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## **In the Shadow of an Abdication: The Art and Cult of Saint Popes on the Example of the Tomb of Boniface VIII in the Vatican Basilica**

### **Background**

Let us go back many centuries, to 13 December 1294, when, in Naples, Pope Celestine V resigned from office in a spectacular manner after only serving five months as pope. According to the chroniclers of the time, the elderly pope read out the declaration he had prepared, descended from his throne, removed the tiara from his head, placed it on the ground and then his ring and robes, made his way to his cell, where he changed into the grey habit of his congregation, sat down on the lowest step of the papal throne and, with tears in his eyes, asked the cardinals to elect his successor as soon as possible. He then rose and walked out of the hall. Consternation reigned among those gathered. In the words of the biographer of Peter of Morrone, later Pope Celestine V, numerous members of the cardinal's college were *magis gaudentes quam dolentes*, but at the same time other

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witnesses of this exceptional event exclaimed unanimously against the outgoing pope that he had done wrong.<sup>2</sup>

This disunity was to become a kind of curse for the new pope. On 24 December 1294, a swift conclave elected Cardinal Benedict Caetani as the successor of Celestine V, who became Boniface VIII. The outgoing pope asked his successor for permission to return to the hermitage. Boniface VIII refused and sent Celestine ahead of him, north towards Rome. When he reached Monte Cassino, Celestine veered off into the mountains and headed towards Sulmona, where his hermitage was located and where, a few months earlier, he had learned of his election to the Holy See. Boniface VIII ordered a search for the fugitive, who in the spring of 1295 was found near the town of Vieste on the Gargano plateau, where he was awaiting favourable weather to cross the Adriatic to Greece. Eventually, Peter of Morrone known as Celestine V, by order of the pope, was placed in the castle of Fumone near Rome, where he died on 19 May 1296.

This article addresses issues that remain within the realm of history and art history, and it would be simplistic to say that the shadow of Celestine V's abdication reached so far that it completely determined the actions of his successor, which we wish to present. Boniface VIII is an individual who is far too complex and interesting for researchers to dwell only on the singular aspect of his pontificate that links Pope Caetani to Pope Bergoglio-Francis, namely, his election to the See of Peter during the lifetime of his predecessor.

Boniface VIII, Pope from 1294 to 1303, earned a prominent place in historiography, which was certainly due both to his dynamic pontificate and to his personality, as well as to the manner in which he exercised his papacy. Indeed, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani writes in this context about two historiographical 'revolutions' that occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The first of these revolutions took place at the beginning of the last century, thanks to the research of Heinrich Finke, who took an interest in the letters of the ambassadors of the Kingdom of Aragon to the Holy See and published them in print in a three-volume collection which he entitled *Acta Aragonensia*.<sup>4</sup> The work of H. Finke revealed the

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<sup>2</sup> *Quod cardinales videntes, quod numquam ante viderant, coeperunt omnes plorare, licet quam plures illorum essent magis gaudentes quam dolentes. Hac renuntiatione peracta, omnes qui hoc audiebant contra illum clamabant quod non bene fecisset* — *Vita C*, 34 [in:] *S. Pierre Célestin et ses premiers biographes*, "Analecta Bollandiana" 16 (1897), p. 422; see: P. Herde, *Cölestin V. (1294) (Peter von Morrone) Der Engelpapst mit einem Urkundengehang und edition zweiter viten* (Päpste und Papsttum, 16), Anton Hiersemann, Stuttgart 1981.

<sup>3</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, transl. F. Bacchelli, Torino 2003, p. XIII.

<sup>4</sup> See: *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. (1291–1327)*, hrsg. H. Finke, Bd. 1–2: Berlin–Leipzig 1908; Bd. 3: Leipzig 1922; H. Finke, *Aus den Tagen Bonifaz VIII. Funde und Forschungen*, Münster i. W. 1902.

complexity of Pope Boniface VIII and gave impetus to the 20<sup>th</sup> century research on this interesting pontificate, which produced, among others, a biography of the pope, published in the 1930s by the English art historian Thomas Boase.<sup>5</sup> We may speak of a second historiographical revolution with regard to the publication of source material from 1297–1312 containing accusations against Boniface VIII before and during the trial against him.<sup>6</sup> This work — the fruit of many years of research conducted in Rome by the French historian Jean Coste — enabled the preparation of another biography of the pope, which was published on the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.<sup>7</sup> The author of this biography, the distinguished Italian medievalist Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, claims that his work was produced in constant dialogue with the masterwork of Jean Coste.<sup>8</sup>

Relevant to the subject of this presentation are also selected post-conference materials published by the Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo in Rome, in the *Bonifaciana* series, on the occasion of the aforementioned anniversary of the death of Pope Boniface VIII, as well as the rich-in-content international conference in Todi, dedicated to this pope.<sup>9</sup> They strike up an interesting dialogue between art historians, who have at their disposal the achievements of modern research, and the works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century classics on the subject, such as Gerhard Ladner, Michele Maccarone or Angiola Maria Romanini.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See: T.S.R. Boase, *Boniface VIII*, London 1933.

<sup>6</sup> See: J. Coste, *Boniface en procès. Articles d'accusation et dépositions des témoins (1303–1311)*, Roma 1995.

<sup>7</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Bonifacio VIII. Ideologia e azione politica. Atti del Convegno organizzato nell'ambito delle Celebrazioni per il VII Centenario della morte, Città del Vaticano–Roma, 26–28 aprile 2004* (Bonifaciana, 2), Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, Roma 2006; *Le culture di Bonifacio VIII. Atti del Convegno organizzato nell'ambito delle Celebrazioni per il VII Centenario della morte. Bologna, 13–15 dicembre 2004* (Bonifaciana, 3), Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, Roma 2006; *Frammenti di memoria. Giotto, Roma e Bonifacio VIII*, a cura di M. Andaloro, S. Maddalo, M. Miglio (Bonifaciana, 5), Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, Roma 2006; *Bonifacio VIII. Atti del XXXIX Convegno Storico Internazionale, Todi, 13–16 ottobre 2002*, a cura di E. Menestò (Atti dei Convegni del Centro Italiano di Studi sul Basso Medioevo, Accademia Tudertina, e del Centro di Studi sulla Spiritualità Medievale, Nuova serie, 16), Spoleto 2003.

<sup>10</sup> See: G. Ladner, *Die Statue Bonifaz' VIII. in der Lateranbasilika und die Entstehung der dreifach gekrönten Tiara*, "Römische Quartalschrift" 42 (1934) 1–2, pp. 35–69 + 14 plates; M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro di Bonifacio VIII nella basilica vaticana* [in:] *Roma anno 1300*, a cura di A.M. Romanini, Roma 1995, pp. 753–771; A.M. Romanini, *Arnolfo di Cambio nella Basilica di San Pietro* [in:] *L'Architettura della basilica di San Pietro. Storia e costruzione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Roma 7–10 novembre 1995*, "Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura" 25–30 (1995–1997), pp. 45–62.

## 1. The Tomb of Boniface VIII in the Vatican Basilica

The Vatican Grottoes are part of the regular itinerary of pilgrims and tourists visiting St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. However, not everyone pays attention to the sarcophagus of Boniface VIII, a remnant of the pope's burial chapel, which has not existed for over four hundred years, and which was built in the old Constantinian basilica during his lifetime. No matter who we might be referring to, raising a tomb for oneself while still alive usually arouses interest and becomes an occasion for the expression of opinions, often critical. The same was true of the chapel we are interested in. It was consecrated on 6 May 1296, almost a year and a half after the election of Boniface VIII. The possibility cannot be ruled out that the pope himself was the originator of the idea underlying the iconographic plan of the chapel.

The burial chapel of Boniface VIII was located near one of the five doors leading inside the basilica, called the Ravenna Door, and was built in the form of a marble canopy resting on four columns, under which lay a space enclosed by an ornamental iron grille, where a protruding altar mensa was set.<sup>11</sup> Above it was an antique sarcophagus leaning against the temple wall, clad in front and partly on the sides with slabs carved in the form of a bed with the Caetani coat of arms at the base. The original plate enclosing the sarcophagus bore a *gisant* of the pope by Arnolfo di Cambio. Boniface VIII is dressed in lavish pontifical robes, with a tiara on his head. The wall is decorated with an ornamental curtain, the edges of which are being raised by two angels, thereby unveiling the sarcophagus. The artist's intention was probably to depict the deceased as he looked during his lifetime, and to capture his individual facial features. Above the sarcophagus, on the wall of the basilica, a mosaic attributed to Jacopo Torriti was visible. It featured a medallion with the Madonna and Child at the top, and below it an apocalyptic empty throne surmounted by a cross and surrounded by two palm trees. Boniface VIII appears once again, this time on his knees and in a gesture of outstretched arms, he prays to the Madonna and Child, while St. Peter, standing behind him, places his hands on his shoulders, proffering him, a gesture to which we will return.

It was the pope's intention to have the chapel serve as a burial place for members of the Caetani family. On 13 December 1296, that is only six months after the consecration of the chapel, the pope's nephew Benedict Caetani, who had been made cardinal the year before, was laid to rest at its altar. Boniface VIII saw to it that after his death masses were offered for the repose of his soul; he also assigned certain sums of money for the existence of this place of worship, and

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<sup>11</sup> See: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Barb.lat.2733, 7v–8r, [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Barb.lat.2733.pt.1](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.lat.2733.pt.1) [accessed: 15.1.2021].

he used to explain to the people of Rome that the choice of the burial place was dictated by his special affection for the Eternal City.<sup>12</sup>

Before we move on, it is worth mentioning some of the reactions to the pope's decision to erect a tomb for himself when he was alive. Bonaiuto da Casentino, the poet at the papal court, believes that the fact that the pope could see his tomb while he was alive had an ascetic aspect, and besides, as the depositary of supreme power (*puppis apostolicae remex, vigil arbiter orbis, eterne claviger aule*) he could thereby, as it were, 'stop time'.<sup>13</sup> Recounting the heretical doctrine of Dulcinus of Novara, the famous Dominican inquisitor and chronicler Bernard Gui summarizes the contents of his letter to his followers of December 1303, where he speaks of good and bad popes. Dulcinus singles out Celestine V in the first group and his successor in the second, who 'erected for himself a monument and a statue (*ymago*) of stone, which looks alive'.<sup>14</sup> An amusing anecdote contained in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century collection may also echo the discussions surrounding the papal tomb in the Middle Ages. Boniface VIII was said to have asked those admiring his sarcophagus if there was anything else missing from this beautiful work of art. Once everyone had expressed their admiration, one simple-minded bishop had the courage to state briefly, 'You inside!'.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. The Message of the Tomb

Boniface VIII inaugurated his pontificate in a most solemn manner. After being consecrated Bishop, he was ceremonially crowned on the square outside the Basilica of Saint Peter, where homage was paid to him by the powerful Roman families, the Orsinis, Colonnas, Savellis, Contis and Annibaldis. We owe the detailed account of this ceremony to Cardinal Stefaneschi, who, being an admirer of papal ceremony, described it in his *Opus metricum*. The pope appeared wearing a tiara with peacock feathers and a great ruby on top, decorated with a huge number of pearls and precious stones. After the coronation he rode a white horse

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<sup>12</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, pp. 114–115. Boniface VIII's concern for the sepulchral chapel is mentioned by the author of the continuation of Martin Polonus' Chronicle: *Bonifatius VIII natus de Anagnia sedit annis viii, mensibus ix, diebus xviii et cessavit episcopatus diebus xv. Qui vigilia nativitatis Domini apud Neapolim eligitur et Rome moritur xi die octubris et in ecclesia sancti Petri in capella sollemnpi, quam ipse construxit ipsamque ditavit et sacerdotes iii ad celebrandum perpetuo missas instituit, honorifice requiescit* — L. Fumi, A. Cerlini, *Una continuazione orvietana della cronaca di Martin Polono*, "Archivio Muratoriano" 14 (1914), p. 120; J. Coste, *Boniface en procès...*, p. 878.

<sup>13</sup> M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, p. 759.

<sup>14</sup> See: Bernardo Gui, *De secta illorum qui se dicunt esse de ordine Apostolorum*, a cura di A. Segarizzi, (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 9/5), Città di Castello 1907, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, p. 115.

through the city in a solemn procession towards the Lateran. There, the ceremonies and rituals foreseen for the occasion took place, which might be the topic for a separate presentation. Cardinal Iacopo Stefaneschi compares this event to the triumph of ancient chieftains and adds that none of those present remembered such a solemn papal coronation.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that both the decision to erect the tomb in the Vatican basilica and giving it its particular architectural form were part of Boniface VIII's plans, which he began to put into action as soon as he took office. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent his actions were influenced by the situation he faced immediately following his election. We do, however, have some clues to help us address the complex challenge of reconstructing the ideas that caused Boniface VIII's burial chapel take the shape it did.

Let us return to the already mentioned mosaic above the sarcophagus. The pope is depicted with the insignia of power: wearing a cloak, a tiara on his head and the symbolic keys of St. Peter, which, tied with a cord, hang down from his hands folded in a gesture of prayer. To complete the picture, St. Peter the Apostle presents him to the Madonna and Child. When we add to this the name *Bonifatius VIII*, completing the whole composition, there can hardly be a clearer indication that we are dealing with the true successor of St. Peter. As Michele Maccarone writes, we have here traditional motifs, taken over in a specific historical situation and creating a new iconography:

It helps understand [the iconography — J.G.] — the Italian art historian continues — the genesis of the chapel erected by Boniface VIII in the Vatican basilica. More than a tribute to the predecessor after whom he took his name, and more than a burial place for himself and his relatives, this great masterpiece was to remain in the service of his pontificate. The pope must have made the decision to erect it early on, when he began to have concerns that Celestine V would back down from his decision to resign and become a tool in the hands of those who might challenge the validity of the election of his successor. The attempted escape made by Celestine V himself, and the hard line adopted by Boniface, who ordered him to be taken to Anagni in June 1295 and then guarded in the castle of Fumone, only fuelled them. A hostile faction of the Franciscans reinforced this conviction, proclaiming that a pope cannot relinquish the office and be replaced in his lifetime by someone else. This was addressed by an alarmed Peter Olivi

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<sup>16</sup> *Sic igitur coronationis triumphus predicti sanctissimi patris gestorum servata substantia more poetico faleris insignitur. Nam a longis retroactis temporibus nullius Romane urbis antistitis sic celebris, sic preclara coronatio memoratur — Das "Opus Metricum" des Kardinals Jacobus Gaietani Stefaneschi [in:] F.X. Seppelt, Monumenta Coelestiniana. Quellen zur Geschichte des Papstes Coelestin V., Paderborn 1921, p. 84, see: pp. 5, 18.*

in his letter to the general of the order dated 14 September 1295: *Et ideo dicunt quod non solum papa Bonifacius non est papa, ymo etiam omnes, qui ipsum pro papa habent et ei tanquam pape obediunt, sunt synagoga sathane et extra ecclesiam veram et unicam Ihesu Christi.*<sup>17</sup> The concept that inspired the construction of Boniface VIII's burial chapel in the Vatican basilica can be seen as a reaction to the serious and growing contestation of his pontificate.<sup>18</sup>

Michele Maccarone points out another interesting detail in this context. The gaze of a pilgrim entering a Constantinian basilica in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was almost immediately drawn to the mosaic in the apse.<sup>19</sup> Pope Innocent III, the originator and sponsor of the mosaic, who sat on the See of Peter one hundred years before Boniface VIII, ordered to place on the vault of the apse the figure of Christ with the Saints Peter and Paul on either side and palm trees. This composition seems to have replaced the ancient scene showing the *Traditio legis*, or primacy of Peter (Matthew 16:18–19). Below were iconographic elements that already expressed the ecclesiology of Innocent III. In place of the Twelve Apostles, symbolic lambs emerge from the gates of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and in the centre with the Throne and Lamb, two new figures are visible: Pope Innocent III and the *Ecclesia Romana*. Both appear as guides of the sheep coming out of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, leading them toward the Lamb and the Throne, placed in union with Christ in majesty. It is also worth noting the relationship between the pope and the *Ecclesia Romana*. The latter, depicted as a triumphant young woman with an imperial diadem on her head, bears a flag with keys. At first glance, this would seem to be the mystical marriage of the pope to the Church that Innocent III himself mentions in one of his sermons.<sup>20</sup>

Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, however, draws attention to another aspect characteristic of this pope's ecclesiology. His identification with the Church suggests that papal authority derives not only from Peter, but from Christ himself, and commenting on the gesture of the pope's outstretched hands, the Italian historian writes:

The gesture of the hands is certainly to be seen in the context of the fact that the pope is wearing not only a pallium but also a tiara, and is placed in direct symme-

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<sup>17</sup> *Epistola ad Conradum de Offida* [in:] *Petri Iohannis Olivi De renuntiatione papae Coelestini V. Quaestio et Epistola*, ed. L. Oliger, "Archivum Franciscanum Historicum" 11 (1918), p. 367.

<sup>18</sup> M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, p. 758. All translations by Jan Grzeszczak, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Innocentii III papae sermones de diversis. Sermo III in consecratione Pontificis. De quatuor speciebus desponsationum, et praeconiis Romanae Ecclesiae; de spirituali conjugio episcopi cum Ecclesia sua, et bonis conjugii*, PL 217, pp. 659–666; See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Le chiavi e la Tiara. Immagini e simboli del papato medievale* (La corte dei papi, 3), Roma 1998, p. 56, footnote 18.

try with the Roman Church, which is holding a flag and is crowned with a diadem of precious stones. Rather than the mystical nuptials of a bishop (of Rome) with his Church, the mosaic of Innocent III establishes a direct relationship, also on the plane of dominion, with the Roman Church. When exercising the papal *plenitudo potestatis*, understood in its dual dimension: ecclesiastical (the pallium) and temporal (the tiara), the pope acts on the authority of the Roman Church without resorting to any mediation, since his authority comes indisputably from Christ (the Throne/Angel).<sup>21</sup>

We can only imagine the pilgrim who, after coming into direct contact with this work of art, towering over the entire temple and bearing a message about Christ in majesty and his representative on earth (*Vicarius Christi*), felt prompted to turn his attention to other elements in the interior of the basilica. When, perhaps exhausted by the sheer volume of impressions, he headed towards the exit, there was still a work of art waiting for him, a work unique in its kind, which can be described as a miniature of the mosaic filling the apse of the Vatican basilica and carrying a message about another representative of Christ, who confidently held the keys of Peter, although not everyone was willing to accept this fact.

### 3. Hagiography at the Service of the Papal Programme

In choosing the name Boniface, Pope Caetani somewhat broke away from the 13<sup>th</sup> century tradition. With few exceptions, popes of that century chose the names of their recently deceased predecessors. Boniface VIII reached back into the distant past, referring to his predecessor from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, St. Boniface IV (608–615). There is no chance that he considered another pope with the same name, the antipope Boniface VII, who reigned intermittently from 974 to 985, and who was nicknamed *maleficus* during his lifetime and wrote the darkest chapters of the history of the papacy in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

St. Boniface IV rose to fame for one event that took place during his pontificate, and that is the transformation of Rome's Pantheon into a Christian temple. This landmark of Rome was erected in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century during the reign of Emperor Hadrian, as a temple dedicated to all the gods. In late antiquity, the temple was closed, and the passage of time and natural phenomena slowly completed the work of destruction. Yielding to the pope's requests, the Byzantine emperor Phocas agreed to hand over the building to the Church, which transformed it into

<sup>21</sup> A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Le chiavi e la Tiara...*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> See: H. Körtum, [*Boniface VII*] [in:] *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, éd. P. Levillain, Paris 2003, p. 233.



a place of worship for the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the martyrs.<sup>23</sup> Ferdinand Gregorovius vividly describes the event:

Boniface summoned the clergy of Rome; the copper-clad doors bearing the cross were opened wide. In the lofty Rotunda the psalmists sang a litany for the first time, while the pope sprinkled holy water on the marble walls, from which every trace of paganism had been removed. At the words *Gloria in excelsis*, which resounded with sonorous echoes on the marvellous vault, the fancy of the people of Rome could see terrified demons seeking a way out, crowding into the opening of the dome. There were as many of these devils as there were pagan deities. Until the times of Boniface, the mysterious Pantheon was considered their genuine abode, which they favoured in Rome.<sup>24</sup>

According to the same folk fantasy, there was originally no opening in the building's dome; it was made by the horns of a great devil, who came out of the possessed.<sup>25</sup>

Pope Boniface IV was buried in the portico of the Basilica of St. Peter, and commemorated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with an inscription recalling the most famous event of his pontificate; turning the Pantheon into a Christian place of worship.<sup>26</sup> It is worth dwelling at this point on the circumstances surrounding the origin of the inscription. The cult of St. Boniface IV was in existence already earlier, which is confirmed by the *Roman Martyrology* of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the liturgical commemoration of the saint fell on 28 May. The pope's tomb in the portico of the Vatican basilica bears a plaque with the text of a meditation on death, beginning with the words: *Vita hominis brevis est*, which drew the attention of pilgrims.<sup>27</sup> In the

<sup>23</sup> See: *Księga Pontyfików (Liber Pontificalis)*, 1–96 (until 772), tłum. P. Szewczyk, M. Jesiotr, red. M. Ożóg, H. Pietras, Kraków 2014, p. 172; *Acta Sanctorum Maii*, vol. 6, Parisiis–Romæ 1866, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> F. Gregorovius, *Storia della città di Roma nel Medioevo*, vol. 2, Brugherio–Milano 1988, p. 128.

<sup>25</sup> See: C. Rendina, *I papi. Storia e segreti*, Roma 2004, pp. 171–172.

<sup>26</sup> The epitaph is now in the Vatican Grottoes. The text reads as follows: HUIUS Q[UI] SEDIS FUIT AEQUUS RECTOR ET AEDIS / TEMPORE Q[UI] FOCÆ CERNENS TEMPLUM FORE ROMÆ / DELUBRA CUNCTORUM FUERANT QUO DEMONIOR[UM] / HOC EXPURGAVIT SANCTIS CUNCTISQ[UE] DICAVIT / EIUS NATALIS SOLLEPNIA QUI CELEBRATIS / PRIMIS SEPTEMBRIS FERT HAEC LUX QUARTA K[A]L[EN]DIS / OCTAVUS TITULO HOC BONIFATIUS OSSA REPERTA / HAC LOCAT ERECTA BONIFATII NOMINIS ARA. From the words *octavus titulo...* begins a passage added in Gothic script by order of Boniface VIII — see: S. Romano, *Visione e visibilità nella Roma papale: Nicolò III e Bonifacio VIII* [in:] *Bonifacio VIII. Ideologia e azione politica*, pp. 64–65, footnote 24.

<sup>27</sup> According to the Bollandists, the plaque with the text of the meditation on death was placed on the Pope's tomb in the basilica's portico probably in the 11<sup>th</sup> century — see: *Acta Sanctorum Maii...*, vol. 6, p. 76; M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, p. 754.

12<sup>th</sup> century, the pope's relics were moved inside the basilica and placed in a new tomb near the Ravenna Door, upon which Boniface VIII erected his chapel less than two hundred years later. At the same time, a new epitaph appeared, mentioning the merits of Boniface IV in transforming the Pantheon into a Christian temple. Answering the question about the time and motives of this transfer presents no small challenge for historians of the Church and art historians. Palaeographic and epigraphic analyses point to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the time when the epitaph was made, and the consecration of the altar in the Roman basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin by Pope Callixtus II on 6 May 1123 may prove crucial in solving the matter of the transfer of the pope's mortal remains to the interior of the Vatican basilica. The inscription commemorating this event says that among the relics placed in the altar was the arm bone of St. Boniface IV.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the transfer of the mortal remains of this pope from the portico to the interior of the Vatican basilica provided an opportunity to separate the relics, which were then placed in the altar of the aforesaid Roman temple. There is one more detail worth noting: on the same day, 6 May 1123, the Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin gained a papal throne, which the camerlengo Callixtus II first had restored and then donated to this important church of the Eternal City.<sup>29</sup> These actions, in addition to their religious dimension, also took on a political character because they were initiated at a crucial time in the papacy's relations with the empire.

The two epitaphs and the transfer of the relics, corresponding to the *translatio corporis*, a form of canonisation popular in the early Middle Ages, are in keeping with the tendency evident during the Gregorian Reform to promote the cult of papal saints, as stated in the twenty-third thesis of Gregory VII's *Dictatus papae: Quod Romanus Pontifex, si canonice fuerit ordinatus, meritis beati Petri indubitanter efficitur sanctus*.<sup>30</sup>

Hagiography and art were thus incorporated into the great reform project that culminated in the Concordat of Worms of 1122, ending a long-standing dispute over investiture between the Roman Church and the German Empire. A year later, the Lateran hosted the ninth ecumenical council, which was also the first in the Latin Church in the West to set itself the task of continuing the reform initiated by Gregory VII.

During this period, the figures of popes who had to endure the hostility of the Byzantine emperors towards the Roman Church were brought to light, and the

<sup>28</sup> See: M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, pp. 754–755.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa* (Biblioteca di cultura storica, 204), Torino 1994, p. 320.

<sup>30</sup> See: R. Rusconi, *Santo Padre. La santità del papa da san Pietro a Giovanni Paolo II* (Sacrosanto — nuova serie, 14), Roma 2010, pp. 27–33; J. Grzeszczak, *Papież — święty z definicji? Od Dictatus papae do Santo subito*, "Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne" 24 (2010), pp. 251–252.

rebuilding of the Roman basilica of St Clement after the fire of 1084, carried out by Paschalis II (1099–1118), as well as the new décor of the temple, prove that the Gregorian reform reached even further back in its search for inspiration. Clement I, a pope with a strong personality, persecuted by the emperor and sentenced to exile, seemed a figure perfectly fitting for the reformation efforts at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. As Roberto Rusconi states: ‘The inscription placed at the feet of the saint on the mosaic in the apse of the new church of St. Clement, erected during this period, glorified the authority of the pope — the legitimate successor of St. Peter: “Consider, O Clement, that I have promised Christ to you!” (*Respice p[ro]missum Clemens a me tibi Christum*). This was a subject particularly dear to the reformers in monastic circles, who eagerly recalled that Clement I was the first bishop consecrated in Rome by St Peter. Also, at the time of the election of Paschalis II, the cry “Saint Peter has chosen Pope Paschalis” could be heard three times.’<sup>31</sup> Boniface IV and his efforts with Emperor Phocas to obtain a representative Roman building for the Church were certainly integral to this reformist programme.

When erecting the burial chapel of Boniface IV in the Vatican basilica, Boniface VIII had the relics of his namesake from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century placed in the altar along with authentic relics of other saints. The aforementioned plaque with the completed text was also placed in the altar. All these actions prove that the pope knew well both his distant predecessor and the cult he enjoyed in the basilica. It is, however, difficult to ascertain to what extent St Boniface IV inspired him in his choice of name, although his most famous achievement, the making of the Pantheon into a Christian temple, must surely have influenced the pope, who repeatedly asserted his attachment to Rome, and the decision to declare the

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<sup>31</sup> R. Rusconi, *Santo Padre...*, p. 49. At this point, it is worth recalling Boniface VIII’s relationship with the Roman Basilica of St Clement, which testifies to his interest in the figure of this pope from the early days of Christianity. In 1298, Cardinal Giacomo Caetani Tommasini, a nephew of Boniface VIII, donated a marble tabernacle, probably made by Arnolfo di Cambio. Behind the kneeling donor is a pope with a nimbus and tiara on his head, who is certainly St Clement, although the figure’s appearance and attributes perfectly match the iconographic canon seen in the *gisant* of Boniface VIII on the sarcophagus in the Vatican basilica. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani goes even further and recalls the hagiographical tradition, a trace of which can be seen in the *Liber Pontificalis*, according to which St Peter not only consecrated Clement as a bishop, but entrusted him with the governance of the Church, thus appointing him his successor. After the Apostle’s death, Clement, motivated by humility and wishing to avoid a situation in which popes would appoint their successors, accepted the choice of Linus and Cletus before becoming Bishop of Rome himself. The Italian historian does not exclude the possibility that this narrative was known to Boniface VIII and provided him with certain ‘ideological tools’ to justify his own choice, while urging the faithful to place the pontificate of Celestine V into brackets, as it were — see: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, p. 225–226; id., *Il corpo del Papa...*, p. 323; see: *Księga Pontyfików...*, pp. 13–14.

Jubilee in 1300 was a tangible example of this.<sup>32</sup> Boniface VIII appears to be a pope with a certain passion for antiquity and aware of the importance of the Pantheon in the history of the Eternal City. The choice of the name Boniface, breaking with the 13<sup>th</sup>-century custom, is proof of this.<sup>33</sup>

The relics of Boniface IV were laid in a dignified place and venerated in a mausoleum which, according to Michele Maccarone, was perhaps the most precious gift the Vatican basilica had received since the time of the Emperor Constantine.<sup>34</sup> In 1307, William Nogaret accused the late pope of profaning the burial of his predecessor in the Vatican basilica. The ‘accursed heretic’ was said to have retrieved from the tomb the bones of Boniface, whom a French courtier had mistaken for Boniface the martyr, moved them elsewhere, and then erected a tomb on that august spot, where he himself was buried<sup>35</sup>. Nogaret’s deceitful narrative sought to confirm the heresy of Boniface VIII, which would have entailed the removal of his remains from the temple<sup>36</sup>.

### Conclusion. Research Prospects

Time for a few remarks to conclude our deliberations. The Roman Canon, Giacomo Grimaldi (1568–1623) had the opportunity to view the burial chapel of Boniface VIII shortly before its demolition. His account includes an interesting detail: a priest celebrating Holy Mass there had the pope’s sarcophagus at eye level.<sup>37</sup> When the same celebrant looked down, he saw the altar with the relics of

<sup>32</sup> See: M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, pp. 759–761.

<sup>33</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, pp. 76–77.

<sup>34</sup> See: M. Maccarone, *Il sepolcro...*, p. 763.

<sup>35</sup> *Ultimo, propter honorem dei et beati Bonifatii martiris gloriosi fiat omnino, quod ossa beati Bonifatii martiris, que ille sceleratus hereticus exhumari fecit et transportari in alium locum et ipse sepulcrum suum in loco excelso constituit et in petra excidit super sepulcrum illius gloriosi martiris, reportentur in locum suum, et ossa scelerati portentur in locum illum, ubi ipse fecit sepeliri ossa martiris illius. Et hoc debet ad summam gratiam ei reputari, et satis esset impius et infidelis, qui tale factum impediret. Et staret sic negotium, donec dominus provideat, quot iuxta vaticinium Jeremie prophete iuxta merita verius demerita sua: sepultura asini sepeliatur, putrefactus et proiectus extra portas Jerusalem (Jer. 22:19) — W. Holtzmann, *Wilhelm von Nogaret. Rat und Grossiegelbewahrer Philipps des Schönen von Frankreich*, Freiburg i. B. 1898, p. 260. St Boniface, whose liturgical remembrance falls on 14 May, was martyred during the persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian. Together with Saints Pancratius and Servatius, he is counted among the so-called Ice Saints.*

<sup>36</sup> An outright accusation of the pope of heresy appears, among others, in Nogaret’s memorial *He sunt protestationes* of 7 September 1304: *Item proponit quod dictus Bonifacius erat hereticus, vel a fide catholica devius et de hoc graviter diffamatus ut supra, quod etiam a fructibus eius cognoscitur manifeste* — J. Coste, *Boniface en procès...*, p. 242.

<sup>37</sup> *Bonifacius papa octavus [...] sepulcrum sibi vivens marmoreum cum insigni eius gentilicio parietis coaptavit ita, ut, dum sacerdos missae sacrum perageret, tumulum ipsius Bonifacii con-*

St Boniface IV, and when he raised his eyes, he saw the mosaic with Madonna and Child in the centre, St Peter proffering Boniface VIII, and, behind him in the distance, the apse with Christ surrounded by the Apostles Peter and Paul, Innocent III and the *Ecclesia Romana*. If we consider the most natural direction of our gaze, then clearly the centre of the whole composition is that of the pope's gisant, which is devoid of any traces of death; on the contrary, Boniface VIII is portrayed with his individual facial features and therefore 'alive', as those who saw his sarcophagus pointed out. The angels unveiling the sarcophagus were not placed there by chance. Medieval authors make a kind of apotheosis of the person and ministry of the Bishop of Rome, as exemplified by Peter Damiani, and Innocent III himself claimed that the pope is placed between God and man (*constitutus inter Deum et hominem medius*); the English poet of the time, Galfridus de Vinosalvo goes even further, addressing the pope as follows: *Non Deus es nec homo: quasi neuter es inter utrumque*.<sup>38</sup> For a priest performing sacred acts *in persona Christi*, the 'living' pope, whom he was compelled to look at, appears as a living image of Christ, carrying with him a whole array of theological content.<sup>39</sup> The placement of the sarcophagus between the altar with the relics of the holy pope and the mosaic depicting Boniface VIII on his knees and with the keys, commended to the Madonna and Child by St Peter, can be interpreted in terms of the response given to those who contested the validity of his election.

Without a doubt, Boniface VIII was behind this theological vision of his pontificate, expressed with a chisel in stone, which was continued through his subsequent actions and documents issued, among which the *Unam sanctam* bull of 1302 comes to the fore. Similarly to his predecessor, Innocent III, pope Caetani acknowledged the role of the senses in the process of conveying the theological message. For this reason, the tomb erected during his lifetime, apart from its indisputable artistic value, was also an interesting example of sepulchral art remaining at the service of theology.

To conclude, some further research horizons are worth mentioning. The 13<sup>th</sup> century is extremely interesting from the point of view of papal rites. The case of Innocent III, cited on several occasions in this paper, is a typical example of a practice prevailing for many centuries. The pope died in Perugia on 16 July 1216 and the following day a solemn funeral took place in the local cathedral. His successor, Honorius III, wrote after the election that the whole ceremony followed tradition.<sup>40</sup> In the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the interval between

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*spiceret* — G. Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano, Codice Barberiniano latino 2733*, a cura di R. Niggl, Città del Vaticano 1972, p. 37.

<sup>38</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa...*, pp. 321–322.

<sup>39</sup> 'Guardando il gisant, il celebrante non «vede» soltanto il defunto ma il papa come immagine vivente di Cristo' — *ibid.*; see: S. Romano, *Visione e visibilità...*, p. 67.

<sup>40</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa...* p. 218.

the death of a pope and his funeral became increasingly longer. It was also at this time that a document outlining the basic rules of the conclave — that are practically in force to this day — appeared. The *Ubi periculum* Constitution of the Second Council of Lyon states that ‘[...] when a pope died in the city where he resided with his curia, the cardinals present in the same city were to wait only ten days for their absent brethren.’<sup>41</sup> The resulting nine-day period was filled with the so-called *novendiali*, which are also prescribed by Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* of 22 February 1996: ‘After the death of the Roman Pontiff, the Cardinals will celebrate the funeral rites for the repose of his soul for nine consecutive days, in accordance with the *Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis*, the norms of which, together with those of the *Ordo Rituum Conclavis*, they are to observe faithfully.’<sup>42</sup>

The *Novendiali* owe their origin to some extent to the secular customs prevailing at the courts of the rulers of the time, for example in Byzantium. In this case, however, the exposure of the body of the deceased pope is accompanied by the exposure of another body, the College of Cardinals, to whom the eyes of the faithful turn as they demand ensuring institutional continuity in the Church.<sup>43</sup> Before this happens, however, it is their duty to ensure that the body of the deceased pope is buried in a dignified manner. A dozen or so years ago, we had the opportunity to see that this problem ceased to be the domain of a narrow circle of researchers, and became the domain of a huge number of people who gathered from all over the world for the funeral ceremonies of Saint John Paul II.

The circumstances surrounding the election of Boniface VIII were different, and although in the case of the conclave in Naples the provisions of the *Ubi periculum* constitution were observed, as Agostino Paravicini Bagliani writes, ‘[...] he was not elected as successor to the deceased Pope. The decision to transfer the relics of Pope Boniface IV’s body to his own burial chapel was intended to restore the line of apostolic succession of the bodies of deceased Bishops of Rome, which had at one point been interrupted. The absence of the body of his immediate predecessor may have posed a problem for Boniface VIII in the context of the validity of his election, for in the last decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the link between death, funeral and the election of a new pope took on the characteristics of an institutional requirement so strong that it influenced the extension

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<sup>41</sup> *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych, tekst grecki, łaciński, polski*, t. II (869–1312); *Konstantynopol IV, Lateran I, Lateran II, Lateran III, Lateran IV, Lyon I, Lyon II, Vienne*, red. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2003, p. 417.

<sup>42</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution Universi Dominici gregis on the vacancy of the Apostolic See and the election of the Roman Pontiff*, 27, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_22021996\\_universi-dominici-gregis.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_22021996_universi-dominici-gregis.html) [accessed: 19.2.2021].

<sup>43</sup> See: A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa...*, p. 220.

of the pope's funeral ceremonies, while becoming a necessary premise for the practice of *novendiali*.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps also in this context the 'perpetuity', which Ernst Kantorowicz writes about in relation to medieval political theologies, may become an impetus for further research, this time on the papacy as a religious and cultural phenomenon.<sup>45</sup>

## **W cieniu abdykacji. Sztuka i kult świętych papieża na przykładzie grobowca Bonifacego VIII w bazylice watykańskiej**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule podjęto problem ideowej wymowy grobowca papieża Bonifacego VIII w bazylice watykańskiej oraz dokonano przez papieża nawiązania do postaci jego poprzednika z początku VII wieku, św. Bonifacego IV (608–615). To ukończone w 1296 roku dzieło autorstwa Arnolfa di Cambio i prawdopodobnie Jacopa Torritiego należy umiejscowić w kontekście skomplikowanych początków pontyfikatu Bonifacego VIII, wybranego na Stolicę Piotrową za życia poprzednika. Przeprowadzona analiza obejmuje ukazanie wyglądu tego nieistniejącego dzisiaj mauzoleum na podstawie zachowanych świadectw, prezentację ideowego przesłania grobowca oraz przybliżenie oryginalnego wprzęgnięcia przez Bonifacego VIII hagiografii w program własnego pontyfikatu. W artykule zastosowano metodę analityczną w odniesieniu do historii i historii sztuki. W świetle przeprowadzonych badań mauzoleum Bonifacego VIII w bazylice watykańskiej jawi się jako dzieło niezwykle spójne ideowo i podporządkowane jego wizji pontyfikatu, a zarazem służące apologii najwyższej władzy w Kościele w kontekście pojawiających się oskarżeń o bezprawną jej usurpację. Zaprezentowane analizy mogą stanowić punkt wyjścia do dalszych badań nad papieską obrzędowością w średniowieczu.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

Bonifacy IV, Bonifacy VIII, Celestyn V, bazylika watykańska

### **Keywords**

Boniface IV, Boniface VIII, Celestine V, Vatican Basilica

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>45</sup> See: E. Kantorowicz, *Dwa Ciała Króla. Studium ze średniowiecznej teologii politycznej*, tłum. M. Michalski, A. Krawiec, Warszawa 2007, p. XXXI.

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