

LUCA BARISON
Georgetown University, Washington DC
ORCID: 0009-0004-9126-9204

Cluny in the Anglo-Norman Kingdom: times, people and places at the time of St. Hugh (1049–1109)

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IS ENGLAND WORTH DAMNATION?

*Quid enim prodest homini, si lucretur mundum totum et detrimentum faciat animae suae?*¹ In a significant passage from the New Testament, Hugh of Semur (1024–1109), Abbot of Cluny, firmly rejected a request made by King William of England. The Conqueror, keen on reforming his newly acquired kingdom, had written to the head of Cluniac monasticism seeking six black monks to serve as abbots and bishops in the emerging Norman Church of England. Although the original letter is lost, we know of its contents through Abbot Hugh's response.² After expressing gratitude for the King's honorable request, the Abbot declined, offering two distinct but interconnected reasons: one theological and the other logistical. Firstly, Hugh of Semur emphasized that he could not permit the „selling” of any of his monks. King William had offered one hundred pieces of silver for each monk requested, but Hugh considered this an act of simony (*mercimonii cupiditate*), a grievous sin that he, as a staunch opponent of the practice, could not condone.³ Secondly, he argued that

¹ * The Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici (Italian Institute for Historical Studies) of Naples was established in 1946 by the philosopher Benedetto Croce; every year, it provides highly qualified young historians from all over Europe with a research scholarship. For more information: www.iiss.it.

„What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”, Mark 8:36.

² The text has been published in: BERNARD, *Recueil de chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, vol. 4; PL, vol. 159, 0931A–0946A.

³ In 1049, at the council of Reims held by the new-elected pope Leo IX, Hugh himself was interrogated about the possibility that his election to Abbot of Cluny had been stained by simoniac affairs. Eligius, his biographer, narrates that he responded with these words: «The flesh accepted, but the spirit refused». He intended to present Hugh as a man ready to accept his sins and make up for them. At the time of the letter, twenty-five years had passed, but the theme of simony remained one of the most con-

sending a small group of black monks to England would endanger their spiritual welfare due to the absence of a Cluniac monastery across the Channel (*ubi nullum viderem nostrum monasterium*). Without the guidance of an Abbot and the structured life of the cloister, Hugh feared his monks would neglect their monastic vows and stray from the Rule of Saint Benedict.⁴ In summary, the Abbot of Cluny made it clear to the King that his plans were contrary to God's laws, warning that pursuing them would lead both Cluny and the Crown to damnation. Hugh refused to jeopardize his soul for the sake of expanding Cluniac influence, despite the King's considerable power and generosity. Although William had honored the Abbot with lavish gifts and received a blessing and promise of *societas* in return, Hugh remained resolute in upholding his principles.⁵

Following this introduction, it may be surprising to learn that fifty years after Hugh's letter, Cluny had become the primary point of reference for more than thirty priories in England. William wrote to Hugh in an unspecified year between 1066 and 1076, but by 1078, the first Cluniac priory had already been established. This marked the beginning of a significant rise in influence for the black monks in England, who would soon occupy prominent roles in the administration of the Norman Church, serving both the King and his aristocracy. The purpose of this essay is to analyze the reasons behind this rapid growth, specifically defining the period in which it became firmly established, identifying the individuals who facilitated it, and pinpointing the locations where it took root. In doing so, the essay aims to delineate one of the key expansion regions of the Cluniac order in 11th and 12th-century Europe.⁶

CLUNY IN THE CONTEXT OF WILLIAM I'S REIGN

By the time the first English priory was founded,⁷ William the Conqueror had been King for ten years. During this period, he orchestrated a comprehensive redefinition

troversial inside the Church and even among the Cluniac world. In fact, while Cluniac-related monasteries had been obtaining more exemptions from their bishops, the aristocratic donations transformed into actual simoniac trades to obtain control over the monasteries. So, Gregory VII accepted the requests came from the bishops and prohibited these donations in 1079. VIOLANTE 1960, pp. 153–242; CANTARELLA, TUNIZ 1998, pp. 61–62.

⁴ Hugh knew well that his monks' sins would fall upon his soul, as the Rule said: *Sciat abbas cul-pae pastoris incumbere quidquid in ovibus pater familias utilitatis minus potuerit invenire*. BENEDICT OF NURSIA 2004, Cap. II: *Qualis debeat esse abbas*.

⁵ CANTARELLA, TUNIZ 1998, pp. 67–68.

⁶ This article is based on my BA thesis, presented at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice: „Ubi nullum viderem nostrum monasterium. L'espansione cluniacense in Inghilterra durante l'abbaziato di Ugo di Cluny (1049–1109).” I'm deeply thankful to professors Krzysztof Skwierczyński and Glauco Maria Cantarella for the recommendation to publish the results of my research.

⁷ The term commonly used to refer to the region known as England only emerged after the 13th century. In this paper, the term „England” is employed in a geographical sense to refer to the historic region.

of various aspects of his kingdom's administration. The Domesday Book had been written, his vassals were busy building castles, and the Norman aristocracy was gradually replacing the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, including within the Church. Ancient cathedrals and monasteries began to welcome French clergy or were even demolished and relocated. Recent studies suggest that this transformation was a gradual process, not solely driven by the automatic substitution of Anglo-Saxon elements. Over the course of several decades, three significant objectives were ultimately achieved: Normanization, centralization, and subordination to the Crown.⁸ William sought to govern a powerful, renovated kingdom ruled by noblemen, officials, and ecclesiastical lords of French origin, all of whom answered to the two central hubs of English political life: London, the seat of the throne and the primary administrative offices, and Canterbury – the archepiscopal see recognized by all English bishops.⁹

In this context, the foundation of the priory of Lewes was established by the will of its founders, the Dukes of Warenne, and the King himself. William of Warenne (+1088) was one of the most significant and powerful vassals of the Conqueror, rewarded with approximately three hundred possessions in Surrey and Norfolk.¹⁰ In 1076, he and his wife Gunrada decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome, but the conflict between the pope and Emperor Henry IV impeded their journey. Thus, the couple decided to visit the abbey of Cluny. The encounter with the heart of Cluniac monasticism must have been astonishing for William and his wife¹¹ as they decided to establish a Cluniac monastery in the center of their landed estates in Surrey. Having given the king's permission they endowed the Abbot of Cluny with a small church dedicated to Saint Patrick *pro redemptione animarum nostrarum*.¹² This close link to the Conqueror could be interpreted as a fitting expression, but, in my opinion, it

For further discussion on this topic, see DE FALCO 2020, where the author explores the formation of the Welsh Marches within the broader context of the development of geographical and conceptual borders in the chronicles of the Anglo-Norman Kingdom.

⁸ On these topics: DOUGLAS 1999; BARTLETT 2000; CHIBNALL 1999. On the reorganisation of dioceses: CHRISTOPHER 2006.

⁹ The transformation of Canterbury into the primatial see of the Kingdom was challenging, primarily due to the resistance of Thomas of York, who grounded his claims in the historical significance of his diocese; see: TERLIZZI 2003, pp. 23–55.

¹⁰ See on Domesday Online. William de Warenne was a relative of the King and was awarded with several lands for his help during the rebellion of Roger de Mortmer and the Conquest. For a lot of time, historians claimed that Gunrada was an illegitimate daughter of William the Conqueror, but now this hypothesis is no more believed. CHANDLER 1990, pp. 68–81.

¹¹ This reference reveals some similarities to other narrations (threads?) among Edigius' hagiography of St. Hugh. It develops a motif of a pilgrim, who came to the abbey of Cluny from Rome: there, while praying at the tomb of St. Peter, he had heard a voice saying that he would find the remission at Cluny. These narrations clearly reveal that „Cluny wasn't inferior to Rome in any sense, [...] it was equivalent to Rome because, as an institution is constantly supported by the Prince of the Apostles". Translation in: CANTARELLA, TUNIZ 1998, pp. 36–37.

¹² BERNARD, BRUEL 1876–1903, vol. 4, doc. no. 3558.

could demonstrate King William's deep interest in the foundation of this monastery, as many documents suggest. Firstly, the King wrote a charter confirming the creation of the priory and had it signed by several members of his new court. This was likely done to avoid objections to Warenne's decision and to secure strong economic stability for Lewes priory.¹³ William then communicated his royal consent and patronage to the new monastery to Lanfranc (1005–1089), Archbishop of Canterbury, and Odo (1036–1097), bishop of Bayeux and Duke of Kent, through a letter, to protect it from possible interference from the two most powerful members of the Norman clergy, now settled on both sides of the Channel.¹⁴ Finally, a new royal charter was drawn up, describing in the most accurate manner all possessions and rights granted to Lewes priory.¹⁵ Domesday Book as well recorded the monastery as an owner of three villages located nearby, with a total number of more than three hundred households partly subjected to the monks.¹⁶

The royal interest in this particular monastic foundation can be elucidated through the analysis of Hugh's correspondence with King William, especially in the segment where the Abbot emphasizes the lack of a Cluniac priory within the Anglo-Norman Kingdom (*Ubi nullum viderem nostrum monasterium*). Hugh's letter does not aim to halt future expansion of the Black Monks; rather, it subtly communicates to the King that such expansion should adhere to the „traditional system” practiced by Cluny in Europe. This system entails securing an agreement with local potentates or kings, establishing a priory, and only then allowing the order to expand within the region under the auspices of this initial local monastery.

Hugh likely envisioned the Cluniac order spreading throughout England, but he was intent on ensuring this expansion remained under his control, centered around Lewes, the first English daughter house of Cluny. In this strategic vision, supported by King William, Lewes would function as a „bridgehead monastery,” serving as the foundational site from which Cluniac expansion in England would commence.¹⁷

¹³ BERNARD, BRUEL 1876–1903, vol. 4, doc. no. 3559: *S. Willelmi, regis Anglorum, S. M[athildis], regine Anglorum. S. Willelmi, comitis, filii regis. S. Rotberti de Bello Monte. S. Henrici de Bello Monte. S. Rotberti Gifordi. S. Rogerii de Mortuo Mari. S. Goiffredi de Calvo Monte. S. Radulfi dapiferi. S. Mauricii cancellarii. S. Willelmi de Warennia. S. Gundreda, uxoris W. de Warennia.*

¹⁴ BERNARD, BRUEL 1876–1903, vol. 4, doc. no. 3560; David Knowles also supports the opinion that Hugh, at first reluctant, gave the permission to the establishment of the priory after being assured about the endowments to the monastery and its autonomy from episcopal authorities. KNOWLES 1940, p. 151.

¹⁵ BERNARD, BRUEL 1876–1903, vol. 4, doc. no. 3561.

¹⁶ According to Domesday, Lewes priory was one of the lords of three rich and heavily populated villages: Firlle, Flamer and Iford. See on Domesday *Online*. Between 1080 and 1086, William I granted to the monastery the manor of Walton in Norfolk. WHITWELL JOWITT, CARLESS DAVIS 1913, vol. 1, doc. no. 232.

¹⁷ As Cantarella has pointed out, Hugh of Semur was a man too clever to be trapped into the power games led by Lanfranc and Odo of Bayeux, who were in charge of the religious re-organiza-

In the case of Lewes, King William's determination to promote and protect the establishment of the new monastery appears undeniable. This royal patronage can be interpreted as William's strategic use of Cluniac monasticism in the reorganization of the English Kingdom. England, with its longstanding tradition of monasticism dating back to Saint Augustine of Canterbury and notable abbeys like Saint Albans, Glastonbury, and Worcester, consisted of religious houses that were largely independent from one another. It is plausible that William sought to unify and control these houses under the royal-sponsored Cluniac order,¹⁸ thus centralizing monasticism under Norman influence.¹⁹ This notion is further supported by the analysis of other Cluniac priories founded during William I's reign, such as Castle Acre, Much Wenlock, Montacute, Bermondsey, and, in a certain sense, Battle Abbey. These monasteries share a common feature: their symbolic and physical proximity to the Norman aristocracy. For instance, William of Warenne founded Castle Acre in Norfolk in 1087, Roger Earl of Shrewsbury established the priory of Wenlock in Shropshire in 1080, and the Mortains, powerful Norman vassals, founded Montacute in Somerset in 1078.²⁰ These religious houses were strategically placed near their founders' castles, likely to ensure control and facilitate the feudal reorganization of the new kingdom.²¹ Additionally, these priories were often situated in border and peripheral regions, such

tion of the kingdom. An expansion to England was for Cluny a risky move, since the kingdom was under transformation and ruled by a powerful aristocracy. Cluny did not refuse generally to establish in unstable areas, but probably Hugh, who had stood aside during the Investiture Controversy, firstly opted for a cautious approach to the English proposal. CANTARELLA 2006, p. 103.

¹⁸ When Lanfranc became archbishop, he installed as Abbot of the monastery of Canterbury his pupil Henry of Bec and promoted the use of his new *Consuetudines*. As a monk and a scholar, through this text he hoped to improve a more rigid monastic life and to bring about some changes to the abbey's liturgy. According to some historians, a base for this text was the Cluniac *Consuetudines* written by Bernard around 1067, besides the rules followed at Bec. Despite these regulations were never officially imposed, they were adopted by several houses and show a possible role of Cluny in the „Normanization" of English monasticism. GRAHAM 1914, p. 184–185.

¹⁹ Even if this hypothesis could be proven, it is important to remember that a strong sense of unity was not a defining characteristic of eleventh-century Cluny. As prominent historians have noted, it would be inaccurate to assume that the Cluniac ordo was fully established during this period. A more appropriate term would be Cluniac *ecclesia*, an organization in which multiple monasteries were affiliated with the Burgundian abbey, yet the abbey did not exert complete hierarchical control over its priories. Lewes was one of the rare instances where the Abbot of Cluny appeared to exercise strict supervision over the foundation process; however, it would be misleading to conclude that the arrival of the Cluniacs in England marked the establishment of a cohesive and unified congregation. CANTARELLA 1981, p. 34; PICASSO 1983, pp. 225–226.

²⁰ PLANCHÉ 1874, pp. 181, 201–202.

²¹ At Lewes, the castle was located approximately 500 meters from the abbey, a proximity also observed at Castle Acre, where the monks initially resided within the walls of the bailey, as well as at Montacute and Pontefract (founded in 1090). For a case study on the Cluniacs, see PESTELL 2001, pp. 224–229. A document from the reign of Henry I highlights that the priory of Montacute was situated near the castle of the Mortains. DAVIS 1913, doc. no. 1367.

as North Yorkshire and western Shropshire, and in areas where significant rebellions against William had occurred, such as Montacute.²² This placement suggests that William's Norman aristocracy, following the King's example, promoted the establishment and expansion of Cluniac monasticism to aid in consolidating control over England, particularly in unstable and rebellious areas. In this context, the Black Monks can be viewed as agents of royal centralization and Normanization, acting as „colonizing monks.”²³

However, the relationship with the Anglo-Saxon religious heritage reveals a more nuanced interpretation of this monastic phenomenon. Rather than merely replacing the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the Cluniac monasteries sought to integrate and unite the diverse elements of William's kingdom. At Much Wenlock, for example, the former Saxon monastery was replaced by a Cluniac priory dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Yet, the Cluniacs themselves halted this substitution process by rediscovering the relics of the former Anglo-Saxon patron of Wenlock Abbey, Saint Milburga of Mercia (+727). Recent excavations indicate that the new French monks began restoring the old monastic site, re-dedicating it to Saint Milburga rather than the Trinity.²⁴ Similarly, Lewes retained its dedication to St. Patrick, the patron saint of the chapel donated by the Warennes. Montacute was established on Lutgaesbuty/Bishopton Hill, where, during King Edward's reign, a miraculous cross had been discovered and venerated, subsequently becoming the chapel of the Cluniac priory.²⁵

In summary, how should the Cluniac expansion be interpreted, particularly in the context of the Norman reorganization? This expansion was undeniably closely linked with the Norman Conquest of England. King William initially supported the establishment of the Cluniac order in his new kingdom, motivated by his desire for unity and standardization under the Crown. To achieve this, he first offered Abbot Hugh a substantial monetary donation, and after Hugh's refusal, he likely encouraged his vassals to follow the example of William of Warenne. Several of them accepted, recognizing the potential benefits these new monks could bring. However, this remains a hypothesis, as there is no conclusive evidence of an explicit royal

²² KNOWLES 1940, p. 145. Referring to the Cough Map, only Lewes seemed to be a site chosen for its proximity to a road, in this case the routes from Chichester to Canterbury and to London.

²³ WILLIAMS 2015, p. 15: „Mother-daughter house ties were arguably often strong from the start. Houses such as Lewes, Bermondsey and Much Wenlock were founded by monks sent from their respective French motherhouses”. It is difficult to prove a royal project behind these foundations, since different Cluniac monasteries (San Martin des Champs, La Charité) were chosen as mother houses by the English founders. A uniform royal scheme should have involved maybe just the abbey of Cluny, which was William's reference point.

²⁴ YARROW 2013, p. 3; WOODS 1987, pp. 58–63.

²⁵ Montacute's patron saints were Peter and Paul, Cluniac patrons par excellence: the Anglo-Saxon component and the Norman/continental one amalgamated in this site and in the context of the dedications. In fact, some priories were entitled to local saints (Pancras, Augustin, Carrock), while others were devoted to Cluniac cults (Mary Magdalene, Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist).

directive to found Cluniac monasteries, nor is there any indication of uniformity or centralization within these foundations. English Cluniac houses were subordinated to various French monasteries, not exclusively to Cluny itself. Ultimately, the three central principles of the Conquest did not apply to this monastic order: the Crown never attained comprehensive control over all Cluniac foundations, nor did Lewes, as the leading house in the region. Instead, the priories increasingly fell under the influence of the founding families, whose castles strategically governed the life of these religious communities, thereby gaining territorial control and symbolic power. In the end, the Cluniac monks were not proponents of a widespread Normanization of the kingdom, as they often leveraged the Anglo-Saxon religious tradition to facilitate their integration into a foreign land. This approach, however, aligns with the broader process of the Norman Conquest of England, which scholars now interpret as a gradual, partial, and often peaceful infusion of Norman cultural elements into the Anglo-Saxon world.²⁶

WILLIAM II: OLD AND NEW DIRECTIONS

In 1106, Abbot Hugh of Cluny sent a letter to King Philip of France, asserting his freedom to speak as a spiritual father to one of Europe's most powerful rulers. In this missive, Hugh urged the King to abdicate his throne and dedicate himself to monastic life as a means of expiating his sins. In making this suggestion, Hugh encouraged Philip to reflect on the deplorable behavior of his contemporaries and neighboring (*contemporalium vicinorumque*) rulers, particularly Emperor Henry V and King William II of England (c. 1060–1100), the latter having recently passed away under circumstances that Hugh is said to have prophetically foreseen.²⁷ In doing so, the Abbot aligned himself with the prevailing view of William II, the Conqueror's second-born son, who was often depicted by contemporary historians as avaricious, sacrilegious, violent, and blasphemous. This negative portrayal was largely influenced by Rufus' practice of withholding the revenues of large ecclesiastical estates or dioceses, often leaving them without successors after the deaths of their previous beneficiaries. A notable example of this occurred in Canterbury following the death of Lanfranc,

²⁶ For instance, when Roger Bigod acquired his new lands in East Anglia, he did not construct numerous castles to dominate the former Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. Instead, he favored establishing cooperative relationships with them. As noted by historians, „Such arrangements not only point towards friendship between a Norman sheriff and his predecessor in Suffolk but also hint at why the Bigod family was so slow to invest in a seigneurial lordship.” The most prominent of these former noblemen were Northam and Athelwine of Thetford, the latter being a city where a priory was eventually established (WAREHAM 2005, pp. 118–119).

²⁷ PL, vol. 159 (*Hugo Cluniacensis Abbas, Epistola VIII*), 0927A–0932A.

where, as recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Rufus sought to be „the heir of every man.”²⁸

Hugh’s disapproval of William Rufus’ conduct appears to overlook the King’s relationship with Cluniac monasticism in England, particularly with the Cluniac house of Bermondsey.²⁹ The primary source for the history of this priory is the *Annales*, likely composed in the first half of the 15th century, which dates the foundation to 1082, following the decision of Alwin Child to donate one of his properties in London to the Cluniac monks of La Charité-sur-Loire.³⁰ Several questions and hypotheses arise from this account: Who was Alwin Child, and how did he come into contact with Cluniac monasticism? The *Annales* describe him as a *civis Londonie*, but his Saxon name suggests that he may have been a wealthy member of the former ruling class, seeking to align himself with the new Norman practices of monastic patronage, possibly as a means of forging connections with the French aristocracy. Another significant aspect to consider is the involvement of the King in the priory’s establishment. The Domesday Book records the manor of Bermondsey as part of the Crown’s holdings, where a *nova et pulchra ecclesia* had been constructed.³¹ It is possible that Alwin Child was chosen as a „front-man” for the King, though this remains speculative. What is certain is that William Rufus’ engagement with Bermondsey did not conclude with its foundation. Recent research has identified and edited five royal charters issued by William II, through which he granted several properties in Somerset and Kent to the priory.³² These

²⁸ DE FALCO 2018, pp. 1–22; SCHMIDT 2014, pp. 288, 356.

²⁹ In the case of Lewes, for instance, William II granted the manor of Erceham and confirmed a donation from Eustache of Balmer. In the same writ, moreover, he granted all the land that William (of Warenne?) possessed in the *insula in qua monasterium reedificatum est*. This mention of a rebuilding of the monastery probably referred to the wetland landscape that, at that time, covered East Sussex. WHITWELL JOWITT; CARLESS DAVIS 1913, doc. no. 325; Appendix, doc. no. 40.

³⁰ CARPENTER 2018, p. 8. In *The Chartres of William II and Henry I: Hoc anno Alwinus Child, civis Londonie, fundator monasterii monachorum sancti Saluatoris de Bermondese ex licentia regia dedit eisdem monachis qui uenerunt in Angliam in anno secundo Willelmi regis rufi secundi, diuersos redditus in ciuitate Londoniae antequam idem rex Willelmus secundus dedit manerium de Bermundeseye. Et insuper excitauit diuersos dominos tam temporales quam spirituales ut darent predia, ecclesias et maneria prout patet inferius tempore regis Willelmi secundi*. The *Annales Bermundensia* are edited in RICHARDS LUARD 1864–1869, vol. 3.

³¹ See at Open Domesday. CARPENTER 2018, p. 2: „Whether the ‘new and beautiful church’ can be identified as the new priory church is a matter of conjecture.”

³² An alleged foundation charter has been edited, and the signature of Alwin appears. CARPENTER 2018, pp. 16–17: *Nouerit omnium fidelium posteritas quod ego Willelmus rex Anglorum pro anima mea et anima patris mei Willelmi regis cui ego successi in regno dedi deo et monachis de Caritate ecclesiam sancti Saluatoris de Bermondesia simul et ipsam Bermondesia cum omnibus appendiciis suis iure perpetuo possidendam ab omnibus rebus et consuetudinibus liberam et quietam. [...] Willelmus nutu dei rex Anglorum sigillo suo confirmauit hec et corroborauit. S(ignum) Willelmi regis [...] S(ignum) Alwini [...]. AMEN.*

numerous donations, especially when compared to other royal endowments, suggest a particular favor from the King towards this Cluniac house. This preference might be explained by Bermondsey's strategic location in the heart of London, leading to the hypothesis that the priory was intended as a coordination center for Cluniac houses in Britain, established with the Crown's approval in the capital. Within this framework, it could be posited that King William, known for his desire to control religious institutions, promoted the foundation of Bermondsey not only to supervise the Cluniac network in England but also to enhance his image as a pious ruler involved in supporting a respected monastic order. Alternatively, some scholars propose that Cluny itself sought this foundation as a strategic focal point for all the black monk priories in England.³³ However, both theories remain speculative due to the absence of conclusive evidence that Bermondsey played a significant role in the English Cluniac network, at least before the 14th century.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the reign of William Rufus witnessed the establishment of three additional Cluniac foundations: Daventry (1090), Pontefract (1090), and Northampton (1110). These priories shared several characteristics with those founded during the reign of William the Conqueror, such as the Norman origin of their aristocratic founders, their proximity to castles, and their connections to Anglo-Saxon religious traditions, as reflected in their dedications to local saints.³⁴ However, it is also noteworthy that there was a discernible shift in the locations of these new monasteries. Unlike the earlier foundations, which were often situated in border regions or more marginal areas, these later foundations were established in less peripheral regions that were better connected to the rest of the realm by roads, similar to the case of Bermondsey³⁵. This geographical shift suggests that Cluniac monasticism in England during the reign of William Rufus was becoming less peripheral and more integrated into the heart of the kingdom. This development was influenced by both traditional and emerging trends: on one hand, the continued strong ties with the aristocracy, and on the other, the growing

³³ PEARCE 2017, p. 53: „It is here argued that Bermondsey Priory was established by the Cluniac administration for strategic reasons. Situated close to London, the principal city of England, and at a major river crossing, Bermondsey could serve as an administrative centre supporting the wider Cluniac monastic community in England and Wales”. In addition, Pearce suggests that Alwin Child was a sort of character invented during the writing of the *Annales*. That would have been done to remark the monastery's English origins, since Cluny have been frightened about Bermondsey's attempt to become an abbey and free from its bounds with Cluny.

³⁴ Daventry was founded by Hugh of Leicester, sheriff of Northamptonshire; Pontefract was established by the powerful Robert de Lacy, one of the most powerful men in Northern England; Daventry was founded by Simon de Senlis, earl of Northampton. On what refers to dedications, it can be noticed that the trend to choose, in some cases, local saints continued: in fact, Northampton priory was entitled to St. Augustin.

³⁵ EDWARDS 1987, pp. 33–35.

connections with the Crown and a strategic relocation of monastic sites to more central areas.

HENRY I: THE CLUNIAN APOGEE?

In abovementioned Hugh's letter to King Philip of France the Abbot of Cluny recalled the circumstances of William Rufus' death: *sagittae ictu, non in bello, sed in bosco* – not in battle, but struck by an arrow in the woods. Like many other writers of the time, Hugh emphasized this manner of king's sudden death as symbolic of his sinful life – a king who did not die in service to the Lord or in prayer, but while indulging in hunting and other worldly pleasures. English medieval scholars viewed this death as divine retribution, especially given that Rufus had been accused of depriving monasteries and churches of their woods to create royal hunting forests. In contrast, William Rufus' younger brother, Henry I (1068–1135), was remembered as *beauclerc*, the „handsome cleric,” a title that reflected his deep cultural interests and religious devotion—an image likely cultivated and reinforced by Henry himself. Upon ascending to the throne after his brother's death, Henry issued the *Charta Libertatum* (1100), a royal document in which he vowed to restore the liberty of the English Church, combat simony, fill vacant episcopal seats, and abolish the sinful practices promoted by his brother³⁶. In an effort to legitimize his tenuous position as the younger son, Henry essentially pledged to be the antithesis of William Rufus. To the clergy, he was the ideal king, and this sentiment was shared by Cluny. Henry and his wife, Matilda of Scotland (1080–1118), demonstrated their support for Cluny by donating a seven-branched gold candelabrum for the abbey's altar and, in 1131, by bestowing an annual census of 100 silver marks for the church's construction, following the precedent set by Alfonso VI.³⁷ Although Henry extended his patronage to Cistercian, Benedictine, and Augustinian houses, he also granted lands, liberties, and exemptions to the Cluniacs of Bermondsey, Pontefract, Castle Acre, and Montacute—a sign of his particular favor toward the Cluniac order.³⁸ This affinity for Cluny was evident not only in Henry but also among other members of his family, including his parents, his brother, and his relatives Clemence of Burgundy (1078–1133) and Adelaide of Normandy (c. 1030–1090). Clemence was a key figure in the „Cluniacization” of

³⁶ SHARPE 2013, see in Chartres of William II and Henry I.

³⁷ GRAHAM 1914, p. 187; CANTARELLA 1993, pp. 264–265.

³⁸ WHITWELL JOWITT, CARLESS DAVIS 1913, doc. nos. 510, 1017, 1310, 1840 (Lewes); 733, 734, 735, 1368, 1399 (Montacute); 620, 639, 659, 664, 665, 763, 962, 1021, 1350, 1743, 1990 (Bermondsey); 1272, 1400, 1401, 1460 (Pontefract); 1292, 1667, 1912 (Barnstaple); 920, 921, 1282 (Lenton); 770, 832, 833, 985, 986, 1156, 1317, 1318, 1409 (Northampton); 682, 834, 848, 1084, 1246, 1536 (Thetford). It is relevant to say that the majority of these documents refers in their text not only to the English priories, but also to Cluny or to the French mother houses: that probably means that the bonds with the Continent were still felt as strong and important in the first years of the 12th century.

several Flemish abbeys, most notably the ducal monastery of Saint Bertin, which she entrusted to Hugh of Cluny for reform at the end of the 11th century.³⁹ Adelaide, after her husband's death, took vows at Marcigny, the first Cluniac nunnery founded by Abbot Hugh.⁴⁰ This privileged relationship with Cluny also extended to her sons, Henry of Winchester (1096–1171) and King Stephen of England (1096–1154), whom we will discuss later. Given this context, it is understandable why Henry I's reign has often been regarded as a period of Cluniac apogee: new houses were founded, Cluniac monks ascended to positions of power, and the King promoted the establishment of a new Cluniac royal abbey. However, these developments were also marked by signs of weakening in the influence and control that the Burgundian abbey exerted within the English Kingdom, raising questions about the validity of the notion of a „Cluniac apogee” during this period.

During Henry I's reign, numerous Cluniac priories were established, including Thetford (1104), Barnstaple (1107), Lenton (1108), Northampton (1110), and Prittlewell (1121). These foundations reflect traditional patterns of Cluniac expansion. Notably, all were founded by powerful men of French origin, such as the Breton lord Juhel de Totnes (d. circa 1130) and the Norman vassal Simon de Senlis (d. circa 1113). It is significant that Roger Bigod (d. 1107), founder of Thetford, and William Peverell (d. 1114), founder of Lenton, were appointed sheriffs of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Nottinghamshire, respectively. These were influential and wealthy royal officials, closely allied with the King, who relied on them for the governance and administration of his kingdom.⁴¹

³⁹ Clemence, sister of Callistus II and member of the comital family of Mâcon, was the sister-in-law of the Conqueror, having married his wife's brother, Robert of Flandres: during her regency, as Robert had gone in the First Crusade, she created a bond between Cluny and the comital abbey of St. Bertin at Sithou with the aid of some bishops who had joined the movement of the 11th century Reform. Around 1090 Hugh had been appointed by Gregory VII to judge a dispute between the bishop of Therouanne and duke Robert; moreover, in 1099, Clemence sent a letter to Hugh, giving him the authority to reform the abbey through twelve monks sent by Cluny. It is relevant to notice that the „clunisation” of the Flandres had already begun in 1076 and that it could have had a sort of role in Cluny's expansion in England. For an overview of the topic: VANDERPUTTEN 2013.

⁴⁰ Adelaide had married the son of Tebald of Blois, who probably was the *comes Campanie* who, as it was said in his letter to Abbot Hugh, sent his son Odo to Cluny in order to become a monk, giving in exchange the village of Cossiac. As her husband-in-law, the Conqueror's daughter then sent his son Henry (later bishop of Winchester) to the Burgundian abbey. PL, vol. 159 (*Hugo Cluniacensis abbas, Epistolae diversorum ad sanctum Hugonem*), 0931A – 0946A. Like in the case of Clemence of Burgundy, we can suppose that the French origin of the Conqueror's family and its bonds with the region of Burgundy had a role in shaping the relations with Cluny.

⁴¹ Thetford priory consisted of a striking example of these patterns. Roger Bigod founded it in the flourishing commercial city at the center of East Anglia, placing it in a vacant church near his castle: „For Bigod, in having the priory to the west of Thetford and his castle to the east, the urban settlement of the borough had effectively become contained between the twin symbols of his power and wealth.” Moreover, the monastery was conceived as his family's mausoleum, and the monks engaged in a legal

The locations of these priories continued to be influenced by the proximity to castles during Henry's reign. Founders often chose sites near their fortresses, a physical symbol of the aristocratic control that their families maintained over the centuries, likely beginning with the establishment of these Cluniac houses. Within the broader context of the kingdom, the movement of Cluniac monasteries observed in previous periods persisted during this time. With the exception of the remote Cornish priory of Barnstaple, the locations of Thetford (situated between Cambridge and Norwich), Lenton (near Nottingham), Northampton (between Coventry, Cambridge, and London), and Prittlewell (not far from London) demonstrate a geographical pattern characterized by placement in mid-sized towns. These towns were well-connected by important roads, though smaller and less populated than major cities like Winchester or York, where the Cluniacs never established a presence. While the sites and founders of these monasteries adhered to patterns seen in earlier decades, new trends began to emerge in the final years of Hugh's abbacy.⁴² For the first time, Cluniac houses other than Cluny and La Charité were involved in founding new priories. The Parisian abbey of Saint Martin des Champs and even Lewes itself became the mother houses of Barnstaple, Clifford, and Thetford, initiating an innovative pattern that would later be followed by Castle Acre, Pontefract, Bermondsey, and Montacute.⁴³ Although this process was gradual, it contributed to the weakening of Cluny's authority in England, aided by the growing autonomy of the English Cluniac houses – a trend often encouraged by the founders' families who sought to assert control over these priories. Two examples are particularly illustrative. In 1202, Robert de Lacy (1170–1211) secured the right for his family to nominate candidates for the abbacy of Pontefract, which was also granted a reduction in the tax owed to its mother house, a concession driven by the lord himself.⁴⁴ Similarly, in 1201 at Lewes, a conflict arose between the Varennes and Cluny over the right to appoint the new abbot. Lord Hameline (1130–1202) refused to accept the abbot nominated by Cluny

struggle against bishop Herbert de Losinga to have their founder buried in their church instead of in Norwich's cathedral. PESTELL 2001, pp. 224–229.

⁴² The exclusion of the Cluniacs from major towns limited their involvement in the „reformation” of the English Church following the Norman Conquest. With few exceptions during the reign of Henry I, no monk directly affiliated with Cluny was appointed as abbot or bishop in any of the prominent English monasteries or dioceses. Consequently, it can be concluded that William the Conqueror's initial intention to employ the Cluniacs for this purpose was ultimately unfulfilled.

⁴³ PEARCE 2017, p. 48: „Thetford Priory, although it received its first monks and prior from Lewes, was subsequently made dependent on Cluny. It seems possible that this change of relationship was determined by the founder, Roger Bigod who may have been unwilling to agree to the foundation for which he was responsible being made dependent on that founded by another prominent Anglo-Norman noble.”

⁴⁴ SPEIGHT 1993, p. 201: „In 1202 Roger de Lacy successfully claimed that priors of Pontefract should be presented to him and made with his assent rather than that of the mother house La Charité. [...] Roger's chief concern was that Pontefract should not be impoverished by excessive payments to the mother house.”

and chose to appoint another monk instead. Although the pope dispatched legates to mediate, they were forced to reach a compromise favorable to the lords of Lewes after Lord Varenne resorted to violence.⁴⁵

Another factor that has led scholars to discuss the Cluniac apogee during the reign of King Henry I is the elevation of several Cluniac monks to high ecclesiastical positions both in their homeland and abroad. Notable examples include Henry of Poitiers, who advanced from being the bishop of Soissons and abbot of Saint Jean d'Angely to becoming the abbot of Peterborough; Hugh of Amiens (d. 1164), previously the archbishop of Rouen, who was elected abbot of the royal abbey of Reading; Robert of Lewes (d. 1166), who was appointed bishop of Bath; another Robert who assumed the bishopric of Winchcombe; and Adam, a monk from La Charité, who was appointed abbot of Ramsey. Additionally, the abbot of Saint Martin des Champs was elected as abbot of Ramsey Abbey, and Bishop Thurstan of York (1070–1104) took vows at Pontefract, where he ultimately passed away.⁴⁶

Two of the most prominent Cluniacs „in power” were Gilbert Foliot (1110–1187) and Henry of Winchester. Gilbert, born into a noble Norman family, began his ecclesiastical career as a monk and prior at Cluny. He was later elected Abbot of Abbeville in Flanders before ascending to other significant positions, including Abbot of Gloucester, Bishop of Hereford, and finally Bishop of London. These esteemed positions made him one of the religious figures closest to the English throne in the latter half of the 12th century.⁴⁷ Henry of Winchester, on the other hand, was a relative of the king, being the son of Henry I's sister Adelaide and the brother of the future King Stephen. His family ties to one of France's most powerful houses, the Counts of Blois, and his connections to the English royal family facilitated his acquisition of the abbacy of Glastonbury and subsequently the prestigious episcopal seat of Winchester. As the head of Glastonbury Abbey, he is credited with promoting a spiritual renaissance by incorporating various Cluniac customs, thereby enhancing the abbey's wealth, magnificence, and status as a „mother house” for other monasteries founded by Henry.⁴⁸ Despite these connections, there is limited evidence of further initiatives directly tied to the Burgundian abbey being promoted by these influential Cluniac

⁴⁵ PEARCE 2017, pp. 250–254; KNOWLES 1940, pp. 156–157. In this decades became „a general movement among the founders and priors of Cluniac houses to limit the rights of the founding house. [...] Above all, in the matter of the election of a prior founders endeavoured to limit the absolute powers enjoyed by Cluny abroad, though often more from a desire to retain for themselves the rights of an *Eigenkirche* than from a preoccupation to safeguard the principles of the Rule”.

⁴⁶ CANTARELLA 1993, pp. 282–283. It is worth of mention, moreover, that Ranulph, the physician of Henry I, decided to become a monk a Montacute around 1121 and to give the monastery all his goods. *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, doc. no. 1307.

⁴⁷ See his biography in Britannica. HILL 2008, pp. 52–59.

⁴⁸ JACKSON 2006, pp. 9–28; STACY 1999, pp. 1–33. Henry had an important role in budgeting Cluny's monetary resources in the first half of the 12th century, when the monastery felt under serious economic difficulties. He brought Winchester's treasure to Burgundy and, using his personal resour-

monks. While they undoubtedly recognized the importance of their order, they did not consistently adhere to its customs and practices. They neither established new Cluniac priories nor endeavored to enforce Cluniac *consuetudines*.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they did not refrain from supporting Cistercian and traditional Benedictine houses. In essence, although these bishops and abbots were Cluniac monks by origin, they distanced themselves from the most rigorous forms of promoting their order. Their rise to prominent positions likely reflects the natural consequence of Cluny's growing influence within a new political landscape and the strong connections that existed across the English Channel, under a king who may have had a special, though not unequivocal, predilection for the Cluniac order.

The third defining feature of the purported Cluniac zenith during the late eleventh and early twelfth century was the establishment of the wealthy, powerful, and privileged Cluniac Abbey of Reading. This monastery, founded by King Henry I and his wife, served two key purposes. First, it was intended to be the mausoleum for their son William, following his tragic death in the sinking of the White Ship. Second, it was designed as a significant pilgrimage destination.⁵⁰ William of Malmesbury described its location as being ideally situated: *ubi ab populosiores urbes Angliae omnium pene intinerantium posset esse diversorium*. Notably, King Henry chose to establish this religious complex sixty kilometers from his capital city, strategically located between the Kennet and the Thames. He endowed it with a hospitale and a grand pilgrimage church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Saint John.⁵¹

The unique origins of Reading Abbey positioned it not only as the most accessible Cluniac establishment in the kingdom but also as the first English Cluniac monastery entirely founded by the Crown. Its most significant feature was its elevation to the rank of an abbey. In 1121, King Henry I obtained permission from Abbot Pontius, Hugh's successor at Cluny, to establish this monastery with the assistance of several black monks from France and Lewes Priory, led by Prior Peter, who later became its first abbot. At its inception, Reading's ties to the Burgundian abbey were notably strong. However, it is important to recognize that this Cluniac house was initially established as an abbey, diverging from the traditional (albeit not exclusive) Cluniac practice of founding priories subordinate to the mother house of Cluny.⁵²

es too, helped Cluny to settle up the immense amount of debts it had made. CANTARELLA 1993, pp. 264–269.

⁴⁹ It is right to remember that some English bishops participated in the foundation of Cluniac houses: Herbert de Losinga, for instance, bishop of Thetford, was one of the promoters of Thetford priory. It seems that Foliot took part only in the establishment of the priory of Prittlewell. PEARCE 2017.

⁵⁰ KEMP 1986, pp. 9–10; LUXFORD 2004, pp. 15–31.

⁵¹ See the following link about the relics placed in the abbey's church. To get a deep knowledge on the various essential topics referring to the history of the abbey refer to *Reading Medieval Studies*, a collection which shares insights on the history, architecture and culture at Reading Abbey.

⁵² It is important to note, however, that several abbeys, upon entering the Cluniac network, retained their abbatial status without undergoing a „downgrading” to priories. This was the case with

While other European Cluniac abbeys cannot be overlooked, this English foundation exhibited a distinctive trait that likely foreshadowed its eventual progressive detachment from the *Ecclesia Cluniacensis*. Throughout the 12th century, Reading likely maintained robust connections with Cluny, adopting its consuetudines, electing abbots who had been monks at Lewes, and sending its men to Cluny, as in the case of Abbot Hugh, who was chosen as Abbot of Cluny in 1199.⁵³ Nonetheless, from that point onward, the separation deepened, largely due to the powerful and unmistakable patronage of the Crown. Henry and his successors endowed the abbey with fiscal privileges, financial autonomy, exemptions, lands, a mint, and a seat for the abbot in the House of Lords. Consequently, Reading, originally founded as a Cluniac abbey but with considerable distinctiveness, increasingly evolved into a royal Benedictine monastery dedicated to the memory of its founders and loyalty to the throne.⁵⁴

CONCLUSIONS

After the death of Henry I, Stephen continued to extend royal patronage to the Cluniacs, exemplified by the foundation of the Abbey of Faversham in Kent in 1148. This abbey was endowed with several lands formerly owned by William of Ypres, one of Stephen's commanders, who was compensated with other nearby villages.⁵⁵ The foundation of Faversham mirrors that of Reading: originally intended as a daughter-house of Bermondsey and sharing the dedication to Saint Saviour, it quickly evolved into an autonomous abbey under the careful oversight of the royal family, lacking strong ties to the broader English Cluniac network.⁵⁶ This development may be seen as indicative of the crisis that began to unfold among the English Black

St. Bertin and Sahagún. In the latter instance (December 1079/January 1080), „*ut nullo homo habeat potestatem super eum, nisi solus rex ad regendum et defendendum et abbas monasterii gubernandum*”, the monastery, although entrusted to Cluny, did not lose its rank of abbey; rather, it became part of the constellation of religious houses that flourished under the abbacy of Hugh I” (DE LA FUENTE 2007, pp. 152–153).

⁵³ MORGAN 2016, pp. 89–102 „Thus, from the time of its foundation in 1121 until certainly the abbacy of Hugh (1186–1199), formerly prior of Lewes, who left Reading to become Abbot of Cluny 1199–1207, the liturgical practices of Reading were established, probably with some input from Cluny itself”. KNOWLES 1940, p. 282. Contemporary strong links with Cluny can be detected also in Lewes' affairs, since in 1107 Abbot Hugh ordered prior Lanzo of Lewes to choose a new abbot of Thetford's priory. PESTELL 2001, p. 225.

⁵⁴ KNOWLES 1940, pp. 27–29.

⁵⁵ JOHNSON, CRONNE 1956, doc. nos. 300, 301, 302. Like Reading, it is probable that Faversham's location was not chosen accidentally: Faversham, in fact, later became a part of the Cinque Ports and probably was a relevant port in Medieval England.

⁵⁶ KEMP 1968, p. 512, note n. 4: „Dugdale, iv. 575. This is a letter (of c. 1148) from the prior and convent of La Charité-sur-Loire in favour of the monks from Bermondsey who were about to settle in the abbey newly established by King Stephen at Faversham. It is a Cluniac letter and concedes *ut ipsa*

Monks in the latter half of the 12th century. While the Crown established special patronage over the two „Royal Cluniac Monasteries” of Reading and Faversham, the descendants of the Norman nobles who founded the first Cluniac houses increasingly interfered with the religious life of the monasteries situated near their influential castles, thereby weakening the connection to their mother houses. By the early 13th century, both the Warenne and Lacy families openly opposed Cluny regarding the autonomous election of abbots in their monasteries. This detachment from the prerogatives of the French motherhouses was driven by both the aristocrats and the English Cluniac monks. In 1291, the General Chapter was informed that the priories of Barnstaple and Exeter sought to detach from the *ordo* and submit to the authority of their bishops.⁵⁷ By 1130, Peter the Venerable had already yielded to a prevailing anti-French sentiment in Peterborough Abbey.⁵⁸ It is therefore unsurprising that during the 13th and 14th century, amid the tensions of the Hundred Years’ War, several Cluniac priories such as Thetford, Daventry, Montacute, and Lewes gained autonomy as abbeys and successfully asserted their prerogatives in the election of their abbots.⁵⁹

At the end of the 12th century, what did remain of Abbot Hugh’s ambitious expansion project, as described in this article? What legacy did it leave for the Norman Kingdom of England? The general crisis, whose seeds were sown during Henry I’s reign, threatened to overshadow the significant role played by the Cluniac monks in England. First, it is crucial to recognize that the arrival of the Cluniacs in England shortly after the Norman Conquest was likely more than a mere coincidence. A wealthy and powerful monastic order, like the one led by Hugh of Semur, symbolized the organized religious structure that William the Conqueror sought for his new kingdom. William envisioned a kingdom unified under a single king, one capital city, and one archiepiscopal see, complemented by a monastic world united under one banner – a role that could be fulfilled by the Black Monks, despite their relative absence in the Duchy of Normandy. The strategic foundation of Lewes Priory, which was desired by the King and initially opposed by St. Hugh, was likely aimed at reconciling the two parties on how Cluniac monasticism should expand in this new kingdom. The monks of Cluny were allowed to settle in Lewes because Hugh recognized the opportunity to expand the order into new territory, but he also insisted on a more controlled form of expansion, resisting King William’s initial project of „buying” the monks outright.

abbatia (sc. Faversham) in eadem maneat libertate in qua manet abbatia de Rading de monachis ordinis nostri constructa.”

⁵⁷ DUCKETT 1890, p. 207.

⁵⁸ KNOWLES 1940, pp. 157, 183–184.

⁵⁹ In 1399 Bermondsey became an autonomous abbey, while a few years later Daventry and Montacute obtained the royal permission to elect their own abbots, as Thetford had been doing from 1376. After 1410, when Lewes was denied being granted with the rank of abbey, the English Cluniac priors sent to Cluny a memorandum with several requests for autonomy. In 1496 Wenlock was able to elect its priory, while the archbishop of Canterbury in 1499 was appointed with the right to visit and inspect the English Cluniac houses. GRAHAM 1924, pp. 100–101, 105–106, 126.

Secondly, the establishment of multiple Cluniac houses near the castles of Norman noblemen highlights their significant role in shaping the new political landscape. By providing liturgical services, these monasteries conveyed political legitimacy to the Norman fortresses and their owners. A powerful „weapon” at their disposal was the strategic reuse of Anglo-Saxon cults and religious sites, as demonstrated by the monastery of Wenlock, which was dedicated to the local veneration of St. Milburga. The proximity of these Cluniac houses to the centers of Norman lordship fostered a strong bond between the monasteries and their patrons, leading to increased control by the latter over the former.

Moreover, it is evident that the Crown quickly recognized and sought to exploit the symbolic power of Cluniac monasticism. While Battle Abbey, founded by monks from Marmoutier, cannot be considered Cluniac in origin, it is clear that William II, Henry I, and Stephen chose to align themselves with Cluniac institutions and liturgy.⁶⁰ William Rufus provided substantial support to Bermondsey Priory, possibly to establish a stronghold for Benedictine monks in his capital city. Despite the onset of a looming crisis during Henry Beauclerc’s reign, this period was marked by the Black Monks attaining the highest levels of royal patronage, as evidenced by the foundation of Reading Abbey.

As the title of this article suggests, the discussion centers on the time, places, and individuals associated with English Cluniac monasticism during the abbacy of St. Hugh. His role was crucial in the negotiations for the foundation of Lewes Priory. However, it is also clear that Norman kings and aristocrats played a significant part in this process, influencing both the timing and location of new Cluniac foundations and shaping their relationships with their motherhouses. The arrival of Cluniac monks in England was not solely a matter of concern for Cluny; it was also an issue that the Norman Kingdom had to address and strategically utilize. This perspective facilitates an analysis of various phases in Cluny’s history, including the transition from *ecclesia* to *ordo* and the ways in which the Burgundian abbey adapted to the policies of Norman kings. During its first century in the kingdom, the Cluniac order encountered multiple challenges and adopted various strategies in response to the Anglo-Norman context. The interaction between Cluny and William I’s kingdom thus offers valuable insights into how secular powers and the Black Monks navigated their respective challenges while establishing their structures of lordship. This case study provides scholars with a deeper understanding of the relationships between political domains and monasticism in the Middle Ages.

⁶⁰ Marmoutier was founded in 372 by St. Martin of Tours and was reformed by Abbot Maiolus of Cluny by the end of the 10th century, when he introduced there *consuetudines* of his abbey. NEISKE 1998, p. 194; HARE *et alii* 1985, pp. 11, 18.

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Summary

This article examines the arrival of the Cluniacs in England during the abbacy of Hugh of Semur, spanning the reigns of William the Conqueror, William Rufus, and Henry I. It explores the relationships between these monarchs and Cluny, as well as with its abbot, from the challenging establishment of the first Cluniac priory at Lewes in 1076 to the period of the alleged Cluniac apogee in England during the early 12th century. The article also delves into the role of the Black Monks in the Norman government post-Conquest, the strategic significance of the geographic locations of their abbeys, and offers new interpretations based on cartularies and other historical documents.