The liturgical celebration commemorating the translation of the relics of St Martin of Tours has a long history, which is told anew in the office composed by Radbod, bishop of Utrecht between 899 and 917. The city of Tours, where Martin had occupied the episcopal see between 373 and 397, instituted the feast-day on 4 July to commemorate the transfer of Martin’s relics to a new basilica. During the pontificate of Perpetuus (461-491), the old basilica built to house Martin’s tomb after the saint’s death in 397 had outgrown the numbers of pilgrims visiting the shrine. Gregory of Tours tells us in his *Miracles of the Bishop St Martin* (I.6) that the transfer of the relics could not take place on just any day or without the saint’s approval. Gregory records the event as a miraculous intervention. The clergy’s efforts to carry the body to the new church were futile until they continued with the saint’s consent and were finally allowed to lift up the body on the day of Martin’s episcopal ordination (4 July).

Among the celebration of liturgical feasts in honour of St Martin on the Utrecht calendar, we find no early traces of a celebration in July. Radbod might have been the one who introduced it to this northerly patrocinium. He certainly was the composer of an entire office, comprising all chants needed to celebrate the liturgy of the hours on 4 July. Radbod was a learned bishop, who received his intellectual training at the court school of Charles the Bald until the latter’s death in 877. The *Vita* tells that he continued to study with “Abbot Hugo”, presumably referring to the lay abbot of St Martin’s community of canons in Tours, at the same time an important figure at the late ninth-century Carolingian court. With this intellectual background, Radbod can be seen as one of the last epigones of the prototypical Carolingian bishop.

Radbod’s interest in St Martin, patron saint of the cathedral and bishopric he was appointed to in 899 or early 900, was a conscious and personal choice. The *Vita* testifies to the close bond between Radbod and the saintly bishop in numerous instances. Radbod chose Martin as his special patron (c. 6: *pre ceteris specialem elegit patronum*), and died with a chant in praise of this patron on his lips (c. 12). The *Vita* hints at this special veneration more implicitly by presenting Radbod as a keen imitator of the great saint, expressed in a number of allusions to the *Vita Martini*. Among the features Radbod’s life had in common with his patron saint are a deliberate choice for a monastic way of life during his episcopate (c. 3), foreknowledge of his death long in advance (c. 10), and a peaceful death away from home when he was at work in a
remote place of his diocese (c. 11). Finally, the honourable welcome to the body when it was received upon its return by the clergy and people of his city (c. 12) echoes the epistle in which Sulpicius Severus describes the death of St Martin, and which became an integral part of the *Vita Martini* in the history of its transmission.

An expression of this special devotion is found in Radbod’s literary and musical works in commemoration of the saint. For his composition of the office – Radbod’s authorship is testified by the *Vita*, c. 6 – he made ample use of the *Little book about a miracle performed by St Martin* that he wrote in response to the events of the year 903, when the city of Tours was besieged by the Northmen. In this narrative, composed as a sermon addressing his fellow clergymen (and perhaps, in a revised version, the people of his diocese), Radbod sings the praises of the relics of St Martin. These precious remains, kept in Tours, are presented as a prized possession, taking away the want for any other earthly good. In the heat of the fight, the people of Tours appealed to the saint to protect them from the threatening Northmen, while the clergy of St Martin’s basilica substantiated this prayer: they took the relics from the shrine and brought them to the city walls, where they frightened off the aggressors.

The chants composed by Radbod reflect the relevance of the saint to his civic community and to the well-being, both physical and spiritual, of his city. The chants recorded here give evidence of this point of view. In addition to mirroring the threat of the invaders thwarted by the protective power of the saint’s relics, the liturgical compositions also mirror the response expected from the urban community of Martin in return to the saint’s special care. The bishop persuades his audience to heed the reciprocal character typical of the Christian cult of the saints. The second responsory in the first nocturn of Matins is an example of this:

**Resp. Sponsa Christi ecclesia et mater et virgo est; generat filios et regenerat, emancipans illos a servitute miserabili faciensque eos heredes testamenti sui.**

**Vers. Si quos autem videt a se male alienatos, hos sibi certatim adoptat in filios, emancipans ...**

Resp. The Bride of Christ, the Church, is both mother and virgin. She generates and regenerates children, setting them free from miserable slavery and making them heirs of his will.

Verse. If she sees anyone estranged from herself, she adopts them as her own children, setting them free...
This chant is part of Radbod’s personal response to the ‘Miracle of St Martin’ that disarmed the Northmen’s attack. Radbod places the relevance of Martin’s relics and their protective power in a broader ecclesiastical understanding of deliverance from oppression, here presented as *slavery*. While the immediate cause to compose the office is a military event, the imagery Radbod chooses to depict the protection provided by the relics in civic, rather than military metaphors. Radbod, himself qualified as a *miles Christi* in his *Vita* in imitation of his patron the Roman soldier Martin (c. 3), would have found abundant examples of a more militant figurative language in the biblical wording that permeates his chants. Yet Radbod focuses not on the defeated enemy, but on the liberated city in which the community of St Martin is expected to mould their lives on the saintly example. The chant applies the civil imagery of the Christians as adopted children of God through Christ, which Radbod found in the New Testament, particularly in the letters attributed to St Paul. The image of Christ’s followers as adopted children and therefore, in contrast to slaves, as full participants in the inheritance of God’s grace consisting in eternal salvation, is frequently employed by the apostle Paul in his letters (e.g. to the Romans, chapter 8, 12-17; to the Galatians, chapter 4, 1-7). In Radbod’s chants, the same civic metaphor is applied to indicate how the urban community of St Martin shares with the patron saint in the inheritance of eternal reward.

The reciprocity that is a core characteristic of the Christian cult of saints is further reflected in the fifth responsory, sung in the second nocturn. Participants in the inheritance safeguarded by the saint are asked to respond to the saintly protection by imitating the way of life the saint showed first. The following chant gives an example of a fitting response:

*Resp. Si quis huius gemmae amminiculo suffultus esse meretur, non eum ambitio inflat, non paupertas contristat, non conditio mortalitatis excruciat.*

*Verse Quin immo inter omnia vitae presentis discrimina incertos semper moderatur eventus; non paupertas contristat...*

If someone merits to be supported by the aid of this precious stone, ambition will not make him arrogant, nor will poverty sadden him, nor will his mortality torment him.

Among all the dangers of this mortal life she [the precious stone, i.e. the relics of the saint] guides the uncertain fortunes; poverty will not sadden him...

Before a disciple of St Martin is able to face his or her mortality, he or she, through the help of the saint, will be able to mortify the temptations of earthly life: submission to worldly
ambitions and material possessions. As in the previous responsory, the virtues Radbod presents echo civic virtues, most notably the notion of poverty. The reference to \textit{paupertas} calls to mind the image central in the \textit{Vita} and cult of St Martin. In the famous story of Martin sharing his cloak with the beggar, Sulpicius Severus locates the poor nude man (\textit{pauperem nudum}) outside the civic community: ‘at the city gate of Amiens’. This scene presents poverty as the most frightening concept imaginable. The poor is the counterpart of the citizen, the outcast from civic life by definition. In his chant Radbod takes away the frightening prospective of poverty by wiping out the line that poverty drew between the citizen and the non-citizen – a liturgical mimesis of St Martin’s famous example. Poverty, separating those in possession of civic status from those deprived of it, is turned here into a civic value: to seek one’s riches not in earthly possessions that divide, but in the cult of the saint that unites.

Although Radbod never lived in Utrecht, as the city had been havocked by Northmen attacks already in the mid-ninth century, his office will have been destined for and certainly celebrated in Utrecht’s cathedral and other collegiate churches. Its oldest transmission is in a twelfth-century manuscript made for and used in St Mary’s church, now preserved in Utrecht University Library, MS 406. Its music and notation is extensively analysed by the late Ike de Loos, who also made the reconstruction performed here.

Further reading


Albrecht Diem, ‘Radboud was behalve bisschop ook nog eens een groot geleerde...’, \textit{Ex Tempore. Verleden Tijdschrift Nijmegen} 23 (2003), 83-97


Ike de Loos, ‘Liturgy and Chant in the Northern Low Countries’, \textit{Tijdschrift Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis} 53 (2006), 9-47 [repr. in
Patronen ontrafeld. Studies over gregoriaanse gezangen en Middelnederlandse liederen, samengesteld en ingeleid door José van Aelst et al. (Hilversum 2012), 61-96


Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their miracles in late antique Gaul* (Princeton 1993), including an English translation of Gregory of Tours, *Miracles of the Bishop St Martin* (p. 199-303)