

Non parva ab eo accepta pecunia

Papal Succession, Simony,
and Economic Rationality (1044-1046)

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Sucessão papal, simonia e racionalidade econômica (1044-1046)

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ABSTRACT This article delves into the pontifical succession that took place amid the events occurring between 1044 and 1046 in the city of Rome, with a particular focus on the transfer of power from Benedict IX to Gregory VI. This episode has been regarded as one of the most notorious cases of ecclesiastical corruption in the entire 11th century and is believed to have indirectly caused the Gregorian Reform. The aim is to analyze the historical interpretations mobilized by narratives about the incidence of money in this episode, a matter that has sparked lively historiographical debates. To achieve this objective, the article considers various narrative prisms about the events that took place during the second half of the 11th century. The main argument presented is twofold: firstly, that the theme of monetary abuse was characterized by a narrative divide; and secondly, that this divide was ideologically determined by a certain economic rationality. The latter idea constitutes the primary conclusion sustained in this text.

KEYWORDS Medieval History, simony, economic rationality

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RESUMO Este artigo tem por tema a sucessão pontifícia ocorrida no bojo dos eventos que, de 1044 a 1046, tiveram lugar em Roma. As páginas a seguir tratam, especificamente, da passagem de poder de Bento IX para Gregório VI, episódio que terminou caracterizado como um dos mais notórios casos de corrupção eclesiástica de todo o século XI, tendo, inclusive, provocado indiretamente a eclosão da Reforma Gregoriana. O objetivo consiste em analisar os significados históricos mobilizados pelas narrativas sobre a incidência do dinheiro no episódio em questão, aspecto em torno qual a historiografia trava um movimentado debate. Na busca por alcançar tal meta, foram analisados diferentes prismas narrativos adotados a respeito dos acontecimentos ao longo da segunda metade do século XI. O argumento principal foi formulado como dupla constatação, a saber: que o tema do abuso monetário foi marcado por uma clivagem narrativa, clivagem essa que foi ideologicamente determinada por uma racionalidade econômica, sendo esta última ideia a conclusão primordial sustentada neste texto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE História Medieval, simonia, racionalidade econômica

INTRODUCTION: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM¹

The events that took place in Rome during the 27 months between September 1044 and December 1046 appear in the academic narrative as the beginning of an inflection in the Latin world history. Although contemporaries have not been reached by news about what was happening

1 Before anything else, an explanation. I am not going to address a history of simony against the background of the “Gregorian Reform”. These pages will be filled with a monographic fragment on the memorial plots involving the presence of money in a single papal succession. This is not, therefore, an introductory or summary study on the theme of simony in Latin ecclesiology. For this purpose, we already have good paradigmatic texts, such as the works of Rudolf Schieffer (1972), Hanna Vollrath (1993), Charles West (2015; 2022), and Cláudia Bovo (2013). The title of this article refers to a passage from the *Life and Miracles of Saint Benedict*, by Desiderius, abbot of Monte Cassino, cited and discussed below.

between the seven hills (VOLLRATH, 2012, p. 135-145), the certainty that prevails in the current state of our knowledge is that the course of Roman particularisms provoked a profound crisis in the Christian social order. Rupture from which the “Reforming Papacy” emerged, which was protagonist of the first “total revolution” of the Middle Ages (MOORE, 2000; ALTHOFF, 2019, p. 171-213; D’ACUNTO, 2020; MARTINE; WINANDY, 2021). Nevertheless, the breadth of the definition is not synonymous with consensus. On the contrary. The great narrative is interspersed with dissonances, disputes that constantly redesign facts, characters, and circumstances (MILLER, 2009; GOUGUENHEIM, 2017; AUSTIN, 2019).

Even when they declare their disagreements irremediable, scholars on the subject usually leave the following sequence of events intact: in September 1044, the Romans took up arms against the Pope, Benedict IX. In a few weeks, the revolt expelled His Holiness from the ancient city, leading him to take refuge in one of the fortresses that his family, the Tusculum clan, had on the outskirts of Monte Calvo. Meanwhile, allied with Benedict, the Trastevere region’s inhabitants took over the *villa*, starting to promote the pontifical cause at the south region of the Tiber River. The conflict then stopped. Rome remained divided throughout the autumn, occupied by rival forces. When the battle finally occurred, on January 7, it did not break the deadlock. Dozens fell fighting, but the military balance did not falter: the rebels prevailed in the north, entrenched in the so-called “Leonine Citadel” and in the Castle Sant’Angelo, while troops loyal to the Pope won in the south, quartered in Trastevere and in the outskirts of the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Benedict reconquered the city only in March, after the Tusculum army had had its ranks swelled by men loyal to the Count of Galeria. But not in time to prevent the Romans from electing a new Pope, Sylvester III – who, at this point in time, had returned to Sabina, where he was bishop. Although the elected pontiff did not even complete fifty days at the helm of the Holy See, opposition to the Tusculum government persisted. Benedict found Rome ungovernable. In the face of such fierce antagonism, he resigned. He was succeeded by John Gratian, archpriest

of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, who was given the name Gregory VI. This is one of the points where the common denominator breaks down. Here, the minimum consensus disappears, and an old historiographical problem takes shape.

How did the transfer of power take place? A long-standing conclusion asserts that it was an illicit transaction, outright illegality (MANN, 1925, p. 251). The abdication would have cost John a considerable sum of money, whose amount we cannot specify because it may have varied from a thousand pounds in fine gold to the equivalent of the entire collection of the denarius of Saint Peter paid annually by England. The apostolic succession would have been, therefore, unconfessable purchase and sale, or, as ecclesiastics of the period shouted, evident simony (FREYTMANS, 1932, p. 137). Having gained followers throughout the 20th century, this version reaches readers nowadays (POOLE, 1917, p. 11-21; TELLENBACH, 1959, p. 173-175; 1993, p. 141-142; CHAMBERLIN, 1993, p. 67-74; WEINFURTER, 1999, p. 90-91; ULLMANN, 2003, p. 122; MELVE, 2007 p. 136-147).

However, an interpretation almost as long-standing as this one, dating back to the 19th century, arranges things differently. Formulated by G. B. Borino in 1916, it assigns another function to the money pledged by John Gratian. It was not a fixed payment for a transaction, but an aristocratic indemnity. Benedict's godfather and, in that capacity, belonging to the family sphere involved, Gratian resorted to money to ensure the continuity of Tusculum hegemony while accepting the Roman opposition, putting an end to his godson's pontificate. The reality of the payment, whatever the amount, should not be measured with the theology or canon law of the time, but with the moral code of the Roman elites (BORINO, 1916b, p. 381-399). Such a reading had a lasting influence on the writing of history by shifting the theme of simony to the margins of the issue. Its echoes reverberate through the pages written by important names such as Friedrich Kempf and Josef Jungmann (1980, p. 254-255), Uta-Renate Blumenthal (1988, p. 56-57), Herbert Edward John Cowdrey (1998, p. 22-23), Kathleen G. Cushing (2005, p. 60-64), and Glauco Maria Cantarella (2018, p. 63-70).

Finally, a third interpretation turns the whole scenario upside down. It brings together those authors who, through different documentary paths, arrive at the following position: there was no money involved in the 1045 succession. Records that mention gold pounds or income granting are fabrications of memory, clerical slander – not historical evidence. “As for the assertion (...) according to which John Gratian would have bought his dignity before Benedict IX, it should be relegated to the legends”² – Frenchman Augustin Fliche (1966, p. 107) stated in 1924. “Therefore, the money was not poured”³ reinforced Belgian scholar Jacques van Wijnendaele (2005, p. 343), some eighty years later. “With such views, the slander on Benedict IX having sold (...) the Papacy (...) is created. This is simply absurd”⁴ with unrestrained value judgment, Spanish professor Gonzalo Fernández Hernández (2012, p. 444) summarized this other way of understanding the subject.

In the current state of historiographical art, there are three possible pasts for the 1045 papal power transmission. It may have been a secret exchange showered with excess money, or a public pact in which the money was nothing more than conventional compensation, or a resignation carried out without any money. It is soon noticed that the three ways of conjugating reality have the following in common: the presence (or absence) of money is seen by historians as evidence of culturally diverse aspects characterized by social amplitude. In the first interpretation, the monetary motive is a legal indication that demonstrates the agents’ normative awareness, the limits of government practices, and the impact of corruption on institutions. In the second view, it is a semiotic component that allows demarcating a hierarchy between current normative systems and imprinting a sense of alterity on the description of

2 Freely translated: “Quant à l’assertion de quelques polémistes, suivant laquelle Jean Gratien aurait acheté sa dignité à Benoît IX, elle doit être reléguée parmi les légendes”.

3 Freely translated: “Donc l’argent n’avait pas été versé à la population car le délit eût été public et Pierre Damien ne s’y serait pas trompé”.

4 Freely translated: “Con tales miras se inventan la calumnia de que Benedicto IX había vendido (...) el Papado (...). Esto es sencillamente absurdo”.

lordly behaviors. Finally, in the third perspective, it is the textual representation that directs several attempts to manipulate public opinion and delimit the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate, in order to, thus, restrict the ideological capture of resources, prerogatives, and common spaces. Far from being a detail, a side manifestation, money appears in historiography saturated with implications, sociologically eloquent.

I have not found, however, a single study that had selected money itself as an object of analysis, as a topic that would deserve methodical and comprehensive attention. Consequently, the implications that shape our understanding of the past remain latent and subliminal. This is a recurrent feature in medieval studies: when dealing with power relations that imply a notion of corruption, money is a figure that sustains the historiographical discourse, instead of being delineated by it. The issue addressed in these pages is precisely this sustaining effect. That is, the purpose of this article is to bring this effect to light and submit it to analysis. In other words, it is a matter of asking: what did medieval people talk about when they discussed money in relation to the 1044-1045 events?

My working hypothesis is composed of two explanatory and consecutive segments. First: when organized together, the documentary records of the troubled succession of Benedict IX are marked by a cleavage – the versions that declare that a monetary operation has happened reached relevance in the mid-1080s. Second: such an image comes from ideologically convergent versions, and the ideological character in question was marked by an economic rationality. While both segments result in developments that are – I hope – relevant to papal power history, the second perhaps stands out. After all, it will inscribe a unique economic rationale as the foundation of the positions taken by some of the most notorious characters of the so-called simony crisis of the mid-11th century (WEST, 2015; 2022). As far as I could reach in my readings, this connection was not proposed by historiography. Before summarizing this proposition, it will be necessary to go through the itinerary patiently, as the order in which the hypothesis was formulated proved to be necessary and consequent. For the last section of thought to assume analytical breadth, it is necessary to have gone through the first.

DISPUTES OVER MEMORY: GREGORIANS AND MONETARY ABUSE

I will start with the records of those who were contemporary with the events: the hermit Peter Damian, Popes Clement II and Leo IX, the anonymous author of the text known as *De Ordinando Pontifice*, and the monk Herman of Reichenau.

Damian did not report how the passage of power from Benedict IX to Gregory VI took place. In a letter dated 1045, however, the hermit enthusiastically hailed the accession of John Gratian. “May the heavens light up with joy, may the earth rejoice”, he wrote, “and may the holy Church exult, for it has recovered her ancient charter of liberties”. In his perspective, the new Pope was a champion of the ecclesiastical cause, a promise in flesh and blood that the “dragon of simony” would finally be vanquished: “may the head of the treacherous and poisonous serpent now be crushed, may the trading in such wicked dealings end (...)”. According to these lines, there was no suspicion that the Papacy had been sold. What one reads is the exact opposite. Damian addressed the person sworn to the apostolic throne as the one who would extinguish the transactions of ecclesiastical dignities: “that the golden age of the apostles be restored and [that] (...) Your Prudence curbs the avarice of those who aspire to the episcopal dignity and overturns the seats of money brokers”⁵

In another letter, addressed to Gregory in the 1045-1046 winter, Damian again exhorted him to take initiatives for the correction of ecclesiastical discipline, especially for cases involving entry the episcopate.⁶ The epistles start from the premise of a legitimate succession,

5 DAMIAN, Peter. Epistle 13. In: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)*, Briefe 4:1, 1983, p. 143-144. Freely translated: “Laetentur ergo caeli et exultet terra, et antiquum sui iuris privilegium se recepisse sancta gratuletur aecclesia. Conteratur iam milleforme caput venenati serpentis, cesset commercium perversae negociacionis, (...). Reparetur nunc aureum apostolorum saeculum, et praesidente vestra prudencia (...) reprimatur avaricia ad episcopales infulas anhelancium, evertantur cathedrae (...) nummulariorum”.

6 DAMIAN, Peter. Epistle 16. In: *MGH*, Briefe 4:1, 1983, p. 153-154.

which took place according to the law and clerical order. It is true that Damian changed his mind. More than 10 years later, we find him lamenting that the succession had been tainted by sin. The complaint, however, comes in 1059: more than a decade after Benedict and Gregory were found guilty of simony by the Council of Sutri in December 1046 and then deposed by King Henry III. It is then that Damian claims that Benedict had handed over the Apostolic See to Gregory because “venality intervened and the one who accepted [money] was deposed”.⁷ It is possible to note, however, that Damian does not mention “money” explicitly. The phrase in the Latin language is *venalitas intervenerat, depositus est, qui suscipit*. Obliquely, the monetary presence slipped into the space between the letters, taking refuge in the linguistic realm created by the use of “venality”, a word that designated “commerce” and “sale” since antiquity, but was commonly employed as a synonym for prostitution, corruption, and enticement (BLAISE, 1975, p. 949; NIERMEYER, 1976, p. 1069).

The semantic range indicates that Damian’s writing placed the transgression eventually committed in 1045 in the larger plane of an ecclesiastical anthropology (BOUREAU, 2004). The idea of “transaction” is there but wrapped in numerous layers of ecclesial implications. It is one of the threads which form a clew of predicates concerning the disturbance of the proper order of Church affairs. The same can be found among the very rare writings attributed to Pope Clement II. He is the successor of Gregory VI, elected under Henry III’s watchful eye in the last days of 1046. In a letter addressed to the clergy of Bamberg, Clement referred to the period before his election as the time when a “heretical disease had acted on the Roman See”, provoked by the “prey” that men like Benedict and Gregory distilled on the Papacy.⁸ The derogatory

7 DAMIAN, Peter. Epistle 72. In: *MGH*, Briefe 4:2, 1983, p. 363.

8 ADABOLD. Vita Heinrici II Imperatoris. In: *MGH*, Scriptores (SS), 4, 1841, p. 800; JAFFÉ, Philippus et al. (Ed.). *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*. Leipzig: Veit, 1885, doc. 4149. Freely translated: “ecce enim cum illud caput mundi illa Romana sedes heretico morbo laboraret, (...) explosis tribus illis, quibus idem nomen papatus rapina dederat (...)”.

meaning of the chosen terms is poignant but broad. Here, the Latin language weaves multiple semantics: what happened has, simultaneously, legal (it was *rapina*, that is, pillage, theft), medical (it had the nature of *morbus*, that is, illness, disease), and spiritual (because *morbus* is also the name reserved for vice, disorder of the soul) meanings.

In another letter, in an excerpt that, it seems to me, also refers to the 1045 events, Clement opposed those who entered the apostolate by insinuating (*surrepfere*) surreptitiously “as it is typical of thieves and mercenaries” (*utpote fures & latrones*).⁹ The simplicity of reasoning harbors remarkable versatility: in a nutshell, obvious illegality derives from covert behavior. Without apparent difficulty, we are informed about a legally transparent fact that erupted on the edge of the inapprehensible. In the frenzy of theft, the elusive conduct; in the excess of legal competence, the lack of pastoral instruction. Accommodating contrasts, language kept the past open to many judgments, from the mild to the harshest. Leo IX illustrates this well. Enthroned in 1049, he referred to those who preceded him by four years as “unjust pontiffs” (*Benedicto et Gregorio injustis pontificibus*).¹⁰ Years later, at the end of his life, he lamented, in a letter sent to the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomachus, that “in former times, the Apostolic See and Holy Roman Church was often occupied by mercenaries, not by shepherds”.¹¹ In the discursive breadth of these formulations, the presence of money is a punctual component, an aspect through which the reasoning transits without stopping. Money composes the episode but does not determine it.

This logic gains strength with *De Ordinando Pontifice*. Written in 1047, by an anonymous author, to give theological support for the protests against the imperial right to remove bishops, this booklet formally

9 CLEMENT II. Epistle to all sons of the Roman Church. In: UGHELLI, Ferdinando. *Italia Sacra sive de Episcopis Italiae*. V. 2. Venezia: Coleti, 1720, p. 361.

10 LEO IX. *Patrologia Latina*, 143, 1853, col. 593-594; KEHR, Paulus Fridolinus (Ed.). *Italia Pontificia*, 4, 1861, n. 3, p. 77.

11 LEO IX. Letter to Emperor Constantine Monomachos. In: JAFFÉ, Philippus et al. (Ed.). *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*. Leipzig: Veit, 1885, doc. 4333. Freely translated: “Apostolica Sedes nimium diu obsessa fuit mercenarii et non pastoribus”.

links Gregory VI's rise to the driving seat of the Holy See to money expenditure. But it does so with certain nuances, details that we should not lose sight of. The author revolves around tradition, returning to ancient pontiffs and councils, to support arguments such as this one: "it is even silly to say, when it comes to the apostolic chair, that it should not be bought for money, but for merits". When, however, it focuses on those involved in the 1045 events, above all on Gregory VI's image, the booklet, incisive and devoted to correcting often subtle mistakes, settles for another legal measure: "if the fame that came flying to us is true, that he obtained the name of the apostolate by a simony curse (...) and, by the torment of his conscience (...), he exposed that curse (...)". Gregory is a character without precise borders, so that different versions of history invade his silhouette. Some say that he went in search of a sum of money, as he did not have what was needed to achieve what he wanted. "Others, in turn, excused him, saying that it was not he who gave money, but he would have consented to his friends and relatives giving it" – and then would have paid what they spent. The author probably gave credit to the latter version to intensify the attack on simony. After all, he uttered: "the Lord ensured that Gospel sellers and buyers were expelled from the Temple". *De Ordinando Pontifice* is incisive, does not hesitate. Such forcefulness is the reason for having considered those involved to be malefic for much more than getting involved with money. There was the protection offered by others, the relatives' influence. And there was "hatred against the truth". This is what made Benedict and Gregory "perverse": hiding how they took power over the Church. "What strength, what property did [each one] possess, what did they lose? To whom did he take what, and what did he receive for it"¹² – questions conveying a concern that goes far beyond attention to money (MELVE, 2007, p. 143; p. 147-148).

12 *De Ordinando Pontifice*. In: *MGH, Libelli de Lite Imperatorum et Pontificum (Ldl)*, v. 1, 1891, p. 9-11. Freely translated: "Quid vis, quae proprietas, quid habuit, quid perdidit? Quid quis ei abstulit, quid a quod recepit?"

The prevailing certainty in the 1050s was that the papal succession was tainted by money-laced sin. It was repeated even in brief records, such as that written by the monk Herman. According to him, “once restored to his see, [Benedict] subsequently removed himself from office and appointed another in his place, moved by avarice and contrary to canon law”.¹³ Such words found an echo in the chronicle written at the abbey of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon, whose writer, if he did not accompany Halinardo – archbishop of Lyon – to Rome in the 1045/1046 winter, probably made use of his testimony. Without mentioning money, the chronicler considered just the triple deposition, by imperial order, of “John, who then presided over the chair [of Saint Peter], Benedict and Sylvester”, because, “once their guilt was examined in a council, it was discovered that they were not only adept to simony, but also usurpers of the Church of Christ”.¹⁴ Heterogeneous, the evidence left by contemporaries characterizes the passage of papal power that occurred in 1045 as a recurrence, the example of a universal pattern – “venality”, “illness”, “pestilence”, “usurpation” – of rupture of Catholic ecclesiology.

Such a constant is obfuscated in the late 1070s. When it became the main stage of the conflict between the Papacy and the Empire and the spread of civil wars across the Italian Peninsula, Gregory VII’s government divided ecclesiastical memory. As he was the protagonist of a catastrophic collision between “the kingdom” and “the priesthood”, Gregory’s actions fomented an intense dispute over the memory of the 1045 events. Driven by lordly rivalries and urban antagonisms (FIORE, 2020, p. 3-49), the struggle between Gregorians and anti-Gregorians advanced into the literary field (ROBINSON, 1978; WEINFURTER,

13 HERMAN DE REICHENAU. Chronicon. In: *MGH, SS*, 5, 1849, p. 125. Freely translated: “Benedictus (...) sedisque suae redditus, se ipsum postea privavit, et alium pro se ob avariciam contra canones ordinavit”.

14 Chronicon Sancti Benigni Divionensis. In: *MGH, SS*, 7, 1846, p. 237. Freely translated: “fecit deponi Iohannem, qui tum cathedrae presidebat, et Benedictum atque Silvestrum, qui in concilio tunc abito, examinata eorum culpa, inventi sunt non solum simoniaci sed etiam pervasores aecclesiae Christi”. See also: Borino (1916b, p. 304-308; p. 347), Freytmans (1932, p. 134).

2014, p. 157-215; NIBLAEUS, 2021, p. 16-20) and made the facts of thirty years earlier – in which Gregory VII had taken part as Gratian’s chaplain – a collection of proofs and counterproofs on the faults and merits of the one who had directed the Holy See since 1073. The radicalization of the antagonisms and the feverish pace of the alternation of power meant that the versions of contemporaries to 1045 ended up eclipsed by two interpretative currents, the Henrician (in which King Henry III figured as the force capable of ordering Roman misrule and abolishing the papal corruption) and the Gregorian (in which Gregory VI emerged as the one whose mind condensed ecclesiastical discipline and reforming principles).

The different Henrician readings would bear a common mark, which can be seen in the *Gesta Hammanburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, composed by Adam of Bremen around 1075. According to Magister Adam, “after having subdued or ceased the uprisings of the Pannonians, King Henry [III] was taken to Rome by ecclesiastical demands”. The text then clarifies that “the king was crowned emperor on Christmas day (...) after having deposed the schismatics Benedict, Gratian and Sylvester, who were disputing the Apostolic See”.¹⁵ In this short passage, the past undergoes a drastic modification. More than a hundred years ago, Giovanni B. Borino was right when he demonstrated that, in contemporary versions, Benedict, Gregory and Sylvester are not Popes simultaneously. It was not, under that gaze, a triple schism, but a succession: Benedict was replaced by Sylvester, who then retired to Sabina; then, Benedict recovered the Chair, but he abdicated after a while; a new election took place, from which Gratian emerged as Gregory VI (BORINO, 1916a, p. 222-223). In the Henrician version, all three are concurrently *invaders*. The passage of power also appears metamorphosed into tripartite competition in the *Annals* of Lambert of Hersfeld: “the king

15 ADAM OF BREMEN. *Gesta Hammanburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, 3:7. In: *MGH, SS*, 7, 1846, p. 337-338. Freely translated: “Heinricus rex, domitis vel compositis Pannonum sedicionibus, ecclesiastica, ut dicitur, necessitate Roman tractus est, (...) Ubi depositis, qui pro apostolica sede certaverant, Benedicto, Gratiano et Silvestro scismaticis (...)”.

celebrated the Nativity of the Lord in Rome, where he deposed the three who had invaded the Apostolic See against ecclesiastical rules”.¹⁶

Here, we leaf through a narrative group that stands out for characterizing the 1045 papal succession as – above all, but not only – an invasion. It implicates the different characters in the violation of patrimonial and jurisdictional integrity. It is no longer the ecclesiological rupture that occupies the forefront of the argument, but the violation of property guarantees offered by emperors since Carolingian times. As Giacomo Todeschini (2017, p. 47) noted, the relationship with wealth was mediated by the ideas of possession (*possidere*) and domination (*dominare*), categories that “refer to one another and contain within themselves a notion of sacred legitimacy”.¹⁷ Which, in turn, crystallized in the manuscripts as the idea of imperial control over space and ecclesiastical goods. Control that, according to Benzo, bishop of Alba, was rigorously exercised in that year 1045: “when our lord, the emperor, (...) heard that three demons had usurped the throne of the apostolic see, he ordered them to meet him at Sutri, yet only two of them came”. The author continues: “A synod was assembled there, which the king presided over together with the bishops, and in which both men were condemned by fair trial, while the third, who fled, [was] fulminated by the thunderbolt of the anathema”.¹⁸

Summary, cohesive, capable of providing a firm sense of factual guidance, the Henrician version echoed well into the 12th century, propagated by imperial allies such as Guido, bishop of Ferrara; Sigebert, monk at Gembloux; and the many writers of the *Annales Corbeiensis*,

16 LAMBERT OF HERSFELD. *Annales*. In: *MGH, SS*, 5, 1849, p. 154. Freely translated: “Rex nativitatem Domini Romae celebravit, ubi tribus depositis qui sedem apostolicam contra ecclesiasticas regulas invaserant (...)”.

17 Freely translated: “*possidere* et *dominare* renvoient l’un à l’autre et contiennent en soi une notion de légitimité sacrée”.

18 BENZO OF ALBA. *Ad Heinricum IV imperatori Libri VII, 7.2*. In: *MGH, SS*, 11, 1854, p. 670. Freely translated: “Dominus noster cesar, (...) audivit tres diabolos usurpasse cathedram apostolicae sessionis. Quibus precipiendo mandavit, ut sibi occurrerent Sutrio, sed non venerunt nisi duo. Facta est autem ibi synodus, ubi sedente rege cum pontificibus, uterque eorum iusto iudicio est condempnatus, tercius vero, qui aufugit, anathematis facula fulminatus”.

Wirzburgenses, *Hildesheimenses* and the Chronicle of the Abbey of Farfa.¹⁹ It became a synthesis endowed with such magnetism which hooked philogregorian writing, as happened with religious figures like Hugh of Flavigny, the memories of the *Annales Romani* compiler, and the vision of numerous historians²⁰ – among whom the author of this article figured.

Like the versions written by 1045 contemporaries, the Henrician perspective does not give a specifically monetary emphasis to the course of recollected events. The Gregorian perspective does so. Note the vision embraced by Bonizo, Bishop of Sutri and zealous defender of Gregory VII. Back in Rome, 1045. Overwhelmed by the political atmosphere, Benedict “came to a certain priest named John (...) and, on his advice, he condemned himself and resigned”. The decision would have been “extremely praiseworthy if the vilest sin had not then occurred. For that same priest, (...) seduced by the vilest venality and dispensing immense sums of money, took the opportunity (...) and rose to the Papacy”. Here, a clarification is necessary: the singularity in question does not refer to the appearance of “money”. Or that it does so in large quantities. But the singularity is that this narrative, unlike all others seen so far, detailed its origin and its stipulated uses. We resume the plot. Months later, before a council, confronted by the emperor with the reputation of his actions, Gratian “said that, at the time, (...) he acquired large sums of money, which he saved to repair church ceilings or carry out a new and great work in the city of Rome”. When he realized, however, how the local magnates vilified the Holy See, “he could think of nothing better to do with that money than restore to the clergy and people the right of election that had

19 GUIDO OF FERRARA. De Scismate Hildebrandi. In: *MGH*, Ldl, 1, 1891, p. 565; SIGEBERT OF GEMBLoux. Chronica. In: *MGH*, SS, 6, 1844, p. 358; Annales Corbeiensis. In: *MGH*, SS, 3, 1839, p. 6; Annales Wirzburgenses. In: *MGH*, SS, 2, 1829, p. 244; Annales Hildesheimenses. In: *MGH*, SS, rer. Germ. 8, 1878, p. 46; Chronicon Farfense. In: BALZANI, Ugo (Ed.). *Il Chronicon Farfense di Gregorio di Catino*. V. 2. Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1903, p. 244-245.

20 HUGH OF FLAVIGNY. Chronicon, 2:30. In: *MGH*, SS, 8, 1848, p. 406; Annales Romani. In: *MGH*, SS, 5, 1849, p. 468-469; Liber Pontificalis. In: DUCHESNE, Louis (Ed.). *Le Liber Pontificalis*. V. 2. Paris: De Boccard, 1981, p. 331-332.

been unjustly withdrawn by tyranny”.²¹ Bonizo doesn’t mention wealth only. It is not a circumstantial and neutral element, the impersonal instrument set in motion by an agent to achieve an end. Here, the use of money carries a certain moral baggage, to the point of constituting John Gratian’s subjectivity. In other words, Bonizo shows that not all money implies commerce or profane exchange. It was possible to present it as an integral factor of pastoral care (NAISMITH, 2018b, p. 144). Money connected with Catholic ecclesiologies in many ways; it was a lever that propelled buildings and ornaments, as well as support for ethical redemption and the fight against oppression (NAISMITH, 2018a; TODESCHINI, 2019).

The cultural heterogeneity of money emerges between the lines and irrigates the text signed by the bishop of Sutri, resulting, soon after, in a predictable narrative climax: the suspicion of simony fired against Gregory VI is a dispute over the meaning attached to money, not a mere observation of the presence or absence of the monetary motive. Writing between 1085 and 1086, Bonizo most likely emulated the account of another Gregorian person, namely the famous *Life and Miracles of Saint Benedict* that Desiderius, abbot of Monte Cassino, published some eight years earlier. There, it was stated that Gratian, after disbursing “not a small sum of money”, received the name of Gregory VI and, after having “administered the priesthood for two years and eight months, King Henry (...), having assembled a council”, ordered that “the matter of utmost importance to the Church of Rome should be examined”. However, Desiderius emphasized, as pontiff and monarch “were moved by this

21 BONIZO OF SUTRI. Liber ad Amicum, 5. In: *MGH*, Ldl 1, 1891, p. 584-585. Freely translated: “ad quendam sacerdotem Iohannem, qui tunc magni meriti putabatur, se contulit eiusque consilio semetipsum dampnavit pontificatuique renunciavit. Quod consilium valde esset laudabile, nisi turpissimum post esset secutum peccatum. Nam idem sacerdos, de quo supra retulimus, accepta hac occasione nefando ambitu seductus per turpissimam venalitatem, omnemque Romanum populum pecuniis ingentibus datis sibi iurare coegit. (...) Scique ad pontificalem ascendit dignitatem. (...) Huius rei causa multas adquisisse pecunias dicebat, quas servabat, ut sarta tecta ecclesie restauraret vel aliquid novi magnique faceret in urbe Roma. Cumque sepissime tyrannidem patriciorum secum tractaret, et qualiter sine ulla cleri et Populi electione pontifices constituerent, nichil melius putabat quam electionem clero et populo per tyrannidem iniuste sublatam his pecuniis restaurare”.

same zeal” – that is, to purge the Holy See of its invaders – Gregory had to be “removed by the king and the other bishops (...): after the matter had begun to be thought over and discussed, (...) recognizing that he could not justly administer such an honor, (...) he himself laid down the dignity of the high priesthood”.²² When seen through Desiderius’ and Bonizo’s eyes, John Gratian is a very pious man – “the most devout among the other clerics”,²³ “the one of great merits at the time”²⁴ – and somewhat naive – “an illiterate man of great simplicity”,²⁵ said the bishop of Sutri –, who recognizes himself a sinner when he realizes that he has committed simony: not only for having put his hands on the money, but for having given it a different use than the one for which it had been saved.

When Gregorian narratives became widespread in the 1080s, the past took on a new shape. The finding is somewhat contradictory. The interpretative current committed to the legitimacy of Gregorian governance is the one that ensures greater visibility for the incidence of money in the succession – it is worth remembering that stains and transgressions attributed to John Gratian would very likely contaminate the reputation of his former chaplain, Gregory VII. How was that possible? How to explain this apparent friendly fire by supporters of the pontifical government? From this point on, we need to analyze the ideological underpinnings of the plot.

22 DESIDERIUS OF MONTECASSINO. *Dialogi de Miraculis Sancti Benedicti*, 3. In: *MGH, SS*, 30.2, 1934, p. 1142-1143. Freely translated: “non parva ab eo accepta pecunia summum sacerdotium relinquens tradidit; (...) Interea Iohannes, cui Gregorius nomen inditum est, cum duobus annis et octo mensibus sacerdotium administrasset, Heinricus rex, (...) in Sutrina urbe concilio congregato, Iohannem, qui Gregorius dictus est, missis ad eum episcopis, ut de ecclesiasticis negotiis maximeque de Romana tunc ecclesia, (...) Sed haec de industria agebantur. (...) Praedictus pontifex exoratus a rege ceterisque pontificibus Sutrium, (...) et res agitari ac discuti a synodo coepta est, agnoscens se non posse iuste honorem tanti sacerdotii administrare (...) summi sacerdotii dignitatem deposuit”.

23 DESIDERIUS OF MONTECASSINO. *Dialogi de Miraculis Sancti Benedicti*, 3. In: *MGH, SS*, 30.2, 1934, p. 1142. Freely translated: “religiosior ceteris clericis”.

24 BONIZO OF SUTRI. *Liber ad Amicum*, 5. In: *MGH, Ldl*, 1, 1891, p. 584. Freely translated: “qui tunc magni meriti”.

25 BONIZO OF SUTRI. *Liber ad Amicum*, 5. In: *MGH, Ldl*, 1, 1891, p. 585. Freely translated: “idiota et mire simplicitatis vir”.

THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: THE ECONOMIC RATIONALITY

The Gregorian perspective situates the money employed by Gregory VI within a specific resource allocation system (ZELIZER, 1989, p. 342-377). The sums mobilized at that time derived from a circuit of accumulation and application of wealth established on the basis of city destinations, such as ecclesiastical administration (*administrare*), which involved, for example, repairing church roofs; and development of great urbanization works (“[for him] to make new and great [buildings] in the city of Rome”²⁶). It is also possible to speak of a system insofar as the expenditure of money is subordinated to a public instance of decision-making. That is, the narratives indicate the existence of a common sphere that monitored – to some degree – the risk involved in the control and allocation of resources: an urban public opinion. Desiderius, for example, observed that it was not, properly speaking, a clergyman who had removed a venal Pope with the use of money, but “an archpriest who was then considered in the city (sic) the most pious of all clergymen”. An argument that Bonizo assimilates and expands when describing how John Gratian would have clarified to the council that he had always been “a priest of good character and reputation and that since his childhood he had always lived with a chaste body. At the time, this seemed to be not only venerable to the Romans, but almost angelic”, mainly because it was “for this reason (sic) [that] he acquired large sums of money”²⁷.

26 BONIZO OF SUTRI. Liber ad Amicum, 5. In: *MGH*, Ldl, 1, 1891, p. 585. Freely translated: “novi magnique faceret in urbe Roma”.

27 DESIDERIUS OF MONTECASSINO. Dialogi de Miraculis Sancti Benedicti, 3. In: *MGH*, SS, 30.2, 1934, p. 1142. Freely translated: “cuidam Iohanni archipresbytero, qui tunc in Urbe religiosior ceteris clericis videbatur”; BONIZO OF SUTRI. Liber ad Amicum, 5. In: *MGH*, Ldl, 1, 1891, p. 585. Freely translated: “Dixit se Dei misericordia sacerdotem fuisse boni testimonii et fame et casto corpore a puericia semper vixisse. Quod non tantum laudabile, sed etiam quase angelicum tunc temporis videbatur apud Romanos. Huius rei causa multas acquisisse pecunias dicebat”.

The connection of papal actions to a local, uniquely Roman system of allocation of resources would reach its best finished version at the hands of William of Malmesbury, English Benedictine who cherished, in the 1120s, clear sympathies for the Gregorian past. Interestingly, however, William says nothing about relations with Benedict IX or any sums of money changing hands during the apostolic succession. His writing transports us to a story unlike any other, as if it unveiled an entirely new past. It all begins with Gregory, “formerly called Gratian and a man of great piety and severity”, discovering “the power of the Roman Pontificate so reduced by the neglect of his predecessors, that, with the exception of a few neighboring cities, and the oblations of the faithful, he had scarcely enough to support himself”. The surrounding towns and lands, “where the Church had properties, had been forcibly taken by looters; the thoroughfares and public highways throughout Italy were so crowded with thieves that no pilgrim could pass safely unless heavily protected”. In the figures of the looters, Gregory would have faced an opposition capable of depriving him of the exercise of manorial power, an opponent that made the reproduction (“sustenance”) of the ecclesiastical lifestyle unfeasible. Deprived of income, after noticing that, in the “provinces, one preferred to give money to local churches than to feed thieves with the goods of their labors”, he threw himself into action. Using peaceful means, he tried to bring the allocation system monitoring body, the Senate, into action. It was not enough. From exhortations he passed to excommunication, from excommunication to repression. He ordered the transgressors to be put to death. The conduct would have taken a heavy toll on his soul. On his deathbed, Gregory was confronted: “United with the opinions of the people, the cardinals, (...) recommended that he consider not ordering to be buried in St. Peter’s Church with the other Popes, since he had polluted his office by watching so many men die”. The affront turned out to be an elixir. “Revived in spirit”, the Pope replied: “All my life I squandered my own patrimony for your benefit, and at last I sacrificed the applause of the world to your ransom”. Gregory would lash out at the ears of those who were watching over him: “the accolades (...) [of the people] were lost to

me, thanks to my concern about your poverty”²⁸ The warning unfolds, sharply, over many more lines. We have already reached, however, the part that matters. The last passage registers the crucial link: the wealth that Gregory could dispose of came globally from local, urban circuits of accumulation and transfer.

Indeed, the judgments intertwined in a Gregorian narrative about 1045 were not aimed at “the” money, a certain generic utilitarian value, but a “special money” – according to the theoretical meaning attributed to the expression by Viviana A. Zelizer (1989, p. 347-350; 2011, p. 89-163; BANDELJ; WHERRY; ZELIZER, 2017). “Special money” refers to the use of money that occurs outside the sphere of the market – but not alien to it –, invested with moral, social, and religious meanings contained by “invisible boundaries [that] emerge from sets of formal and informal rules that regulate its uses, allocation, sources, and quantity” (ZELIZER, 1989, p. 350-351). It is precisely the case of what we have seen in this section. The Gregorian memory culturally delimited the money that would have corrupted the 1045 succession, making it a mediator laden with subjective and indivisible properties: Roman money by its origin, publicly local in its allocations, subordinated to urban public opinion.

We can, finally, untie the knot created by the impression that the Gregorian narratives would have disqualified the Gregorian succession:

28 WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY. *Gestis Regum Anglorum*, 2.202. In: *MGH*, SS, 10, 1852, p. 469-470. Freely translated: “Erat papa Gregorius sextus, ante dictus Gratianus, magnae religionis et severitatis. Is ita Romani apostolatus statum per incuriam antecessorum diminutum invenit, ut praeter pauca oppida Urbi vicina et oblationes fidelium pene nihil haberet quod se sustentaret. Civitates et possessiones in longinquo positae, quae ad ius ecclesiae pertinebant, a praedonibus ablatae; tramites publici et strata viarum per totam Italiam a latronibus stipabantur, ut nullus peregrinus nisi cum maiori manu impune transiret. (...) Cessatum est ab omni provincia omni iter agredi, quod mallet quislibet per domesticas ecclesias mummos suos dividere, quam latrunculos propriis laboribus pascere. (...) ipsi etiam cardinales argumenta populi probabant, adeo ut (...), ne se in ecclesia sancti Petri cum ceteris apostolicis tumulari praeciperet (...). Tum ille, recollecto spiritu torvisque luminibus minax, hanc orationem habuit: (...) qui, quantum vixi, et patrimonium meum in vestra commoda effudi, et postremo famam mundi pro vestra liberatione neglexi. (...) Has laudes, hos plausus abstulit mihi vestrae tenuitatis contuitus”.

men like Desiderius and Bonizo considered profane and corrupting the presence of Roman money, not money *tout court*. Their versions of events enunciated a specific opposition to local wealth – not the advocacy of some generic ideal of clerical purity within which no form of money could operate. This is why it is from them, the narrators most committed to the Gregorian cause, that we receive the most incisive descriptions of the passage of power as a transaction of buying and selling apostolic dignity, as Leo of Marsica did when writing the *Chronicle of the Monastery of Monte Cassino* during the 1090s.²⁹ The Roman use of wealth was condemned. This did not necessarily imply opposing papal control over money.

The Gregorian memory symbolically captured the 1045 events and re-signified them, indexing Roman wealth – above all, Roman income – as a harmful, corrupted presence, and therefore contaminating the ecclesiastical order. It was not a mere description that preserved the facts, but a persuasion strategy. One remembered so that the past could take its seat and testify to the illegitimacy of a connection between money and the Romans' authority. For the Gregorians, it was a priority cause, urgent due to the outcome of that transition of power between 1044 and 1046. The deposition of Gregory VI was followed by the enthronement of the Bishop of Bamberg. Experienced prelate from beyond the Alps, the Pope – who received the name of Clement II – became a living obstacle to the continuity of half a century of lordly hegemony over the Papacy. For the first time in nearly 50 years, the direction of the bishopric was exercised by a voice outside the local web of interdependencies and interests. It turns out that Clement was not an isolated case. His rise meant the establishment of a series of non-Roman leaderships that controlled the Holy See for decades. An antagonism began that would affect the institutional structure of the Papacy, influencing the behavior of the social circles involved therein in an amplitude and intensity that do not usually find adequate expression among the studies of the so-called Gregorian Reform.

29 *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, 2:77. In: *MGH, SS*, 7, 1846, p. 682.

A split was installed in the local aristocratic scope. Not only because the ecclesiastical and manorial elites ceased to constitute the same social stratum, but, above all, because they became competing groups at the structuring level of domination over the local population. Decade after decade, “Romans” and “curialists” strove to remove each other from the chains of manorial exploitation. After all, in the local magnates’ eyes, the Pope and his entourage of collaborators had subtracted the Roman Church from the community of values, loyalties, and unstable balances shared among Lazio lineages. In turn, the prelates’ identification with the authority and safeguard provided by magnates installed in other social landscapes projected onto the great Roman families the contrasting image of external (and foreign) forces to ecclesiastical stability and integrity. The local elite’s influence over the bishopric did not decline, however, at the same pace in which families lost ecclesiastical protagonism. If, after 1046, lineages such as the Crescenzi and the Tusculum were no longer able to keep one of their own on the throne of Saint Peter, the intricate clientele webs radiated by their main names allowed them to continue to control nodal points of the diocesan network and the monastic fabric. Even in the *Ager Romanus*, “a wide zone stretching 20-25 kilometres from the city walls” – that is, a region where “the pope did keep large amounts of land, and (...) there were also few or no castles to break up the political hegemony of the city and its rulers” (WICKHAM, 2011, p. 445) –, lords of Lazio intercepted the chain of domination thanks to the influence exercised over the dioceses of Silva Candida or Velletri; about monastic colossi like Grottaferrata, Subiaco and Farfa; to control over the Via Latina and Via Appia, the Valle Latino and the county of Sutri (GUARNIERI, 1998, p. 70-118; VENDITTELLI, 2008, p. 62).

Between the 1050s and 1090s, “the stability of the position of popes in the city” was constantly at risk, as noted by Chris Wickham (2011, p. 442). Leo IX’s government (from 1049 to 1054) was “a long period of fighting”,³⁰ with troops frequently dispatched for punitive missions in the vast area controlled by the Tusculum clan (BEOLCHINI,

30 Freely translated: “Seguì un lungo periodo di combattimenti nel territorio”.

2006, p. 72). In 1058, after the death of Stephen IX, an aristocratic coalition was formed to reverse the rift between the Roman “clergy” and “people,” securing the apostolic miter for John Mincius, bishop of Velletri and probably a nephew of Benedict IX. The result was a turbulent schism that would reach an outcome – once again unfavorable to the “Romans” – after bloody confrontations and a humiliating rite of public atonement for the manorial candidate (STROLL, 2012, p. 69-82). Elected in 1061, it would take Alexander II more than three years to take control of his bishopric, a feat achieved thanks to two uneasy military alliances: one with the Normans, antagonists of papal claims in the south of the peninsula, another with Geoffrey of Lorraine and Tuscany, a recalcitrant imperial vassal.

At Christmas 1075, Gregory VII was pulled from the altar in the middle of the liturgy and dragged from the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore by Centius Stephani. Herbert Cowdrey (1998, p. 327) seems not to have hesitated: contrary to what Canon Paul de Bernried, the Pope’s medieval biographer, suggested, the kidnapping was not a blow struck by high continental politics, something like an attack engineered by the imperial court in an escalation of the so-called Investiture Struggle, but a local Roman event. Throughout the 1080s, civil wars spread across the center and north of Italy, in a state of conflict in which the “great lords found it harder and harder to effectively control their varied groups of vassals, clients and officials, who by now aspired to forms of local power”. At that time, “bishops and leading abbots proved even more incapable of controlling lords within the territories they governed” (FIORE, 2020, p. 12). This is one of the causes that kept Victor III and Urban II away from Rome during a good part of the period between 1087 and 1093 and dependent on heavy armed escorts – sometimes from Normans, sometimes from northern troops – to gain the interior of the Eternal City (BECKER, 1964, p. 78-138; DE ROSA, 2008, p. 143-186).

The reference of the language used by the Gregorians was both the events that occurred thirty or even fifty years before, as well as the fierce and intermittent competition waged against a portion of the Roman elite. If “the papacy (...) was the major power in Europe whose wealth (...)

was (...) most liquid, most based on money and treasure” (WICKHAM, 2011, p. 452), delegitimizing local wealth as the mainstay of an apostolic succession would be at the top of the priorities cherished by the high papal clergy. This explains why Cardinal Beno, Gregory VII’s notorious rival, adopted a Gregorian perspective and described the handover of power to John Gratian as an exchange in which “one thousand five hundred pounds [of silver]” (*libris mille quingentis*) allowed Benedict to “sell the Papacy” (*vendidit papatum*).³¹ Before passing on to posterity as one of the princes of the Church who abandoned Gregory in 1084, Beno was a member of the curia for years: he probably joined the cardinalate profited to ecclesiastics of Burgundian or Lorrainian origins who took office under the command of Stephen IX in 1058 (LORKE, 2019, p. 248). It took decades to absorb the animosity of regional public agents. Time and reason enough to criminalize Roman money.

A few years ago, Bill Maurer (2018, p. 50) warned that the monetization of social relationships could erode, but also create social distinctions and relationship nexuses. The study of the critical events from 1044 to 1046 demonstrates how such distinctions and connections were, in turn, delimited by the agents’ ability to participate in power games and remedy material urgencies. The so-called simony crisis of the mid-11th century – the wide repercussions of cases like the one involving Benedict IX and Gregory VI – was, to a large extent, a chapter in the history of economic rationalities.

CONCLUSION: ECONOMIC RATIONALITY AND THE “SIMONY CRISIS”

“Economic rationality” is an expression that usually establishes a sharp dichotomy between money and non-pecuniary values – or, if one prefers, between money and the culture of a time (ZELIZER, 1989, p. 347). As such, rationality is seen as the process that removes social relationships from the symbolic moorings and particularities that define a way

31 CARDINAL BENO. *Contra Gregorium VII. et Urbanum II*, 2:7. In: *MGH*, Ldl, 2, 1892, p. 378.

of life in space and time by wrapping them in an abstract, uniformizing, and highly fungible logic (KEANE, 2008; MAURER, 2018). Within the scope of a given economic rationality, money would act as an objectifying reagent, the ingredient that converts qualitatively ineffable, unrepeatable, and intrinsic aspects into quantitatively distinct, generic, and alienable attributes. In these pages, however, the expression has taken on a meaning that is not to be confused with that of a sovereign predominance of the quantitative over the qualitative. Economic rationality is, here, the process through which a group, a community, or a class creates specific distinctions and relationships regarding the source, uses and allocation of resources extracted from work and social domination. It consists of a set of heterogeneous, culturally plural, and dynamic relationships that regulate wealth users' identities and the repertoire of guarantees and restrictions, collectively valid, regarding the accumulation, exchange, and destination of material surpluses (FELLER, 2010; DEVROEY, 2010).

The economic rationality of the agents who disputed the Papacy from the mid-11th century onwards is contained, albeit partially, in the plurality of formal and informal relationships maintained with money (NAISMITH, 2019; 2015). As such, the presence of the monetary motif in a story depended not only on the events that transpired, but also on the narrative strategies that allowed each writer to link the past to a unique economic agenda, constituted by shared experiences regarding the value to be recognized in materials, objects, usurers, and practices – which means that economic rationality made sense of extra-economic criteria. This is particularly useful when dealing with the study of the 1045 passage of power and, in a broader perspective, of the entire period extending from September 1044 to December 1046, since the stereotypes mobilized at that time regarding pastoral violation, patrimonial invasion, and simony guilt are not just discourses aimed at identifying false Christians and locating ecclesiastical authority. They also formed a complex linguistic system that made it possible to express the nature and legitimacy of the intersection between economic power and ecclesial organization.

From the ecclesiological rupture of the contemporaries – in which money assumed marginal importance – and the violation of the patrimonial integrity of the Henricians – who gave greater theological weight to the ways of estimating pecuniary accumulation – we arrive at the shocking simony of the Gregorians – who carried forward a true monetization of the past. From the end of the 1040s to the mid-1080s, therefore, the issue of monetary abuse assumes different weights for the groups in dispute for papal power. Perhaps we can see new analytical gains if we overcome the logic of a zero-sum game between documentary records and leave aside the effort to, by comparing them, classify some of them as “more representative” of reality than the others. We would thus proceed to investigate how they all are equally anchored in “typically unbalanced and asymmetrical” contexts (CURTA, 2006, p. 697) and bear marks of social dynamics and power shifts.

As for the implications for the study of the “simony crisis” that took over the institutional trajectory of the Papacy and Latin Christianity in the second half of the 11th century, it is necessary, first of all, to note how much this interpretation moves in the opposite direction to the characterization of a Gregorian “reform program” emerging between the 1040s and 1080s. Not only because I insist on normative plurality – on the ideological weight of imbalances and asymmetries within the context studied –, but also because talking about economic rationality is not the same as envisioning a “program of ecclesiastical actions”. There is a distance to be covered in order to measure how economic agendas were articulated within the correlations of forces faced by social agents.

I also point out an argument that I consider supplementary to that of Timothy Reuter (1995; 2001) and that redirects the sociological meaning of the term *reformer*. The “moral panic” about simony – around such a multifaceted category (FERREIRO, 2005) – does not seem to me to be sufficiently explained as a reaction of men accustomed to the logic of gift and reciprocity in the face of the disengaging and depersonalizing action that currency, flowing more than ever on social life due to urban and commercial transformations, would have fallen on everyone (MOORE, 2012, p. 73-84; WEST, 2015). Certainly, such a perspective

and the understanding established here are not mutually exclusive; but, like Reuter, I think that the horizon of understanding expands when we bring to the foreground the finding that the discourses about simony were structured by previously constituted economic reasons – instead of structuring a new reason for the world. Such discourses directly implied property and taxation relations, as well as legal guarantees regarding access and concentration of resources.

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