

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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# MAPPING THE CHANGING RELATIONS BETWEEN BISHOPS AND MONASTICS IN ELEVENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Overview of the Project

State of the Art and Research Gap

The 11<sup>th</sup>-century bishop-monastic relations in France has been long studied within the context of the Gregorian Reform / Papal Reform. According to such a narrative, monasteries, previously under episcopal control through feudo-vassalic bonds, gained emancipation through papal privileges around the year 1100.

Key Questions:

- Were monasteries truly emancipated by the papacy around 1100?
- How did the bishop-monastic relations evolve during the 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries?
- From what perspectives should their relations be analyzed?

Preliminary Findings

By examining sources through the lenses of **liturgy, canon law, and property**, this research finds that the bishop-monastic relations were progressively better defined, formalized, and institutionalized over the course of the long 11<sup>th</sup> century. Simultaneously, certain privileged monasteries, such as Cluny and Marmoutier, challenged these evolving relations by establishing a new form of monastic obedience.

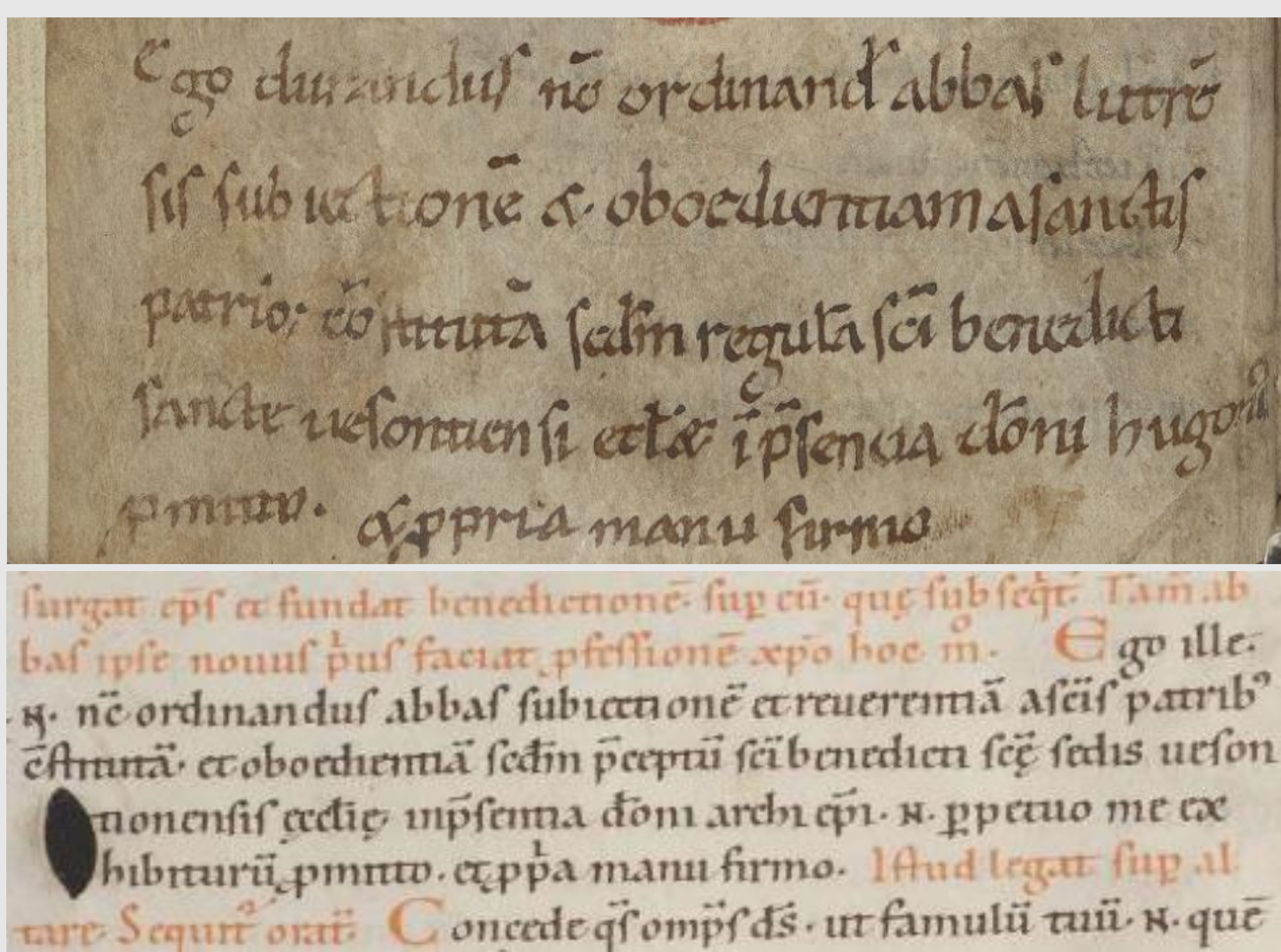
Sources

- Pontificals (bishop's liturgical handbooks)
- Canonical collections
- Charters and Papal bulls
- Letters
- Theological treatises
- Narrative Sources

Liturgical Innovations: Abbatial Obedience

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, some bishops began demanding for a promise of obedience before consecrating an abbot. This ritual became increasingly formalized, emphasizing a personal connection between the abbot and the bishop.

For instance: in the two manuscripts (1030s and 1040s), the abbot promised obedience to the Church of Besançon in the presence of the archbishop; in the edited text (12<sup>th</sup> century), the abbot directly professed to the abbot himself, addressing him as father (pater).



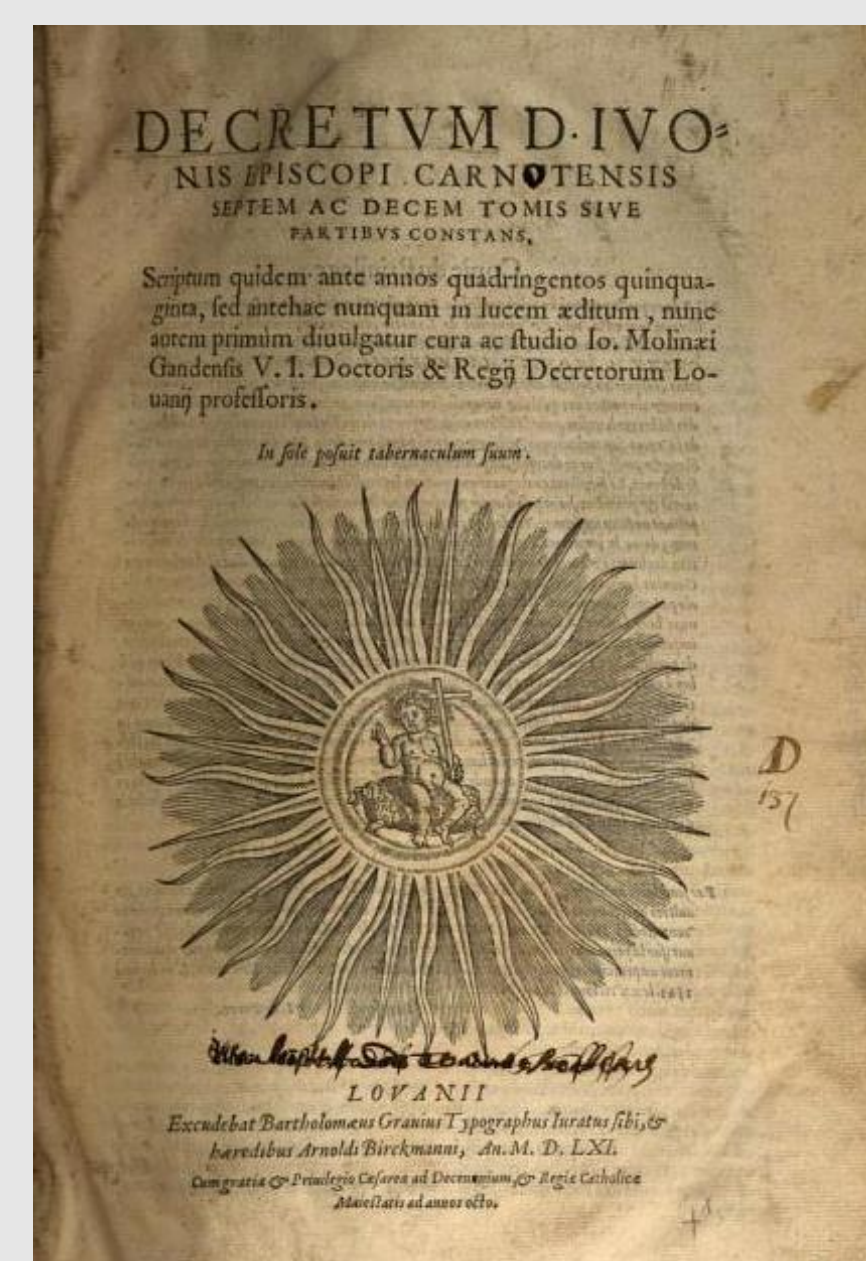
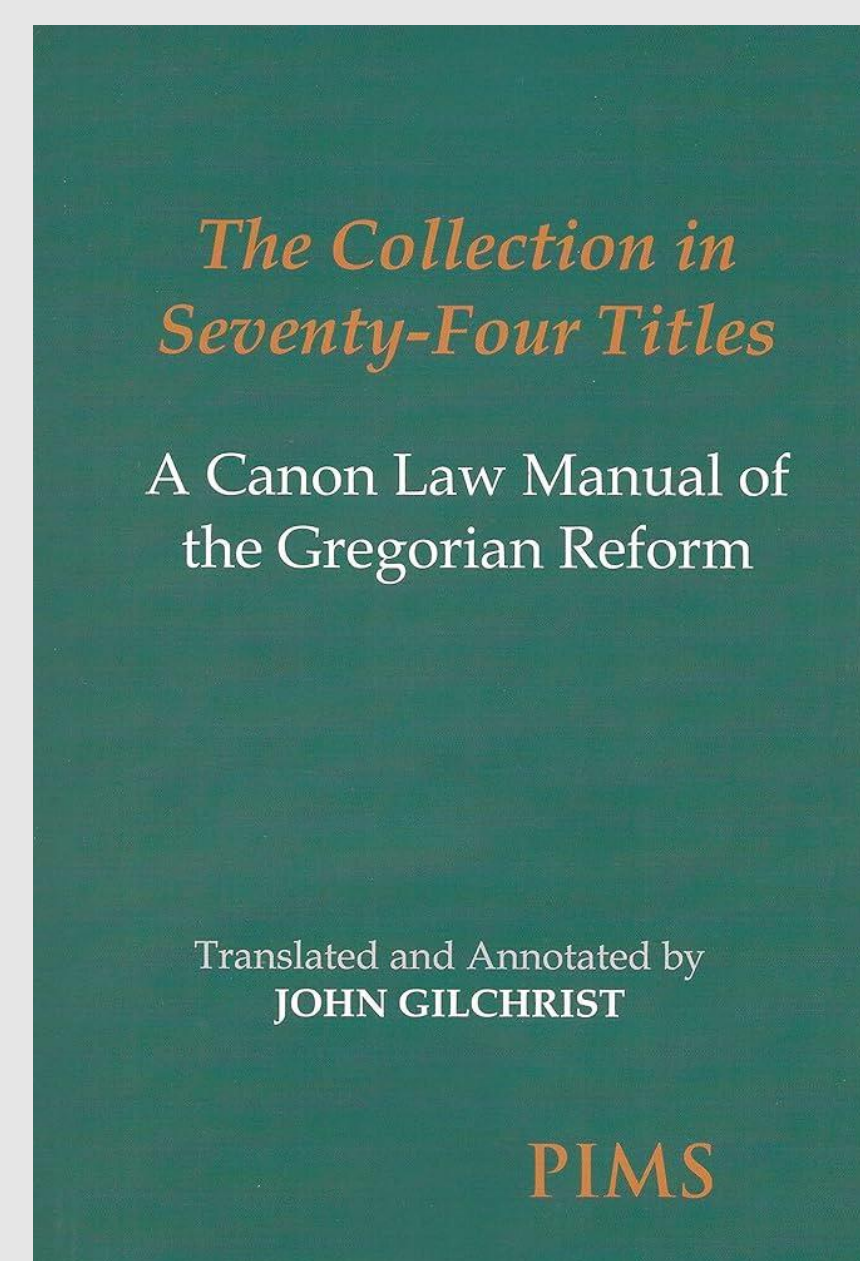
a Deo sibi constitutum. — Professio abbatis. Ego N. humilis cenobii beati ill. abbas, promitto tibi pater N. et — 159 v<sup>o</sup> — successoribus tuis atque matri ecclesie Carnotensi debitam subiectionem... — « Benedictio super abbatissam... — 160. Com-



Feudal oath and clerical ordination. Which one influenced abbatial consecration, or both?

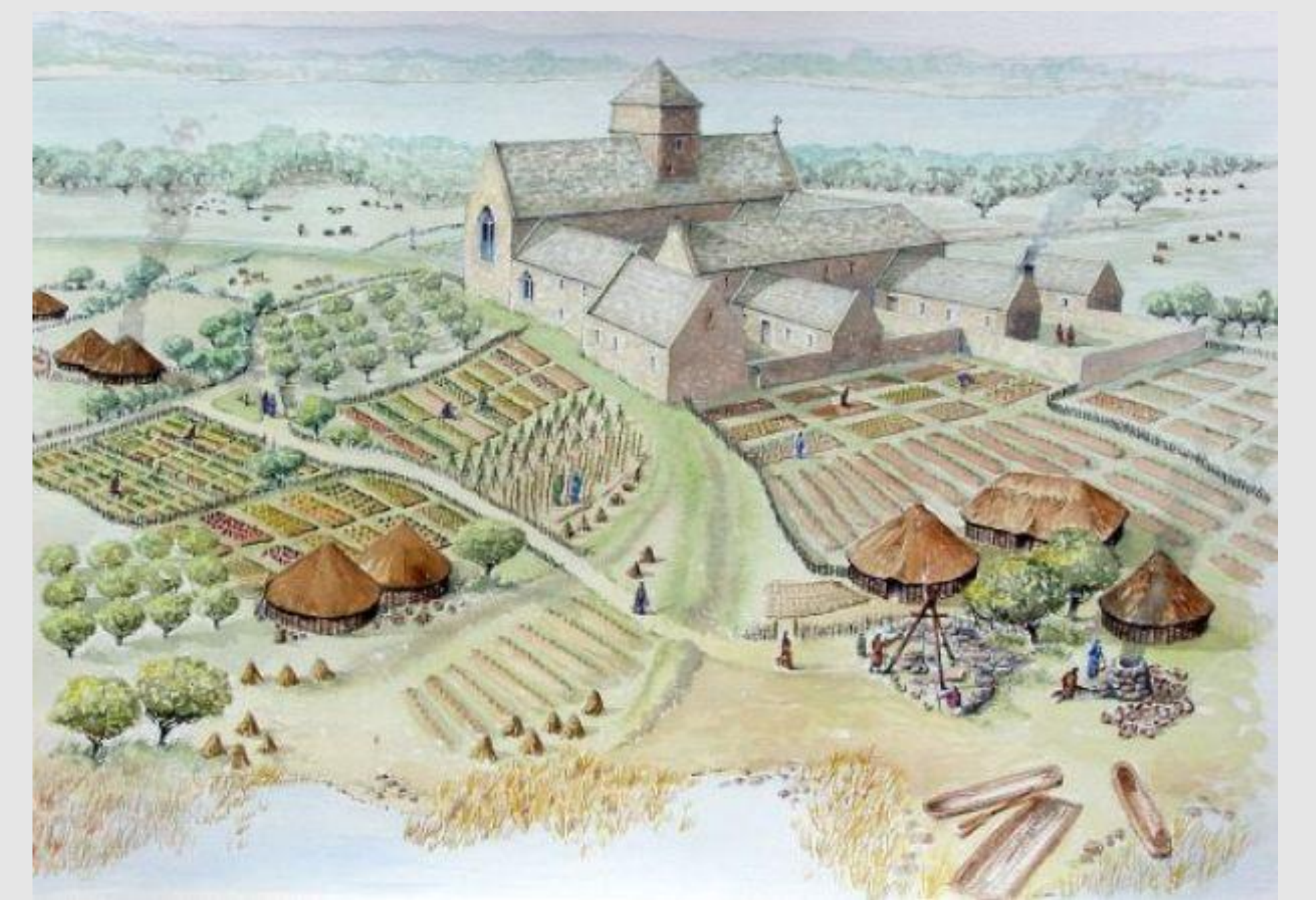
Canonical Collections: Attempts to Explicitly Define Bishop-Monastic Relations

Canonical collections fall into two categories: those compiled by bishops and those by monks. Both sought to define bishop-monastic relations to their advantage. While monks emphasized their autonomy, bishops, represented by Ivo of Chartres, aimed to incorporate monks more firmly within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.



Monastic Property

The rights of bishops over monastic property became more clearly defined during this period. For example, canon law introduced by papal legates in Normandy in 1128 stated that monasteries required diocesan bishop's permission to accept properties or tithes from lay donors. Without such permission, these acquisitions were deemed usurpations.



A New Form of Monastic Obedience

It is noteworthy that numerous monasteries enjoyed privileges that ensured complete immunity from episcopal interference. Some privileged monasteries, such as Cluny and Marmoutier in France, developed an alternative system of abbatial obedience. Here, abbots pledged obedience to the head of their network, who was sometimes referred to as an archabbot, rather than to the diocesan bishop. This structure granted network members the same privileges and evolved alongside the increasingly formalized bishop-monastic relations.

References

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3. Victor Leroquais ed., *Les pontificaux manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France*. 4 vols (Paris, 1937), vol. 2, 19.
4. John Gilchrist ed. and trans., *The Collection in the Seventy-Four Titles* (Toronto, 1980).
5. Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum D. Ivoonis episcopi Carnotensis* (Leuven, 1561).
6. Marjorie Chibnall ed. and trans., *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1969-1980), vol. 6, 389.

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