

ESSAYS ON LAY AND ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNITIES IN AND AROUND THE MEDIEVAL URBAN PARISH

MARIA AMÉLIA CAMPOS
COORD.



This book gives a definite contribution to a wide-ranging reflection on the medieval parish and the secular clergy, considered within a long-term chronological framework and a wide geographical scope that allows the analysis and confrontation of case studies from the Iberian kingdoms, Northern France, Italian Piedmont, Lombardy, Flanders, Transylvania, and North of the Holy Roman Empire. The chapters published in this book tells of dynamics of social, religious, and cultural exclusion and inclusion within lay communities, of the constitution of family elites and parish confraternities; it shows the composition and the recruitment rationales of the parish clergy and of some ecclesiastical chapters with a duty of *Cura animarum*; it examines the relations of the churches and parochial clergy with more prominent – secular and regular – ecclesiastical institutions in the context of the establishment and exercise of the right of patronage; finally, it explores the role of the secular clergy in the application of justice, based on the characterization of their cultural and juridical formation.



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SUMMARY

PREFACE

- Maria Amélia Campos, Tiago Viúla de Faria and Flávio Miranda* 7
- 1. REFLEXIONS ON URBAN PARISH COMMUNITIES IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CURRENT HISTORIOGRAPHY**
Maria Amélia Campos..... 9
- 2. CITY CHAPTERS WITH *CURA ANIMARUM*. TERRITORIAL RECRUITMENT AND SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE CLERGY IN NORTH-WESTERN ITALY (TWELFTH-FIFTEENTH CENTURY)**
Francesco Cissello & Elena Corniolo 23
- 3. BISHOPS AND DIGNITARIES OF COIMBRA IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY: A PROSOPOGRAPHICAL STUDY**
Maria do Rosário Morujão 63
- 4. THE LEGAL EXPERTISE OF THE PARISH CLERGY IN LATE MEDIEVAL TRANSYLVANIA (LATE FOURTEENTH TO EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY)**
Adinel C. Dincă 85
- 5. “*QUI MISERIT MERDAM IN BOCCA ALTERIUS PECTET CCC SOLIDOS:*” EPISCOPAL LAWCODES AND LORDSHIP IN TWELFTH CENTURY CASTILE AND LEÓN**
Kyle C. Lincoln 121
- 6. A CHURCH UNDER INFLUENCE: THE CISTERCIAN CONVENT OF ODIVELAS AND THE PATRONAGE OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SÃO JULIÃO DE SANTARÉM (IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)**
Mário Farelo & Luís Miguel Rêpas 151

7. THE EXERCISE OF PATRONAGE BY THE <i>COLEGIADA DE GUIMARÃES</i> IN THE CHURCH OF SÃO MIGUEL DO CASTELO DURING THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES	
<i>Aires Gomes Fernandes</i>	177
8. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION BETWEEN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY: THE CASE OF THE “LOMBARD” FINANCIERS (THIRTEENTH–SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES)	
<i>Ezio Claudio Pia</i>	199
9. MEDIEVAL JEWISH QUARTERS IN NORTHERN FRANCE AND URBAN PARISHES (TWELFTH-FOURTEENTH CENTURIES): PLACES OF IDENTITY AND COHABITATION	
<i>Manon Banoun</i>	223
10. FROM NEIGHBOURS TO ENEMIES AND BACK. JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN NORTHERN EUROPE	
<i>Cordelia Heß</i>	255
11. ‘ARTIFICIAL FAMILIES’ WITHIN THE PARISH: INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONFRATERNITIES AND PARISH CHURCHES IN MEDIEVAL COIMBRA	
<i>Ana Rita Rocha</i>	279
12. EPILOGUE	
<i>Beat Kümin</i>	315

**CITY CHAPTERS WITH *CURA ANIMARUM*.
TERRITORIAL RECRUITMENT AND SOCIAL
COMPOSITION OF THE CLERGY
IN NORTH-WESTERN ITALY
(TWELFTH-FIFTEENTH CENTURIES)¹**

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Abstract: Our paper aims to analyse the recruitment processes and the social composition of some city chapters with *cura animarum* functions in North-Western Italy in the late Middle Ages. Case studies will be the cathedral chapter of Vercelli and the two chapters of Aosta (the regular chapter of Sant’Orso and the cathedral chapter). These topics will be discussed through the analysis of an heterogeneous set of documents, mostly unpublished, preserved in the respective capitular archives. Vercelli and Aosta were both similar and different towns, making a comparative study of particular interest. The two urban centres developed differences in the institutions of city self-government. On the other hand, the importance of the diocesan Church, not only ecclesiastical but also political, was similar. Another

¹ Francesco Cissello is the author of §1; Elena Corniolo is the author of §2.

fundamental common element was the location within the area of the *Via Francigena*, which connected the territories in the North and South of the Alps, leading to a conspicuous mobility of goods and people. Through the analysis of some representative cases, we will highlight the existence of differences in clergy recruitment depending on the territorial context, but also on the functions carried out by the various attested ecclesiastical communities.

Resumo: Este trabalho tem como objetivo analisar os processos de recrutamento e a composição social de alguns cabidos urbanos, com funções de *cura animarum*, no Noroeste de Itália, no final da Idade Média. Os casos de estudo serão o cabido da catedral de Vercelli e os dois cabidos de Aosta (o cabido regular de Sant’Orso e o cabido da catedral). Estes temas serão abordados através da análise de um conjunto heterogéneo de documentos, na sua maioria inéditos, conservados nos respetivos arquivos capitulares. Vercelli e Aosta eram cidades com semelhanças e diferenças, o que torna o estudo comparativo de particular interesse. Os dois centros urbanos desenvolveram diferenças nas instituições de governo autónomo da cidade. Por outro lado, a importância da Igreja diocesana, não só eclesiástica, mas também política, era semelhante. Outro elemento comum fundamental é a sua localização na zona da “Via Francigena”, que ligava os territórios a Norte e a Sul dos Alpes, permitindo uma notória mobilidade de bens e pessoas. Através da análise de alguns casos representativos, evidenciaremos a existência de diferenças no recrutamento do clero em função do contexto territorial, mas também das funções desempenhadas pelas várias comunidades eclesiásticas atestadas.

This paper aims to analyse the recruitment processes and the social composition of some city chapters with *cura animarum* functions in North-Western Italy in the late Middle Ages. Case studies are the cathedral chapter of Vercelli and the two chapters of Aosta (the regular chapter of Sant’Orso and that of the cathedral). These topics were

studied through the analysis of an heterogeneous set of documents, mostly unpublished, preserved in the respective capitular archives and through a comparison with the historiography.

The towns of Vercelli and Aosta shared similarities and differences, making a comparative study particularly relevant. Although the two urban centres developed differences in the institutions of city self-government, the ecclesiastical and political importance of the diocesan Church was similar. Another fundamental common element was their location within the area of the *Via Francigena*, which connected the territories in the North and South of the Alps, leading to a conspicuous mobility of goods and people. The exchanges between these cities were frequent and involved also ecclesiastical people².

These chapters, aside from controlling churches with parish functions (the cathedral itself, in Vercelli; other parishes, in Aosta), enjoyed the right to elect the bishop and governed the diocese together with him. These features allow the theme of *cura animarum* to be analysed from an unusual but interesting perspective³. Particular attention was given to the presence of clerics of foreign origin in both cathedrals and in the priory of Sant'Orso. These data will be related to well-known phenomena in historiography: on the one hand, the attractiveness of these ecclesiastical institutions in the

² For a reflection about the openness of the Alps in the Middle Ages and the consequent mobility, see Giuseppe Sergi, *Antidoti all'abuso della storia. Medioevo, medievisti, smentite* (Napoli: Liguori, 2010), 161-236 and, more recently, Stefano De Bosio, *Frontiere. Arte, luogo, identità ad Aosta e nelle Alpi occidentali. 1490-1540* (Roma: Officina Libraria, 2021).

³ Even in the context of a revival of studies on Italian cathedral chapters in recent decades, the subject of *cura animarum* carried out by canons remains scarcely frequented by historiography: see Emanuele Curzel, "Le quinte e il palcoscenico. Appunti storiografici sui capitoli delle cattedrali italiane", in *Canonici delle cattedrali nel medioevo* (Verona: Cierre, 2003). The main reference on the topic remains the study of Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, "Canoniche regolari, capitoli cattedrali e «cura animarum»", in *Pievi e parrocchie in Italia nel basso Medioevo, sec. 13.-15. Atti del 6. Convegno di storia della Chiesa in Italia* (Roma: Herder editrice e libreria, 1984). See also, for more specific references to Vercelli and Aosta, below, notes 12-13, 32-36.

medium-long range and, on the other hand, the grounding of the clergy in the local social context⁴.

Considering the different research methods experienced for the two case studies, we decided to organize the text in two sections identified by geography: the first paragraph will be dedicated to Vercelli, the second one to Aosta. The research topics, therefore, will be the common thread inside the two parts of the article. In the last paragraph, instead, we adopt a thematic perspective.

Both case studies show that social and geographical recruitment depended above all on the function performed by the local clergy. The analysis of some representative cases in the diocese of Vercelli allows us to highlight the existence of a minor clergy in the cathedral, dependent on the chapter, but more involved in the *cura animarum* than the canons. These priests were generally from humble families and less involved in geographic mobility than members of the cathedral chapter. Reconstructing the sequences between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries of the most important offices associated with the two chapters and the three city parishes of Aosta, we find that clergy with *cura animarum*, even when the priests were canons,

⁴ The relationship between social prominence in the diocese and a career as a canon is a traditional topic in historiography: see Marino Berengo, *L'Europa delle città. Il volto della società urbana europea tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), 702; Roberto Bizzocchi, *Chiesa e potere nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), 17, 21-26; Andrea Tilatti, "Capitoli e canonici. Esempi e riflessioni", in *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano, 3. Il mondo ecclesiastico (secoli XII-XV)*, eds. Sandro Carocci and Amedeo De Vincentiis (Roma: Viella, 2017), 243-263. The mobility of the cathedral clergy, already significant in the municipal age, increased significantly from the 14th century onwards: see, for some interesting case studies in Italy and France, Mauro Ronzani, "Vescovi, capitoli e strategie famigliari nell'Italia comunale", in *Storia d'Italia. Annali, 9: La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, eds. Giorgio Chittolini and Giovanni Miccoli (Torino: Einaudi, 1986); Pascal Montaubin, «Étrangers en Chrétienté: clercs italiens en France et en Angleterre (fin XII^e-mi XIV^e siècle)», in *L'étranger au Moyen Âge. XXX^e Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2000). Such dynamics have been observed, with obvious difference due to the local context, in recent studies devoted to a single chapter, over a wide chronological span: see, for instance, Paolo Rosso, *Negli stalli del coro. I canonici del capitolo cattedrale di Torino (secoli XI-XV)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014); Emanuele Curzel, *I canonici e il capitolo della cattedrale di Trento dal XII al XV secolo* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2001).

was closely tied to the local context. When the two city chapters opened to the power dynamics that involved the Savoy Church between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the *cura animarum* continued to be done mainly by local people, generally of humble social origins. Therefore, both dioceses experienced at least two distinct levels of action: the high level involving the bishops, the city chapters and the most important ecclesiastical and religious local institutions and the low level represented by the clergy with *cura animarum*. The people who held the different offices shared the places where they performed their function and interacted with each other, but they usually came from different social and geographical backgrounds⁵.

1. Minor clergy in Vercelli cathedral (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Vercelli, situated halfway between Turin and Milan, was one of the biggest and most important centres in the current Piedmont region, in North-Western Italy⁶. In these centuries the city, like the other *comuni*, had its own self-government, and its history is characterized by strong demographic development and territorial expansion in central-eastern Piedmont⁷.

⁵ Both Vercelli and, above all, Aosta seem to have been partial exceptions in a panorama of Northern Italy in which the geographical mobility of the lower-middle clergy with *cura animarum* increased strongly from the 14th century onwards (see below, note 21).

⁶ See below, Map 1: an image of the medieval diocese of Vercelli from *Rationes decimarum Italiae nei secoli 13. e 14. Lombardia et Pedemontium*, ed. Maurizio Rosada (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1990).

⁷ A dated but still important synthesis of the city's history is that of Vittorio Mandelli, *Il Comune di Vercelli nel Medioevo. Studi Storici*, I-IV (Vercelli: Tipografia Guglielmoni, 1857-1861). For more recent historiography, see: *Vercelli nel secolo XII. Atti del quarto Congresso storico vercellese* (Vercelli: Saviolo, 2005); *Vercelli nel secolo XIII. Atti del primo Congresso storico vercellese* (Vercelli: S.E.T.E., 1984); Laura Baietto, "Vescovi e comuni: l'influenza della politica pontificia nella prima metà del secolo XIII a Ivrea e Vercelli", *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 100 (2002): 507-546; Simonetta Pozzati, "I Tizzoni e la parte ghibellina a Vercelli nella seconda metà del Duecento", *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 118 (2020); Riccardo Rao, "Comune e signoria a Vercelli (1285-1335)", in *Vercelli nel secolo XIV. Atti del quinto Congresso storico vercellese*, eds. Alessandro Barbero and Rinaldo Comba (Vercelli: Saviolo, 2010).

The importance of the city also derived from the relevance of the diocesan Church, which had its centre in the cathedral of Sant'Eusebio. The Church of Vercelli enjoyed a privileged relationship with the Papal See and had fairly close relations with other dioceses in Northern Italy and also with territories north of the Alps. Indeed, from the middle of the twelfth century until the end of the thirteenth, important bishops from Lombardy, Emilia and Valle d'Aosta were active in Vercelli. Many canons and religious from the same territories arrived in the city at the same time, while the presence at the papal court of a number of cardinals from the diocese gave the Vercelli clerics the opportunity to obtain benefices in French, English and Belgian cathedrals⁸.

The attractiveness of the Church of Vercelli was also due to the fact that both the cathedral chapter and the religious orders were centres of high-level teaching and cultural elaboration⁹.

At the same time, the diocesan Church was strongly integrated into the city environment. We can consider two aspects in particular: on the one hand, the important political role that bishops maintained in the city and diocese throughout the thirteenth century¹⁰; on the other, the strong presence of the urban elite in the cathedral clergy¹¹.

⁸ See: Maria Pia Alberzoni, "Vercelli e il Papato", in *Vercelli nel secolo XII*; Laura Minghetti Rondoni, "La chiesa eusebiana tra papato e impero nel secolo XII", in *Vercelli nel secolo XII*; Francesco Panero, *Una signoria vescovile nel cuore dell'Impero: funzioni pubbliche, diritti signorili e proprietà della Chiesa di Vercelli dall'età tardocarolingia all'età sveva* (Vercelli: Società Storica Vercellese, 2004). See also below, note 19.

⁹ See: Grado Giovanni Merlo, "I canonici dei capitoli cattedrali", in *Vercelli nel secolo XII*; Paolo Rosso, *Studio e poteri. Università, istituzioni e cultura a Vercelli fra XIII e XIV secolo* (Torino: Zamorani, 2010); Paolo Rosso, "«Constitutur magister idoneus a prelato». La ricezione in area subalpina delle disposizioni dei concili lateranensi III e IV sull'istruzione del clero", *Reti medievali Rivista* 17/1 (2016): 533-536.

¹⁰ See: Panero, *Una signoria vescovile*; Baietto, "Vescovi e comuni", 507-546; Flavia Negro, "«Et sic foret una magna confusio». *Le ville a giurisdizione mista nel Vercellese dal XIII al XV secolo*", in *Vercelli fra Tre e Quattrocento. Atti del sesto Congresso storico vercellese*, ed. Alessandro Barbero (Vercelli: Società Storica Vercellese, 2014), 401-412.

¹¹ The strong presence of the urban elite in the cathedral chapter is a feature that partly distinguishes that of Vercelli from the other two major chapters in Piedmont, Novara and Asti, where the influence of the local aristocracy was stronger: see, in general, Rosso, "«Constitutur magister idoneus a prelato»", 523-524; Hagen Keller, "Origine sociale e formazione del clero cattedrale nei secoli XI e XII nella Germania

The cathedral of Sant'Eusebio was the meeting point between the two main characteristics of the Vercelli diocesan Church: the wide-ranging relations and its roots in the city. In fact, the cathedral had several functions: it was the seat of the episcopate and the chapter of canons, but also a church with parish functions for a portion of the city's population, and for the people of some villages of the diocese where it administered local churches¹². This plurality of functions mirrored articulated composition of the cathedral clergy, that in Vercelli, as in other Italian cathedrals, consisted of several communities of clergymen.

Firstly, there was, as we have just said, a chapter of canons whose functions are fairly clearly delineated, thanks to the abundance of sources and the comparison with other dioceses of Northern Italy. What founded the superiority of the canons over the rest of the diocesan clergy was undoubtedly their proximity and assistance to the bishop in governing the diocese; on the other hand, there is little evidence of canonical involvement in the administration of the sacraments¹³.

This is one of the reasons to think that the *cura animarum* was largely delegated to other types of clergymen present at the cathedral, referred to as *decumani*, *cappellani* or (sometimes) *conversi* of the cathedral. These clerics were excluded from the 'political' tasks of the chapter, but there are some indications that they were more

e nell'Italia settentrionale", in *Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche della «societas Christiana» dei secoli XI-XII. Diocesi, pievi e parrocchie. Atti della sesta settimana internazionale di studio* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1977). See also bibliography cited below, notes 16, 18.

¹² The *cura animarum* over the rest of the city's population fell entirely, at least until the 12th century, to the ancient cathedral of Santa Maria, where a minor chapter of canons had its seat. Here, however, I will only deal with the clergy of Sant'Eusebio. About the parish functions of the two churches, see Giuseppe Ferraris, *Le chiese "stazionali" delle rogazioni minori a Vercelli dal secolo X al secolo XIV* (Vercelli: Chiais, 1995), 7-9, 113-115, note 24.

¹³ For the rights of canons in the government of the diocese see, for example, Curzel, *I canonici*, 361-439. The studies on the Vercelli chapter mostly take a prosopographical approach, but the functions of the canons are clear from the sources: for example, they exercised the right of electing bishops in the second half of the 12th century: Giuseppe Colombo, ed., "I Necrologi Eusebiani", *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 6 (1901): 6, doc. 694 (see also below, notes 16, 18).

involved in *cura animarum* than canons. In fact, unlike the canons, the majority of these clerics were priests (not deacons, subdeacons, or acolytes). So they could administrate sacraments: this is the reason why, in canons' wills, *decumani* or *cappellani* are often charged of celebrating masses *pro anima*¹⁴. It is also important the comparison with other dioceses of Northern Italy (the best-known case being Milan) where there was also a group of cathedral clerics, not canons, whose task was the administration of the sacraments¹⁵. It is interesting to investigate whether the different role of the group of canons, on the one hand, and of the minor clergy of the cathedral, on the other, corresponds to very different social and territorial origins: this is precisely our objective.

Unfortunately, historiography has given insufficient attention to the composition of the cathedral clergy in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries (probably also because of a documentation abundant but mostly unpublished). A few biographies of canons with a high cultural background have been studied, but without a general focus on the social and territorial composition of the chapter¹⁶. Even less attention

¹⁴ For an example of a chaplain in charge of celebrating masses *pro anima* every week, see the will of canon *Salienbeni de Torcello* (Vercelli, Archivio Capitolare [ACVc], Atti Privati, cartella V, May 6, 1241).

¹⁵ See, in general, Fonseca, "Canoniche regolari, capitoli cattedrali e «cura animarum»". The best-known case of division of the cathedral clergy between canons and *decumani* is, of course, that of Milan. Here, however, the *decumani* also officiated at all the other city churches, while in Vercelli they seem to have been incardinated only in the cathedral or the other capitular church of Santa Maria (see, for Milan, Enrico Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche milanesi", in *Storia di Milano*, IV: *Dalle lotte contro il Barbarossa al primo signore (1152-1310)* (Milano: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1954), 689-703; for Vercelli, see below, notes 17, 18).

¹⁶ Recent studies on the clergy of Vercelli cathedral have focused almost exclusively on the 14th century; see: Gianmario Ferraris, "I canonici della chiesa di S. Eusebio di Vercelli (sec. XIV-1435). Spunti di riflessione e schede biografiche", in Barbero, *Vercelli fra Tre e Quattrocento*. For the earlier period, only a few biographies of clerics with a high cultural profile have been examined: see bibliography cited above, note 9. Mandelli also compiled a list of the canons who held the most important roles in the chapter: Mandelli, *Il comune di Vercelli*, III, 106-112.

has been paid to the cathedral's minor clergy, both with respect to the biographies of individual clerics and their roles¹⁷.

For these reasons, I will not be able to provide, here, exhaustive answers, but only some general indications, deriving from the research I have been carrying out during and after my doctoral thesis on the mobility of clerics and religious in the communal Vercelli¹⁸.

Then, two cases of particular interest will show the differences that could exist between the biographies of canons and of other clerics of the cathedral.

1.1. Canons and cathedral's minor clergy: a different territorial recruitment

Generally speaking, there were fewer clerics from other dioceses in the cathedral's minor clergy than in the chapter of canons.

Indeed, the wide-ranging mobility of clergy usually depended on proximity to a bishop or a member of the papal court, or was linked to attendance of a university or cathedral school. These opportunities concerned above all the canons of the cathedrals, who were in fact the part of the secular clergy most involved in wide-ranging mobility in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (not only in Vercelli, but

¹⁷ Only Mandelli provided an incomplete list of the *decumani* of Vercelli and noted that their role was «rivolto a coadiuvare i Canonici *ordinarii* nel coro»: Mandelli, *Il comune di Vercelli*, III, 112-118. See, for some documents concerning the *decumani* of Sant'Eusebio: Domenico Arnoldi, Giulio Cesare Faccio, Ferdinando Gabotto and Giuseppe Rocchi, eds., *Le Carte dello Archivio capitolare di Vercelli*, I (Pinerolo-Vercelli: Unione tipografica vercellese, 1912), 61-65, doc. 52-54; Domenico Arnoldi and Ferdinando Gabotto, eds., *Le Carte dello Archivio capitolare di Vercelli*, II (Pinerolo: Tipografia Giuseppe Brignolo, 1914), 63-64, doc. 367; 67-68, doc. 371; Domenico Arnoldi, ed., *Le Carte dell'Archivio Arcivescovile di Vercelli* (Pinerolo: Tip. successori Brignolo, 1917), 307-308, doc. 68.

¹⁸ Francesco Cissello, *La mobilità ecclesiastica nella storia di una città. Territorio, confini e relazioni di Vercelli comunale (XII-XIII secolo)*, Doctoral Thesis (Torino: 2018. Unpublished). The data examined in my Doctoral Thesis, and presented in this paper, are mostly taken from the main published collections of Vercelli's capitular and episcopal documentation, and from unpublished documentation of 13th century in ACVc (see below, Bibliography).

throughout Western Europe). Although most of the canons were of diocesan origin, several clerics from neighbouring dioceses in Northern Italy, but also canons linked to the Popes, joined the cathedral chapter of Sant'Eusebio¹⁹.

The large majority of *decumani*, *cappellani* and *conversi* of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries were, instead, probably from the city or the diocese. It is not possible to be more precise, because in many cases these clerics are attested only by their proper names: however, this is also significant because foreigners are normally mentioned with an indication of their place of origin²⁰. However, these data are in line with the situation of other dioceses in Northern Italy, where the mobility of lower-middle clergy with *cura animarum* generally became significant in a later period than the one investigated for Vercelli²¹.

Anyway, there were also clerics of the cathedral from territories outside the diocese of Vercelli. I will examine the most relevant cases: those of *Iohannes Augustanus* and *Nicolaus Anglicus*. One of the most interesting aspects of their career is that they were present in Vercelli at a time when no canon of the same origin is attested. In order to explain their arrival in the city, in fact, we have to consider

¹⁹ For example, under the episcopate of Aimon de Challant, clerics from Aosta valley obtained important roles in the Church of Vercelli (see below, note 23). For some general considerations on the role of popes and bishops in the canonical mobility in Northern Italy see also: Stefano G. Magni, "Il nepotismo episcopale nell'Italia dei comuni (fine XIII-XIV secolo)", in *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano*, 3. *Il mondo ecclesiastico (secoli XII-XV)*, eds. Stefano Carocci and Amedeo De Vincentiis (Roma: Viella, 2017); Ronzani, "Vescovi, capitoli", 120-146. See also above, note 8.

²⁰ Minor clergy was, moreover, often of humble social origin (except in rare cases, no members of the urban elite are attested: see Cissello, *La mobilità ecclesiastica*; see also above, note 17). A similar social background was also found, for example, for the clergy in *cura animarum* in Padova in the 13th century: Antonio Rigon, *Clero e città. «Fratalea cappellanorum». Parroci, cura d'anime in Padova dal XII al XV secolo* (Padova: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica padovana, 1988), 95.

²¹ See, for instance, the book *Preti nel Medioevo* («Quaderni di storia religiosa», 4) (Verona: Cierre, 1997): in particular the study of Silvana Anna Bianchi, "Chierici, ma non sempre preti. Itinerari chiericali nel Veneto tra la fine del XIII e gli inizi del XV secolo"; see also Flavia De Vitt, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e vita quotidiana nel Friuli medievale* (Venezia: Deputazione Editrice, 1990), 183-196; Rigon, *Clero e città*, 93-100.

different explanations from those usually used for members of the cathedral chapter.

1.2. *Iohannes Augustanus*: connections with Aosta valley (twelfth century)

Just after the middle of the twelfth century, a cleric called *Iohannes Augustanus* was part of the Vercelli cathedral clergy, not as a canon but as a *conversus*²². His status as a *presbiter* and his role in a church dependent on the cathedral, probably located in a village near the city, lead us to believe that he was involved in the *cura animarum*.

Iohannes, as his surname certify, was the first (or at least, the first known) cleric from Aosta valley to join the cathedral clergy of Vercelli. Although the diocese of Aosta was quite close to Vercelli, there were no other clerics of the same origin in the cathedral until the end of the thirteenth century. At that time, three canons from Aosta valley joined the cathedral chapter. At least two of them were of aristocratic origin, and all three were linked to Bishop Aimon de Challant, also from Aosta, who promoted their entry into the chapter²³.

The reasons for the arrival of *Iohannes* in Vercelli were different. He was not connected to the current bishop, nor was he an aristocrat,

²² See, for the cleric's attestations: Giuseppe Colombo, ed., "I Necrologi Eusebiani", in *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 4 (1899): 355, doc. 594; Romualdo Pastè, ed., "I Necrologi Eusebiani", in *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 25 (1923): 334-335, doc. 820; Arnoldi and Gabotto, *Le Carte*, II, 363-365, doc. 599. *Iohannes* officiated a church dedicated to San Cristoforo, probably located at Busonengo, a village north of the city (see Ferraris, *Le chiese stazionali*, 19). Another *conversus* of the cathedral of foreign origin (*Cona Alamannus*) is attested in the middle of the 12th century, but he was not a priest, and the reasons of his mobility were probably very different from that of *Iohannes* (see Cissello, *La mobilità ecclesiastica*, 390).

²³ See: Antonio Olivieri, "'Notai del vescovo' e 'notai per il vescovo'. Il caso del vescovo di Vercelli Aimone di Challant (1273-1303) nel quadro dell'evoluzione delle cancellerie vescovili tardo duecentesche nell'Italia settentrionale", in *In uno Volumine. Studi in onore di Cesare Scalton*, ed. Laura Pani (Udine: Forum, 2009), 492, 500 (for *Willelmus de Stipulis*); Ferraris, "I canonici", 172-173 (for *Willelmus de Challant*), 187-188 (for *magister Nicolaus*); Cissello, *La mobilità ecclesiastica*, 261-272.

since his social origin seems to be rather humble²⁴. Likely, he arrived in Vercelli because of the need to exercise his profession of priest.

Why did *Iobannes* choose to come to Vercelli and not to another diocese? We can assume two main reasons.

Firstly, there were many connections between the two cities, which facilitated the movement of people from one to the other. In particular, both Vercelli and Aosta were located in the area of the *Via Francigena*, which connected the territories in the North and south of the Alps. In addition to *Iobannes*, other people from Aosta valley were in fact present in Vercelli: in particular, the presence in the city of a *domus* dependent on the canons of the Great Saint Bernard must be remembered²⁵. It is also possible, therefore, that *Iobannes* knew other *Augustani* living in Vercelli, who may have facilitated his mobility.

Secondly, Vercelli in the second half of the twelfth century was in an expanding period, in terms of both size and population, with a probable growing need for ecclesiastical labour (a phenomenon that also seems to have affected the part of the *contado* closest to the city, as the case of *Iobannes* shows). Foreign priests were not required in the cathedral chapter, but in the ranks of the clergy involved in the *cura animarum*: those very *anime* who were increasing.

Vercelli was therefore one of the most natural destinations for a cleric from Aosta valley who wanted, or had to, exercise his profession outside his own diocese: it is, indeed, a type of mobility, from mountain areas to the city, well documented in the North-Western Alps²⁶.

²⁴ There are some indications in this sense, such as the absence of a more precise indication of his territorial or parental origins. A similar origin probably characterized the majority of the members of the cathedral's minor clergy (see above, note 20).

²⁵ See, in general, Renato Stopani, *La via Francigena. Storia di una strada medievale* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1998); (for the presence of the canons of Great Saint Bernard) Mandelli, *Il comune di Vercelli*, III, 130-131.

²⁶ See, in general, Rinaldo Comba, "Emigrare nel Medioevo. Aspetti economico-sociali della mobilità geografica nei secoli XI-XVI", in *Strutture familiari, epidemie, migrazioni nell'Italia medievale*, eds. Rinaldo Comba, Gabriela Piccinni and Giuliano Pinto (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1984), 59-65.

1.3. *Nicolaus Anglicus*: people from Great Britain (thirteenth century)

Some of the most important aspects of the mobility of *Iohannes Augustanus* can also be found in the biography of a cleric who is attested a few decades later: *Nicolaus Anglicus*.

Nicolaus is attested for the first time in the documentation of Vercelli cathedral in 1200, with the title of servant of the archdeacon. After a few years, however, he managed to join the chapter of the *decumani*: a group of clerics who, as we have said, were probably involved in liturgical service²⁷.

Nicolaus was therefore the protagonist of a double mobility. Firstly, a social mobility, within the cathedral, which he had entered with very humble functions. Secondly, a geographical mobility, from Great Britain to Vercelli, as his surname testifies.

The two aspects are actually connected. Although *Nicolaus* was the only British cleric in the cathedral of Sant'Eusebio, we know that some British people reached Vercelli in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, travelling along the *Via Francigena*. There were in fact two hospitals in the city specifically dedicated to welcoming *Anglici* or *Scoti* pilgrims²⁸.

It is likely that *Nicolaus* also arrived in Vercelli as a layman, without any particular professional qualifications. His mention as a *serviens*, in fact, suggests that he was not yet a cleric in 1200 and that he had humble social origins; but in the following years – as we have just seen – he joined the cathedral clergy as *decumanus*, achieving a quite important social and professional advancement.

²⁷ See, for the cleric's attestations: Arnoldi and Gabotto, *Le Carte*, II, 418, doc. 647; ACVc, Atti privati, cartella 11 (March 27, 1201); cartella 13, (January 20, 1208); cartella 14 (September 2, 1210); cartella 18 (July 10, 1219); cartella 19 (October 2, 1220). See also Cissello, *La mobilità ecclesiastica*, 390-392.

²⁸ See: Mandelli, *Il comune di Vercelli*, II, 402-411 (about the hospital of Santa Maria); Miriam Clelia Ferrari, *L'ospedale di S. Brigida o degli Scoti nella storia di Vercelli medievale (secoli XII-XIV)* (Vercelli: Saviolo, 2001).

As in the case of Iohannes *Augustanus*, we must remember that Vercelli was in a period of strong demographic expansion. It is precisely this expansive trend, probably, that explains the possibility of an entry into the cathedral clergy with *cura animarum* even for a person completely foreign to the local context. A person who could never have entered the canonical chapter.

2. City chapters and churches with *cura animarum* in Aosta between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries

Today Aosta is a small city in the North-West of Italy (it has less than 35.000 inhabitants) and it is the capital of an autonomous region – Aosta Valley – which is also the smallest region in the country (it has less than 130.000 inhabitants), where Italian and French are both official languages. Between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, Aosta was located within the Savoy Cisalpine states. Its position was strategic, because it was crossed by two of the most important international routes around the Western Alps: the routes directed to the Great and the Small Saint Bernard passes. The huge number of hospitals, which used to offer food and a warm place to rest during the complicated journey, offers a clear indication of the multitude of people that passed through the region and the city (merchants, pilgrims and, of course, soldiers). The political and economic significance of this area was evident: every count and every duke of Savoy tried to control the region, either by direct government or negotiating the loyalty of the local powers²⁹. Among them, besides the aristocratic

²⁹ For more in-depth information on the history of hospitality and assistance in the Aosta valley during the late Middle Ages, see: Anselme-Nicolas Marguerettaz, *Les hôpitaux anciens du Val d'Aoste* (Aosta: Imprimerie de Jean-Baptiste Mensio, 1870); Elena Corniolo, “Ospitalità e assistenza nella valle d'Aosta tardomedievale”, in *Ospedali e montagne. Paesaggi, funzioni, poteri nei secoli medievali (Italia, Francia, Spagna)*, ed. Marina Gazzini and Thomas Frank (Milano-Torino: Pearson Italia, 2021), <https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/SSMD/issue/view/1710>. For an overview of the historical-political development of Aosta valley in medieval times, see: Giuseppe Sergi, *Potere e territorio lungo la strada di Francia: da Chambéry a Torino fra X e XIII secolo*

families who controlled parts of the territory with their castles, the local Church was an important player. Geographically, the diocese of Aosta – yesterday as today – corresponded to the area shaped by the Alps³⁰. During the three centuries covered by this study, we can see, on the one hand, the bishop's power growing, especially at the expense of the other ecclesiastical and religious local institutions, and, on the other hand, the local Church opening to the dynamics of the power that, by the fifteenth century, were controlled by Rome and Chambéry, respectively by the pope and the Savoy prince³¹. This period represents, therefore, an interesting point of view to observe the dynamics within the Church of Aosta.

In particular, we will try to enter inside of the two most important institutions that, with the bishop, shared the administration of the diocese and the *cura animarum* of the people: the two city chapters, linked to the cathedral and to the church of Sant'Orso. The features and the evolution of their relationship with the bishop and with each other will be studied starting from the social composition of the two chapters. The social background and the geographic origin of the canons show the different ways in which the two chapters reacted to the dynamics that involved the diocese between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Both institutions were affected by a progressive opening to the Savoy aristocracy, but this process was faster in the cathedral chapter than in that of Sant'Orso. In the lower level of the

(Napoli: Liguori, 1981); Alessandro Barbero, "Conte e vescovo in Valle d'Aosta (secoli XI-XIII)", in *Valle d'Aosta medievale*, ed. Alessandro Barbero (Napoli: Liguori, 2000); Giuseppe Sergi, "Il medioevo: Aosta periferia centrale", in *La Valle d'Aosta e l'Europa*, I, ed. Sergio Noto (Firenze: Olschki, 2008).

³⁰ See below, Map 2, elaborated by the author from the map available online (cc: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/Mappa_diocesi_Aosta.png [last visit: 23/09/2022]). The map shows the diocese of Aosta and its parishes at the end of the 15th century. Parishes highlighted are those which were founded starting from the end of the 14th century. For the history of the diocese of Aosta see Renato Perinetti and Paolo Papone, "Le diocèse", in *Les institutions du millénaire*, ed. Conseil Régional de la Vallée d'Aoste (Quart: Musumeci, 2001).

³¹ For a more in-depth look at these issues, please refer to the bibliography discussed in Elena Corniolo, *Chiesa locale e relazioni di potere nel XV secolo. Sant'Orso d'Aosta tra il 1406 e il 1468* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2019), 37-51.

city parishes, instead, the clergy recruitment continued to involve almost only local priests, even when they were canons and when they led churches that depended on the two city chapters.

The social composition of the city chapters and its connection with power dynamics involving the local Churches in the late Middle Ages are topics of discussion well-known to historiography³². However, the diocese of Aosta in the late Middle Ages has not been investigated from this perspective. Local studies in the last decades have been more interested either in the History of art or in the spiritual life of the local Church³³. Between the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, some local scholars, often belonging to the clergy of Aosta valley, conducted research on local ecclesiastical institutions. They have given us books and editions of sources that can be the starting point for new studies³⁴. Other recent work of sources transcription – in particular, the edition of pastoral visitations of the fifteenth century related to the city of Aosta³⁵ – and a new volume dedicated to the cathedral of Aosta in the same period³⁶ can

³² See above, notes 3-4.

³³ Interest in Art history is particularly evident in: Daniela Platania, *Oger Moriset. Vescovo di Aosta e Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (1411-1441). Vita e committenza artistica* (Aosta: Le château, 2003); Roberta Bordon *et al.*, eds., *Georges de Challant priore illuminato* (Aosta: Tipografia valdostana, 2011); Bruno Orlandoni, *L'âge d'or. Saggi e materiali su Stefano Mossettaz e sul tardomedioevo in Valle d'Aosta* (Aosta: Tipografia valdostana, 2013). The study of worship and ritual has been deepened in: Elfrida Roulet, "Vita religiosa nella diocesi di Aosta tra il 1444 e il 1525" (Diss., University of Turin: 1982); Marie-Rose Colliard, "Culto e religiosità di popolo nella diocesi di Aosta nella prima metà del XV secolo" (Diss., University of Turin: 1994); Maria Costa, ed., *Le culte et ses rites: des témoins manuscrits aux expressions de la dévotion populaire* (Aosta: La Vallée, 1994).

³⁴ Joseph-Auguste Duc, ed., *Documents relatifs à l'épiscopat du bienheureux Emeric I de Quart, évêque d'Aoste* (Aosta: Imprimerie Edouard Duc, 1879); Pierre-Étienne Duc, *Le prieuré de Saint-Pierre et Saint-Ours d'Aoste* (Aosta: Imprimerie catholique, 1899); Joseph-Auguste Duc, *Histoire de l'Église d'Aoste*, 1-3 (Aosta: Imprimerie catholique, 1901), 4-8 (Châtel-St-Denis: Imprimerie moderne H. Leibzig, 1909-1913), 9-10 (St-Maurice: Imprimerie de l'oeuvre St-Augustin, 1914-1915); Jean-Joseph Bono, *Les dix siècles de la prévôté de S. Gilles de Verrès* (Aosta: Imprimerie catholique, 1912); Justin Boson, *L'insigne collégiale d'Aoste* (Ivrea: Viassone, 1929).

³⁵ Marie-Rose Colliard, ed., *Atti sinodali e visite pastorali nella città di Aosta del XV secolo* (Aosta: Tipografia valdostana, 2015).

³⁶ Sandra Barberi and Luca Jaccod, eds., *Ecclesia pulchra. La cattedrale di Aosta e le committenze artistiche e librerie nel medioevo* (Aosta: Tipografia valdostana, 2019).

be used to find information on the city chapters. Therefore, the history of the local ecclesiastical institutions in Aosta valley is still a topic that can be explored with interesting results. In addition to this bibliography, unpublished sources from the chapter archives of both institutions were used in this research³⁷.

2.1. The organization of local Church in Aosta between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries

Beginning in the eleventh century, the map of Aosta expanded through new neighbourhoods. In particular, new houses, mills and factories were built beyond the eastern side of the Roman walls, a place historically dedicated to religious burials. This part of the city, called *Burgus de Porta Sancti Ursi*, quickly became an important economic centre³⁸. From this moment onwards, the city was organized into two principal areas: the ancient part of the city, built within the Roman walls, and the *Burgus*³⁹. Even from the ecclesiastical point of view, the administration of the city was split in two: two chapters who administered three parishes.

The cathedral chapter, which was a secular chapter, controlled the Roman area, which was divided into two districts. The parish of San Giovanni, in fact, was officiated by the canons and had its altar inside the cathedral of Santa Maria. The northern part of the city,

³⁷ See below notes 53-55.

³⁸ See below, Map 3 (1:17000), which shows the medieval organization of the city of Aosta and the main ecclesiastical institutions. This map is a reworking of that published by Ezio Gerbore in the volume Lino Colliard, *Vecchia Aosta* (Quart: Musumeci, 1986), 40.

³⁹ They have dealt with the urban structure of Aosta in the Middle Ages: Andrea Zanotto, "Note sull'assetto urbanistico medievale della città di Aosta", in *Atti del congresso sul bimillenario della città di Aosta* (Bordighera: Istituto internazionale di studi liguri, 1982); Colliard, *Vecchia Aosta*; Antonina Maria Cavallaro, "Ipotesi sullo sviluppo urbanistico di Aosta altomedievale", *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino*, 94/1 (1996); Tersilla Gatto Chanu, *Aosta dalle origini al terzo millennio* (Quart: Musumeci, 2012).

the suburb of Santo Stefano, was also administrated by the cathedral chapter, which controlled the parish of Santo Stefano. The inhabitants of the *Burgus*, instead, found in the priory of Sant'Orso their religious landmarks. In fact, the canons of Sant'Orso, who followed the rule of Saint Augustine since 1132, administered the parish of San Lorenzo, located just in front of the priory's church⁴⁰.

The bond between the two chapters was deep. Until 1152 their shared heritage was reflected by the proportion of two-thirds to the cathedral and one-third to Sant'Orso. This proportion was the same that, officially from 1227, elected the bishop, the provost of the cathedral and the archdeacon of Aosta. This proportion was then reversed for the election of the prior of Sant'Orso. We can understand the technicalities of these elections from some sources preserved in the ecclesiastical archives of the diocese of Aosta⁴¹. The canons collaborated for the episcopal election again in 1376, even though, on that occasion, they were forced to recognize the supremacy of the pope, who refused their election to then end up choosing the same person who had been elected by the canons. This was the last attempt of canonical election of a bishop⁴². At the same time, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, others ecclesiastical and religious institutions lost their autonomy and powers. The provost of the cathedral and the archdeacon of Aosta lost their administrative power; until then, both institutions shared with the bishop the power to

⁴⁰ Paolo Papone and Viviana Vallet, "Storia e liturgia nel culto di Sant'Orso", *Bulletin Société académique religieuse et scientifique que du Duché d'Aoste (Bulletin Académie Saint-Anselme)*, 7 n.s. (2000): 220-259.

⁴¹ The papal bull issued to the chapter of Sant'Orso in 1227, which recognized the canons of the *Borgo* as having the right to elect the bishop, the archdeacon and the provost of Aosta, can be found in the Archivio storico del priorato di Sant'Orso (Aso), 4F1-2. In 1455 this document was transcribed in a cartulary (Aso, 1m), followed by the election of the provost which took place in 1318: Orphée Zanolli, ed., *Cartulaire de Saint-Ours. XV^e siècle* (Aosta: Imprimerie valdôtaine, 1975), 316-319, doc. 621.

⁴² The protagonist of this election was Giacomo Ferrandini, bishop of Aosta between 1376 and 1399: Amato Pietro Frutaz, *Le fonti per la storia della Valle d'Aosta. Riedizione con note aggiunte a cura di L. Colliard* (Aosta: Tipografia valdostana, 1998), 306.

visit and judge the districts which depended on them⁴³. The prior of Sant'Orso was also hindered in the governance of his community⁴⁴.

The relationship between the two chapters was often complicated. They fought for many reasons: processions, funerals, the ringing of bells. Even the boundaries of the two main parishes of the city were a topic of discussion. In 1233 they had to resort to arbitrators who tried to put an end to these oppositions. The border between the parishes of San Lorenzo and San Giovanni was fixed in correspondence of the river *Perron*, so that the parish of the *Burgus* also included a small part of the ancient city⁴⁵.

The cathedral of Aosta has long exercised the primacy in the *cura animarum* of the inhabitants of Aosta. Until 1387 it possessed the only baptismal font in the entire city⁴⁶. The church of San Lorenzo was able to build its own starting from this time, but the parishioners of Santo Stefano continued to go to the cathedral to be baptized still in the fifteenth century⁴⁷.

⁴³ Antonio Gallenca, "Un capitolo della storia ecclesiastica di Aosta: il Prevosto e l'Arcidiacono", in *La Valle d'Aosta. Relazioni e comunicazioni presentate al XXXI Congresso Storico Subalpino di Aosta* (Torino: Deputazione subalpina di storia patria, 1958).

⁴⁴ Corniolo, *Chiesa locale*.

⁴⁵ See below, Map 3 (1:17000) to find the river Perron inside the city of Aosta and above, note 38 for the references. Zanolli, *Cartulaire*, 340-346, doc. 625. Another *compositio super modo processionandi* dates from 1269: Zanolli, *Cartulaire*, 330-332, doc. 623.

⁴⁶ Several studies show a progressive localization, in the north of Italy, of the *cura animarum* at least starting from the end of the 14th century. See, for example, *Pievi e parrocchie*, for a comparison between different areas, and Emanuele Curzel, "L'organizzazione ecclesiastica nelle campagne", *Reti medievali rivista*, 11/1 (2010) for a bibliographical investigation; Iginio Rogger, *Storia della Chiesa di Trento. Da Vigilio al XIX secolo* (Trento: Il Margine, 2009) and Emanuele Curzel, "Pievi e cappelle in area trentina nel tardo medioevo", in *La Chiesa «dal basso». Organizzazioni, interazioni e pratiche nel contesto alpino alla fine del medioevo*, eds. Simona Boscani Leoni and Paolo Ostinelli (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2012) for the alpine area of the North-East of Italy; Elisabetta Canobbio, "Strutture della *cura animarum* in diocesi di Como: pievi, parrocchie, comunità", in *La Chiesa «dal basso»* and Massimo Della Misericordia, *Comune ecclesie. Chiese e società locali in Valtellina e nelle Alpi lombarde nel tardo medioevo* (Sondrio: Tipografia Bettini, 2015) for the Lombardy Alps.

⁴⁷ The baptismal font erected in the church of San Lorenzo is at the heart of a pronouncement of the diocesan official dated July 2, 1387 (Aso, 4F7-6). In 1416 this «fons baptismatis stilat in duabus partibus, aliter est bene», Marie-Rose Colliard, *Atti sinodali*, 152. In the acts of the pastoral visitation to the church of Santo Stefano of

In the following part of the article, we will dive into the analysis of the social and geographical composition of local Church of Aosta and its main protagonists. In particular, we will try to recreate the sequence of the people who played the most important roles in the two chapters and the two parish churches between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries: provosts, archdeacons, priors and priests. Aim of this study is to see if the social and geographic origins of these actors can explain anything about the way these urban ecclesiastical institutions reacted to the evolution that affected the local Church in this period.

2.2. Archdeacons, provosts, priors and priests in Aosta between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries

In order to follow the sequence of the people in charge as archdeacon, provost, prior and priest in Aosta between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the volumes written by local scholars between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were useful. The attention that was given to the local ecclesiastical and religious institutions during this extended period led to the creation of several types of work. In the eighteenth century, some authors tried to recreate the sequence of the most important political, administrative and ecclesiastical offices that acted in Aosta since their origins. The results are not entirely in agreement, but they are still a standard of comparison for new research⁴⁸. A specific interest in the local

Aosta dated 1416 we read for example: «sacramentalia servantur in Sancto Johanne Augustensi ubi batizantur omnes parrochiani, et ipsa est de gremio ecclesie. Fontes non sunt», Colliard, *Atti sinodali*, 215. Still in 1459 the archdeacon noted: «baptistorium non habent, sed vadunt ad curatum Sancti Johannis sive ad baptistorium cure Sancti Johannis», Colliard, *Atti sinodali*, 228.

⁴⁸ In particular, the sequences of archdeacons and provosts present in the *Historique de la Vallée d'Aoste*, written by Jean-Baptiste de Tillier in 1737 – Jean-Baptiste de Tillier, *Historique de la Vallée d'Aoste*, ed. Andrea Zanotto (Aosta: Imprimerie I.T.L.A., 1968), 413-415, 419-422 – and in the *Catalogue*, written by Dondeynaz in 1773 –

Church dates to the end of the nineteenth century. The writing of both monographs on individual institutions⁴⁹ and volumes devoted to local church history dates from this period⁵⁰. All this information needs an accurate verification, which could be done on the one hand through the recent research that in many ways have concerned the local Church and, on the other hand, through the sources. Both possibilities were pursued for this research. To find information on the clergy of the cathedral, the volume *Ecclesia pulchra. La cattedrale di Aosta e le committenze artistiche e librerie nel medioevo* was useful⁵¹. The transcription of the acts of the diocesan synods and pastoral visitations of the fifteenth century was equally important to research the local clergy⁵². Several volumes of the minutes of meetings of the cathedral chapter in the fifteenth century have been also investigated⁵³. The institutional history of the priory of Sant'Orso has not been researched in recent decades. For this reason, too, my doctoral thesis was devoted to the history of this institution in the fifteenth century. On that occasion I had the opportunity to work on the documentary heritage of this institution⁵⁴. Many sources (almost two thousand documents) dating back to the fourteenth

Dondeynaz, *Catalogue* (Chambéry: Imprimerie de M. F. Gorrin, 1773) – have been used for this work.

⁴⁹ Such as *Le prieuré de Saint-Pierre et Saint-Ours d'Aoste*, written by Duc in 1899, where the sequence of priors of Sant'Orso is found (Pierre-Étienne Duc, *Le prieuré*).

⁵⁰ Such as the ten books of the *Histoire de l'Église d'Aoste*, written between 1901 and 1915 by Joseph-Auguste Duc, bishop of Aosta between 1872 and 1907, where it is possible to find a lot of information about the institutions and the actors of Aosta's Church (Joseph-Auguste Duc, *Histoire de l'Église*), and the various editions of the *Annuaire du diocèse d'Aoste*, written by Pierre-Étienne Duc starting from the last decades of the 19th century, where it is possible to find the sequences of the priests of almost all the parishes of Aosta diocese: Pierre-Étienne Duc, *Annuaire du diocèse d'Aoste 1893* (Torino: Imprimerie Saint-Joseph – Collège des Artigianelli, 1893), 24, 26-27.

⁵¹ Barberi, and Jaccod, *Ecclesia pulchra*.

⁵² Marie-Rose Colliard, *Atti sinodali*.

⁵³ These sources are preserved in Aosta, Archivio storico della cattedrale (Acca), V 21 Voll. 33, 33bis, 33ter, 34, 50.

⁵⁴ To explore what kind of sources were investigated, please refer to the bibliography in Corniolo, *Chiesa locale*, 309-311.

century and now preserved in the Historical archives of Sant'Orso have recently been studied for a research project supported by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage of Aosta Valley⁵⁵.

By comparing these documentary and bibliographical data, it was possible to recreate the lists of archdeacons, provosts, priors and priests who lived in Aosta between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The sequences include only those names that can be supported by documented research; names that are only present in the sequences dating back to the eighteenth century have been rejected for now⁵⁶. The four categories of offices investigated can be divided into two groups: archdeacons, provosts and priors on the one hand and the local priests on the other.

Regardless of the century, part of the first group were mainly people with aristocratic origins: 14 of the 21 archdeacons, 13 of the 21 provosts and 11 of the 20 priors of Sant'Orso were wealthy individuals⁵⁷. Concerning the other names, it is generally difficult to tell whether they were aristocrats or not. It is clear and obvious that the three more important ecclesiastical positions in the local Church represented a path to success for members of aristocratic families. What changes during the period covered by this study are the geographical origins of these families. In fact, until the fifteenth century, most archdeacons and provosts were part of the aristocracy

⁵⁵ Aso, 7A11 (Varia XV^e siècle); 1B1 (1455-1469, Angley); 1B2 (1440-1455, Angley); 7B6 (1320-1340); 7B7 (1360-1368); 7B8 (1368-1369); 7B9 (1369); 7B10 (1370-1372); 1C1 (1371-1372); 1C2 (1374-1380); 1C3 (1380-1400); 1C4 (1400-1408); 1C5 (1409-1410); 1C6 (1410-1414, Vallaise); 1C7 (1414-1415, Vallaise); 1C8 (1416-1420, Vallaise); 7C7 (Varia); 4D8 (1304-1500, St-Blaise Quart); 7D1 (1320-1340); 7D2 (1420-1440); 3E10 (Charte Augustane); 7E10 (Testaments des chanoines); 2F1 (1460-1475); 4F1 (Bulles); 4F3 (Documents); 4F4 (Actes des prieurs XIV^e siècle); 4F6 (Documents 1300-1397); 4F7 (1380-1400); 4F8 (Documents 1400); 2m (Cartulaire XIV^e siècle); 9m (Actes des prieurs); 21R (1443-1454). These sources were analysed in Elena Corniolo and Luca Jaccod, "*In monasterio Sancti Ursi. Un cantiere aperto sui secoli XIV-XV*", in *1416-2016: Il tempo di Amedeo VIII in Valle d'Aosta* (in press).

⁵⁶ See below, Tables 1-6.

⁵⁷ See below, Tables 1-3. To find information about the most important aristocratic families of Aosta valley and their genealogies, the volume Jean-Baptiste de Tillier, *Nobiliaire du Duché d'Aoste*, ed. Andrea Zanotto (Aosta: Imprimerie ITLA, 1970), written in the 18th century, remains a good starting point, even if it needs to be verified.

originating in Aosta valley. This proportion tends to be reversed, for the archdeacons from the beginning of the fifteenth century, while for the provosts dates back to 1330 onwards. The dynamic of power that was shaping the entire western Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is also evident in the diocese of Aosta: in this period, the local Church tends to lose its autonomy and the ecclesiastical and religious benefices become commodities in a higher and wider local context, which for the diocese of Aosta means the territory of the Savoy States. In fact, archdeacons and provosts came mainly from aristocratic families from the dioceses on the other side of the Alps and, although to a lesser quantity, from Piedmont. This dynamic was slower in the priory of Sant'Orso, where the attachment to the local contest was deep and prolonged. Until 1440, in fact, the institution was directed by priors who came from aristocratic families from Aosta valley. The priory resisted the market of ecclesiastical benefits for an extended period, during which, by studying the sources preserved in the episcopal and the capitular Archives, it is possible to observe a strong opposition to the power of bishop on the part of the prior and the regular canons. The openness to the dioceses beyond the Alps that characterized the cathedral chapter in contrast to that of Sant'Orso is clear even by studying the other functions performed by the canons. Most of them had significant and prolonged relationships beyond the Alps; in fact, they often were also canons or even bishops in the dioceses of the Savoy Church⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Among the archdeacons, starting from the 13th century, six people were canons also in other cathedrals – Aimone di Chesallet (Sion), Aimone Grossi (Lille), Bonifacio di Sarre (Sion), Emerico di Quart (Ivrea), Giacomino de Crista (Troyes), Giorgio di Challant (Lyon) – and two became bishops of other Savoy dioceses – Aimone di Challant (Sion), Ogerio Moriset (Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne). Even among the provost, starting from the 13th century, five people were canons also in other cathedrals – Pietro II di Savoia (Valence, Lausanne, Genève, Lyon), Espaunius (Chartre), Pietro di Challant (Lyon), Pietro di Cly (Lyon), Antonio di Billens (Lausanne) – and seven became bishops of other Savoy dioceses, even if many of them remained elected bishops – Rodolfo Grossi (Tarentaise), Pietro di Challant (Lyon), Pietro di Cly (Lyon), Guglielmo di Montjoie (Béziers), Giovanni di Billens (Saint-Papoul), Aimone di Gerbais (Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne), Guglielmo Didier (Belley). See below, Tables 1-2, last column.

Both institutions administered many parishes, including the three urban parishes of Aosta. By studying the succession of the people who were priests with *cura animarum* in these churches⁵⁹, it is easy to discover how closely they were tied to the local context⁶⁰. Between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, all the priests of the churches of San Giovanni, San Lorenzo and Santo Stefano whose names I have been able to collect were from families from Aosta valley, almost none of them aristocratic, with few exceptions for the parish linked to the cathedral. Local Church seemed to act upon two levels: the elevated level of the summits of the ecclesiastical institutions – the bishop, of course, but also the archdeacon of Aosta, the provost of the cathedral and the priors of the Augustinian institutions – and the low level of the parishes. If the former attracted aristocratic families and was attracted by the circuit of exchanges involving the Savoy Church between fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the latter stayed in the local context. What is interesting is that the people who acted within the two city chapters were the same ones who held the office of priest with *cura animarum* in the three urban parishes. In fact, almost all the priests of San Giovanni and San Lorenzo came respectively from the cathedral chapter and from the chapter of Sant’Orso. All the priests, even those of Santo Stefano, were in any case tied to the institution that had the power to assign parish benefits.

Therefore, the two city chapters even at the end of the fifteenth century, were seen as privileged places for social promotion, even though, in this period, the climb of the social ladder was mainly reserved to the most important aristocratic families of Savoy. Nonetheless, the local families who managed to enter the two chapters found in the administration of the two most important urban parishes a way to root themselves in the local political and social context.

⁵⁹ See below, Tables 4-6.

⁶⁰ This sentence could be mitigated for other parishes of the diocese of Aosta in the 15th century: Marie-Rose Colliard, “*Cura animarum* e formazione del clero: il ministero sacerdotale nelle parrocchie valdostane nella prima metà del Quattrocento”, in *Ecclesia pulchra*.

3. Comparative method: some reflexions on the case studies of Vercelli and Aosta

The comparative method used to analyse Aosta and Vercelli in terms of territorial recruitment and social composition of the clergy shows both differences and similarities between the two cities in North-Western Italy.

Considering the timelines that have been studied for this research, it is evident that they are similar, but not entirely the same. The chronology of the history of Vercelli, in fact, focuses on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; that of Aosta, instead, starts in the thirteenth century and goes up to the fifteenth century. This delay depends on the different urban and political development of the two cities: Vercelli became a relevant urban centre before Aosta, whose relevance remained linked to the power of the Savoy prince.

The relationships linking the dioceses of Vercelli and Aosta to other dioceses during these centuries were influenced by this different urban history. The contacts between Vercelli and Rome dated early, like those with the Lombardy area – from which the majority of bishops and canons came. Aosta, since the beginning of its social, political, and economic rebirth, was projected beyond the Alps. Contacts with the Piedmont – and with Vercelli – existed, but they were not structural until the sixteenth century. Starting in the fifteenth century, the Rome-Chambéry bipolarity became stronger and began to influence the local history.

The link between Vercelli and Lombardy also influenced the composition of the cathedral clergy. Here, in fact, in addition to the canons, there was also a minor clergy, more involved in the *cura animarum*, according to the Lombard model. In Aosta, on the other hand, the canons were often in charge as priests in the city parishes.

The organization of the urban Church was also different in the two cities involved in this study. In Vercelli, the cathedral of Sant'Eusebio itself had parochial functions. In Aosta, on the other hand, both city chapters were responsible for the *cura animarum* of the people

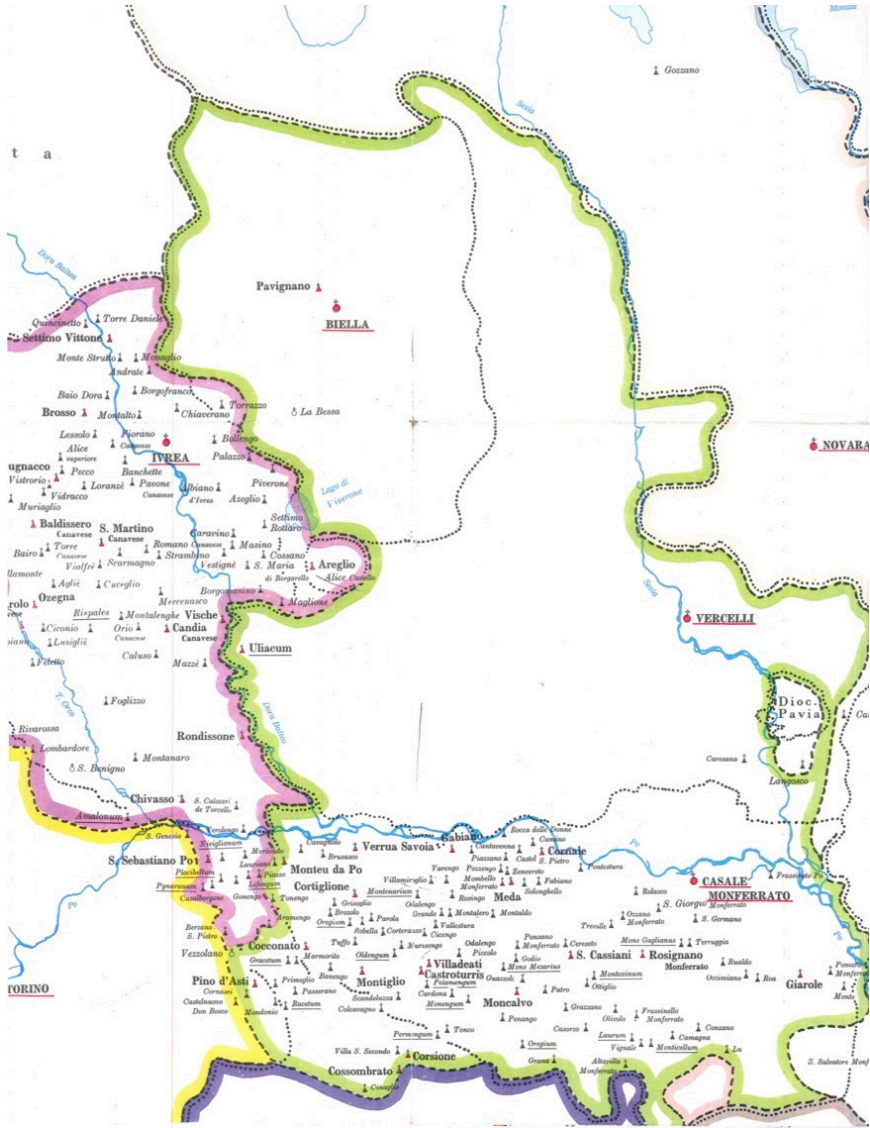
through parish churches distinct from both the cathedral and the priory church.

Despite the different chronology, similarities between Vercelli and Aosta are equally evident. Members of the local aristocratic families found in the two cathedral chapters a useful place for their social and political advancement. These chapters, otherwise, also attracted foreign clergy, particularly those who were linked to the bishop, the pope or, especially in Aosta from the fourteenth century, the prince. They generally came from aristocratic families, often involved in a type of mobility linked to their cultural formation.

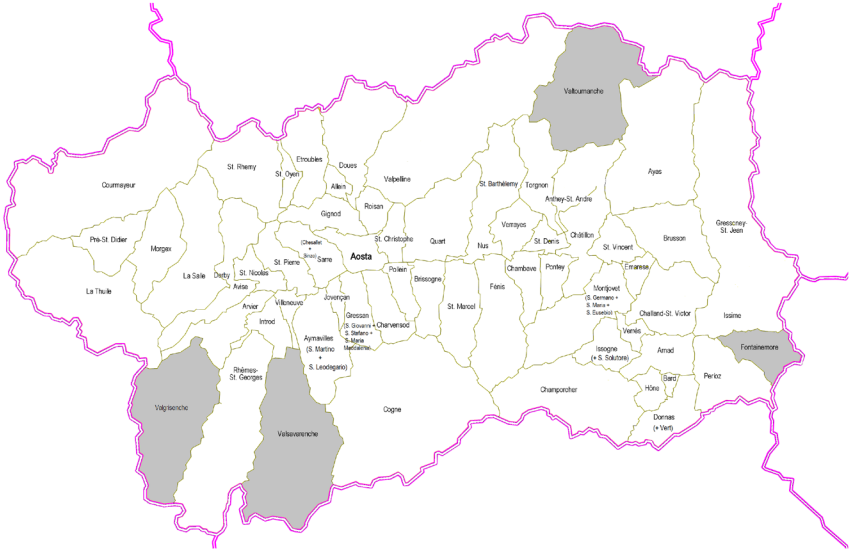
Clergy with parish functions, on the other hand, was tied to the local context and generally of humble social origin. It does not mean that parish clergy was not involved in some form of mobility. The two case studies illustrated for Vercelli show, on the one hand, that people often moved when the cities expanded and that some of them found in the lower cathedral clergy a way to fit into the local social context; on the other, that priests in search of a place to practice their profession sometimes arrived in Vercelli earlier than the clergy linked to the bishops. In any case, most of the parish clergy, both in Vercelli and Aosta, were of local origin and moved within the diocese, whether these clerics were part of the cathedral chapter or not. Especially for Aosta (because of the chronology considered here), it is quite a significant difference compared to the situation of Northern Italy, where the mobility of parish clergy generally increased considerably from the fourteenth century onwards.

Therefore, we can say that parish and canonical clergy were not composed of the same people: social and territorial recruitment was generally different for these two types of clergy. Actually, the mobility of clerics could have different features even when people came from the same territory and arrived in the same place. In any case, parochial like canonical clergy clearly had their own identity within the history of the local Church.

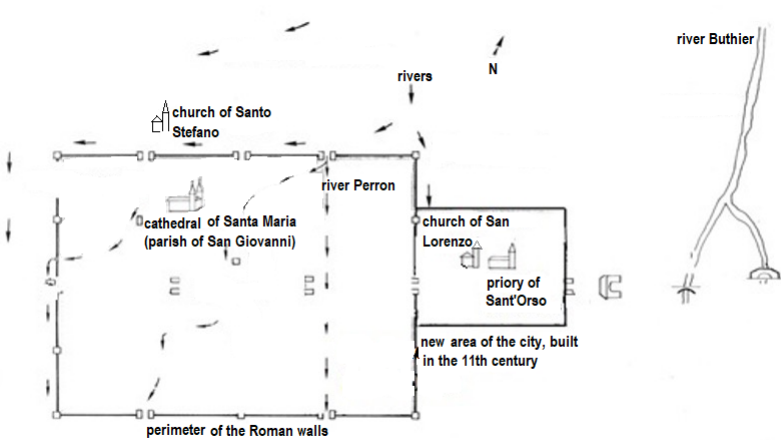
Maps



Map 1. An image of the medieval diocese of Vercelli from *Rationes decimarum Italiae nei secoli 13. e 14. Lombardia et Pedemontium*, ed. Maurizio Rosada (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1990).



Map 2. The diocese of Aosta and its parishes at the end of the 15th century. The map was elaborated by the author from the map available online⁶¹.



Map 3. The medieval organization of the city of Aosta and the main ecclesiastical institutions (1:17000)⁶².

⁶¹ See https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/Mappa_diocesi_Aosta.png [last visit: 23/09/2022].

⁶² This map is a reworking of that published by Ezio Gerbore in the volume Lino Colliard, *Vecchia Aosta* (Quart: Musumeci, 1986), 40.

Tables Supporting the Analysis in §2.2

The following tables list the pieces of information that are considered in the paragraph 2.2, related to Aosta⁶³.

⁶³ The data showed by the tables came from a bibliographical and documentary research, whose, considering the purpose of the research, I offer here the general references. Please, consider that a lot of documents have been investigated, often unsuccessfully. Therefore, in this case the bibliography shows the process of the research, not its specific results. The tables show instead the elaboration of the acquired data. See above, notes 48-52 for the bibliographical references; notes 53-55 for the documentary references. Other bibliography was useful to find names and information: Joseph-Antoine Besson, *Mémoires pour l'histoire ecclésiastique des diocèses de Genève, Tarantaise, Aoste et Maurienne et du Décanat de Savoye* (Môitiers: Marc Cane, 1871), 243-282; Orfeo Zanolli, ed., *Inventaire des archives des Vallaise*, I-III (Aosta: ITLA-Musumeci, 1985-1988); Jacques Lovie, *Les diocèses de Chambéry, Tarentaise, Maurienne* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 5-79. Critical editions of documentary sources: Zanolli, *Cartulaire*; Orfeo Zanolli, ed., in cooperation with Lino Colliard, *Les obituaires d'Aoste* (Aosta: Musumeci, 1980); Maria Costa, ed., *Le più antiche carte del priorato aostano di Saint-Bénin (1239-1370)* (Aosta: Tipografia Valdostana, 1988).

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins			Significant and prolonged relationships beyond the Alps
			local	beyond the Alps	other	
Antonio	end of 12 th cent.					
Anselmo	end of 12 th -begin of 13 th cent.					
Bernardo di Pertuis	1201		X			
Davide di Pont-Saint-Martin	1206-1221 (death)	X	X			
Aimone di Chesallet	1223-1231 (death)		X			X
Giovanni di Cigliano <i>alias</i> Lombardi	1231-1263 (death)				X (Piedmont)	
Aimone Grossi di Châtelar di La Salle	1263	X	X			X
Aimone di Challant	1276-1305/8? (death: 1323)	X	X			X
Bonifacio di Sarre	1305-1318 (death)	X	X			X
Pietro di Quart	1318-1321 (death)	X	X			
Guglielmo di Quart	1324-1343 (death)	X	X			
Emerico di Quart	1343-1358	X	X			
Giorgio Bersatori	1389-1400 (death)	X			X (Piedmont)	
Giacomo de Crista di Doues	1400-1405 (death)	X	X			
Ogerio Moriset di Conflens	1406-1409	Not		X		X
Giacomino de Crista	1411-1432	X	X			X
Pietro di Gilaren	1432-1455 (death)	X		X		X
Guido Bollieti	1455 (death: 1458)	X		X		X
Baldovino Scutiferi	1455-1475 (death)			X		
Giovanni di Mercenasco <i>alias</i> Valperga	1475	X			X (Piedmont)	
Giorgio di Challant	1479-1509 (death)	X	X			X

Table 1. Archdeacons of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins			Significant and prolonged relationships beyond the Alps
			local	beyond the Alps	other	
Guido	1180-1206					
Davide de Sotor	1207-?					
Pietro II di Savoia	1227-1232	X		X		X
Espaunius	1233					X
Rodolfo Grossi di Châtelar	1241-? (death: 1271)	X	X			X
Rodolfo des Cours	1243-?	X	X			
Ugo Gay	1247					
Enrico di Quart	1288-1318 (death)	X	X			
Pietro di Challant	1253-? (death: 1287)	X	X			X
Pietro di Cly	1321-1328 (death: 1329)	X	X			X
Andrea Bersatori	1330-? (death: 1361)	X			X (Piedmont)	
Antonio di Billens	1361-1387 (death: before 1390)	X		X		X
Giovanni Magnin di Chambéry	1387-1397			X		
Guglielmo di Montjoie	1405- -1420/21 (death: 1451)	X		X		X
Giovanni di Billens	1421	X		X		X
Aimone di Gerbais	1421-1422			X		X
Aimone di Sala	1424		X			
Guglielmo Didier di Bresse	1425-1428	X		X		X
Teobaldo di Vico	1429; 1438			X		
Giovanni di Valperga	ante 1474	X			X (Piedmont)	
Giovanni Pietro di Piosasco	1474-1507 (death)	X			X (Piedmont)	

Table 2. Provosts of the cathedral of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins			Significant and prolonged relationships beyond the Alps
			local	beyond the Alps	other	
Bonifacio di Valperga	1210-1219	X			X (Piedmont)	
Erluino di Chignins	1220-1224			X		
Giordano	1224-1228					
Aimone	1228-1230					
Pietro di Saint-Alban	1230-1250			X		
Pietro de Palatio	1250-1260	X	X			
Giovanni	1260-1264					
Gontier di Courmayeur	1264-1280		X			
Guglielmo di Brissogne	1280-1286		X			
Uldrico di Rhyns (Roisan)	1287-1294	X	X			
Guglielmo di Lides <i>senior</i>	1294-1332	X	X			
Amedeo di Miribel di Bresse	1332-1334	X		X		
Giovanni di Arnyo	1334-1349					
Guglielmo di Lides <i>junior</i>	1349-1361	X	X			
Giovanni di Champvillair di Roisan	1361-1373 (death)	X	X			
Riccardo	1373					
Bertoldo di Balme di Nus	1374-1406 (death)	X	X			
Antonio di Vallaise	1406-1440	X	X			
Umberto Anglici	1440-1467/68	X		X		
Giorgio di Challant	1467/68-1509 (death)	X	X			

Table 3. Priors of Sant'Orso of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins		
			local	beyond the Alps	other
Aimone de Palatio	1231-1272	X	X		
Giovanni di Étroubles	starting from 1237; 1256	X	X		
Goffredo	1237; 1270				
Aimone di Quart	1279-1300	X	X		
Giovanni de la Plantà	1300-1310 (death)	X	X		
Rodolfo di Focha Sarre	1320-1330 (death: 1335)	X	X		
Giovanni Philippi	1359				
Pietro, <i>Il papa di Derby</i>	1359		X		
Michele di Foras	1395-1406				
Giovanni Rosset	1419, 1424		X		
Antonio Pécion	1422		X		
Giovanni Rosset	1431-1440		X		
Francesco Rosset di Saint-Martin-de-Corléans	1441-1469		X		
Leonardo di Bosses	1472-1512	X	X		

Table 4. Priests of S. Giovanni of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins		
			local	beyond the Alps	other
Giovanni di Brissogne	1288-1304		X		
Francesco de Jordanis	1362	X	X		
Varnerio di Saint-Oyen	1396		X		
Antonio Pecplet	1404-1419		X		
Giovanni di Carreria	1424-1440		X		
Bonifacio Bordon di Cogne	1443		X		
Giovanni Revelli	1463-1483		X		
Sulpicio Martinet d'Arvier	1490		X		

Table 5. Priests of S. Lorenzo of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

Name	Uptime	Aristocratic family	Origins		
			local	beyond the Alps	other
Pietro d'Arvier	1302		X		
Ibleto di Pralia	1357-1393		X		
Pietro di Pralia	1393-1413		X		
Giovanni Volant	1455-1461				

Table 6. Priests of S. Stefano of Aosta between 13th and 15th centuries.

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Série Investigação

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