Spatial 'Christianisation' in Context: Strategic Intramural Building in Rome from the 4th–7th c. AD

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Cover Image: detail of apse mosaic of S. Prassede, Rome. Pope Paschal I holding a model of the church. Detail of author photo.

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Acknowledgements

This book began its life as a Ph.D thesis at University College London in 2003 on the topic of the sacred (both 'pagan' and Christian) landscape of late antique Rome from Constantine up to the end of the episcopate of Sixtus III (A.D. 440), supervised by Michael Crawford and Benet Salway. Such a project took some time to formulate. A few years earlier, it was working on my MA thesis, also at UCL, with John North, that inspired me to concentrate on the religious history of the Roman world, which in turn led me to the fascinating era now defined as late antiquity. It was Antonio Sennis who suggested I study Rome, and the pieces began to fall into place. However, none of this would have been possible without the encouragement and support of my late father who I owe so much. As important has been the support from my mother and sister. Also, friends, colleagues and staff within the history department at UCL and the Classics departments at KCL and Royal Holloway have provided excellent sounding boards for my ideas. Friends outside the academic bubble have kept me sane, level headed and given me a valuable sense of perspective on this whole process. Their interest as well as bewilderment has been an important tonic. I also need to thank the staff and members of the London Library for helping me pay the rent and introducing me into a wonderful labyrinthine world of bookish delights. This hidden gem was also a valuable library resource. On this note, the staff and resources at the Institute of Classical Studies, the Institute of Historical Research and the Warburg Institute, all in London, were invaluable. It was the UCL Graduate School Research Projects Fund and the University of London Central Research Fund that allowed me to spend some crucial time at the British School at Rome in 2005 and 2006. Particular thanks here must go to Maria Pia Malvezzi for making it possible for me to see much of the archaeology under discussion below. I have also been inspired by the devotion shown towards late antique scholarship by Luke Lavan, whom I met in Leuven in 2005. Working with him since 2008 at Ostia has clarified several thoughts for this book concerning the interpretation of the archaeological evidence. It has also led to the delay in the production and publication of this book, which was no bad thing. My work has moved on quite a bit since the completion of my thesis in 2008, and the decision to cut it in half, to focus solely on Christian buildings, and lengthen the timescale, has led to a tighter and more coherent argument. Ten months spent at the British School at Rome in 2011, working on Ostia, also led to the attendance of several conferences and giving of papers that have helped refine this book. Another important influence has been the work of Simon Malmberg, whom I met at this time. I also need to thank my wonderful girlfriend Ada Nifosi for giving me the final push to finish the book.

I would describe myself as an historian who largely uses archaeology, rather than just texts. I'm interested in the everyday and mundane aspects of the ancient world, the human story of how ordinary people lived their lives, something largely perceptible only through archaeological evidence. The precise phasing and chronology of a building or landscape interests me, but more so when it tells us how the people in it may have thought and acted. Being born and raised in the Roman colonia of Colchester, surrounded by Roman material, makes my interests unsurprising perhaps, but it was the volunteering I did with Colchester Archaeological Trust in the mid to late 1990s that entrenched this passion and taught me the basics of archaeological method and excavation. Other names that deserve a mention and that played a part directly or indirectly in the creation of this book are: Steve Nutt, Dave Huggon, David Nightingale, Christopher Chaffin, Charlotte Roueché, and particularly Richard Alston and Massimiliano Ghilardi for reading through a draft. Abby George helped immensely with the creation of most of the figures in the book, and her professionalism and work was crucial. Final thanks must also go to David Davison at Archaeopress for his patience and assistance. Any remaining errors or infelicities in the text are all, of course, my own.

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0. Introduction

> *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you".* (Matthew 6:5-6).[1]

This excerpt from the Bible advises Christians to be humble in prayer and to do so in modest surroundings, away from the public gaze. For three centuries, the followers of Jesus seem to have generally followed this maxim, albeit more through pragmatic necessity than piety, one might suggest.[2] With the imperial acceptance of Christianity by Constantine in A.D. 312, and the money and patronage that accompanied it, prominent Christians and emperors now wished to express their beliefs in the traditional Roman manner: building. The growing Christian congregation did necessitate the construction of purpose-built centres for worship, liturgy and administration, but the practice of building itself gave several elites an avenue and outlet for typical Roman munificence.

This book argues for the idea that several Christian building donors, whether private donors or the Church authorities themselves, sought to advertise their basilica building investments within the city walls of Rome by siting them in prominent places in the city. Several also sought practically useful sites to take advantage of pre-existing water facilities. This is a teleological argument that can never be definitively proven of course, and not every donor thought in these terms it seems, but, as I will set out here, the many examples of prominent and pragmatic site placement seen with early Christian basilicas, coupled with the evidence for a separation between donation and property in Christian patronage in Rome, makes this motivation possible and the most likely scenario. Building in strategically advantageous locations in a city is a long-standing aristocratic Roman tradition as well.

In Rome, imperial spending on Christian building seems to have focused on creating extramural basilicas over or near the graves of Christian martyr heroes, where space for such large structures was available, and where foci for Christian devotion already existed.[3] Recent scholarship has suggested that within the walls of Rome itself, into the 5th century, many Christians still worshipped privately in houses, several elite examples of which were formally converted for Christian use.[4] Certainly the small size and number of 'public' centres of Christian worship/congregation, the so-called *tituli*, up to the early 5th century suggests this may have been the case, if we assume a large Christian population in the city.[5]

What this also implies is that *tituli* were utilised initially for mainly administrative or baptismal purposes perhaps (for more see below), with special celebrations for feast days for important local or popular martyrs taking place in the large extramural 'tomb churches'. Also, *tituli* may have been more manifestations of elite munificence than practical additions to the Roman landscape. Whatever their initial importance however, they were still the first visible manifestation of Christianity in the central and residential areas of Rome.

It is important to note also that these basilicas were the product of the orthodox Nicene, 'catholic', Christianity promoted by the emperor and the bishop. Because these were the only visible sign of Christianity in these centuries we are inevitably focusing on them, but it is crucial to be aware of the fact that many other Christian groups, deemed heretical, existed in the city, particularly in the 4th and 5th centuries, and met in domestic settings within it, so are, so far, archaeologically invisible.[6] Therefore, the first *tituli*-

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1 Translation: *New International Version* (1984).

2 The exception being at least one prominent purpose-built church in the East in Nicomedia, destroyed under Diocletian: Lactant. *De Mort. Pers*. 12.

3 The long-standing idea that such a pattern was due to the emperor not wanting to offend the majority pagan elite in the city by building such structures in the centre (Von Schöenebeck H. *Beiträge zur Religionspolitik des Maxentius und Constantin* (1962) 88; Krautheimer R. *Rome: Profile of a City,* 312-1308 (1980) 3-32; Krautheimer R. *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (1983) 28-29 (n.19)), ignores these more positive, pragmatic reasons for the early large extramural basilicas. They also provided spiritually potent places for burial by the faithful, which was their primary purpose.

4 Bowes K. *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (2008) 71-75 and passim.

5 Population: Von Harnack A. *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (1915) 255; Purcell N. 'The populace of Rome in late antiquity: problems of classification and historical description', in *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity*, ed. W. V. Harris (1999) 135-62; Lo Cascio E. 'Il popolamento', in *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, edd. S. Ensoli and E. La Rocca (2000) 52-54; Lo Cascio E. 'La popolazione di Roma prima e dopo il 410', in *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: the Event, its Context and its Impact: Proceedings of the Conference held at the German Archaeological Institute at Rome, 04-06 November 2010,* edd. J. Lipps, C. Machado and P. von Rummel (2013) 411-22. For the debate concerning tituli, their definition, when they appeared and their function see the classic works: Kirsch J. P. *Die römischen Titelkirchen im Altertum* (1918); Pietri C. 'Recherches sur les domus ecclesiae', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 24 (1978) 3-21; Guidobaldi F. 'L'inserimento delle chiese titolari di Roma nel tessuto urbano preesistente: osservazioni ed implicazioni', in *Quaeritur inventus colitur: miscellanea in onore di padre Umberto Maria Fasola*, edd. P. Pergola and F. Bisconti, vol. 1 (1989) 383-96. The list of works discussing this is exhaustive and too long to list here. However, for a more recent synopsis of the debate see: Bowes K. *Private Worship* (2008) 65-71.

6 *Libellus precum: Guenther O. ed. Epistvlae imperatorvm pontificvm aliorvm inde ab a. CCCLXVII vsqve ad a. DLIII datae Avellana qvae dicitvr collectio (=Coll. Avell.)* (1895) 2.34; Maier H. O. 'The topography

basilicas show us only the development of 'orthodox' Christianity, and as such were also about promoting that orthodoxy in the face of these other groups, as well as promoting the generosity of the donor.

Work looking at early Christian patronage in Rome, since Charles Pietri first put forward the theory, has suggested that the *tituli* were controlled and owned by their private benefactors, whereas the large extramural basilicas and the Lateran were run and owned by the bishop and his administration until the late 5th century when aristocratic patronage shifted elsewhere. However, more nuanced approaches to the patronage of the *tituli* have also come to the fore, with J. Hillner recently arguing that the bishop had more of a role.[7] In her work she attempts to divide the process of foundation and endowment of *tituli*. What I seek to do is subdivide the process of foundation, between the provision of money and the provision of land, which I contend, were not always tied together.

My focus, however, is not patronal or legal problems, for which enough ink has been spilt. My focus is the actual physical impact of a few of these early Christian buildings in the Roman urban landscape up to *ca*. 700. Any questions as to their ownership, status or how they were funded does not preclude any difference in purpose behind Christian basilica construction; that is to say some episcopal or private builders both strove for recognition and a lasting personal legacy with their investment, as befitting any traditional elite Roman munificence. What I will be describing is that with some intramural Christian building, either private or episcopal, this can be perceived in their micro topographical location. Who built and ran them and when is less important for me than knowing that their construction was independent of the state, something all commentators agree on, which would allow for a degree of favourable site choice. Evidence for a separation between donations (towards the building of *tituli*) and the land/property on/in which they were created, alongside their favourable locations, will be used to argue for a degree of strategy in some intramural Christian building in this early period. That is to say, the siting of many of these early Christian foundations in Rome did not rely on the donation of a building, but was more down to a deliberate choice being made by its builders.[8]

The active purchase of small plots of desirable land in the city was more likely after the devastating Gothic Wars, but the favourable siting of many Christian basilicas built before that time suggests deliberate land/property purchase was more common than the donation of a particular plot/building by an aristocratic (lay or episcopal) owner. The epigraphic evidence also points to the former occurring. This goes against the current orthodoxy, explicitly described by F. Guidobaldi, of *tituli* (that is to say early Christian intramural structures) being located in random places determined purely by the donated land given to the Church.[9] Guidobaldi and others, however, have both overlooked the evidence for the separation between donation and property, and only looked at the macro distribution of *tituli* via modern top-down maps (see for example fig. 1), not their micro impact and the buildings immediately around them. When appreciating this, and various macro factors as well, as well as looking at the epigraphic and written evidence again, we begin to notice that several early Christian centres were favourably placed in the urban landscape and that buildings were rarely donated to the Church for conversion.

The favourable siting of several *tituli* involved creating some Christian centres alongside main arteries within the city and on occasion encroaching upon them, and later the building of larger basilicas on the tops of hills within the urban landscape. Such observations are known of course but are only described in passing in discussions of Roman Christian topography, and deserve to be mentioned in the same context as arguments about patronage and urban change, and to be perceived explicitly as deliberate attempts for otherwise modest foundations to attain prominence within the urban fabric, in the same mould as the motives of temple builders in earlier centuries. It is important to stress that these Christian buildings' 'monumentality' rarely bore any comparison in *scale* to the existing temples in the city in this period, but what will be argued is that their monumentality lies in their 'impact' at a street, micro level, not their macro visuality or effect. In other words, in terms of scale and expenditure within the walls, temples and some early *tituli* seem hardly comparable, yet the motivation behind their location and site choice is the same: to make an impression on the urban landscape.

of heresy and dissent in late fourth century Rome', *Historia* 44 (1995) 232-49.

7 Pietri C. *Roma christiana: recherches sur l'Eglise de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311-440)* (1976) 90-96, 569-73; Pietri C. 'Recherches' (1978) 7; Pietri C. 'Donateurs et pieux etablissements d'après le légendier romain (Ve-VIIe s.)', in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IV-XII siècle. Actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris 2-5 mai 1979* (1981) 439 (434-53); Pietri C. 'Régions ecclesiastiques et paroisses romaines', in *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne: Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste, 21-28 septembre 1986*, ed. N. Duval (1989) 1043 (1035-62). This view has been nuanced by, for example, Llewellyn: Llewellyn P. A. B. 'The Roman Church during the Laurentian Schism: priests and senators', *Church History* 45 (1976) 417-27. Greater episcopal role (with a titulus' donations at least): Hillner J. 'Families, patronage and the titular churches of Rome, c.300-c.600', in *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900*, edd. K. Cooper and J. Hillner (2007) 225-61. For a recent synopsis of the wider long-running debate concerning how the Church administered the city of Rome, and the role of the bishop and the tituli (and their priests) within this, see: Spera L. 'Il vescovo di Roma e la città: regioni ecclesiastiche, tituli e cimiteri. Ridefinizione di un problema amministrativo e territoriale', in *Atti del XV Congreso Internacional de Arqueologia Cristiana (Toledo, 8-12 septiembre 2008)* (2013) 163-69 (163-98).

8 Cf. Bowes K. *Private Worship* (2008) 66-67 who defines the term titulus to actually mean donated property. See below for my own view that it is a term defining a particular (still unknown) role and function to the building.

9 Guidobaldi F. 'L'organizzazione dei tituli nello spazio urbano', in *Christiana loca: lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio*, ed. L. Pani Ermini (2000) 125 (123-29). He did admit, however, that with some examples site choice was able to be made by a bishop, something noted by V. Fiocchi Nicolai ('Strutture funerarie ed edifici di culto paleocristiani di Roma dal III al VI secolo', in *Le iscrizioni dei cristiani in Vaticano. Materiali e contributi scientifici per una mostra epigrafica*, ed. I. Di Stefano Manzella (1997) 121-41) but not expanded upon.

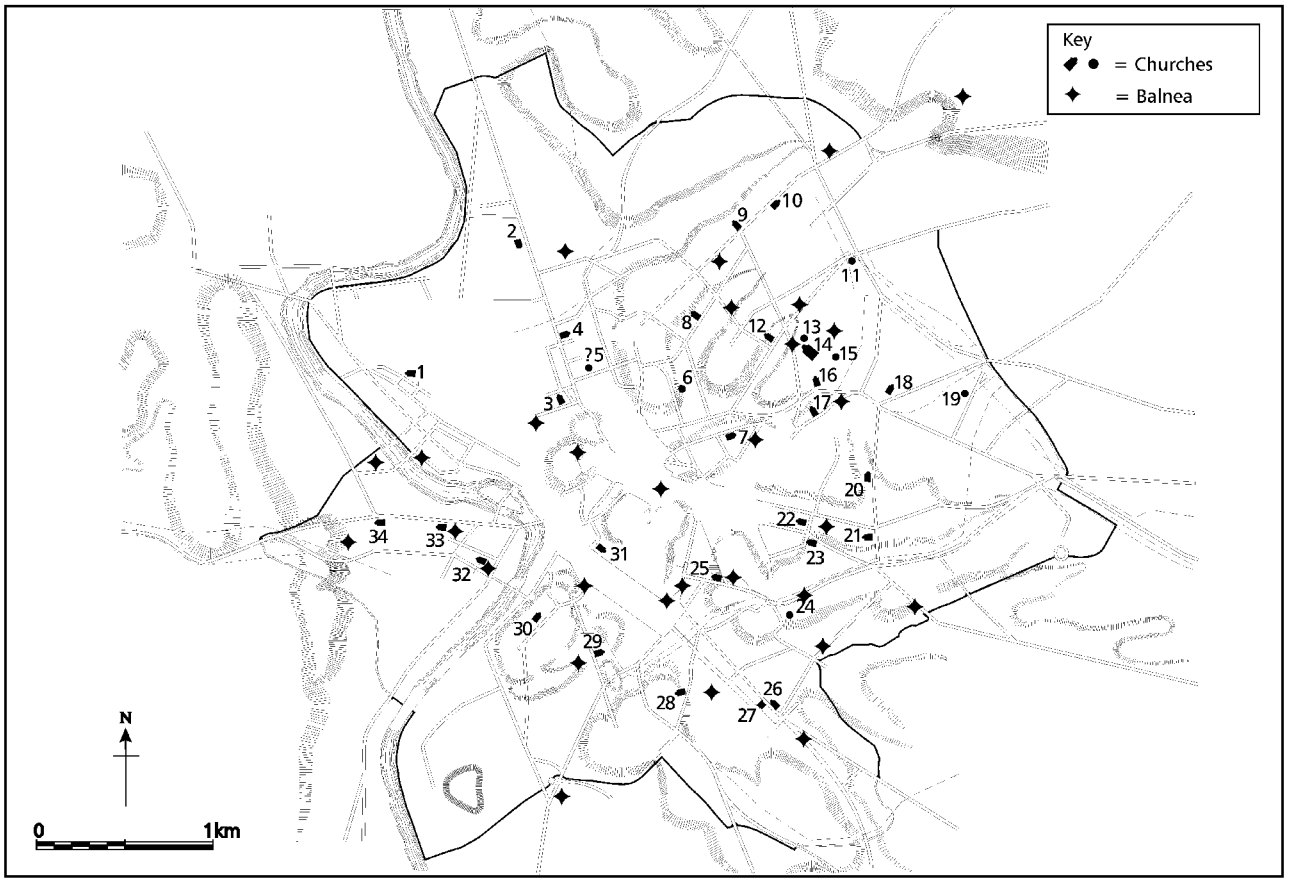

FIGURE 1: ROME WITH LOCATION OF CHURCH-BASILICAS AND *BALNEA*. DRAWN BY ABBY GEORGE FROM A BASE MAP IN REEKMANS L. 'L'IMPLANTATION MONUMENTALE CHRÉTIENNE DANS LE PAYSAGE URBAIN DE ROME DE 300 À 850', IN *ACTES DU IXE CONGRÈS INTERNATIONALE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE CHRÉTIENNE* (ROME 1989) 861-915.

What will also be noted more closely is the symbiotic relationship between several early Christian foundations in Rome and bath buildings. Such foundations were closely related to bathing establishments whether by immediate proximity, by ownership, or by being built within one. What will be explored is why this may be the case and the implications of that for our understanding of early Christian liturgical practice in the city.

Furthermore, to properly understand the impact of spatial 'Christianisation' we need to see the early intramural Christian centres in their contemporary surroundings and to comment on how they affected the use, movement within and perception of the neighbourhood around them. In Rome such detailed topographical information is frustratingly elusive, but there is one exceptional case, with the *tituli* of Equitius and Sylvester, where the ancient sources and archaeology allow for a detailed analysis of the micro topography of the contemporary urban landscape immediately surrounding them. This will reveal a great deal to us about how early Christian worship practically 'worked' in the Subura area where the *tituli* lie, and how that in turn 'reworked' the immediate area and the people who lived and worked in it.

Clearly, not all formal Christian centres up to the 7th century inside the city were favourably placed, some were no doubt purely located based on the site of a donated property, as Guidobaldi suggests, or simply where an empty affordable building was situated. However, many were also strategically situated as has been described: apsidal encroachment onto main roads and the practical liturgical benefits of a bath's water system does suggest selective land purchase by some private donors or churchmen for the benefit of their investment and its conspicuousness. This is something made more apparent in the 5th century with Christian basilicas being constructed on prominent hills, and, from this time, the creation of Christian worship spaces within prestige Roman structures in central locations. There are also two examples of 4th century Christian buildings being constructed in close proximity to major pagan monuments, an indication of a harmonious, rather than antagonistic religious topography, and certainly not one of avoidance.

Therefore, Christian building in the 4th to early 8th century in Rome needs to be seen as any other form of aristocratic munificence in the urban sphere (lay or episcopal), where there was a desire to promote one's investment and for it to be a prominent or important landmark in the city. That is not to say that Rome became an *urbs christiana* overnight, indeed the temples and pagan shrines still vastly outnumbered any Christian buildings within the city until the former's dismantling, destruction or quiet rotting

away. However, it can be said that on certain streets and in certain places within the city, Christian buildings were prominent.

Although this book examines urban space and movement, the use of modern urban theoretical models will not be implemented here. These can be favourably employed in ancient urban spaces, but only when we have a complete, or largely complete, street plan available to us, as at Pompeii and Ostia.[10] In Rome we do not have this to any extent, so we are limited in our theoretical scope. In some ways this is a good thing however. Many urban theories are simply ways to scientifically measure something that is often intuitively obvious. We do not need space syntax theory or measures of spatial diversity to tell us a street was private or a building was largely inaccessible, although they can provide valuable insights on a broad city wide scale, or room by room scale within a building, and where surface remains are limited. In this discussion here, however, we are simply observing the spatial relationship between an early Christian building and its immediate contemporary surroundings, and with any material remains beyond this often lacking, the questions are often archaeological rather than theoretical. Terms used by geographers and urban theorists such as 'spatial capital' may be appropriate here with regards the aims of some early Christian builders, just described above, but these terms have not been strictly defined and so have the potential to be misleading.[11]

The incomplete nature of the archaeological evidence of the basilicas in discussion also means some of our conclusions need to be tentative. Their original height and exterior decoration is unknown to us, so I may in fact be underestimating their 'impact'. Equally, in a few cases, a tall structure may have obscured any micro visual prominence such a building may have had, but, where appropriate, this has been noted.

0.1 Problems of Definition

As with all studies of the ancient world our modern definition of an ancient term may be misleading when used to describe a particular ancient group, process, or the function of an object or space. In this study, where the use of such terms is inevitable, we need to set out what we mean before we begin. Particularly problematic is the term 'Christianisation', a monolithic sounding programme seemingly enacted from the top down. Such a process has now been rightly nuanced, with the reality of a very fractured and disparate Christian community in this period being acknowledged (with many 'Christianities'[12]) and, as we will see here, the role of private elite donors being fully appreciated. As such, I will use the term 'Christianisation' here to mean the appearance of defined spaces in Rome for public Christian worship and/or gathering, which may have been originally for non-Catholic use. The clearly delineated nature of public Christian space in the city in this period (marked by the walls of a basilica or later xenodochium and diaconia), and the nebulous nature of so-called 'pagan' or 'secular' space, makes the interaction between all three difficult to judge, but it does allow us to mark out Christian nodes in the cityscape quite easily, and thus the process of spatial 'Christianisation'. This ignores of course the important domestic private sphere of Christian worship, as emphasised recently by K. Bowes,[13] but what is of interest here is how Christians interacted with the urban landscape around them and the tangible manifestation of that is the apsed basilica hall used for public Christian congregation. Meetings and services in houses are private internalising phenomena, and their location cannot be determined in any meaningful way.

Another debatable term is that of *titulus* itself, and what it actually means. It does not appear before A.D. 377 in a Christian context, and has been argued to refer to the legal ownership of the property.[14] Indeed, in the 4th and 5th century Latin literary sources, the term *titulus* is not used at all to denote a Christian place of worship, implying the word acquires that meaning only in the 6th century and was only used in legal or administrative contexts before this.[15] Also, what *tituli* actually were, whether solely places of worship and/or meeting places we cannot say for sure as no archaeological or written source can shine any light on this problem.

Bowes has recently claimed that *titulus* has in fact the meaning of a property gift from a donor and that is why it is sometimes described as distinct from the physical structure of the basilica. Because of the use of the vague 'constituere' for the foundation of the *titulus Vestinae* (described in detail below) she argues for the term being a reference to the donation and property given.[16] Yet it seems to me that this may in fact be a reference to a role or function, in other words a term to describe the building's use, having lost its literal legal meaning in this Christian

[10] Most recently: Kaiser A. *Roman Urban Street Networks* (2011); Stöger H. *Rethinking Ostia: a Spatial Enquiry into the Urban Society of Rome's Imperial Port-Town* (2011).

[11] For a definition see: Marcus L. (2007) "Spatial capital and how to measure it: an outline of an analytical theory of the social performativity of urban form", in *Proceedings to the 6th International Space Syntax Symposium, İstanbul, 2007*, edd. A. S. Kubat, Ö. Ertekin, Y. I. Güney and E. Eyüboğlou (2007) 005.1-005.12.

[12] For example Hopkins K. A *World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire* (1999) and importantly Smith J. Z. *Drudgery Divine. On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (1990) which reasseses the study of early Christianity in all its multifarious forms. For Rome in particular see: Lampe P. *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries: From Paul to Valentinus* (transl. M. Steinhauser, ed. M. D. Johnson) (2003) esp. 358-408.

[13] Bowes K. *Private Worship* (2008).

[14] Inscription of 377: ICUR 1.124 n. 262 and also in a Roman synod attendee list of 499: MGH.AA (=*Monumenta Germaniae historica. Auctores antiquissimi*) 12.410-15. Ownership definition: Pietri C. *Roma christiana* (1976) 90-96, 569-73 and recently: Hillner J. 'Families, patronage' (2007) 232-37 (225-61); Bowes K. *Private Worship* (2008) 66-67.

[15] The terms *ecclesia, basilica* or *dominicum* are generally used for actual places of worship in the 4th century: Guidobaldi F. 'L'organizzazione dei *tituli*' (2000) 123-24 (123-29). *Titulus* in legal contexts in late antiquity: eg. *Cod. Theod*. 1.1.6, 1.4.3, 1.5.12, 13.6.8, 14.3.13, 15.1.2.

[16] Bowes K. *Private Worship* (2008) 66-68.

context.[17] So, Bishop Innocent, in the case of Vestina's foundation, is rather giving the basilica building the role to be assigned to it, 'constituere' also meaning 'organise', and in a legal sense, 'define'.

A contemporary 4th century letter (collated in the so-called *Collectio Avellana*) is very precise in describing Damasus being elected bishop *in Lucinis* in 366, which can only mean the *titulus Lucinae* mentioned in the synod attendee list of 499.[18] In the letter the '*titulus*' term is omitted because the source is describing the building itself, the basilica, and not its function, something that would be appropriate in a list of attendees at a Church meeting and in a description of a basilica's foundation. In the same 4th century letter we hear that bishop Felix set himself up *in iuli trans Tiberim*, again referring to a building, so with no reason to use the title *titulus*.[19] The term 'basilica' is used later with another *basilica iuli* in the same letter, so as to distinguish it from the previous, different structure which lay across the Tiber, and perhaps to deny the places where Felix and Damasus were elected an air of respectability, two events the author of the letter clearly disapproved of.[20] No distinction is made in the 499 synod list between the three presbyters of a *tituli Iuli*, although one Paulinus is described as a *presbyter (tituli) sancti Iuli* in three other manuscripts.[21] Others have thought that '*titulus*' refers to a separate community centre near or inside the basilica,[22] but I think the more nuanced view that it describes the role and function of a particular sort of Christian building (like *diaconia, xenodochium*) is more accurate.[23] This meaning changed in later centuries of course, but remained fairly consistent from the 4th to 6th century I believe.

This definition of '*titulus*' may explain the variation in nomenclature which we see, as this variation is based on the type of source in which it is written, that is, what it is telling the reader. This definition, as I have said, is likely to be a largely administrative and community function which also involved, as I will show later, baptisms in owned or nearby baths and where small-scale liturgy also took place by the 4th century, judging by the provision of liturgical type vessels given to several foundations.[24]

To avoid ambiguity then, we shall generally refer to these known Christian centres simply as basilicas (rather than 'churches'), as, as far as we can tell, the form all these early centres took were small basilical structures. These are the buildings that will be the focus for this study. The Lateran complex will not therefore, in itself, be studied, in spite of it being a prominent, large intramural centre.[25]

0.2 Historiography

To put my argument into some sort of context, an overview of the modern scholarship for the archaeology and topography of early Christian Rome is required. Such scholarship began in earnest with Rodolfo Lanciani and his *Pagan and Christian Rome* (1895), a book that is in effect a write-up of the excavations he undertook in the city during the previous years. These excavations were the first thorough and systematic archaeological investigations of Rome's ancient remains, and the first to examine some of its early Christian features. This later period in Rome's ancient history had been largely overlooked by previous scholars, and Lanciani tried to remedy this further with part of his *The Destruction of Ancient Rome* (1899), but especially with *Wanderings Through Ancient Roman Churches* (1925). The latter was the first attempt to look at these early structures in Rome archaeologically and historically, but was quickly followed by the more scholarly *Le Chiese di Roma nel Medio Evo* (1927) by Christian Hülsen. Hülsen's work was in some ways the second part of Samuel Ball Platner's towering contribution to the topography of ancient Rome, completed two years later by Thomas Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1929), the first index to the known monuments of the city, but which ignored the Christian contribution. The fact that this omission has only recently been remedied in the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (1993-2000), and within the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae: Suburbium* (2001-2008), shows the

[17] An early reference to a Roman Christian centre is from a Greek source from about AD 351 (revised after 370), Athanasius (*Apol. c. Ar.* 20). This has been translated as a "place where the presbyter Vito held his congregation" (Schaff P. and Wace H. edd and transl. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* (1892 repr. 1995) 110) with no further detail given. Thus, is this just a meeting place, a place of worship or both? Is this a *titulus*? For the date of the source and its revision see Donker G. J. *The Text of the Apostolos in Athanasius of Alexandria* (2011) 22, with Jones A. H. M. 'The date of the 'Apologia contra Arianos' of Athanasius', JTS 5 (1954) 224-27.

[18] *Coll. Avell.* (ed. Guenther) 1.5; MGH.AA.12.414. Damasus' election was then formalised in the Lateran, the *titulus Lucinae* being unfit for this purpose: De Spirito G. 'Ursino e Damaso - una nota', in *Peregrina curiositas: eine Reise durch den orbis antiquus: zu Ehren von Dirk van Damme*, edd. A. Kessler, T. Ricklin and G.Wurst (1994) 266-68 (263-74).

[19] *Coll. Avell.* (ed. Guenther) 1.3.

[20] This 'basilica iuli' a different structure: Künzle P. 'Zur basilica Liberiana: basilica Sicinini = basilica Liberii', *RömQSchr* 56 (1961) 39-41 (1-61, 129-66); Geertman H. 'Forze centrifughe e centripete nella Roma cristiana: il Laterano, la basilica Iulia e la basilica Liberiana', in *Hic fecit basilicam: studi sul "Liber Pontificalis" e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma da Silvestro a Silverio*, ed. S. de Blaauw (2004) 28-31 (17-44) where it is thought to be on the site of the current Sancti Apostoli. The idea that the *Iuli trans Tiberim* and the *basilica Iuli* might in reality have had different statuses based on the former only being regarded as a '*titulus*', has been argued by De Spirito G. 'Ursino e Damaso' (1994) 266. Two separate basilicas of Julius in sources: Liberian catalogue (LP=*Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (1886-92) 1.9). Boniface I (418-22) was ordained in *basilica Iuliae* according to the 6th century LP (LP 1.227) but in *ecclesia Marcelli* according to a more reliable contemporary letter (*Coll. Avell*. (ed. Guenther) 14.6). Note the absence of the term *titulus* once more.

[21] *Coll. Avell.* (ed. Guenther) 1.3; MGH.AA. 12.411-2, 414..

[22] For the debate and confusion surrounding one particular example, the tituli of Equitius and Sylvester, see below Chapter 4.

[23] The larger basilicas inside and outside the city (the Lateran, Liberian Basilica, those on or near martyr tombs) are not represented in these synods by their own priests. An explanation may be that these buildings were initially purely for large services on Sundays and feast days and so had no permanent clergy; the priests of *tituli* or the bishop himself presided over services as and when required. An example may well be the presbyters of the *titulus Vestinae* having jurisdiction over S. Agnese fuori le Mura (see chapter 1: n.72).

[24] See for example LP 1.170, 212.

[25] For the most recent research on this structure see Liverani P. 'L'episcopio lateranense dalle origini all'Alto Medioevo', in *Des 'domus ecclesiae' aux palais épiscopaux. Actes du colloque tenu à Autun du 26 au 28 novembre 2009*, edd. S. Balcon-Berry, F. Baratte, J.-P. Caillet and D. Sandron (2012) 119-32.

extent to which the Christian topography of the city had been regarded separately from its non-sacred and pagan buildings. In general, topographers of Rome had largely focused on its pre-Christian structures and their locations, whereas the examination of the first Christian buildings had been confined to archaeologists and architectural historians. The most comprehensive example of the latter approach is Richard Krautheimer's *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (1937-77) which detailed the written and archaeological history of each of Rome's ancient and early medieval Christian buildings. Within this work, the results of the first excavations under them, from the 1920s, were set out. These, aside from providing a valuable chronology to the 4th and 5th century Christian building programme, made obvious the lack of evidence for a visible pre-Constantinian Christian topography in the city, something scholars of the first half of the 20th century had assumed was the template for the later post-Constantinian landscape.[26]

The obvious next step after examining the archaeology and history of the early Christian buildings in Rome, was to look at where they were located within the urban landscape. This, however, has been done only in a cursory fashion, as we have said. The discussion has tended to focus on three subjects: the large imperial structures, the arguments concerning '*domus ecclesiae'* in the city, and brief asides on the general macro spread of the distribution of these early basilicas. The idea that these centres were preceded by *domus ecclesia*, a theory first proposed by Kirsch, is now regarded with a great deal of suspicion, as are the martyr stories that claim a more ancient inheritance and history for many of the first Christian buildings, stories whose reliability has been questioned for some time.[27] Nevertheless, the debate elsewhere on this topic has not moved on very much. It has tended to see the early Christian basilicas in isolation from their contemporary surroundings, preferring to concentrate on broad socio-political motives for their locations. For example, as we have seen, the location of the *tituli* within the city has been explained as simply random, and the lack of imperial foundations in the pagan centre of the city has been argued to be due to that emperor wishing to avoid the ire of the pagan senate.[28] More recently, work has focused on the patronage and ownership of these basilicas and their private nature, as discussed above, and as such their location is taken to depend solely on where the land owned by the donor was situated.

Nonetheless, in the last few years these smaller structures have rightly begun to be seen in the context of the buildings and roads around them at the time in which they were built. Both J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital* (2000), and H. Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome from the Fourth to the Seventh Century* (2005) for example, accept the importance of the surrounding buildings, spaces and roads for Christian builders. However, the details of this are not explored, something I wish to do.[29]

The actual location of some of these small basilicas needs to be seen as a feature of the 'Christianisation' of the city. In previous scholarship it is only the actual phenomenon of the appearance of these buildings, rather than where they appeared, that has been regarded as part of this process. Other work on the Christianisation of the city has focused on its social and political dimensions, as well as the progress of the conversion of the Roman aristocracy. One of the most important contributions to this subject is A. Alföldi's *La conversione di Constantino e Roma pagana* (1943), which acknowledged how fundamentally pagan Rome still was, architecturally, socially and politically, long after Constantine's acceptance of Christianity. Equally important is C. Pietri's magisterial *Roma Cristiana* (1976), that looked at the growth of the Roman Church as an organisation, and the physical manifestation of that; that is the appearance of Christian basilicas in the urban landscape. Pietri noted that the building of these structures was a part of the conversion process, but went no further with that train of thought.[30] More recently the debate has moved on, identifying that 'Christianisation' was a more nuanced idea and encompassed all facets of city life, and was in many respects more of a secularisation at first. Nowhere is this approach more clear than in A. Fraschetti's *La conversione: Da Roma pagana a Roma cristiana* (1999). Essentially Fraschetti sees a secularisation of imperial ceremony and a gradual and slow Christianisation of the political, topographical and calendrical spheres. This latter element is also a focus for M. Salzman's work on the Roman calendar in late antiquity.[31] The conversion of the aristocracy, in Rome and elsewhere, has also been looked at in more depth recently, along with the governance of the city in general.[32]Specific case studies looking

[26] Eg. Kirsch J. P. *Die römischen Titelkirchen im Altertum* (1918); Vielliard R. *Recherches sur les origines de la Rome chrétienne* (1941).

[27] Domus ecclesiae: Pietri C. 'Recherches' (1978) 3-21; Guidobaldi F. 'L'inserimento delle chiese titolari' (1989) 384-85; Guidobaldi F. 'L'organizzazione dei *tituli*'(2000) 123-24 (123-29). Martyr stories: Delehaye H., 'L'amphithéatre flavien et ses environs dans les textes hagiographiques', *Analecta Bollandiana* 16 (1897) 235-52; Delehaye H., *Étude sur le légendier romain; les saints de novembre et de décembre* (1936) 14-41.

[28] Tituli: see n.9. Lack of central imperial foundations: see n.3. See also Brandt O. 'Constantine, the Lateran, and early church building policy', in *Imperial Art as Christian Art, Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian*, edd. J. Rasmus Brandt and O. Steen (2001) 109-14, where the Lateran is argued to have been a 'private' building and therefore not an appropriate addition to the city centre.

[29] See also Crippa M. A. 'L'urbanistica tardoantica e topografia cristiana, III-VII secolo', in *L'arte paleocristiana. Visione e spazio dalle origini a Bisanzio*, edd. M. A. Crippa and M. Zibawi (1998) 429-42. The most recent example of this more contextual approach is: Spera L. 'Characteristics of the christianisation of space in late antique Rome. New considerations a generation after Charles Pietri's 'Roma Christiana'', in *Cities and Gods. Religious Space in Transition*, edd. T. Kaizer, A. Leone, E. Thomas and R. Witcher (2013) 121-42. This focuses on three areas of the city but, however, still only looks at the evidence in general, regional terms, not at the micro street level.

[30] Pietri C. *Roma christiana* (1976) x.

[31] Salzman M. *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (1990); Salzman M. 'The christianisation of sacred time and space', in *The Transformations of Urbs Roma* (1999) 123-34.

[32] Cameron A. 'The last pagans of Rome', in *Transformations of Urbs Roma* (1999) 109-21; Salzman M. *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy:*

at early Christian basilicas in the city, based on new archaeological discoveries, or the reassessment of known results, continue to shine more light on the chronology of these structures, often moving their construction into a different era.[33] Topographical studies have also tended to shift more to the previously neglected suburban areas and hinterland of towns and cities.[34] Although they do not impact directly on the study here, their examination of the importance of movement and space to these buildings can be also applied to several Christian intramural structures.

In this way, to view the spatial 'Christianisation' of Rome in terms of a basilica's location and the 'effect' it made is a new approach and one that can give a deeper 'street-level' sense of the changes taking place in the fabric of Rome from the 4th to the 7th century.

Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire (2002); Lizzi Testa R. *Senatori, popolo, papi: il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani* (2004).

33 Examples will be cited in later chapters.

34 For Rome this includes: Bjur H. and Santillo Frizell B. *Via Tiburtina: Space, Movement and Artefacts in the Urban Landscape* (2009); Spera L. and Mineo S. *Via Appia I. Da Roma a Bovillae* (2004) and many of the other books in the 'Antiche Strade. Lazio' series; La Regina A. dir. *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae: Suburbium*, 5 vols. (2001-2008) is the first comprehensive survey of all of ancient Rome's suburban remains. The bibliography for Rome's Christian extramural tomb churches is, however, already voluminous.