INVENTING PATRON SAINTS:
THE CULT OF ST FULK BETWEEN CIVIC
REALITY AND HISTORICAL FICTION

By Luca Ricci

Summary: Seventeenth-century sources attest the cult of English pilgrims in southern Lazio. Focusing on the case of Fulk, I argue that the seventeenth-century tradition is supported neither by the literary accounts nor by topographical analyses. Instead, Fulk's cult, based on Peter Deacon's twelfth-century *Vita Fulconis*, was central in processes of civic formation. Changing religious attitudes in the twelfth/thirteenth century are linked with lay sainthood. An English pilgrim coming back from the Holy Land, through the sanctuary on Mount Gargano, brought great prestige to the urban centre vis-à-vis other urban centres, having visited and, thus, been a witness to some of the greatest places in Christendom.

Introduction

In 1894, the English monk Bede Camm travelled to Italy on a sort of spiritual Grand Tour. While we would imagine that he directed his feet toward the well-known sites of Christianity, such as Rome or the Gargano, we would be mistaken – at least in part. In fact, he decided to visit also those places, steeped in mysticism and devotion, that dotted the Italian countryside. On his travels, he stopped at the small village of Santopadre, which, in the words of Camm himself, 'rejoices in the possession of the relics of a holy English pilgrim who found his way here [i.e., to the village] while returning from a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, and devoted himself to tending the plague-stricken in the hospital which had been founded on this site by the people of Aquino, in order that their sick might have the benefit of the pure air of the mountains'.[1] The reasons for Camm's visit to this mountain village and for his fascination with the

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1   Camm 1923: 119.

English saint provide enough material to write an article on the relationship between English and Roman Catholicism; yet, such is not the aim of this paper. Here, I want to focus on the cult of this English saint, known as Fulk (Folco in Italian), and, more specifically, on the reasons for which an English pilgrim became a patron saint of an Italian village.

In reporting the story, Camm was not relying on popular hearsay or oral tradition. Though he does not explicitly say so, he based his factual knowledge of the cult on historical sources, dated to the mid- to late seventeenth century: Antonio Vitagliano's *Il Ceprano Ravvivato* and the Bollandists' *Acta Santorum*.[2] Any investigation on Fulk's cult must start precisely from these sources and, more specifically, from their historicity, taken by so many historians at face value.[3] A close examination, in fact, will reveal that, while some elements are certainly historical, the broader narrative whereby the pilgrim arrived in Santopadre in the seventh century must be rejected. By employing archaeological and topographical evidence, I will show that the village did not come into existence until much later, namely in the thirteenth century. In addition, I will postulate that the seventeenth-century sources drew their inspiration from a much older, no longer extant source, the *Vita Fulconis* written by Peter the Deacon. Though it is practically impossible to fathom what the twelfth-century *Vita* contained, by analysing the thematic choices of Peter the Deacon's extant, contemporary works and comparing these themes with regional literary practices, I will argue that the foreign pilgrim had become a recurring *topos* in Italy, especially in relation to those regions that bore witness to an increased flow of pilgrims toward southern Italy and the Holy Land. Ultimately, I will argue that the cult of St Fulk was adopted as the patron saint of a village that, in the thirteenth century, was undergoing a process of civic formation. Of course, this does not really explain why an English pilgrim was chosen. Though much ink has been spilt on the development of civic religion and lay patron saints

2   Vitagliano 1653; *AS (Maii V)* 1685: 192-93 (22 May); *AS (Maii VII)* 1688: 829-30. See also Fusco 2002.

3   Apart from Camm's own report, all other scholars focusing on the cults of English pilgrims have mostly relied on the seventeenth-century sources: Scafi 1871, Tavani 1868, Bonanni 1922, Bonanni 1923, Colafrancesco 1993, Contucci 1993. For an overview on this reliance, see Recchia 2002: 88.

in the late Middle Ages,[4] I will put forth the idea that the cult of Fulk developed in light of localised competition among urban centres. A pilgrim saint, in fact, offered multiple benefits to the community: these centres all lay on pilgrimage routes and, by that direct contact with pilgrims, wanted to boast a patron saint that encapsulated worldly and religious values. And who better than an English pilgrim?

Between literature and archaeology: assessing the popular tradition.

Though the seventeenth-century sources agree on identifying Fulk as a pilgrim from England and on his rough pilgrimage route,[5] it is only Vitagliano's work that provides a precise date for the saint: AD 623, namely twenty-seven years after Augustine's arrival in England.[6] It is also Vitagliano that informs us that, on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Fulk was not alone; rather, he had three companions, Gerard, Ardwyn, and Bernard, who all ended up becoming patron saints of villages and towns near Santopadre.[7] This must be our historical basis for the ensuing analysis. If the four pilgrims left for the Holy Land in the early seventh century, then we cannot expect them to have reached their villages (where they would have been elected as patron saints posthumously) much later.

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4   Poulin 1975: 35; Vauchez 1987; Grégoire 2002: 57; Vauchez 2008.

5   The *Acta Sanctorum (Maii V)*: 193A only report *in Anglia paternis maternisque bonis Domini pauperibus erogatis* (having distributed his riches, inherited from both parents, to the poor in England). Vitagliano (1653: 115) is more precise by pinpointing *Silions* as their birthplace, presumably a town somewhere near Scotland. More recently, animated by the perceived historicity of the saints, various local historians have attempted to discover where Silions might have been located: it might be worth to cite Recchia's attempt in placing Silions in Wales (Cardiganshire) without taking into account the rate of Christianisation in the early seventh century. After all, how likely would it be to find Christians in Wales at that early stage?

6   Vitagliano 1653: 120.

7   See the full description of the pilgrimage in Vitagliano 1653: 114-35.

The state of southern Lazio is of the utmost importance to understand what the four pilgrims would have found upon their arrival.[8] What transpires from the sources is a period of grave socio-political crisis and of urban decline wherein pilgrimage was, if not absent, at least heavily reduced. After the Byzantine conquests, the Church, mostly through the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, held control of the area and allowed a flourishing of civic centres.[9] Yet, such a scenario would not have endured long since, in AD 569, the Lombards moved toward southern Italy and, within the area we are investigating, took hold of the land in and around Aquino, eventually pillaging and destroying Monte Cassino.[10] Even if the Lombards did not destroy urban centres, their incapability to upkeep the administrative structures inherited from the Roman Empire meant that cities inevitably faced a collapse: at the end of the sixth century it is estimated that 50% of southern Italian cities had disappeared.[11] The fact that in these areas under Lombard hegemony production and commerce of pottery kept a localised character at best should also point to the fact that the region was unfit to be traversed by pilgrims.[12] If itinerant merchants/traders are unattested archaeologically, why should the flow of pilgrims be intense?

And, in fact, if we take a look at pilgrimage toward the sanctuary of Saint Michael on the Gargano, where the legend says the four English pilgrims spent some time, we should hardly be surprised to find out that the flow of foreign pilgrims began to intensify only much later, namely in the eighth century. Though we know that several Anglo-Saxon eccle-

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8   An introductory picture can be gleaned from Nicosia 1995: 73-114.

9   D'Angela 1985; Nicosia 1990: 75-76; Ermini Pani 1998: 233-36. On the economy of the economy of urban settlements, see Zanini 1998.

10 Paul the Deacon, *Gesta Langobardorum* 4.17. In ca. AD 581 some monks took refuge in Rome under the protection of pope Pelagius, further ensuring the spreading of the Benedictine *regula* (Dell'Omo 1987: 494-504).

11 Rotili 2009; Busino 2019: 61.

12 Busino 2019: 62.

siastics went to Rome to acquire sacred books, ornaments, and even rel-ics,[13] evidence for their travels further south date to the early eighth cen-tury and increase in the second half of the century.[14] And even in those cases where we know of foreign pilgrims going down south in the sev-enth century, we do not see centres that could cater for a large influx of pilgrims: a most notable case is that of the Frankish monks who reached Monte Cassino in the late seventh century and found the place in a state of disrepair.[15]

But even if the pilgrim did reach southern Lazio and the village of Santopadre, what would he have found? What is the evidence for the ex-istence of the village in the seventh century? In nineteenth- and twen-tieth-century popular piety, the village was thought to have changed its name precisely because of the pilgrim's arrival: the name "Santopadre", in fact, presumably derives from "santo padre", namely the Italian for "holy father", the title by which the pilgrim was known in the neighbour-hood.[16] While such a story might be immediately branded as a piece of local folklore, we must nevertheless recognise that historians were con-vinced of a toponymic change: Pasquale Cayro is the first to point it out;[17] subsequently, Rocco Bonanni writes that '[s]ulla vetta del monte Cam-peo, sul versante settentrionale della cima, a pochi metri dal culmine di esso, detto Favone, esisteva in antico il castello chiamato in antico: Fo-rolo, o Fiorolo (...), ora poi Santopadre'.[18] In other words, at some point in time, immediately after the pilgrim's arrival, the place known as Forolo or Fiorolo became known as Santopadre. In order to verify the

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13 Benedict Biscop, for instance, travelled to Rome six times, once, in AD 665, with his friends Acca and Wilfrid. Willibrord was in the *Urbs* in AD 690 and AD 695. In some cases, archbishops would have gone to Rome to receive the pallium: the oldest attes-tation for this dates to AD 667/668 when Bede, archbishop of Canterbury, was be-stowed the pallium (Bede *HE* 2.29). See Sumption 1976: 24; Maraval 1985: 233-41; Sinisi 2014: 56-57; Tinti 2014. On the routes taken by pilgrims, see Pelteret 2014.

14 The *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* reports of a deaf and dumb pilgrim that acquired his hearing and sight in AD 787 (*Die Chronikon von Montecassino*, ed Hoffmann, 48).

15 Paul the Deacon, *Gesta Langobardorum* 6.2. Grégoire 1982: 286-87.

16 Scafi 1871: 66.

17 Cayro 1811: 184-86.

18 Bonanni 1922: 148.

historicity of the saint's story and posthumous cult, then, we could investigate when and, more importantly, if this change took place. After all, the fact that such a change is not recorded in the seventeenth-century sources should cause some caution in believing wholeheartedly in its historicity.

If we look at the presence of Forolo in the historical record, as Cayro did, and compare it with the first instances of the name "Santopadre", then we would have to admit that the popular tradition of the saint's cult cannot be historically reliable. First of all, *Castrum Foroli* is mentioned in documents dated to the eleventh and twelfth century.[19] Apart from the criticisms that Sabrina Pietrobono moves against Cayro's use of these documents,[20] we should really ask ourselves why the name of Forolo is kept well into the late twelfth century. If we are to believe the popular tradition, the toponym changed in relation to the saint, and we know for a fact that, in AD 1128, Peter the Deacon wrote a *Vita Fulconis*,[21] thus indicating that the cult was already practised in the first half of the century (see *infra*). Then, we should not wait until the beginning of the thirteenth century to see the name *Castrum Sanctis Patris* or *Sanctus Pater* appear in the historical record.[22] The traditional picture begins, in other words, to be dismantled.[23]

A solution to the enigma might be reached by looking at the historical landscape of the late twelfth century. In the documents cited by Cayro, the *Castrum Fioroli* or *Castrum Foroli* is mentioned together with other urban centres that formed an organised group *qui dicitur Comino*: we can find a *Civitas Surana*, a *Castro Surella*, a *Castro Vicalbu*, a *Castro Preziniscu*, a *Castro Atina*, a *Castrum Septem Frati*, a *Castrum Ribo Sclavi*, a *Castro Arpino*, and a *Castrum Sancti Urbani*.[24] Pietrobono noticed that one of these urban centre disappeared from the record at the time when *Castrum Foroli* did:

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19 *Regestum Petri Diaconi*, n. 619 (AD 1018); Gattola 1734: 252 and Fabiani 1968: 116-17 (AD 1137); Gattola 1734: 252 (AD 1191).

20 Pietrobono 2002: 141-42.

21 Carcione 2002: 21-22.

22 In AD 1215, Frederick II donates some land to Innocent III's brother, among which a *Castrum Sancti Patris*. See Cayro 1808: 156 and Bonanni 1926: 148-49.

23 It should be pointed out here that the tenth-century mention of a territory called *Patrinate*, as Scafi (1971: 246-47) reports, is not based on any solid evidence.

24 *Regestum Petri Diaconi*, n. 619.

namely, *Castrum Sancti Urbani*.[25] Erected on the eastern side of the *Mons de Albeto*,[26] the *Castrum Sancti Urbani* was no longer included in the *Comitatum Comino* after 1191. It seems that, after that date, the *Castrum Alviti* replaced the *Castrum Sancti Urbani* in a way that is strikingly similar to the transition from *Castrum Foroli* to *Castrum Sancti Patris.* We do know, moreover, that the two centres on the *Mons de Albeto* did not develop on the same geographical location; rather, the *Castrum Alviti* occupied a more elevated position on the *Mons de Albeto.* Such a transition, in the case of the *Castrum Sancti Urbani*, could have taken place in relation to the belligerent efforts undertaken by Roffredo, count of Acerra, sent by Arrigo VI against the settlements of the *Comitatum Comino* for their rebellion and their support of Tancredi; the whole valley was heavily affected by such an event.[27] The violence of the military action could have been so strong as to prompt the inhabitants of the *Castrum Sancti Urbani* to move to a higher position which was easier to defend, precisely the *Castrum Alviti*; similarly, it should not surprise us if the *Castrum Foroli* disappeared from the record at the exact same time because its dwellers decided to seek a safer position.[28] Pietrobono argued that the *Castrum Sancti Patris* came into being after a process of synoecism whereby smaller centres, such as the *Cstrum Foroli* and other hamlets (the so-called 'contrada Valle'), came together for defensive purposes.[29]

All in all, what this section tried to do was assess the geo-historical landscape of seventh-century Lazio, reaching the conclusion that it would have been highly improbable that pilgrims traversed the region in such dire socio-economic conditions. At the same time, attention was bestowed on the popular tradition, which crept into the historical discourse, and presents a high degree of unreliability. The village with which the pilgrim/saint was to be associated did not come into existence until the early thirteenth century. We should also remind ourselves that

25 Pietrobono 2002: 144.

26 *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* 4 14; Santoro 1908: 25-26, 37-39.

27 Muratori 1833: 169; Santoro 1908: 38-39.

28 One should also be reminded that, until recently, a location at a few kilometres from the medieval town was called *Vetere*, *castel Vetere*, or *castro Vetere.* This could be a reference to an older inhabited centre. Scafi 1871: 65.

29 Pietrobono 2002: 146.

the hagiography of the saint had existed before the formation of the new urban centre. In this context, it would not be entirely farfetched that the civic formation required the adoption of a patron saint (perhaps to ennoble a cult that already existed?). The newly-formed urban community, then, adopted the story of Fulk, a story which had already been devised. And, in fact, before we comment on the implications of such a choice, we should first direct our attention toward Peter the Deacon and his *Vita Fulconis.*

Peter the Deacon and the *Vita Fulconis*: inventing hagiographies in the twelfth century

Anyone interested in the hagiography of St Fulk will not be able to go further back in time than the *Vita egregii confessoris Fulconis* by Peter the Deacon. Though the work is unfortunately lost to us, we can still try and reconstruct with as much accuracy as possible not only what its themes were, but also where the author might have taken his inspiration from. Peter the Deacon took advantage of themes/narratives typical of his time to create a novel hagiography.[30] Of course, we might be sceptical in seeing this work as preceding the aforementioned seventeenth-century sources; yet, if we look at the hagiographic development, we realise that the cult has only really been venerated in a small area between the Liris and the Comino Valley.[31] It is more than plausible, then, that the seventeenth-century sources were relying on accounts – whether written or oral – that dated back to Peter the Deacon's *Vita.*

The date of composition of the *Vita* has been mentioned before. Yet, for the sake of the argument, it is worth detailing why literary historians think that such a date is reliable. The three versions of Peter the Deacon's autobiographies have the *Vita egregii confessoris Fulconis* occupy second (chronological) place between two well-known compositions: namely,

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30 Spiteris 1979: 109-13. On the cultural influence of Peter the Deacon on Medieval literature, see Meyvaert 1955a; Bloch 1984; Pecere 1994: 27; Dell'Omo 1996a: 63-65.

31 Carcione 2002: 20.

the *Passio beatissimi Marci ac sociorum eius* and the *Vita sancti Placidi discipuli sancti Benedicti*.[32] These works were written during his exile in the town of Atina where the young monk, in his early twenties, was sent on account of the *invidia aemulorum suorum* (the envy of his rivals). Ultimately, he was there because he had sided with Abbot Oderisius II, who, in turn, had been deposed by Pope Honorius II.[33] Whatever the reason, Peter the Deacon's sojourn in Atina can be dated between AD 1127 and AD 1131 after which he was allowed to return to Monte Cassino. We might be even more precise; for the *Passio beatissimi Marci* was composed in AD 1128, while the *Vita sancti Placidi* was first put together between AD 1129 and AD 1130.[34] As a result, the *Vita Fulconis* must have been written in the intervening years.[35]

A connection between the hagiographic account and Atina, though not part of the popular hagiographic narrative, seems to have percolated through time. A seventeenth-century excerpt by Vitagliano, in fact, provides evidence for this. In detailing the life of St Fulk, the author admits that his source of inspiration was an older *Vita*, which was also sent to cardinal Francesco Boncompagni, archbishop of Naples.[36] A passage from this document reports that *Fulgus, Silionis Anglus, ex sociis quattuor unus, in quondam Rurae Atticae Vallis* (...) *Atinam petiit, ut inde per Cumini Vallem in latinum iter, Romam iturus se insinuaret* (Fulk, an Angle from Silions, the only one out of four companions, went to Atina, in what used to be the vales of Atticus, so that, through the Valley of Comino, he could reach Rome).[37] Even if we possess no secure information concerning this *Vita*'s date, it is telling that the element of Atina was included in Vitagliano's work. The fact that Peter the Deacon sojourned in Atina where he definitely composed a *Vita Fulconis* coupled with the saint's presence in the same place, as seen in Vitagliano's work, cannot be entirely casual.

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32 Codd. Casin. 361, 257, 450. In the Cod. Casin. 450, the *Vita sancti Placidi discipuli sancti Benedicti* is known as *Passio sanctissimi martyris Placidi discipuli sancti Benedicti*. See Meyvaert 1955b; Dell'Omo 1996b.
33 Carcione 2002: 21-22.
34 Rodgers 1972: 8-9.
35 Carcione 2002: 23.
36 Colafrancesco 1993: 123.
37 Vitagliano 1653: 129-30.

Yet can we ever know what Peter the Deacon included in the *Vita Fulconis*? Briefly put, we cannot — at least not with any certainty. Despite this, we should be able to shed light on the themes and literary choices adopted by the Benedictine librarian during his stay in Atina. At first, what should be transparent is the author's inventiveness which often included a fair degree of plagiarism.[38] This can be appreciated in the *Passio beatissimi Marci* and the *Vita sancti Placidi* alongside his more "historical" compositions. In particular, what can be gleaned is an interest in employing historical narratives to supply legitimacy for the cult of saints. The *Passio beatissimi Marci*, for instance, recounts the story of Marcus, a Galilean man, who found himself in Atina where he eventually met St Peter, who was on his way from Capua to Rome. He was converted by the *princeps apostolorum* and soon after ordained bishop.[39]

It should be no great mystery that Marcus' story was invented, but why? The scholarly opinion is that of seeing Peter the Deacon's *Passio beatissimi Marci* as a way to express gratitude toward Atina and its community for welcoming him during his exile.[40] Since the town had no episcopal see, Peter the Deacon sought to provide that for Atina in two ways: firstly, by highlighting a link with St Peter himself; secondly, by imbuing Marcus' story with all the elements typical of the hagiographies of martyrs. After the episcopal ordination, Marcus clashed with a group of pagans and the consul, who even bribed him to sacrifice to the gods. He was sent to prison, tortured, and eventually executed.[41] In order to highlight the importance of Atina, references to the town's mythical foundation and ancient past are mentioned.[42]

But the stress on Atina is not only present in the *Passio beatissimi Marci*. In the *Passio martyrum atinensium SS. Nicandri et Marciani*, for instance, Peter the Deacon goes as far as to change the established historical tradition. It is true that, by AD 1110, there was a church of St Marcianus *iuxta Atinum*;[43] yet, the story of the two saints had very little to do with Atina,

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38 Meyvaert 1963.
39 Bloch 1998: 81, 193-95.
40 Bloch 1991: 23-24; Bloch 1998: 131.
41 Bloch 1991: 201-4.
42 Livy 9.28.6; 10.39.5; Verg. *Aen.* 630; Ughelli 1720: 406; Tauleri 1702: 10.
43 Squilla 1971: 175.

since the events surrounding the martyrdom took place in Tomi on the Black Sea.[44] The cult must have reached Atina, as Herbert Bloch postulates, due to the geographical proximity to Venafro (ca. 50 km) where the two saints were particularly venerated.[45] Peter the Deacon would have also acquired some familiarity with the hagiography in Monte Cassino itself where the oldest manuscripts of the *vitae sanctorum* were from.[46] And in following the original story, he cannot but add his own interpretation. This is particularly prominent in the involvement of the bishop of Atina in the burial of the two martyrs and in the erection of a basilica on the tomb of St Marcus wherein the martyrs find their resting place.[47] At this point, we can already start to understand what the implications of the *Passio beatissimi Marci* might have been in relation to the creation of the bishopric of Atina. By inventing that Marcus had been appointed bishop, Peter the Deacon opened the door to an enigma: namely, the justification of a non-existent bishopric. Though Bloch seems to suggest that the list of the bishops of Atina represents a solution to the problem,[48] by creating an apostolic succession Peter the Deacon was not simply trying to solve a historical problem. He was also providing further legitimacy to his story. It is interesting, in fact, that the last three bishops of the list coincide in name and episcopal rule with the bishops of Sora.[49] The last, bishop Leo, in particular, was in charge of the see until AD 1059. Such a date was not chosen by chance: it is set far back in time so that none of Peter's contemporaries in Atina could actually remember the non-existence of the bishopric.

Shifting the attention to the *Vita sancti Placidi*, though not necessarily centred on Atina, it still showed Peter the Deacon's interest in manipulating history in order to legitimise contemporary power. Placidus, a well-known disciple of St Benedict of Nursia, was sent to Sicily where his father, Tertullus, had promised 18 *curtes* (i.e., estates) to Benedict.[50] The

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44 Lanzoni 1927 I: 176.
45 Bloch 1998: 87.
46 *Cod. Cas.* 145: 514-17; *Cod. Cas.* 146: 783-87; *Cod. Vall.* 8.
47 Bloch 1998: 88.
48 Bloch 1998: 123-25.
49 Fedele 1909; Kehr 1935: 197; Bloch 1998: 126.
50 *Chron. Cas.* 1.1.

choice of Sicily is explained by the fact that the martyrdom of Placidus and his companions took place in Messina at the hand of *Mamucha pirata*.[51] Peter the Deacon combined all these elements in his work and took care to manufacture Tertullus' donation:[52] the names for these *curtes* were taken from the *Itinerarium Antoninianum*, thus showing his knowledge of the ancient world.[53] Eventually, we understand what all this fiction amounted to when we realise that, in AD 1137, Emperor Lothair III confirmed these possessions in favour of Monte Cassino.[54]

In our understanding of Peter the Deacon's *Vita Fulconis* what should be of the utmost importance is that the theme of the pilgrim was popular throughout the twelfth and thirteenth century.[55] The explanation for this has been sought in the increased waves of pilgrimage that after the First Crusade prompted people to visit the Holy Land and other sacred places.[56] At the same time, one ought to be aware of other pilgrims who were not necessarily linked to the movement of people caused by the Crusades. In this context, it is worth mentioning the example of Gualfardo of Verona, who died in the homonymous town in AD 1127.[57] As an artisan/merchant from Augsburg, he incarnated all the features of the pilgrim and the ascetic, having led a solitary life in nature and, eventually, having moved into a semi-urban context where people would seek his help.[58] These elements of pilgrimage and Christian charity can also be perceived in the cases of Allucio di Campigliano (+ 1134) and Teobaldo d'Alba (+ 1150). The former, though not moving substantially from his native Tuscany, nevertheless became a proponent of charitable actions by founding a series of hospitals and churches.[59] The latter went onto a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, after which he was known for

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51 Bloch 1988: 99; Block 1998: 23.
52 Caspar 1909: 47-72.
53 Bloch 1998: 18, 24.
54 Bloch 1986: II, 771-900.
55 Vauchez 2008.
56 Cohen 1980; Gauthier 1983; Cardini 1991; Stopani 1992; Gai 1993; Cardini 1995: 275-89.
57 *AS* (Aprile III, 837-40).
58 Vauchez 1989: 60.
59 *AS (Oct. X, 235-36).*

helping the poor.[60] Still in the twelfth century is the case of Ranieri di Pisa, who, in a rather Franciscan manner, renounced his aristocratic up-bringing to lead a monastic life and help the poor.[61] The vicissitudes sur-rounding these pilgrims and ascetics meant also that a florid hagiograph-ical motif was developing. This is best exemplified in the *Vita Paschasii* where elements of charitable work have been pointed out as commonal-ities with the life of St Fulk.[62]

All in all, if we are to believe Filippo Carcione, Atina offered the 'me-moria religiosa',[63] namely the religious memory which inspired Peter the Deacon's *Vita Fulconis.* In other words, the monk, in writing this hagio-graphic account, took inspiration from the flow of pilgrim that went through Atina as a corridor between two valleys, the Liris and the Comino Valleys.[64] While this might be true, there is no specific reason for which we should see Atina occupy a special geographical position for pil-grimage routes. In fact, it would have been possible for a pilgrim to cross from one valley to the next in other locations. Even the notion whereby the cult of St Fulk was first venerated in Atina does not hold. As we have seen, while Peter the Deacon's Atinate production was aimed at increas-ing local prestige, other works, such as the *Vita sancti Placidi*, had no con-nections at all with the place. The inventiveness of Peter the Deacon would have been reflected in the *Vita Fulconis* without any need for a local historical basis. Rather than being associated with a specific place, the thematic choices of Peter were part and parcel of literary practices of his time. Pilgrims were becoming increasingly more important within soci-ety. Next, we focus on the reasons why they, and Fulk more specifically, might have been adopted as patron saints.

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60 Giordano 1929.
61 Caturegli 1968: col. 37-44; Kaftal 1952: col. 874-84.
62 Vuolo 1996; Carcione 2002: 32.
63 Carcione 2002: 19.
64 Bertolini 1993.

Adopting pilgrim saints: lay values

As briefly hinted at in the introduction, the presence of pilgrims and the adoption of pilgrim saints in Late-Medieval Italy points not just to a change of religious preferment, but also to a change of social attitudes. The cult of lay saints emerged at a time when the laity was acquiring a renewed societal importance,[65] especially in relation to the affirmation of the Italian Comuni. It should be apparent, moreover, that the increasing flow of pilgrimage to the Holy Land after the recapture of Jerusalem played a prominent role in making the lay role of the pilgrim more widespread.[66] The fact that lay pilgrims, animated by a desire to reach those places where Christ had lived and preached, would undertake perilous journeys made it possible for the figure of the pilgrim to become an *imago Christi*.[67] It is precisely by virtue of this association with Christ that pilgrims could access sainthood: apart from the vulnerability caused by the dangers of pilgrimage, these holy wanderers would spend the rest of their lives following Christian virtues, teachings, and doctrine. In several cases, as in the example of Fulk, they would even die on the road, thus emphasising even more the link with a life spent for Christ.

This new model of sainthood, with its emphasis on the emerging middle classes, contrasted quite starkly with the older, more traditional framework of episcopal patron saints, attached to the prestige of aristocracy.[68] In the twelfth century, even if the Church kept proposing new and ancient episcopal cults, these must have been unfit for patronal role; at best, they were appointed as co-patrons, as we see in Milan with Galdino who, nevertheless, did not reach the same level of importance as the ancient patron, Ambrose.[69] The novel saints that emerge from the laity are associated with the world of the artisans, the *artes*, and charitable institutions. Not only did these saints originate from outside the aristocracy

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65 One ought to remind oneself of the edited volume *I Laici nella "societas Christiana" dei secoli XI e XII*. See also Merlo 1989 and, for a contemporary case study, Tilatti 1995.

66 Vauchez 2008: 94.

67 Salvadori 2021: 390.

68 On the role of episcopal patron saints, namely those saints chosen from the body of bishops, see Golinelli 1991; Golinelli 1994: 576-87.

69 Cattaneo 1972.

and the High Church, but they were actively involved in improving the conditions – whether physical or spiritual – of their fellow citizens.[70] Just as in the popular accounts of Fulk, the hagiographies of these lay saints often highlight the transition from a wealthy to a more modest life. The literary trope to emphasise this is the dissemination of private property: by doing so, in the words of André Vauchez, these lay saints became 'saints du "Popolo"', part and parcel of a so-called middle class, which, ultimately, was the class fully aware of the societal and economic issues of the time.[71]

In the transition toward a lay sainthood what played a pivotal role in determining the status of saint was the notion of public service. The episcopal model had previously highlighted high status and heredity: the possibility of becoming a bishop, after all, was not a path available to everyone and certainly not to those of a middle and lower economic class. Though undertaking a pilgrimage was not a gratuitous experience, the majority of those who wanted to visit the holy places did not necessarily need to be aristocrats and were precisely from the middle classes. Merchants and artisans, in fact, would have had sufficient means to support themselves during a long voyage. At the same time, we should not forget that sainthood was not only determined by the voyage, but also by charitable assistance. It is interesting, in this landscape, that the aforementioned *vitae* contained this theme in relation to lay pilgrims. The legend of St Fulk, too, includes the passage wherein the saint spends time attending to the needy and the lepers. The fact that such a literary *topos* was preserved in the seventeenth-century version of the *vita* could be a useful indication that it had already been devised in the Late Middle Ages, precisely when such a theme was so popular. Such a way of expressing holiness and Christian values, though predicated upon money, was nevertheless attainable to a much larger social group; it was also a way to denote service to the citizenry and, broadly speaking, to the urban centre.[72]

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70 Vauchez 1989: 66.
71 Vauchez 1989: 66-67.
72 Vauchez 1989: 67.

Aside from the hagiographic sources, the historical record confirms the collective dimension of this 'rivoluzione della carità'.[73] The late-twelfth-century case of Raimondo, known as Palmerio, is a case in point. Upon his return from the Holy Land, and aware of the effects of the increased urbanisation rate, he decided to take under his protection and care orphans and prostitutes, attempting to reintroduce them into civic life.[74] The apex of the phenomenon was reached with the development of leper colonies or *leprosaria* that between the mid-twelfth and the thirteenth century dotted Europe.[75] Initially thought to be established in relation to a plague epidemics in the aftermath of the First Crusade, *leprosaria* have been more recently re-analysed, leading to a critique of the old model: in 2002, Piers Mitchell dismissed the leper epidemics as a myth, basing his argument not only on Medieval sources, but also on bioarchaeological evidence.[76] In justifying the spreading of such institutions, Mitchell pointed at a change in social values and attitudes whereby *leprosaria* were instituted as a way to help others and ensure entry into Heaven for the commissioner.[77] The fact that Fulk, upon his arrival in Santopadre, spends time helping lepers in a local *leprosarium* could be seen precisely vis-à-vis this change in religious attitude: a patron saint who had helped the needy in life would also reflect that on the community.

The role of the pilgrim, especially as a patron saint, would have reflected all these changes. As a novel urban centre, formed in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century, Santopadre had surely undergone a form of civic restructuring, especially if we are to believe that it was the result of a synoecistic process from various neighbouring communities. Despite this, it should go without saying that, as part of a civic formation, the patron saint would have played a pivotal role. The choice of Fulk was

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73 Vauchez 1993: 405.

74 Vauchez 1989: 62; Vauchez 1993: 405.

75 Miller & Nesbitt 2014: 119-38. See Bériac 1988: 164-65 for an increase of *leprosaria* in France; Nasalli-Rocca 1938: 265-67.

76 Almost a century before, the dismissal of the epidemics myth had been the main thesis of Kurth (1907). See also Mitchell 2002.

77 Mitchell 2002: 173.

made because it granted a degree of self-representation whereby the pilgrim saint was a layman who encapsulated the civic values of society.

Adopting pilgrim saints: bringing the peripheries at home

The emergence of lay values in relation to the middle classes explains the phenomenon of lay sainthood only in relation to socio-historical changes. Apart from embodying the values of the laity, pilgrim saints proved enticing precisely because of their travelling character. In this section, then, I shall show that pilgrimage or, more specifically, accounts of pilgrimage could be a way for linking the peripheries to the centre.

Though pilgrimage can acquire several meanings, in Late-Medieval Europe the focus was placed on its Christian character: pilgrims directed their steps toward the great centres of Christianity — whether Rome, the Holy Land, or any of the other major sanctuaries scattered throughout Europe (from the Gargano to Compostela). However important, pilgrimage, especially long-distance pilgrimage, could not be undertaken by everyone: there were economic consideration that rendered these extended travels practically difficult if not impossible. Even if pilgrims could have resorted to more local sites, the appeal and importance of the great locations of Christianity would have occupied centre stage in the Medieval mindset.[78] This is why displaying knowledge of these sites would have been deemed as extremely important. Eye-witnessing these places meant that one could bear witness to the reality of the Bible and, ultimately, Christ's existence on Earth. Though dated to the fifteenth century, the work of Felix Fabri, the *Evagatorium*, attests precisely to this phenomenon.[79] In his visit to the Holy Land, Fabri described how he actively interacted with the landscape: for instance, he walked into the tomb of Absalom in the valley of Josaphat.[80] This sort of behaviour allowed him to even check and confute episodes from the Bible, as in the case of the Pool of Siloam, which, according to him, was not the place

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78 Geary 2018: 163-76.
79 Beebe 2014; Schröder 2014; Reichert & Rosenstock 2018.
80 Hassler 1843-1849: I 408.

where David had seen Bathsheba.[81] Of course, we will never know how the hagiographic account of Fulk relayed — if at all — the description of his pilgrimages. Despite that, the association between the pilgrim patron saint and the Christian places of pilgrimage, which, in his case, would have been two (both the Holy Land and the Gargano),[82] would have played an important role in strengthening people's faith. For most people, that simple connection would have sufficed without necessarily requiring a detailed and faithful eye-witnessing account. As Stefan Schröder puts it,[83] 'when it comes to the question of believing, when it was necessary to look into the sphere of transcendence, eye-witnessing reached its limits'.

Another reason why a pilgrim like Fulk would have been adopted as a patron saint relates to the need to know the world: in the words of Nicole Chareyron,[84] 'the twelfth-century pilgrim was more of an intellectual, as open to the knowledge of things spiritual as of secular realities. He complemented the traditional descriptions of sites and sanctuaries with his own spontaneous observations and also contributed to the dissemination of legends'. Someone who not only had travelled to the Holy Land, but who had also come from a far-away land encapsulates this need better than anyone else. The impetus behind pilgrimage brought about by the First Crusade would have ensured that stories about those foreign places would be told throughout Europe. In turn, this prompted pilgrims to embark on voyages not simply as a mere *imitatio Christi*: they would have been enticed by the prospect of adventures and of visiting exotic places.[85] Going back to Fabri's account, though he wants the readers to be clear about the pious and religious motives behind his travels, he nevertheless cannot but report wondrous stories, like that of young women dancing and provoking lustful thoughts in any man.[86] Such an episode was inserted into the wider critical approach to Islam,[87] which must have

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81 Hassler 1843-1849: I 417-18.
82 Especially for the Gargano, see Jaritz 2011 on the role of the visual representation of rural space on its impact.
83 Schröder 2020: 276.
84 Chareyron 2005: 3.
85 Nolte 1997; Reichert 2005.
86 Hassler 1843-1849: III 36, 202.
87 Daniel 1960; Tolan 2002; Di Cesare 2012.

been pronounced in light of the Crusades. In other words, pilgrimage accounts – whether explicitly or implicitly – were also about the "Other", more specifically about bringing the "Other" from the peripheries to the centre (seen as the urban community). This, of course, does not mean that there was a form of acceptance toward foreign and exotic cultures. Rather, what a story like that of Fulk would have done was to show that a community could elect a patron that had experienced the "Other". By doing so, the patron had also allowed the community to experience the "Other" and, thus, partake in the wider phenomenon of familiarising with the "Other" so present in the Late Middle Ages.

Pilgrims, ultimately, while being mostly lay people, presented other features that made them attractive as patron saints. Their laity could indeed appeal to emerging middle classes, as in the case of the newly-formed Santopadre. At the same time, their "worldly" character, epitomised by their destination and, in the case of the English pilgrim, even the provenance, reflected the need to show off familiarity with Christian places and, more broadly, with exotic, distant locations and cultures.[88] The next step is that to see how these narratives fit practically within the historical landscape of late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth century Liris and Comino Valleys.

Adopting pilgrim saints: urban competition

The cult of pilgrim saints in the Liris and the Comino Valleys cannot be fully understood without bringing urban competition in the picture. That need to showcase familiarity with the wondrous Christian world, as detailed in the previous section, acquires a much stronger significance once we realise that various urban centres employed pilgrims and pilgrimage to enhance local prestige.

The notion of urban competition is best exemplified by how neighbouring towns in the Liris and the Comino Valleys decided to adopt pilgrim saints within the local pantheon of saints. If we re-examine the popular tradition of the English pilgrims cited at the beginning of this article, we should remember that St Fulk was thought to have travelled together

88 See Russo 2008.

with other three companions,[89] who, ultimately, became patron saints of other, neighbouring towns: St Ardwyn in modern-day Ceprano, St Bernard in modern-day Roccadarce, and St Gerard in modern-day Gallinaro. Despite the popular tradition, it had already become apparent in the seventeenth century that these companions could not have travelled together. While Vitagliano seems to be the only one to defend this version, the Bollandists had identified a progression whereby Ardwyn dated to the seventh century, and both Bernard and Gerard to the late eleventh century.[90] At least for the case of Gerard, this contemporaneous date with Fulk is also confirmed by an earlier document, a twelfth-century parish register preserved in the episcopal curia of Sora. This so-called *Libretto Gotico*, reproduced in the *vita* of the Bollandists, specifies that *tertio anno postquam omnis spiritualis potentia, Spiritus Dei afflata ad liberationem Sancti Sepulchri sumpserat arma*, Gerard arrived in Gallinaro, *Arvernensi provincia genitus* (On the third year after the entire spiritual army, moved by the Spirit of God in order to free the Holy Sepulchre, had taken up arms... born in the Auvergne region).[91] What should be apparent at this point is that, at the end of the eleventh century, pilgrims were reaching towns in southern Lazio and could be, after their death, being adopted as local patron. The mention of the provenance, the Auvergne, is in striking contrast with the popular tradition that sees Gerard as coming from England. This, in my opinion, should point to the fact that the exact location meant very little and that what really mattered was the foreign provenance of the saint-to-be. Ultimately, should we not see Peter the Deacon's *Vita Fulconis* in this historical landscape whereby pilgrims were increasingly becoming more common in the Liris and the Comino Valley, eventually being elected as patrons? After all, the Benedictine librarian wrote the *Vita Fulconis* roughly thirty years after the arrival of Gerard. The proximity, moreover, of Gallinaro to Atina, where Peter was living in exile, should point to the fact that he could have been aware of pilgrims acquiring local importance.

In many cases, the adoption of these pilgrim saints was not without struggle. Nowadays, the popular story tells us that Fulk was the patron

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89   This theme is also treated in Mazzoleni 1994: 313-29.
90   *AS (Octobris XI)*, 653; Recchia 2002: 90.
91   *AS (Augusti II)*, 695.

saint of Santopadre from the start. Little do we know that the cult of Fulk had also played a brief role as patronal cult in the diocesan centre of Aquino. Filippo Ferrari, in his study of the saint's life, included elements which were not necessarily part of the popular story: not only did Fulk travel with two companions, respectively Grimoald and Eleutherius, but he also chose Aquino as his final stop to his pilgrimage.[92] And while, as said above, the church *S. Fulconis* appeared in the *Rationes Decimarum* of 1325, it is also true that the *Martyrologium Romanum* relates *apud Aquinum, Sancti Fulci Confessoris*.[93] The adoption of the cult at Santopadre, moreover, did not occur without struggles against the local episcopal authority: in the popular version of the story recorded by the Bollandists, in fact, the local bishop had initially refused to recognise the saint. In this I agree with Carcione when he argues that, though the incredulity of local church authorities is a long-lasting *topos*,[94] still this element in the cult story of St Fulk belies the pride felt by an important urban centre, such as that of Aquino, in relinquishing claims upon a local saint to the advantage of a smaller peripheral settlement.[95] It is more than plausible that the cult played a pivotal role in the program of the local bishop Guerino I (ca. 1125-1136), who was interested in boosting the pride of the community in its ancestral saints: Peter the Deacon, then, supported the bishop by writing the *Vita Fulconis* and the *Vita Constantii* (both works are mentioned in his autobiography), precisely to emphasise the role of St Fulk and St Constant, still the local patron saint.[96] The reasons for which Peter the Deacon should have wanted to carry out such a work are explained by political and family relations.[97]

The rise of lay sainthood, coupled with the interest toward the "Other", as detailed in the previous sections, would have meant that the adoption of foreign pilgrims as patron saints was dictated by a sense of inter-local competition. The fact that the *Vita Fulconis* was written in the period when these pilgrims were traversing the Valleys and dying

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92 Ferrari 1613: 304.
93 Inguanez, Mattei Cerasoli, Sella 1942: 35.
94 Golinelli 1996.
95 Carcione 2002: 47.
96 Carcione 2000: 21-28.
97 This is not within the aims of the article. See Carcione 2002: 48-49.

therein, eventually becoming patron saints, should not hint only at a thematic inspiration. Rather, since the hagiography had a practical use, namely that of furnishing an existing cult with prestige, these themes are also a way for settlements to increase local pride. The transition of the cult of St Fulk from Aquino to Santopadre emphasises how these themes still played an important role in settlement status even almost after a century.

Conclusions

Starting with the seventeenth-century sources on the cult of St Fulk, this article has shown that the oral tradition needed to be recontextualised in light of topographical, archaeological, and historical evidence.[98] The cult of the foreign pilgrim was, ultimately, employed in order to increase the prestige of a settlement that had borne witness to a process of civic formation. First of all, the seventh-century date for the cult has been disproven: southern Lazio at the time was so ravaged by the Lombard invader as to discourage pilgrimage across it. It is only from the eighth century that the influx of pilgrims increased. At the same time, the article paid attention to more local topographical dynamics. The urban centre with which the cult of St Fulk was associated, namely Santopadre, does not appear on the historical record until the early thirteenth century. The adoption of the cult, then, ought to be viewed as taking place together with a phenomenon of civic formation: the transition from *Castrum Foroli* to Santopadre brought about a need to cement communal, civic ties; and what better solution than to do so around a new patron saint?

What has also transpired from the analysis is that the development of the saint's hagiography was earlier than the adoption of the patron saint in Santopadre. In particular, it has been established that a *Vita Fulconis* was written by Peter the Deacon during his exile in Atina between AD 1128 and AD 1131. It was sufficient to examine his works attributed to his

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98   See Palmer 2018: 15-40 on the creation of hagiographies in the Early-Medieval context.

stay in Atina to understand that the invention of cults and hagiographies was not entirely unknown to him. As an exile, in fact, he tried to display gratitude to the community that made him feel welcome by manipulating local traditions and ennobling local cults. Though the evidence for a cult of St Fulk in Atina is not extant, the *Vita Fulconis* should be intended as part and parcel of the author's literary practice.

The last part of the article dealt with the crucial question of motive. Briefly put, why was the cult developed and what was the point of its adoption in Santopadre? This question was analysed in close relation with the cultural significance of pilgrim saints. In the aftermath of the First Crusade, with the intensification of pilgrimage toward the Holy Land, Europe bore witness to an increasing presence of pilgrim saints. The main feature of these characters was their lay origin. While consecrated bishops and martyrs had been the favourite choice as local patron saints, from the late eleventh century that choice had fallen on lay individuals that demonstrated the merits and virtues of the rising "middle classes". And this would fit well with the adoption of St Fulk as the patron of the newly formed town of Santopadre. The urban elites would have wanted a saint that reflected their laity away from the aristocratic background of the bishop saints. At the same time, such an explanation offers only a partial answer: after all, there must be a specific significance for the choice of a pilgrim, especially one of foreign extraction. This was explained in light of the pilgrim as an eyewitness of Christian sacred places and wondrous travels. Hence, by choosing Fulk as a patron saint, the community would have benefited from the association by appearing as worldly.

Another aspect that was emphasised in this context was that of local competition. The Liris and the Comino Valley saw several urban centres elect foreign pilgrims as patron saints. The aforementioned notion of worldliness, then, would have become more pronounced whereby some towns could boast the link with distant travellers animated by Christian virtue. In some instances, as in the case of Gallinaro, this link was even physical since the patron saint, St Gerard, was historically attested there at the end of the twelfth century. The next step is that of carrying out

contextual studies on the broader phenomenon in the two valleys, paying attention to the formation of the various hagiographies and their relationship to urban settlements.

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Luca Ricci
University of Oxford
luca.ricci@some.ox.ac.uk