167-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. p. 43 for Bologna joining the League in December 1167. On the wars with Barbarossa, see Paolo Grillo, *Legnano 1176: Una battaglia per la libertà* (Rome: Laterza, 2010) and Paolo Grillo, *Le guerre del Barbarossa: I comuni contro l'imperatore* (Rome: Laterza, 2014). For the Peace of Constance, see John B. Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 422-7.



celebrated.<sup>76</sup> But while no such established body was present in the city at this time, in the later part of the eleventh century there were a number of ecclesiastical and lay schools offering instruction in the notarial arts, liberal arts, law and theology.<sup>77</sup> Then, under the direction of two masters, firstly Pepo and thereafter Irnerius, the study of law became much more systematic and for the latter was informed by a direct knowledge of Justinian's *Digest*, the first twenty-four books of which – the *Digestum Vetus* – had recently been rediscovered.<sup>78</sup> Irnerius was probably teaching at Bologna in the early 1100s since a 'Guarnerius bononiensis' is mentioned as an advocate (*causidicus*) in a document of 1112.<sup>79</sup> After 1127, the anonymous poet of the *Carmen de bello mediolanensium adversus Comenses* described the city as 'Bologna, the learned' who 'guided with her laws'.<sup>80</sup> Around 1140, Gratian's work of canon law, the *Decretum*, appeared and with it the study of church law was raised to the same levels of academic rigour as that of classical Roman jurisprudence.<sup>81</sup> By the 1140s or 1150s, the Four Doctors – Bulgarus, Martinus Gosia, Jacobus de Boragine and Hugo de Porta Ravennate – were teaching civil law to students in private schools. They were recognised throughout Christendom for their scholarly excellence and their fame attracted to Bologna students from afar afield as London – Thomas Becket – and Jerusalem – William of Tyre – who both studied law in the city during the 1140s and 1150s.<sup>82</sup>

The movement towards institutionalisation soon followed. After meeting with certain unnamed scholars and students in 1155, Barbarossa issued his *Authentica Habita*. It was a law that placed under his imperial protection any non-Bolognese students or scholars engaged in academic activities or whilst travelling to or from the city, and it forbade the right of reprisal against students for debts incurred by their fellow countrymen. The provisions of the *Habita*, which Barbarossa also instructed should be included into Justinian's Code, thereby

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<sup>76</sup> The celebrations of the eighth centenary coincided with the 1888 Emilian Exhibition. Aldo Berselli, 'Da Napoleone alla Grande Guerra', in Aldo Berselli and Angelo Varni (eds.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 4.1: Bologna in età contemporanea, 1796-1914* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2010), pp. 1-136 (pp. 100-4).

<sup>77</sup> David Lines, 'The University and the City: Cultural Interactions', in *CMRB*, pp. 436-73 (pp. 437-8).

<sup>78</sup> Wolfgang Muller, 'The Recovery of Justinian's Digest in the Middle Ages', *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 20 (1990), pp. 1-29.

<sup>79</sup> Edited in Enrico Spagnesi, *Wernerius Bononiensis iudex: La figura storica d'Irnerio* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1970), n. 1, pp. 29-35.

<sup>80</sup> 'docta sua secum duxit Bononia leges'. *De bello Mediolanensium adversus Comenses. Liber cumanus*. RIS 5 (Milan, 1724), pp. 413-456 (v. 211, p. 418).

<sup>81</sup> Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); James A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 94-107.

<sup>82</sup> William FitzStephen, *Vita Sancti Thomae*, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, ed. J. Robertson, Rolls Series, LXVII, vol. III (London: Longman & Co., 1877), p. 17; William of Tyre, *Chronica*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), vol. 2, bk. 19, ch. 12, pp. 880-1.

detaching it from its specifically Bolognese setting and initiating a step that would later enable its provisions to be drawn upon by the new universities elsewhere in Europe, enabled students to have their cases heard before courts presided over by their masters rather than city judges.<sup>83</sup> Whether it was this intervention by the Hohenstaufen emperor, the sheer number of scholars and students in the city, or the example set by the trade guilds and by the Commune itself, the amorphous groupings of separate masters and students began to coalesce into defined corporate bodies.<sup>84</sup> When Pope Lucius III (1181-85) issued regulations regarding the provision of accommodation for non-resident students or scholars, he referred to the ‘common assembly of masters and scholars’. At this juncture, the student ‘Nations’ first start appearing, and in the coming decades the Cismontane and Ultramontane *universitates* were formed, being closely followed by a *collegium* of law professors.<sup>85</sup>

It was in this context, as the city of Bologna and its two most prominent institutions were, to use Chris Wickham’s phrase, ‘sleepwalking into a new world’, that Petronius’ cult was born.<sup>86</sup> But unlike Commune and *Studium*, there exists no uncertainty as to its moment of invention: Petronius’ cult was created on 4 October 1141 following the discovery of his relics at Santo Stefano the day before, and it was certainly no accident or unintended consequence of a subconscious action. It was, on the contrary, the deliberate decision of the city’s bishop, Enrico.

The evidence for the *inventio* comes from two near contemporary sources, one directly, the other indirectly. The first is the *Sermo de inventione sanctorum reliquiarum*, an alleged eyewitness account of the finding of Petronius’ relics but which comes after the Latin *Vita* in the Santo Stefano legendary BUB MS. 1473, dated 1180. For reasons discussed below, it seems likely that the author of the *Sermo* and the *Vita* was the same person, and that both were written at the same time c.1180. Here, however, it will suffice to say that the sermon records that the *inventio* was announced to the Bolognese on 4 October 1141 and there is no legitimate reason to think otherwise.<sup>87</sup> This judgement is based on the second piece of

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<sup>83</sup> Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 138-40.

<sup>84</sup> Carlo Dolcini, ‘Lo *Studium* fino al XIII secolo’, in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 477-98 (pp. 490-1).

<sup>85</sup> Brundage, *Medieval Origins*, pp. 223-227, with quote at p. 225. On the nations more widely, see Pearl Kibre, *The Nations in the Mediaeval Universities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1948).

<sup>86</sup> It appears that only two Italian communes, Rome in 1143 and Benevento in 1128-31, were consciously self-aware at the time of action that they were innovating and creating a new form of government. Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World*, p. 135; Paul Oldfield, ‘The Commune of Benevento (1128-1131): A South Italian Contribution to the Communal Movement’, *English Historical Review* 136 (2021), pp. 1117-1147.

<sup>87</sup> ‘anno Domini millesimo centesimo quadragésimo primo, quarto nonas octubris’. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 124

evidence, a papal bull issued by Pope Lucius II (1144-45) on 13 May 1144 to Bishop Enrico at the Lateran Palace. The text of the bull records that Enrico went to visit Lucius in order to congratulate the new pope and obtain confirmation of his property rights in his city. Lucius, himself Bolognese, formerly cardinal priest of Rome's simulacrum of the Holy City, the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, had been present at Enrico's episcopal ordination in 1130 and the old acquaintance happily complied with the request of his Bolognese compatriot.<sup>88</sup> Among the properties listed as belonging to the Bolognese church was Santo Stefano. The complex is described as 'the monastery of Santo Stefano, which is called Jerusalem, and which the most holy lord and bishop Petronius built'.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, in this authentic papal bull issued less than three years after the *inventio*, Petronius was mentioned and his new status as the founder of Santo Stefano was recognised. Being in Rome, Bishop Enrico, the instigator of the Petronian cult, was presumably able to advise Lucius in person of his recent act of discovery and ensure that Bologna's new saint received the appropriate recognition afforded to him as outlined in the sermon he had preached three years previously. To put it succinctly: because of the circumstances of the bull's production, the details contained within and its closeness in time to the *inventio*, it confirms the substantive truthfulness of the account provided by the anonymous author of the *Sermo*, namely the act of discovery in October 1141.

The *Sermo de inventione* opens with a short panegyric to the city of Bologna. The anonymous author, who would develop the theme at much greater length in the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, praises the city's fame, its quality of learning and observes that it enjoys a 'superiority of the highest honour in all things'.<sup>90</sup> The *Sermo* proceeds to describe the 'illustrious Church of Santo Stefano, from its origins built by the most blessed Petronius, formerly bishop of the Holy Church of Bologna, symbolically called Jerusalem' and records that Petronius had endowed Santo Stefano with a very large quantity of precious relics.<sup>91</sup> After the monastery's credentials are established, what follows is a lengthy account of discovery, with Petronius' remains being one of over one hundred various relics to be found in the monastic complex.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Giuliano Milani, 'Lucio II, papa', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2006), vol. 66. Accessed online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/papa-lucio-ii\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/papa-lucio-ii_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) on 05/06/2020; Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>89</sup> 'monasterium Sancti Stephani, quod vocatur Iherusalem, et quod dominus Petronius sanctissimus episcopus edificavit'. *Codice diplomatico della Chiesa bolognese*, n. 104, pp. 231

<sup>90</sup> 'Cum omnis aeloquentiae preclara urbs Bononia doctrinis inter ceteras mirifice splenderet variis, et altividi in omnibus honoris deferret eminentiam'. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 120

<sup>91</sup> 'inclitam sancti Stephani ecclesiam, a beatissimo olim Petronio, sancta bononiensis aeccliesiae episcopo, a primevo aedificatam, et Ierusalem typice vocatum'. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 120.

<sup>92</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 121-6.

Along with the remains of St Isidore, a certain *Symon*, and the bodies of the Holy Innocents, many of the relics found at Santo Stefano during this great discovery corresponded with, as Robert Ousterhout has observed, those known to be in the possession of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.<sup>93</sup> This recently unearthed cache of relics was part of a much older and continuing tradition of bringing Jerusalem to Bologna that the newly founded cult of Petronius was grafted on to at the moment of discovery and further expanded upon.

After Petronius' relics had been located by the band of relic hunters, the author of the *Sermo* interrupts his account of the mass *inventio* to describe the foundation of Petronius' feast day. He tells us that Bishop Enrico and those present at Santo Stefano were acutely aware that the finding of so many relics was miraculous, and that Enrico in particular was keen to share the news. On the following morning – 4 October – the bishop announced the discovery 'to all the city, indeed throughout all the lands of the Bolognese'.<sup>94</sup> Enrico had in fact arranged for messengers to go to every parish and ordered that:

'every archpriest with his clerics and their people should be promptly notified of this most holy *inventio*, and that all should promptly come with great honour, in procession and litany, to this grand solemnity'.<sup>95</sup>

His flock did so obligingly. A great crowd gathered before Santo Stefano, and they were joined by Bologna's consuls and leading citizens. In their presence, we are told that Enrico offered the remission of sins for two years to any who visited the monastery eight days before or after 4 October. Further, it was decreed that Petronius' feast day and the *inventio* would be celebrated in perpetuity by the Bolognese. This was confirmed by the communal officials present.<sup>96</sup>

This appearance of spontaneity regarding the unearthing of Petronius' relics obscures the preparatory work that would have preceded matters. In the *Sermo*, no explanation is provided for Bishop Enrico's involvement at an early stage of the *inventio*, with his being at Santo Stefano on the day in question serendipitous. But rather than an act of good fortune or providence, it was an accident that brought him to the monastery. Two months earlier his

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<sup>93</sup> Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', p. 314.

<sup>94</sup> 'per totam urbem, immo per totam terram bononiensium'. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 123

<sup>95</sup> 'Idem vero sacer episcopus, per omnes sui episcopii plebes, sacras direxit precipendo legationes, ut unusquisque archipresbyter suis clericis et populis hanc sanctissimam sollicite notificaret inventionem, et ut omnes ad tantam honorifice festinanter cum processione et letaniis venirent sollempnitatem'. *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 123-4.

<sup>96</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 124.

cathedral had been badly damaged and the bishop's court had transferred to Santo Stefano. When in residence, as the author makes clear, the bishop and his supporters actively sought relics rather than passively stumbled across them. Once a great quantity had been revealed, it was Enrico who dispatched messengers throughout Bologna and its *contado* to ensure that as wide an audience as possible was informed of the miraculous events, a concern of some importance considering that in semiliterate societies public ceremonies and organised preaching were the primary forms of mass communication.<sup>97</sup> Specific emissaries must have also been sent to the communal authorities to advise them of developments, perhaps offering them the opportunity to participate in organising the festivities and negotiating their level of involvement in the new cult. This required strategic planning on Enrico's part so that he could integrate the discovery of relics into the wider fabric of city life. Recognising all this, the *inventio* quickly becomes no happenstance but a carefully choreographed piece of political theatre, with Enrico in the leading role and Santo Stefano as his stage.

As has been suggested earlier, the text of the sermon was written at approximately the same time as the Latin *Vita* and its author, although asserting the contrary, was probably not an eyewitness to the *inventio*.<sup>98</sup> There are several reasons, of different evidential value, which may cause us to doubt that the *Sermo de inventione* was written by an eyewitness to the event itself in 1141. First, Lanzoni noted that the *Sermo*'s author seems to speak of Bishop Enrico, the event's chief protagonist, as if he were already deceased at time of writing – ‘*domno Henrico, reverentissimo sancte Bononie aecclesiae episcopo*’ and ‘*domno celeberrimo episcopo*’.<sup>99</sup> This would place its production after 1145, the year of Enrico's death. The incumbent abbot of Santo Stefano in 1141, Abbot Guido, is referred to without any honorific title and indeed remains unnamed throughout the text despite being referred to five times. He had died by 1154. If the *Sermo* had been written contemporaneously to Guido's abbacy, and by a brother of Santo Stefano no less, the author doubtlessly would not have failed to recognise the role of his monastery's governor in the *inventio*; and so, this significant omission would indicate that the *Sermo* also postdates Guido's death.<sup>100</sup> Similarly nameless are the consuls, the ‘wiser men’ (*sapientioribus*) who Enrico and the abbot sought counsel

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<sup>97</sup> David d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); for a specific example, see Christopher Tyerman's comments on Pope Urban II's sermon at Clermont in 1095, Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 64-5.

<sup>98</sup> ‘et a nobis omnibus qui ad hoc sacrum spectaculum insistebamus’. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 123.

<sup>99</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 121 and 123; Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 41

<sup>100</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 41.

from, and the messengers the bishop dispatched throughout the diocese to announce the *inventio*.<sup>101</sup> Admittedly, the latter were bit-part players and the author may have considered them incidental to the overall narrative. Still, the unnamed figures, from messengers to the abbot, and the suggestion that Enrico was already dead could indicate an unfamiliarity on the part of the hagiographer with the persons involved and the events he claimed to have directly witnessed.

Secondly, the author's casual description of Petronius' tomb points to its writing at a later date. The hidden tombs of St Isidore and Symon, for instance, were only revealed during building works.<sup>102</sup> The reliquary in the Church of Santa Croce was discovered after the party of relic-searchers hammered down the walls of that building in pursuit of further sacred objects.<sup>103</sup> Yet with regards to the finding of Petronius' remains, the anonymous author did not include any such elaborate story. He simply wrote that the bishop, abbot and monks, after their initial successes, headed to the adjacent Church of Santo Sepolcro. Upon entering, they walked over to Petronius' tomb and found his relics inside.<sup>104</sup> This casual story is hardly in fitting with the dramatic and divinely inspired act of rediscovery that led to the unearthing of so many long-lost relics, Petronius' included. Expressly, if the location of Petronius' tomb had been that obvious an act of God and the finding of a lost-long note would not have been necessary prerequisites for its discovery.<sup>105</sup> What this suggests, therefore, is that in the intervening period between the *inventio* and the time of writing a tomb had been built to house Petronius' relics. The author was thus describing the layout of the Church not as it was in 1141 but as it stood in his present day some years later. When faced with having to determine where Petronius' remains had lay hidden, the writer of the *Sermo* naturally settled upon the place where one would have expected them to have been found, his tomb.

The third is the terms of the indulgence said to have been granted by Enrico in 1141, which promised pardon from the penalty of sin for two years for any who visited Santo Stefano eight days before or after Petronius' feast day.<sup>106</sup> At the point of the relics' discovery, there could have been no need to anticipate people coming to the monastery to celebrate their unearthing prior to their finding and the subsequent *inventio* announcement. The inclusion of

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<sup>101</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 121 and 123-4.

<sup>102</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>103</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 123.

<sup>105</sup> For the finding of this note during building work, see below.

<sup>106</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 124.

the sixteen-day period of celebration, including eight days leading up to the feast day, was surely a later development, presumably to encourage more visitors to Santo Stefano. Writing retrospectively, the hagiographer knew this and was describing the practicalities of the feast day celebrations as they matured in the intervening period, not as first promulgated by Enrico.

The fourth sign of a delay between the *inventio* and the writing of the *Sermo* is the manner in which the author records the actions of the Bolognese consuls and leading citizens at the creation of Petronius' feast day in 1141. Coming after Enrico's promise of an indulgence, the communal authorities swear that all those who travel to Santo Stefano during the celebration would be under their protection.<sup>107</sup> In including this promise of safe passage, the hagiographer could well have been influenced by Barbarossa's *Authentica Habita*. Realistically, when Bishop Enrico instituted Petronius' cult he could not reasonably have anticipated that it would become popular outside of Bologna and its immediate hinterland, an expectation that would have been shared by the communal authorities. Because the participants in the festivities would almost certainly have been Bolognese, who were already subject to the Commune's evolving jurisdiction, such a guarantee to these persons and their property above and beyond what ordinarily was in force was unnecessary. Of course, the assurance might have been consequence of a hoped-for regional significance for Petronius' cult; or more feasibly it could contain faint echoes of the imperial proclamation. Just as Barbarossa protected travellers visiting Bologna, so too the Commune. If this is correct, then the *Sermo* must have been written after 1155.

While the author may not have been an eyewitness to the events of 1141 and was writing several decades later, he certainly had access to the oral testimony of individuals who had been present at the *inventio* and their recollections formed the basis of his account. We are told that the catalyst for the finding of the sacred remains was the discovery of a long-forgotten note left by Petronius himself which recorded the presence of the hidden relics in Santo Stefano.<sup>108</sup> But the author records that it was consultation and discussion among those present that directly led to the rediscovery of the aforementioned relics. In fact, he specifically mentions that the opinions of the oldest monks were most valued, and it was their ability to recall memories of hidden tombs and reliquaries no longer visible that facilitated

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<sup>107</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, p. 124.

<sup>108</sup> The precise contents of the note are not recorded. Instead, it is summarised in the text. *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 120-1.

their refinding.<sup>109</sup> Setting aside the prospect that the brothers of Santo Stefano would have previously permitted building works that covered up tombs and reliquaries to take place, the author's close attention to the probative value of the monks' memories is indicative of his own working methods. He was not an eyewitness but he had access to the oral memory of those Santo Stefano monks who had been at the monastery on the day in question. He very likely consulted with his fellow brothers and from their verbal accounts constructed his own, taking into consideration what he had been told by the older monks, affected as it was by the lapses in human memory intentional or otherwise, omitting what he considered superfluous and adjusting the *Sermo* to correspond with the present-day architectural setting of the monastic complex.

When he came to compose the *Sermo*, the author was acutely aware of the problems posed by the monastery's claim that over one hundred relics, a sizeable number of which were known to be located elsewhere and had no recognised association with Santo Stefano, had been found within the confines of the complex. The medieval sceptic was not an unknown entity.<sup>110</sup> Such a contemporary example is provided by the celebrated Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Bologna, Boncompagno of Signa. Frustrated by the belief in the alleged miracles performed by the Dominican Friar John of Vicenza and the credulity of the Bolognese people, Boncompagno told the populace to assemble below the Monte della Guardia, the hill on which the Sanctuary of Madonna di San Luca sits atop, where they would be able to see him fly.<sup>111</sup> On the expected day, he appeared with a pair of fabricated wings like a thirteenth-century Icarus and stood at the peak for some time. After a prolonged period, he shouted to the crowd to disperse and sent them on their way with a 'divine blessing'. Salimbene of Parma, the chronicler who reported this tale, laconically notes the audience '*Et recesserunt cognoscentes se derisos*'.<sup>112</sup>

Conscious of the potential for disbelief, the medieval hagiographer often anticipated criticism and pre-emptively responded to any possible objections that could legitimately be raised as to the truthfulness of their account.<sup>113</sup> The writer of the Petronian *Sermo* was no different. The text is bookended with an explanation why the relics had lay hidden since Petronius' death:

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<sup>109</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 120-1.

<sup>110</sup> Susan Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities and the Cases of Medieval Scepticism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991), pp. 21-41.

<sup>111</sup> On John of Vicenza and the "Great Devotion" of 1233, see Augustine Thompson, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>112</sup> Salimbene, *Cronica*, vol. 1, p. 210.

<sup>113</sup> Steven Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?', *Representations* 103 (2008), pp. 1-29.



fear of their theft.<sup>114</sup> At the end of the *Sermo*, just before the final three reliquaries and their contents are listed, the author closes with a grand hypophoric flourish. Addressing Petronius, he questions the ancient bishop's seemingly paradoxical treatment of the relics. Why had Petronius taken great care to acquire so many precious objects and commission expensive reliquaries for their storage but at the same time hidden them from view and acted as if he 'considered them worthy of such shameful treatment'? He then answers:

'you [Petronius] subtracted from the robbers and the abductors the hope of stealing and the most iniquitous audacity of plundering, and you wanted the same place [Santo Stefano] to be guarded, always safe and unviolated'.<sup>115</sup>

Here is the explanation; or rather the hagiographer's attempt to allay any doubts about the relics' authenticity. Petronius had so successfully hidden the relics many centuries earlier that they had passed from human memory. He, however, had never intended for them to be forgotten forever. His written note, functioning 'almost as a testament', guaranteed their provenance and ensured that they would eventually be rediscovered at the opportune moment.<sup>116</sup>

What, then, made 1141 just such a moment? Although nowhere stated in the *Sermo*, the immediate cause of the *inventio* must have been the great fire that struck Bologna on 1 August. It wrought significant damage and its most high-profile casualty was the cathedral, when St Peter's was in flames on the feast day of St Peter in Chains.<sup>117</sup> There could not have been a more unfortunate symmetry for Bishop Enrico. The collective pain the Bolognesi would have felt at the sight of their *duomo* ablaze is all too easily comprehensible if one considers the Parisian anguish when Notre Dame burned in 2019. In order to distract the Bolognesi from this suffering, Enrico's decision to stage an *inventio* appears entirely logical.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, his motivation for organising the rediscovery of Petronius' relics so soon after the ruin of his episcopal church surely went beyond that of the benevolent prelate. Traditionally, the bishop of Bologna had been a relatively weak figure in comparison to other northern Italian

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<sup>114</sup> *Sermo de inventione*, pp. 120, 125-6.

<sup>115</sup> 'latronibus enim et raptoribus spem furandi et iniquissimam audaciam depredandi omnimodo sustulisti, ipsumque locum semper sanctum custodire et inviolatum voluisti'. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 126.

<sup>116</sup> 'quasi in testamento'. *Sermo de inventione*, p. 126.

<sup>117</sup> 'Bononia combusta est in festo sancti Petri in Vinculo, die primo augustii. Et combusta fuit nec non ecclesia sancti Petri'. *Cronica Villola*, vol. 2, p. 18; Matteo Griffoni, *Memoriale*, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Testi-Rasponi, 'Note marginali', (1911-12), pp. 201-2; *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. xvi-xvii; Orselli, *L'immaginario religioso*, pp. 453-4.

bishops. He had to compete with other secular and religious authorities, such as the counts of Canossa and the “counts of Bologna”, and the abbots of Nonantola and the archbishops of Ravenna, who all had rights and jurisdictions within the bishop’s diocese.<sup>119</sup> In an already fractured landscape, the bishop’s office witnessed a further diminution in both temporal and spiritual authority during the first stages of the Investiture Controversy when Bologna had two prelates, one loyal to Henry IV, the other to Pope Gregory VII and his successors. However, the position started to change after 1100 when the office was held by three very capable men: Bernardo (1096-1104), Vittore (1105-1129) and Enrico.<sup>120</sup> While never appearing as the representative of the city as other bishops like those of Milan and Pisa did, they succeeded in establishing for themselves a more prominent position in the city’s political life, and they legitimised the incipient commune by virtue of their office.

The fire struck at a particularly delicate time for Enrico. After he and his immediate predecessors had carved out a role for themselves in the nascent communal government, the loss of the cathedral church, and very likely the episcopal palace as well, was a political crisis that required an immediate response. Hence the discovery of Petronius’ relics two months later. As we will recall, Enrico had relocated his curia to Santo Stefano following the fire. Although the monastery had previously welcomed the pro-papal bishops of Bologna during the Investiture Controversy and had a well-established Jerusalem tradition, something more needed to be done to mitigate against the very obvious loss he had suffered. Accordingly, the finding of Petronius’ relics may well have been intended to serve not just as a distraction to the plight of the cathedral but as a reassertion of the important role the bishop played in the city’s affairs and as an act of ennobling Santo Stefano, his new temporary residence. Enrico, as we have seen, actively co-opted the Bolognese consuls and citizens into the *inventio*. The *Sermo*, whilst acknowledging the primary importance of Enrico in the matter, presents both Commune and Church working in harmony when organising the newly instituted feast day for Petronius. Moreover, the very many relics discovered at the monastery had a dual function, making up for those lost in the fire and further sanctifying Santo Stefano by their presence.

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<sup>119</sup> Milani, *Bologna*, p. 11; counts of Bologna is in parenthesis because Tiziana Lazzari has argued the Carolingians never established a *comitatus* at Bologna like they did elsewhere. Lazzari, “*Comitato*” *senza città*. Lazzari’s thesis has not been accepted by all, with notable critique by Antonio Ivan Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 166.

<sup>120</sup> Paolini, ‘La chiesa e la città’, pp. 663-5; Vasina, ‘Chiesa e comunità’, pp. 102-11.

In deciding to organise an *inventio* of Petronius' relics, Enrico had much source material to draw upon for inspiration. It has long been recognised that the cities and rural communes of central and northern Italy, and to a similar though lesser extent those of southern Italy, adopted examples of political and constitutional best practice from their neighbours.<sup>121</sup> This was, however, also true for their respective saints' cults, and it is entirely possible that Enrico considered recent instances of relic exposition or other forms of episcopal engagement with the cult of saints to inform his own activities at Bologna. Two nearby examples could be found at Modena and at Verona. For the former, the relics of St Geminianus were exhumed and translated into the city's new cathedral in 1106. Among those present at the ceremony were Pope Paschal II, Countess Matilda of Canossa, Bishop Dodo of Modena, Bishop Bonsenior of Reggio Emilia and all the Modenese.<sup>122</sup> For the latter, in 1138 the lunette of the western door of the Basilica of San Zeno was completed; on it, St Zeno is flanked by Verona's infantry and cavalry and the inscription reads that the saint 'gives to the people a standard worthy of defence'.<sup>123</sup> So while not suggesting a direct interrelationship between the events at Modena and Verona with those at Bologna, Enrico, like his episcopal counterparts, could have hardly failed to take register of precedents such as these. Two later such examples come from Padua and Lucca and provide further evidence of this politically inspired relic rediscovery. At the former in 1176, four years after a terrible fire, the relics of the virgin Justina, the apostle Mathias and St Luke were discovered. In 1197, the relics of Paulinus, bishop and martyr, Severus martyr and Theobald martyr were found in an *inventio*.<sup>124</sup> Whether these imitations were consciously performed or not, there is undoubtedly a similarity in spirit and a common mode of action that unites all five instances. The Bolognesi, like the residents of many other Italian cities in the central and later medieval period, were engaged in the adoption and promotion of saints' cults, both new and old.<sup>125</sup>

Returning to the specifically Bolognese context, we should pause for a moment to consider Enrico's choice of Petronius as the principal figure whose relics were found at Santo Stefano during the mass discovery. It is a question that has attracted very little attention in the

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<sup>121</sup> Wickham, 'Sulle origini', p. 216. On the cities of Southern Italy, Oldfield, *City and Community*.

<sup>122</sup> *Relatio translationis corporis Sancti Geminiani* (M.XC.IX-M.C.VI), ed. Giulio Bertoni (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1907).

<sup>123</sup> Gian Maria Varanini, *Verona* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2019), pp. 97-8; Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy*, p. 61.

<sup>124</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, pp. 76-8.

<sup>125</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*; Thompson, *Cities of God*; Paolo Golinelli, *Città e culto dei santi nel Medioevo italiano* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1996); Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage*.

scholarship; this is likely a consequence of the attempts to identify a proto-history of Petronius' cult that predates the *inventio*. Simply put, if there was a pre-existing cult then the choice of Petronius was obvious. But as it was observed above, there is no evidence that Petronius was recognised as a saint by the Bolognese prior to 1141. Consequently, the decision to stage an *inventio* of his relics appears somewhat enigmatic. However, the options available to Enrico were limited. Any recourse to Bologna's two established cults – Peter, and Vitalis and Agricola – was prevented by myriad factors. Starting with Peter: after the destruction of Bologna's cathedral, dedicated to Peter, and on one of his most important feast days, it would have been ill-advised to attempt to orchestrate a rediscovery of his relics in the immediate aftermath of such ill-fated portents. A second obstacle was Peter's connection to the papacy. As his successors, the popes in Rome jealously guarded his cult and would not tolerate new claims to the possession of Peter's relics originating outside of their auspices.<sup>126</sup> Lastly, Enrico had a duty to his episcopal church. Although in ruins, the cathedral would naturally be rebuilt and would almost certainly continue to be dedicated to Peter. So when works eventually commenced, which they did the year after Enrico's death in 1146, Bologna would have had two centres to Peter. If realised, this would have detracted from the cathedral's status as the sole Bolognese custodian of his relics and possibly as the centre of Christian worship in the city, a state of affairs no bishop could willingly permit.

Equally, the cult of Vitalis and Agricola was also unavailable to Enrico. The location of their relics was well-known and a celebrated translation of their remains into the newly built Church of San Giovanni Battista had been performed in 1019. To therefore claim that there were some further undiscovered relics of theirs in Santo Stefano would have stretched credibility too far for it to have been believable. In addition to this practical concern, the increasingly fractious relations between the Church of Bologna and the Church of Ravenna was a further obstacle to their expropriation by Enrico. Since the late eleventh century, Bologna's bishops had proactively worked to achieve independence from the Archbishop of Ravenna. It was a goal that was realised at the church council at Guastalla in 1106, although the decision was subsequently reversed by Pope Gelasius II in 1118. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the setback, the aspirations for separation from the metropolitan archdiocese persisted. In this context, it was not practical for Enrico to use the cult of Vitalis and Agricola

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<sup>126</sup> As we will see below, this was something the abbot and monks of Santo Stefano would learn at the turn of the fifteenth century when they claimed that the monastery possessed Peter's relics.

because Vitalis of Bologna was too similar to Vitalis of Ravenna for a Bolognese Church seeking to remove itself from Ravenna's authority.

Petronius, in contrast, was a promising candidate around which to construct an *inventio*. The Bolognese had access to documentation that attested to his holding of the episcopal see in the fifth century and there may have been some limited form of an oral tradition associated with his person, but beyond this Petronius was a blank canvas on to which Enrico could apply whatever he so wished. Enrico thus resolved that Petronius was an eminent previous occupant of his office, a determination which was intended to imbue with sanctity the seat and its incumbent bishop.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, a distinguished and highly esteemed former colleague who was a great church builder and collector of relics was more reflective of contemporary concerns for both bishop and Commune alike. Martyrs as witnesses to the faith had undeniably always been and continued to be the most important category of saints.<sup>128</sup> Yet for a self-assertive Bologna, a powerful prelate who was a symbol of authority and an active participant in civic life rather than the tragic victim of another power precisely captured the zeitgeist.

Insofar as it has been possible to determine what happened at Santo Stefano in early October 1141 and understand the inner complexities of the *inventio*, it is apparent that Bishop Enrico did his very best to furnish Bologna with a new saint in whom the Bolognesi could identify with at a time of pressing need. In cooperation with communal officials, Enrico orchestrated a celebrated and very public discovery of the relics of an illustrious former occupant of Bologna's episcopal throne and ensured that this message was widely disseminated throughout his diocese. In doing so, Enrico had overseen the creation of two essential components for a successful saint's cult: a body, and the name and feast day. Yet for all his preparatory work, in the period between the *inventio* and his death in 1145, Enrico failed to author or sponsor the writing of a hagiography for Petronius, the third and arguably most important constituent element of a cult.<sup>129</sup> Why Enrico failed to do so is puzzling, but the reason for this oversight is ultimately unknowable. And with the immediate absence of any literary commemoration, the evidence of a Petronian cult for forty years after the *inventio* is sparse: in total, the inclusion in Pope Lucius II's bull of 1144 and the passing reference at an unspecified date to his feast day in the first of Vitalis' and Agricola's miracles. So despite the

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<sup>127</sup> Maureen C. Miller, *The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 132.

<sup>128</sup> Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 175.

<sup>129</sup> Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 102-3.

promising beginnings, it would appear that with the passing of Enrico and the rebuilding of the city's cathedral in 1146, interest in Petronius' cult faded outside of Santo Stefano. The next stage in its development, the production of hagiographic writings, was to come at another critical moment in Bologna's history. Unlike the cult's creation, this time the impetus came not from the city's bishop but an anonymous monk of Santo Stefano. It is to that *Vita* we will turn in the next chapter.

#### iv. Conclusion

Very little can be known about the life of Bishop Petronius of Bologna. Information provided by the two contemporary or near contemporary authors, Eucherius of Lyon and Gennadius of Marseille, fix his time of office and date of death to sometime between c.432/50.

Archaeological evidence, references in the letters and *Vita* of St Ambrose, and a passage from Gregory of Tours might indicate Petronius played some role in building or remodelling the Santo Stefano monastic complex. Further circumstantial information may point to a father-son relationship between the episcopal *Petronii* of Verona and Bologna and two surviving sermons may record evidence of their respective preaching activities. Yet many of the later grand claims made for Petronius, from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem to his completion of the Christianisation of Bologna, are simply unverifiable. Other than being a former occupant of the city's episcopal office and perhaps the first builder of the Santo Stefano monastic complex, what Petronius may or may not have done during his lifetime is of little significance to the later Petronian cult. When his cult and subsequent legend were created, they bore little relation to Petronius the man. Acknowledging that there was really no connection in historical reality between Petronius the man and Petronius the saint is essential for a proper understanding of the dynamics of the cult in the later Middle Ages.

When Petronius died in c.432/50, no evidence suggests that he immediately became the focus of a cult. Indeed, Petronius only became a saint hundreds of years after his death in the fifth century. Other saints such as St Peter and Ss. Vitalis and Agricola were preferred by the Bolognesi. It was only in 1141, after the city's cathedral was destroyed in a fire, that the Petronian cult was born. The creation of the ancient bishop's cult happened at the same time that two of Bologna's other most prominent institutions, the Commune and the *Studium*, were coming into formation. Under the guidance of Bishop Enrico, who was using Santo Stefano as his temporary base, the long-lost relics of Petronius were discovered at the monastery. In collaboration with the monastery's abbot and the incipient communal authorities, the

discovery was then announced to the Bolognesi and a feast day was instituted. Enrico successfully spliced the long-standing Bolognese tradition of replicating the Holy City with the new cult. But for all of Enrico's efforts, he did not write or cause to be written a hagiography for his former colleague. And with his death, the bishops of Bologna seem to lose interest in the Petronian cult. In their place, it was the abbots and brothers of Santo Stefano who supplied the ancient bishop with a written commemoration some forty years later. That hagiography, the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, shall now be our concern.

## Chapter 2 – The First Hagiography: The *Vita Sancti Petronii*

The Latin hagiography of Petronius, the subject of this chapter, stands at the very heart of the Petronian cult. In consequence, it merits close investigation in order to demonstrate just how pivotal a role it played in shaping Petronius' reputation at Bologna and the subsequent influence it would later exercise in the coming centuries. The goal of this chapter, then, is threefold: firstly, to set out the main outline of the legend preserved in the *Vita Sancti Petronii*; secondly, to consider issues of authorship, including by when and by whom the hagiography was written, and investigate the textual relationship between the Latin *Vita Sancti Petronii* and the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio*; thirdly, to read the Latin hagiography to see what it can tell us about Bolognese politics and society in the late twelfth century.

To that end, opening our discussion is a short precis of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*. Without a summary of the text, what follows has the potential to confuse given that the narrative jumps around and almost the entirety of it is fictitious but features otherwise well attested figures with no known association with Petronius of Bologna. Additionally, since the *Vita* contains the essential framework of the ancient bishop's hagiographical legend, having it clearly presented at the beginning of our analysis on the late medieval cult is worthwhile. In this chapter and chapters three and four, there will be frequent reference to various deeds Petronius was said to have performed. A sound understanding of the legend will enable the reader to follow the discussion without issue. Once completed, the second part of the chapter will focus on the fundamentals of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, in turn examining authorship, date of production, and whether it was based on a now lost original which the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio* more faithfully preserves. The answers to certain of these questions are relatively straightforward. We will see the *Vita's* author was almost certainly a monk from Santo Stefano, who wrote the hagiography at some point between the narrow window of c. 1177-80. A thornier problem is whether there was an earlier saint's biography of Petronius on which our text is based. We shall argue strongly in favour of the traditional view that the Stefanian *Vita* was the first and oldest hagiography, thereby restoring the *Vita Sancti Petronii* to its rightful place in the Petronian canon. Beyond this, recognising that it was a monk from Santo Stefano who wrote the original *Vita* is an important point when gauging the popularity of Petronius at this time and when thinking about the ownership or sponsorship of



his cult by various sub-strata of the Bolognesi. Section three, the bulk of the chapter, will be a critical examination of the *Vita*. Here the findings from chapter one on the ‘historical’ Petronius will pay dividends. When reading the hagiography, we know not to look for faint glimmers of historical truth otherwise unrecorded but nonetheless transmitted somehow from Petronius’ death in c.432-50 up to the writing of the *Vita* in the late twelfth century. On the contrary, going through the text in a non-sequential fashion we shall examine the *Vita* in light of its immediate historical context. Setting aside hagiographical topoi, meaning in the hagiography shall be found as it relates to the experiences of Bolognese citizens in the 1160s and 1170s. In doing so, our approach will recognise the *Vita* as a work of immense value for the historian of late twelfth century Bologna; one which contains a wealth of information on a great number of subjects, some of which would appear to be quite independent of Petronius’ cult. More generally, our analysis of the *Vita Sancti Petronii* will achieve two things. It will demonstrate the efficacy of the method here employed, recognising how hagiography could be used to articulate contemporary socio-political needs. Secondly, it will confirm one of the central contentions of this thesis: that in the cities of medieval Europe, sanctity and politics were two inseparable phenomena. No medieval urban community can truly be understood without a full and proper appreciation of the role the cult of saints played in city life.

### i. The *Vita Sancti Petronii* in summary

The *Vita* begins with Petronius’ birth.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Greece to Christian parents, who ensured that he received an education in the liberal arts and theology, in both Greek and Latin. Petronius was descended from three Roman Emperors: Constantius II (r.337-61), Constantine II (r. 337-40) and Constans (r. 337-50). His unnamed sister married Emperor Theodosius II (r. 402-50), making him Petronius’ brother-in-law.<sup>2</sup> As Petronius reached manhood, he devoted himself to a life of Christ and was held in the highest regard by Theodosius II and the people of Constantinople. In response to a heresy, Theodosius II dispatched Petronius as an imperial ambassador to Rome, where Pope Celestine I (r. 422-432) was convening a church council. The day before Petronius’ arrival, St Peter visited

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<sup>1</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 94-119.

<sup>2</sup> Eventually Petronius’ sister would acquire a name: Eudocia. This attribution first appears in the humanist author Zaccaria Enrichetti’s *Vita Petronii ep. Bononiensis*. More knowledgeable about Late Antiquity than his hagiographical predecessors, Enrichetti knew that Emperor Theodosius I’s wife was called Eudocia, and so according to the logic of the hagiographical tale this must have been Petronius’ sister. Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 145-6; Frazier, *Possible Lives*, p. 51, 377.

Celestine in a dream to advise him of Bishop Felix of Bologna's death and instructed the pope to name Petronius as Felix's successor. During the church council, the Bolognese contingent arrived at Rome. Celestine informed them of his dream and with their encouragement, Petronius reluctantly became their bishop and was anointed by Celestine. Once consecrated, Petronius travelled to Bologna, where he found the city in ruins, it having been earlier destroyed by Emperor Theodosius I. His first act was to construct Santo Stefano, modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other sacred sites in Jerusalem.

The legend then jumps backwards in time to when Theodosius I was emperor (r. 379-395). He had dispatched officials to every city in his empire to collect taxes and the privileges owed to him. His official at Bologna antagonised the local population and they murdered him in anger. Theodosius I wanted revenge. He used the pretext of his nephew's death, who was not the legate and up to this point had been unmentioned in the *Vita*, to gain entry to the city under the promise of peace. While the funeral was underway, the Emperor's army erupted into violence; many citizens were killed or captured, and Bologna was destroyed. Devastation wrought, Theodosius I set out for Milan. St Ambrose, hearing of this, denied the Emperor entry, excommunicated him and ordered he rebuild Bologna. Ambrose's edict was carved into marble and added to Bologna's only surviving wall.

Back to Petronius' present. He rebuilt Bologna with funds from the imperial treasury. Overseeing building activities, Petronius performed a miracle to save an injured labourer. He left the city to return to Constantinople. While there, he absolved from penance a man from Capua who had killed his city's prince during factional infighting. Petronius took his leave of Constantinople. Before departing, Theodosius II gave Petronius many sacred relics. Petronius was welcomed by the Bolognese. He spent many more years as their bishop and died peacefully, a true confessor of Christ. Petronius was buried at Santo Stefano, and his *Vita* concludes with an ode to Bologna's many saints.

## ii. The textual relationship between the Petronian *Vitae*

The *Vita Sancti Petronii*, a combination of prose and verse, was written by an anonymous author, who was almost certainly a monk of Santo Stefano, at some point between 1164 and 1180, but more precisely 1177 and 1180.<sup>3</sup> It is divided into three discrete sections: the

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<sup>3</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 47-8; Filippini, *S. Petronio*, p. 4; Pini, *Città Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 207, 261; Orselli, *L'immaginario*, p. 206, 440; Golinelli, 'Santi e culti bolognesi', p. 11.

*Prologus*, the *Vita*, and the *Sermo de inventione sanctorum reliquiarum*, the last of which we have already discussed in the preceding chapter.<sup>4</sup> Its *terminus ante quem* is easily determined by the presence of a colophon at folio 330r of BUB MS. 1473, the oldest surviving manuscript of the hagiography.<sup>5</sup> It reads that the legendary was completed by 14 or 15 November 1180: ‘on the Friday four days after the feast of St Martin the Bishop’ during the eighteenth year of Landolfo’s abbacy.<sup>6</sup> The *Vita*’s *terminus post quem* can be discerned from information contained within the hagiography itself. Principally, this relates to the murder of an imperial official in the narrative, an event which did in fact occur at Bologna in 1164.<sup>7</sup> A further narrative clue to its dating is suggested by the declaration that Bologna is a city free from all external political interference. A statement such as this plausibly would follow the victory of the Lombard League over Barbarossa at Legnano in 1176 and the Treaty of Venice in 1177.<sup>8</sup> On this basis, we can be fairly sure the anonymous scribe put quill to parchment during this narrow window, specifically 1177-80.

A more vexed question is whether this monastic hagiographer’s *Vita* was an original composition or a doctored version of a now lost hagiographic exemplar. In his classic work on Petronius, Lanzoni identified the Latin *Vita* in the Santo Stefano legendary as the Petronian “first edition” and argued that the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio* was a text indebted to but independent from the Latin archetype, produced at some point in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Latin first and Old Italian second was accepted until Maria Corti published her edition of the Old Italian *Vita* in 1962. In its introduction, she argued the reverse: that is, although the manuscript tradition of it is less ancient and the narrative includes information from the thirteenth century, in its essence the Old Italian *Vita* more faithfully transmits another lost Latin hagiography older than the surviving Latin *Vita*, which itself is also based on this now defunct text. This lost *Vita*, it is suggested, was also authored after 1164 but before 1177-80 as the surviving Latin *Vita* was based on it; and since the Old Italian *Vita*, once the later thirteenth century embellishments are pruned from the text, carries

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<sup>4</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 40; Lodi, *San Petronio*, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Printed in *Vitale e Agricola*, p. 199.

<sup>7</sup> *Cronaca Villola*, vol. 2, p. 35; *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 48; Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 207. On the Treaty of Venice, see Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 401-19.

<sup>9</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 39-48.

the authentic Petronian tradition, it follows that this vernacular *Vita* is our guide to the oldest literary commemoration of Petronius.<sup>10</sup>

Corti's arguments in support of this hypothesis can be neatly summarised: firstly, compared to the Latin text, the Old Italian *Vita* has a much more logical narrative. This is a sign that the monastic scribe violently interrupted the tale as it unfolded in the Latin *Vita* to stress the centrality of Santo Stefano in the Petronian legend.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, reference is repeatedly made in the Old Italian *Vita* to an '*Instoria*' in which details about Petronius' life could be read. The '*Instoria*' is not the surviving Latin *Vita* but the lost hagiographic exemplar.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, in the Latin *Vita* Petronius is said to be related to two Roman emperors when in fact three are named, whereas in the vernacular he is related to three and there is no such confusion. The later scribe correctly copied the story from the lost text but the monk from Santo Stefano committed a grave error of transcription by writing he was related only to two whilst still writing three names.<sup>13</sup> Fourthly, the Latin *Vita* contains a Petronian miracle story but the Old Italian *Vita* does not. As miracle stories tended to multiply in later versions of hagiographic texts, the surviving Latin one must be a later version of the original *Vita* because it is absent from the Old Italian *Vita*.<sup>14</sup>

Since its publication, Corti's thesis has divided opinion. Many Bolognese historians, including Antonio Ivan Pini, have accepted her conclusions and now routinely make reference to a third Petronian hagiography or the lost *Instoria sancti Petronii*.<sup>15</sup> Others though, such as Alba Maria Orselli and Mario Fanti, have expressed reservations about the so-called lost hagiography and instead maintain that the *Vita Sancti Petronii* was the first Petronian *Vita*.<sup>16</sup> To my mind, the latter or "traditionalists" are correct; there is no sound reason to speculate, let alone assert, the contrary. In explanation, it may be that Pini's willingness to embrace the idea that an earlier now lost Petronian hagiography existed was connected to his arguments regarding the belated formation of a Bolognese civic sentiment. In his article on the subject, he described the Latin *Vita* as 'being in the Bolognese cultural context of the time, a fruit out of season'.<sup>17</sup> By this, he suggested that the *Vita Sancti*

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<sup>10</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. ix-xxxix.

<sup>11</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>12</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>13</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 3 n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Alluded to by Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>15</sup> Zarri, 'The Church', p. 362; Pini, *Città, Chiesa e Culti Civici*, pp. 200-1, 251

<sup>16</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 227-41; Fanti, 'Petronio!', pp. 130-1.

<sup>17</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e Culti Civici*, p. 194.

*Petronii*, the only surviving example of urban praise at Bologna for this period, appears rather late, towards the end of the twelfth century. Given that Bologna was home to the continent's first university and was a rich and intellectually vibrant city, the absence of an example of this kind of text is puzzling; and so, surely there must have been an earlier manifestation of civic pride in literary form, originating either from the city's bishop or its cathedral chapter. If, therefore, there was an earlier Petronian hagiography then Bologna's urban praise tradition appears less stagnant by comparison, something which was more befitting a city of its status.

As much as one considers the existence of a now lost Latin *Vita* highly probable or even desirable, there is just no solid evidence to support the position. In negation, much of the heavy lifting has been done by Orselli and Fanti. As has been convincingly argued, the allusion to an '*Instoria*' in the vernacular *Vita* is in all probability to the extant Latin hagiography.<sup>18</sup> For the '*Instoria*'s reference at '*passim*' in the index, it is only cited three times in the text: twice at the beginning of the hagiography in relation to Petronius' family origins and once more for the emperor's machinations regarding the burial of his nephew.<sup>19</sup> All of this information is there in the surviving Latin *Vita* and there is no reason to read beyond it for a lost Petronian archetype. Neither is there any grounds to suspect that the monk from Santo Stefano would have excluded information from the "exemplar" if it would have been to Petronius' benefit.<sup>20</sup> With regards to the uncertainty over two or three emperors, the manuscript tradition shows that the original '*ex imperiali diuorum regum*' had subsequently been altered to '*duorum regum*'; hence the confusion.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the miracle story. Given that in later hagiographical works material tended to be added rather than subtracted, its featuring in the Latin but not the Old Italian *Vita* might be the strongest point in support of Corti's hypothesis. In reply, it has been suggested that this element of the story might have been unique to Santo Stefano and was consequently trimmed from the later Old Italian *Vita*, which was the work of a Bolognese layman.<sup>22</sup>

To this critique, I would add one further observation and nuance another. When one reads the Latin hagiography, there is no denying the *Vita* has an awkward narrative structure that does not unfold in a chronological manner. Petronius is born; he reaches adulthood; he is dispatched as an imperial ambassador to Rome, where he is duly elected Bishop of Bologna;

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<sup>18</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, p. 231

<sup>19</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 3, 19, 89; Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 229-36.

<sup>20</sup> Fanti, 'Petronio!', p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 236-8.

<sup>22</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 239-40.

he constructs Santo Stefano. Once the monastery's glories are described in great detail, the account then jumps back in time to Bologna's destruction. After this is recounted, the narrative arc returns to Petronius as bishop. Further building activities and foreign travels are recorded, and the *Vita* finishes with Petronius' death, peacefully at a grand old age. Unusual, yes, but not so extraordinary to justify the existence of a now vanished template. Indeed, the early emphasis on the monastery in the *Vita* is not an interjection of additional material into an otherwise already well-crafted narrative. On the contrary, it is an obvious statement of the monk's priorities. At the *inventio*, Bishop Enrico had attributed Santo Stefano's foundation to Petronius and so the scribe's focus on the monastery, the custodian of his relics, is not without reason. Irrespective of narrative cohesion, among Petronius' list of achievements Santo Stefano had to take pride of place.

Concomitant to this temporal flitting, the monastic author had a very particular writing style. For him, interruption was no vice. A similar pause in the narrative occurs in the *Sermo de inventione*, where the establishment of Petronius' feast day lies sandwiched between the many acts of relic discovery. For the monk, his main objective in writing the *Sermo* had been to record the creation of this solemnity. Likewise, in the *Vita* the monk was always going to prioritise Santo Stefano, quite literally his and Petronius' home. Once the necessary preparatory biographical work had been accomplished, a lengthy and very detailed description of the monastery is at the centre of the hagiography. Only afterwards could the monk turn to other matters, and it is this rather than an early Petronian template which explains the *Vita*'s somewhat cumbersome structure.

The absence of the miracle story is acknowledged as the strongest argument in favour of a lost hagiographic exemplar. In hagiographies, miracles should multiply. But instead of seeing the miracle performed by Petronius as being something that was unique to his legend at Santo Stefano, the answer to its excision in the vernacular *Vita* could lie in differences arising from the two authors' knowledge of the genre. The monastic scribe was deeply learned and had read many other saints' lives and other hagiographical works. He knew Gennadius of Marseille's *De viris illustribus*, the *Vitae patrum*, Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Sancti Martini*, Ambrose's *Exhortatio virginitatis*, the *Gesta Sancti Silvestri papae*, the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, Agnellus of Ravenna's *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, the *Vita Sancti Prosperi* and Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*.<sup>23</sup> From his study, he would have

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<sup>23</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 75-80; Lanzoni, 'Le fonti', pp. 269-77; Lodi, *San Petronio*, p. 88, 96, 98.

understood the function of a miracle as an essential literary motif in the demonstration of the individual's sanctity; so he included one. Conversely, the author of the later Old Italian *Vita*, in all likelihood a layman without the same depth of learning as his monastic predecessor, did not possess the detailed knowledge of the subject and its literary expectations. When he came to write his version of Petronius' life, he was not bridled by the conventions of the hagiographic genre and so removed the story of the saved labourer from his account, unaware that in doing so he had subtracted one of the key components of a conventional *Vita*. It is also the case that, by the time the vernacular hagiographer was writing, the cult and sanctity of Petronius was established: being so, arguably there was no need to include miracle stories such as this one in the *Vita di San Petronio*.

In short, there exists no arguable basis on which to postulate a lost Petronian exemplar which served as a template for the Latin and Old Italian *Vitae*. Perhaps a discursion, but nonetheless an important one, for the implications of accepting a lost hagiography are significant. If one had existed and had been sponsored by either the Commune or the bishop, then it would suggest far greater levels of support for Petronius' cult in the immediate aftermath of the *inventio* than we have accounted for. But there was neither the popular devotion nor the '*Instoria*'. For whatever reason, the cult's initial dynamism faded into abeyance in the city everywhere except Santo Stefano, where a new tomb was built to house Petronius' relics. Gifted a new saint by Enrico, Santo Stefano now became Petronius' primary promoter, although they too acted rather slowly. Whether it was anxiety caused by having a saint with no *Vita* or if the scribe or his commissioner was spurred on by the momentous events of the 1160s and 1170s, the obvious lacuna was finally filled. And when it was, the monk had at his disposal earlier non-Petronian hagiographical literature and an oral history which had developed since the 1141 *inventio*, but nothing more.

### iii. The *Vita Sancti Petronii* in context

Having established that, surviving or otherwise, the *Vita Sancti Petronii* was Petronius' first literary commemoration, our focus will now be on the hagiography itself. As a work of biography, the *Vita* is of little value and will disappoint any who read it in the hope of discovering detail about Petronius' life; yet for the historian of late twelfth century Bologna, it is of enormous interest. In it, the contemporary history of the city is writ large, and a careful examination of the information contained within reveals much about how the

Bolognese, or at least the monks of Santo Stefano, conceived of their city and articulated aspirations of communal autonomy and civic pride.

Preceding the *Vita* proper is a short *Prologus*, which can briefly be dealt with for in it there is little of interest. It opens with a complaint: namely, many people ignore the word of God and his commandments. Instead, great thought and attention is spent philosophising and writing long, nugatory treatises on pagans, the capture of Troy and the miserable end of King Priam and his noble house.<sup>24</sup> Grievance concluded, the author then embarks on a providential history that runs from the Fall of Man, through David, Mary's conception of Christ, Christ's Ministry, Passion and Resurrection, ending with Christ's appearance to his disciples and His instruction for them to preach the Gospel.<sup>25</sup> There is no mention of Petronius or Bologna. It affords the monk the opportunity to demonstrate his dexterity with the Latin language and his knowledge of classical mythology and the Bible, and not much else.

When the monk came to write Petronius' *Vita*, Bologna and her allies in the Lombard League, along with Pope Alexander III, had recently defeated Frederick Barbarossa at Legnano and agreed to a six-year truce with the Emperor at Venice in 1177. In 1183, the agreement was formally recognised at the Peace of Constance and almost three decades of intermittent warfare was concluded.<sup>26</sup> However, the long years of fighting had not left Bologna unscathed. It is this conflict between Barbarossa and Bologna that provided the hagiographer with the source material on which to base his account of Petronius' life.

In the *Vita*, the parallels between the deeds of the evil Emperor Theodosius I and the actions of Barbarossa are many. As a starting point, the causes of the hostilities between Bologna and the emperors are the same. According to the hagiographer, the 'most wicked' Theodosius I sent an imperial official to Bologna and other nearby cities in order to collect the '*regalia* and tributes' owed to him.<sup>27</sup> It was this same concern - the recognition of his *regalia* – that had in part motivated Barbarossa in his dealings with the communes of northern and central Italy. Whenever the Hohenstaufen Emperor made pacts with cities and rural lords, the oaths of fidelity typically required the swearer to never threaten his *regalia* and do everything within

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<sup>24</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 86

<sup>25</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 86-93.

<sup>26</sup> Fasoli, 'La lega lombarda', pp. 257-92; Raccagni, *The Lombard League*; Grillo, *Legnano 1176*; Grillo, *Le guerre del Barbarossa*.

<sup>27</sup> 'Ad hanc vero tam preclaram urbem direxerat imperator cariorem sibi, quatenus regalia tributa ex vicinis civitatibus colligeret'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109



their power to assist Barbarossa in reclaiming them if unlawfully appropriated by another.<sup>28</sup> In 1158, Barbarossa called the Diet of Roncaglia so that, with the assistance of scholars, their meaning could be explicated.<sup>29</sup> After his destruction of Milan in 1162, Barbarossa came to ‘expect *regalia* and tributes’ from the subjugated cities of northern Italy and the issue of *regalia* was the fundamental sticking point between parties in the lead up to Venice in 1177.<sup>30</sup> *Regalia* was, therefore, of critical importance; the monk from Santo Stefano’s decision to attribute this policy to Theodosius I and his use of the specific term cannot have been accidental. It had been the Four Doctors of Bologna’s *Studium* who Barbarossa consulted at Roncaglia and there was little chance the hagiographer did not know this.<sup>31</sup> Those Bolognesi who either read or heard the *Vita* would have understood by reference to these very recent and public events that the author, through his extended metaphor of Barbarossa/ Theodosius I, was using the cover of the legend to attack the Hohenstaufen Emperor’s demands and ultimately show the error of his ways by reference to the example of the good emperor, Theodosius II.

The similarities continue. When Theodosius I’s official reached Bologna in pursuit of the imperial *regalia*, he behaved arrogantly and alienated the Bolognesi. Despite having done nothing wrong, on a certain day the official had one of the leading residents of the city whipped. The flogging sparked a revolt and in the tumult one of the Bolognesi murdered Theodosius’ functionary.<sup>32</sup> By featuring this event in Petronius’ hagiography, the monk was again drawing upon events in Bologna’s recent past. In the late 1150s and early 1160s, Barbarossa was at the apex of his power in Italy. With the humbling of Milan and the other cities that opposed him, Barbarossa imposed imperial podestà on his defeated opponents and they governed at his discretion. One such podestà was appointed at Bologna: Bezo. Although the circumstances behind it are unclear, in 1164 Bezo was killed by an artisan in the city’s

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<sup>28</sup> See the oath sworn by Verona, Mantua, Cremona and Pavia in 1158. *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 3.19, pp. 195-6.

<sup>29</sup> *Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, 3.46, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup> *Romualdi Salernitani Chronicon*, ed. C. A. Garufi, RIS 7.1 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1935), pp. 249-50; *Boso’s Life of Alexander III*, trans. G. M. Ellis with an introduction by Peter Munz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 105-6.

<sup>31</sup> Acerbus and Otto Morena, ‘*Libellus de rebus a Frederico imperatore gestis*’, in *Italische Quellen über die Taten Kaiser Friedrichs I. in Italien und der Brief über den Kreuzzug Kaiser Friedrichs I.*, ed. and trans. Franz-Josef Schmale (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), pp. 88-91; Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 138-9, 231-9.

<sup>32</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109.

hinterland.<sup>33</sup> His murder clearly had a profound impact on the Bolognesi since the execution of an imperial official featured in another Bolognese hagiographical text written at a similar time: that of St Proculus.<sup>34</sup> The monk's decision to make reference to it in Petronius' *Vita*, and specifically in the manner he did, served a clear purpose: to explain and atone for Bologna's earlier murder of Barbarossa's podestà. In both legend and real life, it had been the arbitrary and despotic actions of the emperor and his officials that had pushed Bologna into conflict with him. They did not, in principle, deny the rights of an emperor as their sovereign; they did, however, object to what they considered the overly oppressive interference in the affairs of city life, affairs now managed by local magistrates accountable to the city's propertied population. On this reading, the exculpatory story of the innocent Bolognese disgraced by imperial officialdom was one way of expressing the troubled relationship that existed between the communal cities of northern Italy and Barbarossa, which at the time of writing had yet to be resolved.

Once Theodosius learned of his official's death, he wanted to exact revenge on Bologna. In order to do so, he used the pretext of his nephew's death to enter the city. He sent an ambassador to the Bolognesi to advise them of his loss and requested that his nephew be buried in the bishop's palace, as befitting his royal status. The Bolognesi, having been assured of the emperor's peaceful intentions, gladly welcomed the body into the city, accompanied by Theodosius and his army. In anticipation of their arrival, the citizens had made all necessary preparations and earnestly received Theodosius, as was custom.<sup>35</sup>

Although Bologna did not fall victim to a deception such as this in the twelfth century, imperial visits and their ceremony would have been familiar to its citizens. In 1155, Barbarossa had pitched his camp on the banks of the Reno, just outside Bologna, and the citizens rushed out to give him and his soldiers gifts.<sup>36</sup> Four years later Barbarossa billeted troops in the city and its surrounding area, and in February 1167 the Hohenstaufen Emperor

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<sup>33</sup> For the Bolognese chroniclers, see above. Further detail is added by the Modenese chronicler Bonifacio da Morano. Bonifacio da Morano, *Chronica circularis*, in *Cronache Modenesi di Alessandro Tassoni, di Giovanni da Bazzano e di Bonifazio Morano*, ed. L. Vischi, T. Sandonnini, and O. Raselli (Modena: Società Tipografica, 1888), pp. 16-7.

<sup>34</sup> There are three Proculian hagiographies. Two are for Proculus the soldier, one in verse and one in prose. The third is for Proculus the bishop and martyr. All are printed in Melloni, *Atti e Memorie degli uomini illustri in santità*, vol. 1, pp. 279-83, 502-7. The manuscript which Melloni consulted in the eighteenth century no longer survives. The two *Passio sancti Proculi (militis)* have Proculus kill the praetorian prefect Marinus before himself being martyred. On Proculus' cult, see Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 233-79; Mario Fanti, *San Procolo: la chiesa, l'abbazia: leggenda e storia* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1963); Lodi, *I santi della Chiesa bolognese*, pp. 31-6; Golinelli, 'Santi e culti', pp. 23-6.

<sup>35</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> *Barbarossa in Italy*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Carson (New York: Italica Press, 1994), vv. 452-503, p. 16

again spent several days at Bologna before making his way towards Rome – taking Bolognese hostages prior to his departure.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the hagiographer filled his narrative with detail that would have been instantly recognisable to his audience, thereby reinforcing the comparison he was making between the two emperors.

Nowhere in the *Vita* is the connection between Barbarossa and Theodosius I more apparent than in the attack on Bologna and the destruction of its walls. The trap sprung, Theodosius' army erupted into violence during his nephew's funeral and caught the Bolognese unprepared. In the *Vita*, the author spares no detail in describing the magnitude of the damage Theodosius was supposed to have caused. His soldiers killed many citizens and captured others. Indeed: 'the whole city was plundered and devastated by fire. Bologna's tall walls, its towers and its palaces, along with its churches of God, were destroyed down to their foundations'.<sup>38</sup> For Bologna, the consequences of the attack were so significant that Petronius had to spend his episcopacy rebuilding the city.

Of course, this never happened. Yet in ascribing these deeds to Theodosius, the *Vita*'s author cleverly combined well-known historical events - though with some adjustment – and his city's contemporary history to further continue his thinly veiled criticism of Barbarossa. Theodosius I did not destroy Bologna, but he infamously ordered his army to massacre a sizeable proportion of the civilian population of Thessalonica in April 390.<sup>39</sup> Presumably the monk had this in mind when writing the Petronian *Vita*. And, given the conceit running through the hagiography, it should now come as no surprise that Barbarossa had committed similar deeds in the late twelfth century. In March 1162, after accepting its surrender, Barbarossa had Milan evacuated and destroyed. He made sure the city's *carroccio* was dismantled, part of its gates and walls pulled down and the cathedral tower demolished.<sup>40</sup> In April, Brescia surrendered and its citizens agreed to the destruction of its fortifications; in May, so too did Piacenza, its moat filled in and its walls dismantled. In June, Barbarossa marched to Bologna. In the face of the imperial army and cognisant of the Emperor's actions at Milan, Bologna also capitulated. Its castles on either side of the Reno were seized and its

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<sup>37</sup> Hessel, *Storia di città di Bologna*, p. 52, 57.

<sup>38</sup> 'Civium enim alios interemerunt, alios catenis vinxerunt, totamque urbem preda et igne vastaverunt; alta menia urbis, turres et palatia, insuper Dei aecclesias a fundamentis destruxerunt'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 315-23.

<sup>40</sup> Acerbus and Otto Morena, *Libellus de rebus a Frederico imperatore gestis*, pp. 176-80; Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 276-90; Grillo, *Legnano 1176*, pp. 26-7; Grillo, *Le guerre del Barbarossa*, pp. 104-7.

walls and moat were likewise dealt with. In the following months, the same fate befell Imola and Faenza.<sup>41</sup>

Each of these instances of wall destruction would have had a major impact on the citizens of the respective localities. For the inhabitant of a medieval city, their walls were imbued with a much richer cultural meaning beyond that of their primary function as a defensive structure. They were a status symbol; they delineated the boundaries between urban and rural space; and they were an important feature in the construction of a civic identity since they quite literally surrounded the city and encompassed everything within.<sup>42</sup> So their destruction at Bologna and the other named places by Barbarossa were events of some significance. Almost certainly the monks of Santo Stefano would have witnessed their levelling at Bologna and the fresh memory of their symbolic destruction served as one of the key narrative points in the Petronian *Vita*.

Bologna destroyed, the not so subtle allegory of Theodosius/Barbarossa which the hagiographer was developing at some length continues. With it in ruins, Theodosius departs from the city and makes his way towards Milan. However, before the emperor made it to Milan news of his destruction of Bologna reached Ambrose. The bishop, acting on behalf of ‘the party of God and St Peter, in whose name the Church of Bologna is honoured’ (*ex parte Dei et sancti Petri, cuius vocabulo bononiensis aecclesia decoratur*), forbade Theodosius from entering the city and excommunicated him for his actions at Bologna. The terms of the excommunication required the emperor to rebuild the city – a task we are told he barely undertook – and stipulated that no man of the emperor could enter Bologna except under the penalty of death. Ambrose then ordered his edict to be carved on a marble stone and mounted onto Bologna’s eastern wall, which conveniently was the only section to have survived unharmed from Theodosius’ rage. Less fortunately, at the time of writing the hagiographer reported that, as a consequence of many fires, most of the edict’s fragments were now lost.<sup>43</sup>

In featuring Theodosius’ excommunication in Petronius’ *Vita*, the monastic author again demonstrated his ability to manipulate the history of Late Antiquity and his present in furtherance of his condemnation of Barbarossa. Theodosius had famously been denied

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<sup>41</sup> Acerbus and Otto Morena, *Libellus de rebus a Frederico imperatore gestis*, pp. 180-5; Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 291-3; Grillo, *Legnano 1176*, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Sara Menzinger, ‘Mura e identità civica in Italia e in Francia meridionale (secc. XII-XIV)’, in Sara Menzinger (ed.), *Cittadinanze medievali: dinamiche di appartenenza a un corpo comunitario* (Rome: Viella, 2017), pp. 65-109.

<sup>43</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 111-2.

communion by Ambrose, not for attacking Bologna, but for his actions at Thessalonica. Ambrose had allegedly prevented the emperor from entering Milan's churches and enforced an eight-month long penance on him.<sup>44</sup> In a similar fashion, Barbarossa, following his convening of the Council of Pavia in 1160 and recognition of (Anti-)Pope Victor IV during the papal schism, was excommunicated by Pope Alexander III.<sup>45</sup> Comparison of the twin excommunicants complete, under the guise of Petronius' legendary deeds the hagiographer was able to implicitly criticise Barbarossa for his ruining of Bologna's walls and was bold enough, after Legnano, to issue a warning that the city would in no way tolerate the presence of his officials within their environs. A sure sign of communal confidence manifest in the late 1170s, this passage was very much an expression of Bologna's longed-for civic autonomy.

Ambrose's marble edict merits further comment. One cannot help but think that its positioning on the lone-standing eastern wall was a deliberate choice of the hagiographer. In the Lombard League's wars with Barbarossa in the 1170s, there had been two main centres of activity. The first was in the region of Lombardy, where Milan took the lead; the other was in the Romagna, where Bologna was the principal anti-imperial city. Under the leadership of Christian of Buch, Archbishop of Mainz, Barbarossa's forces had united a host of local lords and the cities of Ravenna, Imola, Faenza, Forli, Cesana and Rimini against Bologna, who feared its expansion in the Romagna. This exposed the League's eastern flank and Bologna was tasked with protecting it. Because of this, Bologna contributed very few men to lifting the siege of Alessandria and appear not to have participated at Legnano. Instead, they fought Christian, with varying levels of success, and continued to skirmish around Imola after the armistice at Venice had been agreed.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, these peace talks were originally scheduled to be held at Bologna, but on the eve of their commencement a change of location had been requested by the imperial party, who claimed the city was overly hostile to Barbarossa's imperial princes.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Ambrose's warning against imperial officialdom was projected eastwards, towards the Romagna. In the late 1170s it was here that Bologna was most vulnerable to threats from the emperor's men, but it was also the natural direction of Bologna's expansion. It was, in other words, positioned in such a place where at the moment

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<sup>44</sup> For a detailed summary of this see Mclynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 323-30.

<sup>45</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, pp. 50-2.

<sup>46</sup> Grillo, *Legnano 1176*, pp. 87-9, 113-5, 173-5; Grillo, *Le guerre del Barbarossa*, pp. 188-92; Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 84-6, 91-2.

<sup>47</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, pp. 104-5

of the *Vita*'s composition the idea of Ambrose's guarantee of safety would prove most efficacious.

As has been noted, Ambrose of Milan plays an instrumental role in Petronius' hagiography. It is he who chastises the evil Emperor Theodosius for his activities at Bologna and who, prior to Petronius' arrival, extends his protection over the city from any further imperial advances. That Ambrose should feature so prominently in the *Vita* is a consequence of the hagiography's narrative logic: for the metaphor of Theodosius/Barbarossa to work, Ambrose's inclusion is one of necessity given the historical source material and the legacy of Ambrose as defender of Church liberty which blossomed as a consequence. His appearance, however, also reflects both Bologna's long-recognised connection with the Milanese saint and the powerful influence exerted by Milan in the late twelfth century. In the previous chapter, we observed how closely the early Bolognese church had been under Ambrose's direction, including personal ties between himself and Bologna's bishops, and his attendance at the discovery of Vitalis and Agricola relics in 393.<sup>48</sup> To associate Petronius with Ambrose, around whom a favourable tradition was firmly acknowledged, was thus an intelligent strategy. In the process, the author was able to integrate Petronius' cult into an already well-established civic history in which Ambrose featured prominently. Moreover, by linking the two ancient bishops the hagiographer could obscure the obvious novelty of Petronius' cult by appending it to his more famous Milanese predecessor.

Bologna's historic ties with Ambrose and the Milanese were renewed in the twelfth century, which of course provided the hagiographer with more reason to focus on the connexion between Petronius and Ambrose. To begin with, the Bolognese Commune patronised the Church of St Ambrose (*curia Sancti Ambroxii*), which today is no longer extant but was attested in the ninth century and was situated on the present-day Piazza Maggiore, as their seat for urban government.<sup>49</sup> It would appear that in uniting the two, the monk from Santo Stefano was making a concerted effort to position Petronius alongside Ambrose at the heart of Bologna's Commune. On top of this toponymical concern, additional impetus was provided by Bologna's effort to oppose Barbarossa and its later participation in the Lombard League. When Milan was destroyed in 1162, its population was forcibly dispersed by the Hohenstaufen Emperor. Some of the Milanese found refuge at Bologna and those that did

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<sup>48</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 61; Orselli, *L'immaginario*, p. 210.

<sup>49</sup> Bocchi, 'Lo sviluppo urbanistico', pp. 216-8.

settled near Santo Stefano, later forming the Compagnia dei Lombardi.<sup>50</sup> With them, they would have brought the worship of their city's patron, and it is hard not to believe that their devotion to Ambrose went unnoticed by their neighbours in Santo Stefano.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, present at Bologna, Ambrose was also there on the battlefield with the Lombard forces. At Legnano, Milan's *carroccio* was adorned with an image of the saint, and with the result of the battle in balance, the Lombard soldiers prayed to God, St Peter and Ambrose. Resolve strengthened, the line held firm and Barbarossa was comprehensively defeated, an outcome which paved the way for meaningful peace talks the following year.<sup>52</sup> So with this potent combination of Late Antique history, civic tradition and contemporary politics, it was natural that Petronius and Ambrose were intertwined in this manner. The Petronian *Vita* was in fact fundamental in the forging of a symbiotic relationship at Bologna between the two saints that would endure until Milan became the greatest threat to its independence in the later fourteenth century.

After the lengthy criticism of Barbarossa masked as the legendary deeds of Theodosius, the hagiographer makes a positive case for Bolognese communal autonomy. In the final line of the *Vita*'s penultimate paragraph, he writes that 'seeing that among all the neighbouring cities Bologna is freer and more beloved, it will forever endure, blessed with safety and without the troublesome restraint of political power'.<sup>53</sup> In bringing the *Vita* to a conclusion in this fashion, the passage neatly summarises the struggle for independence that had so engulfed Bologna and the other Italian city-republics in the 1150-70s. It stands as an emphatic statement of Bologna's aspirations for self-government, anchored in the legendary life of Petronius and optimistically projected forward in time to the late twelfth century. Certainly anachronistic, but all the same a sure sign of the desire for urban autonomous government that pervades the *Vita* so fully.

That this political ambition occupied such a prominent place in the hagiography must owe something to a hitherto overlooked factor. We know that the peace summit held in Venice in

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<sup>50</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 60-1. On the Compagnia dei Lombardi, see Mario Fanti, 'L'antichissima e nobilissima Compagnia militare dei Lombardi in Bologna: cenno storico', in Massimo Medica and Silvia Battistini (eds.), *L'antica compagnia dei Lombardi in Bologna: un passato presente* (Milan: Cinisello Balsamo, 2019), pp. 11-4.

<sup>51</sup> For Ambrose as patron of Milan, see Hans Conrad Payer, *Città e santi patroni nell'Italia medievale*, intro. and trans. by Anna Benvenuti (Florence: Le Lettere, 1998), pp. 65-87.

<sup>52</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>53</sup> 'quoniam inter cunctas vicinas urbes liberior et carior absque freno dure potestatis felici securitate semper consistit'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 119

1177 originally was planned for Bologna but for a last-minute change of venue. Because Bologna had been the long-agreed location for the talks, the representatives of the Lombard League had been awaiting the arrival of Alexander III and the imperial party in the city.<sup>54</sup> It is not clear at what point the League's plenipotentiaries had first reached Bologna, but the city was designated as the setting for negotiations by mid-December 1176.<sup>55</sup> Barbarossa's request for their transfer elsewhere was not received by the pope until 24 March 1177, by which time they were definitely at Bologna, and the League's representatives did not go to meet the Pope at Ferrara to discuss the proposed change until 10 April.<sup>56</sup> On this basis, the League's ambassadors were waiting at Bologna at least for several weeks but quite conceivably a month or more. Whilst there, their activities are not documented; yet, the excitement and intellectual vivacity in the city as the League's negotiators prepared for discussions which they hoped would result in the preservation and legal recognition of the communes they had fought so hard for must have been palpable. Having had their success on the battlefield, at Venice and at Constance the 'New World' was confirmed.<sup>57</sup> As part of this, the time the leaders of the League spent at Bologna might have been brief, but on a local level, that is on the hagiographer and his *Vita Sancti Petronii*, its impact appears to have been significant; for if the *Vita* had not already been written by this point, it is this episode that may well have provoked the composition of the work.<sup>58</sup>

It is against this background of Bologna versus Barbarossa and the struggle for communal independence that Petronius' Greek heritage should be considered. It will be remembered that in the *Vita* Petronius was born to Christian parents in Greece, and although the precise place of birth is not stated, it would appear to have been at Constantinople, where he spends his youth and early adulthood. Petronius was the brother-in-law of Emperor Theodosius II, since his unnamed sister married the emperor. Petronius was also descended from three other emperors: Constantius II, Constantine II and Constans.<sup>59</sup> Admittedly this was an impressive

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<sup>54</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> *Romualdi Salernitani Chronicon*, pp. 220-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>57</sup> Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, p. 77, 103; Gianluca Raccagni, 'When the Emperor Submitted to his Rebellious Subjects: A Neglected and Innovative Legal Account of the Peace of Constance, 1183', *English Historical Review* 131 (2016), pp. 519-39; Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 422-7; Grillo, *Legnano 1176*, pp. 175-92; Grillo, *Le guerre del Barbarossa*, pp. 217-22.

<sup>58</sup> It was often during crisis, periods of uncertainty or moments of transition that hagiographies were written or rewritten. Robert Bartlett, 'Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales', *Speculum* 58 (1983), pp. 598-613 (p. 599).

<sup>59</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 95



family tree, though with no basis in the historical record.<sup>60</sup> It was a fictitious lineage totally invented by the hagiographer. But why did the monk expend so many words stressing Petronius' Greek origins and his family connections? About this question, Lanzoni wrote that attributing a foreign descent to their saints was a common trait for people of the Emilia-Romagna, and that maybe it was the 'instinct of the plebs to assign an illustrious birth' to Petronius.<sup>61</sup> As explanations, an interest in the exotic and class obsequiousness are not the most convincing. Instead, a more fruitful line of enquiry was taken by Antonio Ivan Pini, who, although he did so rather tentatively and based it on the assumption that the Old Italian *Vita* preserves an older form of the Latin *Vita*, suggested that the person of Theodosius II was supposed to embody the contemporary Byzantine Emperor, Manuel Comnenus (r. 1141-80).<sup>62</sup>

Although we have rejected the thesis of a lost hagiographic exemplar on the grounds of an absence of evidence, the conjoining of Theodosius II and Manuel Comnenus is of interpretive value. In complete contrast to Theodosius I, Theodosius II is a hero of the hagiography. His familial relationship with Petronius is mentioned on 7 separate occasions; on two of them, Theodosius directly addresses Petronius: 'O venerable brother-in-law, truly always dear to me' and 'my wife's brother'.<sup>63</sup> Theodosius, so the hagiographer tells us, was 'glowing in the love of that man' and cherished Petronius most dearly. Before Petronius had been ordained bishop, the emperor offered to 'grant him the rule of his kingdom and his sacred place on top of everybody living in his empire', and he was put in charge of the royal treasury.<sup>64</sup> As Petronius departed from Constantinople for the papal council, Theodosius furnished him with many gifts decorated with gold and jewels, kissing him goodbye with tears in his eyes.<sup>65</sup> After he had taken his seat, Theodosius' continued to provide support. In order to rebuild Bologna, Petronius used funds from the imperial treasury (*ex imperiali tributo*). Upon hearing of Petronius' labours:

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<sup>60</sup> Although based on the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, Petronius has recently been called 'An aristocrat from fifth-century Constantinople'. Lugli, *Making of Measure*, p. 156.

<sup>61</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 12-3, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 205, 259. This identification was rejected by Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 238-9.

<sup>63</sup> 'O venerande, vale, levir, michi semper amate, ... levir'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 99.

<sup>64</sup> 'idem ipse Augustus, levir eius, non moderate fervens in amore illius, diligebat eum ultra quam fas sit dicere; adeo quod primatum totius monarchiae et sacri palatii sibi super cunctos degentes in imperio suo, sive dederat ei facultatem distrubendi universa regalia tributa ad votum viri sanctissimi Petronii'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 96.

<sup>65</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 99

‘Every prefect, praetor, tribune and herald of every province of this kingdom, hearing report of this royal relationship and since Petronius was a relative of the king, flocked to him from every direction carrying royal taxes’.<sup>66</sup>

When Petronius returned to Constantinople, he celebrated mass in the patriarch’s basilica standing at the side of the emperor and his princes.<sup>67</sup> Lastly, as Petronius embarked on his return journey to Bologna, Theodosius accompanied him. The Emperor travelled ‘with his kinsman through every province of Italy so that all the people from different regions would obey the precepts of that holiest confessor of Christ’ and as a farewell gift he gave Petronius the relics of five bodies of the Holy Innocents.<sup>68</sup> On this basis, then, it is not tenable to maintain that in the hagiography Theodosius II is a ‘vapid figure and badly sketched out’ (*una figura scialba e mal delineata*).<sup>69</sup> Altogether, he is an important character who loves his brother-in-law and, more importantly, expends considerable time and resource assisting him. In short, the connection between the two men is more than incidental; it is in fact substantial.

At much the same time as the hagiographer was writing this relationship into Petronius’ *Vita*, Manuel Comnenus was in the midst of his ‘cold war’ with Barbarossa.<sup>70</sup> One manifestation of this conflict was the extensive support he provided to the Lombard League in their ‘hot wars’ against the Hohenstaufen Emperor. Manuel may have tried to prevent the fall of Milan in 1162, and he certainly contributed to the rebuilding of its walls, completed to much celebration in 1171.<sup>71</sup> According to John Cinammus, Manuel had secretly dispatched envoys to cities in the north of Italy and along the Adriatic coast ‘to remind them of Frederick’s insatiable greed and to arouse them to resistance’, and Manuel ‘hindered him with money and other devices’. His diplomacy was a success, causing many of the ‘most outstanding cities in

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<sup>66</sup> ‘Cuncti prefecti, pretores, tribuni et precones omnium provinciarum huius regni, audita fama regie affinitatis, et quod regis cognatus est, undique confluebant ad eum deferentes sibi regia vectigalia’. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 112.

<sup>67</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 114.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Data namque est jussio a Theodosio Cesare juniore, cognato suo, per omnes provincias Italiae, ut omnes populi ex diversis regionibus obtemperarent preceptis beatissimi confessoris Christi Petronii, bononiensis episcopi’. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 205 n. 36.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 57-65, 83-94 (quote at p. 62). In addition, see Paolo Lamma, *Comneni e Staufer. Ricerche sui rapporti fra Bisanzio e l’Occidente nel secolo XII*, vol. 2 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1957); Peter Classen, ‘La politica di Manuele Comneno tra Federico Barbarossa e la città italiane’, in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Peter Classen* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1983), pp. 155-70; David Abulafia, ‘Ancona, Byzantium and the Adriatic, 1155-1173’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 52 (1984), pp. 195-216.

<sup>71</sup> *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. 113.

Liguria (here meaning Italy)' to support Manuel.<sup>72</sup> The Byzantine civil servant and historian Niketas Choniates agreed: 'There were no cities in Italy ... where this emperor did not have someone sworn to be faithful to his cause'.<sup>73</sup> Niketas continues, writing that 'Time and again he (Manuel) armed the Italians against Frederick' and 'dispatched envoys who emboldened the Italians, enjoining them to prevail against Frederick'.<sup>74</sup> The papal biographer Boso too records Manuel twice offered Pope Alexander 'precious gifts' and 'great sums of money' to fund the pope and those Italian cities opposed to Barbarossa.<sup>75</sup> The Italian cities, so the Anonymous Chronicler from Laon says, 'considered submitting their kingdom to Manuel, the emperor of the Greeks', who promised to reward them and make them twice as rich.<sup>76</sup> In a similar fashion, the Cologne Chronicle claimed Barbarossa decided on another campaign in Italy in 1172 because Alexander and the communes wanted 'to place the crown of the Roman Empire on the Greek', and Boncompagno of Signa later wrote that Manuel had sent agents to Ancona to establish feudal relations of dependency between himself and the citizens of that city.<sup>77</sup>

Whether they be communal, papal, Byzantine, Hohenstaufen or from further afield, the commentators of the day were all in agreement that the communes received considerable financial assistance from Manuel and at least considered recognising him as their emperor and overlord. Reading the *Vita Sancti Petronii* against this background, one might see the contemporary political strategies employed by Manuel Comnenus being channelled into the figure of Theodosius II in the hagiography. Petronius was a citizen of Constantinople, a relation of the emperor, he once worked in Theodosius' government as a civil servant, he received money and royal taxes from the imperial treasury to rebuild Bologna, the emperor told the people of Italy to obey Petronius' instructions, and every imperial official from across the empire supported Petronius in his endeavours. Executed skilfully, in that the hagiographer never directly states it to be the case and thereby permits a different reading with the opportunity for an alternate course of action in changing political circumstances, the

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<sup>72</sup> John Cinammus, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. Charles M. Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), bk. 5, p. 172, 173, 174

<sup>73</sup> *O City of Byzantium*, p. 113.

<sup>74</sup> *O City of Byzantium*, p. 113.

<sup>75</sup> *Boso's Life of Alexander III*, pp. 69-70, 76-7.

<sup>76</sup> *Chronicon universale Anonymi Laudunensis. Von 1154 bis zum Schluss (1219) für akademische Übungen*, eds. Alexander Cartelieri, Wolf Stechele (Leipzig: Dyk, 1909), p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> *Chronica regia Coloniensis (Annales maximi colonienses)*, ed. Georg Waitz MGH SSRG 18 (Hanover: impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1880), p. 121; *Boncompagni Liber de obsidione Ancone (a. 1173)*, ed. Giulio C. Zimolo. RIS, ser. 2, 4.4 (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1937), p. 34.

*Vita* recognises Manuel's support and arguably, but certainly guardedly, makes a claim for Bologna being part of the Byzantine world.

It might seem that to do so was contrary to the very thrust of the communes' cause. That is, by simply changing one emperor for another, they would run afoul of Phaedrus' fable of the old man and the donkey: 'A change in the person who controls the State brings to the poor no change in their situation but a change of master'.<sup>78</sup> Yet it does not. Manuel had courted the communes with his generosity, in stark contrast to Barbarossa's heavy taxation. Equally, he would have understood the Italian cities would reject the burdens of an overmighty emperor, be they German or Greek, and so would need to tread more softly.<sup>79</sup> Plus, he was also over a thousand miles away in Constantinople. This combination of factors meant that for Bologna Byzantine suzerainty would in practise be theoretical, at a distance and level of abstraction that would not stifle the Commune's independence. On a more formal basis, this is exactly the approach the city of Ancona adopted. Aligning themselves with Constantinople and accepting its overlordship, the people of Ancona paradoxically increased their autonomy and guaranteed their security. Indeed, Niketas Choniates wrote that the Anconian 'citizens rejoiced over the recovery of their liberty' and Manuel, who admitted 'them to the same civic rights enjoyed by Roman (meaning Greek) citizens', promised to 'provide whatever legitimate and practicable needs they might request'.<sup>80</sup> So, in exchange for a notional recognition of homage, the Anconians gained freedom from outside interference.<sup>81</sup> Employing a similar strategy with its careful pledge of support for Manuel, this same political pragmatism seems to be there in the Petronian *Vita*.

The bond with Greece and its emperors does not end here. Petronius was not only claimed relation to Theodosius II. The careful reader will have noticed that the three other emperors Petronius counted among his ancestors - Constantius II (r. 337-61), Constantine II (r. 337-40) and Constans I (r. 337-50) – were all children of Constantine I (r. 306-37).<sup>82</sup> Being so, it naturally follows that Petronius too was a descendent of Constantine, who was the first

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (London: Duckworth, 1981), p. 444.

<sup>79</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 88-9.

<sup>80</sup> *O City of Byzantium*, p. 115.

<sup>81</sup> Abulafia, 'Ancona, Byzantium and the Adriatic', pp. 215-6.

<sup>82</sup> On Constantine's heirs, see *The Sons of Constantine, AD 337-361: In the Shadows of Constantine and Julian*, (eds.) Nicholas Baker-Brian and Shaun Tougher (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Christian emperor and regarded as the greatest of all emperors by medieval Christians.<sup>83</sup> Like so many of the claims made in the hagiography, there is no substance to it, and there is no doubt that if it had been true the Late Antique sources we have referred to would not have failed to mention information as important as this when discussing Petronius.<sup>84</sup> But the invention itself is interesting: in creating a familial link between the two, the hagiographer was engaged in a process of what Carrie Beneš has termed “retroactive networking”, whereby cities ‘sought to increase their glory in the medieval present’ by forging connections with ‘events and people already recognised as glorious by the history, literature, and the art of medieval Italy’.<sup>85</sup> Yet unlike the examples of Padua, Siena and Perugia discussed by Beneš, the phenomenon of the appropriation of the classical past occurs at Bologna earlier, and, more unusually, it looked to a Greek rather than Roman tradition.

Never before had the Bolognesi claimed for themselves a connection to Constantine or had they any association with the Byzantine Empire since the city fell to the Lombards in 727. As Constantine’s heir, Petronius, and through his person the city of Bologna, could now boast a historic and noble lineage that few cities could rival. Still, in inventing this link the hagiographer was going further than his source material suggested. Since he was following Gennadius, he had to situate Petronius and his legendary deeds in the same epoch as Theodosius II; there was no such restraint regarding Petronius’ ancestors. Other than his father, the praetorian prefect, the sources are silent. In consequence, the monk could be as creative as he wished and as we can see he decided that Constantine was the saintly bishop’s progenitor. Underlying this choice of imperial ancestor beyond the purely symbolic, however, were the political concerns of the day. Building on a tradition that first took hold in the 1130s, Barbarossa, through his chancellor, Rainald of Dassel, and interaction with the Italian City-Republics, increasingly stylised his polity as a *sacrum imperium*. This was further supported on 29 December 1165, when Barbarossa, with the cooperation of (Anti-)Pope Paschal III (r. 1164-8), had his predecessor Charlemagne canonised at a diet at Aachen.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Paul Magdalino, ‘Introduction’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, March 1992* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), pp. 1-9 (p. 3); Raymond Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 19-32.

<sup>84</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>85</sup> Carrie Beneš, *Urban Legends: Civic Identity and the Classical Past in Northern Italy, 1250-1350* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), p. 22

<sup>86</sup> Vedran Sulovsky, *The Sanctity of the State under Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190): Saint Charlemagne and the sacrum imperium*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2019; Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 197-216, 330-3.

Bologna, confronted by an emperor who presented himself as sacred and who was supported by Saint Charlemagne, in response sanctified its cause with its own imperial saint. Petronius was related to four emperors by birth and a fifth by marriage. Being born in the purple, he could not have been any more imperial. It is just that in the *Vita* the imperial tradition to which Petronius belonged was not that of the German-Roman Empire and its present-day incumbent, Barbarossa. It was rather an older and more venerable tradition. In his Conciliar Edict of 1166, Manuel referred to himself as the “heir to the crown of Constantine the Great, whose rights we exercise in spirit, since some have revolted from our authority”.<sup>87</sup> By virtue of Petronius’ Greek heritage and his kinship to Constantine, Bologna could now claim this legacy for its own and benefit from the retroactive ties to a paragon of Christian political legitimacy.

The circuitous way the hagiographer arrived at Petronius’ ancestry allows us to say something about the *Vita*’s audience. Although the hagiographer adopted a challenging style of prose and filled the text with biblical and classical references to evidence his erudition, the *Vita* was not an esoteric exercise in intellectual self-gratification. He expected the *Vita* to be read, and to be read aloud to the monks of Santo Stefano in the chapter house or at the table in the refectory: ‘May we, therefore, dearest brothers, give thanks and may we rejoice today with every honour as we celebrate the solemnity of our patron, the blessed Petronius’.<sup>88</sup>

Concerning the manuscript that contains the hagiography, the leaves on which the *Vita Sancti Petronii* are written show the most signs of wear and carry the highest number of marginalia: both attest that it was the legendary’s most popular and widely read and listened to text.<sup>89</sup> For it to have been successful, the hagiographer cannot have produced a *Vita* that was impenetrable to all but himself. The purpose of a *Vita* was to demonstrate its subject’s sanctity, with each individual aspect or narrative snapshot serving a performative function in the realisation of that person’s sainthood.<sup>90</sup> In Petronius’ case, his relation to Constantine was one contributory factor, but it only could contribute to this objective if this connection between emperor and saint were understood. So, although the shared lineage of Constantine and Petronius was not stated explicitly, the hagiographer nevertheless expected some of the readers/listeners to understand the unspoken implications of Petronius’ genealogy, and that

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<sup>87</sup> Ed. Mango, ‘Conciliar Edict’, p. 324 quoted in Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 88

<sup>88</sup> ‘Gratulemur itaque nos, fratres karissimi, omnique veneratione exultemus beati Petronii, patroni nostri, hodie sollempnia celebrantes’. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 119

<sup>89</sup> Thompson, *Cities of God*, p. 117.

<sup>90</sup> Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 518-9.

they would share their insights with those who did not. Otherwise, he was wasting his time. The monk was a demanding author, but one who was writing for an audience that included individuals as educated as he in the university town par excellence. And if he thought that his intentions would be intelligible in this instance, then he likely believed the many other things he included just beneath the surface of the text would likewise be comprehensible for those who read or heard Petronius' *Vita*, either directly or with the explication of learned friends.<sup>91</sup>

A significant part of the hagiography is dedicated to the construction of Santo Stefano. Indeed, the building of the monastic complex is the first accomplishment of Petronius' episcopacy that the *Vita* details, and the hagiographer's main concerns in addressing the monastery were cementing Petronius' legacy as its founder and recreating the Holy Land at Bologna. However, of all the material included in the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, that which relates to Santo Stefano arouses the most controversy, centred on two inter-related issues: did Petronius build Santo Stefano, and if so, was it modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem from its inception.

We have allowed for the possibility that the "historical Petronius" may have built Santo Stefano in the fifth century, but no more than that. The building was neither associated with nor modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem from its foundation. Undoubtedly, though, the monastery acquired a connection to and imitated the architectural form of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem over the course of its long history, and it did so well before the *inventio* of Petronius' relics in 1141. At precisely what point, no one can be sure. Unless an idiosyncratic reading of the inscription on the basin (datable to c. 736-44) in Pilate's Courtyard is accepted, as sensible a guess as any would be to suppose the influence of the Carolingians.<sup>92</sup> Charlemagne had been at Santo Stefano in December 786, and he made a second visit to Bologna in May 801.<sup>93</sup> He showed a great interest in Jerusalem, which included the commissioning of a survey of the Holy Land at some point between 801-810, and debates about Christian sacred space flourished during the Carolingian

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<sup>91</sup> A process described by Brian Stock as "textual communities". Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 88-240.

<sup>92</sup> Filippini suggests the basin's inscription includes a reference to Jerusalem. Filippini, *S. Petronio*, p. 49. His thesis has not been favourably received. Cosentino, 'Bologna tra la tarda antichità', pp. 74-8.

<sup>93</sup> Augusto Vasina, 'La fine del regno longobardo. L'intesa franco-pontificia. L'abbozzo delle pretese papali sul territorio Emiliano-romagnolo (secoli VIII-IX)', in O. Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna, vol. 2: Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 309-327 (pp. 316-7).

Renaissance.<sup>94</sup> It is possible that a member of this milieu noticed an apparent resemblance between the churches in Bologna and Palestine and so shared his thoughts. In any event, by 887 at the very latest Santo Stefano was identified with the Holy City. In a diploma issued by Charles the Fat, which transferred the church from the bishop of Bologna to the bishop of Parma, it is designated ‘Santo Stefano which is called Holy Jerusalem’.<sup>95</sup> In 973, after the synod of Marzalia, Santo Stefano was returned to Bologna.<sup>96</sup> By 983 Santo Stefano was a Benedictine monastery and it was around this time, if not slightly earlier, that Saint Bononius was a child oblate at the institution.<sup>97</sup> In the new millennium, the idea of Bologna as an Imagined Jerusalem gathered momentum. Between 983 and 1095, that is before the First Crusade was preached by Urban II, there survives 59 documents which use the phrase ‘*qui vocatur Gerusalem*’ in connection with Santo Stefano.<sup>98</sup> From 1096 to 1125, there are another 33 instances of this usage.<sup>99</sup> The neighbouring Church of San Giovanni in Monte Oliveto was by 1043 identified as ‘the monastery of St John the Evangelist on the Mount of Olives’ and again in 1065 as the ‘monastery of St John which is called the Mount of Olives’.<sup>100</sup>

In concert with these growing number of textual references, Santo Stefano witnessed several phases of building activity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Earlier works included the

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<sup>94</sup> Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne’s Survey of the Holy Land: Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church between Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011); Samuel W. Collins, *The Carolingian Debate over Sacred Space* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>95</sup> *Codice diplomatico della Chiesa bolognese*, n. 23, pp. 82-3.

<sup>96</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>97</sup> Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 160.

<sup>98</sup> Mario Fanti, ‘Santo Stefano detto Hierusalem: Una città o una santa? Riflessioni su un ennesimo enigma stefaniano bolognese’, *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)*, n.s., 66 (2016), pp. 105-20 (pp. 115-9).

<sup>99</sup> *Le carte del monastero*. The documents will be listed by number in the collection, year of production and the page number of the Jerusalem reference: n. 119, 1096, p. 211; n. 121, 1097, p. 214; n. 123, 1097, p. 218; n. 126, 1098, p. 222; n. 129, 1099, p. 227; n. 131, 1099, p. 230; n. 135, 1101, pp. 241-2; n. 136, 1101, p. 243; n. 140, 1102, p. 250; n. 141, 1102, p. 252; n. 153, 1105, p. 276; n. 154, 1105, p. 277; n. 155, 1105, p. 279; n. 156, 1105, p. 280; n. 157, 1106, pp. 282-3; n. 159, 1107, p. 286; n. 160, 1107, p. 287; n. 161, 1108, p. 289; n. 179, 1113, p. 322; n. 181, 1114, p. 326; n. 187, 1115, p. 336; n. 190, 1116, p. 341; n. 192, 1117, p. 344; n. 194, 1118, p. 348; n. 197, 1118, p. 353; n. 198, 1119, p. 354; n. 200, 1119, p. 357; n. 206, 1121, p. 367; n. 211, 1122, p. 375; n. 213, 1122, p. 379; n. 218, 1124, p. 387; n. 223, 1125, p. 396; n. 224, 1125, p. 398.

Incidentally, these 92 references to Santo Stefano being known as Jerusalem between 983 and 1125 do not mention Petronius in any capacity, let alone him as the builder of the Bolognese Jerusalem complex. This omission lends further weight to the argument advanced in chapter one that there existed no recognised cult to Petronius prior to the 1141 *inventio*, and it would seem to confirm that the two references to him building Santo Stefano in the papal bulls of 1074 and 1114 are subsequent interpolations or forgeries. If not, we have to accept that the writers of the two bulls, who ostensibly were issuing them at Rome, knew more about local Bolognese cults than its own residents, and that the authors went further than Santo Stefano’s and the bishops of Bologna’s notaries in ascribing to Petronius, at that time a former bishop without a cult, the agency of creating the Jerusalem simulacrum.

<sup>100</sup> Fanti, ‘Santo Stefano detto Hierusalem’, p. 110.



building of the Church of San Giovanni Battista in 1019 and the restoration of the Church of SS. Vitale e Agricola around 1100, but both seem to have been unrelated to the idea of the complex as an Imagined Jerusalem. However, in 1117, Bologna was struck by a major earthquake and it seems likely that this would have promoted the need for further works at Santo Stefano.<sup>101</sup> It was probably at this time, when there was a greater knowledge of the Holy Land as a consequence of the First Crusade and the establishment of the Crusader States, that the monks used the opportunity to recreate the aesthetic of its long-held sobriquet. The Church of Santa Croce and the Atrio were rebuilt by the 1140s and certainly before the writing of the *Sermo de inventione* and *Vita Sancti Petronii*; so too was the Church of Santo Sepolcro which housed a tomb aedicula.<sup>102</sup> With their completion, in Romanesque style Santo Stefano now architecturally as well as figuratively reproduced the buildings where Christ had been crucified, buried and resurrected.

The architecture of Santo Stefano achieved this likeness in a multitude of ways. The octagonal shape of Santo Stefano's Church of Santo Sepolcro imitated the Rotunda of the Anastasis of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, and within the church its off-centre aedicula replicated Christ's Tomb, just like the one in Palestine. In an attempt to remain as faithful as possible to the original, the Holy Sepulchre's eight piers and twelve columns were reinterpreted at Santo Stefano as an eight-sided building and twelve interior supports, a consideration of some importance since it preserved the numerical symbolism of eight – the Resurrection – and twelve – the Apostles. Moreover, the distance between the tomb monument and the Church of Santa Croce at Santo Stefano, where there was a replica of the True Cross on which Christ was crucified and which were connected by the Atrio, is almost exactly the same as the distance from the Tomb of Christ to Calvary in Jerusalem. In Charlemagne's survey of the Holy Land, in fact, the distance between these two sites is listed as 41.6 metres; at Bologna, the length is 42 metres. Therefore, by 1180, the two most important buildings of the Sepulchre complex, and located within them the two most important relics, equidistantly separated and likewise connected by an open, porticoed court, were reproduced at Santo Stefano.<sup>103</sup> Informed medieval contemporaries were suitably impressed with its similarity. Antonius de Reboldis, a Franciscan from Cremona, visited the Holy Land and made a travel account of his pilgrimage. Under his entry for Jerusalem, which

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<sup>101</sup> *Cronaca B*, vol. 2, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', p. 319 n. 14.

<sup>103</sup> Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', pp. 311-6.

he visited on 23 April 1327, he gave a brief description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and provided some valuable advice for those who were unable to make the trip to Palestine: ‘if you want to know in what manner the aforementioned Church of the Sepulchre was built, look at the Church of St Stephen at Bologna’ (*Ecclesiam autem praedictam Sepulcri si vultis scire, quomodo facta est, videatis ecclesiam Bononiae sancti Stephani*).<sup>104</sup>

In the *Vita*, this centuries long process of construction and assimilation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land at Bologna was condensed into the timespan of Petronius’ episcopacy. The story the hagiographer provides is not, then, an accurate historical account of Santo Stefano’s origins and the evolution of its Jerusalem tradition. But it is nevertheless, for the most part, an excellent description of Santo Stefano in so far as it relates to the attempt of recreating the Holy Land as it stood at the time of the *Vita*’s writing, in 1177-1180. Parts of the complex which do not assist the hagiographer in mapping the topography of Jerusalem and its sacred sites onto the city are ignored. The churches of SS. Vitale e Agricola and San Giovanni Battista, as well as the monastery’s cloister, are all omitted from the text; but another church not part of the complex – the Church of San Giovanni in Monte Oliveto – and the stretch of land separating it from Santo Stefano are incorporated into the hagiographer’s schematic because they enabled the author of the *Vita Sancti Petronii* to further enrich his description of Bologna’s recreation of the Holy Land.

The hagiographer opens with a general description of Santo Stefano. All of its buildings were spacious and lavishly adorned with porphyry columns and others of marble of diverse colours, each with its own pedestal and chapter decorated with figures of men, horses and birds.<sup>105</sup> More interestingly, Santo Stefano, he records, was situated outside of the city and towards the East (*ad orientem*).<sup>106</sup> In writing this, he was of course reporting a simple fact: the monastery does lie a very short distance to the east of the historic Roman core of the city. Yet, the actual location of Santo Stefano afforded the hagiographer the opportunity to further develop the idea of the monastery as an Imagined Jerusalem. Since the second century, Christians had directed their prayers eastwards. St Augustine wrote that ‘When we stand at prayer, we turn to the east (*ad orientem*), whence heaven rises’ and medieval *mappae mundi*, which by 1100 increasingly featured Jerusalem at their centre and deployed other

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<sup>104</sup> Antonius de Reboldis of Cremona, ‘Itinerarium ad Sepulcrum Domini (1327) et ad Montem Sinai (1330)’, in *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente Francese*, vol. 3 (1300-1332), ed. Girolamo Golubovich (Quaracchi: Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1919), pp. 326-42 (p. 335).

<sup>105</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 105.

<sup>106</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 105.

cartographical devices to accentuate its primacy, had an eastwards orientation and from the perspective of Latin Europe were thus directed towards the Holy Land.<sup>107</sup> Sharing the same intellectual concerns, the hagiographer's designation of the monastery *ad orientem* blended the real with the symbolic, and with its multiple layers of meaning Santo Stefano as another Jerusalem stood to the east of Bologna just as Jerusalem was to the east for those in the Latin West.

After these introductory observations, the hagiographer comes to Santo Stefano's Church of Santo Sepolcro. It had been constructed by Petronius in the 'likeness of the Lord's Sepulchre' (*instar Dominici sepulchri*).<sup>108</sup> But how had he known what the buildings in Jerusalem looked like? In an earlier career, that is before being an imperial ambassador and then the bishop of Bologna, Petronius had been an imperial tax collector working throughout the whole of Judea for an extended period. At some point during this posting, either through remarkable foresight or academic curiosity – the monk does not say –, Petronius measured the dimensions of the church with a surveying rod (*calamo*) and stored away this valuable information.<sup>109</sup> With it to hand, many years later Petronius was able to reconstruct with mathematical precision the holy sites he encountered during his assignment in Palestine. This included the Church of Santo Sepolcro, but also inside it the Pool of Siloam. To the left of the tomb aedicula is a natural stream that runs under the monastery. It had been incorporated into the structure since the building had been a temple to Isis. However, it was transformed by the hagiographer into a Petronian made water feature. In accordance with the measurements he had carefully taken whilst at Jerusalem, Petronius built a pool that resembled the Pool of Siloam where Christ had restored a blind man's sight.<sup>110</sup>

The Bolognese Church of Santo Sepolcro's shape enabled the hagiographer to include further allegorical material in aid of the Bologna/Jerusalem analogy. Medieval Christian cosmology understood the universe to be organised in a series of concentric cosmological circles. The spherical shape of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was at the centre of a spherical Jerusalem at the centre of a spherical world at the centre of a spherical universe. Yet the Heavenly Jerusalem, that city predicted in the Book of Revelation, will be quadrilateral in form. To reconcile the geometric differences, Christian cosmologists combined the two, that

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<sup>107</sup> Thomas Quigley, *Crusading with mappae mundi: Jerusalem at the Centre of the Crusades*, unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Manchester, 2017, pp. 16-28.

<sup>108</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 105.

<sup>109</sup> 'et provida cura cum calamo diligenter mensus fuerat, cum esset Ierosolime'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 105.

<sup>110</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 107-8.

is the circle and the square, in their interpretations of the universe. And so, be it the microcosm of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the macrocosm of the cosmos, creation was considered to be circular and square, simultaneously possessing features of the two geometric forms.<sup>111</sup> In the *Vita*'s treatment of the Bolognese Santo Sepolcro, this same idealistic and dualized representation of shape is present. The monk writes: 'Furthermore, the internal walls of the sepulchre are completely circular with their joints, and with the stones cut off and squared they shine with immeasurable radiance'.<sup>112</sup> With his merging of geometrical forms, Santo Stefano symbolised both the earthly city in Palestine and the heavenly city to come, thereby situating the monastery and Bologna at the centre of Christian cosmogony.

The next building to be addressed was the Church of Santa Croce. In continuing the theme of material grandeur, it too possessed many expensive columns, similarly supplied with pedestals, chapiters, decorated in kind, and its floor was laid with white marble, porphyry and many other types of stone.<sup>113</sup> Yet it was not only its architectural richness that made this place famous. It was known by another name: 'which figuratively is called Golgotha, that is Calvary, where the Cross was installed on which Christ was fixed for the salvation of the world'.<sup>114</sup> Appropriately, in this church's chapel Petronius had erected a wooden cross. It was, the hagiographer says, an identical replica of the True Cross on which Christ had been crucified, its proportions equal in both width and length.<sup>115</sup> Because of its numerical exactness, the cross could be characterised as a relic and it was capable of producing miracles.<sup>116</sup>

From Bologna's Calvary, the hagiographer moves to Bologna's Mount of Olives. A diligent surveyor, Petronius had not only measured the proportions of the Holy Land's buildings. He also, again with rods, charted the distance between these two places at Jerusalem, and when he started his construction project at Bologna he incorporated this measurement into his

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<sup>111</sup> Keith Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), pp. 15-40.

<sup>112</sup> 'Etiam parietes sepulchri intus undique per girum cum junturis suis sunt erecti et lapidibus quadratis et sectis nimio candore pollutibus'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 105.

<sup>113</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p.

<sup>114</sup> 'qui figurate Golgotha, hoc est Calvarie, nuncupatur, ubi crux, in qua Christus pro salute mundi fixus est, posita fuit'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 106.

<sup>115</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 106.

<sup>116</sup> When marauding Huns attempted to burn the cross, it was fire resistant. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 106. The story of Huns attacking the city has been lifted from the *Vita Sancti Germiniani*. Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 207 n. 43. On the importance of numbers and measurements in medieval Italy, see Lugli, *Making of Measure*.

plans. With the consent of an imperial edict, Petronius is said to have built a mountain that was as far from Santo Stefano as the Mount of Olives was from Calvary in Jerusalem.<sup>117</sup> In actual fact, the difference between the two measurements is over a kilometre, and the Petronian mountain is a small, naturally occurring promontory.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, the small hill and the church atop, dedicated to St John the Evangelist, were represented as similitudes of the mountain and the Church of the Ascension, namely the place where Christ visited his disciples before ascending to heaven and where the Holy Ghost appeared to his followers and granted them the knowledge of every language so they could preach the gospel.<sup>119</sup> The structure was likewise praised for its expensive decorations and its round shape, something in actuality it did not possess but which continued the symbolic idea of the circular heavenly city. And the recreation did not end there. The hagiographer identified the area of land between Santo Stefano and the Mount as the biblical Valley of Josaphat, which corresponded to the topography at Jerusalem, and also noted that the Field of Acedama, the place where Judas of Iscariot committed suicide, was located within the Bolognese Josaphat valley, a mistaken identification which did not follow the geography of the Holy Land.<sup>120</sup>

In reproducing architecturally, topographically and symbolically the Holy Land and its most sacred sites, Santo Stefano and the interconnected places, of all the Imagined Jerusalems of the medieval world, was perhaps the most complete and faithful copy of the original.<sup>121</sup> However and whenever the Jerusalem tradition at Bologna started, as it developed it would play an important role in the social, political and cultural life of the city. The logic of simulacrum reinforces and intensifies that which it replicates.<sup>122</sup> As his letter to the people of the city would indicate, it would appear that the Bolognesi reacted very passionately to Pope Urban II's call to liberate Jerusalem in 1095.<sup>123</sup> The Bolognesi also participated in the Third Crusade, and they were part of the Fifth Crusade that captured Damietta in 1219.<sup>124</sup> When

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<sup>117</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>118</sup> Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', p. 315. Despite the scientific evidence, some still maintain Petronius was responsible for creating the hill. Fernando Lanzi, 'Le quattro croci e la sacra Hierusalem Bononiensis', in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna: il volto di una storia: arte, storia e culto del santo patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), pp. 33-38 (p. 38).

<sup>119</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 107.

<sup>120</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 107; Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', p. 316.

<sup>121</sup> Renata Salvarini, *La fortuna del santo sepolcro nel medioevo: spazio, liturgia, architettura* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2008), p. 140. On the phenomena more widely, see Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*.

<sup>122</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 46.

<sup>123</sup> *Codice diplomatico della Chiesa Bolognese*, n. 59, pp. 153-5.

<sup>124</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, pp. 99-100, 120-1; *Studien zur Geschichte des Fünften Kreuzzuges*, ed. Reinhold Röhrich (Innsbrück: Wagner, 1891), ns. 40, 47-52, pp. 68, 70-74.

they freed their serfs and outlawed slavery in 1256/7, the Bolognesi claimed their city was a Paradise where man's natural freedom had been restored.<sup>125</sup> Even in the celebrated jurist Giovanni da Legnano's 1360 tract *On War*, Bologna is a city that may 'truly be called Jerusalem'.<sup>126</sup> Petronius and his cult were subsumed within this tradition of Jerusalem devotion and then further accentuated it. The *Vita Sancti Petronii*, while indebted to pre-existing toponymical and architectural traditions, brought a conceptual unity to the simulacrum and imbued it with a deeper Christian symbolism.



Figure 4 - Tomb aedicula in the Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano. Photo by author.

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<sup>125</sup> The *Liber Paradisus* was the government document which recorded the liberation of 5,855 serfs by the Commune in 1256/7 and banned the institutions of slavery and serfdom in Bolognese territory. *Il Liber Paradisus: con un'antologia di fonti bolognesi in materia di servitù medievale (942-1304)*, ed. Armando Antonelli (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), p. 1, 45, 69. On the *Liber Paradisus*, see the essays in *Il Liber Paradisus e le liberazioni collettive nel XIII secolo. Cento anni di studi (1906-2008)*, eds. Armando Antonelli and Massimo Giansante (Venice: Marsilio, 2008).

<sup>126</sup> 'civitas Bononiae, quae vere vocari potest Ierusalem'. Giovanni da Legnano, *Tractatus de bello, de represaliis et de duello*, ed. Thomas Erskine Holland (Oxford: Printed for the Carnegie Institution of Washington at the Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 71.



Figure 5 – Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano. Photo by author.



Figure 6 – *Ebstorf mappa mundi*, c. 1250. Accessed at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf\\_Map#/media/File:Ebstorfer-stich2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebstorf_Map#/media/File:Ebstorfer-stich2.jpg)

Another notable feature of the *Vita* is the attention its author pays to Petronius' supposedly deep learning. Petronius was, according to the hagiography, 'delivered by his parents to the school of philosophy where he was taught the liberal arts and the sacraments of the church by his teachers'. At school, he studied 'every philosophy' and excelled at his spiritual studies,



being instructed in both Greek and Latin.<sup>127</sup> Following the standard medieval confusion of Gennadius of Marseille's continuation of St Jerome's *De viris illustribus* as Jerome's original work, the *Vita* claims that the famous church doctor commented on with approval the quality of Petronius' education.<sup>128</sup> Truly, it was his knowledge of 'every Greek and Latin sermon' and exceptional understanding of both the Old and New Testaments (*non mediocriter est eruditus scientia veteris ac novi Testamenti*) that had, along with his ties of kinship to Theodosius, led to Petronius' appointment as imperial ambassador to Rome.<sup>129</sup>

To place such an emphasis on Petronius' scholarly credentials must be a consequence of the environment in which the hagiography was produced. Along with Paris, Bologna was the leading centre of study in the Latin West. Given the quality of his Latin and wide reading, our hagiographer was possibly an alumnus of the *Studium* and evidently was proud of the prestige it brought to the city. Bologna was fast becoming saturated with learning of an increasingly secular character and this itself is reflected in the *Vita*, even though authored by a monk. Noticeably, the hagiographer misquotes the Jerome/Gennadius passage on Petronius. In the original text, Petronius had been educated in 'monastic studies' (*monachorum studiis*), by which Jerome/Gennadius meant the central concerns of the monastic life: so not studies in an academic sense at all, but rather things to which monks needed to put their minds, like singing, prayer, silence and contemplation.<sup>130</sup> By contrast, in the hagiographic variant the author has Jerome/Gennadius say he was 'full with the knowledge of the liberal arts'.<sup>131</sup> Such an emphasis on a saint's sophisticated learning was in fact atypical of the time. In many twelfth century hagiographies, education beyond what made the scriptures intelligible was considered superfluous for a prospective saint. If anything, the universities posed a risk to their masters' and students' immortal souls.<sup>132</sup> Here then, with the elucidation of his intellectual abilities and the subtle but significant change in their nature, Petronius defied the trend. That he did so is testament to importance of the *Studium* in Bologna's urban fabric and a sign of the cultural expectations held by literate Bolognesi for those who occupied high or saintly office in their city.

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<sup>127</sup> 'Postea vero cum adolevisset, a parentibus traditus est gymnasio phylosophorum, ac liberalium disciplinarum, et ecclesiasticorum sacramentorum magistris; et ita, Deo largiente, inbutus est, ut in omnibus philosophiæ, et presertim spiritualibus floreret studiis'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 95

<sup>128</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 95

<sup>129</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 99.

<sup>130</sup> See the discussion in chapter 1.

<sup>131</sup> 'liberalium artium scientia plenus'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 95

<sup>132</sup> Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 397-8.

To be a saint, one must perform a miracle. In Petronius' case, it was a simple one: a miraculous intervention to prevent the death of a builder. One day at Bologna, an overly ambitious labourer attempted to raise one column on top of another. He was unable to manage the weight of this second column and he fell to the ground. The heavy stone was precariously balanced, threatening to topple and crush the craftsman. Petronius recognised the danger immediately, looked to the heavens and made the sign of the cross. Because God loved His bishop, he interceded and granted Petronius the power to save him. Petronius ensured the column did not fall or fragment and the worker was unharmed.<sup>133</sup> It is not in dispute that this miracle is not original and in large part has been lifted from Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*.<sup>134</sup> Neither is it controversial to say that miracles served a very specific function in medieval hagiographies: they were, in the words of Jacques Le Goff, the medieval world's 'social security'.<sup>135</sup> At issue, then, is not whether Petronius had thaumaturgically saved an injured worker in the fifth century but why in the late twelfth century the hagiographer saw fit to include this particular type of miracle: that is, what would the advantage be of having a saint who minimises the risks of sustaining work-related injuries of this kind.

Its answer lies in the social context of its production since the miracle can often reflect the society that produces it. In Petronius' case, this maxim holds true. There had been building works at Santo Stefano earlier in the century and this might have been one possible source of inspiration for the hagiographer.<sup>136</sup> However, we should cast our net more widely: at the time of the *Vita*'s writing, Bologna was itself in the middle of a veritable construction boom. The city was expanding outwards and its suburbs (*borghi*) had already outgrown the Selenite walls by the time Barbarossa destroyed them in 1162. Vast civil engineering projects like the building of the Torresotti walls – so called because of the many stone gates in the shape of towers, they were Bologna's second circuit of walls and encompassed an area of 113 hectares compared to the Selenite's 19 - and the construction of the Savena and Reno canals were happening all around the hagiographer as he wrote Petronius' *Vita*.<sup>137</sup> And construction then,

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<sup>133</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 112-3.

<sup>134</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 79-80; Pini, *Città, Chiesa and civici culti*, p. 207.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted without reference in Lodi, *I santi della Chiesa bolognese*, p. 5

<sup>136</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 80.

<sup>137</sup> Bocchi, 'Lo sviluppo urbanistico', pp. 222-33. On the canals, see Antonio Ivan Pini, *Campagne bolognesi: Le radici agrarie di una metropoli medievale* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1993), pp. 15-38. On the more general phenomenon of city expansion and the associated building work in Italy at this time, see Michael Greenhalgh, *The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1989), pp. 56-85.

as now, was a dangerous occupation with attendant risk of injury, just like the overproud labourer. With accidents on building-sites being frequent, they thus would have been an obvious source of inspiration for the monastic author in locating the kind of miracle Petronius might most pertinently have performed. Indeed, one might presume that builders did actually pray to saints to preserve them from accidents. So inspiration, but more to the point, utility; by rescuing the worker, the monk bestowed upon Petronius a practical social benefit that would endear him to the labouring Bolognesi. For those engaged in this work, the idea that, however improbable, a local saint could intercede on their behalf and save them from death in the event of an accident must have been reassuring and a consequent cause of popularity.

Much of the discussion on the Petronian *Vita* so far has focused on secular matters. Turning to the affairs of the Bolognese church and its bishop, a desire for ecclesiastical autonomy is also present in the hagiography. Evidence for this comes from the account of Petronius' consecration as bishop. On the night before his arrival at the church council in Rome, St Peter appeared to Pope Celestine in a dream and informed him that Bishop Felix of Bologna had died. He further advised Celestine that he should meet with the emperor's ambassador the following day and that this man should become that city's new prelate. So Petronius arrived and the pope welcomed him. During the church council held in the 'basilica of Constantine', 'Bolognese citizens of every class' (*cives bononienses universi ordinis*) interrupted the synod and requested a new pastor. Celestine announced his dream and with gentle encouragement Petronius assented to becoming Bologna's bishop. Celestine invested him with a staff and a seal of office, and anointed his head. He then embarked on a long and discursive sermon in verse - 109 lines long -, ranging from the Patriarchs, the relation between David and Christ, and His disciples.<sup>138</sup> The 'papal sacraments and blessings' complete, the ceremony was concluded in the 'customary manner' and the Bolognesi returned to their city with the newly consecrated prelate, who was welcomed by a 'crowd of both sexes who burst out in praise and spiritual hymns'.<sup>139</sup> Just like the Petronian miracle story, in the writing of this section the hagiographer has copied from another source: on this occasion, Agnellus of Ravenna's *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*. Specifically, he took the vision of Saints Peter and

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<sup>138</sup> Filippini suggested this sermon was the Petronian *tractatus* mentioned by Gennadius of Marseille, discussed above. Filippini, *San Petronio*, p. 35.

<sup>139</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 100-5.

Apollinaris appearing before Pope Sixtus III in a dream the night before the arrival of a Ravennese group from his *Life* of Peter Chrysologus.<sup>140</sup>

How does this story of papal consecration relate to Bolognese ecclesiastical autonomy? We do not know who consecrated Petronius as bishop, but from the 430s Bologna became a suffragan of the archbishop of Ravenna and from that point on its bishops were confirmed there.<sup>141</sup> Yet by the twelfth century, Bologna and its bishop were increasingly trying to achieve separation from their metropolitan province. In the previous chapter we saw that this was briefly realised at the Council of Guastalla in 1106, and although reversed, the desire of disassociation persisted. To therefore have Petronius consecrated as bishop by the pope in Rome and completely omit the archbishop of Ravenna from the *Vita* was a very deliberate indication of ecclesiastical priorities. In this regard, the current political situation made the hagiographer's task easier: Ravenna was a pro-imperial city allied to Barbarossa. With both Commune and Church united in common purpose, there was a happy union of the political and the religious expressed most clearly in the Petronian *Vita*.<sup>142</sup>

For anyone who has read this chapter up to here, it will be evident that the hagiographer was a proud Bolognese. His work, whilst being a hagiography to Petronius, was also an example of the *laus civitatis* genre: that is, works of urban panegyric that were written in praise of cities and which were produced in far greater quantity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than at any other point previously.<sup>143</sup> That the *Vita* was part of this literary tradition is a fact often mentioned but not much commented upon in the historiography.<sup>144</sup> However, it is clear that the hagiographer used his subject, Petronius, and his medium, the *Vita*, as a platform to

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<sup>140</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 75-8. Agnellus of Ravenna. *The Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, trans. with an introduction and notes by D. M. Deliyannis (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), ch. 49, pp. 159-61.

<sup>141</sup> Benati, 'La Chiesa Bolognese', pp. 24-5.

<sup>142</sup> In executing this ecclesiastical snub, it is of note that the monk drew upon a hagiographical text about the archbishops of Ravenna to write those same archbishops out of Bologna's church history. As Agnellus' most recent editor has observed, he was a passionate defender of Ravenna's ecclesiastical independence from Rome so the fact that the Bolognese hagiographer used this source to promote closer ties to Rome went against the very spirit of Agnellus' *Liber Pontificalis*. Agnellus of Ravenna, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup> Oldfield, *Urban Panegyric*, pp. 3-4. Oldfield's book is now the standard work on the subject, but see also John K. Hyde, 'Medieval Descriptions of Cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965-6), pp. 308-40; Gina Fasoli, 'La coscienza civica nelle "Laudes Civitatum"', in Francesca Bocchi, Antonio Carile and Antonio Ivan Pini (eds.), *Scritti di storia medievale* (Bologna: La fotocromo emiliana, 1974), pp. 293-318; Elisa Occhipinti, 'Immagini di città. Le *Laudes Civitatum* e la rappresentazione dei centri urbani nell'Italia settentrionale', *Società e Storia* 16 (1991), pp. 23-52.

<sup>144</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 205-6.

praise his city and extol the many virtues of his fellow citizens, some of which were quite independent of the ancient bishop.

He first does this by connecting Bologna to the three most important cities of medieval Christianity. Bologna, so the hagiographer states, owed its origins to Rome and was a city of the Empire.<sup>145</sup> By virtue of Petronius' ancestry and life, it had ties with Constantinople, that "second Rome" and the largest city in the Christian world at the hagiography's time of writing. With the Santo Stefano complex, it was forever twinned with Jerusalem. Through its association with each of these cities, Bologna could share in their respective distinguished histories and, in consequence, its own status was elevated. Next, he focused on the urban landscape. Santo Stefano and the other churches are described in great detail, praised as much for their architectural richness and beauty as for their likeness to Jerusalem. There were also the remains of ancient buildings, including an arena where emperors would once convene councils and royal palaces, with bath houses and columns of expensive stone.<sup>146</sup> All attested to Bologna's historicity and material splendour. The hagiographer then moved onto the Bolognesi themselves. His fellow citizens, he writes, are faithful Christians, strong warriors and naturally very wise.<sup>147</sup> For a combination of these factors, the hagiographer avers that the 'famous city of Bologna' was the 'principal city of the Romagna and Emilia' (*Est autem haec civitas principium Romanae provinciae, ac Aemiliae*).<sup>148</sup>

When he comes to describing Bologna's fecundity, the hagiographer draws upon the city's etymology to assist him. The Latin word for Bologna is *Bononia*, for good in the feminine singular it is *bona*, and for goodness or excellence it is *bonitas*. The similarity in spelling between the three made possible a play-on-words whereby Bologna and good/goodness appear synonymous, something which the hagiography was not the first to exploit: Urban II, in the aforementioned letter to prospective Bolognese crusaders, praised the '*popolo Bononiensi*' (people of Bologna) for their '*bonitas vestra*' (your goodness).<sup>149</sup> In a similar mode, the hagiographer said: 'with its etymology and special designation, this name, that is Bologna (*Bononia*), was so given because it is abundant with every resource and full with

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<sup>145</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 108.

<sup>146</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109.

<sup>147</sup> 'Incole illius urbis bone fidei doctique armis, pollentesque consilio naturaliter existunt'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109.

<sup>148</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109, 117

<sup>149</sup> *Codice diplomatico della Chiesa bolognese*, n. 59, p. 154.

every good thing (*bonis*)'.<sup>150</sup> He then followed this etymological game with many examples of its agricultural richness. We are told that the city's land was beloved by its farmers and they guarded it from all others. It possessed trees of every kind and as is recorded in the '*gestis Francorum*', their harvest produced more than any other city.<sup>151</sup> In particular, its fruit trees were to be commended. Vegetables could be grown throughout the year; it produced salubrious herbs with the sweetest of scents; and beautiful flowers of purple and gold and many other colours were grown. In fact, the city could legitimately be called the 'garden of Rome' (*ortus Romae*) and each region of the diocese produced a yield of corn, barley and wheat of all different kinds. Pools plentiful with fish and pleasant plains surrounded the city, and Bologna produced so much wine that nobody would dare dispute its glory.<sup>152</sup> Already, some decades before it was to acquire its originally pejorative epithet of *la grassa* (the fat), the Petronian *Vita* was placing great importance on the copiousness of Bologna's hinterland as a source of civic pride and it was a constitutive feature of the city's identity. In view of this, Petronius' hagiography stands at the beginning of a tradition for gastronomic excellence that was actively cultivated in the later Middle Ages and which any modern-day visitor to Bologna would be hard pressed to disagree with.<sup>153</sup>

Lastly, the hagiographer turns to Bologna's celestial guardians in the *Vita*'s final prayer. In a manner typical of the *laus civitatis* genre, the hagiographer lists his city's many saints.<sup>154</sup>

Alongside Petronius, there are the Five Holy Innocents, the martyrs Vitalis and Agricola, the

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<sup>150</sup> 'Propria enim ethimologia specialique vocabulo hoc nomen, idest *Bononia*, sibi inditum est, eo quod universis opibus sit copiosa, omnibusque bonis ad plenum refecta'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 108.

<sup>151</sup> 'quemadmodum in *gestis Francorum* legitur'. *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 109. The reference to the *gestis Francorum* is puzzling. Lanzoni suggested it was Gregory of Tours' *Decem Libri Historiarum*. Lanzoni, 'Le fonti'. However, Lodi has said he has been unable to find any reference to tree harvests in any source of this kind, either for Bologna or Boulogne (which shares the same Latin spelling). *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 108 n. 24. I have looked for reference to either city and their agricultural production in the First Crusade chronicles that might appropriately be termed '*gestis francorum*' without success. In the *gesta Francorum* the closest passage I can find is the author's description of the agricultural richness of Antioch's hinterland. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and trans. R. M. T. Hill (London: T. Nelson, 1962), p. 28. Another possible inspiration for the hagiographer might have been Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*. In it, Aimoin mentions tree harvests on several occasions, including one that states in a particular year two crops were harvested in one season. Again, though, this was not said to have occurred at either Bologna or Boulogne. Aimoin of Fleury, *Gesta Francorum*, ed. A. Duchesne, *Historiae Francorum Scriptores coetanei*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1641), pp. 1-120; reprinted in *PL*, vol. 139, cols. 627-798 (cols. 717 and 729).

<sup>152</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 108-9. Praising the wealth and fecundity of a city in its patron saint's hagiography was a popular theme. In Eusebius of Vercelli's, the author writes how after Eusebius liberated the city from Arians: 'the noblest city of Vercelli was rich in wealth, well-wooded with trees and vineyards, abundant in pastures, and irrigated by clean rivers'. *The Passion and Life of Eusebius of Vercelli*, in *Patron Saint of Early Medieval Italy, AD. c. 350-800: History and Hagiography in Ten Biographies*, trans. Nicholas Everett (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2016), p. 186.

<sup>153</sup> Antonella Campanini, 'Regulating the Material Culture of Bologna *la Grassa*', *CMRB*, pp. 129-53.

<sup>154</sup> Golinelli, 'Santi e culti bolognesi', p. 11.

martyr Proculus, the martyrs Hermes, Haggai and Gaius, the venerable Julian, whom Ambrose had praised, Isidore of Seville – ‘brightest doctor and confessor of Christ’ -, Felix, Petronius’ predecessor, the early Bolognese bishops Parthenius, Tertulianus, Jucundus and Theodore, and many more saints who are unnamed, with the exception of Catherine of Alexandria, whom are preserved either completely or partially. Most of these were local cults, and although their number was much less than the 35 saints, 12 apostles and 40 martyrs listed in the *Versus de Verona*, with their bodily remains resident at Bologna, the hagiographer can say the city is ‘favourably honoured with the protection of many saints’ and, because of Petronius’ work in acquiring them, claims Bologna will be ‘venerated by neighbouring cities’ on account of their number and quality.<sup>155</sup>

#### iv. Conclusion

The *Vita Sancti Petronii* was the first Petronian hagiography. Written by a learned monk from Santo Stefano c. 1177-80, it marked a decisive stage in the formation of Petronius’ cult. Although his relics had been discovered and a feast day instituted by Bishop Enrico, the ancient bishop lacked a written account of his saintly life. The absence of this third and arguably most important element of a successful cult acted as an impediment to its further development at Bologna. In its place, only oral tradition could fill the hagiographic void, using as its basis the limited foundations provided by Enrico in his sermon announcing Petronius’ discovery. However, this was all to change with the production of the *Vita*. Now, thanks to the monastic scribe, the Petronian legend was set down in writing and expounded upon in great detail. In an original work, which nevertheless drew upon and directly borrowed from a wide range of non-Petronian hagiographical texts, the monk provided much of what was expected of a twelfth-century saint. Petronius was a holy man, committed to Christ since his childhood. He was, moreover, a miracle worker, and during his many years of holding his city’s see he was a benevolent bishop of Bologna who cared for his flock.

But much more than simply being a topoi filled or boilerplate text, the *Vita Sancti Petronii* is a work rich and saturated with the social, political, economic, religious and cultural concerns confronting Bologna in the late twelfth century. The writing of a *Vita* for Petronius was in a sense a logical progression for the cult. Yet, it was the great events of the 1170s that prompted the production of the first Petronian hagiography. When Bologna came under

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<sup>155</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 117-8. Oldfield, *Urban Panegyric*, p. 84.

extreme political pressure, the city was given spiritual and intellectual fortification by crafting sanctity, and the figure of Petronius, who had so recently been discovered by bishop Enrico, provided the ideal foil on which to do so, given that next to nothing was yet established about him and so he was an infinitely malleable figure. So sitting within pre-existing traditions and standing at the beginning of others, the *Vita* was firmly embedded in the society which produced it. The great battles between Bologna and the Lombard League against Barbarossa feature by being transplanted back into the Late Antique past. Arguments in support of Bolognese civic liberty and freedom from external intervention are grounded in Petronius' and Ambrose's legendary deeds. With the flattering account of Emperor Theodosius II, the ancient bishop's brother-in-law, there may even be a suggestion that the Bolognesi were at least willing in the 1170s to consider recognising the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus as their overlord in exchange for communal autonomy. In the account of Petronius' consecration, evidence of the Bolognesi's attempt to extricate themselves from the metropolitan diocese of Ravenna is present. Retroactive networks between Petronius, and thus by extension Bologna, are forged with several classical emperors, subtly but most prominently Constantine. In its pages, Bologna is connected to the three principal cities of the medieval Christian world: Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. Of the latter, Bologna is in fact a copy. Working within a long-established tradition of Santo Stefano as a simulacrum of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the hagiographer pushed the comparison to incorporate more of the city's landscape and buildings than had hitherto constituted the Bolognese replica of the Holy City. Indirectly borrowing from contemporary cosmological thought, the hagiographer positioned Bologna, just like its Jerusalemite exemplar, at the centre of Christian salvation. Also influenced by the city's famed *Studium*, the *Vita*'s author took care to reference Petronius' advanced learning in the liberal arts and commends the collective wisdom of the Bolognesi. What is more, Bologna's material and architectural splendour were praised, acknowledging the city's wealth; Bologna's agricultural fecundity was a source of real pride and a key marker of urban identity; and the celestial guardians of Bologna listed in the final prayer, many of whom owed their presence in the city thanks to Petronius, provide evidence of the Bolognese civic cult.

The *Vita Sancti Petronii* is, therefore, fundamentally important to our study. One, because it codified the main contours of the Petronian legend. Small and slight changes or interpolations would subsequently be made to Petronius' hagiographical tale; but its skeleton was established in the *Vita Sancti Petronii* and significant deviation was no longer possible. In



short, the creative act of setting down in writing a hagiography for the ancient bishop was a decisive intervention in the Petronian cult to which all else that came after was indebted to and shaped by. Two, as the analysis of the *Vita*'s content shows, it was a work that was authored by a monk who, cloistered or not, was most interested in the wider affairs of Bolognese life. Through the prism of Petronius, he commented upon a broad sweep of matters touching the Bolognesi, be that from the city's constitutional arrangements to its wine production. Sanctity was a ubiquitous feature of medieval urban life and a great many things were understood or achieved by reference to or in association with a patron saint. The *Vita Sancti Petronii* is, in the Bolognese setting, the first great example of this practice. In the following pages, as we focus our attention on the Petronian cult in the thirteenth century and beyond, the interconnected relationship between Petronius and Bolognesi will become ever more apparent.

### Chapter 3 – Custodians of the Cult: The Commune, and the Abbots and Monks of Santo Stefano

In the preceding two chapters, we have traced Petronius' cult up to c. 1180. By this time, the core of the cult had been established: there was a body and name, a feast day, and a literary commemoration. However, we have not been able to say much more than that, only hypothesising that certain aspects of the cult may have resonated with the Bolognesi for a particular reason, such as the miracle of the saved labourer. This is the case for one simple reason. Other than the *Vita* itself, concrete evidence for devotion to Petronius of any kind is lacking in this period. Yet as the twelfth century closes and the thirteenth begins, this starts to change. Slowly, and it must be said intermittently and with varying degrees of intensity across the population, the number of references to Bolognese participation in or engagement with his cult grows significantly so that by the early fifteenth century Petronius had impressed, or indeed been impressed, upon the urban fabric of Bologna in monumental form. With its still unfinished façade, the Basilica of San Petronio, one of the world's largest churches, dominates Bologna's Piazza Maggiore.

Because of the much varied and expanded source material at our disposal, our approach in this chapter and the next will shift. Rather than continuing chronologically, we will instead address the subject thematically, something which hitherto has not been possible. After a quick but necessary survey of Bologna's social and political history from the Duecento through to the Cinquecento, the focus here will be on the Commune, and the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. Both of these sub-strata will be addressed in turn, looking to see in what ways they interacted with Petronius' cult, if indeed they did at all. Employing this method here and in chapter four, which explores Bologna's other significant social institutions, will allow us to investigate more closely the strength or popularity of Petronius' cult and its connection to the city's political history, to plot changing levels of devotion over time and, by not treating the people and institutions of Bologna as a monolithic bloc, to assess whether at any given moment it fluctuated in dynamism across the Bolognese population and seek to explain why. By treating the multiple and overlapping communities inhabiting one urban space as separate entities which at the same time both shared and had opposing interests, a richer and more subtle understanding of the Petronian cult in practice in late medieval Bologna is possible.

The two institutions under discussion in this chapter, the Commune and Santo Stefano, were the two custodians of the Petronian cult: they were the only two bodies that ever claimed possession or ownership of the ancient bishop, making them Petronius' principal advocates among Bologna's many sub-communities. From the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, it was during periods of Bolognese communal government that the cult flourished. Adopting a broad range of Petronian policies, from instituting elaborate celebrations for his feast day to requiring subject communities to render homage to the Bolognesi each year on 4 October, and across a range of media, such as law codes, coinage and buildings, the various iterations of the City's commune positioned Petronius at the heart of Bologna's civic cult. The process, as we shall see, was tied to the vicissitudes of Bologna's communal government, and it reached its apogee under Bologna's "Second Commune" of 1376-1401. Because of their actions, the Bolognesi became *petroniani*, and it was at that stage, as chapter 4 will show, that every form of government that succeeded them, of whatever complexion, had to co-opt Petronius into their idiom of governance. The other guardian, the Benedictines of Santo Stefano, continued what they had started with the writing of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*. They used the Petronian legend to continue embellishing their Jerusalem simulacrum, to add to the growing number of saints they claimed possession of, most notably St Florian, and to receive financial assistance from the city authorities. But precisely at the moment that the Petronian cult became Bologna's primary saint's cult, Santo Stefano suffered. The monastery's brothers struggled to overcome the creation of a second cult centre to Petronius at Bologna, gradually losing possession of Petronius' relics to the civic basilica.

#### i. A short history of Bologna in the later Middle Ages

Starting this chapter with a brief overview of the important social and political developments of late medieval Bologna is helpful for two reasons. The first is that our approach in the next two chapters will naturally involve much chronological back and forth. For those not acquainted with the history of the city and the affairs of the Italian peninsula, the discussion will help frame and I hope make more intelligible what follows. This is especially so given that one of this thesis' central arguments is that Petronius' cult was inextricably connected to its wider socio-political context. The second, although connected to the first, is that there exists in English no single-authored continuous narrative of Bolognese history of the later Middle Ages. Of course, the starting point for any student is now the essays in the volume, edited by Sarah Blanshei, entitled *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna*, but

as valuable as it is, the format does not lend itself to simple historical storytelling and, more problematically, it is beset by a number of typographical or factual errors which detract from its overall purpose as a primer to medieval and early modern Bolognese history.<sup>1</sup> What follows, then, is a sketch of the major events and personalities. By no means does this outline claim to be comprehensive or indeed original, but it should serve as an introduction to the city's complex history and allow the reader to orientate themselves as our analysis of the Petronian cult unfolds.

Bologna emerged from the Peace of Constance in 1183 in a position of strength. Having obtained legal recognition of its Commune, the city flourished.<sup>2</sup> Never again did Barbarossa challenge the communes' right of existence and with his death in 1190 on the Third Crusade, the Hohenstaufen empire was no threat to the Italian city-republics for a generation.<sup>3</sup> Taking advantage of the respite and now fully conscious of what they were doing, the communes witnessed a phase of intense institutional development. At Bologna, the office of the podestà was permanently established in 1195, that is the appointment of one non-Bolognese man, aided and supported by his own salaried retinue of legal experts, notaries and soldiers, who was the principal magistrate of government and who held office typically for six months.<sup>4</sup> Supporting him was the *Consiglio di credenza*, a council whose responsibility was to elect all communal officials, collectively forming the *curia*. The responsibilities and functions of these officials was further clarified, and the Commune began codifying its laws, with Ranieri of Perugia drafting its *Registro Grosso* around 1223. The first extant civic statutes survive at Bologna from 1250.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *CMRB*. To cite several examples, the protective pact between Bologna and the castles of Rodiano, Sanguineta and Capriglia of 11 June 1123 is dated 10 June 1223 (p. 211); erroneously following the much later Bolognese chronicle tradition, Barbarossa is said to have destroyed Bologna's walls in 1163 instead of the correct dating of 1162 (p. 362); Pope Nicholas III is said to have died in August 1289, when in fact he died on 22 August 1280 (p. 218); Pope Boniface IX is confused with Pope Boniface VIII (p. 221); Taddeo Pepoli died on 29 September 1347, not the 28 September as stated (p. 225).

<sup>2</sup> The Peace of Constance has been called the 'Magna Carta of the Lombard Cities'. Gianluca Raccagni, 'The Teaching of Rhetoric and the Magna Carta of the Lombard Cities: the Peace of Constance, the Empire and the Papacy in the Works of Guido Faba and his Leading Contemporary Colleagues', *Journal of Medieval History* 39 (2013), pp. 61-79 (p. 61).

<sup>3</sup> Freed, *Barbarossa*, pp. 483-513.

<sup>4</sup> On the office of the podestà in communal Italy, see *I podestà dell'Italia comunale*, 2 vols. ed. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur (Rome: École Française, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna*, pp. 167-72; Tamba, 'Civic Institutions', pp. 212-3. On the *Registro Grosso*, see the introduction by Tommaso Duranti in *I libri iurium del comune di Bologna. Regesti*, eds. Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi and Tommaso Duranti, 2 vols. (Bologna: Editrice Pliniana, 2010), vol. 1, pp. xix-lxxvi. The 1250 statutes, mistakenly thought to date to 1245, are published in *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*. On the statutes' dating, see Roberto Greci, 'Bologna nel Duecento', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *Storia di Bologna*, vol. 2: *Bologna nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 499-580 (p. 557).

When Frederick II, the grandson of Frederick Barbarossa, became German emperor in 1220 the threat to the Italian communes was renewed. He never accepted the terms of the Peace of Constance as legitimate. He projected his imperial ambitions in his 1231 *Liber Augustalis/Constitutions of Melfi*, which although primarily focused on the Kingdom of Sicily, was a more general statement of his opposition to autonomous communal government and his preference for monarchy; in other words, a template for how he intended to govern cities in central and northern Italy when they came under his direct control.<sup>6</sup> Fighting began in the 1220s and lasted until Frederick's death in 1250.<sup>7</sup> Bologna and her allies, supported by the papacy, united in the Second Lombard League in 1226 to oppose Frederick and his illegitimate son, King Enzo of Sardinia.<sup>8</sup> At the battle of Fossalta in 1249, Bologna comprehensively defeated imperial forces and captured Enzo. He was transferred to Bologna where he remained imprisoned in the eponymous Palazzo Re Enzo until his death in 1272.<sup>9</sup> Although still nominally a subject of the Holy Roman Empire, during the period of interregnum caused by Frederick's death Bologna prospered. It allied with Charles of Anjou, and the city succeeded in extending its influence throughout the Emilia-Romagna, sending its officials and establishing its laws throughout the region.<sup>10</sup>

As the thirteenth century progressed, the Bolognese merchant and commercial classes increasingly sought political influence to match their economic importance in the city. In 1217, the bankers and moneylenders succeeded in joining the newly created body of the *Consiglio generale*, but an aristocratic reaction in 1219 expelled the upper representatives of the *popolo* (literally translated as 'people', it referred to the class of urban merchants and artisans) from communal government. However, a revolt led by the merchant Giuseppe Toschi and supported by the Arts societies (the Bolognese name for guilds) in November

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<sup>6</sup> *The Liber Augustalis, or Constitutions of Melfi Promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 1231*, trans. with an introduction and notes by James M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971). For a discussion of the *Constitutions* as a 'blueprint' for government, see John Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 27-30.

<sup>7</sup> On Frederick II, see David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Penguin, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> On the conflict between Frederick II and the papacy see Ortensio Zecchino, *Gregorio contro Federico. Il conflitto per dettar legge* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2018); Brett Edward Whalen, *The Two Powers: The Papacy, the Empire, and the Struggle for Sovereignty in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> *Bologna, re Enzo e il suo mito: atti della Giornata di studio, Bologna, 11 June 2000*, eds. Antonio Ivan Pini and Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi (Bologna: Deputazione di storia patria, 2001); *Bologna, re Enzo e il suo mito*, eds. Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, Valeria Braidì, Raffaella Pini and Francesca Roversi Monaco (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002); Francesca Roversi Monaco, *Il Comune di Bologna e Re Enzo: costruzione di un mito debole* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Tiziana Lazzari, 'Esportare la democrazia? Il governo bolognese a Imola (1248-1274) e la creazione del "Popolo"', in Tiziana Lazzari, Leardo Mascanzoni and Rossella Rinaldi (eds.), *La norma e la memoria. Studi per Augusto Vasina* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2004), pp. 399-439.

1228 brought the *popolo*'s return.<sup>11</sup> Around this same time the Arms societies formed, voluntary organisations of Bolognese citizens whose purpose was to defend militarily the Commune.<sup>12</sup> The 1230s witnessed the birth of the *collegio degli anziani e consuli*, a body of elected members who represented the interests of the Arts and Arms societies. Another council, the *consiglio del popolo e della massa*, was created to oversee all matters that concerned the *popolo*. It was composed of the *anziani*, the leading officials of the guilds (often called *ministrali*) and other councillors and legal experts. At the summit of the *popolo* was the *capitano del popolo*, an office created in the 1250s. Like the podestà, he was an elected non-Bolognese official with a supporting cast of judges, notaries and other agents but his role above all else was to protect the *popolo*'s political project, one which allowed approximately 12-18,000 adult Bolognese men out of the city's population of c. 50,000-60,000 to actively participate in the city's political life.<sup>13</sup>

There thus existed two parallel structures of government, the Commune and the *popolo*, both of which were becoming more complex and sub-divided into specialist component parts. They were not, however, mutually exclusive, and members of the *popolo* could also participate in the institutional arm of the Commune, though not vice versa. On top of this complicated political arrangement, the Bolognese population was further divided under the heads of two factions, the Geremei and Lambertazzi.<sup>14</sup> The Geremei were Guelfs, that is pro-papal, while the Lambertazzi were Ghibellines, typically supporters of the imperial cause.<sup>15</sup> Proponents of each faction argued that Bologna should pursue a foreign policy that promoted the cause of their wider alliance, and within the city they pursued inter-familial vendettas. In a climate of increasing violence, and following the Bolognese defeat to Venice in 1270-1, the *popolo*, led by the celebrated notary and professor Rolandino Passaggeri, sided with the Geremei.<sup>16</sup> Matters came to a head in 1274: after forty days of fighting on the streets, the

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<sup>11</sup> On the Arts societies see Gina Fasoli, 'Le compagnie delle arti a Bologna fino al principio del secolo XV', *L'Archiginnasio* 30 (1935), pp. 237-80.

<sup>12</sup> On the Arms societies see Gina Fasoli, 'Le compagnie delle armi a Bologna', *L'Archiginnasio* 28 (1933), pp. 158-83, 323-40.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts gives a figure of c. 15,000-18,000, Roberts, *Police Power*, p. 20. For the year 1294, Blanshei gives a more conservative estimate of c. 12,000. Blanshei, *Politics and Justice*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>14</sup> On their formation and development, see Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Guelfes et gibelins à Bologne au XIIIe siècle: l'"autodestruction" d'une classe dirigeante', in Claude Gauvard (ed.), *Les élites urbaines au Moyen âge: XXVIIe Congrès de la SHMES: Rome, mai 1996* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1997), pp. 153-64.

<sup>15</sup> On Guelfs and Ghibellines see Paolo Grillo, *La falsa inimicizia: Guelfi e Ghibellini nell'Italia del Duecento* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> On Rolandino Passaggeri, see Arturo Palmieri, *Rolandino Passaggeri* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1933); Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Un principe dei notai in una Repubblica dei notai: Rolandino Passaggeri nella Bologna del Duecento', *Nuova rivista storica* 84 (2000), pp. 51-72; *Rolandino e l'ars notaria da Bologna all'Europa. Atti*

Lambertazzi were expelled from the city. Some 4,000 people were exiled from Bologna. The Lambertazzi were readmitted to Bologna in 1279 but were exiled again some weeks later. In 1306, the third and definitive expulsion of the Lambertazzi took place.<sup>17</sup>

With a sizeable number of Bologna's social elite forcibly removed from the city, the *popolo* then turned against the Geremei. Already in 1272, the *capitano del popolo* Accursio Lanzavecchia had the names of nobles and magnates deleted from the matricula of the Arms and Arts societies, thus excluding them from the *popolo*.<sup>18</sup> By 1274-5, Rolandino had created the Society of the Cross, a 2,000-strong armed militia tasked with defending the *popolo* and to which we shall return below. His control over the city was briefly interrupted in 1278 when the German Emperor Rudolf of Habsburg relinquished his rights over the Romagna to the papacy. At this date, Bologna formally fell under papal rule, where it would remain until 1860. Pope Nicholas III (r. 1277-80) sent his nephew and legate, Bertoldo Orsini, to Bologna. He was made the city's *podesta*, and Rolandino was barred from holding any political office and the Society of the Cross was disbanded. This brief phase of direct papal control was, however, short-lived. By the early 1280s, the Orsini were gone and Rolandino was back at the head of the *popolo*, now presented as being coterminous with the Commune. In 1282, the *Ordinances* were promulgated, the first Bolognese anti-magnate legislation, and they were followed by the *Most Sacred Ordinances* in 1284, both of which were incorporated into the civic statutes of 1288.<sup>19</sup> At this time Bologna managed to avoid the advances of the *signori* that brought to an end the communes of many Italian cities, and Rolandino remained at the head of Bologna's government until his death in 1300.

At the turn of the fourteenth century, the war Bologna had been waging since 1295 against Azzo d'Este, the *signoria* of Ferrara and Modena, was concluded through the mediation of Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294-1303). A less radical government, populated by "moderate Guelfs" more closely aligned with Bologna's magnate class, was in control of the city's affairs until 1306. They were replaced in that year by the so-called "intransigent Guelfs",

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*del convegno internazionale di studi storici sulla figura e l'opera di Rolandino*, ed. Giorgio Tamba (Milan: Giuffrè, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Giuliano Milani, *L'esclusione dal comune. Conflitti e bandi politici a Bologna e in altre città italiane tra XII e XIV secolo* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2003). The Lambertazzi exile is narrated in the *serventese* poem. Flaminio Pellegrini, 'Il serventese dei Lambertazzi e dei Geremei', *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)* 9 (1891), pp. 22-71, 181-224; 10 (1892), pp. 95-140.

<sup>18</sup> Greci, 'Bologna nel Duecento', pp. 530-1.

<sup>19</sup> Gina Fasoli, 'La legislazione antimagnatizia a Bologna fino al 1292', *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 6 (1933), pp. 86-133; Rolando Dondarini, 'Gli Statuti "Antimagnatizi" del Comune di Bologna del 1288 alla luce delle recenti ricerche', *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)*, n.s., 64 (2014), pp. 1-42.

which led to the final exile of the Lambertazzi and “moderate Guelfs” opposed to that policy. Hearing of this in Avignon, Pope Clement V sent Cardinal Legate Napoleone Orsini to Bologna to restore papal control. Within months, Orsini had been driven out of the city in a revolt led by the butcher’s guild and he openly allied himself with the exiled Lambertazzi and the Ghibellines of the Romagna against Bologna, further complicating matters.<sup>20</sup> In consequence, the city was placed under interdict, which remained in force until 1308.

For the next nineteen years, the Commune and the *popolo* remained in charge of Bologna but their position was increasingly threatened by the machinations of the city’s most powerful noble families. At their head was Romeo Pepoli, originally hailing from the *popolo* but by this point one of the wealthiest men in Italy. He bankrolled Bologna’s costly wars against the German Emperor Henry VII, who descended into Italy in 1310. In exchange for his financial support, Romeo was granted extraordinary powers so that by the end of the decade he had established a “crypto-signoria” over Bologna. Yet he was forced to flee the city in 1321, a year after he had made the Commune bear the expense of his son’s doctorate celebrations.<sup>21</sup> The Commune was preserved, though in an increasingly fragile state, and a new office, the *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, whose purpose was to prevent the installation of a *signoria* at Bologna, was created.<sup>22</sup> However, the attempt was in vain.

Suffering a heavy defeat at the battle of Zappolino in November 1325, exhausted and riven by factionalism – now divided under the names of Scacchesi (who would later become the Raspanti) and Maltraversi -, Bologna offered itself to the papacy. Having narrowly avoided the “crypto-signoria” of Romeo Pepoli, Bologna, with one brief interlude, was governed by a succession of *signori*, of indigenous, Milanese or papal extraction, up to 1376.<sup>23</sup> Papal legate Cardinal Bertrand du Pouget arrived in the city and was named Lord (*dominus*) of Bologna in February 1327. He governed the city until a revolt caused him to flee Bologna on 28 March 1334. In its wake, a communal government was restored. New statutes confirming the fact were issued in 1335, but by 1337 it had fallen. Taking its place was the lordship of Taddeo Pepoli, son of Romeo, who had been welcomed back into Bologna during Bertrand’s period

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<sup>20</sup> Attilia Veronesi, ‘La legazione del card. Napoleone Orsini in Bologna nel 1306’, *Atti e Memorie (Romagna)*, sr. 3, 28 (1909-10), pp. 79-133.

<sup>21</sup> Massimo Giansante, *Patrimonio familiare e potere nel periodo tardo-commune. Il progetto signorile di Romeo Pepoli, banchiere bolognese (1250c.-1322)* (Bologna: La fotocromo emiliana, 1991); Massimo Giansante, ‘Romeo Pepoli. Patrimonio e potere a Bologna fra comune e signoria’, *Quaderni medievali* 53 (2002), pp. 87-112.

<sup>22</sup> Tamba, ‘Civic Institutions’, pp. 222-3.

<sup>23</sup> Trombetti Budriesi, ‘Bologna, 1334-1376’, pp. 761-866.



of control. Taddeo's mercenary troops and supporters overwhelmed the communal forces gathered in the piazza on 28 August 1337 and carried out a bloodless coup. He was declared 'protector and governor of the Commune and people of Bologna'.<sup>24</sup> Following negotiations, Pope Benedict XII (r. 1334-42) bestowed the title of Papal Vicar upon Taddeo. His rule lasted until his death on 29 September 1347, and his two sons, Giacomo and Giovanni, jointly succeeded him. Facing the extreme consequences of the Black Death, which is first noted at Bologna in May 1348, and lacking both the appetite and aptitude for government, the adult Pepoli sons sold Bologna to the Archbishop and ruler of Milan, Giovanni Visconti, in October 1350.<sup>25</sup> Long holding ambitions to control the city, he entered Bologna on 23 October and occupied the piazza with 1200 mercenaries. Pope Clement VI recognised Giovanni Visconti as Papal Vicar of the city on 28 April 1352, and Giovanni was lord of the city until his death in April 1354. His nephew, Matteo II Visconti, followed Giovanni as Bologna's ruler. Matteo died in September 1355 and Bologna passed to a cadet branch of the Visconti, which was opposed by Bernabò Visconti in Milan. The city's ruler from 1355 to 1360 was Giovanni Visconti da Oleggio. He was granted the vicariate of the city in 1358, but following negotiations with the papacy, he surrendered the city in exchange for the signoria of Fermo and the title of marquis of Ancona. Papal forces entered the city in March 1360 and Bologna was directly ruled by five different papal officials until 1376. First was Cardinal Gil Álvarez Carrillo de Albornoz from 1360 to 1364.<sup>26</sup> Next came Cardinal Androin de la Roche from 1364 to 1368, when he was removed from office by Pope Urban V (r. 1362-70) and replaced by Cardinal Anglic de Grimoard, Urban's younger brother. He was governor of Bologna until 1372, losing his position after Urban's death. Anglic, who left a very detailed briefing note for his successor, was followed by Cardinal Pierre d'Etain, the governor of

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<sup>24</sup> The full title was 'generalis et perpetuus conservator et gubernator comunis et populi Bononiae ac totius civitatis comitatus et districtus subiectorum et districtualium et habitatorem eiusdem et augmentator status boni pacifici et tranquili omnium premissorum'. On Taddeo Pepoli, see Antonioli, *Conservator pacis et iustitiae*.

<sup>25</sup> On Giacomo and Giovanni Pepoli, see Guido Antonioli, 'Un epilogo. La signoria di Giacomo e Giovanni Pepoli a Bologna (1347-50)', *Quaderni del M.ae.s* 10 (2007), pp. 51-95. On the Black Death at Bologna, see Wray, *Communities and Crisis*. Wray's arguments on the impact of the Black Death on Bologna may need to be nuanced given Giulia Lorenzoni's discovery of a document which records that many wills and other acts were not recorded in the *Memoriali* at this time because of the plague and were thus not legally valid. Nevertheless, the overall thrust of Wray's arguments, namely that Bolognese government continued to function during the Black Death, remains sound. Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>26</sup> Francesco Pirani, *Con il senno e con la spada. Il cardinale Albornoz e l'Italia del Trecento* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2019).

Bologna until 1374.<sup>27</sup> The fifth and final papal ruler of the city before the revolt of 1376 was Cardinal Guillaume Noellet.

Bertrand and the *signori* who came after him, be they papal governors or lords of native or foreign extraction, attacked the basis of popular government and concentrated in their person all authority.<sup>28</sup> Repeatedly the *signori* targeted the Arts and Arms societies, the bedrock of the autonomous Commune. They disbanded the Arms societies, and they sought to minimise the influence of the guilds by separating the political from the economic. Unlike under periods of communal government, officials of the guilds had no role in the management of the Commune. Their purview was confined solely to the regulation of their respective trades and its practitioners. Communal officials were either appointed directly by the *signori* or suitably loyal candidates were vetted and presented for confirmation. The offices of the *capitano del popolo* and the *barisello*, the two positions most closely associated with popular government, were abolished, and the various communal councils were disbanded, allowed to fall into abeyance or were denuded of any real power or autonomy of action.

The revolt of 1376 ushered in Bologna's "Second Commune", the regime of 'the *popolo* and of the guilds' (*del popolo e delle arti*). Encouraged by the Florentines as part of their conflict with the papacy known as the War of the Eight Saints, on the evening of 19 March the Bolognese rose up in rebellion.<sup>29</sup> By the following day, the *collegio degli anziani e consoli* had been re-established and the other institutions of the former commune followed thereafter: the *gonfalonieri del popolo*, the *massari delle arti*, the offices of podestà and *capitano del popolo*, and the *consiglio generale*, initially numbering 500 but growing to 1,200 members. Negotiations held at Avignon resolved the stalemate between Bologna and the papacy. In 1377, the title of papal vicar was bestowed upon the jurist Giovanni da Legnano, a solution which recognised the nominal authority of the papacy over Bologna but which guaranteed the Commune's right to directly manage the affairs of the city. Reconfirmed by Urban VI in 1378, Giovanni held the title until he retired in 1382. The papal vicarship then passed to the

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<sup>27</sup> La 'Descriptio civitatis Bononie eiusque comitatus' del cardinale Anglico (1371). *Introduzione ed edizione critica*, ed. Rolando Dondarini (Bologna: Deputazione di Storia Patria, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> The account offered here in this paragraph draws on Trombetti Budriesi, 'Bologna, 1334-1376'; Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*; Antonioli, *Conservator pacis et iustitiae*; Tamba, 'Civic Institutions', pp. 223-7.

<sup>29</sup> The classic account is by Oreste Vancini, *La rivolta dei Bolognesi al governo dei vicari della chiesa (1376-1377). L'origine dei tribune della pace* (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1906); John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 151-2. For the letters the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati sent to Bologna in 1376-7 encouraging the Bolognesi to defend their liberty against tyranny, see Ronald G. Witt, *Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters* (Genève: Droz, 1976), pp. 53-6.

*anziani*, whose possession of it was reconfirmed by Pope Boniface IX in 1389 for a period of 25 years.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of its social composition, the “Second Commune” was less representative compared to the Bolognese Commune of the thirteenth century.<sup>31</sup> However, the tendency to restrict active involvement in the city’s political life for all but the social elite gathered further momentum with the escalating tensions between Bologna and Milan. A committee of ten members, the *Dieci di Balìa*, was created in 1388 and they were granted extraordinary powers to prepare the city’s defence. In 1393, the *Dieci* was replaced by *Sedici Riformatori dello stato di libertà*. Controlled by the city’s aristocracy, its members jostled for political influence and sought to establish a signoria. Giovanni I Bentivoglio succeeded, briefly ruling the city from 1401 to 1402. Defeated at the battle of Casalecchio, Bentivoglio was executed and Bologna once again passed under the control of Milan. Gian Galeazzo Visconti entered the city on 29 June. He died in September and was followed by his son, Giovanni Maria. Within a year, Bologna once again submitted itself to the papacy and welcomed Cardinal Legate Baldassare Cossa. He governed the city directly until 1410, when he was elected (Anti-)Pope John XXIII. In his absence, governors ruled on his behalf. Revolts in 1411, 1416 and 1428 temporarily interrupted papal control of the city but a resolution was reached in 1447 with Pope Nicholas V’s *capitoli*. The terms of the agreement settled Bologna’s position within the framework of the Papal States. It established a *governo misto*: the papacy’s jurisdiction over the city was confirmed and in return the institutional structures of the city’s government, now the preserve of the urban aristocracy, were recognised and managed Bologna in conjunction with a papal legate. Though the specific details of the arrangement would change over time, the basic structures of Nicholas’ resolution, which were confirmed by Pope Julius II in 1506-7, remained in force until the end of the *ancien régime* in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>30</sup> Tamba, ‘Civic Institutions’, pp. 227-30.

<sup>31</sup> The account in this paragraph draws on Tamba, *Il regime del popolo*; De Benedictis, ‘Lo “stato popolare di libertà”’, pp. 899-950; Angela De Benedictis, ‘Popular Government, Government of the *Ottimati*, and the Languages of Politics: Concord and Discord (1377-1559)’, in *CMRB*, pp. 289-309; Tommaso Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno a Bologna nel Quattrocento (1392-1466)*. *Fonti per la storia delle istituzioni* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009); Tommaso Duranti, ‘*Libertas*, Oligarchy, Papacy: Government in the Quattrocento’, in *CMRB*, pp. 260-88; Ian Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle of St Peter. Pope Paul II and Bologna* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); Andrea Gardi, ‘Making of an Oligarchy: The Ruling Classes of Bologna’, in *CMRB*, pp. 310-334.

Liberty was a concept to which all forms of government at Bologna paid homage. But liberty as a concept had a long and complicated history in the city.<sup>32</sup> The first sustained engagement with the idea of *libertas* dates to the period of wars with Barbarossa in the late twelfth century. At that time, liberty meant the right for the city's consular elite to govern the city without the interference of the emperor or his functionaries in the day-to-day running of municipal government. Liberty's meaning was broadened in 1256/7 with the promulgation of the *Liber Paradisus*. By abolishing slavery and serfdom to return mankind to its natural state of freedom, the Commune conjoined free status with liberty. To these definitions of liberty was added a third with the definitive rise of the *popolo* and the transfer of Bologna from the Holy Roman Empire to the Papacy in 1278. Liberty now meant representative government featuring the guilds and arms societies, and freedom from direct papal intervention.

Liberty took on new meanings with the rise of *signori* at Bologna in the fourteenth century. The papacy and its nominated *signori*, be that the Pepoli, the Visconti or papal legates, similarly used *libertas* in their vernacular of governance. It, however, did not carry the same ideological punch as it had during the earlier communal government. On the contrary, under the *signori* liberty was understood as being coterminous with stable government and the absence of factional violence. It had no connotations of independence and participatory government, two things to which the *signori* were deeply opposed. But things changed again with the coming of the "Second Commune", when liberty, along with Petronius' cult, was the government's stated *raison d'être*. In 1376, *libertas* meant a return to the communal government of the late thirteenth century and its former definition. To have liberty was to have an independent Commune that included members of the guilds as active citizens in political decision making. The citizens recognised the higher authority of the popes, but in practice this acknowledgement was theoretical; the Bolognesi had the liberty to govern the city as they wished.

The fall of the "Second Commune" brought with it further alterations to the concept of *libertas*. Papal overlordship of Bologna was acknowledged in 1378 and eventually confirmed

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<sup>32</sup> For the paragraphs that follow, I have drawn upon Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*; Tommaso Duranti, 'La costruzione di un linguaggio della *libertas* in una città *superiorem recognoscens*: Bologna, XIV-XV secolo', in A. Zorzi (ed.), *La libertà nelle città comunali e signorili italiane* (Rome: Viella, 2020), pp. 201-28; Daniele Bortoluzzi, "'La Libertà' divisive. Alcune considerazioni sull'ideologia della "libertas" a Bologna', in N. D'Acunto and E. Filippini (eds.), *Libertas: secoli X-XIII. Le settimane internazionali della mendola. Nuova serie 6* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2019), pp. 419-25; Robert Benson, 'Libertas in Italy (1152-1226)', in G. Makdisi (ed.), *La notion de liberté au moyen âge: Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1985), pp. 191-213.

in greater detail in 1447 and 1506. From that point, liberty was to be a subject city in the Papal States. As a term, *libertas* also encompassed the rights of the city's aristocratic elite to play a direct role in the management of city affairs in concert with papal representatives.

We might divide the political history of Bologna in the period c. 1183 to c. 1506 into four stages. The first was from the Peace of Constance in 1183 up to the arrival of Cardinal Bertrand du Pouget into the city in 1327. This was the period of the Bolognese Commune's greatest strength, which from 1228 included the city's class of artisans and merchants – the *popolo* – within the structures of government. Increasingly the Commune became more sophisticated and complex, and Bologna's control over the Emilia-Romagna was at its height. This period also witnessed conflict between factions and across classes. Facing increasing pressure from neighbouring cities and from within by magnates who sought to make themselves lords of Bologna, the Commune was unable to survive. The second stage, from 1327, the year of the city's submission to the papacy, until 1376 was Bologna's age of *signori*. Other than for one short interlude from 1334 to 1337, this almost fifty-year period saw Bologna governed by individual lords, either in their own name or as papal legates. As best as they could, the *signori* concentrated power in their person, ignoring or stripping the communal councils of any genuine authority or deliberative purpose. Institutions and officials that did survive were functionaries in the running of the city for the *signori* at whose discretion they held office. The guilds lost their dual political and economic roles. They became trade bodies responsible for the practices and regulation of their professions and their members; as economic institutions, they had no role in the city's government. The third stage of late medieval Bolognese history ran from 1376 to 1401. This was the time of the "Second Commune". Although never as broadly representative as earlier versions of the Commune on which it was based, the government of 'the *popolo* and of the guilds' nevertheless re-established the institutional apparatus of the Bolognese Commune of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The city's guilds once again had political power, and the government which they constituted championed an ideology of liberty and autonomy. Much like the previous version of the Bolognese Commune, the regime of 'the guilds and arts' could not withstand the desires of the city's aristocratic population to either exclude the *popolo* or establish a *signoria*. Coupled with pressure from the papacy and the Visconti, the "Second Commune" fell. The fourth stage began in 1401 with the end of the "Second Commune". Notwithstanding several short-lived *signori*, Bologna in the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries returned to the Papal States. In exchange for recognition of papal suzerainty and the imposition of a legate, Bologna's aristocracy governed the city.

In the analysis that follows, these four stages of the city's political history neatly map onto periods of intense activity or long periods of inactivity for the Petronian cult. For most of the period, Petronius' fate at Bologna was connected to the strength of the city's Commune. The first stage, from c. 1183-1327, marked the slow rise of Petronius to become one of Bologna's foremost saint's cults. Stage two, from 1327 to 1376, as chapter four will demonstrate, was a fifty-year lull for Petronius. None of the multiple *signori* who ruled in the city ever showed the slightest interest in supporting the ancient bishop's cult. On the contrary, they opposed it and preferred other saints in his place. Under the "Second Commune" of 1376-1401, the third stage, Petronius became Bologna's principal patron saint. The Commune pushed the ancient bishop's cult to the physical and spiritual centre of Bologna. Its work meant that no other saint could displace him. After 1401, in the fourth stage, despite a regime change, Petronius continued to flourish. As chapter four will show, any one institution or person who ruled the city in the fifteenth century and beyond had to do so with Petronius at their side.

Photo of map of northern Italy in 1310 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 7 – Map of northern Italy in 1310. From Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy*, Map. 4

Photo of map of major Italian cities c. 1340 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 8 – Map of major Italian cities c. 1340. From Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy*, Map. 5



Photo of map of late medieval Bologna removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 9 – Map of late medieval Bologna. Design by Fernando Lugli. From Francesca Bocchi, ‘Shaping the City: Urban Planning and Physical Structures’, in Sarah Rubin Blanshei (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 56-102 (p. 57).

## ii. The Commune

The most straightforward way to chart the evolution of the Bolognese Commune’s support for Petronius’ cult is through an analysis of the introductory prayer or dedication in the various editions of the city’s law codes. Civic statutes of communal Italy often open with invocations to God, the Virgin Mary and the respective city’s most important local saint or saints. By including them at the very beginning of these texts, the drafters were forging a link between the city and its rulers with God and his intercessors above.<sup>33</sup> If, therefore, a particular saint is mentioned in these prologues to the city’s laws, it is a good sign that their

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<sup>33</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 103.

cult was one that was being promoted by the communal or political authorities at the time of their production. In Parma's statutes, their patron saint, St Hilary, is invoked.<sup>34</sup> Verona's has St Zeno.<sup>35</sup> Modena's mentions St Geminianus, and Ferrara's, St George.<sup>36</sup>

Petronius is absent from the opening preamble of the earliest surviving statutes of the Bolognese *popolo* from 1248 and the Bolognese Commune from 1250. The *popolo*'s statutes open with a dedication to 'God, the most glorious Virgin Mary and all of the saints', and in the Bolognese Commune's statutes of 1250, there is no such preliminary dedication.<sup>37</sup> The statutes of the two podestà Matteo da Correggio (1261) and Guglielmo da Sesso (1265) both pay homage to God, the Virgin Mary, the Apostle Peter, 'defender of the city of Bologna', and then Dominic and Francis; so do the podestarial laws from 1273 and 1276/7.<sup>38</sup>

However, by the time of the 1288 edition of the Commune's statutes, this had changed. Petronius is featured in these dedications, suggesting his cult had become more popular at Bologna. He is omitted from the opening prayer of book 1, which is addressed to the persons of the Trinity and no one else, but in book 5, that is the one that contains the anti-magnate legislation of 1284, Petronius is included together with Ambrose alongside the Virgin Mary, Peter and Paul, and Dominic and Francis, all 'patrons and defenders of the city of Bologna'.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in the 1335 statutes, the same saints are again listed, although this time Petronius and Ambrose had jumped ahead of the mendicants and appear after the apostles, an indication of their growing importance.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of the 1376 statutes, we encounter the familiar quorum of saints, now supplemented by the apostle John and the martyr Florian.<sup>41</sup> Listed in order of importance, Christ appears first, followed by the Virgin Mary, the apostles Peter, Paul, and John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, then Petronius and Ambrose, and finally Dominic, Francis and Florian. Pointedly, in these statutes for the first time Petronius' name precedes Ambrose's in their episcopal coupling, reflecting the success of his cult and

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<sup>34</sup> *Statuta Communis Parmae 1347*, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Statuti Veronesi del 1276*, bk. 1, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Statuta Civitatis Mutine 1327*, p. 3; *Statuta Ferrariae 1287*, bk. 1, rb. 1, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-1267*, vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-1267*, vol. 3, p. 551; Orselli, *L'Immaginario*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>39</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, bk. 1, p. 5, bk. 5, p. 283

<sup>40</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, bk. 1, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Florian was another who became a Bolognese patron saint. According to the *Vita di San Petronio*, he owed his presence in Bologna to Petronius. We shall discuss Florian in the section on Santo Stefano.

the waning fortunes of Ambrose in Bolognese public life as a consequence of the Milanese threat to the city's independence.<sup>42</sup>

From these preambulatory dedications, we can see the steady ascent of Petronius to become one of Bologna's preeminent saints' cults. In the earliest of the Commune's introductory statutory addresses, the presence of Peter looms large. In the editions that followed, Peter was joined by the mendicants Francis and Dominic, who were very popular at Bologna during their lifetimes and had large churches dedicated to them shortly after their deaths.<sup>43</sup> When Petronius does first appear in the 1288 statutes, in the section containing the anti-magnate legislation, it was at a time of acute social tension. The restrictions this legislation imposed on Bologna's aristocratic population were deeply unpopular with those affected by them. During a moment of political reaction, book 5 was ripped out of the statutes in 1292, only then to be reinserted with some modification.<sup>44</sup> Petronius' first invocation in the statutes was thus associated with the Bolognese Commune led by the guilds and characterised by a strong anti-aristocratic disposition. This, combined with the tradition established in the *Vita Sancti Petronii* that recognised the ancient bishop as the Commune's founder and guarantor of liberty, placed Petronius in a potentially difficult position. By including him in the statutes a precedent had been set, but the ancient bishop was overtly linked to *popolo* government. This is why the short-lived Commune of 1334-7 embraced Petronius and his episcopal partner Ambrose, and it is a phenomenon we can see even more clearly in the preamble to the statutes from the "Second Communal Age".

The way a city government legislated for the celebration of a saint's feast day is commensurate with the status of that cult in the city's devotional landscape. The citizens of Reggio Emilia inserted provisions into their statutes for the feast of St Prosper, the people of San Gimignano did the same for St Geminianus, and the Parmigiani did so for St Hilary.<sup>45</sup> For Petronius, the situation was more complicated, and it would take until the end of the fourteenth century for his feast day celebration to be elaborated in full in Bologna's statutes.

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<sup>42</sup> 'In nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi, beatissimeque matris eius Virginis gloriose, beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli utriusque Iohannis, sanctorum pontificum Petronii et Ambrosii, beatorum confessorum Dominici et Francisci, nec non preciosi militis Floriani martiris, patronorum defensorum ac protectorum comunis et populi civitatis et districtus Bononie et tocius celestis curie amen'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 1, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Bocchi, 'Lo sviluppo urbanistico', pp. 241-3, 269-72. On Dominic, the Dominicans, and his cult at Bologna, see Alfonso d'Amato, *I Domenicani a Bologna, vol. 1: 1218-1600* (Bologna: ESD, 1988); Lodi, *I santi della chiesa bolognese*, pp. 79-94.

<sup>44</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, pp. XXIII-XXIV.

<sup>45</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 111; *Statuti del comune di San Gimignano 1255*, bk. 4, rb. 29, p. 725; *Statuta Communis Parmae 1347*, p. 78.

It will be remembered that Bologna's communal officials were present at the announcement of the *inventio* of Petronius' relics by Bishop Enrico on 4 October 1141. Yet after that date, there is no evidence of the Commune celebrating Petronius' feast day for over one hundred years. Before the Bolognese government showed an active interest in Petronius' cult, it had already intervened in the 1230s to ensure the relics of St Dominic remained *in situ* at Bologna, the place of his death in 1221. When the General Chapter of the Dominican Order gathered in the city in 1233, the podestà ordered guards to protect Dominic's remains and prevent their removal during the translation of his relics to a more impressive resting place. To guarantee their future safety, the key to Dominic's new tomb was entrusted to the podestà.<sup>46</sup> It was only in 1253 that the Commune directed its attention to Petronius. It was decreed that communal officials should offer forty wax candles to his altar at Santo Stefano on the vigil of or on his feast day.<sup>47</sup> The offering was not especially generous, and other cults such as those of Peter at the cathedral, Apollinaris, Dominic and Ambrose were singled out for greater attention in the 1250 statutes.<sup>48</sup> In a sign that things were changing, however, the 1288 statutes contained a rubric that specifically required communal officials to go to Santo Stefano annually to honour Petronius and Florian with an offering of cloth and wax costing 10 Bolognese pounds. Still, this ceremonial visit did not take place on either saint's feast day. Instead, it was scheduled for St Stephen's solemnity, and the value of the offering was inferior to the 50 Bolognese pounds stipulated for St Gregory the Great's feast day.<sup>49</sup>

The celebration of Petronius' feast day was once more the concern of communal authorities in 1301, when a *provvigione* issued on 15 September was incorporated into the city's *Registro Grosso*.<sup>50</sup> Partly, this measure was motivated by a clash in the ecclesiastical calendar. St Francis of Assisi had preached in Bologna's Piazza Maggiore in 1222, and the Franciscan Order became popular in the city, as well as across Latin Christendom, very soon

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<sup>46</sup> Pierre Kerbrat, 'Corps des saints et contrôle civique à Bologne du XIII siècle au début du XVIe siècle', in André Vauchez (ed.), *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne (Chrétienté et Islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche "Histoire sociale et culturelle de l'Occident. XIIe-XVIIIe siècle" de l'Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l'Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1995), pp. 165-85 (pp. 169-71). The concern for keeping control of saintly remains is as old as the cult of relics itself. The body of St Martin became an object of competition between the cities of Poitiers and Tours immediately after the saint's death. Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 13-4.

<sup>47</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-1267*, vol. 1, bk. 5, rb. 3, p. 441.

<sup>48</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-1267*, vol. 1, bk. 5, rb. 2, pp. 439-40.

<sup>49</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 2, bk. 11, rb. 4, p. 190. Petronius' feast day is also listed as one of the Commune's public holidays. *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 2, bk. 6, rb. 51, pp. 41-2.

<sup>50</sup> The document is summarised in Trombetti and Duranti, *I libri iurium*, vol. 2, p. 650; it is partially printed in Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 13, pp. 429-30.

thereafter.<sup>51</sup> Francis, who died late in the evening on 3 October 1226, had his feast day on 4 October, the same day as Petronius. In order to avoid both feasts being celebrated concurrently, the Commune stipulated that Petronius' should be held on the day 'before or after the feast of the blessed Francis' (*ante, vel post festum Beati Francisci*), leaving it up to the abbot of Santo Stefano to decide on which day it would fall.<sup>52</sup> However, besides moving the day of celebrations so they could align their church's liturgy with the rest of the Latin west, the arrangements for Petronius' solemnity were elaborated in far greater detail in this *provvigione*. Drawing upon the traditions established in the Petronian hagiographical literature, the provision notes the ancient bishop's achievements: he happily governed the city, endowed it with the relics of many saints, rebuilt large parts of it and constructed other sections of the city from anew, founded the *Studium* and received many other freedoms from the Empire.<sup>53</sup> Because of this, the *provvigione* established that Bologna's bishop or his viceregent, together with all of the city and its districts' clergy and its confraternities, were to go to Santo Stefano to venerate Petronius' relics on the morning of the specified day of the abbot's choosing in great procession. In addition, the podestà, the *capitano del popolo*, the *anziani*, the consuls, the doctors of canon and civil law and the *milites* were to lead the *carroccio* to Santo Stefano and make an offering of wax valued at twenty-five Bolognese pounds, paid for by the Commune. They were to be followed to the monastery by the Arms and Arts societies, organised under their respective banners. Whilst this was happening, the Humiliati and Bologna's other penitents were to collect offerings of wax, money and other alms to be stored in the hospital of St Petronius for the purpose of helping the poor and downcast.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the Commune considered the feast day to be so important that they referred to it as Bologna's Easter (*velut reverendissimum Pascha nostrum*); a bold claim, but one that must be understood in light of Petronius' supposed building programme at Santo Stefano, Bologna's Jerusalem simulacrum.<sup>55</sup>

With the arrangements for Petronius' feast day having been earlier outlined with such precision, in rubric 101, book 4 of the 1335 statutes, 'Concerning the celebration of the feasts

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<sup>51</sup> Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: a New Biography* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 13, p. 429.

<sup>53</sup> 'eo civitatem suam Bononiae feliciter gubernante, multorum Sanctorum eam multiplicibus dotavit reliquiis, reparavit, construxit, et mirabiliter instruxit, et redemit de laqueis diaboli, et studii, ac aliarum immunitatum honoribus coronavit, et statuit ab imperio coronari, ornavit'. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 13, p. 429.

<sup>54</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, pp. 429-30.

<sup>55</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, p. 429.

of Blessed Dominic and Petronius', the draughtsman could laconically write that the *podestà* and the *capitano del popolo* should ensure that Petronius' solemnity is celebrated 'each year in the customary manner, place and time'.<sup>56</sup> In comparison, the particulars of Dominic's festivities were the object of much more focus.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, for good measure, the statutes' authors made sure to state that it was Petronius 'in whose name and special patronage all business of the Commune of Bologna was conducted' and that he was the city's 'father and defender'.<sup>58</sup>

When the Bolognesi ejected the papal governor Cardinal Guillaume Noellet in 1376, almost immediately they set out producing a new body of statutes. Among the many other things that were codified during this period of legislative activity were the minutiae of Petronius' feast day celebrations. From reading the Commune's new collection of laws, one can quickly see that Bologna's "Second Commune" had firmly decided that Petronius was to be the city's undisputed patron. Whereas in the 1335 statutes the feast days of Petronius and Dominic had been elided into the same rubric and Dominic's had come first, the 1376 statutes separated the two and emphatically stressed the centrality of Petronius in the city's devotional landscape.<sup>59</sup> Alongside preceding Dominic in the order, the rubric dedicated to the ancient bishop is entitled 'Concerning the veneration of the blessed confessor, Petronius, patron and defender of the people and city of Bologna and the fairs to be held in that city at the time of the said feast'.<sup>60</sup> Straight away, the lawmakers make clear the date on which the feast is to be celebrated:

'we establish and order that the aforementioned feast of the most blessed confessor, Petronius, which is on 4 October, ought to be celebrated and observed by whomsoever due to the reverence for him in that city, county and district'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> 'fiat quolibet anno modo, loco et tempore consuetis, et potestas et capitaneus hoc fieri facere teneantur sub pena predicta'. *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 4, rb. 101, p. 325.

<sup>57</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 4, rb. 101, pp. 323-4.

<sup>58</sup> 'Petronii, cuius nomen et patrocinium speciale in cunctis agendis negociis comunis Bononie utpote patris et defensoris nostri non inmerito invocamus'. *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 4, rb. 101, pp. 324-5.

<sup>59</sup> Respectively *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54 and 55, pp. 305-9.

<sup>60</sup> 'De veneratione beati Petronii confessoris, patroni et defensoris populi et civitatis Bononie et nundinis fiendis in ipsa civitate tempore dicti festi'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, p. 305.

<sup>61</sup> 'statuimus et ordinamus, quod festivitas beatissimi confessoris Petronii antedicti que est die quarta mensis octubris ob ipsius reverentiam in ipsa civitate, comitatu et districtu celebretur et fiat ac celebrari et observari debeat per quoscumque'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, p. 305.

Accordingly, any previous accommodation with Francis' solemnity was forgotten and at Bologna his feast day celebrations were moved to another date so that Petronius' could take pride of place.

Each year, before 9 a.m. (*mane ante tertiam pulsentur*) on the morning of 4 October every Bolognese citizen had to congregate in their customary location in preparation for the day ahead. After the clergy had finished their procession and quite separately to them, the *anziani* and the consuls, together with the podestà and the *capitano del popolo* and their respective bodies of officials, the leaders of the guilds and their members, the *milites*, the doctors of law and other notable and honourable men of the city, along with trumpeters, carrying cloth and flags, were to make their way from the *anziani*'s palazzo to Santo Stefano in sequence. Each *anziano* was required to carry a lit two-branched candelabra (*doplerium*). So too were the podestà and the *capitano del popolo*, who were to follow the *anziani* with the flagbearers and their flags. The *gonfalonieri* similarly were to carry *doplerii* of less than two pounds of wax, and all those who came after them were to bring a *doplerium* or a candle of a value commensurate to their individual status and means.<sup>62</sup> Any man who should participate in the parade but failed to do so could be referred by their *gonfaloniere* to the *capitano del popolo*, who would examine the case and had the power to impose a twenty *soldi* fine.<sup>63</sup> Everyone participating in the procession was to personally ensure they went inside Santo Stefano and honoured the relics of Petronius, giving the *doplerii* as offerings.<sup>64</sup> These offerings, however, in the first instance were not for the benefit of the monastery. Rather, the statutes stipulated that the money raised from the donations was to pay for a new reliquary to house Petronius' skull. Only once the new reliquary had been completed would the donations revert back to the abbot and monks of Santo Stefano, which we will discuss subsequently.

Given that Bologna's population was somewhere between 30-40,000 in the 1370s and 1380s, the number of participants in the Petronius feast day procession may have numbered in the low tens of thousands.<sup>65</sup> Unmistakeably, it would have been one of the key dates in the Bolognese year. With every important city official, prominent citizen and members of the guilds in attendance, all carrying candles, the civic flags and banners aloft, noise from the

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<sup>62</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, pp. 305-6.

<sup>63</sup> 'Et congregare et congregari facere homines sui confalonis dicta de cause libere et impune qui homines teneantur in predictis parere mandato et voluntati sui confalonerii, sub pena viginti solidorum bononinorum pro quolibet eorum de facto exigenda per dominum capitaneum populi si ipse confalonerius voluerit'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, p. 306.

<sup>64</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, pp. 305-6.

<sup>65</sup> Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale*, p. 171.

trumpeters and the city's bells ringing in the streets and *piazze*, the Bolognesi were brought together in a magnificent display of public devotion towards Petronius. With its spectacular combination of visual display and impressive soundscape, no person in the city could have avoided the celebration, whether they wished to or not. In comparison, no other saint, of a local or universal character, received the same level of support at Bologna until the ceremony of bringing the icon of the *Madonna di San Luca* down into the city from the Monte della Guardia first started in 1433.<sup>66</sup>

The evolution of the Petronian feast day celebrations mirror what was observed with the opening statutory dedications. Until the beginning of the fourteenth century, there survives very little evidence of any proactive measures on behalf of the Commune to attach any special reverence to his feast day. Indeed, from the perspective of the city government, after the *inventio* until 1301 there is little to distinguish Petronius' solemnity from a host of other saints' days in the Bolognese calendar. If anything, the city law codes suggest Petronius was less important than his saintly colleagues; although, interestingly, with the exception of a horse race (*palio*) ran on his feast day, to which we will return to below, the celebration of Peter's feast day is never elaborated in any detail in the surviving body of civic statutes dating from phases of communal government. Presumably, as the patron of the cathedral, its organisation was the purview of the bishop and the cathedral chapter. However, the *provvigione* of 1301 is a major turning point, but with one key caveat: Petronius' day, for all the talk of it being a Bolognese Easter, was subordinate to Francis', who was himself a named patron of the Commune. Yet, setting aside the calendar juggling, the *provvigione* illustrates the ceremony of the feast day celebrations in hitherto unparalleled detail.

It is at this point, in 1301, that a qualitative difference in the treatment of Petronius' solemnity first becomes evident in the Bolognese legislative programme. The ancient bishop's festivities were now distinguished from the celebrations organised for other saints in the Bolognese civic cult. This process then reached its logical conclusion when in 1376 the newly established government's statutes outlined the much-expanded regulations for the Petronian feast day ceremony. Dispensing with the past deference to Francis and now eclipsing Dominic in terms of legislative primacy and the grandeur of the pageantry, 4 October was a class apart. And while Petronius' feast day was undoubtedly a religious matter,

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<sup>66</sup> Mario Fanti, 'Una storia di amore: I bolognesi e la Madonna di San Luca', in Mario Fanti (ed.), *La Madonna di San Luca fra storia e fede* (Bologna: Minerva Edizioni, 2001), pp. 11-54; Lodi, *I santi della chiesa bolognese*, pp. 68-78.



it was also rich with political symbolism. Separating the clerical and secular processions, beginning from the residence of the *anziani*, requiring every city official and citizen to participate, implementing fines for non-attendance and prominently displaying Bologna's colours on the way to Santo Stefano all pointed towards the same message: Petronius, the present regime and the city of Bologna itself were consubstantial. To venerate the ancient bishop was to endorse the "Second Commune", both of whom were working in harmony to protect and advance the interests of Bologna.

By the close of the fourteenth century, the celebration of Petronius' feast day sat sandwiched in the middle of a major economic event for Bologna. Most likely taking inspiration from the traditional indulgence said to have been offered by Bishop Enrico in 1141 to visitors at Petronius' tomb on the eight days before or after the feast day, in 1376 the Commune instituted a great fair to take place for sixteen days each year in September and October. Their reasons for doing so were twofold: on account of the honour and respect they held for Petronius and for the material benefits (*utilitas communis*) it brought to the city. The fair was located in a field outside the boundaries of Bologna, on the present-day Piazza VIII Agosto. In the middle of this field, communal officials were to erect a monumental cross, where each day two masses led by the Bolognese religious orders were to be held (*religiosos fratres conventuum huius civitatis videlicet quilibet religiosorum*). With the assistance of the guild leaders, the field was subdivided, and each trade and its members were allocated individual plots. On these, the merchants could station a stall or tent, covered or uncovered, for the duration of the fair. Overseeing the organisation of the fair and maintaining order were two of the podestà's judges. Two days prior to its opening, the podestà or his officials were to inspect the field to ensure the rules were being complied with; any contravention would result in a fine, and the money levied would contribute to the fair's expense. With regards to justice, the city's laws were in effect, with the only exception being that the punishment for offences committed in the vicinity of the fair was doubled compared to what was ordinarily prescribed in the statutory regulations.<sup>67</sup> Other than those individuals or families who had previously been exiled or banished from the city, anyone was welcome to attend. For the duration of the fair, foreign merchants were welcomed to Bologna and the Commune waived any customs or taxes on any goods purchased, excluding corn and wine, and they could be freely exported to any location without hindrance. Most importantly, whilst the fair was ongoing no Bolognese

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<sup>67</sup> 'tamen ut supra dupli duplicando penas que per feram statutorum imponi ordinate sint'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 4, rb. 54, p. 308.

artisan or merchant was permitted to practise their trade or sell their wares at their homes or normal places of work, under penalty of a 10 Bolognese pound fine for each infraction. The only exemption on this restriction of trade pertained to the makers and sellers of wax: they were allowed to set up stalls on Piazza Santo Stefano so that visitors to Petronius' tomb could readily access wax to give as offerings to the city's patron saint.<sup>68</sup>

In the sixteen-day long Petronian fair, the economic, the religious and the political were happily combined. The introduction of the annual exhibition demonstrated the Commune's concern for the economic welfare of the city. After the dreadful years of the Black Death and the costly wars fought in the 1360s and 1370s, the fair's inception signalled a desire for the revitalisation of trade and commerce, goals which were to be expected by a government led by Bologna's productive classes and which were tied to the cult of Petronius as the fair's dedicatee. From late September through to 13 October, all regulated economic activity in Bologna was conducted in the name of Petronius. Alone, the length of the fair, with the solemnity in the middle, was remarkable. In fact, the amount of time given over to Petronius was eclipsed only by the multitude of feast days connected to the birth, death and Ascension of Christ; and the exemption permitting wax sellers to station themselves in the Piazza Santo Stefano for the duration of the fair suggests that donations were being made to Petronius' tomb for the length of the exhibition, not just on 4 October.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the fair would have attracted many visitors to the city, causing Bologna's population to temporarily increase. One imagines that, having nothing else to do on 4 October, the foreign merchants and other traders attending the fair would in all likelihood have joined the feast day celebrations. This, in turn, would have swelled the ranks of those participating in the procession, and the addition of non-Bolognese processioners would have rendered the feast day even more impressive. So, thanks to the fair, for at least a two-and-a-half-week period each year, the prosperity of the city was conflated with Petronius' patronage over Bologna. In that sense, then, it might be appropriate to speak of a Petronian political economy at Bologna in the later fourteenth century.

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<sup>68</sup> 'Salvo, quod vendi possint operam factam de cera tantum in platea Sancti Stephani ut volentes offerre ad altare prefati beatissimi patris nostri facilius et comodius ipsa possint invenire'. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 54, p. 307.

<sup>69</sup> Thirty-one days in the calendar were dedicated to Christ: Christmas Day, three days before and seven days after up to the Feast of the Circumcision on 1 January; Easter, seven days before and after; the Feast of the Ascension; the Feast of Corpus Christi; Pentecost and the two days after. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 4, rb. 48, p. 388.

Popular support of a cult was also shown through the organisation of a *palio* – a horse race taking its name from the piece of cloth (*pallio*) typically awarded as a prize - on the respective saint's feast day. Almost certainly the most well-known *palio* is the still ongoing biannual horse race held at Siena, but in the medieval period cities across the Italian peninsula staged races on the holy days of their local saints. Florence had one for St John the Baptist, Ferrara for St George, Imola for St Cassian, and Arezzo for St Donatus.<sup>70</sup>

At Bologna, a *palio* known as the *porchetta* (so named for the roast pork prize) was held on 24 August to celebrate St Bartholomew's feast day from the 1250s.<sup>71</sup> At the Commune's expense a rowney (*roncinus*), a sparrowhawk, a pair of gloves and a pig were to be purchased, costing no more than twenty Bolognese lira.<sup>72</sup> The winner of the horse race, run from the Ponte Maggiore to the cross at the trivium of Porta Ravennate (*ad crucem tribii porte Ravenatis*), was awarded the rowney and the sparrowhawk, the runner-up the gloves and pig, roasted or alive depending on whether Bartholomew's solemnity fell on a day when eating meat was permitted. A second *palio*, this one dedicated to St Peter, was held each year on his feast day of 29 June (*singulis annis de mense iunii in festo beati Petri Apostoli*) and was run from the Reno bridge to the enclosure of Porta Steri (*ad seralium porte Steri*). The Commune would purchase a scarlet cloth 8 *braccia* in length and a cockerel, with the fabric given to the winner and the cockerel to the man in second place. For both events, each horse entered into the races had to be registered with the podestà's notaries and a public proclamation was made three days prior to advise the riders of this fact. Another announcement would follow one day later, this one for the attention of citizens who lived along the racecourses. They were expected to clear the streets in front of their properties of any rubbish that could obstruct the horses, under penalty of a 40 Bolognese *soldi* fine, and no one was to intentionally block the route or injure a horse or its rider, on pain of a 25 Bolognese lira fine.<sup>73</sup> The *palio* races were thus events of great public ceremony, visibly taking over large parts of the city for days at a time and attracting fierce competition among the Bolognesi: it would appear that the need to expressly forbid harming the jockeys and horses implies that large sums of money were gambled on their outcome and/or that victory

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<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth MacKenzie Tobey, *The Palio in Italian Renaissance Art, Thought and Culture*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2005, pp. 49-59; Thompson, *Cities of God*, pp. 172-4; Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, pp. 210-1.

<sup>71</sup> Lorena Biaconi, *Alle origini della festa Bolognese della Porchetta: ovvero San Bartolomeo e il cambio di stagione* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005).

<sup>72</sup> A rowney is a carthorse. A rowney was also the prize for the *palio* ran at Ferrara on the Feast of the Assumption. *Statuta Ferrariae 1287*, bk. 2, rb. 117, p. 93.

<sup>73</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 2, bk. 12, rb. 25, pp. 220-1.

was a source of intense pride or public renown. In fact, the *palii* were so well attended and such an important part of civic life that the Commune legislated for them in greater detail and its expenditure on two races would only grow over time.<sup>74</sup>

In 1395, a third *palio* was added to the Bolognese racing calendar.<sup>75</sup> At a meeting held at the residential palazzo of the *anziani*, the *gonfalonieri di giustizia*, the consuls and the *anziani* pronounced that a new *palio* was to be held each year on the feast day of Petronius.<sup>76</sup> The decree, which recognised Petronius in the customary manner as patron and defender of the city, shared the officials' motivation for instituting the race: because of the affection for him at Bologna and in order to further venerate him, the Commune wanted to make sure that Petronius' feast day was celebrated in every way possible (*quam omni alia celebritate possibili*). Hence the creation of a new *palio*, which would not only recognise Petronius in the present, but would preserve the ancient bishop's memory for future generations of Bolognese citizens. The prize to be awarded to the winner of the race was to be a cloth worth 50 *bolognini d'oro* or 10 golden ducats. The Commune would meet the costs of the cloth, and it was for the *anziani* holding office in September and October to determine its style, form, quality and colour. Their most basic requirement was that the *palio*'s prize be both pleasing and beautiful. Once purchased, they had to present the cloth for inspection to the *capitano del popolo*, and the *anziani* had to swear on oath that its value was equal to the prescribed figure. In terms of the race, it was to be run in a circle (*per circulam*) from Borgo di Galliera to the Piazza Maggiore, and it was stipulated that the horses had to be north African Barbs.<sup>77</sup>

The "Second Commune" was, therefore, responsible for the Petronian *palio*. Although admittedly a late-comer in the equestrian calendar, this horse race would only have added to the spectacle that was Petronius' solemnity. Coming after the morning's procession, the *palio* was the afternoon's entertainment. With all communal activities suspended, businesses closed, and the Petronian fair paused for the day, the Bolognesi and their city's visitors had the opportunity to enjoy the sporting event as horses raced through the city. Presumably, with their family and friends they cheered on their favourite rider or horse and speculated on its outcome, and once the race was finished and the winner crowned, the festivities would have

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<sup>74</sup> *Stauto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 66, pp. 315-6.

<sup>75</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 27, p. 478.

<sup>76</sup> The decree is published in Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 27, pp. 486-7.

<sup>77</sup> 'si ordinarebbe si dovesse fare correre con Cavalli Barbari l'istesso giorno della festa di S. Petronio'. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 27, p. 478. The Barb or Berber horse was valued for its compact build and ability to run quickly over long distances. The requirements for the horses to be Barb were common across the *palii* of central and northern Italy. Tobey, *The Palio*, pp. 247-53.

continued on into the evening.<sup>78</sup> The new *palio*, therefore, made Petronius a figure of celebration and merriment, one who the Bolognese citizens could show devotion towards and thank for the day's entertainment.

Concomitant with feast day celebrations, the organisation of markets and the running of horse races, the Italian Communes also recognised locally and universally important saints by establishing holidays on which no court cases could be heard or legal activity take place on their respective feast days.<sup>79</sup> For Bologna, with its density of legal learning and the involvement of legally trained individuals in the running of its government, this was a matter that received much attention in their law codes.<sup>80</sup> The Bolognese statutes of 1250 listed Petronius' feast day among the Commune's legal holidays.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the 1288 statutes recognised Petronius' feast day as a legal holiday, but this time it was only a day when no civil cases could be heard.<sup>82</sup> The situation becomes more complicated in the 1335 statutes. In these, a distinction was drawn between criminal and civil courts. For the latter, a very large number of holy days were set aside for when the city's courts would hear no civil cases. As expected, Petronius' feast day was one of them.<sup>83</sup> Yet, for Bologna's criminal courts the amount of days on which it would not sit was much reduced. Included were the festivities associated with Christ's birth, passion and resurrection, the Feast of Corpus Christi, feast days of the Virgin Mary, the feast days of St John the Baptist, the Archangel Michael, all the apostles and evangelists, and the mendicants, Dominic and Francis.<sup>84</sup> At this juncture, Petronius did not merit inclusion in this rarefied list, and it indicates that his solemnity was not regarded as special enough to halt criminal judicial proceedings.

Corresponding with much else, this state of affairs changed with the rise of the "Second Commune". The new 1376 statutes followed the 1335 iteration by having Petronius and many other local and universal saints' days as periods when the civil courts would hear no cases.<sup>85</sup> They, however, differed in one important respect: Petronius' solemnity was now of such a stature that criminal courts were likewise closed on 4 October.<sup>86</sup> His feast day had, in other

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<sup>78</sup> Evidence from later chronicle accounts and paintings for other Italian cities shows celebrations continuing late into the evening. Tobey, *The Palio*, pp. 73-8.

<sup>79</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>80</sup> On the participations of legal practitioners in Bolognese government see Sara Menzinger, *Giuristie e politica nei comuni di Popolo: Siena, Perugia e Bologna, tre governi a confronto* (Rome: Viella, 2006), pp. 225-329.

<sup>81</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*, vol. 1, bk. 4, rb. 18, pp. 400-2.

<sup>82</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 2, bk. 6, rb. 51, pp. 40-2.

<sup>83</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 4, pp. 504-9.

<sup>84</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 2, bk. 7, rb. 1, pp. 581-2.

<sup>85</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 4, rb. 48, p. 388.

<sup>86</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 5, rb. 1, p. 439.

words, been upgraded to Bologna's highest judicial tier. This elevation also impacted on the work of government officials in the city's hinterland, known as vicars of the *contado*. The 1376 codes expressly forbid them from conducting any work on the feast days of Christ, the apostles, the Virgin Mary, and the saints Petronius, Dominic and Francis.<sup>87</sup> The legislation regarding the days when courts could sit or municipal officials work serves as a further example of the "Second Commune" pushing Petronius to the fore of Bologna's civic cult.

The Petronian legislative programme of the "Second Commune" similarly found expression in the regulation of the city's prison population. In a move which no previous edition of the Bolognese law codes had provided for, the 1376 statutes connected the release of prisoners to the liturgical year.<sup>88</sup> They established that on Christmas Day, Easter, the feast of St Peter, 'chief apostle and patron of the commune and people of Bologna', and the feast of Petronius, 'protector and defender of the city and people of Bologna and its liberty', certain prisoners could have their sentences quashed.<sup>89</sup> The *anziani* were to nominate four men, one per quarter, eight days before each solemnity. In collaboration with other civic officials, these men were to identify incarcerated Bolognesi who were deserving of freedom. They were permitted to choose any prisoner, except for those who had been sentenced to death or amputation, or anyone who had been convicted of treason, assassination, sodomy, robbery, rebellion, homicide, fraud, arson, or poisoning. On each of the four specified feast days, 10 eligible imprisoned Bolognesi were to be pardoned as an oblation. After being released, the former prisoners were to go in solemn procession with one of the *podesta's* officials and two trumpet players to whichever church led the celebration for that feast day – either the Cathedral or Santo Stefano -, with the city's church bells ringing. Upon entering the church, they were to go before the altar and thank the saint in whose honour they had been freed.

The "Second Commune's" lawmakers were very selective in deciding on which saint's feast days these acts of pardon could occur. Having their number limited to just four, the days of prisoner-related oblation were a considerably more infrequent affair than the recognition and celebration of dozens of saints' feast days or even the more restricted instances of court closure. Being so few, the days included in this ceremony were special, exceptionally so.

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<sup>87</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 5, p. 200.

<sup>88</sup> A phenomenon studied at Siena and Tuscany more widely by John Koenig, 'Prison Offerings, Patron Saints, and State Cults at Siena and Other Italian Cities from 1250 to 1550', *Bullettino Senese di Storia Patria* 108 (2001), pp. 222-296 and Lidia Zanetti Domingues, 'Rituali di liberazione dei prigionieri nell'Italia del Duecento: il caso toscano tra diritto e religione', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 179 (2021), pp. 221-257.

<sup>89</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 25, pp. 258-60.

Christmas and Easter are the two most important days in the Christian calendar, so their place in the list needs no comment. As Peter was still a civic patron, and the titular of the Cathedral, his inclusion is unsurprising. Besides that, the one additional saint invested with such weighty responsibility was Petronius, the city's new and foremost patron. No other celestial candidate was considered; not the Virgin Mary, nor Francis, Dominic, Florian, or any saint elsewhere invoked by the Bolognesi. Only Christ, Petronius and Peter could perform the sacred duties, and at two specific locations: the Cathedral and Santo Stefano. Along with the two others, then, Petronius had been invested with the powerful Christian symbolism of salvation. Thanks to the oblations made in his name, the ancient bishop was a redemptive force for good and forever associated by the Bolognesi with acts of clemency. One would expect nothing less from Bologna's chief patron saint.

In Italian cities, the cult of saints touched upon oaths of office sworn by city officials. When a new podestà arrived at Parma, he was required to swear on St Hilary that he would perform the duties of his office in the best interests of the Parmigiani.<sup>90</sup> At San Gimignano, the incoming podestà had to do the same on their patron saint, St Geminianus.<sup>91</sup> In Bologna, the various recensions of the civic statutes contain many oaths that their incoming holder was required to affirm, and the saints on which he did so, before taking up his position. We shall, however, focus our attention on the oaths of the three principal civic offices of the Bolognese state: the *podestà*, the *capitano del popolo* and the *anziani*. The earliest surviving 1250 statutes record the oath that the podestà Ricardo de Villa had to swear. He had to promise in the name of 'Our Lord Jesus Christ' that he would act in an honest and trustworthy manner, to follow the laws of the city, and to promote the general welfare of the city and district of Bologna. No other supernatural invocation was required of him.<sup>92</sup> By the drafting of the 1288 laws, the incoming oath had grown in length and so had the pageantry of the swearing-in ceremony. Ten days before his term of office began, the newly elected *podestà* was to arrive at Bologna. Upon entering the city, he and his retinue were to make their way to the Cathedral of St Peter and then on to the communal piazza.<sup>93</sup> Before dismounting from his horse, he was presented with a lectionary with the Gospel readings and had to swear an oath, which opens as follows:

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<sup>90</sup> *Statuta Communis Parmae 1347*, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> *Statuti del comune di San Gimignano 1255*, bk. 1, rb. 1, p. 663.

<sup>92</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*, vol. 1, bk. 1, rb. 1, pp. 21-2.

<sup>93</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 1, bk. 1, rb. 3, p. 7.

‘I, the *podestà* of the city of Bologna, in this place swear on God omnipotent, and his only son our Lord Jesus Christ, truly God, and the Holy Spirit, and the holy and glorious mother of God, the always Virgin Mary, and by the four gospels, in whose stead I hold this book in my hands, and on the Archangels Michael and Gabriel’.<sup>94</sup>

The arrangements set out in the 1335 statutes are similar. They specify that the incoming *podestà* should visit the ‘altar of the blessed apostle Peter’ in the Cathedral, and they demand a profession of the *podestà*’s Christian, Catholic and Guelf credentials. Regarding the saints who are named in the opening lines, in essence the oath remains unchanged.<sup>95</sup> This is also true for the 1376 edition, where God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, the Evangelists, and the Archangels all appear again. Changes that were implemented are slight: the *podestà* was to arrive in Bologna four days before the first day of his term of office rather than ten, and interestingly, in a reversal of the traditional ceremonial route, he was to visit the palazzo of the *anziani* and the consuls first before heading to Peter’s altar at the cathedral.<sup>96</sup> Of note: even at the very end of the fourteenth century, there is no place for Petronius in this saintly invocation.

For the *capitano del popolo*’s oath, much is the same. In so far as saints are concerned, the *capitano del popolo*’s oath in the 1335 recension of the Bolognese statutes is identical in form to that of the *podestà*: no saints are added or subtracted from the list of spiritual witnesses.<sup>97</sup> By the 1376 edition, there was one difference. Joining the company of saints was the ‘blessed Peter, prince of the apostles’.<sup>98</sup> It is again worth pointing out: Petronius remains conspicuous by his absence.

The same is not true for the *anziani*’s oath of office, although it would take until the advent of the “Second Commune” for Petronius’ inclusion in oaths sworn before assuming the duties of that position. The first surviving statutes of the *popolo* from 1248 required the elected *anziani* to swear on the Gospels (*ad santa dei evangellia*) that they would perform their office dutifully and in good faith. No saints were called in support of the oath.<sup>99</sup> In the 1288 and

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<sup>94</sup> ‘Iuro ego potestas civitatis Bononie per Deum omnipotentem, et Filium eius unigenitum dominum nostrum Ihesum Christum Deum verum, et sanctum Spiritum et per sanctam gloriosam Dei genitricem, et semper Virginem Mariam et per quatuor Evangelia quorum loco hunc librum in manibus teneo, et per sanctos archangelos Michaellem et Cabrielem’. *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 1, bk. 1, rb. 4, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 1, rb. 5, p. 13 and rb. 7, p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 2, rbs. 4-5, pp. 99-101.

<sup>97</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 2, rb. 2.7, p. 82.

<sup>98</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 2, rb. 28, p. 138.

<sup>99</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*, vol. 1, bk.1, rb. 1, p. 5.



1335 editions, the oath is not included in the codes, but in the 1376 statutes the precise wording of the affirmation is recorded. In many ways, the oath reads like the opening statutory dedication from that year. In the palazzo of the *anziani* and the consuls, the incoming *anziani*, in the presence of those exiting office, the *podestà* and the *capitano del popolo*, with the communal flag of justice raised, had to begin their tenure by promising to preserve the liberty of the Bolognesi, swearing in the name of ‘the omnipotent God and his son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and his glorious virgin mother, and the holy apostles, Peter and Paul, and the holy bishops, Petronius and Ambrose, and the precious knight and martyr, Florian, and the holy and glorious confessors, Dominic and Francis’.<sup>100</sup>

How might we explain the different saintly witnesses across the different oaths of office? Surely by the time of the “Second Commune” all the major magistracies of the Bolognese state should have invoked Petronius? Conceivably, the answer to these questions is one of geography. A fundamental requirement for both the offices of the *podestà* and the *capitano del popolo* was that the candidate be a non-Bolognese. It was a condition of office that was not unique to Bologna and was employed almost universally across the Italian communes. In theory, the prerequisite’s rationale was logical: being an outsider would allow the officials to stand above the domestic rivalries and factions that repeatedly destabilised city politics, ensuring that they governed in the best interests of the city and were not beholden to the special interests of one sub-stratum of the city’s population. While in practise this sensible ideal was prone to abuse and cities recruited their candidates from cities sharing their own geopolitical allegiances – for instance, the Bolognese officials had to affirm they were Guelfs -, what remained constant was the outsider status of the *podestà* and the *capitano del popolo*.<sup>101</sup> And as much as Petronius’ cult was championed at Bologna, there is little evidence to suggest he was popular or well-known outside of the boundaries of the Bolognese *contado*. So for the incoming *podestà* and *capitani del popolo*, it is possible they had a faint knowledge of Petronius’ cult, but not a strongly developed sense of devotion towards his figure. To invoke Petronius in their oath of office may not have carried the necessary weight

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<sup>100</sup> ‘omnipotentis Dei et Salvatoris nostri domini nostri Iesu Christi eius filii eiusque matris virginis gloriose, sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli et sanctorum pontificum Petronii et Ambrosii et preciosi militis martiris sancti Floriani et gloriosorum confessorum sanctorum Dominici et Francisci’. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 1, rb. 4, pp. 14-5.

<sup>101</sup> For a short summary, see Waley and Dean, *Italian City-Republics*, pp. 40-2, 144; Tamba, ‘Civic Institutions’, pp. 213-5. For a comprehensive treatment, see the chapters in *I podestà dell’Italia comunale*. The part of the *podestà*’s oath that required him to be a Guelf is: ‘Guelfusque sum et amator partis Guelfe et presentis status civitatis Bononie’. *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 1, rb. 7, p. 19. The *capitano del popolo*’s oath was similar: ‘quelfusque sum et amator partis Guelfe et presentis status et regiminis civitatis Bononie’. *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 2, rb. 7, p. 82.

for such an important post, which is why their supernatural witnesses were limited to figures of the universal Church. In fact, the reader will notice that Petronius was not the only saint from the Bolognese civic cult excluded from this oath: Florian, Dominic and Francis (the two mendicants in this context taken as local) are likewise absent, adding support to the argument that for ‘foreign’ magistrates universal over local saints were preferred. In contrast, the *anziani* were Bolognese citizens, well versed in the Petronian legends and touched by the growing levels of veneration directed towards his cult. By the time the 1376 statutes were produced, Petronius and the other saints in the Bolognese civic cult had an obvious and very real importance for the city’s inhabitants. For the *anziani*, therefore, to invoke Petronius in their oaths of office was an act of some significance, and it shows just how far Petronius’ cult had come by the time of the “Second Commune”.

As well as regularly featuring in the internal affairs of the Italian communes, the cult of saints played an important part in the relations these cities had with their neighbours, from the small villages of their *contadi* up to the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. At Genoa, for instance, from 1202 onwards subject towns were required to send a large candle to the city’s *Duomo* on the feast day of St John the Baptist.<sup>102</sup> An examination of the Bolognese example shows the Commune’s co-optation and growing reliance on the Petronian cult in its dealings with other political communities.

Almost as soon as Bologna started the long process of expanding into and extending its jurisdiction over the city’s surrounding hinterland, the city’s government had recourse to its patron saints. For example, when the city of Imola signed a treaty of submission with Bologna in 1153, one of the terms required of the defeated Imolesi was that they had to make a symbolic gift of two silk cloths each year on the feast day of St Peter.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, when the Bolognesi signed pacts with other cities, Peter was Bologna’s supernatural representative, standing side-by-side with the city he personified, sanctifying the agreement with his presence and acting as a guarantor of its good-faith, opposite the respective city’s own patron saint: in 1249, Peter versus St Geminianus for Modena; in 1264, Peter versus St Cassian for Imola; in 1273, Peter versus St Mark for Venice.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Gervase Rosser, ‘The Church and Religious Life’, in Carrie Beneš (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Genoa* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 345-367 (p. 349).

<sup>103</sup> Orselli, *L’Immaginario*, p. 190 n. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Orselli, *L’Immaginario*, p. 206.

Given that at this stage Peter remained the patron of the Commune and of the cathedral, it is natural that the Bolognesi employed his services in their dealings with other cities. Peter would soon, however, face competition from Petronius. Increasingly the Commune turned to its own ancient bishop for legitimisation as it expanded into its surrounding territories. The first example of this shift is embedded in the so-called Theodosian Privilege and accompanying *Notitia*, a second document that was based on the Privilege, likely written in critique of it as we shall see in the fourth chapter, but which still nevertheless came to be permanently associated with it. The Privilege, dating from some point between 1225-34, claimed to be an authentic record of a decree issued by Theodosius II at a church council held in Rome in 423, presided over by Pope Celestine I.<sup>105</sup> It purported to establish two things: the right of Bologna to house a *Studium*, which we will explore in the following chapter, and the territorial limits of Bologna's *contado*. These boundaries, conveniently for the Bolognesi of the early thirteenth century, neatly corresponded with their territorial claims in the 1220s and 1230s, and which were to the detriment of Imola to the east, Ferrara to the northeast, and Modena to the west.

Based on the claims made for Bolognese hegemony in the *contado*, the Privilege must have originated from a communal environment.<sup>106</sup> Petronius is not mentioned in the Privilege, but it is rooted in the Petronian hagiographic legend. It was the monk from Santo Stefano who had first connected Theodosius II to Bologna in his *Vita Sancti Petronii*. In that text, Petronius, who was a Greek citizen of Constantinople, received many gifts and an assurance of Bologna's perpetual freedom from his brother-in-law, the emperor. It was the next logical step to build upon the pre-existing material and claim that Theodosius issued this decree. For it to have served as inspiration for the false Privilege, Petronius' Latin hagiography must have been fairly well known at Bologna by the second decade of the thirteenth century. Further, the *Notitia* confirms the intertextual relationship between both documents and the Petronian hagiography. Its author achieves this by having Bishop Petronius, who was 'born in our city of Constantinople' – thus drawing directly from the Latin *Vita* -, carry the Privilege

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<sup>105</sup> The Theodosian Privilege is published in Gina Fasoli, 'La composizione del falso teodosiano', in Francesca Bocchi, Antonio Carile and Antonio Ivan Pini (eds.), *Scritti di storia medievale* (Bologna: La fotocromo emiliana, 1974), pp. 583-608 (pp. 604-7), and the accompanying *Notitia* at pp. 607-8. On the dating of the privilege, see Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna*, pp. 226-8; and Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Federico II, lo Studio di Bologna e il "Falso Teodosiano"', in Roberto Greci (ed.), *Il pragmatismo degli intellettuali. Origini e primi sviluppi dell'istituzione universitaria* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1996), pp. 67-89 (pp. 83-5).

<sup>106</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 210-1; Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Federico II, lo Studio di Bologna', p. 83; Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Manovre di regime in una città-partito. Il falso teodosiano, Rolandino Passaggeri, la Società della Croce e il "barisello" nella Bologna di fine Duecento', *Atti e memorie (Bologna)*, n.s., 49 (1998), pp. 281-318 (pp. 282-3).

to Bologna.<sup>107</sup> In summary, the author of the *Notitia* knew precisely that the Theodosian Privilege stood on Petronian foundations.

The Privilege was therefore inextricably connected to Petronius, and the Bolognese Commune quickly recognised its potential utility. When a new book of laws was compiled in 1257, the so-called *Registro Nuovo*, the Theodosian Privilege and the *Notitia* were its opening two documents. Their place at the beginning of the codex was initially very brief. They were ripped out of the *Registro* in 1257/8, only to be reinserted in the immediate aftermath of the First Lambertazzi exile in 1274, where they thereafter remained in pride of place.<sup>108</sup> By 1271, the Bolognesi cited the Privilege in a treaty they made with Ferrara.<sup>109</sup> Only a few years later, the author of the Old Italian Petronian *Vita*, who wrote his hagiography around the same time the Privilege and *Notitia* were returned to the *Registro*, incorporated the legend of their procurement into the text. When Petronius and Theodosius II converse, the bishop complains about the size of Bologna's hinterland and asks the emperor to guarantee its *contado*. Going one better, Theodosius increased Bolognese territory and the new borders he established matched those set out in the "official" Privilege.<sup>110</sup> The 1335 statutes required of the incoming *podestà* and his counsel to read the Peace of Constance, every other treaty or pact Bologna had made with any institution and any 'promise or privileges' the city had received; this would have of course included the Theodosian Privilege.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, a rubric in the 1376 statutes on the laws and confines of Bolognese territory makes reference to the 'privilege of Emperor Theodosius'.<sup>112</sup> In 1417, in a set of instructions dispatched to Bolognese ambassadors at the court of Pope Martin V at Constance, the officials were instructed to seek confirmation of Bolognese territory 'declared and conceded to the city of Bologna by Emperor Theodosius II, of honourable memory, in his Privilege'.<sup>113</sup> Petronius and the Privilege he was said to have received had become embedded into the institutional memory of the Bolognese government.

Through his connection with Theodosius II, Petronius had obtained confirmation of the territorial extent of Bologna's hinterland. But his work did not stop there. We will recall that in the Latin *Vita* Ambrose had warned on his marble tablet that no king could enter Bologna

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<sup>107</sup> Fasoli, *Scritti di storia*, p. 608.

<sup>108</sup> Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, 'Postfazione', in *I libri iurium*, vol. 1, pp. CXI-CXVII

<sup>109</sup> Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna*, p. 259.

<sup>110</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>111</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 2, bk. 7, rb. 8, p. 521.

<sup>112</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 7, rb. 90, p. 695.

<sup>113</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 2, p. 145.

without permission.<sup>114</sup> The nature of this threat against emperors or kings was issued in the late 1170s when it was Barbarossa who had made repeated efforts to quash the independent Bolognese commune. With changing historical circumstances and the disappearance of the Hohenstaufen threat, the episcopal ban in the Old Italian *Vita* was directed towards a wider range of social classes.<sup>115</sup> Ambrose, and with Petronius at his side this time, now included in the list of proscribed persons any ‘king, tyrant or baron’ who dared to harm Bologna; Petronius then confirmed Ambrose’s decree, adding ‘prince’ to the list of named categories.<sup>116</sup> A pseudo-Ambrosian letter, following the Privilege and *Notitia* as the third document in the *Registro Nuovo*, similarly warns against ‘kings and magnates’.<sup>117</sup> In the 1270s it was no longer German emperors but magnates and rural *signori* who most threatened the Bolognesi, which is why the language of the warning evolved to incorporate these other social actors. Not only had the ancient bishops established claims over Bologna’s *contado*, they also issued threats to protect it. While the Latin *Vita* imposed the penalty of excommunication on any who dared to contravene the edict, the Old Italian *Vita* preferred a more worldly punishment to preserve the integrity of Bologna’s territorial expanse: any who failed to heed Petronius’ and Ambrose’s words would ‘burn and die’.<sup>118</sup>

In addition to the Theodosian Privilege and the warnings contained within the hagiographies, by the late fourteenth century Petronius’ feast day had also replaced Peter’s as the day on which subject polities had to give tokens of their submission to Bologna. New regulations concerning the celebration of Petronius’ feast day issued in 1393 specified what was exactly required of these communities. Fourteen days before the feast day, the *anziani* were to write to the vicariates of Bologna’s hinterland and advise them accordingly. On the vigil of the feast, all the vicars of the *contado* and the district of Bologna, all the dependent castles, and the representatives of the Commune of Imola had to come to Bologna and present gifts to the ‘chapel of St Petronius’. The vicars of the *contado* were to bring two-branched candelabras of new wax to the altar, in the presence of Bolognese communal officials. To make sure none of the offerings were missed, each candle was etched with the name of its donor. For the castles in the *contado* of Imola, each one was to give a candle of new wax worth 10 pounds. Finally, for the Commune of Imola, its representatives had to offer a silken cloth of a value of 10

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<sup>114</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 111.

<sup>115</sup> Orselli, *L’immaginario*, p. 235.

<sup>116</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 43.

<sup>117</sup> Trombetti Budriesi, ‘Postfazione’, p. CXVI.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Unde miser san Petronio de presente sì la confermò e disse che subito dovesse ardere e essere morto re, tiranno, prencepo o barone, che volesse consumare la città de Bologna’. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 44.

*bolognini d'oro* to the altar of St Petronius. When each donation was made, the giver or his notary had to approach the *anziani* and state in a loud voice: 'these are your servants, the men of such a vicariate, who commit themselves to the blessed Petronius and to your lordships' before exiting to the sound of trumpets. Amongst setting out the various gifts that should be provided, by whom and when, the decree vocalised why the Bolognesi considered this ceremony to be important: it is 'regarded as very useful because by this action is demonstrated the fealty and obedience that the said communes and officials hold to the Commune of Bologna'.<sup>119</sup>

In terms of a saintly patron who acted as a supernatural representative for the city in its relations with other polities, Petronius had eclipsed Peter at Bologna by the close of the fourteenth century. The origins of this reversal first had root in the *Vita Sancti Petronii*. In subsequent decades, someone affiliated with the Bolognese Commune appropriated the idea of Theodosius II's intervention into the affairs of fifth-century Bologna. The Petronian legend was fused with the Theodosian Privilege and soon after the *Notitia*. Thanks to its coupling, the Bolognesi claimed to possess an imperial edict, one that delineated the extent of their rural possessions and which they had only through the agency of their ancient bishop, Petronius. These two forgeries, the very suggestion of which was made possible by the Latin *Vita*, were then reincorporated into the hagiographical literature in the vernacular *Vita di San Petronio*. Alongside this dialectical process of borrowing and reassimilation, the communal authorities recognised the Privilege as good law, referencing it in treaties with other cities and enshrining it in their law codes. Even when Bologna could no longer in fact maintain that the lands mentioned in the Privilege belonged to them, it still acted as if in theory they did, and the Privilege was the starting point on which they opened negotiations with various parties, such as the papacy. When they did, because of the interdependence between the forgeries and the hagiographical legend, Petronius was their man. Peter, although the traditional patron of the Commune, could boast no such legacy. Further stymied by his inseparable connection to the bishops of Rome, he was increasingly phased out from his role as Bologna's celestial ambassador. This is why the Imolesi, 240 years after they were first compelled to make offerings to the Bolognesi on St Peter's feast day, now brought symbols of their subjugation to Bologna on the feast day of St Petronius.

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<sup>119</sup> 'Questi sono li vostri Servitori, gli Huomini del tale Vicariato, che al B. Petronio, & alle Signorie vostre si raccomandano' and 'Il qual 'ordine è tenuto molto utile, perche con questo attione si mostra la fedeltà, e l'vbbidienza, che detti Communi, & Vfficiali tengono al Commune di Bologna'. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 27, p. 467. The decree is also cited by Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, pp. 179-80.

One area where the Bolognese Commune's support for the Petronian cult appears more restrained was in its approach to blasphemy laws. It was not unusual for Italian cities to incorporate into their civic statutes rubrics expressly forbidding the practice and imposing large fines on those found guilty of doing so. When governed by popular communes, the cities of Brescia, San Gimignano, Mantua, Lucca, Pisa, Modena, Ravenna, Verona and Biella all issued laws criminalising blasphemy against their respective patron saint.<sup>120</sup> Often, these clauses established a hierarchy of offence for the would-be offender. For example, at Modena the law codes of Niccolo d'Este had three tiers of penalty: the greatest fine was levied for insults to God and the Virgin Mary; a middling tier covered any derisory comments made against St Geminianus, that city's patron saint; and a lower band concerned all other saints.<sup>121</sup> The deontology of their criminal justice system articulated succinctly the saintly politics of their city: just below God and the Virgin Mary was Geminianus, and to insult him was to insult Modena.

At Bologna, though the act of blasphemy was legislated for and trial records show residents of the city were charged with committing this crime, the civic statutes did not include a scale of offence such as the one just described for Modena, nor did they ever specifically cite Petronius as a saint whose impugnation was an especially serious crime.<sup>122</sup> Across the city's many editions of law codes, the language of the blasphemy clause insofar as saints are named remains consistent. The earliest surviving statutes from 1250 mandated a 40 *soldi* fine or public whipping for anyone who insulted God, the Virgin Mary or any other saint.<sup>123</sup> The 1288 statutes increased the fine to 25 *lire*, though the nominated saints remained the same.<sup>124</sup> The same is true for the 1335 and the 1376 statutes, which stipulated that anyone who committed a blasphemy against 'our lord God, or his glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, or any of the male or female saints of God' should face a fine of 50 Bolognese pounds for their first infraction. For repeated offenders, the punishments became more severe.<sup>125</sup>

By reference to the blasphemy laws of other Italian city-states, the Bolognese example was atypical. Importantly, there was no difference whether the blasphemer had insulted Christ,

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<sup>120</sup> Thompson, *Cities of God*, p. 138.

<sup>121</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 125.

<sup>122</sup> Melissa Vice, 'To the Podestà or the Inquisitor? Adjudicating Violence against God in Bologna, 1250-1450', in Sarah Rubin Blanshei (ed.), *Violence and Justice in Bologna: 1250-1700* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018), pp. 187-206.

<sup>123</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*, vol. 1, bk. 2, rb. 43, p. 301.

<sup>124</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 1, bk. 4, rb. 23, p. 191.

<sup>125</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 2, bk. 8, rb. 45, p. 669-70; *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 5, rb. 40, p. 482

Petronius or any other saint; the law recognised no distinction and shows that at least in this regard to blaspheme against Petronius was not taken, by synecdoche, as an insult against Bologna. However, whether this tells us that the Bolognesi did not respect Petronius as dearly or that he was as closely identified with Bologna as say Geminianus was with Modena is a different question. In Bologna's blasphemy laws, excepting the Virgin Mary, no one individual saint is ever mentioned. The earliest statutes omit Peter when he was the Commune's patron, and the mendicants Francis and Dominic were similarly absent from later editions. Following the other evidence so far adduced, we should only expect Petronius' presence in the legislation from 1376 onwards. That neither he nor any other saint was featured at any point should not lead to any conclusions as to their respective place in Bologna's civic cult. Whomever was Bologna's main patron saint, they were not singled out in the city's blasphemy laws. This reflects the particular form and structure of Bologna's law codes. It was not a commentary on the status of its patron saint.

A valuable angle from which to analyse the Bolognese Commune's growing patronage of the Petronian cult is through the city's various *carrocci* and civic flags, for both were closely connected to the cult of saints. A *carroccio* was an oxen-pulled war chariot, and its first use is attested at Milan in 1039, a creation of that city's archbishop, Aribert (1018-45).<sup>126</sup> It functioned as a rallying-point for soldiers in battle, but over time its purpose evolved and it became a potent symbol of civic identity.<sup>127</sup> Part of this process of acquiring a deeper cultural meaning was linked to patron saints: by the late twelfth century, the Milanese had installed onto their *carroccio* an image of Ambrose. Soon the *carroccio* and the practice of adorning it with the respective city's patron saint was ubiquitous across the communes of central and northern Italy.<sup>128</sup> A register of its importance can be found in Salimbene's *Cronica*. He cites a letter the Parmigiani sent to Pope Innocent IV: 'if the *carroccio* of some city is taken in war, that city considers it the greatest ignominy, just as it would be for the French and their king if their *Oriflamme* were captured in war'.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Waley and Dean, *Italian City-Republics*, p. 97; Peyer, *Città e santi patroni*, p. 67.

<sup>127</sup> Hannelore Zug-Tucci, 'Il carroccio nella vita comunale italiana', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 65 (1985), pp. 1-104.

<sup>128</sup> Thompson, *Cities of God*, pp. 125-7.

<sup>129</sup> 'et si carrocium alicuius civitatis capitur in bello, civitas illa magnum opprobrium reputat sibi fieri, veluti, si Aurea flamma caperetur in bello, tam Francigenae quam rex eorum magnum opprobrium reputarent'. Salimbene, *Cronica*, vol. 1, p. 586. The *Oriflamme*, the battle standard of the King of France, was kept at the Abbey of Saint-Denis and ceremonially handed over when needed. St Denis was the patron saint of Paris and later of the French monarchy. Xavier Hélyar has suggested the *Oriflamme* was seen by late medieval contemporaries as a French 'national flag', making Salimbene's comparison between the *carroccio* and *Oriflamme* exact. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: the Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins



At Bologna, the earliest record of a *carroccio* dates to 1170. According to the *Cronica Bolognetti*, in that year the Bolognesi besieged Faenza with the ‘first *carroccio* they ever had’.<sup>130</sup> Based on the later account by Ghirardacci, it seems that the Bolognesi did not attach an image of a saint to their war-wagon at this time. He records that for this campaign, the *carroccio* was given a guard of 1500 well-armed infantry and a sizeable but undetermined number of cavalry. It was four-wheeled and pulled by either two or four pairs of large oxen. Both the men on the chariot, including trumpeters, and the man leading the animals were dressed in red and white. The *carroccio* carried a golden cross on top of a flagpole, on which flew a flag with a white field and a red cross. To assist his audience in visualising the cart, Ghirardacci included a recreation of the *carroccio* in his chronicle.<sup>131</sup>

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University Press, 1997), p. 154; Xavier H elary, ‘French Nobility and the Military Requirements of the King (ca. 1260 – ca. 1314), in W. C Jordan and J. R. Phillips (eds.), *The Capetian Century, 1214-1314* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 115-42 (p. 137). For St Denis as the patron saint of Paris, see Oldfield, *Urban Panegyric*, p. 86.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Li Bolognixi feno lo primo carozo che mai avesseno, in 1170’. *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, p. 37. Also reported in *Cronaca A*, *Cronaca B* and *Cronaca Villola*, vol. 2, pp. 37-8.

<sup>131</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 3, pp. 89-90.

Photo of reproduction of Bologna's first *carroccio*, c. 1170 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 10 – Reproduction of Bologna's first *carroccio*, c. 1170. From Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 3, p. 90

We do not know at what point the Bolognesi started attaching images of a patron saint to their *carroccio*. Presumably, following the example of the Milanese, it first occurred at some point in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Although no source tells us this directly, we must assume that it was St Peter who was represented since he was both patron of the Commune and the Cathedral. Indirectly, this supposition may be supported by the actions of the Bolognesi in 1272. During one of the many disturbances of that decade, the *carroccio* was removed from the *Palatium Novum* (today known as the Palazzo di Re Enzo) and transported to the cathedral for safekeeping.<sup>132</sup> A *carroccio* bearing the image of St Peter would naturally be at home in the *duomo* dedicated to St Peter. Accordingly, it would have been under Peter's banner that the Bolognesi went to war in 1199.<sup>133</sup> In 1216, the Bolognesi, after having taken prisoners that campaigning season, returned home with some of their captives publicly displayed on the *carroccio*.<sup>134</sup> The same fate befell King Enzo in 1249, who was ceremonially carried back to Bologna on the oxen-pulled war chariot after his capture at Fossalta.<sup>135</sup> Its importance in war and as a symbol of the city was further acknowledged in the

<sup>132</sup> Petri Cantinelli, *Chronicon*, p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> *Cronica Bolognети*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>134</sup> *Cronaca B*, vol. 2, p. 79; *Cronica Bolognети*, vol. 2, p. 79.

<sup>135</sup> Tucci, 'Carroccio', p. 31.

1250 statutes. Any Bolognese knight who deserted the battlefield and left the *carroccio* undefended was liable to pay a fine of 100 Bolognese pounds, and for any foot soldier who did so the fine was 50 Bolognese pounds.<sup>136</sup> The high financial penalty imposed for such an offence underlined the perceived severity of the crime: not only was one abandoning their fellow Bolognese citizens in the face of death or capture, but also St Peter.

St Peter would not, however, remain on Bologna's *carroccio* indefinitely, and soon it was decided that a change of saint was in order. In 1275, the Bolognesi besieged Faenza but were defeated in battle. Many thousands of prisoners were taken and their *carroccio* was captured.<sup>137</sup> Whether it was immediately replaced or not is unclear; yet a *provvigione* of 1287 informs us that the Bolognese *carroccio* was adorned with the images of six saints. It does not specify who, but Orselli's assumption that the saintly six were Peter, Paul, Dominic, Francis, Ambrose and Petronius seems well founded.<sup>138</sup> However, in the context of escalating tensions between the Bolognesi and the *signore* of Ferrara, Azzo VIII d'Este, the six would become two; in 1301, the apostles and the mendicants were dropped from the war chariot, leaving only the episcopal coupling of Petronius and Ambrose.<sup>139</sup>

The move away from the traditional patron of the Commune had in fact already been anticipated with the creation of the *Society of the Cross* in the 1270s, and then separately in 1297. In the latter year, it was decreed that the communal militias were to be put in a state of readiness. As part of these military preparations, the 8 *sapienti* in charge of the war effort ordered that a 'great flag of vermillion silk with the figures of St Petronius and St Ambrose' was to be made, together with four other blue flags equipped with the insignia of Charles II of Naples. These military standards were placed under the protection of a newly elected communal official, the *Gonfaloniere del Popolo*. His role was simple. With four other officials, thus one per quarter, he was to bring the 'standard when there was a need' and with his other flagbearers gather in the Piazza Maggiore and do whatever they must to protect 'the state and liberty of the city'.<sup>140</sup> Given that the legislation draws a distinction between the *carroccio* and these newly mandated flags, we cannot be sure whether it was just the two bishops on the *carroccio* at this moment. Nonetheless, it is not long until the matter becomes

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<sup>136</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1245-67*, vol. 1, bk. 2, rb. 61, pp. 318-9.

<sup>137</sup> Hessel, *Storia della città*, pp. 269-70.

<sup>138</sup> Based on the opening statutory dedications of 1288 which list all these figures as patrons and defenders of Bologna. Orselli, *L'Immaginario*, pp. 217-8 n. 68.

<sup>139</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 13, p. 429.

<sup>140</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 11, pp. 350-1.

clearer. In the 1301 *provvigione*, that same one which established in detail the form of the Petronian feast day celebrations, the decorative features of the wagon are recorded: ‘the *carroccio*, on the front part of which are the images of the blessed Ambrose and Petronius’.<sup>141</sup>

So it would take until the turn of the fourteenth century for Petronius to feature on Bologna’s symbol of war. The logic behind the relegation of Peter and the promotion of Petronius onto the *carroccio* is fairly straightforward. After Rudolf of Habsburg ceded his claims over Bologna to the papacy, the popes in Rome (and elsewhere) were now one of the biggest threats to Bolognese communal autonomy. It would not make sense for the Bolognesi fighting against the advances of the representatives of St Peter to do so under their own banner of St Peter. Ever since the writing of the Latin hagiography in c. 1180 and then with much embellishment in the Old Italian *Vita*, Petronius was considered the founder and defender of Bolognese liberty. At this stage in the city’s history, there really was no better saint to be represented on the *carroccio*. The real irony of this development is that it occurred at a watershed moment in the autonomous commune’s political history. Very shortly after Petronius was promoted in aid of protecting Bolognese self-government, Bologna was no longer independent. In 1327, the Bolognesi marched their *carroccio* out of the city to welcome Cardinal Bertrand du Pouget, to whom they had just submitted.<sup>142</sup> In other words, Petronius was sent to welcome back Peter.

Jumping ahead to the time of the “Second Commune” and the codification of the 1376 statutes, Petronius and his place on Bologna’s flags was once again the subject of attention. With changing tactics and the development of new military technologies, the *carroccio* was fast becoming obsolete on the battlefield and concomitantly less a symbol of urban identity; nevertheless, civic banners were still very much a fact of civilian and military life for the cities and citizens of central and northern Italy, and the images of saints were still an important part of that culture’s vexillology. The new Bolognese law codes that were produced upon the ascendancy of the “Second Commune” pay close attention to the design of their flags. They were four in number; one for each of Bologna’s four quarters. The statutes prescribe that each one should have a quadrisectional plan, and they specify their heraldry. For Porta Piera, the four cantons were as follows: in the upper hoist canton, the insignia of

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<sup>141</sup> ‘vexillo carrotii, in quo ex parte anteriori sint ymagines beatorum Ambrosii et Petronii’. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1, bk. 13, p. 429.

<sup>142</sup> *Cronaca A*, vol. 2, p. 376; *Cronaca Villola*, vol. 2, p. 377.

Bologna flanked by St Peter; in the upper fly canton, a griffin sable and argent; in the lower hoist canton, a castle or on a field gules; in the lower fly canton, a port argent. For Porta Stiera, following the same schematic, there was the insignia of Bologna flanked by St Francis, a stellar on field azure, a griffin or, and the wheel of St Catherine of Alexandria. For Porta Procola, there was the insignia of Bologna flanked by St Dominic, a lion sable, a dragon sable, and a talon sable on a field or. For Porta Ravennate, there was the insignia of Bologna flanked by St Petronius, a martlet on a field or, a lion argent on a field sable, and the ‘figure or form of a white column with an arm and hand holding the column’ (*figura seu forma unius columpne albe cum brachio et manu tenente columpnam*).<sup>143</sup>

Unlike the *carroccio* of the early fourteenth century, the new civic banners were not the sole preserve of Petronius and Ambrose. Indeed, there was no place on them for Ambrose, long the episcopal companion of Petronius but now a portent of the Visconti’s threatening presence in the Emilia-Romagna, or Proculus, a local warrior saint who had been eclipsed in his own quarter by Dominic. Beyond concerns of foreign policy, the decision regarding which saintly figures should be included on the banners was largely a consequence of Bologna’s ecclesiastical landscape. The four saints depicted on the flags reflected the principal church or monastery of that part of the city: the cathedral dedicated to Peter in Porta Piera, the Basilica of San Francesco in Porta Stiera, the basilica and final resting place of Dominic in Porta Procola, and the Santo Stefano monastic complex, from 1141 forever associated with Petronius, in Porta Ravennate. What this division of geography and saintly patronage as implied by the design of the communal flags suggests is that there existed varying levels of popular devotion to Petronius’ cult across the different neighbourhoods of Bologna. For those Bolognese residents living in parishes that constituted Porta Ravennate, their connection with Santo Stefano and its chief saint, Petronius, was likely to be stronger than for Bolognesi living on the other side of the city. In a maximalist sense, then, Petronius could act as the patron of Bologna, whilst also acknowledging that in the private lives of the Bolognesi, especially for those living in other sectors of the city and who would be carrying or marching behind their respective quarter’s banner, other saints had a more important position in their personal religious convictions. Support for this idea of layers of veneration may be found in the opening prayer of Pietro di Mattiolo’s chronicle:

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<sup>143</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 1, rb. 17, p. 46.

‘In the name of God and his glorious mother, the holy mother Virgin Mary, of the poor apostles St Peter and St Paul, of the poor martyrs St Florian and St Proculus, of the poor confessors St Dominic and St Francis, who are all patrons and defenders of the city of Bologna, and of the poor bishop and confessor, St Petronius, who is patron of the city of Bologna’.<sup>144</sup>

The Commune promoted the Petronian cult further by attributing to him a pioneering role in the manufacturing and ordering of Bolognese public space. Ever since the 1141 *inventio*, but especially after the writing of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, Petronius’ cult had a special connection to the Bolognese built environment. He was credited with constructing more public buildings than any other Bolognesi, and his reputation as Bologna’s chief architect permitted more recent additions to the cityscape to be recognised as Petronius’ work. Most notably in this regard were the four Petronian crosses. These are monumental crosses, so-called because their construction was attributed to Petronius, Ambrose and St Ursicinus of Ravenna in the *Vita di San Petronio*. Since the capture of Bologna by Napoleon’s forces in 1798, they have been located in the Basilica of San Petronio, but were originally at four locations across the city, and were supposedly underlaid with the relics of many saints acquired by Petronius in the Holy Land.<sup>145</sup> Because of their moving in the late eighteenth century, their original medieval positioning cannot be stated with pinpoint accuracy, but we are fairly certain of where they were situated since the *Vita di San Petronio* records where they once stood.<sup>146</sup> The cross dedicated to the Apostles and the Evangelists was at Porta Ravennate; the cross dedicated to the Virgins was on the crossroads of Via Castiglione and Via Farini; the cross dedicated to the Saints was on Via Barberia at the Valdaposa corner; and the cross dedicated to the Martyrs on Via Montegrappa at the corner of Porta di Castello.

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<sup>144</sup> ‘Al nome de dio e de la soa gloriosa e vergene madre Madonna santa maria, de misser Sam piedro e de misser Sam paolo apostoli, de misser sam fioriano e de misser sam progolo martiri, de misser Sam domenego e de misser Sam Francesco, confessuri, E de misser Sam petronio vescouo che fo e patrono de la cittade de bollogna, confessurj, tutti patroni e defensuri de la citade de bollogna’. Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, p. 1.

<sup>145</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 42-5.

<sup>146</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 42-3.



Figure 11 – The Cross of the Apostles and the Evangelists. Basilica of San Petronio. Photo by author.



Figure 12 – The Cross of the Virgins. Basilica of San Petronio. Photo by author.



Figure 13 – The Cross of the Saints. Basilica of San Petronio. Photo by author.



Figure 14 – The Cross of the Martyrs. Basilica of San Petronio. Photo by author.

The actual history of the Petronian crosses is a matter of some debate. It merits our attention not simply because it is another element of Petronius' cult, but because it has important implications in determining the extent to which sanctity played a defining role in the production of urban space in late medieval Italy. It is not clear when the crosses were first built, and this uncertainty has encouraged much speculation. Much of it rests on the question of whether otherwise unrecorded events included in the Petronian hagiographical literature have any grounding in historical fact. Of the four crosses, the best documented one is the Porta Ravennate cross. It is first mentioned in a document of 1041. The surviving cross dates to 1159, as attested by an inscription on it. The other three extant Petronian crosses are all late thirteenth or early fourteenth century productions. However, this has not stopped Bolognese historians, following the legendary material of the *Vita di San Petronio*, from

arguing that the crosses are much older and likely owe their foundation to Ambrose.<sup>147</sup> The logic of accepting the late fourth-century origins of the crosses is as follows: leave aside Ursicinus, the archbishop of Ravenna from 533-6, because he had no connection to Bologna and he and Ambrose obviously did not coexist; because so little documentation survives for Petronius' episcopacy, he too should be probably discounted although the possibility of his intervention, however slight, remains open; Ambrose had constructed three churches outside the boundaries of Milan and the Bolognese crosses were dedicated to typically Ambrosian figures. Therefore, he built them, in all likelihood when he was at Bologna in 393 for the *inventio* of Vitalis and Agricola. Further, because the location of the crosses corresponds with where the gates of the Selenite Walls would have stood, and accepting that these walls were in existence at the close of the fourth century, there must have been a conceptual unity between the two. Not all have, however, accepted this dating. Antonio Ivan Pini has proposed, based on the 1159 dating of the Porta Ravennate cross and his arguments regarding the relationship between the Petronian *vitae*, that the four crosses are a twelfth-century creation, linked to Bologna's struggle with Barbarossa and the archbishop of Ravenna.<sup>148</sup>

Pini is right to have dismissed any suggestion that the late medieval crosses had any link to the activities of either Ambrose or Petronius around the turn of the fifth century. However, rather than situating them in the twelfth century, the crosses as a collective belong to the Duecento. Admittedly, at least one of the crosses was in existence in the eleventh century and was remade in the twelfth; yet as we have shown, the Old Italian hagiography was not a more faithful transmission of a lost Petronian *vita*, and so it is not possible to argue for the existence of the four crosses in the twelfth century based on a text that was most likely written in the 1270s. The absence of the Petronian crosses from the Latin *Vita* is crucial here. It seems highly unlikely that if the crosses had been in existence at the time of its writing in c. 1180, and were important foci in the built environment, the anonymous monk from Santo Stefano would not have utilised their symbolic function and incorporated them into his Bologna-Jerusalem schematic; particularly as he mapped the idea of the Holy City onto Bologna with a much more sophisticated Christian cosmology than the vernacular hagiographer achieved. Since he did not, the most plausible explanation that remains is the

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<sup>147</sup> Bocchi, 'Lo sviluppo urbanistico', pp. 187-90; Bocchi, 'Shaping the City', pp. 59-60; Cosentino, 'Bologna tra la tarda antichità', pp. 37-8; Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, pp. 118-9; Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 58.

<sup>148</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 43-50.



crosses were not all *in situ* at Bologna by c. 1180, or if they were, they were neither regarded as forming a collective, nor were they associated with Petronius.

This had changed by the time the *Vita di San Petronio* was written. One explanation for this might be that they were connected to the quarters, a new spatial unit of administrative organisation introduced at Bologna in 1217-9.<sup>149</sup> Two or three of the crosses, depending on where the boundaries of the quarters are drawn, sit on or very near to the dividing line between sectors of the city.<sup>150</sup> It could be that the claim of Petronius having built the crosses was a post facto legitimisation of their introduction, though of course if that had been their purpose then all four should have demarcated the quarters. Another possible reason could be that the crosses were appended to the Petronian legend at a time when the *Society of the Cross* had just been formed in 1274. Even if neither of these explanations are satisfactory, the crosses as described in the vernacular *Vita* stood testament to another example of Petronian intervention in the Bolognese built environment. It is conceivable that they served as meeting points for the Bolognesi as they moved about their city, with the Petronian crosses acting as important nexuses in the quotidian rhythms of urban life in late medieval Bologna. They also started to feature as markers in the management of civic space, as recorded in the Bolognese *Liber Terminorum*, and in 1315 the *anziani* ordered that the Daily Office be held at each one in honour of God and Petronius.<sup>151</sup> Even many centuries after his death, Petronius continued to shape the urban and religious fabric of Bologna.

The coming of the “Second Commune” had a profound impact on the material culture of Petronius’ cult. In our preceding discussion of the celebration of his feast day, we will recall that the 1376 statutes stipulated that the offerings presented to Petronius’ tomb were to pay for a new reliquary to house the remains of his skull. The goldsmith Jacopo Roseto was commissioned to execute the piece, and he completed his work in 1380.<sup>152</sup> A finely decorated golden object, the new Petronian reliquary stood testament to the central role he now occupied in the Bolognese public cult. Atop the reliquary is a statue of Petronius holding the

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<sup>149</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, ‘Le ripartizioni territoriali urbane di Bologna medievale: quartiere, contrada, borgo, morello e quartirolo’, *Quaderni Culturali Bolognesi* 1 (1977), pp. 5-50.

<sup>150</sup> See Map 3.1 in Bocchi, ‘Shaping the City’, p. 57.

<sup>151</sup> Rosa Smurra, ‘Prassi amministrativa e spazi urbani di circolazione come immagine della città: Bologna alla fine del Duecento’, in Francesca Bocchi and Rosa Smurra (eds.), *Imago Urbis: L’immagine della città nella storia d’Italia. Atti del convegno internazionale (Bologna 5-7 Settembre)* (Rome: Viella, 2003), pp. 417-40 (pp. 427-8). On the *Liber Terminorum* see Jacquers Heers, *Espaces publics, espaces privés dans la ville: le Liber terminorum de Bologne, 1294* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984). On the Daily Office, Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, p. 156; Donarini, *Bologna medievale*, p. 245 n. 333.

<sup>152</sup> My discussion of this reliquary is indebted to Raffaella Pini’s analysis in her *Oreficeria e potere a Bologna nel secoli XIV e XV* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2007), pp. 65-72.

city in his left hand, in miniature form presenting the ancient bishop as a synecdoche for Bologna. Included alongside Petronius on the stem are the saints Ambrose, Proculus, Florian, Peter, Stephen, Francis and either Dominic or Paul. On its base, eight episodes from the Petronian hagiographic corpus are depicted: Petronius' departure from Constantinople, the dream of Pope Celestine, Petronius' election as bishop, his entrance into Bologna, the miracle of his saving the worker at Santo Stefano, the blessing of the Bolognese monumental crosses, his absolution of the Capuan knight at Constantinople, and the concession of the Theodosian Privilege.

The design of this reliquary served multiple purposes. One, given that it would have been carried during processions, the reliquary's size and use of precious metal showed to Bolognesi and non Bolognesi alike how the citizens of Bologna would spare no expense in venerating Petronius, their city's patron. Two, the pictorial representations taken from the *vitae* and inserted onto the reliquary served to establish a series of canonical points about the ancient bishop's life. The choices show Petronius to have been a conventional saint, but one who counted among his main achievements, with receipt of the Theodosian Privilege, the foundation of the free commune, the *Studium* and the city's *contado*. In fixing this political legacy to the relics of the ancient bishop, the reliquary's commissioners issued a powerful statement that their right to govern was based on Petronius' saintly deeds. Three, symbolically the number eight is repeated throughout the reliquary's design. The base, the stem and its spire capped with a small reliquary are all eight-sided. Similarly numbered are the pictorial representations taken from the hagiographical *vitae*. As Raffaella Pini has suggested, this design must have consciously replicated or been inspired by the octagonal form of the Santo Stefano rotunda, which Petronius was said to have constructed.<sup>153</sup> In imitating the monastery's eight-sided design, the reliquary recreated Bologna's Church of Santo Sepolcro, the supposedly Petronian-made recreation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the site of humanity's salvation.

In addition to the practical, didactic and symbolic concerns of its design, the political priorities of the reliquary's commissioners are rendered explicit. On the base of this reliquary, commissioned by communal authorities and paid for by the offerings of the Bolognese faithful, is inscribed:

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<sup>153</sup> Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, p. 69.

‘In the year 1380, this distinguished object was made at a time of liberty, of the regime of the *popolo* and the arts of the Commune of Bologna, to honour the sacred head of this most blessed protector, and it was executed by Jacopo Roseto’.<sup>154</sup>

Once again, this time in the form of a golden reliquary, the connection between the present state of liberty under the “Second Commune” and the patronage of Petronius over Bologna was stated emphatically. By virtue of his place on top of the reliquary, Petronius was figuratively and metaphorically above his saintly colleagues, rendering him a first among equals in the Bolognese civic cult. To underscore the relationship between the temporal and the celestial, the inscription reminded all who read it that it was the Arts societies and the Commune of Bologna who had created the environment in which Petronius’ cult could thrive. So as much as it was an act of pious celebration of Petronius’ memory, the reliquary was also a statement of self-congratulatory praise and ideological promotion, conjoining Bologna’s present constitutional arrangement and its championing of liberty with the promotion of Petronius’ cult.

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<sup>154</sup> ‘Currente MCCCLXXX hoc isigne opus factum fuit tempore libertatis regiminis popularis et artium comunis bononie ad ornamentum sacri capitis huius sui beatissimi protectoris et Iacobus Rosetus fecit’. Quoted in Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, p. 65.

Photo of Jacopo Roseto, Reliquary of St Petronius, 1380 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 15 – Jacopo Roseto, Reliquary of St Petronius, 1380. In Borghi, *Basilica di Santo Stefano*, p. 171.

The commissioning of a new reliquary was not, however, the most dramatic example of the Petronian cult's evolution during the period of the "Second Commune". Not satisfied with its progress to date, the Commune decided that Petronius would be commemorated on a far grander scale. To that end, decreed in 1388 by the *Consiglio Generale dei Seicento* and inserted into the new edition of civic statutes enacted in 1389 was a rubric dedicated to the building of a new church in the ancient bishop's honour. Up to that point, Bologna had never had a church of any size dedicated to Petronius.<sup>155</sup> He had always been associated with Santo Stefano since the *inventio* of 1141, and it is likely that for many years the powerful monastery successfully resisted any attempts to share his cult with any other institution within the city's walls. This is not to say that nothing was named after Petronius inside Bologna: by 1250 a district bore his name (*Borgo di San Petronio*) and a road followed by 1253, both of which were in the vicinity of Santo Stefano.<sup>156</sup> We have also seen there was a Petronian hospital by 1301, although beyond knowing of its existence there is very little to add. Still, notwithstanding these few named examples, there was no Petronian church.

In 1389 the government addressed this shortcoming, deciding to build a new Petronian basilica only three years after the Milanesi had started work on their own new cathedral. The rubric of the aforementioned Bolognese statute opens with a passionate statement of intent on the part of its draughtsman. Given to it by God, the city of Bologna, we are told, enjoys a 'most happy state of popular liberty' (*statum popularem et felicissimam libertatem*). Indeed, Bologna's 'liberty was flourishing' (*floride libertatis*) and it owed its fortune to God and his intermediary, Petronius. Petronius, so the rubric continues, that 'protector and defender of the people and city of Bologna', worked tirelessly to 'protect, defend, conserve and preserve the popular state of liberty' that the Bolognesi held so dearly (*ipseque protector intercedere ad protectionem, defensionem et conservationem et perpetuacionem libertatis et popularis status*). In order, therefore, to bestow the appropriate level of gratitude for such support, it was decreed that a 'beautiful and honourable church' dedicated to Petronius should be built at Bologna. Its exact location was to be confirmed by the *anziani* and a council of 48 Bolognese citizens, 12 per quarter; although the law codes did specify that it had to be built in a place where it opened onto the communal piazza. Anticipating its great cost, the rubric included

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<sup>155</sup> Though some have argued, in the face of a total absence of documentary or archaeological evidence, that there existed an older or 'first' Petronian church. Filippini, *S. Petronio*, pp. 89-90; Francesca Baldi and Roberto Sernicola, 'La prima chiesa di San Petronio in Bologna', in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna: Il volta di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), pp. 71-4.

<sup>156</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 127-8.

measures to finance the project. A value added tax of four denarii for every pound of value produced was implemented, falling upon all individuals and institutional bodies except for the expenses of the *anziani*. Further, a proportion of the entry fee for membership of the *Consiglio dei quattromila* was diverted to the project, and a percentage of the salaries of elected communal officials was similarly subtracted. Finally, the heirs and executors of wills were required to give two Bolognese *soldi* for the construction and maintenance of the Petronian church for each pound of donations made in the will to pious causes. Perhaps conscious of any backlash for introducing these taxes, the language reassures that all fiscal measures were implemented only to ensure that the basilica would be built more quickly (*ut dicta ecclesia celerius fiat et fieri debeat*).<sup>157</sup>

With this mandate, work on the new Basilica of San Petronio began in earnest. The architect Antonio di Vincenzo was put in charge of its construction. It was to be situated on the southern side of the Piazza Maggiore. Demolition work in the piazza soon followed. There were a number of high-profile casualties in this clearance, but most saliently for us, the *curia Sancti Ambrosii*, the first seat of the Bolognese Commune, was one of them. As with the opening statutory dedications and the civic banners, Ambrose, because he was to Milan what Petronius had now become to Bologna, fell victim to this demotion for being a symbol of the growing Visconti threat. By the end of May 1390, the preparatory hardscaping had been completed and construction commenced in June of that year.<sup>158</sup>

On 7 June, the ground breaking ceremony took place. Our best guide to the day's events comes from the chronicle account of Pietro di Mattiolo, a contemporary and most likely eyewitness or participant.<sup>159</sup> He tells us that a solemn mass took place in Bologna's cathedral at 5 a.m. Here the cornerstone of the new basilica, which had been impressed with the Commune's coat of arms, was blessed by a Franciscan friar, Bartolomeo. It was then taken in procession from the cathedral to the site of the new basilica on the Piazza Maggiore.

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<sup>157</sup> *Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389*, vol. 2, bk. 3, rb. 54, pp. 1102-3.

<sup>158</sup> Bocchi, 'Lo sviluppo urbanistico', pp. 291-3; Bocchi, 'Shaping the City', pp. 85-8; Donarini, *Bologna medievale*, pp. 298-9, 302-5.

<sup>159</sup> On Pietro's biography and his chronicle see Simona Cantelmi, *Bologna fra Trecento e Quattrocento: la testimonianza di Pietro di Mattiolo* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2011), pp. 15-24. Although Pietro does not himself say he was part of the ceremony, he was born in Bologna in the 1350s, tells us he attended the *Studium* in 1371, was made parish priest of S. Michele del Mercato di Mezzo in 1378 and in 1380 was elected mayor and proctor of the priestly consortium of S. Prospero in the quarter of Porta Stiera. Given his elevated clerical status, one can reasonably assume that he would have been one of the many religious involved in the procession. Further, his chronicle becomes much more detailed from 1389 onwards, suggesting he was either writing contemporaneously, writing later but these events were fresher in his memory, or had recourse to greater documentation for these years. Any of these three explanations points to the veracity of his account of the ground breaking ceremony.

Participating in the parade were ‘all the clerics of the city of Bologna, the abbots, priors, chaplains, and all the mendicant religious orders’. They were then followed by the *anziani*, the *gonfalonieri*, the *massari* of the guilds, the *podestà*, the *capitano del popolo*, knights, university professors, judges, procurators and other distinguished men. When it arrived at its destination and in the presence of all these individuals, the stone was blessed by the bishop of Bologna before being set in place.<sup>160</sup> Although Pietro does not mention it, in addition to carrying Bologna’s coat of arms the cornerstone was also emblazoned with the word *libertas*.<sup>161</sup> Work on the basilica continued apace in the 1390s. By the time of the architect Antonio di Vincenzo’s death in 1401, roughly one third of the project had been completed. Progress then slowed, and it would take until the sixteenth century for the majority of the construction works to have reached their conclusion.

The decision to build the Basilica of San Petronio was a monumental intervention in Bologna’s cityscape. By the time it had been finished, the basilica was the largest building in Bologna by some margin, accommodating 30,000 people inside. It dominated the public space of the Piazza Maggiore, facing the Palazzo del Podestà and being flanked by the Palazzo d’Accursio, two of the principal buildings of the Bolognese municipal government. The city’s cathedral, on the modern Via dell’Indipendenza, sat to the north of the communal piazza and was thus excluded from the nexus of Bologna’s civic, political and religious space. Government activity was now conducted under Petronius’ gaze, and Bolognese officials did all they could to bolster the city’s new basilica. In 1392 the Commune petitioned and received official confirmation from Pope Boniface IX that a visitor to the Basilica of San Petronio, three days before or after Petronius’ feast day, would receive the same plenary indulgence as that conceded to those who went to the Basilica of San Marco in Venice – the church which housed the evangelist’s relics - on the Feast of the Ascension, or to Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi – the church in which Christ had spoken directly to St Francis - on the first two days of August. Because very few Bolognesi had been able to visit Rome during the jubilee of 1390 that Urban VI had proclaimed, Boniface also established a three-month jubilee for Bolognese visitors to the Petronian basilica, with the indulgence conceded being between one half and one third of what they would have received if they had gone to the basilicas of St Peter and Paul in Rome.<sup>162</sup> In 1417, Bolognese ambassadors were instructed to

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<sup>160</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca Bolognese*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>161</sup> Bocchi, ‘Lo sviluppo urbanistico’, p. 293.

<sup>162</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 1, pp. 130-1. In the context of trying to shore up his support during the Western Schism, Boniface also granted similar indulgences to Ancona in 1390, to Milan and Sardinia in

petition Pope Martin V to recognise the indulgences granted by his predecessors Boniface IX, Innocent VII and (Anti-)Pope John XXIII to the basilica.<sup>163</sup> The 1454 statutes had a clause that required city officials to safeguard monies set aside for the basilica's façade, and they also covered funding the basilica and its new reliquaries through taxation.<sup>164</sup> That the Petronian church had become such an important feature of Bolognese life is evidenced by the fact that it was in the basilica and not the cathedral that Emperor Charles V was crowned in 1530.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, in 1547-8, when the Council of Trent was relocated to Bologna, the delegates who charted the course of Catholicism for the next three centuries did so in the Petronian temple.<sup>166</sup>



Figure 16 – Basilica of San Petronio. Photo by author.

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1391, and to Bavaria in 1392. Arnold Esch, 'Bonifacio IX', *Enciclopedia dei Papi* (2000). Accessed online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bonifacio-ix\\_\(Enciclopedia-dei-Papi\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bonifacio-ix_(Enciclopedia-dei-Papi)/) on 08.01.22.

<sup>163</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 2, pp. 148-9.

<sup>164</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 38d, p. 367 and doc. 38e, p. 374.

<sup>165</sup> Konrad Eisenbichler, 'Charles V in Bologna: the Self-Fashioning of a Man and a City', *Renaissance Studies* 13 (1999), pp. 430-9.

<sup>166</sup> Umberto Mazzone, 'Dal primo Cinquecento alla dominazione napoleonica', in Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (eds.), *Storia della chiesa di Bologna, vol. 1* (Bologna: Edizioni Bolia, 1997), pp. 205-82 (p. 214).



All the while, the Basilica of San Petronio remained the property of the city. Ownership was not transferred to the diocese until 1929, a consequence of Mussolini's and Pope Pius XI's Lateran Pact.<sup>167</sup> Liturgical services had been held at the Basilica from 1392 onwards, but it was only consecrated as a church on 3 October 1954 by Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro.<sup>168</sup> All but the head – which had been taken to the Basilica in 1742 – of Petronius' relics were moved from Santo Stefano to the basilica as late as 2000.<sup>169</sup> In the late medieval and early modern period, therefore, the Basilica of San Petronio was a pantheon of Bolognese civic liberty. Commissioned and financed by the Commune, it was as much a secular building as a religious one. The statutes confirming its construction and the cornerstone both affirmed the Commune's intention in building the basilica: it was to be a monumental edifice to liberty. That is, the liberty enjoyed by the Bolognese Commune to exercise its right of self-government; a type of government that, so the hagiographical legends told, owed its right of existence to the actions of Petronius in the fifth century. After almost three centuries of evolution, Petronius as the founding father of Bolognese autonomous government now received concrete confirmation in the grandest of forms. With architecture sanctioning a political philosophy of liberty and self-government that was at the centre of the Commune's ideology, the new basilica signalled to all in the city of Bologna and beyond where the city's saintly loyalties lay. There could now be no return to Peter, or any other saint for that matter. Petronius, of whom the Commune now unambiguously claimed ownership, was synonymous with Bologna.

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<sup>167</sup> Something that was not unique to Bologna. The Paduan commune finished building the Basilica of Sant'Antonio in 1310. It was that city's most important church, but, like the Basilica of San Petronio, was from its inception owned and administered by the city's government, which by 1396 was officially through the Veneranda Arca di Sant'Antonio. It too was transferred to the diocese in 1929, being specifically mentioned in article 27 of the Lateran Pact. Giovanni Lorenzoni, 'La Basilica del Santo di Padova e la sua Committenza', In David Rosand (ed.), *Interpretazioni veneziane: studi di storia dell'arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro* (Venice: Arsenale, 1984), pp. 85-7; John Kenneth Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), pp. 2, 33-4. Similarly, Venice's Basilica of San Marco was the city's most prominent church. It had been founded as the doge's private church and 'its separation from the episcopal administration of the city's churches was carefully preserved'. The office of the procuratori di San Marco, a thirteenth century creation, administered the Basilica until Napoleon captured Venice in 1797. Debra Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 10-1, 36-8, 190-1 n. 13. Another example comes from southern Italy: at Bari, the main church was the Basilica of San Nicola, not the cathedral of San Sabino. The Barese basilica, which started being built in 1087 after the translation of the saint's relics from Myra, was patronised by the city's Norman rulers. This church, like the Petronian basilica, was transferred to the Church in 1929, with provision being made for the transfer of unspecified lay administered or royal managed churches exempt from local ecclesiastical jurisdiction in articles 27 and 29 of the Pact. Dawn Marie Hayes, 'The Cult of St Nicholas of Myra in Norman Bari, c. 1071-c. 1111', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67 (2016), pp. 492-512; Graham Loud, *The Latin Church in Norman Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 131-2, 375-7.

<sup>168</sup> *Cronaca A*, vol. 3, p. 439.

<sup>169</sup> Lodi, *San Petronio*, pp. 249-51, 273-4.

A study of Bolognese coins minted during our period of investigation sheds further light on the Commune's relationship with Petronius' cult. Being circular in nature, coins, like civic seals, could function as a microcosm of the city in which they were produced.<sup>170</sup> They were also an ideal medium on which urban governments could project statements of power and they often featured their nominated patron saint's likeness, holding their respective city in hand.<sup>171</sup> At Padua, for instance, St Prosdocimus, that city's patron saint, featured on the city's coinage. From the twelfth century onwards, St Mark did so for Venice; so did St John the Baptist for Florence, and St Hilary for Parma.<sup>172</sup> The Bolognesi first started producing their own coinage in the late twelfth century. As a reward for their support of his strategic objectives in Lombardy, the German Emperor Henry VI issued a privilege to the city in 1191 which allowed it to begin minting coins.<sup>173</sup> Possessing the first operational mint in the Emilia-Romagna, the Bolognesi struck their *denarium bononiense*, known colloquially as the *bolognino*, almost immediately. In terms of its design, on the front face of the *bolognino* was written *Bononia* and on the reverse *Enricus Imperator*.<sup>174</sup> Further coins were struck in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which we will explore in the next chapter, but here it suffices to say that Petronius was not represented on any Bolognese coin until very late in the city's history.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, it was during the phase of the "Second Commune" that Petronius first made an appearance on Bologna's currency. The newly established government struck two new coins. One, the *bolognino d'oro*, first appeared in 1380. It bore on its face a lion rampant with the city's banner, and the coin was stamped with BONONIA DOCET. On its reverse stood St Peter, with the legend *S Petrus Apostolus*. The second coin, minted from 1376 up to 1401, was a silver *doppio grosso*. On it stood Petronius, represented in the customary manner for a bishop and so identified only by the coin's legend.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> An argument made by Keith Lilley regarding seals and their relationship to the imagined circular Jerusalem, but one that is also valid for coinage, Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, p. 23.

<sup>171</sup> Lucia Travaini and Stefano Locatelli, 'La Città nelle Mani del Santo: Studi di Iconografia Monetale', in A. L. Morelli and E. Filippini (eds.), *Moneta e identità dalla polis antica alla civitas medievale* (Reggio Calabria: Falzea, 2016), pp. 251-68.

<sup>172</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of saints on Italian coins, see Valerio Giovanni Moneta, *Santi e monete. Repertorio dei santi raffigurati sulle monete italiane dal VII al XIX secolo* (Milan: LED, 2010).

<sup>173</sup> Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna*, pp. 69-70

<sup>174</sup> Pini, *Città, Chiesa e culti civici*, p. 226; Donarini, *Bologna Medievale*, p. 206.

<sup>175</sup> Lisa Bellocchi, 'San Petronio su monete e medaglie', in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna: Il volto di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), pp. 219-222 (p. 219).

Peter in gold, Petronius in silver. Taken in isolation, the numismatic evidence would suggest that the Commune's traditional patron remained preeminent. Yet, while the silver coin carrying Petronius was of lesser value, it would have been the currency of daily life, that is for all transactions of goods and services other than for the most expensive of commodities or for engaging the skills of highly specialised professionals. Given its greater worth, it is more likely that the higher value coin bearing the image of Peter was used for export or long-distance trade. As he was a universal saint, it is possible that his presence on the gold currency was more appropriate for this usage. There too may have been an element of political pragmatism behind the choice; notwithstanding its claims of independence and liberty, the "Second Commune" governed the city at the pleasure of the papacy, and so placing Peter on the gold *bolognino* could be interpreted as a numismatic recognition of the Pope's ultimate sovereignty over the city. It also could have been a tactic to bridge the novelty of first putting Petronius on a coin. Having never featured on any Bolognese money before, it would have been a dramatic first step to propel Petronius onto the city's gold coins. Only once the precedent had been set could the nature of the metal subsequently change, something we will see in the next chapter. Nevertheless, for Petronius to feature on the *doppio grosso* was a development of some significance. Every Bolognese resident reliant on the city's monetary economy now carried images of Petronius on their person. Each and every transaction with the silver *doppio grosso* was facilitated by Petronius and with his likeness on the coin he acted as the fiduciary of Bologna's currency.<sup>176</sup>

Petronius' cult owed its place in the Bolognese civic pantheon thanks to the activities of Bologna's communal governments. Indeed, it might have seemed unusual to first frame an investigation into a saint's cult from the perspective of a political rather than religious authority. But the quantity and multifaceted nature of the evidence of the city government's engagement with the Petronian cult justifies our close scrutiny of the Bolognese Commune. From it, a typology of its evolution can be discerned. Two phases of *popolo* led or inspired communal government were the occasions for the most intense stages of development for Petronius' cult. The first of these two was from c. 1183 up to 1327, but we might properly restrict it to between 1228 and 1327. During that time, a new hagiography was penned for Petronius, he started to feature in civic statutes, his feast day was celebrated with increasing

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<sup>176</sup> This really is a point of some magnitude. As a former governor of the Bank of England has recently remarked: 'Trust is fundamental to the acceptability, and so the value, of money. But it is trust ... in the issuer of money, usually governments, that determines its value'. Mervyn King, *The End of Alchemy: Money, Banking and the Future of the Global Economy* (London: Abacus, 2017), p. 67.

pageantry, a false privilege based on the hagiographic legend was utilised by the government in its claims for territory, and he featured on the Commune's *carroccio*. Yet for all the advances that his cult made, Petronius still competed for preeminence with and was arguably eclipsed by other saints' cults, principally Peter and the mendicants Dominic and Francis.

Coming in the middle of our two phases was a short-lived attempt at resurrecting communal government following the exile of Bertrand du Pouget. Petronius was once again an important saintly figure, but it would take the establishment of the "Second Commune", the second of the two periods of communal activity, for Petronius to become the undisputed celestial patron of Bologna. Building upon what had been achieved in the thirteenth century and early fourteenth century, the "Second Commune" from 1376 to 1401 pushed ahead with promoting his cult and based its claims for power on the authority of Petronius. The civic statutes they promulgated placed Petronius at their centre, they commissioned a new golden reliquary and an enormous basilica in his honour, stipulated in minute detail the celebration of his feast day, set up a Petronian market, established a *palio*, made his solemnity the occasion for subjugated communities to render tokens of submission, and issued coinage with his likeness on. All of this combined to show that under the "Second Commune's" direction Petronius and Bologna were now one and the same. Ideas of liberty, communal self-autonomy and civic welfare were represented by and articulated through the person of the ancient bishop. Because of their efforts, the foundations of the Petronian cult were so solid at Bologna that no individual or regime change could displace Petronius from the city's celestial throne.

In comparison with other Italian cities, the sponsorship of the Petronian cult by communal authorities was simultaneously usual and unusual. Examples from Bologna's neighbours testify to the important role sanctity played in civic religion and the construction of political authority. Whether it be Parma, Modena, Ferrara or elsewhere, city governments legislated on the celebration of their saint's feast day, placed them on their *carrocci* and coins, and had their patron saints stand as celestial ambassadors to treaties and pacts. Where the Bolognese example and Petronius' cult was unusual is the scale, pace, and magnitude of change in patron saint and the intensely political and divisive nature of his cult, at least for much of its history. Most Italian cities had settled on their main saints by c. 1200.<sup>177</sup> Petronius' cult, by contrast, was only in its infancy at that time and would not reach maturity until 200 years

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<sup>177</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 135.

later, by which point he had completely eclipsed Peter. Moreover, for those cities which had not identified their main patron by the thirteenth century, the support of new saints by communal authorities played out in opposition to their city's cathedral and its patron saints. The Florentines started worshipping St John the Baptist and left Saints Reparata and Zenobius to their bishops.<sup>178</sup> This communal versus episcopal dynamic also manifested itself at Bologna with Petronius, as we shall see in chapter four. But, in the Bolognese context, Petronius' cult also embodied competition between conflicting visions of political philosophy and praxis. Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, at Bologna to invoke Petronius was to endorse a very particular type of Bolognese government. Of all the governments Bologna had, it was only communal-inspired ones that relied on Petronius in the leveraging of political power. *Signori* and papal legates were fully cognisant of this association: they did their best to ignore Petronius and communicate their political programme through other less provocative saints. A change in the city's constitution entailed a shift in celestial patronage. No other saint's cult from any Italian city had such strong political resonance. In other words, Bologna's sacred history and the Petronian cult were inescapably intertwined with the city's socio-political events.

### iii. The abbots and monks of Santo Stefano

The original custodians of Petronius' cult were not members of the communal government, but the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. Since the discovery of his relics at Santo Stefano in 1141, Petronius had been indelibly connected to the monastic complex which he was supposed to have built. At the time of the *inventio*, it will be remembered that the monastery's pre-existing tradition of replicating the Holy City was grafted onto the newly formed cult and then was elaborated in great detail in the Latin *Vita* c.1180. However, the centuries-long process of replicating the Holy Land at Bologna did not stop there. In the gap between the writing of the *Vita Sancti Petronii* and the *Vita di San Petronio* approximately 90 years later, the monks of Santo Stefano had been busy embellishing their Jerusalem simulacrum. Evidence for this comes from the vernacular hagiography. Its author, whilst almost certainly not a monk of the monastery, was most probably a Bolognese layman who lived in the vicinity of Santo Stefano, and so had obtained knowledge of the complex's evolution and the growing Petronian legend. His familiarity with the topography of the monastic complex shows in his text. Basing his account on the original *Vita Sancti Petronii*,

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<sup>178</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 136.

the author of the Old Italian *Vita* has Petronius go to the Levant, though this time Petronius was an episcopal pilgrim to the Holy Land rather than a foresighted civil servant. Once there, he visited all the main sites on the pilgrim itinerary and took measurements so that he could recreate them at Bologna.<sup>179</sup> Most of the recreation follows the Latin *Vita*, but three significant additions were appended to the Jerusalem schematic by the 1270s: a column of flagellation where Christ had been whipped in the Bolognese Church of Santo Sepolcro; the Lombard basin in Santo Stefano's Atrio had become a replica of the bowl where Pontius Pilate washed his hands upon ordering Christ's crucifixion, and a church dedicated to St Thecla had been built in the Bolognese Valley of Josephat.<sup>180</sup> Petronius was also said to have taken a stone of the Holy Sepulchre as a relic to incorporate into his own Bolognese version of Christ's tomb.<sup>181</sup> Later, in 1362, the abbot of Santo Stefano installed a new altar in the Church of Santo Sepolcro to Petronius, continuing to cultivate the association between the two. It was consecrated with the relics of the ancient bishop, St Florian and St Thomas Becket (*San Tomaso Arcivescovo di Cantuaria*).<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 21-6.

<sup>180</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 34-40. Ousterhout suggests the Santa Tecla church was probably a reference to the Tomb of the Virgin Mary, the most noteworthy monument in the thirteenth century Valley of Josephat. Ousterhout, 'The Church of Santo Stefano', p. 320 n. 57.

<sup>181</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 25.

<sup>182</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 24, pp. 260-1. In 1326, the abbot of Santo Stefano claimed to have found several of Thomas' relics whilst restoring part of the aedicule. Filippini, *San Petronio*, p. 106.



Figure 17 – The Column of Flagellation, Church of Santo Sepolcro, Santo Stefano. Photo by author.

In addition to the further development of the Petronian Jerusalem tradition and the building of an altar to him, the monks of Santo Stefano used Petronius as a conduit through which to increase the number of saints to whom they laid claim. Although the *Sermo de inventione* and *Vita Sancti Petronii* had recognised over 100 different relics that Petronius had supposedly brought to Bologna, the remains of more saints were added to the monastery's collection by the time the Old Italian Petronian hagiography had been written. Most prominent among them was St Florian. Petronius, so the *Vita* tells us, gathered the remains of forty martyrs from the city of Gaza with 'the main one' (*lo principio*) being Florian.<sup>183</sup> This is the earliest

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<sup>183</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 24.

reference to a cult of Florian at Santo Stefano or at Bologna more generally.<sup>184</sup> But, based on the authority of the Petronian legend, the monks of Santo Stefano successfully promoted their new cult. The 1288 statutes required communal officials to give reverence to him at Santo Stefano on St Stephen's feast day.<sup>185</sup> In 1298, his solemnity was elevated to a *ferie*, and in 1303 an official visit by communal officials to Santo Stefano on his feast day was instituted.<sup>186</sup> He also started to feature in the statutes of the city's guilds, and a *passio* fleshing out his life and martyrdom was authored in the fourteenth century.<sup>187</sup> Petronius was, therefore, a useful tool and one to whom the brothers had common recourse. Having a well-known but equally ductile hagiographic tale, Petronius was a supernatural agent whom the monks could call upon to obscure otherwise obviously recent phenomena. This was a tactic that they employed with effect, whether that be for the on-going expansion of the Imagined Jerusalem or for the introduction of new saints' cults like Florian's.

Compared with his saintly colleagues from across the Christian world, Petronius of Bologna did not have much of a reputation for miracle working. So far, we have noted just three instances of his divine intervention. Two of these were supposedly during his lifetime, as recorded in the *vitae*: saving the labourer at Santo Stefano and absolving the Capuan knight from his penance. The third and only posthumous one yet attributed to him concerned the possessed peasant woman from Pizzocalvo who visited Santo Stefano on his feast day sometime during the abbacy of Landolfo in the late twelfth century; but even this miracle was worked in collaboration with Vitalis and Agricola, and it is included in their *miracula* and thus was not solely connected to the ancient bishop. This, however, changed in 1307. In the May of that year, Petronius was responsible for healing hundreds of Bolognese citizens. Crippled and infirm Bolognesi went to Santo Stefano on Pentecost, continuing the connection between the monastery and Jerusalem. Once there, they drank and washed themselves in the waters of the shallow stream that runs under the aedicule and formerly the altar of Petronius

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<sup>184</sup> It was exactly around the same time that Florian was being "discovered" at the Austrian monastery of St Florian, near Linz. Stephen Mossman, 'Einwik Weizlan von St. Florian', in Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Medieval Chronicle*. Accessed online at [http://dx.doi.org/manchester.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/2213-2139\\_emc\\_SIM\\_00919\\_on\\_14.01.22](http://dx.doi.org/manchester.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_00919_on_14.01.22). Interestingly,

many of the relics that the Austrian Florian's chronicler claimed for his monastery corresponded closely with relics Santo Stefano alleged possession of. For instance, stones from Christ's tomb and the Column of Flagellation, and the relics of St Stephen, St Hermes, St Haggi and St Gaius. A. Zauner, 'Die *Kirchweihchronik* des Stiftes St. Florian', *Mitteilungen des oberösterreichischen Landesarchivs* 10 (1971), pp. 50-122 (p. 89).

<sup>185</sup> *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, vol. 2, bk. 11, rb. 4, p. 190

<sup>186</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, pp. 177-8.

<sup>187</sup> Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, pp. 93-4.



(*l'altaro de sancto Petronio*) in the Church of Santo Sepolcro.<sup>188</sup> The *Cronica Bolognetti* records the cured numbered 150, and the *Cronaca B* states that the infirm across Italy celebrated these miracles.<sup>189</sup> Petronius had become a much more active miracle worker.

Much like the original *inventio* of his relics, the Petronian mass healing of 1307 was probably inspired by the worldly events of the day. Bologna was under interdict, which had been imposed in 1306 for their expulsion of Cardinal Legate Napoleone Orsini. To add further pressure on the Bolognesi, Orsini preached a crusade against Bologna and its ally Florence in 1307.<sup>190</sup> For the miracles to have occurred so soon after, it seems that they were an orchestrated response to the actions of the papal legate. Something similar also occurred at Florence: after two years of grain shortages, in 1331 the body of St Zenobius was exhumed and reinterred. Miracles were reported shortly after.<sup>191</sup> In context of recounting the miracles at Santo Stefano, the Bolognese chroniclers cited above respectively called Petronius the 'father of Bologna' (*padre de Bologna*) and the 'patron of Bologna' (*patrone di Bologna*).<sup>192</sup> One month later, a new leader of the *Society of the Cross* was appointed. It is best to see these two activities working in tandem: one was a spiritual retort to the interdict and a confirmation of Bologna's religious orthodoxy, whilst also serving as a morale booster in the face of a potential crusade; the other was a practical measure to prepare for an anticipated upcoming military encounter. By helping to organise Bologna's spiritual defences, the monastery of Santo Stefano and its brothers played their part in preparing the city at a time of potential crisis. Moreover, to help Bologna was also to help themselves. Being the guardian of a powerful intercessor was only to their benefit. With the suggestion that non-Bolognesi came to see or worship at the healing Petronian waters, it is likely that footfall at the monastery increased. Santo Stefano would have received more donations from the higher traffic of pilgrims, and perhaps it gave them greater leverage in discussions with civic authorities.

The spatial distribution of Petronius' supernatural activities is of interest because it shows how the monks of Santo Stefano tried to maintain control of the ancient bishop's cult.

Excluding the miracle of the Capuan knight, all acts of Petronian healing were performed at

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<sup>188</sup> *Cronaca B*, vol. 2, p. 282. Also recorded in *Cronaca A*, *Cronaca Villola* and *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, pp. 280-3; and Matteo Griffoni, *Memoriale*, p. 31

<sup>189</sup> *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, p. 283; *Cronaca B*, vol. 2, p. 282.

<sup>190</sup> Norman Housley, *The Italian Crusades: The Papal-Angevin Alliance and the Crusades against Christian Lay Powers, 1254-1343* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 31-2.

<sup>191</sup> George Dameron, *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 226.

<sup>192</sup> *Cronaca B*, vol. 2, p. 282; *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, p. 282.

Santo Stefano. Its abbot and monks were careful to concentrate his thaumaturgic powers within the confines of their monastery and not share that special gift with any other place or institution in the city. When Petronius healed people, he did so at Santo Stefano and nowhere else. Therefore, in order to be on the receiving end of Petronius' miraculous intervention, one had to go to Bologna's Jerusalem simulacrum. Behind the geography was a desire to preserve Santo Stefano's ownership of Petronius' cult.

In the fourteenth century, Santo Stefano was drawing bigger crowds to the monastery. In the previous section, we saw that the 1288 statutes and a *provvigione* of 1301 required annual processions to Santo Stefano on the feast day of Petronius. Other such requirements were introduced in 1303 for the celebration of Florian's feast day. Large crowds probably also gathered at the monastery in 1307 when Petronius healed hundreds of Bolognese citizens. Yet despite the growing number of people who regularly visited Santo Stefano, the monastery and its piazza lacked the necessary infrastructure to accommodate so many visitors. It was in fact complained that the muddy and poorly-kept square was hampering the feast day processions. To correct this, in 1321 the communal authorities repaved the Piazza di Santo Stefano and built new porticos so the solemnities could proceed without disruption.<sup>193</sup> That the commune met the expense of these building works indicates just how important the monastery was in the Bolognese landscape and in the city's liturgical and civic calendar. Yet without their possession of Petronius and Florian, the monastery would not have benefited from this material investment. The saintly pair were essential for Santo Stefano's connection to the communal government and any benefits it received thereof.

Santo Stefano was a more regular recipient of state aid than the one-off refurbishment of its piazza. The Bolognese civic statutes all included a rubric entitled *De elimoxinis*. These clauses established how much the civic authorities should give to each of the city's principal churches or monasteries. Sherri Franks Johnson has helpfully combed through the published editions of these statutes and presented them in table form. In short summary as they relate to Santo Stefano, the monastery did not receive any gifts in the 1245-67 statutes or the 1288 edition. The 1335 codes granted Santo Stefano 24 Bolognese pounds, 12 to Petronius and 12 to Florian; the same was true in the 1352 and 1357 statutes; and in the 1376 and 1389 editions the donation was reduced to 10 Bolognese pounds, only to Petronius.<sup>194</sup> In terms of when the payments should be made, the 1335 codes decreed it should be made 'on the feast and for the

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<sup>193</sup> Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, p. 249 n. 388.

<sup>194</sup> Johnson, *Monastic Women*, p. 140 and 150.

feast of St Petronius in the month of October’, while the 1376 and 1389 statutes required it only to be paid ‘on the feast of St Petronius’.<sup>195</sup>

When the money given to Santo Stefano is examined alongside that granted to other institutions across the city, it becomes evident that Santo Stefano was not a particularly favoured monastery. By way of comparison, the 1335 statutes gave 100 Bolognese pounds each to the basilicas of Dominic and Francis. Respectively, this figure was four times more than the 24 Bolognese pounds donated to Santo Stefano.<sup>196</sup> Two conclusions can be drawn from this: one is that respective Bolognese governments favoured giving to churches associated with the mendicant orders, something which was not restricted to Bologna and was repeated across central and northern Italy. The second is that Santo Stefano’s receipt of government charity was predicated on their possession of and communal support for Petronius’ cult. This is why Santo Stefano received no donation in the earliest statutes, that is before Petronius had truly established himself in the Bolognese civic cult.

Since the *inventio* of 1141 until the commencement of the building of the Basilica of San Petronio, the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano had been the sole custodians of the Petronian cult. Even with growing support for it, especially during the first phase and most of the second phase of communal led government, the Benedictine monastery had managed to maintain its control over Petronius and access to his bodily remains was mediated through it. But with the construction of the new civic basilica in Bologna’s Piazza Maggiore, the brothers of Santo Stefano struggled to adapt to the creation of a second and much more imposing cult site in the city. As soon as it could hold services, the Petronian feast day processions were diverted to the Basilica of San Petronio and attendees received papal indulgences for visiting Bologna’s new church. Santo Stefano was increasingly side-lined from what had always traditionally been under its purview. In response, the brothers sought to react to their exclusion with a time-honoured technique: an *inventio*.

At the turn of the fifteenth century, and in the context of the Western Schism, the monks of Santo Stefano claimed that their monastery housed the authentic relics of St Peter.<sup>197</sup> The basis on which they argued that the relics rested in Bologna and not in Rome was the Petronian *inventio* of 1141. We will recall that among the many discoveries on that day was

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<sup>195</sup> *Stauto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 5, rb. 49, p. 381; *Stauto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 63, p. 314; *Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389*, vol. 2, bk. 3, rb. 62, p. 1118.

<sup>196</sup> *Statuto del Comune di Bologna 1335*, vol. 1, bk. 5, rb. 49, pp. 379-80.

<sup>197</sup> Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, pp. 95-6.

the bodily remains of a certain Symon. In *2 Peter 1*, the apostle Peter had referred to himself as ‘Simon Peter’, and in *Matthew 16:17* Christ had called Peter ‘Simon’. Playing on the two names, the brothers held that their Symon was in fact Peter. So while strictly speaking it was not a new *inventio*, the earlier 1141 discovery was reinterpreted in light of the monastery’s contemporary needs. No longer being the centre of Petronian worship at Bologna, the monks needed another saint to replace him as the focus of devotion. In so doing, they had some short-lived success. The cult of Simon Peter grew rapidly but it attracted the ire of the papacy. When Pope Eugenius IV stopped at Bologna in 1437 on his way to the church Council of Ferrara of 1438, he ordered the cessation of the cult and had the doors of the Church of SS. Vitale e Agricola, where Simon Peter’s relics were held, bricked shut.<sup>198</sup>

The desire to find or fashion something new was not a reaction that was unique to the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano in late fourteenth-century Bologna. The commissioning of a new Petronian reliquary and the building of the Basilica of San Petronio reverberated across the city’s celestial community. In the hope of not being outdone, the Dominicans instructed the goldsmith Jacopo Roseto to craft a reliquary for the head of St Dominic. In February 1383, the head of the mendicant saint was placed inside its new home. It is larger and visually more impressive than the Petronian reliquary executed by Roseto. However, the Dominicans received no communal funding for their new shrine; it was a private enterprise. Similarly, in 1389, the abbot of San Procolo, Giovanni, organised an *inventio* of the relics of two Proculi, the bishop and the martyr. The ceremony was attended by the communal authorities, but it received a lukewarm reception.<sup>199</sup> Common to the brothers of Santo Stefano, San Procolo and San Domenico was the recognition that they would be hard-pressed to compete. Seemingly motivated by the inexorable progression of Petronius’ cult under the direction of the “Second Commune”, the discovery of new saints or the fashioning of new devotional objects by other religious communities were acts of desperation in the face of an oncoming Petronian tide.

As well as having one of the monastery’s churches closed for the aborted attempt of claiming St Peter as their own, Santo Stefano was unable to prevent the sharing of Petronius’ relics. In 1442, the arm of Petronius was translated from Santo Stefano to the Church of San Giovanni in Monte Oliveto.<sup>200</sup> Although this church had long been connected to Santo Stefano and Petronius had allegedly built both it and the hill it stood atop, this was a further diminution of

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<sup>198</sup> With the support of Pope Nicholas V, the church was eventually reopened. Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>199</sup> Fanti, *San Procolo*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>200</sup> Filippini, *San Petronio*, pp. 56-7.

Santo Stefano's exclusive relationship with the ancient bishop. The more churches that possessed parts of Petronius, the less the monastery could shape the cult in its own image. This was coupled with the practice of transporting the head of Petronius on the vigil of his feast each year to the basilica for the following day's celebrations. To prevent any attempts at or accusations of impropriety, a notary observed the transaction and ensured the relic was returned to the monastery after the solemnity had concluded. Still, it was a sign of what was to come. The arrangement was first negotiated in 1429, but Santo Stefano did so not from a position of strength, but weakness. Although its monks managed to keep hold of Petronius' head until the eighteenth century, they were not its guardians on the most important day of the Petronian calendar; now marginalised, the processional crowds passed Santo Stefano and flocked to the Basilica of San Petronio.

Ultimately, the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano lost possession of Petronius' cult. They had, with the assistance of Bishop Enrico, promoted Petronius' cult after the *inventio* of 1141 and supplied him with a *Vita* by c. 1180, essentially taking ownership of it at this early stage. In the thirteenth century, as the cult became more widely diffused across Bologna, the monastery remained an essential component of Petronian worship. The monks also took the opportunity to further enrich the Jerusalem simulacrum and supplement their stock of saints by reference to the Petronian hagiographic legend. For most of the fourteenth century, Santo Stefano was still an intrinsic part of his cult. The monastery was the final destination of his feast day processions, and there were the excellently-timed Petronian miracles of 1307. So well attended were the solemnities that the Commune had to invest in improving the Piazza di Santo Stefano in 1321. The monastery continued to receive charity from the Bolognese government, though it paled in comparison to the mendicant churches, and a new altar to Petronius was dedicated at Santo Stefano in 1362. Even in 1376, the fundamental role the complex had in Petronius' cult was recognised in the regulations outlining the feast day celebrations and the exemption on wax sellers in the Piazza di Santo Stefano during the Petronian fair. However, the real turning point for the Santo Stefano complex was in 1389. With the many policies of the "Second Commune" and especially with the building of the new basilica, Petronius had become unambiguously a communal cult. No more the sole custodian of the Petronian cult or the last stage of the annual procession, Santo Stefano, for so long inextricably bound to the cult's fortunes, suffered in inverse proportion to the Bolognese government's sponsorship of Petronius in the later fourteenth century. What followed was a doomed attempt at resurrecting the fortunes of the monastery by claiming St Peter for its

own. In a sense, then, the monks returned full circle. Petronius had been discovered because the Bolognese cathedral of Peter had been consumed by fire. Now the Bolognese government started building a civic temple to Petronius, the brothers of Santo Stefano reverted to Peter, Bologna's original patron. It was a decision that did not bode well for the brothers; the oldest church of the complex was walled shut and parts of Petronius' relics were shared with other Bolognese churches as the monastery faltered. It was a process that was finally completed as Bologna entered the third millennium, when Cardinal Giacomo Biffi translated the remaining relics from the monastery to the basilica.

#### iv. Conclusion

In different ways, which at times were complementary and sometimes not, the two custodians of the Petronian cult were instrumental in establishing Petronius as Bologna's principal patron saint by the close of the fourteenth century. The journey from one among equals to Bologna's chief celestial being was both protracted and complicated. It took hundreds of years to be realised, in the face of regular and sustained interruption. One reason for this was the presence of other very popular cults in the city, from St Peter at the cathedral to the mendicants Francis and Dominic. A second, and equally important factor was the connection the ancient bishop had to city politics. For Petronius, since the writing of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, had been closely associated with the autonomous Bolognese Commune, a mode of government that was based on fairly widespread popular participation. This meant that when the Commune was replaced with rule by a *signore*, the Petronian cult suffered. But when the Commune prospered, so too did the ancient bishop's cult. Primarily, the period of communal and Petronian success occurred during two decisive stages: from c. 1183 to 1327, the first stage of Bolognese history identified earlier in this chapter, and then from 1376 to 1401, the age of the "Second Commune" and our third stage. In the first juncture, in concert with the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano, Petronius was positioned alongside Bologna's other patron saints. Gradually, the ancient bishop was included in statutory dedications, his feast day celebrations were codified, and his solemnity had become a public holiday. Yet other than when the Bolognesi called Petronius' feast day their Easter in 1301, the Petronian cult did not stand out from others in the Bolognese civic cult. With the rise of *signoria* across the Italian peninsula in the fourteenth century, the cult's progress was halted. A fleeting return of the Commune in 1334-7 signalled a desire to push Petronius further, but it was only with the rise of the "Second Commune" in 1376, our third stage, that Petronius eclipsed his celestial

companions to become the city's undisputed patron. The ancient bishop was imposed on the city's coinage, a grand new basilica was built in his honour and a new golden reliquary commissioned, he became the city's supernatural ambassador, his name was included in the oaths of office officials had to swear, and his feast day, returned to its original date of 4 October, was celebrated with great pageantry, with spectacular processions, horse races and a 16-day long fair. City authorities also required criminal and civil courts to close, eligible prisoners were released as an offering to him, and work was prohibited on the day of the solemnity. In all, by 1401 and through the efforts of the "Second Commune", the Petronian cult had percolated through almost every aspect of Bolognese civic society.

The abbots and monks of Santo Stefano were Petronius' other guardians. For much of the later Middle Ages, the two keepers of the Petronian cult happily co-existed. When the Bolognese Commune supported the ancient bishop, the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano benefited. The brothers continued to enrich their recreation of the Holy City, to the benefit of all Bolognesi, and increased their store of saints, most notably St Florian, who was himself recognised as a patron saint of Bologna. Both were achieved by reference to the Petronian legend. In return for Petronius' growing importance, the monastery received yearly charitable donations and successfully petitioned for the costs of their piazza's refurbishment to be met by the communal authorities. The brothers also oversaw the serendipitously-timed miracle of 1307 and arranged for a new altar to the ancient bishop in 1362. However, this implicit arrangement of mutual cooperation faltered when the civic authorities came exclusively to claim Petronius for their own in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. On account of the "Second Commune's" many and varied Petronian policies, but especially the building of the Basilica of San Petronio, the cult was no longer restricted to Santo Stefano nor solely controlled by its brothers. Having lost their place as the single cult centre, the monastery slowly became a secondary partner in all things Petronian.

One custodian was a religious institution, the other political. The actions of both show how the struggle for authority and political legitimacy was inextricably connected to the cult of saints in late medieval Italy. Petronius' cult was a vital and at times decisive force in the negotiation and articulation of power. He was both a symbol – of Santo Stefano and as a synecdoche for Bologna on its coins and flags - and an agent – the builder of the monastery's Jerusalem simulacrum and the founder of the Commune and the *Studium*. Petronius was thus a powerful tool, as a representative of the institutions that laid claim to him and as an actor who performed many deeds in the name of his custodians. For all of this to be achieved,

however, he had to be popular. The messages Petronius was said to embody could be effective only if Petronius was himself respected and admired. Sanctity did not exist independently of the urban communities in which the cults were based. Neither was it simply an ideological tool that could be utilised without regard to the wider civic context. By anchoring its basis for existence in the Petronian cult, the communal governments that relied on him had to ensure that the ancient bishop was popular among the Bolognesi. Progress was made by the Commune in the first stage of the city's late medieval history, but it was the "Second Commune" that made the ancient bishop truly popular. Because of them, he and his cult were ubiquitous in the city. Petronius became part of the very fabric of Bolognese life.

This chapter, then, has dealt with the two keepers of the Petronian cult. In the next, our attention shall turn to other social groups and institutions in Bologna, all of whom never tried or claimed to have established ownership of the ancient bishop's cult. We shall see how they responded to the Petronian initiatives set by the Commune and Santo Stefano, and assess their individual relationships with Petronius' cult.



## Chapter Four – The Significant Social Institutions of the City: The Bishops of Bologna, the *Studium*, the *Signori* and the Guilds

As one of the largest and most socially complex cities of the Latin West in the later Middle Ages, Bologna had many different social formations which could interact with Petronius' cult in myriad ways.<sup>1</sup> In the previous chapter, we looked at just two of them: the various iterations of the Bolognese Commune and the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. Having examined their extensive and very detailed relationships with the Petronian cult, we now turn to other prominent bodies or institutions at Bologna, four in total. The first of our sub-groups will be the bishops of Bologna and the cathedral canons. Coming next will be Bologna's famed *Studium* and its scholars. The third will be the *signori*, be they papal or secular lords, who at various junctures laid claim to Bologna in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Lastly, the final grouping will be the Bolognese guilds, known locally as the Arts societies.

We will follow the same methodology deployed in the previous chapter but expand our horizons to take in a much wider social spectrum, ranging from the second half of the twelfth century up to the sixteenth. It will encompass non-communal political authorities, ecclesiastical authorities, academics and the city's many trade associations to assess the status of Petronius' cult at Bologna from a multiplicity of perspectives. This time, though, no individual or group under discussion ever claimed ownership of the Petronian cult. Their engagement with it was one step removed compared to the Bolognese Commune or the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. Nevertheless, in their own way each of the sub-strata under discussion had a unique relationship with the Petronian cult. Some of the social formations supported the cult from very early on, while others only did so much later or with less enthusiasm compared to other Bolognese groups. In analysing them, we shall pay just as close attention to those who refused to participate in or support the cult as those groups or institutions that did. Indeed, given the association that Petronius had with the autonomous Bolognese Commune and ideas of civic liberty, this reluctance to positively engage with the ancient bishop's cult might be particularly telling of wider socio-political concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, at least in terms of population, a statement that is only true for the thirteenth century. Because of socio-political turmoil and the repeated exile of the Lambertazzi faction, the ravages of war, famines, and the Black Death, Bologna's population would decrease to around roughly 25,000 in c. 1350. It would not surpass its late thirteenth century high point until c. 1450. Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale*, pp. 170-3

So this chapter will demonstrate that, most atypically, Bologna's bishops spent the better part of 160 years avoiding association with the cult of a most impressive former colleague. Although a bishop, Petronius' cult at Bologna could not accurately be described as episcopal. Never did Petronius in hagiography or did his relics post *inventio* step foot or be placed in Bologna's *duomo*. His was a bishop's cult with no cathedral. When the city's bishops slowly came to venerate his cult in the fourteenth century, they did so only after communal authorities had declared Petronius' feast day Bologna's Easter. The *Studium* and its scholars, thanks to their creative reading of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, saw in Petronius' cult the institutions right of existence. Its members did not demonstrate strong worship towards Petronius. Yet they persistently acknowledged the ancient bishop for his alleged act of foundation. Even though they were non-custodians, the *Studium*'s scholars shaped the Petronian legend from a distance. Bologna's *signori*, for socio-political reasons, proactively shunned Petronius' cult. To them, his cult was representative of communal government and political autonomy. The *signori*'s stance towards it only changed after the fall of the "Second Commune". Because of its Petronian legacy, after 1401 whoever governed Bologna had to do so in concert with Petronius as civic patron. Up until 1376, Bologna's guilds did not act in unison towards the ancient bishop. Some were active supporters and many others were not. However, this all changed with the advent of the "Second Commune". At that point, every single Bolognese guild regardless of their previous position became lively worshippers of the Petronian cult.

Our analysis will show that it is only after 1376-1401 that sweeping generalisations about the Bolognesi and Petronius' cult can usefully be made. Before that point, a spectrum of approaches in relation to the ancient bishop's cult were open to the social formations here discussed. At one end, a specific group could worship Petronius' cult much earlier than others, or inspire innovation in the hagiographical legend. At the other, an individual or substratum could simply ignore the Petronian cult altogether. Many others sat in between these poles, and attitudes were not static but liable to change for a multitude of reasons, some discernible and others not. Of those that are, behind these various strategies adopted by the named parties vis-à-vis Petronius were issues of socio-political ideology and praxis, geo-political disputes, ecclesiastical competition, occupational preference, and organisational need. These concerns remained after the "Second Commune" but the status of Petronius' cult had so fundamentally changed at Bologna that the number of options open were significantly

reduced. After 1401, to participate in Bologna's civic, political or religious life now necessitated recourse to Petronius, the city's undisputed celestial patron.

### i. The bishops of Bologna

The Petronian cult owed its origin to the actions of Bishop Enrico of Bologna. He fashioned Petronius' cult from new in the aftermath of his cathedral's fire in 1141. With the exception of not having authored a *Vita* for Petronius before his death in 1145, Enrico prepared the grounds for a successful episcopal cult. This included the discovery of his ancient colleague's body, establishing a regular feast day for him, and receiving confirmation of Petronius' sanctity from Pope Lucius II in his bull of 1144. Once Enrico died, however, his episcopal successors did not share his concern for promoting the cult of Petronius at Bologna. It passed to the brothers of Santo Stefano, and there is very little evidence to show the active involvement of the bishops of Bologna in the Petronian cult until the second decade of the fourteenth century.

The first indication of the Bolognese bishops' refusal to patronise Petronius' cult comes from the late twelfth century. Very shortly after the cathedral had been damaged, the Bolognese Commune and its bishops started the process of rebuilding the city's *duomo*. By the 1180s, the task had been completed, and Pope Lucius III was at Bologna in July 1184 to consecrate the Cathedral of St Peter.<sup>2</sup> The *Cronaca Villola*, written by the parchment-maker (*Cartolaio*) father and son duo of Pietro and Floriano Villola in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, though drawing upon earlier sources, records the sacred relics that were placed inside the restored church.<sup>3</sup> These included the tunic of St Peter and the clothes he was wearing when crucified, St Lawrence's dalmatic (*dalmaticha*), the bones of St Apollinaris, the relics of St Vitalis and St Christopher, the bones of St George, St Genesis and St Agnes, a stone from the tomb of Christ (*sasso sepulcri Domini*), two teeth of St Silvester and St Innocent and Saint Primus and Felician, relics of St Paul, St Bartholomew, St Cosmas and

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<sup>2</sup> A move that offended the archbishop of Ravenna, Bologna's metropolitan bishop. Lucius wrote to the archbishop on 4 September 1184, advising him that his acts of consecrating the cathedrals of Bologna and Modena were not prejudicial to the archbishop, and that both dioceses would always be suffragans of Ravenna. Pini, *Chiesa e culti civici*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>3</sup> Armando Antonelli, 'Pietro e Floriano da Villola', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 99 (2020). Accessed online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-e-floriano-da-villola\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-e-floriano-da-villola_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/) on 21/09/2020; Armando Antonelli and Vincenzo Cassi, 'Bolognese Vernacular Language and Literature', in CMRB, pp. 474-498 (pp. 488-9). For the Villola family as parchment makers, see Rosa Smurra, 'Manuscript Book Production and Urban Landscape: Bologna During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds.), *Text and Image in the City: Manuscript, Print and Visual Culture in Urban Space* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp. 81-104 (pp. 93-4).

Damian, St Herculanus and many other saints.<sup>4</sup> Absent from this illustrious list is Petronius; despite his discovery several decades before and his recently authored hagiography, none of Petronius' remains were transferred to the cathedral.

It is peculiar that Bishop Giovanni IV (1169-87) excluded his former colleague from the newly installed collection of relics in Bologna's *duomo*. Surely there was no more fitting place to house the relics of a bishop than in the city's cathedral. Given that the cult was conceived of by Bologna's bishop, there should have been no concerns that it was unorthodox or, to use Janine Larmon Peterson's phrase, "suspect"; Petronius had been the city's bishop, after all, and the *Vita Sancti Petronii* also makes reference to his predecessor in office, Bishop Felix.<sup>5</sup> Even if there were some lingering doubts, the simplest and most effective way for an ecclesiastical authority to nullify the risk posed to it by a novel cult or charismatic individual was to patronise that cult or person and then mould it how it saw fit. Notably, Innocent III did this with St Francis in 1209. On a lesser scale, so too did Bishop Sicard of Cremona with the cult of St Homobonus, when Sicard transferred some of the saints' relics to the city's cathedral in 1202.<sup>6</sup> This did not happen at Bologna. Petronius' relics never were interred inside Bologna's cathedral and whether of their own making or not, the bishops of Bologna were not active promoters of Petronius' cult until the fourteenth century.

Unfortunately, the evidence does not exist to provide a definitive answer to this problem. Perhaps it might be the case that Enrico's successors were wary about promoting a cult that was so intimately associated with Bologna's other principal church, and one which had been in competition with the *duomo* since 1017-19. This might also explain the presence of a piece of stone from Christ's tomb among those listed in the 1184 consecration.<sup>7</sup> Santo Stefano may have figuratively recreated the place of Christ's Passion and his tomb, but the cathedral, so it claimed, actually possessed part of that tomb. In other words, Bologna's Jerusalem

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<sup>4</sup> *Cronaca Villola*, vol. 2, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Janine Larmon Peterson, *Suspect Saints and Holy Heretics: Disputed Sanctity and Communal Identity in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019), pp. 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> Doyno, *Lay Saint*, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Except for the reference to this relic in the *Cronaca Villola*, I have been unable to find any other mention of it. Many places across Latin Christendom claimed possession of part of Christ's tomb. The historian Ibn al-Athir, in his entry for the years 1187-8, records that Saladin, once he had conquered Jerusalem, ordered a marble pavement that had been built over the tomb be pulled up. According to him, the pavement had been built to protect the tomb from priests who had chipped bits of it off and were selling them to visitors from the Latin West for its 'weight in gold'. When the buyers returned home, they would build a church to house the relic. *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-ta'rikh, part 2: The Years 541-589/1146-1193: The Age of Nur al-Din and Saladin*, trans. D. S. Richards (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 334.

simulacrum was not the only place in Bologna where a citizen could come into contact with the Holy City. By virtue of this relic, the cathedral possessed a Jerusalem tradition of its own independent of the legendary deeds of Petronius and Santo Stefano. Whether it was capable of rivalling the Petronian complex is, however, another matter.

Viewed from another perspective, it may have been that the monks and abbots of Santo Stefano resisted attempts to share Petronius' cult with the Bolognese episcopacy. Their centuries-long tradition of imitating the Holy City had, thanks to the *Sermo de inventione* and the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, its own origin story. In whatever fashion the idea of imitating the Holy City had first begun, in these texts agency was attributed to Petronius and the various recreations were unified into a complete whole under his guidance, whilst also extending the extent of the Jerusalem simulacrum outside of Santo Stefano and across the Bolognese landscape more widely. Being an essential component of this programme of imitation, the Benedictine monks were likely reluctant to divest something so intrinsic to the monastery's identity. They would not have permitted part of the tomb aedicule to be broken off and given away. The same is true for Petronius' relics.

Support for the monks of Santo Stefano resisting any suggestion of episcopal claims to the cult may be found in the Petronian hagiographies. In both texts, there is no mention of any act or deed performed by Petronius in so far as it relates to Bologna's cathedral. In the *Vita Sancti Petronii* and the *Vita di San Petronio*, Petronius visits some of the most impressive churches of the Christian world: the Hagia Sophia, Constantinople; St John Lateran, Rome; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. Indeed, in the Old Italian *Vita*, Petronius is baptised in the Hagia Sophia by the Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>8</sup> But never does he step foot in the Bolognese cathedral. For all of his many construction works, Petronius was not said to have built, rebuilt, or even modified or extended Bologna's *duomo*. Given that Theodosius I was supposed to have completely destroyed Bologna and its many churches, the cathedral must logically have numbered among the architectural casualties and thus required repair. Admittedly the *vitae* do not explicitly say one way or another, but the silence on the matter is persuasive. Neither is Petronius ever recorded as having stood inside or even near Bologna's cathedral. Other churches, Santo Stefano being the one that receives most attention, are singled out, yet the cathedral is not. Furthermore, Petronius could correspond with emperors and popes and travel throughout Italy and the Mediterranean world but he could never make

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<sup>8</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, pp. 3-4.

it to his cathedral or converse with his cathedral canons. So from reading the *vitae*, one gets the impression that Petronius was a bishop without a *duomo*. This is a point that has not been appreciated in the historiography on Petronius' cult. Here we have an episcopal cult that existed outside the control of the city's bishopric and counter-intuitively flourished without episcopal support or the city's cathedral as a locus of activity. To the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any other example, in the Italian context or beyond the Alps, where such a state of affairs existed.

That there was tension between the monks of Santo Stefano and the bishop and his cathedral canons is demonstrated by two letters sent in the first decade of the thirteenth century. The first, sent by Cardinal Giovanni of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, dated 19 November 1205, and the second, sent by Innocent III, dated 5 December 1205, both concerned a dispute that had arisen between the cathedral canons and the monks of Santo Stefano regarding the offerings made by the latter to the former on the feast days of Petronius and St Stephen.<sup>9</sup> The abbot and monks were contesting what they believed were the excessive demands made by the canons to visit their monastery on the respective solemnities. Clearly, both sides were insistent that they were the injured party because the dispute had escalated to an appellate court. Mediation was sought from the bishops of Ferrara and Modena. Once concluded, Cardinal Giovanni issued his judgement. In return for the canons visiting Santo Stefano in procession on Petronius' and Stephen's feast days, the monks would pay 30 loaves of quality bread, two barrels of good wine, pepper and other spices, pork, beef and other goods. The canons also had to go the monastery with incense, holy water (*aqua benedicta*), and other things required for a procession (*aliis que consueverunt in processionibus*), which included the ringing of church bells.<sup>10</sup> However, one, or perhaps both parties, were unhappy with the cardinal's judgement and sought to appeal it to a higher authority, namely the pope. Innocent, however, refused to overturn Giovanni and merely confirmed the ruling of earlier court.

The two letters are the first solid evidence that Petronius' feast day was being celebrated with regularity at Bologna, and by more than just the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. It is a possibility that the Bolognese legal community became aware of the dispute and the judgements issued by Cardinal Giovanni and Innocent as they kept abreast of important developments in case law. If they were, it would have brought a greater familiarity of

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<sup>9</sup> Both are printed in Rasponi, 'Note marginali', pp. 244-6. Innocent's letter is also published in *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 3, doc. 142, pp. 162-3. Here, however, it is incorrectly dated to 1204.

<sup>10</sup> Rasponi, 'Note marginali', p. 245. Giovanni's letter refers simply to water, but Innocent's states holy water, p. 246.

Petronius' cult to them. If they did not, the ringing of church bells and the procession from the cathedral to the monastery may have proved more illuminating to the jurists and the wider Bolognesi. But more on this later. Most significantly, the letters reveal that Bologna's bishop, who at the time was Gerardo IV Ariosti (1198- resigned 1213), did not go to Santo Stefano on Petronius' and Stephen's feast days.<sup>11</sup> The first of the two anticipated that Gerardo might not be part of the procession (*si episcopus non aderit*) and the canons would go to the monastery without their bishop (*dent eiusdem canonicis quamquam veniunt sine episcopo*).<sup>12</sup> Innocent's letter repeats the ruling, confirming the possibility that Bologna's bishops might recuse themselves from joining the feast day parades.<sup>13</sup>

From these two letters, a number of conclusions emerge. One is that Petronius' feast day was being celebrated at Bologna from at least 1205 by a wider segment of the population than the brothers of Santo Stefano. Whether 1205 had been the first year others joined in the festivities or not is unclear. The argument over the number of goods exchanged for attendance would seem to have begun in that year, though. Seeing that St Francis had only started his life's vocation in the summer of 1205, Petronius' feast day was still celebrated on 4 October at this stage.<sup>14</sup> The mediation and letters sent in the following months suggests they were in response to arguments that had broken out at Petronius' solemnity that October and were settled in time for Stephen's feast day on 26 December, another potential flashpoint. Two, the very fact that the tension between the monks and canons could not be resolved internally and necessitated recourse to outside help indicates the levels of animosity between the two. The attempt at appealing Cardinal Giovanni's judgement proves that what was going on was not laying off a dispute to a neutral third party in order to avoid ill-feeling, but a real bone of contention and source of grievance. Three, the Bolognesi continued to push for independence from the ecclesiastical province of Ravenna. Bologna was a suffragan of the Archbishop of Ravenna so the dispute should have been escalated to his court. The present occupant of that office, Alberto Oselletti, was himself Bolognese.<sup>15</sup> It may be that going directly to Rome was an attempt to avoid a real or perceived conflict of interest. Even so, Alberto really should have been involved in the matter; being excluded was a direct affront to his metropolitan

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<sup>11</sup> On Bishop Gerardo see Hessel, *Storia di Bologna*, p. 195, 208; Paolini, 'La chiesa', p. 703.

<sup>12</sup> Rasponi, 'Note marginali', p. 244, 245.

<sup>13</sup> Rasponi, 'Note marginali', p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> Thompson, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 3-17.

<sup>15</sup> Gian Maria Varanini, 'Alberto di Oseletto Uccelletti', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 97 (2020).

Accessed online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-di-oseletto-uccelletti\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-di-oseletto-uccelletti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/) on 14/05/2021.

authority. Four, the bishop of Bologna did not wish to support Petronius' cult or Santo Stefano. His non-attendance at both Petronius' and Stephen's feast days was something that was specifically inserted into Cardinal Giovanni's settlement of the dispute. It would appear the bishop felt strongly about this, and he received confirmation of his wishes from the highest authority in the land, the Vicar of Christ himself.<sup>16</sup> Why Bishop Gerardo, who was later forced to resign his office by Innocent III in 1213, went to such lengths is unclear. It may have been that he, being opposed to the Commune's support for Otto of Brunswick's claim to the German throne, was unwilling to show public support to Santo Stefano and its pro-communal saint, Petronius.<sup>17</sup> Another possibility is that his refusal was a further expression of the long-standing competition between Bologna's two most prominent religious institutions. Just a few years after the conclusion of the dispute in 1209, the cathedral's new and very large campanile was completed.<sup>18</sup> In a cityscape dominated by towers, it restated in grand fashion the *duomo*'s important position as the centre of Christian worship at Bologna.<sup>19</sup>

The same reluctance to support Petronius characterises the Bolognese episcopate's stance towards the cult for the remainder of the thirteenth century. No evidence survives to suggest that the bishops did anything to patronise or at a minimum to passively engage with the Petronian cult. This is true even for the final decades of the century, the time when the first iteration of the *popolo* backed Commune started to position Petronius at the fore of Bologna's civic cult. The apprehension on the part of the city's bishops may have been motivated by the long-running dispute they had with the city government regarding jurisdictional authority in Bologna's *contado*. Bishop Enrico della Fratta (1213-40) excommunicated communal authorities and placed them under interdict three times.<sup>20</sup> He solicited the support of Frederick II, who in 1220 issued a diploma to the Bolognese church guaranteeing the bishopric's possessions and legal rights, and then Pope Gregory IX, who in 1232 threatened to close the *Studium* and move it elsewhere unless agreement was reached between bishop and Commune.<sup>21</sup> In the midst of this "clash of legitimacies", the Theodosian Privilege, the forgery which claimed among other things that Bologna's territory had been conferred upon it by Theodosius II, was authored, it was incorporated into the *Registro Nuovo* shortly after

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<sup>16</sup> Innocent III was the first pope to label himself the Vicar of Christ. Jane Sayers, *Innocent III: Leader of Europe, 1198-1216* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Paolini, 'La chiesa', p. 703.

<sup>18</sup> *Cronaca A*, vol. 2, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Bologna may have had up to 100 towers in the medieval period. Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale*, pp. 155-6.

<sup>20</sup> Paolini, 'La chiesa', p. 698.

<sup>21</sup> Hessel, *Storia della città di Bologna*, pp. 208-9.



and then the *Vita di San Petronio* appeared.<sup>22</sup> Petronius was the vehicle through which the Commune claimed its *contado* and its prerogative of government in the territory. As the bishops continued to oppose the Commune's advances into lands where they previously had held jurisdiction, the episcopate's support for Petronius' cult was going to be muted at best.

At the turn of the fourteenth century, however, Bologna's bishops began to positively engage with Petronius' cult. Largely resigned to the Commune's jurisdictional encroachment and holding episcopal office in a city where the government had recognised Petronius as one of its most important saints, the bishops did not have much room for manoeuvre. It starts with the 1301 *provvigione* to which we referred in the previous chapter. There communal authorities stipulated that the bishop or his viceregent should go to Santo Stefano on Petronius' feast day.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, one hundred and sixty years after Bishop Enrico's *inventio* of Petronius' relics we have confirmation that his episcopal successors finally joined in with the celebrations and started to show some support for the cult of their ancient colleague. But with one proviso: the fact that it was communal authorities that compelled the bishop to participate in the feast day celebrations, and the caveat which permitted the bishop's representative to go in his place, could indicate some lasting reservations about the Petronian cult.

Nevertheless, this note of caution is no longer necessary by 1310. In that year, the Bolognese Church held a constitutional synod and its resolutions are the oldest that survive for the diocese.<sup>24</sup> Of the many things decided at the synod, article 25 concerned 'The veneration of the Blessed Petronius and the processional celebration of his feast'. It established that 'every city and diocese' of the Bolognese church should celebrate the feast day of the 'glorious confessor, the Blessed Petronius, our father and patron, bishop of this city' in the month of October. Further 'every cleric and person' should go in procession to Santo Stefano on the day in question. To ensure that nothing detracted from Petronius' feast day celebrations, no one was permitted to preach or hold services at any other church. This, it was hoped, would

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase is that of Andrea Gamberini, *The Clash of Legitimacies: the State-Building Process in Late Medieval Lombardy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For the Theodosian Privilege, see the discussion in chapter 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 1. bk. 13, p. 429.

<sup>24</sup> The constitutions are edited in Leandro Novelli, 'Costituzioni della Chiesa Bolognese emanate sel Sinodo diocesano del 1310 al tempo del vescovo Uberto', *Studia Gratiana* 8 (1962), pp. 450-552 (pp. 481-550). Orselli, *L'immaginario*, p. 199 n. 22 following Novelli (p. 459 and 464), believes these constitutions preserve older norms and customs that no longer survive or were only codified at this late stage. This may be true, except in so far as concerns the clerical celebration of Petronius' feast day. Given the 1301 *provvigione*, the evidence suggests the clergy were following the example of communal authorities in celebrating the solemnity and not vice versa.

guarantee that the people would visit the bodily remains of Petronius the ‘saintly patron’. Any cleric that failed to comply with these regulations faced a fine of 10 Bolognese *soldi* for each infraction.<sup>25</sup>

So it took until the first decade of the Trecento for Bolognese bishops to support and legislate for Petronius’ cult. The church synod recognised the ancient bishop as the city’s patron and pushed the celebration of his cult into the hinterland’s parishes. On Petronius’ feast day, services at churches other than Santo Stefano were cancelled and all the Bolognesi were encouraged to go to the monastery to venerate his relics. Still, one gets the impression that Bologna’s church authorities were following the lead of the civic authorities. The 1301 *provvigione* set out exactly how the Bolognesi should celebrate Petronius’ feast day, including directing the actions of the city’s clergy and insisting on the participation of the bishop or his representative. We should also recall that the *provvigione* called Petronius’ feast day Bologna’s Easter, and that in 1307 the mass Petronian miracle had occurred at Santo Stefano. The cult was gaining momentum independently of the bishop and the synod’s attention towards Petronius appears reactive rather than proactive. While the bishops and cathedral canons were not innovators, they now, for at least one day a year, were welcome supporters of the Petronian cult.

The relationship between the bishops of Bologna and the Petronian cult was disrupted once again in 1389 when the “Second Commune” commenced construction of the Basilica of San Petronio. Augustine Thompson has observed that in communal Italy the cathedral was the respective city’s ‘parish church: the house (*duomo*) of the city’, and he maintains that ‘no communal government ever doubted this’.<sup>26</sup> However, the Bolognese example would suggest otherwise. Very quickly after building work started, the Petronian temple was the largest and most important of the city’s churches. We will recall that it stood on the main square, surrounded by communal buildings, and was the ceremonial destination to which all high-status individuals arriving at Bologna paid visit or the end point of Bolognese processions. It quite literally dominated the landscape, was the heart of the city and because of its construction Bologna and the ancient bishop were inseparably bound. In contrast, the cathedral had been displaced, and it had been done so by a building dedicated to Petronius.

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<sup>25</sup> Novelli, ‘Costituzioni della Chiesa Bologna’, rb. 25, p. 504.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *Cities of God*, p. 18.

The building of the Basilica of San Petronio was a significant blow for the bishop and his *duomo*. Of course, he and the cathedral canons could do nothing to halt its construction, and the bishop did take part in the basilica's groundbreaking ceremony. Yet, the bishops of Bologna tried as much as possible to sidestep the new church and kept separate the communal basilica from their episcopal office. For instance, Bologna's senior and lesser clerics mostly opted to be buried at the cathedral rather than the Basilica of San Petronio.<sup>27</sup> Another good example of this distancing comes from the ceremonial journey newly elected bishops made into Bologna. It appears that the tradition was invented by Bishop Bartolomeo Raimondi, who took up office in 1392, that is just after the Petronian basilica became functional. After being elected by the Bolognese populace and then consecrated by Pope Boniface IX at the semi-rural convent of San Francesco dell'ordine di S. Chiara, Bartolomeo entered the city through Porta Santo Stefano and went to the Santo Stefano monastic complex.<sup>28</sup> A similar route was followed by Bishop Giovanni di Michele in 1412, who went from the San Francesco convent through Porta Santo Stefano and then onto Santo Stefano, where he specifically visited its altar.<sup>29</sup> As did Bishop Niccolò Albergati, who in 1417 went through the same gate, stopped off at Santo Stefano and finished his journey at the cathedral.<sup>30</sup>

The adoption of this new ceremonial itinerary for incoming Bolognese bishops seems to have been influenced by Petronius' cult. In a negative sense, the city's bishops avoided the Basilica of San Petronio, fostering the impression that it had very little to do with their episcopal office. Given that the church was dedicated to Petronius and he had been a former occupant of the see, the exclusion of it from the route signalled their displeasure. But on the other hand, in a more positive fashion, the act of going to Santo Stefano was itself Petronian in nature. Petronius had, so the hagiographical legends told, built the monastic complex, and built it in imitation of the holiest place in the Christian cosmos. The stop at Santo Stefano was therefore probably linked to Petronius and its relationship with the ancient bishop.<sup>31</sup> Each of the newly elected bishops went to the monastery, which also suffered in consequence of the new basilica, to pay their respects to the former occupant. Doing so, I would suggest, gave the impression of an uninterrupted connection between past and present holders of the see;

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<sup>27</sup> Cantelmi, *Bologna fra trecento e Quattrocento*, pp. 213-20.

<sup>28</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 254-5.

<sup>29</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, p. 248.

<sup>30</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 289-90.

<sup>31</sup> Cantelmi, *Bologna fra Trecento e Quattrocento*, p. 210.

present incumbents also probably went to the monastery hoping their visit would have a symbolic function, demonstrating their eagerness to replicate the successes of Petronius' episcopate. Even if the inspiration of going to Santo Stefano was not to see Petronius but rather to share in its association with the Holy City, perhaps evoking Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Petronian spirit of the act still holds true. He was the monastery's chief architect; since the preaching and then writing of the *Sermo de inventione* and the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, without Petronius there could be no Bolognese Jerusalem. So whether intentional or not, the Petronian cult continued to shape the Bolognese episcopate in the fifteenth century.

Bologna's bishops and the cathedral canons had, therefore, a complicated and somewhat uneven relationship with Petronius' cult. To start with, the canons were perhaps the first Bolognese sub-stratum to join in the Petronian feast day celebrations beyond the brothers of Santo Stefano. We, however, only know that they were there because of their dispute with the monks; in short, the canons expected to be paid for their participation, something which the brothers accepted but felt that the canons' demands were unduly excessive. For the canons, then, their yearly procession to Santo Stefano was perhaps as much about material gain and expressing hierarchy and authority over the monastery as it was spiritual devotion. After that, no evidence survives which enables us to isolate the canons in relation to the Petronian cult. The Bolognese bishops, in contrast, were latecomers to the cult. Bologna's episcopacy never had Petronius' relics interred in the city's cathedral in 1184 or thereafter, arguably the natural resting place for at least some of his remains. This refusal to house them inside the *duomo* set the tone for their stance towards the ancient bishop's cult for well over a century, if not longer. The bishops did not visit Santo Stefano on Petronius' feast day and sought dispensation from Innocent III to confirm that fact. They started to join in when they were compelled to do so by the communal authorities at the start of the fourteenth century. Only then did the Bolognese church start to legislate for the Petronian cult and require all churches within the diocese to celebrate Petronius' feast day, following the lead of the Commune. The warming of relations between the bishopric and Petronius' cult was, however, interrupted by the building of the Basilica of San Petronio by the "Second Commune". It quickly eclipsed Bologna's cathedral to become the city's preeminent church. Concomitantly, the demotion of the cathedral was a demotion for its bishop. In consequence, the bishops distanced themselves from the new civic temple, but engaged with the Petronian cult in other less problematic ways. Chief among which was the return to Santo Stefano on the prelates'

ceremonial journey into Bologna after consecration, something which was inescapably Petronian.

## ii. The *Studium*

It would not be possible to write on late medieval Bologna and not dedicate part of the study to the city's *Studium*. Along with the Commune and the Church, the *Studium* was the third part of the Bolognese triumvirate. The city was famous for its *Studium* and it attracted students from across the Latin West. The influx of students and scholars was one of the reasons why Bologna was such a large and economically diverse city, requiring a strong tertiary sector for the provision of goods and services for this mostly peripatetic community.<sup>32</sup> Yet on top of its social and political position in the Bolognese urban fabric, the *Studium* and its scholars played an important role in the development of the Petronian cult. This impact on Petronius' cult was, however, not straightforward. As we seek to unpack this, we will see that at the same time that representatives of the *Studium* were not ardent supporters of the Petronian cult in the strictly religious sense, they were happy to utilise the figure of Petronius and his legendary deeds where it could be used to their advantage.

As some of the wealthiest and most high-profile residents of Bologna, the doctors of the *Studium* received much attention when they died. The Bolognese chronicle accounts can read like broadsheet obituaries for the distinguished citizenry, noting their year of death and place of burial. Accordingly, they can serve as excellent indicators through which the popularity of Petronius' cult among those scholars can be gauged. Electing where to be interred was a decision of the utmost importance. Not only were they entrusting their body to the respective church, but also their immortal souls. The canons or monks of their place of burial, and that particular institution's titular saint, were responsible for looking after and praying for the deceased individual for eternity. It was an incredibly meaningful act to nominate a certain church or monastery to stand as your guardian forever, and the decision to do so showed the trust and devotion the deceased had in that religious building and its patron saint.

From when the deaths and burials first start being recorded, members of the *Studium* preferred to be buried at churches other than Santo Stefano, that is Petronius' church. One of

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<sup>32</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, 'La presenza dello Studio nell'economia di Bologna medievale', in Ovidio Capitani (ed.), *L'Università a Bologna. Personaggi, momenti et luoghi dale origini al XVI secolo* (Bologna: Silvana editoriale, 1987), pp. 85-111; Fabio Giusberti and Francesca Roversi Monaco, 'Economy and Demography', in *CMRB*, pp. 154-84 (p. 156.)

the Four Doctors who helped Barbarossa conceptualise his imperial prerogatives at Roncaglia, Bulgarus, died in 1166 and was buried at the Church of San Procolo.<sup>33</sup> Another of his colleagues, Martinus, was likewise buried at Proculus' church.<sup>34</sup> In 1178, the 'most famous doctor William Durantis' died and was buried in the cathedral.<sup>35</sup> The trend continued into the thirteenth century. Accursius, his son, Franciscus Accursius, and Odofredus were buried in large tombs next to the Basilica of San Francesco. Rolandino Passaggeri, who as a named individual probably did more than any other Bolognese official in advancing Petronius' cult, was buried outside the Basilica of San Domenico.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 18 – Tomb of Rolandino Passaggeri in front of the Basilica of San Domenico. Photo by author.

I have only been able to find one example of a representative of the *Studium* selecting Santo Stefano as his final resting place. In 1335, Lord Jacobus de Belvixio the 'most famous doctor' died and was buried 'at Santo Stefano before the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, where his coffin is'. Because of his renown, his funeral was attended by almost all the clergy

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<sup>33</sup> *Cronaca Villola*, vol. 2, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Fanti, *San Procolo*, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> Matteo Griffoni, *Memoriale*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> These tombs are extant and can be seen by visitors to Bologna.

of the city and the *podestà* and *capitano del popolo*.<sup>37</sup> Arrangements for his funeral had however been made previously. In his will, executed four years earlier on 15 March 1331, Jacobus requested he be laid to rest in the monastery.<sup>38</sup> In that document, he set aside 100 Bolognese pounds, plus or minus the necessary amount, to cover the cost of his burial at Santo Stefano, where his son Francischus was already interred.<sup>39</sup> He made a further bequest to the monastery, in the sum of 150 Bolognese pounds. Expressly, the monies were for the ‘restoration of the Sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ and for construction of an altar above it in the Bolognese Church of Santo Stefano’.<sup>40</sup> The amount of money Jacobus donated was substantial. And while there is no direct reference to Petronius in the testament, his presence in the document is implied. By the 1330s, there was no denying that the ancient bishop had founded the monastery and built the Jerusalem simulacrum. In 1331, Petronius’ relics were still located inside the recreation of Christ’s tomb in the Church of Santo Sepolcro. Choosing to be buried in Santo Stefano was thus choosing to be buried next to Petronius and the tradition of the Holy City intrinsically indebted to him. Moreover, one might argue that in helping to restore the *aedicula*, Jacobus was perhaps consciously acting as a second Petronius.

What is particularly interesting is the geography of this donation. As is typical of Bolognese last wills and testaments, Jacobus’ records the parish where he resided. In his case, he lived in the parish of San Procolo, located in the quarter of Porta Procola.<sup>41</sup> He was not, therefore, bequeathing money to and wishing to be buried in his local church or even a monastery within the area of the city in which he lived. He could, for instance, have chosen the Church of San Procolo or the Basilica of San Domenico, two popular cemeteries for burials among the scholastic community. Rather, Jacobus went beyond the boundaries of his area of the city to opt for Santo Stefano, situated in the quarter of Porta Ravennate. This tells us Jacobus had a strongly developed sense of devotion towards the monastery and its principal saint, Petronius.

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Et dictus dominus Jacobus sepultus est ad Sanctum Stephanum ante sepulcrum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ubi est archa sua’. Matteo Griffoni, *Memoriale*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 1, doc. 203, pp. 214-221.

<sup>39</sup> *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 1, doc. 203, p. 214. Another of his sons, Jacobus, was also buried at Santo Stefano in 1331. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 21, p. 98.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Item reliquid pro reparatione sepulchri domini nostri Ihesu Christi et pro altare constituendo super eo in ecclesia sancti Stephani de Bononia centum quiquaginta libras bon.’ *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 1, doc. 203, p. 217.

<sup>41</sup> *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 1, doc. 203, p. 214.

Other than the one richly documented example of Jacobus de Belvixio, Bologna's most esteemed scholars favoured to be laid to rest at religious institutions other than Santo Stefano. In particular, four churches stood out: the cathedral, the Church of San Procolo, the Basilica of San Francesco and the Basilica of San Domenico. Given that Dominic had specifically travelled to Bologna because of its *Studium* and many of the students and scholars lived in the Porta Procola, the popularity of the Proculian and Dominican churches is self-evident. The fact the assemblies of jurists were held in the Basilica of San Domenico and those of the arts masters were held in the Church of San Procolo only confirms this point.<sup>42</sup> The Basilica of San Francesco, due to the fame and widespread devotion to its titular, and the cathedral, as Bologna's most important church until the 1390s, were also going to be similarly attractive. Santo Stefano, on the other hand, did not boast a proud burial tradition, whether that be for members of the *Studium* or indeed across the Bolognese population more widely. It is difficult to determine whether the lack of burials was a consequence of the abbots and monks failing to cultivate a reputation for this practice or whether the Bolognesi did not think Petronius was the most suitable saint in this regard. Nevertheless, in so far as it relates to the *Studium*, its absence shows that Bologna's scholars, with one notable exception, did not trust in Petronius to care for their immortal souls.

A further indication that for at least the jurists of the *Studium* Petronius did not rank among their preeminent saints comes from the list of days when classes could not be held. The university calendar was highly prescriptive, with set pages of a given text being lectured on on specific days. To cancel a class so that a saint's feast day could be observed was a mark of respect and devotion towards that celestial figure. So the fact that as late as 1317, some sixteen years after the Commune had designated the ancient bishop's solemnity a public holiday, the *Studium's* jurists did not suspend holding lectures on Petronius' feast day is a sign that the legal scholars did not have that degree of respect for the ancient bishop that would have merited such cancellation.<sup>43</sup> This would appear to follow the practise of university scholar's electing to be buried at ecclesiastical institutions other than Santo Stefano.

The picture presented so far would suggest that the *Studium* and its scholars were indifferent to the Petronian cult. That would, however, be a mischaracterisation. Although the University

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<sup>42</sup> For the university jurists living in Porta Procola, see Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, p. 16. For the assemblies, see Fasoli, *Per la storia*, p. 186.

<sup>43</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, p. 225.



doctors did not choose Santo Stefano as a final resting place or cancel classes on Petronius' feast day, they made use of the Petronian cult and did so with great utility. For in the hagiographical legend of Petronius, the jurists found their justification for existence. Under Roman law as codified by Emperor Justinian in the 530s, only three cities were permitted to have centres of higher learning: Rome and Constantinople, both *regiae urbes*, and Beirut, a *pulcherrima civitas*.<sup>44</sup> As Bologna was at the centre of the revival of Roman law in the Latin West in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries and the *Studium* developed an expertise in its study, the scholars would have been uncomfortably aware of the fact that under the jurisprudence they studied Bologna had no right to house a university. Concerns might have been assuaged with Barbarossa's *Authentica Habita* but the legitimacy of Bologna's *Studium* was once again the subject of debate in 1226. In that year, and after having founded the University of Naples in 1224, Emperor Frederick II imposed a ban on Bologna's *Studium* and ordered it to be closed forthwith.<sup>45</sup> Doing so in the context of his dispute with the Bolognese Commune and its allies in the Second Lombard League, Frederick intended to undermine one of his most powerful opponents and punish it for opposing him. Pope Honorius III quickly stepped in to confirm the *Studium* would remain open.

Nevertheless, in addition to Honorius III's intervention, the Bolognesi looked to Petronius for assistance. As we will recall from chapter three, at some point between 1225 and 1234 the so-called Theodosian Privilege was authored. It dealt with Bolognese territorial claims, but it also concerned Bologna's university. The document, which alleged itself to be an authentic privilege, claimed that in 423 Emperor Theodosius II bestowed upon Bologna the right for the city to have a *Studium*, as well as establishing the lengths of degrees, practicalities regarding the awarding of doctorates and the safe conduct of students travelling to and in the city.<sup>46</sup> Although Petronius is not specifically mentioned, any connection between Theodosius II and Bologna was reliant on the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, where Theodosius' activity at and imperial largesse towards Bologna was first recognised.

Given that the Privilege concerns not only the university but also the extent of Bologna's hinterland, it would seem that its author was from the communal rather than the *Studium* environment. Its production represented one stage in a long and drawn-out process of the communal authorities encroaching upon the independence of the *Studium*. And there was

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<sup>44</sup> Fasoli, *Per la storia*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> On the University of Naples' antecedents and foundation, see Paul Oldfield, 'The Kingdom of Sicily and the Early University Movement', *Viator* 40 (2009), pp. 135-50.

<sup>46</sup> Fasoli, 'La composizione del falso teodosiano', pp. 604-5.

some backlash to the Commune's claims over the university. Most notably, this opposition took the form of the *Notitia*, a document of unknown provenance but which is thought to be the work of Boncompagno da Signa.<sup>47</sup> Whoever was its author, by having Petronius personally carry the Privilege to Bologna the link between the hagiographical tradition and the Theodosian Privilege was clearly elucidated.

Despite the attempt to ridicule any association between Petronius and the *Studium's* foundation by the *Notitia's* creator, other jurists at Bologna's university found the Petronian legend a fecund source for establishing their institution's legitimacy. Azzo, one of the first great glossators who taught his classes in the Piazza di Santo Stefano, argued that a privilege had been granted to Bologna by Emperor Theodosius II and he cited his source: 'so may be read in the legend of St Petronius' (*ut referri dicunt in legenda D. Petronii*). Accursius, Azzo's pupil and the man responsible for the most famous of glosses to Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis*, opined the same, acknowledging the '*legenda beati Ambrosii*' as his authority. A third renowned jurist, Odofredus, similarly wrote that Theodosius had re-founded Bologna and made it a royal city, pointing towards the '*epistulae sancti Petronii*' and the '*legenda Sancti Ambrosii and sancti Petronii*' as support for his position.<sup>48</sup> If anybody should doubt this, Odofredus encouraged his readers to visit the library of the abbey of Saint Victor in Paris where they could find letters from Petronius confirming the fact.<sup>49</sup>

These three glossators, then, found legitimacy for Bologna's university in the Petronian hagiographical legend. Tellingly, it was Azzo, the jurist who worked in the Piazza di Santo Stefano next to Petronius' monastic complex, who was the first to recognise the potential of the *Vita Sancti Petronii*. Although the Latin *Vita* does not explicitly state that the ancient bishop had founded the university, that he did so could quite easily be read into the hagiography. Azzo did just this when he identified the Latin *Vita* as his source for maintaining the ancient origins of the Bolognese *Studium*. Then came his student, Accursius, who said it was the Ambrosian legend in which the *Studium's* beginnings could be read.

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<sup>47</sup> As Gianlucca Raccagni has noted, no direct evidence exists to confirm Boncompagno was the *Notitia's* author. Claims of his authorship are probably connected to Boncompagno's predilection for practical jokes. Raccagni, 'The teaching of rhetoric', p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> F. C. von Savigny, *Storia del diritto romano nel Medioevo*, trans. and ed. by E. Bollati, vol. 1 (Turin: Gianini e Fiore, 1854), p. 552.

<sup>49</sup> 'quando vos itis ad sanctum Victorem, queratis ibi hystorias ubi invenietis epistolas sancti Petronii in quibus continetur quod imperator Theodosius iussu beati Ambrosii eam fundavit'. Odofredus, *ad. Const. Omnem*, no. 19, in Willem J. Zwalve, 'Text and Commentary: The Legal Middle Ages and the Roman Law Tradition: Justinian's Const. Omnem and its Medieval Commentators', in Karl Enekel and Henk Nellen (eds.), *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), pp. 349-86 (pp. 375-6).

Nonetheless, to credit Ambrose was still based on the Petronian Latin hagiography, where the Milanese bishop features prominently. Perhaps Accursius, working in another part of the city, was less inclined to attribute agency to Petronius, or maybe he thought Ambrose would be more intelligible for the non-Bolognese audience of his glosses. In either case, the Latin *Vita* retains its central role as the conduit through which the university's foundation is explicated. Odofredus, the jurist who referenced the Latin hagiography and the Petronian letters, including advice where the latter could be found, went one step further. He moved beyond the *Vita Sancti Petronii* to incorporate the Privilege or *Notitia* in his gloss in support of the *Studium*.<sup>50</sup> All these men drew upon a hagiographical legend in works of jurisprudence, combining the celestial and the civil in order to account for the presence of an institution of higher learning at Bologna.

The idea that Petronius had founded Bologna's *Studium* was gaining momentum. Around the same time that jurists were using Petronius as an argument for their right of existence, the Theodosian Privilege and the *Notitia* were inserted into the Commune's *Registro Nuovo*. Concomitant to this, with the writing of the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio* the tradition of university creator was unequivocally incorporated into the Petronian hagiographical legend. In the vernacular *Vita*, Petronius petitions his brother-in-law Theodosius II:

'I would like, my lord, that Bologna be endowed with a Studio ... I pray, my lord, that you grant the privilege of your imperial seal so I may put in honour my city of Bologna'.<sup>51</sup>

In reply, Theodosius, needing no persuasion, gladly agrees to his relative's request. By this stage, that is the writing of the Old Italian *Vita*, the legend that Petronius had been instrumental in the *Studium*'s foundation had been definitively established. The original legend provided inspiration for scholars to deduce his agency; once the suggestion had been made independent of the Latin *Vita*, it was reincorporated into the Petronian hagiographical corpus in the vernacular version.

The Petronian cult and the belief that the ancient bishop had secured permission from Theodosius II to build a university began and germinated in specific historical circumstances.

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<sup>50</sup> I say the Latin and not the Old Italian *Vita* for two reasons: one is that the vernacular *Vita* was likely written in the 1270s, a decade or so after Odofredus' death. Secondly, Odofredus refers to the legend of Ambrose and Petronius. In the Latin *Vita*, these are the only two bishops who play an active role in the narrative. Whereas in the vernacular *Vita*, a third prelate, Ursicinus of Ravenna, joins Petronius and Ambrose. Since Odofredus does not mention this third bishop, he is probably referencing the Latin hagiography.

<sup>51</sup> 'Piaçave, signore mio, che ella sia dotata del studio ... Priegove, signore mio, che vui me façai privileçio cum vostro sigello imperiale, ch'io possa metere in honore la citade mia de Bologna'. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 28.

The original impetus for writing the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, in which the ancient bishop and Bologna were connected to Emperor Theodosius II, had been the hostilities between Barbarossa and the Bolognese Commune. Similarly, the *Privilege*'s creation, which explicitly recognised Petronius as the *Studium*'s founder, had its origins in the conflict between the Bolognese Commune and Emperor Frederick II. However, long after these events had passed into distant memory, and with the tradition of Petronius as the *Studium*'s founding father of long-standing, the Commune and scholars of the university continued to acknowledge the primary role Petronius was said to have had in the *Studium*'s creation. When the Commune was in negotiations with Pope Boniface IX in 1392, the pope confirmed the 'privilege conceded by our predecessor, Emperor of the Romans, blessed Theodosius' (*privilegium concessum per felicis recordationis Theodosium Romanorum imperatorem*).<sup>52</sup> The Petronian legend also had internal uses. A pertinent example comes from when Bartolomeo di Giovanni de' Calderini was awarded a doctorate in civil law in 1458. After the opening prayer, the first sentence of the document that records his graduation ceremony notes that Bartolomeo received his degree from the very famous *Studium* which Emperor Theodosius conceded to Bologna through the intercession of Petronius.<sup>53</sup> Another comes from a roll of university lecturers from 1473-4. At the top of the document sits Petronius, with Bologna in his hands. In a separate document of this kind, the illuminator has Theodosius granting the privilege to the ancient bishop.<sup>54</sup> In short, after centuries of repetition, Petronius had become intrinsic to the Bolognese *Studium*.

With the presence of an institution of higher learning at Bologna, education played a pivotal part in the Petronian cult as it matured. If Petronius and Bologna's learning had been praised in the *Vita Sancti Petronii*, the Old Italian *Vita* certainly went one better. According to the vernacular author, Petronius was a 'very great doctor in all the subjects', wrote in both Greek and Latin and was a 'philosopher in the seven liberal arts and other disciplines'.<sup>55</sup> The author continues. Preparing to depart from Constantinople, the people of that city lament that the Bolognesi had:

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<sup>52</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 1, p. 130.

<sup>53</sup> *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 1, doc. 296, p. 336.

<sup>54</sup> Massimo Medica, 'Il santo patrono in miniatura. Gli esordi di una tradizione iconografica', in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna: il volto di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), pp. 141-47 (p. 146).

<sup>55</sup> 'grandissimo doctore in tute le sciencie' and 'grande doctore e philosopho in tute le sete liberali arte et oltra quello in omne altra scientia'. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 4 and 5.

‘taken from us the wisdom of Greece, you took from us our philosopher and decretalist. O highest doctor and lecturer of law, knowledgeable in all the seven arts, perfect master’.<sup>56</sup>

Emperor Theodosius II was also disappointed to lose his debating partner: at the time of Petronius’ departure, he was alleged to have said ‘with whom else do I have to reason the great facts of Christianity’.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, in the Old Italian *Vita* the praise was not limited to Petronius. Elsewhere the Bolognesi were referred to as the ‘most intelligent men’ to be found in the world and Bologna, repeatedly described by Petronius as ‘my city’, was called a ‘good and wise city’.<sup>58</sup>

From the writing of the original Latin *Vita* in c.1180, Petronius had always been considered an unusually learned saint. The monastic author of the earliest hagiography had altered the language used by Gennadius-Jerome to describe the extent of his erudition. Nonetheless, the later and almost definitely lay author of the vernacular redaction pushed this further. Similarly bilingual, Petronius had now specifically become, in addition to an expert in the seven liberal arts that formed the core of university curricula, a decretalist; that is an expert on canon law, an area of study that the Bolognese *Studium* specialised in. Not only that, Petronius was a lecturer or teacher of the law. He, in other words, was just like one of the many doctors that inhabited Bologna and played such a prominent part of public life. He was, therefore, a saint in who the large university population of Bologna could identify with and his *vitae* reflected the density of learning in the city. Other academic saints, such as the four Latin Fathers Gregory the Great, Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome, and the thirteenth-century addition of Thomas Aquinas, were likewise the subject of successful cults at Bologna.<sup>59</sup> The Bolognesi prided themselves on their learning and expected the same of their saints.

In conclusion, the Bolognese *Studium* and its relationship with the Petronian cult existed on two levels. On that of personal devotion, it seems that the scholars were not especially attached to Petronius. With one well-documented exception, they did not elect to be buried next to Petronius in Santo Stefano and neither did the jurists cancel classes on the ancient bishop’s feast day. Instead, other saints in the Bolognese cult like Proculus, Dominic, Francis

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<sup>56</sup> ‘anche ché tu ç’ài tolto lo sèno de Gretia, tu ç’ài tolto lo philosopho e decretalista nostro. O sono doctore e lectore de leçe, o sapientia in tute le sete arte, perfectò maistro’. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 32

<sup>57</sup> ‘Con chi dô io raxonare li gram facti de la crestentade?’. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> ‘per natura li èno li piu savii homini che siano al mundo’ and ‘bona e savia citade’. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 27 and 33.

<sup>59</sup> The four Latin fathers’ and Aquinas’ feast day were some of the solemnities the Commune required be observed in law. *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 53, p. 305.

and Peter occupied a more prominent role in the private lives of the university population.<sup>60</sup> Yet beyond the plane of individual devotion, the university had much to thank Petronius for. The ancient bishop, as the two hagiographies recorded but especially so in the later vernacular redaction, was a scholar: a specialist in the study of canon law and a great teacher of the subject. Among many other things, Petronius was a saint in the university's image. Moreover, members of the Bolognese *Studium* found in the Petronian hagiographical legend their justification for existence. Absent any mention in Justinian's list of cities permitted an institution of higher learning, the Bolognesi fabricated a privilege issued by Theodosius II to lawfully permit their activities at Bologna. Only made possible by the legend contained in the *Vita Sancti Petronii* and extrapolated from the Petronian/Theodosian narrative contained therein, the Privilege and the commentaries of the glossators were innovations that were then subsumed into the hagiographical corpus with the writing of the Old Italian *Vita di San Petronio*. The consequence of the two traditions was that Petronius and Bologna's university were now inseparably interlinked. In their approach to the cult of Petronius, then, the scholars of the University preferred the practical benefits the cult brought rather than any great religious significance it may have had.

### iii. The *signori*

Other than for one brief interlude, Bologna had managed to avoid the advances of *signori* in the thirteenth century. But in the Trecento, as will be remembered from the summary of the city's history in chapter three, following the 'crypto-signoria' of Romeo Pepoli, Bologna fell prey to a succession of different lords from 1327 to 1376 (with a three-year interruption from 1334-7 when Bologna was an independent Commune), and again from 1401 onwards, either directly or through a small number of the city's aristocracy working in concert with papal administrators. Each of these powerful individuals came into contact with and were compelled to respond to the Bolognese civic cults, chief among which was that of Petronius. How they did so is the subject of this section. It will show that prior to the rise of the "Second Commune" and its Petronian policy, the *signori* ignored Petronius' cult, doing so for overtly political reasons. However, from the start of the fifteenth century, because of the work of the "Second Commune", it became impossible to overlook the ancient bishop at Bologna.

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<sup>60</sup> For reasons of space, I have not been able to consider the impact of the *Studium*'s international status on the Petronian cult. Students and scholars from across the Latin West went to study and teach at Bologna. They brought with them with their own patron saints, as the English students did with Thomas Becket. This would only have increased the competition between respective cults.

Subsequent governors of the city of whatever ilk had to pay homage to the Petronian cult, though that is not to say they all embraced it with the same zeal as the communal governments had once done.

In addressing the *signori* and their relationships with the Petronian cult, the sources confront us with a particular problem, namely their absence. In chapter 3, the various editions of the Bolognese statutes were invaluable in enabling us to identify instances of support for Petronius' cult, and to chart its evolution over periods of autonomous communal government. The same legal code evidence does not survive with comparable levels of consistency for some of the Bolognese *signori*. Bertrand du Pouget issued statutes in 1332 but with the return of the 1334-7 Commune, they were destroyed and superseded by the issuing of new statutes in 1335. Taddeo Pepoli, who had been one of the five draughtsmen for the 1335 edition and who was sensitive in theory to the traditions of communal government, did not issue his own codes. Instead, he maintained the fiction of the Commune and worked through other legislative channels. New statutes were issued by Giovanni Visconti in 1352, and by Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio in 1357, though they differed little from his predecessor's codes. The papal legates beginning with Cardinal Albornož did not issue any; after them, the next statutes not originating from the time of the "Second Commune" date to 1454 but only fragments of them are published.<sup>61</sup> Naturally this restricts the scope of our analysis to an extent; yet it does not prevent it. There is still much surviving material that we can draw upon to build a representative picture of the *signori* and the Petronian cult.

Saints' days were important markers in the calendar of medieval Italian cities, often rich in meaning and loaded with political symbolism. The unfortunate symmetry between the fire at the cathedral of St Peter on the feast day of St Peter in Chains in 1141 acted as a catalyst for the Petronian cult. The Bolognesi famously did not allow the name of St Anthony to be spoken in the city because of the heavy defeat they suffered at the hands of Faenza on his feast – 13 June – in 1275.<sup>62</sup> After achieving a military victory in 1376, the statutes of that year ordered that a *palio* be run on the feast day of St Sylvester, on whose solemnity the

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<sup>61</sup> I had hoped to consult the 1454 statutes but my trip to Bologna was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On the Bolognese statutes, see Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, 'Gli statuti di Bologna e la normativa statutaria dell'Emilia Romagna tra XII e XVI secolo', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 126 (2014), pp. 481-510. On the 1454 statutes, see also the discussion in Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, pp. 90-104.

<sup>62</sup> Salimbene, *Cronica*, vol. 2, p. 1370.

victory had been won.<sup>63</sup> From 1393, it was on Petronius' feast day that the Bolognesi had their subjugated communities render acts of submission.

Equally, the *signori* exploited the liturgical year to demonstrate their hegemony over Bologna and implicitly refute claims of independence associated with Petronius. When Bertoldo Orsini, nominated the Count of Romagna by his uncle Pope Nicholas III, entered Bologna in 1279 to accept the office of *podestà* at the request of the pope, he arrived in the city on the feast day of SS Peter and Paul, that is 29 June.<sup>64</sup> As did Giangaleazzo Visconti, who captured Bologna on 29 June 1402 and had Giovanni I Bentivoglio executed the same day.<sup>65</sup> Giangaleazzo also left in draft form a privilege which stipulated that every year on the feast of Peter and Paul the ducal lieutenant should give a cloth (*pallio*) worth 25 *bolognini* to the cathedral to mark his conquest of the city (*nel qual giorno Noi babbiamo hauuto il dominio di Bologna*). Even with his untimely death, his wife, Caterina, and his son and successor, Giovanni Maria Visconti, ensured it passed into law.<sup>66</sup> Other instances of ceremonial ties of dependence connected to St Peter's feast day abound. In the agreement reached with Pope Boniface IX in 1392, in exchange for the city's freedom of government the Bolognesi had to pay the pope 5000 florins each year on 'the feast of Peter and Paul'.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Pope Martin V's 1419 concession to Bologna required the city to pay 10,000 florins, 5000 of which were earmarked for meeting the salaries of the *Studium*'s professors, to the papacy on 'the feast of Peter and Paul'.<sup>68</sup> Any attempt by the Bolognesi to renege on any of the agreed terms negotiated by their representatives with papal officials was regarded as an affront to God and SS Peter and Paul, one that merited political intervention. From Pope Calixtus III's confirmation in 1455 of the agreement reached between Bologna and Pope Nicholas V in 1447 onwards, the same punitive clause threatening invasion appears as standard at the end of each document.<sup>69</sup>

Peter's feast day and the invocation of his name were often employed by *signori* in their relations with Bologna, whether that be timing ceremonial entrances into the city that

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<sup>63</sup> *Statuto di Bologna 1376*, bk. 3, rb. 66, p. 316.

<sup>64</sup> 'Et intravit civitatem Bononie in die festi beati apostoli Petri, de mense iunii'. Petri Cantinelli, *Chronicon*, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> 'in lo quale di si è la festa de miser Sam piedro e de Miser sam polo apostoli, la quale è la festa del duomo'. Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, p. 116.

<sup>66</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 28, pp. 537-9, especially 538.

<sup>67</sup> 'or within one month of that date'. Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 1, p. 132.

<sup>68</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 11, p. 174.

<sup>69</sup> 'Siquis autem hoc attemptare presumpserit, indignationem potentis Dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursum'. Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 18, p. 229, doc. 20, p. 235, doc. 21, p. 239.



signalled a transfer of power from the citizens to a lord or overlord, or setting it as a deadline for payment of taxes due to an external power. For the popes and their representatives, this was connected to their status as the successors of Peter. Yet it also had a specific salience to the local Bolognese context. Peter was the titular of the cathedral but also the original patron of the Commune. To focus important matters of foreign policy on Peter's solemnity was to metaphorically turn back time. That is, it was to ignore or overlook the bold claims made by the Bolognesi through Petronius in so far as they concerned Bolognese liberty and autonomy, a city that Petronius had guaranteed would be free from any external influence. Peter's cult, by contrast, was benign and unthreatening. He had no connection to the *popolo*, nor was he associated with opposition to papal control; Bolognese Peter marked exactly the kind of subservient relationship Bologna's papal overlords envisaged. This of course also worked for non-papal *signori* like the Visconti, though it is probable that they were less attuned to the saintly symbolism of Peter versus Petronius.

Coinage was another medium through which *signori* could express support for or antipathy towards a respective saint's cult. The Bolognesi had a tradition of minting coins that went back to the last decade of the twelfth century. But it was only in the fourteenth century that the city's practice of striking coins started to reflect present constitutional arrangements through the prism of sanctity. A decree issued by Taddeo Pepoli in February 1338 created a new coin, known colloquially as the '*pepolesca*' or the '*doppio grosso*'. It was a multiple of the traditional *bolognini grosso*, struck in gold and worth two *denari grossi*. On it was Pepoli's name, and the coin's reverse bore an image of St Peter with the papal keys and a book. This was the first Bolognese money to carry the effigy of a saint, and the choice of celestial figure was telling. Taddeo, whilst keen to foster links with the papacy and receive official confirmation of his governorship over the city, was rejecting the legacy of the *popolo* backed commune represented by Petronius. Peter, in contrast, preserved the tradition of the early Commune, a façade that suggested a continuity in government, but which in praxis also said that the days of genuine representative government were at an end.<sup>70</sup>

With the change of regime, new coins were struck. Giovanni Visconti ordered that all silver coins issued between 1336-50 were to be taken out of circulation and new ones minted; it was a monetary *damnatio memoriae*. The Visconti coinage carried his name and coat of arms,

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<sup>70</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, p. 226; Antonioli, *Conservator pacis*, pp. 159-60; Michele Chimienti, *Monete della Zecca di Bologna: catalogo generale con la pubblicazione delle monete del Museo civico archaeologico di Bologna* (Bologna: Format.bo, 2009), p. 30.

with Bologna's on the reverse. However, no saint was impressed upon the Visconti money. It is possible that Giovanni, having not yet reached accommodation with the papacy over his purchase of Bologna, did not wish to promote a saint so unambiguously Roman and instead preferred self-aggrandisement.<sup>71</sup> Another new coin was struck in 1368, when the city was under the direction of Cardinal Angelic de Grimoard. A *bolognino*, it commemorated the return of Pope Urban V, Angelic's brother, to Rome. This coin too lacked a saint. It had a stylised bust of Urban on the front, in the typical Avignonese fashion. With limited space, Angelic in all likelihood wanted to celebrate his brother's achievements, leaving no room for Peter.<sup>72</sup>

The next stage in the development of Bolognese minting came after Cardinal Guillaume Noellet was expelled from the city in 1376. For the first time, in 1380, an image of Petronius was on Bolognese coins. And after the fall of the "Second Commune", Petronius continued to be represented on the city's currency. The communal officials had done their work too well for the ancient bishop to be cast aside even when they themselves were. First Petronius appeared only on silver or other low value coins, but gradually he featured on golden ones, too. From the early 1400s, a standing Petronius, holding in one hand Bologna and in the other his crosier, was on the reverse of the *quattrini in mistura*. In 1436, a silver *grossone*, struck under the aegis of Pope Eugenius IV, had Petronius seated with the city and his staff of office in hand.<sup>73</sup> Then, in the late 1460s, the golden *doppio bolognino* appeared; taking pride of place on the reverse of the coin was Petronius. This golden *doppio bolognino* was the highest value coin the Bolognesi minted, double the value of Peter's golden *bolognino*. Other silver coins bearing Petronius' image appeared alongside the golden *doppio bolognino* in the second half of the fifteenth century, and by the sixteenth century most Bolognese coins were Petronian. For example, in 1580, after the Bolognese Cardinal Ugo Boncampagni became Pope Gregory XIII in 1572, a silver coin had the legend 'Gregory XIII', the papal keys and tiara, and the coat of arms of the Boncampagni family on one side, and on the reverse Petronius in the clouds, with Bologna, his mitre and crosier, and a Bolognese shield.<sup>74</sup>

The striking of Petronian medals soon followed. When Annibale II Bentivoglio briefly recaptured Bologna from the papacy in 1511, a commemorative bronze medal with Petronius

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<sup>71</sup> Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>72</sup> Chimienti, *Monete della Zecca*, p. 30.

<sup>73</sup> Gianluigi Russo, 'Sull'origine della raffigurazione di San Petronio seduto nella monetazione di Bologna', *Rivista italiana di numismatica e scienze affini* 94 (1992), pp. 233-40 (p. 234).

<sup>74</sup> Bellocchi, 'San Petronio', p. 220 and figure 107, p. 298.

on it was made. Another was struck in 1631 to memorialise the construction of Forte Urbano di Castlefranco the previous year. It showed a plan of the fort with Petronius hovering above, the military and spiritual protectors of Bologna working in unison.<sup>75</sup>

However, the discussion of the preceding two paragraphs should not give the impression that there was no resistance to placing Petronius on Bolognese coins in the fifteenth century. Whenever the Visconti captured Bologna, which they did in 1402 and 1438, they placed their own coat of arms on the coinage to the detriment of Petronius.<sup>76</sup> As did Baldassare Cossa who, having entered Bologna in September 1403 and restored papal control over the city, issued new coinage in 1404. The struck silver and golden *bolognini* and the *quattrini* had Peter with his papal keys on the reverse.<sup>77</sup> Popes could also personally intervene and express their design preferences. Pope Paul II wrote to the Bolognesi in 1466 and specified that the city's golden coinage should carry the insignia and name of the ruling pontiff more prominently than it hitherto had done. On one side of the coin, there should be an image of St Peter accompanied by the insignia of the current cardinal legate and on the other Bologna's coat of arms with the motto '*Bononia docet*' and not the traditional but more incendiary '*libertas*'.<sup>78</sup> Paul's intentions were clear: firstly, underline Rome's suzerain status over Bologna by emphasising the incumbent pope and legate, supported by Peter, on the city's golden coins. Secondly, dismiss any lingering ideas of or aspirations for liberty, connected as it was to Petronius and his hagiographic legend. Paul's intervention, however, was in vain; as noted above, it was during his pontificate that the Bolognesi first started minting the Petronian golden *doppio bolognino*, the city's most prestigious coin.

The *signori* before the "Second Commune" never considered Petronius as a candidate for their coins. Only one saint was put on the currency: Peter. He was the traditional patron of the city, he had no association with the *popolo* backed Commune and his saintly presence placated popes, the theoretical overlords of Bologna. This changed after the "Second Commune" placed Petronius on their coins. There existed a precedent which Bolognese governments now could, if they so wished, continue. Not all did, and there was certainly some backlash to Petronian coins. In the fifteenth century, popes preferred Peter on the city's golden coins. Nonetheless, Eugenius IV sanctioned a silver coin with Petronius' image in 1436. Then, contrary to Paul II's instruction, the Bolognesi elevated Petronius onto their

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<sup>75</sup> Bellocchi, 'San Petronio', pp. 220-1.

<sup>76</sup> Chimienti, *Monete della Zecca*, p. 31.

<sup>77</sup> Chimienti, *Monete della Zecca*, p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, doc. 21, p. 238.

golden currency. As the fifteenth became the sixteenth century, Bolognese coins tended to be Petronian. Medals too were struck with Petronius' likeness. By this juncture, the ancient bishop was inextricably identified as being a symbol of Bologna, one which any governor had to recognise and incorporate into their demonstrative acts of governance. With its combination of papal and Petronian images, Gregory XIII's 1580 coin stood testament to this reality.

Another way *signori* could express their patronage or displeasure towards Petronius' cult was with the support they provided to Bologna's religious institutions or cults, and, for the later lords, this included their policies towards the Basilica of San Petronio. Taddeo Pepoli, for example, preferred to support the cult of St Dominic. Taddeo was one of the authors of the 1335 statutes that elucidated in detail Dominic's feast day celebrations and they remained in force during his rule. He, continuing a tradition dating back to at least his ancestor Zoene Pepoli, elected to be buried at the Basilica of San Domenico.<sup>79</sup> His sons, Giacomo and Giovanni, held their knighthood ceremony at the same basilica.<sup>80</sup> In 1340, Taddeo sponsored building works at San Domenico. He paid for the construction of altars dedicated to St Peter the Martyr, St Augustine, St Mary Magdalene, St Catherine of Alexandria, St Thomas Aquinas and the Archangel Michael. Further, Ghirardacci records that Taddeo had his portrait depicted on a glass window in the chapel of Michael, with Taddeo, wearing his signorial garb, kneeling before the Archangel.<sup>81</sup> So among the main saints honoured at the Basilica of San Domenico, there was no altar or artistic depiction of Bologna's ancient bishop: the Pepoli did not use their power or vast wealth to favour Petronius' cult.

Giovanni Visconti also gave generously to Bologna's churches and legislated on its civic cult. His statutes of 1352 and those of his successor, Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio, of 1357 retained the pithy 1335 rubric outlining that Petronius' feast day should be celebrated in the customary manner. They also maintained the traditional *elemosina* to Santo Stefano on Petronius' feast day.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, Giovanni Visconti patronised other cults in place of the Petronian one. In the first year of his rule, he spent 747 Bolognese pounds on religious feasts. Nothing was given to Santo Stefano for Petronius' feast day.<sup>83</sup> On 14 March 1351, Giovanni

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<sup>79</sup> Antonioli, *Conservator pacis*, pp. 185-6

<sup>80</sup> *Cronica Bolognetti*, vol. 2, pp. 535-6.

<sup>81</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 22, p. 158.

<sup>82</sup> *Statuti del Comune di Bologna 1352, 1357; 1376, 1389*, vol. 1, bk. 3, rb. 53/61, pp. 270-2; Johnson, *Monastic Women*, p. 140 and 150.

<sup>83</sup> Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*, pp. 99-100.

consented to a petition submitted by Bologna's Franciscans which required the *podestà* to go to their basilica on the Virgin Mary's various feast days and on St Francis'. Here we remind ourselves that Petronius and Francis shared their solemnities and at this time Petronius' was obliged to make way for Francis'. Giovanni was, therefore, promoting the mendicant in place of Petronius. Moreover, Giovanni decreed that another saint's day not historically celebrated by the Bolognesi should be marked each year. On 13 October 1351, he ordered that St Columbanus' solemnity, falling on 24 October, would be the occasion for much pageantry. All the city's workshops were to be closed. Similar to the other saints' day processions, all Bologna's knights, doctors of law and jurists, and the heads of the guilds were to follow the *podestà* as he made his way to Columbanus' church. The reason for the celebration, so the decree states, was in recognition of the fact that Giovanni had captured Bologna on that solemnity.<sup>84</sup> Lastly, the Milanese archbishop used St Peter to sanction government decrees. The *anziani* elected 4 priors each month to supervise the work of the magistracy and the judiciary, thus one per quarter. The priors each conserved separately one quarter of the Commune's seal, required for stamping communal acts and authorising payments. On the seal was the figure of St Peter seated in his episcopal chair, and it carried this inscription: '*Petrus ubique Pater; legum Bononia mater*'. (St Peter is everywhere the father of the law, Bologna is its mother).<sup>85</sup>

Less is known about the five papal governors that ruled Bologna from 1360 to 1376, especially as concerns Bologna's civic cult. Francesco Pirani has noted that in every city that Cardinal Albornoz brought back under the control of the Papal States, he put symbols of the papal rule, namely St Peter's keys, on gates, public buildings and fortresses. He may have done this at Bologna.<sup>86</sup> But beyond that, sufficient research has not been conducted to answer this question in any greater depth. We can simply note, for instance, that Cardinal Angelic's 1371 *Descriptio civitatis Bononie eiusque comitatus* has nothing to say whatsoever about Bologna's churches or its saints' cults.<sup>87</sup>

After the collapse of the "Second Commune", the *signori* were once again in charge at Bologna, though this time it was not so easy to overlook Petronius' cult. Principally, this was because the Basilica of San Petronio on the Piazza Maggiore was fast becoming the heart of

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<sup>84</sup> Albano Sorbelli, *La Signoria di Giovanni Visconti a Bologna e le sue relazioni con la Toscana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1091), doc. 79, pp. 449-50 in Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*, p. 99.

<sup>85</sup> Lorenzoni, *Conquistare e governare*, p. 158.

<sup>86</sup> Pirani, *Con il senno*, p. 161.

<sup>87</sup> *La "descriptio civitatis"*.

Bolognese social, civic and political life. Its construction had not been without incident. For example, Caterina Visconti, widow of Giangaleazzo, turned the Basilica of San Petronio into a stable by billeting troops inside the church in 1403 and prevented the mass from being heard.<sup>88</sup> Further, during his period of direct governorship, Baldassare Cossa requisitioned building supplies for the Petronian temple and sold them, causing a halt to its construction for several decades and establishing a precedent for its still incomplete façade.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the rulers of Bologna all recognised the basilica's primary importance. When Giangaleazzo Visconti took the city in 1402, he donated a red cloth to the basilica.<sup>90</sup> In July 1407, Baldassare Cossa won a victory over Forlì. Upon his return to the city, a three-day celebration was held. As part of the victory parades, the Bolognesi went to Santo Stefano, the Basilica of San Domenico and the Church of SS. Nabore e Felice. It nevertheless culminated with a solemn procession and mass in the Basilica of San Petronio.<sup>91</sup> When (Anti-)Pope Alexander V visited Bologna in 1410, he went not to the cathedral but to the Petronian basilica, where a mass was celebrated.<sup>92</sup> So too did the Genovese Cardinal Ludovico Fieschi, who, when visiting Bologna in 1412 at the invitation of (Anti-)Pope John XXIII, went in procession with *inter alia* the cathedral chapter to the main altar of the basilica.<sup>93</sup> Baldassare Cossa, as John XXIII when he returned to Bologna 1413, did the same, and in 1420 so did Cardinal Legate Alfonso of Castile, sent by Pope Martin V.<sup>94</sup> Secular figures did likewise: Emperor Frederick III in 1452 and Francis I of France in 1515.<sup>95</sup> The *signori* also came to embrace the Petronian feast day and basilica in their own discourses of government: for instance, Giovanni II Bentivoglio instituted in 1470 a tourney – a typically aristocratic pursuit - to be held in the Piazza Maggiore on Petronius' feast day, with the temple as a backdrop. The contemporary poet, Francesco Cieco, observed the tournament was 'to honour the feast of our St Petronius (*Per la honorar la festa di tal sancto/ Petronio nostro*).<sup>96</sup> Thus, when distinguished or high-status individuals came to Bologna, on official or private business, they

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<sup>88</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 28, p. 540.

<sup>89</sup> Fanti and degli Esposti, *La Basilica di San Petronio*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>90</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 28, p. 538.

<sup>91</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 193-5.

<sup>92</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 206-7. Though when he died shortly afterwards, he was buried in the Basilica of San Francesco. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, vol. 2, bk. 28, p. 581.

<sup>93</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 246-8.

<sup>94</sup> Pietro di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 254-5

<sup>95</sup> Fanti and Esposti, *La Basilica di San Petronio*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Francesco Cieco, *Descrizione del gran torneamento di M. Giovanni Bentivoglio di Bologna* (Bologna: s.a), 5. Quoted in Georgia Clarke, 'Giovanni II Bentivoglio and the Uses of Chivalry. Towards the Creation of a "Republican Court" in Fifteenth-Century Bologna', in Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner (eds.), *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 162-86 (p. 162 and p. 178 n. 1); Duranti, 'Libertas, Oligarchy, Papacy', p. 278.

went to the Basilica of San Petronio. Physically and metaphorically at the heart of Bologna, the civic temple attracted all to its doors and was the stage for public festivals and tournaments. Petronius, the basilica's titular, now welcomed them as the city's representative. The Bolognesi had finally become Petroniani.

The actions of the *signori* towards the Petronian cult can be neatly demarcated into two distinct phases. Prior to 1376 any lord of Bologna who governed the city, of whatever extraction, ignored Petronius' cult. They instead opted to support other saints' cults, whether that be the traditional patron, St Peter, the mendicants, universally popular across the cities of central and northern Italy, or other saints whose feast days corresponded with significant events of their rule, like St Columbanus. That they did so was a decision political rather than religious in nature. Petronius represented *popolo* backed communal government and autonomous self-rule. To overlook him was to overlook the things his saintly persona and hagiographical legend represented. This, the first signorial phase, ended with the rise of the "Second Commune".

With the Commune's fall begins the second signorial phase. Now, after a quarter of a century of promotion, Petronius' cult was centre stage at Bologna, having reached a level of saturation that made it impossible to neglect or disregard. The aristocratic Bolognese citizens and the *signori* of the fifteenth century and later had to respond to it. In that sense, then, they mirrored the Bolognese episcopate's relationship with the Petronian cult. With no other realistic option available to them, they followed the current. Petronius was put on coins with increasing frequency, new spectacles were added to his feast day celebrations, and slowly the basilica was built. Popes, always overlords of Bologna, liked to signal that the Bolognesi were under their control through St Peter, but within the city's walls Petronius reigned supreme. The Basilica of San Petronio, the epitome of the Petronian cult, encapsulated this in its architecture. With its unfinished façade, it stands as a symbol of Bologna's complicated history in the Later Middle Ages, a history which the Petronian cult embodies and expresses through its greatest monument.

#### iv. The guilds

For much of the period under discussion, the Bolognese guilds were the lifeblood of Bologna. At any one time, their membership numbered up to ten thousand and during phases of communal rule they played an integral role in the city's political life. But, notwithstanding

their involvement in Bolognese politics at various junctures, the guilds continued to exist when the *popolo* as a political body was dismissed from the arena of government. Individual guilds, while constituent parts of the *popolo*, were their own separate entities which engaged with the Bolognese civic cult according to their particular preferences. This, of course, included the Petronian cult. Therefore, where we can distinguish respective guilds from that collective and analyse them during periods of political exile as well as the years of *popolo* ascendancy, a fuller and much richer picture of Petronius' cult at Bologna can be discerned. This, then, shall be our goal. The section will open with a short contextualisation of the position of the guilds in medieval Bologna. Once complete, it will look at the invocations to Petronius or requirements to celebrate his feast day in the statutes of various Bolognese guilds. Next, the much-mentioned Society of the Cross will be examined. Fourthly, we will explore the naming practices of Bolognese citizens, and finally, it will close with a discussion of class and the presence of guildsmen in the *Vita di San Petronio*.

The Bolognese guilds first came into existence in the final decades of the twelfth century. The Bolognese bankers had formed a corporation before 1191 and were managing, with the support of the merchants' guild, the city's mint after receipt of Henry VI's privilege.<sup>97</sup> By the middle of the thirteenth century, there were 21 legally recognised guilds at Bologna with a membership recorded in the *matriculae* of 10,650 men.<sup>98</sup> Formed in the beginning as mutual assistance societies, the guilds regulated their respective trade or profession, including setting criteria for membership, conditions of work, and standards of production. Yet, the guilds were so much more than economic entities concerned solely with working practices. As Sabine von Heusinger has argued for medieval Strasburg, guilds were instruments of social welfare, they exercised influence in legal jurisdiction and advocacy, fulfilled important political functions and they and their members were key participants in the city's popular piety. In all, the guilds were extremely dynamic social groupings.<sup>99</sup>

In this regard, Bologna was no different. The city's guilds, as socio-religious bodies, paid great attention to the liturgical calendar and the cult of saints. The statutes of the merchants' guild (of an uncertain year) forbid its members from performing any work on a long list of

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<sup>97</sup> Giansante, *L'usuraio onorato*, pp. 51-6.

<sup>98</sup> Some trades such as porters, bakers and scribes were forbidden from forming an association. Antonio Ivan Pini, 'Le corporazioni bolognesi nel Medioevo', in Massimo Medica (ed.), *Haec sunt statuta: le corporazioni medievali nelle miniature bolognesi* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1999), pp. 31-7; Tamba, 'Civic Institutions', p. 214.

<sup>99</sup> Sabine von Heusinger, 'Les corporations de Strasbourg au Moyen Age', *Revue d'Alsace* 133 (2007), pp. 473-83.



saints' feast days.<sup>100</sup> The swordmakers' guild had an even longer list of prohibited days, and blacksmiths too were instructed not to work on Good Friday.<sup>101</sup> Guilds also required their members to celebrate particular solemnities with special reverence. The cheesemakers' and charcuterie makers' c. 1242 statutes required its officials to carry two pounds of wax on the Nativity of John the Baptist to his altar at Santo Stefano, where the corporation met annually.<sup>102</sup> The shoemakers' guild gave a wax candle to the city's cathedral on Peter's feast day.<sup>103</sup> The moneylenders' statutes stipulated that each year its consuls and six other members were to go to the Church of Santa Maria in the Porta Ravennana on her feast day in August (*in festivitate beate Marie de augusto*) with candles and wax.<sup>104</sup> Feast days could be occasions for important societal business to take place. The blacksmiths' guild required its officials to bake 'two beautiful breads' (*duas pulcras focacias*) and supply wax and candles on Candlemas, when the corporation's new officials for the year were elected.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, the guilds used Bologna's churches to conduct their business and conserve their records. The 1288 statutes of the guild of rough cloth sellers stated that at least two officials were to station themselves in the cathedral every Friday so that they could be available should any guild member need to speak to them.<sup>106</sup> The 1244 statutes of the tailors' guild set out how their regulations should be preserved. Two copies of the statutes were produced. One would remain in the possession of the consuls, being readily consultable. The second, which was identical to the first, should be stored in the cathedral's sacristy, or wherever else a majority of the association's members determined to be appropriate.<sup>107</sup> The guilds, then, introduced restrictions on economic activity on specific solemnities, they structured their corporations' year around saints' feast days, at considerable expense they made donations to churches or altars, and they entrusted their rules of association to churches and their celestial patrons. Religion and the cult of saints was central to the corporations.

As well as being embedded into Bologna's religious fabric, the guilds were among the most political of their kind for any medieval city. They entered Bolognese government in 1228 and stayed as key protagonists until 1327. They briefly returned in 1334-7, and once again during the period of the "Second Commune" in 1376-1401, otherwise known as the *signoria del*

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<sup>100</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, pp. 127-8.

<sup>101</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 189, 343-4.

<sup>102</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 176.

<sup>103</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, pp. 261-2.

<sup>104</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 106.

<sup>105</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 185.

<sup>106</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, pp. 362-3.

<sup>107</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 281.

*popolo e delle arti*. They sent their leaders to sit on the Council of *Anziani*, and participated in the Council of the *Popolo*, whose acts (*riformazione*) by the 1270s applied to all Bolognesi. In fact, all great matters of state had to gain approval from the *popolo* council, such as identifying suitable ambassadors, discussing and determining diplomatic relations, implementing extraordinary taxation for political or military purposes and general financial measures for town planning. The Council of the *Popolo* was also called on to provide guidance on the correct interpretation of the Bolognese statutes.<sup>108</sup> In his capacity as the draughtsman of the moneylenders' 1245 statutes, the young notary Rolandino Passaggeri had earlier set out in the prologue his vision of *popolo* government and the steps to be taken for it to be realised.<sup>109</sup> In ideology and in practice, the Bolognese guilds were not just mechanisms through which government could be influenced. Instead, for large sections of the medieval period the guilds as a collective were the government itself.

Having now considered the status and role of Bologna's cults in the urban landscape, we can now focus on the city's corporations' relationship with the Petronian cult. Like for any other sub-stratum of the Bolognesi, the celebration of Petronius' feast day was the most straightforward way a guild could display devotion towards the ancient bishop. In the previous chapter we saw how in the fourteenth century the Commune required leaders of the guilds to participate in the October solemnity. However, individual guilds produced their own statutes regulating their craft, and included in these were opening prayers featuring Petronius or rubrics stipulating the marking of his feast day.<sup>110</sup> The best documented example of this comes from the notaries' guild. Their 1304 statutes have Petronius in the invocation at the beginning.<sup>111</sup> The same statutes also required incoming notaries to invoke Petronius in their oaths, and all members of the guild had to celebrate the mass for the honour of God, the Virgin Mary, the evangelists, 'writers and notaries of God' (*scribarum et notariorum Dei*), Peter and Paul, and Petronius and Ambrose when an altar had been constructed in the notaries' palazzo.<sup>112</sup> In the 1334-6 statutes, Ambrose and Petronius appear again with the

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<sup>108</sup> Massimo Giansante, 'Il Comune di popolo a Bologna (1228-1327)', in Massimo Giansante and Diana Tura (eds.), *Bologna 1116-1327: due secoli di autonomia comunale* (Bologna: Il Chiostro dei Celestini, Amici dell'Archivio di Stato di Bologna, 2020), pp. 99-174 (pp. 149-57).

<sup>109</sup> Giansante, 'Il Comune di popolo', p. 110.

<sup>110</sup> As per my comments in the introduction, this section has been greatly affected by my inability to take up a visiting studentship at the University of Bologna due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Here I have had to rely on published editions of the guild statutes that I was able to access because of government restrictions and reduced library services. For a list of the surviving guild statutes, see Filippo Galletti, 'Le società delle arti a Bologna e i loro statuti: un bilancio storiografico', *I quaderni del m.ae.s* 15 (2017), pp. 69-93 (pp. 76-80).

<sup>111</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 5. Also partially edited in Giorgio Tamba, *La società dei notai di Bologna: Saggio storico e inventario* (Rome: Archivio di Stato di Bologna, 1988), p. 168.

<sup>112</sup> *Statuti della società*, vol. 2, p. 26 and 28.

usual list of saints, all as defenders and protectors of the people, party of the Church, Geremei, Guelfs, the Commune and district of Bologna and the honourable society of notaries.<sup>113</sup> The later 1382 statutes include the same, though this time the notaries only designate Petronius and Ambrose as the ‘protectors and defenders of the Commune and people of the city of Bologna’.<sup>114</sup> Worthy of note, all three editions of the notaries’ statutes referenced here were published during periods of communal rule.

Another such good example comes from the carpenters’ and the masons’ guilds. The carpenters’ 1298 and 1320 statutes feature Petronius in the opening prayer, as do the later 1335/6 and 1377-87 statutes.<sup>115</sup> The 1298 ones also stipulated that the society should observe the ancient bishop’s feast day.<sup>116</sup> In contrast, the oldest surviving statutes from the masons’ guild overlooked Petronius. In the 1258-62, the 1329-35 and the 1335-55 editions, there is no mention of the ancient bishop. Petronius only featured in the masons’ 1376 statutes, written after the coming to power of the “Second Commune”. Here Petronius appears in saintly invocation at the start, and now the masons were required to congregate ‘on the feast of St Petronius, our patron, at the Church of St Stephen’.<sup>117</sup>

In a similar fashion, Massimo Giansante has studied the iconography of Bolognese saintly figures in the books of statutes and matriculae (books of registration denoting an individual’s membership of the guild) in the Due and Trecento.<sup>118</sup> For the later 1200s, most of the manuscripts are not decorated, and the ones that are carry devotional figures who had been popular at Bologna for some time, such as Peter and Paul, and more recently Francis and Dominic. In the fourteenth century, that picture starts to change, albeit slowly. Petronius made episodic appearances in the 1360 statutes of the haberdashers, in the 1360 matricula of the blacksmiths and the 1370 statutes of the lesser goldsmiths (*orefici di poco*). However, after 1376, Petronius’ image is everywhere in the manuscripts. With increasing regularity, two miniaturists, Nicolo di Giacomo and Jacopo di Paolo, used their medium to promulgate the ideology of the “Second Commune”. For instance, the 1380 statutes of the silk guild contain a miniature of Petronius, executed by Jacopo. The drawing has Petronius holding a

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<sup>113</sup> Tamba, *La società dei notai*, p. 169.

<sup>114</sup> ‘sanctissimosque pontifices Ambrosium et Petronium, protectores et defensores comunis et populi civitatis Bononie’. Tamba, *La società di notai*, p. 171.

<sup>115</sup> Elisa Erioli, *Falegnami e muratori a Bologna nel medioevo: statute e matricole (1248-1377)*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Bologna, 2010, p. 371, p. 469.

<sup>116</sup> Erioli, *Falegnami e muratori*, p. 423.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Fextum sancti Petronii patroni nostri ad ecclesiam Sancti Stephani’. Erioli, *Falegnami e muratori*, p. 595 and p. 674.

<sup>118</sup> Giansante, ‘Petronio e gli altri’.

copy of Bologna in his hand, which looks very similar to the newly completed Petronian reliquary. Another example comes from the 1383 statutes of the goldsmiths' guild. The Madonna and Child sit enthroned and are flanked by SS. Petronius and Eligius, combining the city's and their profession's patrons.<sup>119</sup> Petronius is also on the illustrated page preceding the frontispiece of a register of creditors of a Bolognese lending society, likely the work of Nicolo in 1394.<sup>120</sup> He is in the top left corner of the page, in episcopal dress and holding Bologna in his left hand. The front page of the Bolognese cordwainers' guild is the same.<sup>121</sup>

Photo of illuminated miniature of St Petronius. *Libri dei creditori del Monte di pubbliche prestanze*, 1394 removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 19 – Illuminated miniature of St Petronius. *Libri dei creditori del Monte di pubbliche prestanze*, 1394. New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library, Ms. M.1056.

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<sup>119</sup> St Eligius was himself said to have been a goldsmith. The Bolognese goldsmith guild had recognised him as its patron in its statutes from 1281, and its 1299 statutes were illuminated with his figure. Pini, *Oreficeria e potere*, p. 14 and 18. An image of the 1383 statutes is printed in Evelyn Welch, *Art in Renaissance Italy, 1350-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), figure 38, p. 82.

<sup>120</sup> New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library, Ms. M.1056, Register of creditors of a Bolognese lending society. Accessed online at <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/1/76815> on 14/05/2019. This single leaf is probably the fourth of five registers compiled in that year, for the Porta Pera quarter. Three of the *Libri dei creditori del Monte di pubbliche prestanze*, 1394, are in the Archivio di Stato di Bologna: ASB, Comune, Camera del Comune, *Monti o cumuli dei denari del Comune, Codici miniati*, 25, 26, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Ms. McClean 201, Matricola of the Bolognese Guild of the Cordwainers, f.15. Accessed online at <https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/image/media-253444282> on 14/05/2019.

From the statutes of the three guilds we have looked at and taking into consideration the conclusions drawn from the iconographical tradition, it becomes clear that up to 1376 not every guild venerated Petronius with equal intensity. Based on the surviving statutory evidence, the notaries and, to a similar though lesser extent, the carpenters supported the Petronian cult from at least the final decade of the thirteenth century. In contrast, the masons' guild did not until 1376. With the revolution of that year, only then did the masons show outward support to the Petronian cult, which included the requirement to visit Santo Stefano on Petronius' feast day. The illuminated saints in the Bolognese guild manuscripts presents a similar picture. As a collective, the guilds did not tend to illuminate their statutes or matriculae, or if they did they elected to adorn them with already popular saints from the Bolognese civic cult. After the rise of the "Second Commune", however, the guilds, whether they had hitherto been active participants in the Petronian cult or not, wholeheartedly embraced the ancient bishop. Simply put, the guilds and the artists they commissioned were not immune to the actions of the "Second Commune" and its Petronian ideology, a fact of little surprise given their prominent role in creating and sustaining it. In law, in art and in architecture, the Bolognese government in the final decades of the fourteenth century put Petronius in the foreground. Acting in tandem, the guilds did the same, requiring members to visit Santo Stefano, invoking Petronius in their prayers and adorning their registers of membership with his image.

One area where the Bolognese guilds made the greatest impression on the Petronian cult was in the so-called Society of the Cross. Formed in late 1274 or just after, its full name was the Society of Saints Ambrose and Petronius (*Società dei Ss. Ambrogio e Petronio*).<sup>122</sup> It was composed of 2000 men, drawn 500 per quarter of Bologna. Its purpose was to protect by force of arms the more radical iteration of the *popolo* that governed the Bolognese Commune after the great expulsion of the Lambertazzi in 1274. Under the direction of Rolandino Passaggeri, Bologna was not only anti-Ghibelline but also anti-magnate, whether of the Ghibelline or Guelf variety. To qualify for membership, one had to be a member of a recognised Bolognese guild; it existed separately to the guilds but one had to be a guildsman to join the Society, interdependent but institutionally distinct. The brainchild of the notary Rolandino, the Society was led by a '*barisellus*', who in the first instance was a certain Giovanni Somma, a butcher by trade. Whether because of their profession's natural affinity with weapons or because the butchers were one of only two trades that had both a guild and

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<sup>122</sup> For what follows in this paragraph, Pini, 'Manovre di regime', pp. 300-18.

an arms society, the Ambrosian and Petronian militia was always headed by a butcher.<sup>123</sup> In terms of the militia's uniform, each member's shield was painted white with a red cross; hence the shortened name. The symmetry between the Society's decorated shields and the colours of the Bolognese Commune pushed the idea that the Ambrosian and Petronian *popolo* militia and the city of Bologna were one and the same. Further, every company of the saintly militia carried a banner adorned with an image of Petronius and a second saint per quarter.<sup>124</sup>

Debate exists as to what the specific purpose of the Society was and what precedents inspired Rolandino. Some have argued that the Society was simply a private confraternity divorced from Bolognese politics, while others have suggested a link between it and the *Società della Croce* created by the Dominicans during the inquisition.<sup>125</sup> Both approaches are, I would suggest, misguided. It is best to consider the Bolognese Society of the Cross in comparative context. As Antonio Ivan Pini observed, many cities on the Paduan plain named *popolo* militias after their respective patron saints: Ambrose at Milan, Syrus at Pavia, Secundus at Asti, Eusebius at Vercelli, John the Baptist at Torino.<sup>126</sup> Closer to home, the Modenesi, after expelling the Marquis d'Este in 1306, created a company of 1000 soldiers called the *societas Santi Geminiani*.<sup>127</sup> The Ambrosian and Petronian Society of the Cross was, then, one example of many. And like its contemporary equivalents, its purpose was overtly political. It existed to prevent any reactionary attempt at expelling the *popolo* from the arena of government. This is why when Rudolph of Habsburg ceded Bologna to the papacy in 1278 and Bertoldo Orsini acquired the city's office of *podestà*, the Ambrosian and Petronian militia was disbanded. Any who tried to resurrect the Society faced the penalty of excommunication. At the same time, Rolandino was barred from holding any government office.<sup>128</sup> Papal forces may have adopted such a tough stance towards the Society because they appreciated that the Petronian militia was an impediment to the peaceful return of the Lambertazzi. But more pressingly, Pope Nicholas III and Orsini recognised the social implications of the Society. It was a creation of the *popolo* backed Commune, a Bolognese government populated by thousands of guildsmen that was attempting to exclude from power

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<sup>123</sup> On Bologna's butchers' guild, see Mario Fanti, *I macellai bolognesi. Mestiere, politica e vita civile nella storia di una categoria attraverso i secoli* (Bologna: Luigi Parma, 1980). The drapers were the other profession that had both a guild and arms society. Blanshei, *Politics and Justice*, p. 125.

<sup>124</sup> Likely Ambrose, Peter, Dominic and Francis.

<sup>125</sup> Orselli, *L'immaginario*, pp. 215-7 n. 65; Lorenzo Paolini, 'Le origini della Societas Crucis', *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 15 (1979), pp. 173-229.

<sup>126</sup> Pini, 'Manovre di regime', pp. 307-8.

<sup>127</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 217.

<sup>128</sup> The terms are reproduced in Petri Cantinelli's *Chronicon*, pp. 31-8.

the city's magnates. The militia's function was, in other words, to preserve a political settlement that inverted traditional class relations, keeping those who had traditionally ruled Bologna from holding political office. Further, with Petronius at its head, the Society represented Bolognese aspirations for independence from outside interference, something that Orsini's ceremonial arrival into Bologna on the feast day of St Peter openly contradicted.

The founding of the Society of the Cross in 1274/5 might also confirm the writing of the *Vita di San Petronio* in the 1270s. One of the most notable additions to the vernacular hagiography was the inclusion of the Petronian monumental crosses. Although at least one of the crosses pre-dated the writing of the vernacular hagiography, no Bolognese source had ever considered them as a collective before our author. It may have been that the hagiographer was inspired by the new militia. The Petronian and Ambrosian Society of the Cross, organised by quarter, had its members' shields emblazoned with a red and white cross. Whilst the militia was adorned with crosses and carried banners of Petronius, the newly drafted Petronian hagiography has Petronius, Ambrose and Ursicinus constructing large crosses in four areas of the city. Given this apparent congruity, one might tentatively suggest that there was a connection between the Petronian militia and the writing of the *Vita di San Petronio*.

Instituted by a notary and led by a butcher, the *Società dei Ss. Ambrogio e Petronio* was a creation of the Bolognese guilds. Although in its true Petronian form the Society only lasted approximately four years, it marked an important step in the advance of the ancient bishop's cult at Bologna.<sup>129</sup> A society bearing his name was established and banners with Petronius' image were used for the first time. In the years immediately after the exile of the Lambertazzi, Petronius, through the militia, was a key protagonist at Bologna. Central to this was the support given to his cult by members of Bologna's guilds, principally the notaries and the butchers. Such was the momentum behind his promotion by the Bolognese guilds, a new Petronian hagiography was produced around the same time. The effect of their support was not, however, all positive. More than anything else, the Society of the Cross probably marred the Petronian cult from the perspective of the *signori* who governed Bologna in the fourteenth century, being as it was so explicitly associated with *popolo* rule and self-government.

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<sup>129</sup> After the exile of Napoleone Orsini in 1306, the office of '*barisellus*' returned. This time he oversaw seven arms societies rather than a dedicated Petronian militia. Pini '*Manovre di regime*', pp. 306-7.

The naming practices of the Bolognesi might also tell us something about the status of Petronius' cult in the city. Members of Bologna's many guilds constituted a large minority of the city's overall population. Given that at any one time guildsmen numbered in their thousands, and that they had to record their membership in registers, they are an excellent starting point from which to analyse onomastic patterns at Bologna.<sup>130</sup> The naming of a child by its parents is a decision that is neither accidental nor incidental. Deciding which name to give a child is a consideration loaded with social, religious, political and cultural meaning, whether that is consciously recognised by the parents or not.<sup>131</sup> Each community, with some variation, has a common set of names which are deemed worthy of bestowing upon its new members. In the medieval west, saints' names were one such category. In all but rare cases, it is very difficult to determine the exact relationship between giving a child a particular name shared by a saint and its supernatural connection.<sup>132</sup> But it was absolutely common practice across Christendom for individuals to bear the names of universally popular saints. For example, in the Flemish cities of Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent, the most frequent given name to males by some distance was John.<sup>133</sup> By c.1370, John was also the most popular name at Genoa. It was in fact widespread across Europe, probably since he was the disciple that 'Jesus loved' (John 13:23).<sup>134</sup> The Bolognesi were no exception in selecting names from members of the early Church. Scores of Johns (*Giovanni*), Jameses (*Giacomo*), Matthews (*Matteo*), Bartholomews (*Bartolomeo*) and Thomases (*Tommaso*) are attested, and children at Bologna were called Peter (*Pietro*), Francis (*Francesco*) and Dominic (*Domenico*) in their thousands.<sup>135</sup> This might reflect the fact that Peter was titular of the cathedral, and that both Francis and Dominic had visited or lived at Bologna and their mendicant orders had a visible presence in the city. More generally, the Bolognesi seem to have been following the general trend of taking the names of Christ's disciples or other ones in common usage.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Though the following discussion will range beyond the guilds to incorporate the entire Bolognese population.

<sup>131</sup> Patricia Skinner, "'And Her Name Was...?'" Gender and Naming in Medieval Southern Italy', *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999), pp. 23-49.

<sup>132</sup> With perhaps the exception of Florence. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'Les patrons célestes des filles et des garçons au baptistère de Florence (XIVe-XVe siècle)', *Clio* 45 (2017), pp. 61-83.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Stabel, 'Personal and Collective Identity: Naming Practices in a Guild Milieu. Bruges in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century', in Christof Rolker and Gabriela Signori (eds.), *Konkurrierende Zugehörigkeit(en): Praktiken der Namengebung im europäischen Vergleich* (Constance: UVK-Verl.-Ges, 2011), pp. 109-30 (p. 119).

<sup>134</sup> Benjamin Z. Kedar, 'Nom de saints et mentalité populaire à Gênes au XIV siècle', *Le Moyen Age* 73 (1967), pp. 431-46 (p. 437)

<sup>135</sup> A cursory look at the Bolognese source material shows this.

<sup>136</sup> Francis and Domenic may also have been popular because they were contemporary. Both men were born and so named in the late twelfth century. Their names were already among the stock of acceptable ones to give a child even before they became associated with the respective saints.



Occasionally, children were also named after their city's or polity's most important saints. At Ghent, there appears to have been a link between the local St Livinus and the density of people having that name.<sup>137</sup> In a slight variation, from the final few decades of the fifteenth century the Florentines started to systematically give their young, of both genders, the second name *Romolo/a*. St Romulus was the patron saint of Fiesole, but he was co-opted by the Florentines during a period of conflict between civic authorities and Florence's archbishop for naming purposes. In addition to bestowing the name to their own, when cities in Tuscany came under Florence's dominion, such as Fiesole, Pistoia and Siena, children there too were called *Romolo/a* in high frequency.<sup>138</sup>

In most other cities, no such correlation between local sanctity and onomatology appears. It would appear that hardly any Milanese were called Ambrogio, for instance.<sup>139</sup> Bologna also follows this typology: for much of the late medieval period, only a tiny number of Bolognesi were given the name Petronius or a derivative thereof. Lanzoni could only identify two such examples up to 1276.<sup>140</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, using the matriculation lists of the Arts and Arms societies between 1272 and 1314, likewise noted that Bolognesi being called Petronius was a very rare occurrence.<sup>141</sup> Even up until the end of the fourteenth century, the instances are few. There was a *massaro* (treasurer) of the carpenters' guild in the second semester of 1345 called '*Paulus condam magistri Petri Iohannis Petroni*'.<sup>142</sup> A land transaction from 1366 shows another Bolognese named '*Iacobo condam Petronii merzario*'.<sup>143</sup> A last will and testament made on 26 July 1379 had a certain '*fratre petronio Iohannis*' as one of the witnesses, and a member of the notaries' guild in 1432 was called '*Blasii ser Petronii de Schanello*'.<sup>144</sup> Additionally, four other *Petronii* are attested at Bologna at this time: Petronio Bonamici, an Augustinian friar and one of the city's first doctors of theology; Petronio Gorzani and Petronio Santi, members of the Council of 600 in 1387 and 1388; and Petronio Preti, a doctor of law and ambassador to the papacy in 1388. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the name became more common, but it still remained much less frequent than other

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<sup>137</sup> Stabel, 'Personal and Collective', p. 121.

<sup>138</sup> Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'Children's First-Names in Italy During the Late Middle Ages', *The Medieval History Journal* 2 (1999), pp. 37-54; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'San Romolo: un vescovo, un lupo, un nome alle origini dello Stato moderno', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 155 (1997), pp. 3-48.

<sup>139</sup> I thank Jacob Frank Morley for sharing this observation with me.

<sup>140</sup> Lanzoni, *San Petronio*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>141</sup> Pini, *Città, chiesa e culti civici*, p. 227.

<sup>142</sup> Erioli, *Falegnami e muratori*, p. 83.

<sup>143</sup> *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*, vol. 4, doc. 350, p. 239.

<sup>144</sup> Bologna, Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Memoriali*, 1379, sem. 2, vol. 305, f. 68v; Tamba, *La società dei notai*, p. 213.

more popular choices.<sup>145</sup> Without a doubt, more *Petronii* could be identified. Still, the fact that they have to be uncovered through painstaking scrutiny of the archival sources rather than being observed as self-evident phenomenon points to its exceptionalism rather than the norm. The trend of observing more *Petronii* for the latter period follows the general pattern of his cult's growing importance in the city. Yet over this long time span the Bolognesi, whether that be the tens of thousands of guildsmen or the other members of Bolognese society, did not call their children Petronius. The absence of Bolognese *Petronii* is not, however, a sign that the Bolognesi were failing to fully embrace Petronius' cult. Rather, the Bolognesi were part of a wider pattern across Latin Europe whereby urban communities did not generally name their children after their city's patron saint.<sup>146</sup>

In her study on patron saints in the Italian City-States, Diana Webb observed how a change in the vocabulary used by hagiographers was indicative of wider societal changes to which their authors were responding.<sup>147</sup> This can be seen most clearly when a particular saint's *Vita* was rewritten, and the process becomes even starker when the original Latin was rendered into the vernacular.<sup>148</sup> In the two Petronian *Vitae*, we have just an example. Across the two texts, small changes in word choice and slight amendments to the narrative point to their production in different historical settings, specifically in their representation of Bolognese society and social class.

Although the identity of the *Vita di San Petronio*'s author is unknown, we can be certain of his general biography. He was likely a Bolognese male citizen, perhaps educated at the *Studium* and quite possibly a member of the *popolo*. Given his different social and cultural horizons from the equally anonymous monastic author of the Latin *Vita*, it should not surprise that the vernacular hagiographer had a sharper eye for sociological phenomena than his cloistered predecessor. For instance, as Petronius is to depart from Constantinople to the church council in Rome in the Old Italian *Vita*, Theodosius II knights his brother-in-law.<sup>149</sup> No knighthood ceremony is included in the older Latin *Vita*.<sup>150</sup> Petronius' imperial ancestry

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<sup>145</sup> Tiziano Costa, 'Il nome *Petronio* a Bologna', in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna: il volto di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), pp. 135-37.

<sup>146</sup> The same would also appear to be true for St Proculus. His cult was popular at Bologna but Bolognese Proculii are similarly absent from the sources.

<sup>147</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, p. 54.

<sup>148</sup> On seeing rewritten saints' lives as 'products of their own time', see Ingrid Rembold, 'Rewriting the Founder: Werden on the Ruhr and the uses of hagiography', *Journal of Medieval History* 41 (2015), pp. 363-87 (pp. 363-4).

<sup>149</sup> 'possa l'imperadore fe' cavaliero san Petronio'. *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 10

<sup>150</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 99.

would have rendered such an honour unnecessary. Nevertheless, the lay author would be more familiar with ceremonies such as this and with his inclusion of it he quite possibly shares a glimpse of the *popolo*'s aspirations for social advancement.<sup>151</sup>

This keener attention to Bolognese society is also evident in the way the urban populations of Constantinople and Bologna are described in the two hagiographies. The Latin author often refers in a vague sense to a 'crowd of both sexes' (*utriusque sexus turba*) or the 'Bolognese citizens' (*cives bononienses*) in the abstract.<sup>152</sup> In contrast, the vernacular hagiographer speaks of 'all the people, men and women, small and great' (*tuta la gente, homini e femene, picoli e grandi*), observing differentiation among the Bolognesi.<sup>153</sup> Other social categories, such as knights and barons are mentioned, and the hagiographer refers to 'respectful men and the well-to-do *popolo*' (*li çentili homini e povolari da bene*).<sup>154</sup> Further sign of such stratification comes in the form of Petronius' entry into Bologna. After having been elected and upon his arrival, the Bolognesi held a party and the residents celebrated 'according to their means' (*segondo la possibilità soa*).<sup>155</sup> Here is recognition that for individual Bolognesi in the fifth and thirteenth centuries alike, their ability to celebrate Petronius and participate in his cult was dependent on their social class and availability of resources.<sup>156</sup> The two hagiographical accounts of the building of the Bolognese Mount of Olives provides more evidence of the vernacular author's more sociologically astute eye. The Latin hagiography has Petronius raise the hillock on his own.<sup>157</sup> The vernacular *Vita*'s description is different. It has the ancient bishop working in tandem with others. Specifically, Petronius, appreciating that it would be a 'very big job' (*lavoriero cusì grande*), worked with 'masters and labourers' (*maistri e manoali*) to complete the task.<sup>158</sup> So, in the Old Italian version, for Petronius to recreate the topography of the Holy City at Bologna, he needed the help and support of men who would have belonged to one of the city's guilds involved in construction, the very people

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<sup>151</sup> Something discussed by Sarah Rubin Blanshei, 'Habitus: Identity and the Formation of Hereditary Classes in Late Medieval Bologna', in Gian Mario Anselmi, Angela de Benedictis and Nicholas Terpstra (eds.), *Bologna. Cultural Crossroads from the Medieval to the Baroque: Recent Anglo-American Scholarship* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2013), pp. 143-157, especially p. 143.

<sup>152</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, p. 96 and 105.

<sup>153</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 14.

<sup>154</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 19.

<sup>155</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 14.

<sup>156</sup> The statutes of Ferrara recognised that the extent to which different social classes could participate in feast day celebrations varied according to their financial means. Ferraresi who had more than 100 imperial pounds had to give a large candle to the city's *Duomo* on the vigil of the feast of St George. Ferraresi who were less wealthy only to offer a candle of two pounds of wax. *Statuta Ferrariae 1287*, bk. 2, rb. 116, p. 93.

<sup>157</sup> *Vita Sancti Petronii*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>158</sup> *Vita di San Petronio*, p. 39.

who were constituent members of the *popolo*. It was a sentiment that would have resonated strongly at Bologna in the 1270s.

The author of the *Vita di San Petronio* was attuned to the social relations of Bolognese society in a way that the monk from Santo Stefano was not. In his description of Late Antique/contemporary Bologna, the Old Italian hagiographer delineated a more complicated social organism than his monastic counterpart had achieved. He made sure to note the wealthy members of the *popolo*, the very people who were governing Bologna at the time of its production and who had started to promote Petronius' cult. He also included reference to guildsmen helping Petronius to realise his project of bringing Jerusalem to Bologna, emphasising their importance in daily Bolognese life. The fact that the newer hagiography was written in the vernacular is itself evidence of this social change. The Bolognese dialect had only recently emerged as a language of writing, and given that it was the language spoken by most Bolognesi, the *Vita di San Petronio* would have been more accessible to a wider segment of the population than the Latin one had been.<sup>159</sup> The decision to write in the vernacular is also probably indicative of the author's own socio-economic background and the growing levels of literacy in the new Italian vernacular within that class. The *Vita di San Petronio* is therefore not only a valuable guide to the continuing evolution of the Petronian cult; it also shows how Bolognese society was developing and how the changing circumstances of city life were incorporated into the later hagiography.

In their dealings with the Petronian cult, the Bolognese guilds did not act in unison. Certain of them stand out for the support they provided to Petronius. Principally, these were the notaries and the butchers, the two guilds most responsible for the creation and maintenance of the *Società dei Ss. Ambrogio e Petronio*. Another guild, that of the carpenters, also consistently included Petronius in their prayers and marked his solemnity. Yet many did not. As for every other group discussed here, the revolution of 1376 was a decisive turning point for the majority of the guilds and their relationship with the Petronian cult. Beyond the named examples of notaries, butchers and carpenters, before that date no other Bolognese arts society distinguished itself in the veneration of Petronius. But with the coming of the "Second Commune", without exception all the guilds started to decorate their manuscripts with images of Petronius, included him in the opening prayers that headed their statutes and legislated for their members to celebrate his feast day. Sensing the place Petronius now

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<sup>159</sup> On the Bolognese dialect, see Antonelli and Cassi, 'Bolognese Vernacular Language', pp. 474-87.

occupied in the Bolognese landscape, the formerly insouciant arts societies at last joined their peers. Petronius thus became popular among the individual guilds and not just as an expression of the guilds collectively.

## v. Conclusion

In discussing Petronius' cult in relation to the bishops of Bologna, the *Studium*, the *signori* and the Bolognese guilds one quickly registers the multiple, competing and often contradictory influences which were exercised upon it. In all instances, the tone was set firstly by the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano and then by the various iterations of the Bolognese Commune. After that, it was for other bodies in the city to respond. Unusually, the city's episcopate did not show any interest in the cult for over 160 years. Indeed, Bologna's bishop managed to obtain permission from Innocent III so that he did not have to visit Santo Stefano on his predecessor's feast day. Episcopal engagement only becomes evident in 1310, nine years after the Commune legislated for the October solemnity's celebration. The scholars of the *Studium* went from apathy to appreciation only when they found in Petronius' legend the justification for their institution of higher learning at Bologna. The *signori* up to 1376 ignored the Petronian cult, viewing it with suspicion on account of its connection to autonomous and *popolo* based rule. The Bolognese guilds were divided on the matter. Some, such as the notaries, the butchers and the carpenters, were stalwarts of the Petronian cult from the late 1200s. Many of Bologna's other guilds were less interested.

For all of its untidy complexity in the intervening 235 years from the *inventio* of 1141, the political revolution of 1376 simplified the position of the Petronian cult at Bologna. The "Second Commune's" ascendancy was the watershed moment for Petronius. Because of its actions, anyone who lived at Bologna had to pay homage to the city's undisputed patron saint. This continued to be the case even after the "Second Commune's" demise. The guilds, whether long-standing *Petroniani* or not, fully engaged with the cult; when *signori* came to the city, they too governed at Petronius' pleasure. Neither could the bishops of Bologna remain distant to it, and the *Studium* continued to thank the ancient bishop for bringing a university to the city. And while none of the groups discussed in this chapter ever claimed or tried to establish ownership of the cult, some of them nevertheless inspired innovation in the Petronian cult. Independently of the original Latin hagiographer, academic jurists at the *Studium* read into the *Vita Sancti Petronii* Petronius' foundation of the university, which was subsequently built upon by the Bolognese Commune, and the guilds, directed by the notaries

and the butchers, created a Petronian armed militia to protect the *popolo* led government of the 1270s.

The history of Petronius' cult is evidence that in medieval urban communities sanctity was at the same time more important and more complicated than has traditionally been viewed. There was far more to a successful saint's cult than the religious preferences or dispositions of a city population, which itself should not be treated as a homogeneous bloc. Piety was key, but it operated in tandem with a whole host of other factors. What exactly those were depended on an equally large number of conditions, such as historical context, religious trends, international relations and foreign affairs, political persuasion, social class, vocation or professional occupation, and institutional competition. To a greater or lesser extent, all of these had a bearing on an individual's or collectivities' decision to favour a particular saint's cult. It also shaped how exactly that cult developed, responding to pressures or influences imposed upon it from various and sometimes incongruous directions, both historical and contemporary.

## Conclusion

The former archbishop of Bologna, Giacomo Lercaro (r. 1952-68), wrote that ‘to speak of St Petronius is to speak of Bologna, and to speak of Bologna is to speak of St Petronius’.<sup>1</sup> While certainly a fitting epithet for Bologna in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – one only has to think of the city’s widely popular football team, which carries the sobriquet *petroniani* –, it is one that has not always been so. The cult of St Petronius of Bologna was a creation of the later Middle Ages. Prior to the *inventio* of his relics in 1141, there was no form of organised devotional activity associated with Bologna’s eighth bishop. For almost eight centuries after his death in c.432/50, the Bolognesi did not even speak of Petronius, let alone consider him as being synonymous with their city.

This, of course, changed over time. Undoubtedly, the Bolognesi are now *petroniani*. But the process of them becoming so was a development that once begun would take over 250 years to reach fruition, and the pace at which the Bolognesi embraced the ancient bishop as their city’s patron varied in speed and intensity across the population. In chapter 1, we saw that although Petronius had certainly been one of Bologna’s earliest bishops, after his death memory of him quickly faded at Bologna. Written records acknowledged his presence in the city’s early episcopal history, but for centuries the Bolognesi had no recourse to it. Long forgotten and outshone by other celestial figures, Petronius’ cult came almost out of nothing, and it did so in a very specific historical context, both at a local and regional level. In 1141, Bishop Enrico lost his *duomo* in a terrible inferno. He was in desperate need of a new base from which to discharge his episcopal duties. Discovering the relics of a distinguished former occupant of the see at his new residence of Santo Stefano was one effective way of reasserting his control and perhaps distracting attention from the fire, in spite of his obvious loss. Operating in tandem to this, though certainly not unique to Bologna, was the emergence of the Italian Communes. As the cities slowly and haphazardly established new political and institutional mechanisms of government, older and supra-governmental sources of authority were channelled in aid of legitimacy, masking their very recent creation. It was in this potent combination of contingent local factors and wider structural transformations touching the entire Italian peninsula that the Petronian cult was born.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi in Giacomo Biffi, ‘Presentazioni’, in Beatrice Buscaroli and Roberto Sernicola (eds.), *Petronio e Bologna. Il volto di una storia. Arte storia e culto del Santo Patrono* (Ferrara: Edisai srl, 2001), p. 9

So Petronius was made a Bolognese saint by Bishop Enrico. His sanctity was then confirmed by the Bolognese pope, Lucius II. Enrico's episcopal successors, however, did not continue in the same vein. With the return of the city's bishops to the restored cathedral, Petronius was left to the abbots and monks of Santo Stefano. Perhaps a symptom of longstanding competition between the *duomo* and Santo Stefano, Bologna's bishops showed little interest in the new cult, and as far as we can tell, it was an attitude shared by the majority of the Bolognesi. Other saints, of a local (Vitalis and Agricola, and Proculus) and universal (Peter) variety were preferred in Petronius' place. But things were changing, albeit slowly.

Around forty years after Enrico's *inventio* of Petronius' relics, the next great development in the Petronian cult occurred. Almost certainly taking as its inspiration for narrative structure the wars between the Italian Communes and Frederick Barbarossa, a hagiography was produced for the ancient bishop. As shown in chapter 2, it was an original composition authored by an anonymous monk from Santo Stefano c.1177-80. The *Vita Sancti Petronii* established the main contours of the Petronian legend which persist with little modification to the present day. What is more, the *Vita*, through the cover of the Late Antique past and under the guise of Petronius, argued for the free and lawful right of existence of the Bolognese Commune. Yet its attention was not limited to the city's mode of government; the monastic author praised Bologna's learning, its fecundity and its simulacrum of the Holy City of Jerusalem. As much as it was a hagiography, the *Vita* was an extended disquisition in praise of the author's home city of Bologna; given what and how much it tells us about how the Bolognesi conceived of their city, it stands as one of the most instructive late twelfth-century Bolognese sources.

By the close of the twelfth century, the core of the Petronian cult had taken shape at Bologna. The ancient bishop had his relics *in situ* at Santo Stefano, his feast day was celebrated in the city and his *vita* had been written. Peter remained the patron of the city's commune and its cathedral, but as the thirteenth century began the signs of Petronius' growing importance in the city looked promising. Although the bishops continued to excuse themselves from participating, by 1205 the cathedral canons were visiting Santo Stefano on Petronius' feast day. In the following two decades, academic jurists at Bologna's famed *Studium* first started to explicitly draw upon the *Vita Sancti Petronii* to claim that Petronius had founded the university with the consent of Emperor Theodosius II. Simply put, because of the Theodosian Privilege any doubts about the legality of Bologna being home to an institution of higher learning were swept away thanks to Petronius' act of foundation. Like Enrico and the



incipient Commune before them, Bologna's scholars were grateful for the legitimising cloak of the ancient bishop.

In the Duecento new saintly figures emerged to check the advancement of the Petronian cult. Popular everywhere across the Latin West but especially so at Bologna where both men were active, the mendicant saints Francis and Dominic left their mark on the city. Each had a large basilica dedicated to them within years of their passing, with Dominic being buried at Bologna. Both saints were the focus of widespread devotion. Very quickly, Francis and Dominic were inserted into the opening prayers of the civic statutes and communal authorities went to their shrines on their respective feast days. The already congested saintly landscape had become even busier.

Still, despite the celestial competition, Petronius and his most active supporters at Bologna refused to let their saint once again fall into obscurity. Having long been associated with the Bolognese Commune, from the 1250s Petronius was slowly but surely identified as the supernatural spokesman of the *popolo*. As we saw in chapter 3, 1253 marks the earliest date where we can state with certainty that Bolognese officials made a donation to Petronius' altar on his feast day. Yet having assumed ever greater influence over the city's government, the *popolo* and their leader, Rolandino Passaggeri, started pushing Petronius to a more prominent position in civic life during the 1270s. Among other things, this tumultuous decade marked the first great expulsion of the Lambertazzi. But it was also around this time of great social and political unrest that a new vernacular hagiography, the *Vita San Petronio*, was authored. Heavily indebted to the original Latin *Vita* but with some additions - most notably, the Petronian crosses - the new *Vita* unequivocally confirmed the foundations of the hagiographical legend: that is, Petronius as the founder of the Commune, the *Studium*, the city's territorial boundaries, its Jerusalem complex, its monumental crosses, and its guarantor of liberty. Additionally, it stands as a sign of the growing popularity of the Petronian cult. In the years that followed, instances of communal patronage multiplied. A communal militia named after Petronius was created, he was invoked as a defender and patron of the city in the 1288 civic statutes, a 1301 government decree outlined the minutiae of the ancient bishop's feast day celebrations, and his image was placed on Bologna's *carroccio*.

This process was not, however, able to continue without interruption. With the change of government in 1327 came a less accommodating environment for the Petronian cult and its primary supporters. Apart for the very brief period of 1334-7, from when Cardinal Bertrand

du Pouget was welcomed into Bologna in 1327 up to the exile of Cardinal Guillaume de Noellet in 1376, that is for almost fifty years, the city was governed by *signori*. As examined in chapter 4, whether the *signori* were representatives of the papacy or self-appointed rulers, they shared a common antipathy to Petronius. Being too closely connected to ideas of liberty, communal self-rule, and participatory government, other saints were preferred in his place, be that the traditional patron Peter, the mendicants or otherwise figures previously unimportant at Bologna. At least for this phase of the city's history, sanctity can function as a very precise bellwether for the political rulers of Bologna.

Behind this backdrop of Bolognese communal sponsorship and signorial opposition, other institutions and collectivities at Bologna had their own unique relationship with the Petronian cult. Santo Stefano, since Petronius' rediscovery at the monastery and the passing of Bishop Enrico, had been the first custodian of the cult. Naturally, its abbots and monks numbered among his most ardent supporters. The brothers continued to enhance their Jerusalem simulacrum in Petronius' name, oversaw the mass Petronian miracle at a delicate moment in the city's history, petitioned communal authorities to repave their piazza to more easily facilitate feast day celebrations and built a new shrine in one of their churches to house his relics. In contrast, the approach of the city's bishops appears perfunctory at best. Only in 1310, probably following the lead of the communal authorities, did the church require Petronius' solemnity to be celebrated in all the parishes of its diocese. Paradoxically, very little evidence survives which attests to the direct and willing participation of Bologna's bishops in the episcopal Petronian cult. The *Studium* and its scholars appreciated the fact that Petronius was said to have founded their university with imperial decree; but other than one well-documented example, which is really the exception that proves the rule, the masters did not show elevated levels of devotion towards the Petronian cult. For them, Petronius was a figure of practical utility rather than one of great spiritual devotion. Finally, the guilds: although as a collective they were key supporters of the *popolo*-backed Commune, the great champion of the Petronian cult, each of the city's arts societies had its own specific connection to the ancient bishop. Some, such as the notaries and the butchers, were the guilds who demonstrated the strongest attachment to Petronius. For other guilds, like the carpenters, the devotion was more tepid, and wider changes in the city's spiritual landscape first were necessary before they as an individual guild became vocal supporters of the ancient bishop's cult.

These changes, as much political as spiritual, soon transpired in the final quarter of the fourteenth century. In chapter 3, we identified how the decisive turning point for Petronius' place at Bologna occurred during the twenty-five-year rule of the "Second Commune", from 1376 to 1401. Building on the preceding framework that stretched back to the 1141 *inventio*, the second iteration of the Bolognese Commune pushed Petronius to the heart of civic life in a way hitherto unseen. For instance, the 1376 statutes stipulated in exacting rigour every fine detail of Petronius' feast day celebrations. Significantly, the accommodation of Francis' feast day was scrapped and the Petronian celebration was returned to the solemnity's traditional date, 4 October. In concert, a prescriptive and very lengthy list of individuals and institutions who were required to participate in the procession was codified in law. Anyone of standing in Bologna's social, cultural, economic, political or religious life was compelled to attend. Moreover, a great annual fair was dedicated to Petronius, which lasted almost a month and attracted merchants from all over Italy and beyond. The ancient bishop was also placed on the city's coinage, a new golden reliquary was commissioned, and most importantly of all, an enormous new Petronian basilica was built on the Piazza Maggiore.

In the years 1376-1401, the "Second Commune" did its work well. Through its many and varied Petronian policies, the ancient bishop's cult had been indelibly impressed onto Bologna, both physically and psychologically. Petronius was now unmistakably Bologna's patron saint. The city's population, regardless of their previous stance towards the ancient bishop, had no alternative option available to them except to embrace the cult. Chapter 4 explored how this was true for the city's bishops, its scholars and its guilds. Politically, all who came after the "Second Commune" continued in this regard. To cite just one example, Giovanni II Bentivoglio's Petronian joust of 1470 would have been unthinkable for the Pepoli or Visconti *signori* of the preceding century. One way the earlier rulers had shaped or articulated their governance had been by ignoring the Petronian cult; the governors of the fifteenth century and later could not do the same. Admittedly, much of the ideological apparatus long associated with the ancient bishop's cult was reinterpreted. Concepts such as liberty and participatory government were suitably malleable to be adjusted to the circumstances of signorial or aristocratic rule. But the roots of Petronius were too firmly embedded in the Bolognese landscape and psyche to be swept away or overlooked without consequence. Irrespective of who governed the city, new golden coins with Petronius on were minted, the feast day celebrations persisted, *palii* were still run, and distinguished visitors and ambassadors were welcomed at the Basilica of San Petronio, standing at the physical,

spiritual and political centre of the city. It was therefore at the end rather than the beginning of the medieval period that Petronius and Bologna became one and the same; only then, in the final quarter of the fourteenth century under the auspices of the “Second Commune”, did the Bolognesi become *petroniani*.

More than an isolated or unimportant phenomenon, the history of the cult of Saint Petronius in the later Middle Ages is the history of the city of Bologna. The ancient bishop’s cult has been the focus of this thesis, but through it our study has ranged across the rich tapestry of the city’s history from the time of the birth of the Commune to the sixteenth century. Being so intrinsic to medieval urban life, sanctity and the cult of saints was ubiquitous in the cities of the Middle Ages. The Bolognese example of Petronius shows how it permeated almost every aspect of the Bolognesi’s quotidian existence. Petronius’ cult is crucial to an understanding of how and in what ways the Bolognesi conceptualised their understanding of their city’s history and how that dialectical process of remembering their ancient bishop affected social and political praxis. It was thus an extremely important constituent of civic identity, and it found expression in the typical representation of Petronius holding Bologna in his hands: the city’s founder and protector, in the past and in the present, for Commune and *Studium* alike. Moreover, loaded with political meaning, for much of the late medieval period the success or misfortune of the Petronian cult neatly mirrored the structure of the Bolognese government. It, in other words, acted as a barometer for the strength of the *popolo*-backed Commune. On a more practical level, the ancient bishop’s cult was immediately visible to the Bolognesi as they moved about their city. Santo Stefano, the monumental crosses and the Basilica of San Petronio were noticeable foci in the urban environment that would have concentrated the citizens’ attention, reinforced awareness of Petronius’ cult and shaped their interaction with it. Connected to, or rather appended and then elaborated upon, the city’s Jerusalem tradition, the Petronian cult seems further to have played its part in consolidating a strong tradition of crusading among the Bolognesi. His cult was, therefore, vividly real for the Bolognesi and their experience of it in urban space had an effect beyond the confines of their city’s walls. The feast day and accompanying horse race were days of great celebration, but also key markers in the liturgical and calendar year. On 4 October, courts closed and work was cancelled. In the days before and after, all economic activity at Bologna was carried out in the Petronian fair, and the currency exchanged was marked with Petronius’ image. To participate in the city’s economy was a Petronian act.

Simply put, in Bologna's politics, its religion, its economy, its social structures, its culture, its built environment, its relations with other cities and states, and its self-fashioning of civic identity Petronius was at its centre. His cult was embedded into the very fabric of the city and was entangled in almost every facet of its complicated medieval history. Despite being a late-comer to the saintly scene, Petronius and his cult were central to Bolognese life in the later Middle Ages.

So this thesis has used a saint's cult as a focal point through which to write a political and cultural history of a medieval city. At its centre is the recognition of the diverse complexity of an urban community, and the multiple and varied influences behind the formation and evolution of a saint's cult. Rather than being separate or extraneous to wider developments occurring within a given city and across Latin Christendom, sanctity was shaped by multiple religious and non-religious influences. It was fundamental to medieval urban communities, being central rather than peripheral to city life. Crises could throw up new candidates for sainthood, be that a terrible fire, the formation of new political or constitutional institutions, or successes or failures on the battlefield. Alternatively older, more established, cults could be reinterpreted in light of contemporary needs. Sainthood was malleable and interacted with social formations, political structures and ecclesiastical hierarchies. The form this took was not always complementary. Different bodies wanted different things from the cult and depending where they stood in relation to it impacted on how much influence they could exercise over it. If one possessed the relics of the saint or the centre of cult activity was directly under the control of an authority, the extent to which the cult could be made to reflect the ideology of the particular guardian was much greater. Rulers, whether individual lords and princes or broader based representative governments, harnessed the legitimising cover of sanctity to obscure recent changes in government or to mask novel forms of association. If the cult was not suitable for a certain leader, they could simply choose to ignore it and promote another saint in its place. Other institutions that were not overtly political, such as universities, likewise had recourse to sanctity. To have a saint as a founder of a given organisation instilled it with dignity and, depending on when it was attributed, pre-emptively or retroactively answered questions concerning the legality of its foundation. Prominent social groupings such as guilds also participated in the cult of saints. If a certain guild was influential enough, they could push their patron onto the wider civic community. The greatest drivers of a saint's cult did not have to be the city's bishop or religious authorities. Many bodies co-existed in cities and working in isolation or cooperation with others they could

determine the success of a cult. Explicit Church cooperation was not always a decisive factor, and city churches and monasteries could be in competition with each other. Even episcopal cults could succeed without the support of present-day prelates and their cathedral.

To understand the status of a saint's cult and determine how it functioned in an urban setting requires consideration of the entire civic community. Much of what was happening in medieval urban communities was connected or related to the cult of saints. The Bolognese example is not unique. Other cities of sufficiently large size and social complexity have histories where sanctity played a leading role in urban life; something that is true not only for those of communal Italy or the Low Countries which urbanised first, but across the Latin West. Many shorter article length studies or chapters in survey texts show this. Here, however, we have explored the nuances of an urban cult in real depth, examining its contested and uneven development across a set of communities within one urban space in fine detail, and having recourse to a wide and diverse body of sources. It has shown the multivalent significance of urban cults in medieval urban life. What has been set out in this thesis, then, is not only a history of the Petronian cult in late medieval Bologna, but also a method or way of studying cities in the Middle Ages. Examining sanctity and urban communities in a truly holistic manner has the potential to expand our knowledge of both subjects and prompt new directions for research by providing a central focal point in relation to which to understand the contours of social change and political development across the caesurae imposed by "events", and so liberate the historian from the tyranny of dates.

This conclusion began with Bologna's football team, and it can close with another contemporary concern. Faced with the economic hardships caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Bolognesi once again turned to Petronius. Under the guidance of the present archbishop, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, a Petronian benevolent fund (*Fondo San Petronio*) was created to help those Bolognesi most in need.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, a second scheme, the 'Saint Petronius Pact' (*Patto San Petronio*), followed suit, providing micro-credit to small businesses in return for the commitment not to lay off their staff.<sup>3</sup> Just as Petronius was said to have saved the labourer at Santo Stefano hundreds of years before, his cult at Bologna still provides care and support to the twenty-first century *petroniani*. Created and formed in the later Middle Ages,

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<sup>2</sup> Sirio Tesori, 'Coronavirus, dalla chiesa di Bologna contributi a partire da 400 euro per chi è in difficoltà', *Bologna Today*, 21 April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> 'Diocesi: Bologna, istituito il "Patto San Petronio" per aiutare famiglie di lavoratori in difficoltà attraverso sostegno a micro-imprese per evitare licenziamenti'. *SIR: Agenzia d'informazione*, 20 April 2021.

the cult of Saint Petronius continues to be an integral part of Bolognese life in the twenty-first century.

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