

## CHAPTER 3

*Scholae, Diaconiae, Xenodochia: the topography of assistance in Rome*3.1 Introduction

Having investigated the routes that Anglo-Saxon pilgrims would follow to explore Rome and the tombs of saints and martyrs, and having confirmed their actual presence at these shrines through the surviving graffiti, some logistical issues relating to such a widespread phenomenon need to be addressed. One of these concerns the provisions made for the care of visitors to Rome.

At different times, for different reasons and often within a wider research context, scholars have touched on or raised the topic of assistance to the poor in Rome: how it was organized after the dissolution of the Roman Empire and later of the Byzantine administration; to whom and where it was delivered.<sup>1</sup> Such questions are relevant here as answers will provide information concerning the nature of the institutions that were responsible not only for the care of the inhabitants of Rome itself, but also for those visiting the city. And, with an understanding of these institutions, the types of buildings and their associated decoration and furnishing can be accepted as having been encountered by the visitors, in particular the Anglo-Saxons.

It seems that the most renowned and celebrated of these institutions was also, not accidentally, the only one specifically associated with the Anglo-Saxons, the so-called *Schola Saxonum*.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, despite its apparent prominence in the literature, actual mention of the *Schola* in the sources is rare

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<sup>1</sup> The essential studies are O. Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medio evo sino alla fine del secolo VIII' in *Archivio della Societa' Romana di Storia Patria* 70 (1947), pp. 1-145; J. Durliat, *De la Ville Antique À la Ville Byzantine: le problème de subsistances*, Rome 1990; U. Falesiedi, *Le Diaconie: i servizi assistenziali nella Chiesa antica*, Roma 1995; F.J. Niederer, 'Early Medieval Charity' in *Church History* 21 (1952), pp. 285-95; H.W. Dey, 'Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia and monasteries: 'social security' and the meaning of monasticism in early medieval Rome' in *Early Medieval Europe* 16 (2008), pp. 398-422. See also the more sparse remarks in Krautheimer, *Roma*, pp. 99-103; Llewellyn, *Rome*, pp. 137-40; Birch, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 123-35. See also the observations in C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*, Oxford 2005, indexed under *annona* and grain production.

<sup>2</sup> See Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*.

and pertains to a much period later than that of its supposed foundation. Some details of the foundation, on the other hand, appear as late as the twelfth-century, in sources that probably relied on earlier traditions. In these (confused) accounts, the kings Ine of Wessex (726) and Offa of Mercia (796) are identified as responsible for the establishment of the *Schola Saxonum*; <sup>3</sup> the same sources also link this event with the origin of the Peterspence, or Romscot, a tax levied to benefit the city of Rome, and in particular St Peter's basilica, a reality which is however unproved until the reign of Alfred and his successor Edward the Elder (ninth and tenth centuries). <sup>4</sup> It is advisable therefore to focus on the earlier mentions, to explain the possible conditions and time for the birth of the *Schola Saxonum* in Rome, and from that basis to explore various hypotheses on its potential influence.

In the *Liber Pontificalis*, the life of Leo III (795-816) contains the first direct mention to the *Schola Saxonum*, and in a particularly interesting context. Upon his return to Rome from Paderborn in 799, where he had met with Charlemagne, the whole city gathered to welcome him back, with representatives of each 'order' of citizens, including 'all the *scholae* of foreigners, Franks, Frisians, Saxons and Lombards'. They acclaimed him 'with standards and banners...and spiritual chants', followed by a solemn celebration of the Mass at St Peter's.<sup>5</sup> Several aspects of this ceremony need to be emphasized: first, it strikingly recalls the imperial *adventus*, the entire population of Rome is represented, almost symbolically, by different groups, possibly organized according to hierarchies, men and women, lay and ecclesiastics.<sup>6</sup> Second, it can be assumed that in order to participate in such a public and official event, the

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<sup>3</sup> See Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 62, 98-9.

<sup>4</sup> It is unclear if it actually originated as a tax, or a private, personal gift or offering from the King. See Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 99-103; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 217, 466-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, pp. 1-48, esp. p. 6; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 185-6.

<sup>6</sup> 'Clericorum cum omnibus clericis quamque optimates et senates cunctaque militia, et universe populo Romano cum sanctimonialibus et diaconissis et nobilissimis matronis seu universis feminis, simul etiam et cuncte scole peregrinorum, videlicet Francorum, Frisonorum, Saxonorum atque Langobardorum'; (all of them as a whole, the leading members of the clergy and all the clergy, the chief men, the senate, the whole militia and the entire Roman people, the nuns and deaconesses, the noble matrons and all the women, and all the scholae...').

'*scholae* of foreigners' were considered a tangible reality in the public life of Rome by this time. It therefore follows that the origins and development of the *Schola* predate 799. Third, it has been suggested that the *scholae* had some military function. This is not inconsistent with later mentions in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in the life of Sergius II (844-7), and more precisely in the account of the Saracen raid on Porto and Rome in 846.<sup>7</sup> From this, it is possible to gather that the joint *scholae* of Saxons, Frisians and Franks were able to provide a military contingent believed to be sufficient to defend the coastal city of Porto. The pilgrim's militia was massacred by the Saracens, who in turn gained access to Rome. What can be deduced from this account, despite the tragic ending, is that at the time the *Schola Saxonum* represented a 'considerable colony' of Anglo-Saxons, numerous enough and well-integrated, so to take an active part into the system of the Roman *Scholae Militia* defending the city.

It is possible to picture this 'colony' further, through other pontifical lives, those of Paschal I (817-24) and Leo IV (847-55).<sup>8</sup> Here two consecutive fires are reported that involved exactly the area where the *Schola* was situated. The first, in 817, was caused by the 'carelessness of some men of English race' and burnt down their entire neighbourhood: with a careful eye to detail, the author of the *vita* even specifies that the Anglo-Saxons used the word *burgus* to define this area.<sup>9</sup> A second, larger fire broke out in 847, again in the 'vicus Saxonum', but this time also involving the nearby *Schola Langobardorum* and reaching St Peter's *porticus* and the church itself.<sup>10</sup>

From these references it is clear is that the Anglo-Saxons visiting Rome, particularly those staying for a prolonged time, would do so in a specific, well-

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<sup>7</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, pp. 86-105, esp. pp. 99-100; Davis (ed.), vol. 3, pp. 95-6; Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 92-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, pp. 52-68 and 106-39.

<sup>9</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, pp. 53-4; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 8-9. It is interesting to consider that the current name of the neighbourhood around St Peter's is still 'Borgo': it clearly originates from the Anglo-Saxon/Germanic word *burh* and the fact that it passed into common language, up until contemporary times, indicates that the Germanic-speaking population must have been a deeply identifiable and influential entity.

<sup>10</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, p. 111; Davis (ed.), vol. 3, p. 119.

defined area of the city, probably as early as the mid-eighth century if not earlier, and so creating a settlement with its own Anglo-Saxon identity. It can be assumed that it may have started as a structure similar to a hostel, located in the crucial area of St Peter's. As the number of visitors increased,<sup>11</sup> it became a more permanent urban feature, possibly including lodgings and houses, later becoming an official institution, with its own church (the origin of which survives in the dedication of the current S. Spirito in Sassia) and a more prominent military and cultural role.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, it seems that the *Schola Saxonum* was a very distinctive and important structure, but it must be kept in mind that, as far as the early medieval period is concerned, its importance, as well as actual existence, can be easily overestimated. Other institutions, such as *diaconiae* and *xenodochia* are less conspicuously associated with the Anglo-Saxons, but can nevertheless be understood as forming part of the reality of Rome that the Anglo-Saxons would have encountered. Moreover the origins of these structures precede that of the *scholae*, and may even explain the origins of the latter. For these reasons, it seems useful to explore in more detail the relatively unfamiliar topic of *diaconiae* and *xenodochia*.

### 3.2 Diaconiae

It is widely acknowledged that when travelling to and staying in Rome, Anglo-Saxon travellers encountered a varied reality of religious and secular institutions, which would have included the *diaconiae*. The scholarly debate surrounding these centres is well established,<sup>13</sup> the main concerns being their origin and function, within and beyond Rome; the relative importance of the part played by the Pope in their establishment and administration and the

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<sup>11</sup> See *infra*, p. 107 (mention of Boniface preaching to foreigners).

<sup>12</sup> A similar phenomenon can probably be hypothesized for the other national *Scholae* (those of the Lombards, Frisians and Franks, and the so-called *Schola Greca*).

<sup>13</sup> The above-mentioned work by Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie romane', discusses and draws from the position of L. Duchesne (1887), J. Lestocquoi (1930), A. Kalsbach (1935) and H.I. Marrou (1940); see other relevant works at fn 1.

interplay with the lay elite; the nature of the services offered and the evolution of the diaconal status; and the location, architectural and artistic history of the buildings where the *diaconiae* were placed.

A connection between these elements and the Anglo-Saxons is not, however, immediately apparent: there is no mention in the sources of Anglo-Saxons pilgrims making use of these charitable structures; it is an idea largely assumed, rather than known for certain. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Anglo-Saxons' stay in Rome could be lengthy, and that they took part in the ecclesiastical and liturgical life of the city. There are many examples of this: Benedict Biscop, for instance, visited Rome six times between 653-85, and although Bede does not specify the length of the abbot's repeated visits, it is generally accepted that they were fairly protracted, even just to allow the time necessary to collect the numerous relics and objects for which he is renowned.<sup>14</sup> Another Northumbrian travelled frequently to Rome: both Stephen and Bede describe Wilfrid's very first visit (between 654-7) as lasting several months;<sup>15</sup> his subsequent journeys, in 679-80 and 704, during which he was received by the popes and participated to long synods, lasted from four months to a whole year.<sup>16</sup> And, there was Boniface who, when he visited Rome for the third time in 738, 'was held in such veneration by everyone' that many people, from different nations – supposedly all staying in Rome as pilgrims or visitors – gathered to listen to his wise teachings. This last account provides the unambiguous evidence of the multicultural, international and possibly multilingual society that Rome offered, to both its resident citizens and the fellow-pilgrims, only

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<sup>14</sup> See *infra*, ch.5.

<sup>15</sup> Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, B. Colgrave (ed.), Cambridge 1927, ch. 5, pp. 10-3; also J.F. Webb's translation in *The Age of Bede*, D.H. Farmer (ed.), London rev. ed. 1983. See also, Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 12-6, 21-31, 39-46.

<sup>16</sup> According to Eddius, in 703 Wilfrid – presumably with his retinue – participated to over 70 sessions of the council gatherings. In the same occasion it is also mentioned that Wilfrid and his priests were offered 'free lodging' (*mansione voluntaria praeparata manserunt*), *Vita Wilfridi*, ch. 50, pp. 102-5; *Age of Bede*, p. 160.

visiting for a limited period of time: Franks, Bavarians and Saxons are all accounted for.<sup>17</sup>

With such examples in mind, the hypothesis that Anglo-Saxons were to some extent involved – directly or indirectly – in the activities of the *diaconiae*, or at least aware of their existence, location and appearance, is thus not too extreme. As a consequence, the several aspects of the *diaconiae* to be examined here can be accepted as being relevant to the Anglo-Saxon experience of Rome.

The question of origins can provide information about the functions of the *diaconiae*, and in turn can lead to an appreciation of their potential ‘customers’. The question of patronage presents problems and situations that could have been reflected or imitated in Anglo-Saxon England, while offering further insight to the complex (secular and ecclesiastical) reality of early medieval Rome, one that Anglo-Saxons would surely have experienced, and that would have influenced their perception of a contemporary *Romanitas*. Finally, questions concerning location, dedication, rituals, architecture and decoration of the *diaconiae* can all contribute to an exhaustive, as well as multifaceted picture of the city the Anglo-Saxons so eagerly visited, being at the same time ‘portable’ features which could be translated and echoed in the monuments, buildings and liturgy within Anglo-Saxon England.

### 3.2 a) The question of origins and the role of the *annona*

The question of the origin of *diaconiae* in Rome lies at the heart of the scholarly debate. *Diaconia* is a word of greek origin meaning ‘assistance’, referring to the combination of all charitable activities usually provided by a monastery. In the Eastern world this is attested from the early fourth century: several contemporary historians mention large charitable centres operating at Edessa,

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<sup>17</sup> ‘*tantaque a cunctis tam Romanis quam etiam advenis, veneratione habebatur, ut multi ad salutare eius doctrina confluerent. Franchorum enim et Baguariorum nec non ex Brittaniam advenientum Saxonum aliarumque provinciarum ingens sedulo eius admonition adhererat multitudo.*’ W. Levison, *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 57, 1905; G.W. Robinson (ed.), *The Life of Saint Boniface*, London 1916, pp. 69-70; Moore, *Saxon Pilgrims*, p. 65.

Constantinople, Alexandria and Ephesus as early as 370, that provided food, assistance and sleeping accommodation for numerous people, ranging from 300 to 3000, including widows, convicts, pilgrims, the sick and disabled.<sup>18</sup>

In Italy the earliest mentions occur in the epistles and register of Gregory the Great,<sup>19</sup> but these do not apply to Rome. Rather, Gregory refers to the *diaconiae* at Naples, rebuking one John, *praefectus praetorio Italiae*, for having used inappropriately '*annonas atque consuetudinis diaconiae, quae Neapolim exhibetur*';<sup>20</sup> in another instance he refers to a controversy over the will of one Adeodatus from Pesaro who had left his wealth to the poor and whose executor wanted to use it to purchase '*aliquid in diaconia quae ibidem constituta est*'.<sup>21</sup> An analysis of the language in both cases suggests that Gregory refers not to a specific structure, but to the entire spectrum of activities offered to the poor through the *episcopium* of a city.<sup>22</sup> The bishop was in fact responsible not only for the spiritual guidance of his flock but also for their more material and often pressing needs. This was obviously also the case in Rome in the earliest period, when the Lateran was the centre of the financial organization of the Church and where the Pope himself represented the canonical obligation to regard the Church's goods as *res pauperum*.<sup>23</sup>

After Gregory the Great, subsequent mention of early *diaconiae* in the *Liber Pontificalis* is recorded under the pontificates of Benedict II (684-85), John V (685-86), Conon (686-87) and the slightly later Gregory II (715-31).<sup>24</sup> These are

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<sup>18</sup> Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 80-3.

<sup>19</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 2-9, Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> '...your Eminence has withdrawn the *annona* and the customs of the *diaconia*, which were offered in Naples'; *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum libri*, D. Norberg (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 140, 140A, 2 vols., Turnhout 1982, Book 10 ep. 8. See J.R.C. Martyn (ed.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols., Toronto 2004, pp. 718-9.

<sup>21</sup> '...something for the *diaconia* which is established there'; *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum libri*, CCSL, 140, Book 5 ep. 25; Martyn (ed.), *Letters of Gregory*, pp. 340-1. See also Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 3; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 86.

<sup>22</sup> It must be underlined also the fact that the *diaconia* is not referred with the name of the oratory attached to it or the dedicatory saint as it will become normal later. See Falesiedi, *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 93, Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 363-5, 366-7, 368-70, 396-414.

still generic references but have been used as evidence to argue for the monastic structure of the Roman *diaconiae*.<sup>25</sup> It is thus worth citing these brief statements:

- *'hic dimisit omni clero monasteriis diaconiae et mansionariis auri libras XXX'* (Benedict II);
- *'hic dimisit omni clero monasteriis diaconiae et mansionariis solidos MDCCCC'* (John V);
- *'hic dimisit omni clero monasteriis diaconiae et mansionariis benedictionem in auro sicuti praecessor eius Benedictus papa'* (Conon);
- *'hic dimisit omni clero monasteriis diaconiae et mansionariis solidos IIICL'* (Gregory II).<sup>26</sup>

Here, the term '*monasteriis diaconiae*' has been interpreted as 'to the monasteries of the diaconia'.<sup>27</sup> This translation supports the school of thought that assigns an eastern and monastic origin to this type of institution, for whom the preference for a Greek vocabulary to define and describe roles and activities related to the *diaconiae* offer further evidence.<sup>28</sup> Closer examination of the text, however, following the interpretation suggested by Durliat and supported by Falesiedi,<sup>29</sup> suggests that the phrase can be understood rather as formulaic and, reflecting the rule in the so-called 'Polyptychum Gelasianum',<sup>30</sup> is understood to point to the division of the Church's revenue into four parts, intended for distribution amongst ecclesiastics, both clergy and monks (*clero, monasteriis*), the poor (*diaconia*, intended in its abstract and collective meaning of 'charitable activities'), and the upkeep of the sacred buildings (entrusted to the *mansionarii*). Gregory the Great had already indicated such a distribution of

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<sup>25</sup> See the position of Marrou in Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 1, 20-2.

<sup>26</sup> Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> On this see Marrou and Bertolini in Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 90-4. On the monastic hypothesis, see *infra*, pp. 114-8.

<sup>29</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 166-69; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 97-8 and 101-4. For a divergent view see Dey, '*Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia*'.

<sup>30</sup> Established by Pope Gelasius (492-96); Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 14-15.

wealth in one of his letters, addressed to the Empress Costantina,<sup>31</sup> which was cited in John the Deacon's ninth-century *Life of Gregory*.<sup>32</sup>

As far as the late seventh-century popes were concerned, it seems therefore that mention of *diaconiae* was not connected with monastic institutions. Falesiedi argues that the sequence of donations entrusting the monks and clergy, the foundation of new churches or restoration of old ones, and charity to the needy, could reflect the standardized 'narrative' followed by the compilers of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which starts to dominate in the seventh-century biographies.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Bertolini suggests that John the Deacon's *Life of Gregory* cannot be used as a reliable source for it reflects the reality of the ninth century, rather than the situation in Gregory's own time. Furthermore, Bertolini points to the apparent treatment of both *xenodochia* and *diaconiae* as separate and distinctive institutions as being untenable in the late sixth/early seventh century.<sup>34</sup>

It is relevant here to examine the later stages of the Roman government-based system of the *annona*,<sup>35</sup> as this might place the *diaconiae* in a context which, at least in its early stages, was distinct from the advocated monastic one. This latter issue has been thoroughly analysed by Durliat who described how the *annona*, the set of institutions and offices charged with ensuring that the city received and stocked adequate supplies of grain, functioned in Rome, as in any other city of the Empire.<sup>36</sup> He outlined how the *annona* then took care that the grain, later combined with supplies of oil, wine and meat, would be delivered free of charge to a pre-determined section of the population, or sold at a fixed price. Quite understandably, especially in a city as densely populated as Rome,

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<sup>31</sup> S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum libri, CCSL, 140, Book 5 ep. 39; Martyn (ed.), *Letters of Gregory*, pp. 355-8; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup> PL 75, II.24

<sup>33</sup> Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 103 fn. 60.

<sup>34</sup> For discussion on the *xenodochia*, see *infra*, pp. 136-41.

<sup>35</sup> *Annona* was originally the name of the Goddess who protected and presided over the harvest and its abundance. Later, the meaning was extended to the policy involving the supply and delivery/sale of grain in the cities of the Empire.

<sup>36</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 123-63.

this system was a complex machine that required numerous and highly trained staff. Furthermore, in the Roman world grain was supplied exclusively by the provinces of Egypt, Africa, Sicily and partly Sardinia, hence its safe production and shipping could often be affected by political events.

Yet, the *annona* seems to have run effectively during the Late Empire, even during the period of Ostrogothic control in the West,<sup>37</sup> and – although the structure was most severely tried during the sixth-century Gothic Wars – a mention in the *Pragmatica Sanctio* issued by Justinian in 554 suggests that the concept of the *annona* at the time was still familiar, and in all probability reflects the Byzantine attempt to revive a customary institution interrupted by the Gothic invasion.<sup>38</sup> Still, the first cracks had started to show: Durliat's interpretation of the life of Gelasius (492-6) in the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests that for the first time the pope himself was involved in the management of the *annona*, albeit limiting this exceptional intervention to a time of crisis.<sup>39</sup> Here, the hypothesis is that, during the sixth century, the popes took over supervision of and collaboration with the civic authorities regarding food supplies, while remaining primarily concerned with the wellbeing of the ecclesiastical population;<sup>40</sup> however, as it can be seen from an episode during the pontificate of Benedict I (575-9), responsibility for the provision of food was also, and still, in the hands of the Emperor, as in the case of Justin II who sent ships from Egypt to supply the starving Roman population.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of the sixth century, however, such a fluctuating situation had become more complicated when, under the pontificate of Gregory the Great, new elements begin to impact: the warehouses where the wheat was stocked start to be referred to exclusively as *horrea ecclesiastica*,<sup>42</sup> and, at the same time,

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<sup>37</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 126-33.

<sup>38</sup> Id., p. 139.

<sup>39</sup> Id., p. 136; *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 255-7.

<sup>40</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 77. See for instance in the life of Pope Boniface II (530-32): ...*et alimoniis multis in periculo famis clero subvenit.*

<sup>41</sup> Id. p. 82; Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, p. 134, fn. 246.

<sup>42</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 79; Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, p. 146.

they were also used to store the *sitonicum*, the wheat owned by the civic authorities and used to provide the needs of the army.<sup>43</sup> It seems therefore that lay institutions were at this point concerned only with military supply, and the bishop of Rome was left with full and sole responsibility for the storage and free delivery – or controlled sale – of the remaining supply to the general population. This is apparently confirmed by the example of the Emperor Maurice (582-602) dealing directly with Pope Gregory over some delayed victuals, without the intermediary action of imperial officers.<sup>44</sup>

It is interesting in this context to consider Gregory's immediate successor, Pope Sabinianus (604-6), and his not very popular decision to sell the wheat housed in the *horrea ecclesiae*, a decision that stirred up the anger of the population and which is often invoked to explain the detour at his funeral, in order to avoid the crowds.<sup>45</sup> What is more likely to have happened is that the Pope, by now responsible not only for the poor and clerics, but also for the entire population of Rome, had to resort to the extreme measure of selling the supply during a famine in order to avoid compromising Church revenues; or, as has been hypothesized, that this was Sabinianus's attempt to collect money to 'buy' peace with the Lombards.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of such considerations it does seem that by the early seventh century the papacy had appropriated responsibility for the management of the grain supply.

In the following century, the tendency of the Empire to take advantage of the ecclesiastical administrative role in Rome – to the point of leaving the Pope almost always in charge of what was once an imperial and government prerogative – was sometimes used by the Byzantine emperors as a way of controlling or threatening the Church. The short pontificate of Severinus (640), for instance, witnessed a military occupation of the Lateran, led by the imperial

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<sup>43</sup> Bertolini, *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Bertolini, *Ibid.*; Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 147-9.

<sup>45</sup> A decision also used to strengthen the contrast between his 'greedy' attitude and Gregory's selfless charity. See Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 141-3.

<sup>46</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 143, 150 fn. 284.

officers Maurice and Isaac, who accused the Pope and his ecclesiastical entourage of subtracting the money to pay the army to their own advantage.<sup>47</sup> This implies that by this time even imperial funds were kept in the ecclesiastical treasury, and that a role which *de facto* had been happily delegated to the Church, was still *de iure* under Byzantine jurisdiction.<sup>48</sup> Thus, from the sixth century onwards, the bishop of Rome seems to have steadily gained prerogatives and control over the assistance of general charitable distributions, and also of what was once the public *annona*, not only in terms of funds and supply but also in relation to the location of the *horrea ecclesiastica*. These aspects provide further information about the patronage, location and architecture of the *diaconiae*.

### 3.2 b) The religious function of the *diaconiae* and the 'monastic hypothesis'

Although the economic and political importance of the *diaconiae* seem to be portrayed quite clearly from a very early stage, what is absent from the sources is any reference to the establishment of specific diaconal institutions, at least until the early eighth century. This picture changes with the report of the donations and concessions made by Pope Gregory II (715-31) to the *diaconia* of S. Eustachio, in the later copy of a document from the Roman *episcopium*.<sup>49</sup> This is the first mention of an actual *diaconia* and is followed by relatively regular references in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in addition to which are three extant inscriptions related to Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Santa Maria Antiqua and S. Angelo in Pescheria.<sup>50</sup> In these sources, both textual and epigraphic, the *diaconiae* are specifically identified by the name of the attached oratory-chapel or the dedicatory saint in order to differentiate them; this practice can be useful

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<sup>47</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 328-9; Davis (ed.), vol.1, pp. 67-8.

<sup>48</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, p. 171 fn. 17.

<sup>50</sup> The epigraph at Santa Maria in Cosmedin is walled in to the right of the current entrance of the church, in the atrium; the inscription at Santa Maria Antiqua functions as heading to one of the frescoes in the Theodotus chapel, see *infra*, pp. 119-25; the inscription of S. Angelo in Pescheria is preserved inside the church, on the right side of the inner facing wall.

in elucidating the connection between their practical and religious functions, while providing further understanding of their origin and foundation, and the complex issue of their location, in relation to pre-existing buildings or areas connected with the Roman *annona*.

Following the reference to the *diaconia* of S. Eustachio, the next specific reference occurs in the life of Gregory III (731-41).<sup>51</sup> He turned what had been a *diaconia* and a small oratory into a 'longer and wider'<sup>52</sup> basilica, dedicated to Santa Maria in Aquiro, by rebuilding it *a fundamentis* and decorating it with paintings. He also enlarged the *diaconia* of the SS Sergio e Bacco at St Peter's, again *a fundamentis*, where there had been a small oratory. To this he granted 'everything that a deaconry uses',<sup>53</sup> and established that the office of the *diaconia* was to support the poor at all times. It is made quite clear here that the religious aspect of the *diaconia* was being emphasised – the small 'oratory' was turned into a great 'basilica' – over and above its welfare function, which is nevertheless still included. Furthermore, in all three instances, the *diaconiae* cited were already in existence and not mentioned as being established for the first time. Therefore, their origin as charitable institutions, as well as their status as acknowledged religious foundations, must date to an earlier period.

Another *diaconia* is mentioned in the life of Gregory's successor, Pope Zachary (741-52).<sup>54</sup> Here too, the religious implications of the institution are stressed: the *Liber Pontificalis* reports the miraculous finding of the head of St George, which was then accompanied by a crowd in solemn procession to the 'venerable' *diaconia* already dedicated to the saint in the area of Velabrum (*ad Velum Aureum*).<sup>55</sup> Two contrasting observations can be made here: first, the use

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<sup>51</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 415-25; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 17-28.

<sup>52</sup> '*basilicam Sanctae Dei Genitricis, quae appellatur Acyro, in qua antea diaconia et parvum oratorium fuit, eam a fundamentis longiorem et latiore construxit atque depinxit*', *Liber Pontificalis*, pp. 419-20.

<sup>53</sup> '*diaconiam Sanctorum Sergii et Bachi, sitam ad Beatum Petrum apostolum, in qua pridem parvum oratorium erat, a fundamentis ampliori fabrica dilatavit*', *Liber Pontificalis*, p. 420.

<sup>54</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 426-39; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 29-49.

<sup>55</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, p. 434; it has been suggested that ceremonial attached to the relics' translation could be read as the saint imperial-like *adventus*, while the implications of the

of the word *venerabilis*, in both its meanings of venerated, but also ancient and respectable, implies that the *diaconia* and the church were well established institutions and had probably been in existence for a considerable time.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the official placing of such a prestigious relic in the church might coincide with a change in its status, a re-dedication of the church itself,<sup>57</sup> or more likely a re-vamping of the ecclesiastical – and possibly the diaconal – activity.

In relation with the combination of *diaconia* and oratory-church, it is important to remember that a *diaconia* was not primarily intended as a church, but rather as a charitable institution controlled and administered by the Church and therefore usually including a chapel or oratory attached to it. Despite this distinction in their initial phases of existence, the first emergence of the *diaconiae* in the sources tends to occur when they were eventually distinguished by the name of their associated church; while identifying the specific moment when the small oratories were enlarged or lavishly rebuilt and established as major churches, it is clear that our understanding of the evolution of the *diaconiae* is thus strongly influenced by this unilateral treatment in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Another contemporary source, Formula 88 of the *Liber Diurnus*, has also been interpreted as a confirmation of the increasing emphasis placed on the church building over the *diaconia*.<sup>58</sup>

It could be argued that, during the eighth century, the religious aspect of the *diaconiae* overshadowed their charitable role, bearing in mind that it was not the status of the *diaconiae* that had changed, only that of the churches associated with them. This could in turn suggest that, eventually, the title of '*diaconia*' became in itself a legacy of the past, referring back to the original role of such

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participating crowd and whole community could be interpreted on lines of concord, unity and social recognition. See P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, p. 96.

<sup>56</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 172-3, fn. 19 and 21.

<sup>57</sup> An addition to the life of Pope Leo II (682-3) in the *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 360, states that the church had been built in honour of St Sebastian and St George. This could give ground to the hypothesis of the renewal of an original dedication to St George.

<sup>58</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, p. 174, fn. 22; Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 21, fn. 2; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 99.

institutions, before their spiritual aspect prevailed: this is particularly evident in the case of prestigious pre-existing churches, such as SS Cosma e Damiano or S. Adriano, which were 'made' into *diaconiae*. It could be hypothesized that the dual legacy of the *diaconiae* and their shifting or mixed identity, as welfare centres and churches, was perceived by the Anglo-Saxon visitors, especially when, like Benedict Biscop, Wilfrid or Boniface, they returned to Rome several times, and so were probably being able to identify differences and changes in the landscape of the city, and in the ways these institutions functioned in relation to the Church.

The religious role of the *diaconiae* and their supposed Eastern origin and monastic administration have been alluded to on several occasions, and seem particularly important in the light of the dedications of the *diaconiae* churches. In this respect, the predominance of Eastern saints – like Giorgio, Teodoro, Adriano, Sergio e Bacco, Cosma e Damiano – has often been used to support the supposed Eastern origin of the *diaconiae*. Nevertheless, such preferences could simply reflect the dynamic network of connections, exchanges and mutual influences between Rome and the 'New Rome' of Constantinople in the fourth to seventh centuries, and the strong influence of a socially and culturally 'Byzantine Rome' in the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, without necessarily implying that only 'Greek monks' were responsible for inspiring, establishing and administering the 'diaconia model' in Rome.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, while in the eastern examples the '*diaconia*' seems to be only one aspect or activity of the coenobitic community, in Italy, and more specifically in Rome, the existence of monastic communities attached to the *diaconiae* and overseeing

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<sup>59</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 106, 134-5; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 97-8; Llewellyn suggested the influence of Armenian 'military saints' possibly linked to the 'guard mastering needs of the Imperial militia', see p. 137. On Greek monasticism in Rome see J.M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux a Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VIe s. – fin du IXe s.)*, 2 vols, Bruxelles 1983; A.J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes. Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752*, Lanham 2007.

their activities is never explicitly stated or witnessed by the sources despite it being taken for granted in the scholarship.<sup>60</sup>

What is important here is the eminently logistical point that it is not possible to identify a monastery – or spaces appropriate to such an establishment – in any of the surviving or documented *diaconiae* buildings, premises or churches.<sup>61</sup> This could imply that only a few monks were responsible for each *diaconia*, and would travel there from their monastery on the days of food distribution, or would be available in the oratory-chapel to serve the spiritual needs of those assisted there.<sup>62</sup> However, it seems unlikely that such a complex institution would be run in such an occasional manner and that the people responsible for it would not live *in situ*, to control the charitable activities and serve the churches on a daily basis, especially after they turned into large and lavishly decorated ones.<sup>63</sup> Overall, therefore, it seems that the need to enhance the religious aspect of the *diaconiae* may indicate that previously this was only a subsidiary function. If this is the case, the argument that the *diaconiae* in Rome did not have originally ‘monastic’ nature seems to be supported. It also links their origin even more strongly to the previous Roman and secular system of the *annona*.

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<sup>60</sup> See Niederer, ‘Early medieval Charity’, p. 287. The *diaconiae* in Italy, including the Neapolitan ones, were never identified by the name of their monastery like the Eastern ones. See Bertolini ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, p. 105, contra Dey, ‘*Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia*’.

<sup>61</sup> A possible exception is the church of Santa Maria in via Lata, the plan of which seems to be articulated in such a way to reflect a use different from exclusively religious, see AAVV, *Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi*, Roma 2000, pp. 72-7. The extensive fresco decoration, dating from the sixth to the eighth century, might reflect in its choice of themes, some of the activities taking place in a *diaconia*.

<sup>62</sup> The chores associated with the *diaconiae*, minus the spiritual/liturgical ones, could also have been performed by lay people. See Bertolini, ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, p. 132.

<sup>63</sup> Against this see Bertolini, ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, pp. 92 and 131, fn. 2; another explanation can be found in Durliat’s interpretation of the Formula 88 of the *Liber Diurnus*, arguing that the church, *diaconia* and monastery would not necessarily be placed all on the same site but could be distinct buildings in different areas. A similar situation has recently been explored in a paper by Alan Thacker (delivered at the Old St Peter’s Conference, British School at Rome, 22-25 March 2010), when he considered the status of those responsible for the administration, liturgical and non, of the papal basilicas, in particular St Peter’s.

### 3.2 c) Patronage of the *diaconiae*: lay or ecclesiastic?

Associated with the question of the origins and therefore management of the *diaconiae* is that of their patronage and responsibilities in their management. The earliest mention of three *diaconiae* – at Santa Maria Antiqua, S. Angelo in Pescheria and Santa Maria in Cosmedin – survive in non-literary sources, dating to the time of popes Zachary (741-52) and Stephen II (752-7). These comprise a heading to the frescoes of Santa Maria Antiqua, and two inscriptions in S. Angelo in Pescheria and Santa Maria in Cosmedin (Pl.60-61).<sup>64</sup> The discussion of the epigraphic evidence has raised the question of the role of lay patronage in establishing and administering these institutions, and has given rise to two separate and contrasting schools of thought.<sup>65</sup>

The inscription at Santa Maria Antiqua, widely renowned for its decoration,<sup>66</sup> reads: '*Theodotus primicerio defensorum et dispensatore sancta Dei Genitricis semperque Virgo Maria qui appellatur Antiqua*',<sup>67</sup> and is found associated with the frescos in the so-called Theodotus Chapel, which adjoins the presbytery and apse on the left (Pl.67).<sup>68</sup> Not surprisingly, this Chapel is named after its patron who is depicted several times with members of his family, with Pope Zachary, and in one instance offering the Virgin a model of a building, presumably the Chapel itself (Pl.83-60). The inscription in question is positioned above this image of Theodotus, represented as donor and founder. The presence of an image of the Pope provide clear evidence of the date of the paintings as well as of the activity of Theodotus, who is defined in the same inscription as *primicerius defensorum* and *dispensator*. His two roles, as well as his actual identity, require further discussion; for a second inscription naming one Theodotus survives in the *diaconia* of S. Angelo in Pescheria (Pl.61). Part of this

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<sup>64</sup> See supra, p.114; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 100, 115-6; Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 180-2; Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 20, 24-39.

<sup>65</sup> Roughly represented by Lestocquoy versus Bertolini and Durliat.

<sup>66</sup> See infra, ch.4.

<sup>67</sup> '*Theodotus, primicerius defensorum* and *dispensator* (of the church) of the Holy Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary which is called 'Antiqua'.'

<sup>68</sup> See infra for discussion of the fresco, pp. 159-63.

inscription reads: *'Theodotus holim dux nunc primicerius Sanctae Sedis Apostolicae et pater huius venerabilis diaconiae...a solo edificavit diaconia pro intercessione animae sua et remedium peccatorum'*.<sup>69</sup> Here Theodotus is defined by his functions of *dux*, *primicerius* (*notariorum*) and *pater* (*diaconiae*), as opposed to *primicerius defensorum* and *dispensator*. This inscription is dated to 1 June 755, a Sunday, which most likely represents the day of the (re)dedication of the newly founded *diaconia*.<sup>70</sup> A third reference to a Theodotus is recorded by the *Liber Pontificalis* in the life of Hadrian I (772-95),<sup>71</sup> where the Theodotus in question, *dudum consul et dux, postmodum vero primicerius sanctae nostrae Ecclesiae*,<sup>72</sup> was the uncle of the pope himself, who had raised and educated the young Hadrian after his mother's death.

The evidence provided by these various sources highlights how distinguishing between the different roles and offices of one, possibly two or even three different individuals can prove confusing. The debate about the identity of Theodotus opens up a discussion about the several names and functions in the lay and ecclesiastic administration in eighth-century Rome. The terms *dux* and *consul* referred to lay military power in the city of Rome; the position of *primicerius defensorum* and *notariorum*, on the other hand, applied to the highest offices in the pontifical administrative career of the eighth-century Church; and finally, the *dispensator* and *pater diaconiae* were administrative roles pertaining specifically to these institutions.

There is general agreement that Hadrian's uncle and the founder of the *diaconia* of S. Angelo in Pescheria were the same person, who belonged, by virtue of his role as *dux* and *consul*, to the influential lay elite – almost the

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<sup>69</sup> 'Theodotus, once *dux* and now *primicerius* of the Holy Apostolic See and *pater* of this venerable *diaconia* ... alone built (this) *diaconia* for the intercession of his soul and the help of the sinners.' J. Lestocquoy, 'L'administration de Rome et les diaconies du VIIe au IXe siècle' in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 7 (1930), pp. 261-98.

<sup>70</sup> However, there seems to be a contradiction as this is considered by Davis a new foundation, while the use of the word *venerabilis* could again underline an already well established institution.

<sup>71</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol.1, pp. 486-523; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 106-69.

<sup>72</sup> '...for a long time *dux* and *consul*, and subsequently indeed the *primicerius* of our holy church.'

aristocracy – of mid-eighth century Rome.<sup>73</sup> However, it needs to be kept in mind that, as *primicerius notariorum*, he was, at the same time, filling the most important position in the ranks of ecclesiastical administration.<sup>74</sup> The debate surrounding the identity of the Theodotus of Santa Maria Antiqua, and the difference between him, *dispensator diaconiae*, and the Theodotus, *pater diaconiae*, has proved more problematic. Bertolini suggested that the two offices were distinct, with the *dispensator* being found among the secular upper class, while the *pater* was a member of the clergy. He further pointed out that the seven higher members of the *schola notariorum* – of whom the *primicerius* was the leader – were expected to receive the tonsure, and therefore belonged to the clergy; this was not a requirement for members of the *schola defensorum*. Thus, there could be a distinction between the Theodotus depicted at Santa Maria Antiqua, *primicerius defensorum* and *dispensator* (and therefore probably still a layman), and his homonymous at S. Angelo in Pescheria, who was *primicerius notariorum* and *pater*, and so probably a member of the clergy. This distinction could be strengthened by the fact that in the frescoes at Santa Maria Antiqua, Theodotus is represented with members of his family (wife and children).<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, these considerations do not rule out the possibility of the existence of only one Theodotus, whose different offices indicate separate and subsequent stages of the same prestigious official career accessible to, and probably coveted by upper-class citizens, an early medieval version of the classical, Roman *cursus honorum*.

A further example of such combining or overlapping of offices is provided by the inscription preserved in the narthex of Santa Maria in Cosmedin (**PI.61**),<sup>76</sup> which bears witness to lavish donations made to this *diaconia* of land, vineyards and other properties in the vicinity of Rome. The donors are ‘*Eustathius, inmeritus dux*’, who is also defined *dispensator*, together with two other powerful

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<sup>73</sup> See for instance Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 115.

<sup>74</sup> Bertolini, ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> Bertolini, ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, pp. 34-5. See also *infra*, pp. 159-63.

<sup>76</sup> Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 114; Bertolini, ‘Per la storia delle diaconie’, p. 29.

lay patrons: the *gloriosissimus Georgius* and his brother *Davit*. The epigraphy can be dated to the pontificate of Stephen II (752-57): supporting this dating and the influential role of the Roman *dux* is also the fact that between 756 and 757 Eustathius took part in the papal embassy sent to Ravenna to the Lombard king, Aistulf.<sup>77</sup>

On this topic, a diametrically opposed explanation has been presented by Lestocquoy, who considers that the Church had absolutely no involvement in selecting the administrators of the ecclesiastical *diaconiae*, who were members of the most influential Roman families.<sup>78</sup> This is despite the unequivocal involvement of lay administrators or patrons independent from the ecclesiastical hierarchies, who often simultaneously took up the most important roles in the Church organization. Overall, it seems clear that there was an overlap in civic and ecclesiastical roles. Bertolini himself admitted that the *dux* Eustathius held the most important military position in the city of Rome, an office that would normally belong to the imperial governor and include the leadership of the *exercitus romanus* with an official residence in the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill; he, at the same time, administered a pontifical *diaconia*, and one located in a very critical position on the banks of the Tiber and close to the Palatine.<sup>79</sup>

The question of patronage seems to prove once again the strong, progressive role and involvement of the Church, in what had probably started as a quite 'secular' project to ensure the continuation of the Roman welfare system. Collaboration between Church and urban secular power is quite evident: it defines a situation almost settled by the eighth century, whereby the Church would rely on the role and strength of the lay aristocracy in administering its institutions, in the same way as the imperial officers in the previous century would entrust the Church with many duties which were once essentially lay prerogatives. Being involved in the patronage and/or

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<sup>77</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 32; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*.

<sup>79</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 31.

establishment of an ecclesiastical institution such as a *diaconia* would also provide the lay families with a visible means of displaying their political influence in the city of Rome. The Church could take advantage of their wealth, while creating for them the opportunity to make powerful connections between ecclesiastical and civil bureaucracy: the popes themselves were often chosen among the members of powerful Roman families, who often had an active role in their election as well.<sup>80</sup> This also marks the moment when the political and administrative distance between Rome and the Eastern Empire reached its climax: the Duchy of Rome asserted its political autonomy with respect to the Empire, while the Church actively started to look north.<sup>81</sup> Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome, who often belonged themselves to the upper echelons of society, both lay and ecclesiastic, would probably find nothing unusual in this relationship and may well have found inspiration in such patterns of patronage, as well as a deeper understanding of the reality and complexity of Roman society, and its delicate balance.

A last, practical example of the questions raised by the issue of patronage is provided by Pope Hadrian's enlargement and renovation of the *diaconia* of Santa Maria in Cosmedin. What is interesting in this context is the manner in which this transformation was achieved. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, upon realizing that an ancient monument (identified with the Roman *aedes Cereris*),<sup>82</sup> was threatening to collapse onto the existing small church, the pope ordered the Temple to be destroyed and in the cleared space he enlarged and embellished the basilica, provided it with three apses and made it 'vera

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<sup>80</sup> For instance, the above-mentioned *dux* Theodotus was Pope Hadrian's uncle.

<sup>81</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 31: '...l'aristocrazia militare cittadina collaborava strettamente [...] con la Chiesa di Roma, per conquistare al ducato romano la piena autonomia politica di fronte all'Impero, pur rimanendo nel suo nesso statale. In questa collaborazione la parte direttiva e' assunta dalla Chiesa, che [...] si vale delle autorità laiche [...] come di organi esecutivi subordinati di fatto - se non ancora di diritto - al potere, eminente anche in campo secolare, del Papa.' See also T.F.X Noble, 'The Roman Elite from Constantine to Charlemagne', in *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 17 (n.s. 3) 2003, pp. 13-25.

<sup>82</sup> G. Massimi, *La Chiesa di S. Maria in Cosmedin (in Schola Graeca)*, Roma 1989, p. 11; *Codice Topografico*, p. 285.

Cosmidin'.<sup>83</sup> Coincidentally, following a surprisingly similar pattern, he also rebuilt the *diaconia* of SS Sergio e Bacco (in the Forum, very close to S. Adriano and to the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus). Here too a Roman building – the Temple of Concord – was about to damage the *diaconia* (therefore already in existence at the time). The *Liber Pontificalis* reports that the eager *dispensator* of this *diaconia* was willing to help, but in so doing he accelerated the process of destruction: the temple collapsed onto the church, leaving him to seek the help of the Pope, who provided for the restoration and enlargement of the diaconal church.<sup>84</sup>

This account implies, first, that the duties of the *dispensator* included the upkeep of the building and its structures; it was therefore a role with practical implications, over and above previous consideration of its status and connection with the urban elite. Second, it seems that the resources of a *diaconia* were not sufficient to allow extra maintenance: the largesse of the popes, so often recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*, was essential and possibly even expected, especially given the constant renovation and upkeep required by ancient buildings and churches, and particularly so in the area of the Roman forums. It is also worth noting what the source seems to imply with regard to the attitude of the pope in two almost identical situations: a Roman temple threatening to collapse on a church provided a more than adequate reason to destroy the temple – even calling the citizens to help (*multitudo populi congregans*) – and re-use its material to enlarge the endangered churches. Although this particular case may have been motivated primarily by practical and circumstantial reasons, it ultimately indicates the changing attitudes of the papacy and the population towards the architectural and ideological interaction between Roman structures and Christian ones.

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<sup>83</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 507; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, p. 160; *Codice Topografico*, p. 285.

<sup>84</sup> *Codice Topografico*, p. 289; *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 512; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, p. 169; Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 48.

### 3.2 d) Location

Turning now to consider in more detail where the *diaconiae* were located, an important aspect in the light of assessing their potential impact on the visual experience of Rome among Anglo-Saxon visitors, it can be demonstrated that they were established in specific but widely dispersed areas of the city. Thus, S. Eustachio lay near the Pantheon, Santa Maria in Aquiro between the via Lata and the Tiber, and SS Sergio e Bacco close to St Peter's and the Vatican Hill.<sup>85</sup> The *diaconia* of S. Giorgio al Velabro, which is mentioned chronologically after these, (*Velabrum* referring to the swampy area enclosed between the Palatine Hill, Capitoline Hill and the Forum),<sup>86</sup> lay in an area where at least two other *diaconiae* were located: Santa Maria in Cosmedin and S. Angelo in Pescheria.<sup>87</sup>

Following these early foundations are the three *diaconiae* first mentioned in the epigraphic sources. Santa Maria Antiqua, which lies between the Capitoline and the Palatine hills, in the heart of the Forum;<sup>88</sup> S. Paolo Apostolo – cited by this name and dedication in the inscription – but known as S. Angelo in Pescheria less than half a century later: it is possible that this name re-surfaced quickly after the dedication to S. Paolo because it was the original, more familiar name of the church, which referred to its location in the covered Roman building of the *Forum Piscium* (fish market), in the densely populated area of the Portico d'Ottavia.<sup>89</sup> The third church here considered, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, was also placed in one of the most central and still dynamic areas of Rome, the *Forum Boarium*, again next to the banks of the Tiber and within the pre-existing Roman structures of the *statio annonae*. The dedication of this

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<sup>85</sup> On the via Lata there was another *diaconia* dedicated to the Virgin; the *diaconia* of SS Sergio e Bacco at St Peter's must not be confused with the homonymous one in the Roman Forum mentioned in the Life of Pope Hadrian (772-95) in the *Liber Pontificalis*.

<sup>86</sup> See S.B. Platner, *A topographical dictionary of ancient Rome (completed and revised by T. Ashby)*, Oxford 1929, pp. 549-50.

<sup>87</sup> It was an area really close to the banks of the Tiber, probably the most appropriate docking/wharf site, and not surprisingly the see of two of the largest Roman markets, the *Forum Piscarium* and the *Forum Boarium* (the fish and meat markets).

<sup>88</sup> See *infra*, ch.4.

<sup>89</sup> Opposite the banks of the Tiber, where this slows down in a curve, and the Isola Tiberina. See Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 42.

church with the appellation 'Cosmedin/Cosmidion' – found in other churches in Ravenna and Naples – is of Greek/eastern origin and was probably inspired by the predominant Greek population of the district, later confirmed also by the presence of a 'Schola Graeca'.<sup>90</sup> Here, a small church was first installed in the sixth century in part of what was the *loggia annonaria*, a large covered room with columns/porticus on three sides that had been built during the fourth century along the south wall of the Temple dedicated to Ceres and which was used as a space to stock, trade and distribute the wheat being transported and delivered along the river banks (PI.62).<sup>91</sup> This church reveals, in its supposed sixth-century form to the present one, which – albeit much restored – is substantially medieval, the coherent structural support and frame provided by the pre-existing Roman structures (PI.63). The columns of the *loggia annonaria* feature prominently in the fabric of the church, emerging clearly both from the west end and the north wall of the nave. The building thus acquired a powerful sense of antiquity, where the reuse of the Roman colonnade can almost be read as a case of whole-scale structural *spolia*. The same effect is achieved at S. Angelo in Pescheria, where the church seems almost to emerge out of the majestic *propylaea* of the *porticus Octaviae*: to an early medieval visitor to Rome this church must have represented one of the most obvious and audacious examples of interaction between *Romanitas* and Christianity (PI.64).

Two more *diaconiae*, both located in the area of St Peter's, are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* life of Stephen (752-57) as being already in existence: Santa Maria in Caput Portici and S. Silvestro.<sup>92</sup> Santa Maria in Caput Portici, as the name indicates, was probably placed at the head of the covered walkway leading to the Basilica, and thus played an essential welfare role for all those heading to the church, as the last official 'pit-stop' before reaching their ultimate

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<sup>90</sup> Such definition for the area is used, for instance, in the Itinerary of Einsiedeln. On the impact of 'Greek' ecclesiastics in Rome, see *infra* chapter 4.

<sup>91</sup> G.B. Giovenale, *La Basilica di Santa Maria in Cosmedin*, Roma 1927; Massimi, *op. cit.*; see *infra*, p. 130.

<sup>92</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 440-62, esp. p. 441.

Roman pilgrimage goal. It is interesting to note how, in Stephen's life, reference to these two institutions is made when discussing the Pope's establishment of four *xenodochia*, also charitable structures but with different aims and mostly separated from the *diaconiae*.<sup>93</sup> A careful reading of this account confirms the pre-existence of the two *diaconiae* and demonstrates that Stephen only associated them with the newly established *xenodochia*.<sup>94</sup> It is not possible to determine, however, if this 'renovation' was primarily administrative or architectural, or both.<sup>95</sup>

The same *diaconiae* were offered further gifts and renewed by Pope Hadrian (772-95), whose life witnesses a level of effort and activity almost unparalleled in renovating and reorganizing the welfare network of Rome. He established two new *diaconiae*: at SS Cosma e Damiano and at S. Adriano, the former building of the Curia Senatus in the Roman Forum. These two 'foundations' indicate that the choice of where to establish a *diaconia* reflected responses to a variety of requirements: as an institution it could pre-exist a church that would later develop from its chapel or oratory; it could be combined with another, pre-existing, structure of assistance, like the *xenodochia* in Pope Stephen's life; and, if considering the 'transformation' of SS Cosma e Damiano in the Forum into a *diaconia*, it is worth noting that – like almost all Christian structures in the Forum – it was a church with a long and well established history before it became a *diaconia*.<sup>96</sup> Its location and use emphasize the practice of re-using buildings in Rome that had an historically high profile, along with that of adapting a newly renovated building to existing structures and conveying the new purpose through its decoration. In the case of SS Cosma e Damiano or S. Adriano, the status of renowned and venerable churches changed, leaving open the question of whether this transformation implied an

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<sup>93</sup> See *infra*, pp. 136-41.

<sup>94</sup> 'duo fecit xenodochia...et sociavit venerabilibus diaconiis illic foris existentibus perenniter permanere, id est diaconiae sanctae Dei genitrici set beati Silvestri'.

<sup>95</sup> *Codice Topografico*, p. 268.

<sup>96</sup> Like, for instance, Santa Maria Antiqua and S. Adriano.

actual change in its administration or legal status, in the architecture or decoration of the building or its duties, or all of these.

Hadrian's life presented three more *diaconiae*: Santa Maria in Hadriano, close to the Mausoleum of Hadrian (Castel Sant'Angelo), Santa Maria in Caput Portici and S. Silvestro. All were located in the area of St Peter's, the *Liber Pontificalis* specifying that they were found 'hidden away, producing no works of mercy'.<sup>97</sup> It seems strange that this had occurred so soon after Pope Stephen II had attached a *xenodochium* to at least two of them.<sup>98</sup> One possible suggestion is that the two already existing and 'venerable' *diaconiae* were overshadowed by the establishment of the *xenodochia*, and that Hadrian's intention was to improve or reaffirm their previous institutional role. In this he seems to have been quite successful, as the slightly later list of Leo III (795-816) mentions the two churches simply as *diaconiae*.

The list of donations to ecclesiastical institutions included in the life of Leo III under the year 807 is where all the remaining 11 *diaconiae* are mentioned for the first time.<sup>99</sup> As indicated, this does not imply the moment of foundation. Some of the *diaconiae* in this list were churches that had been built long before the turn of the ninth century: S. Teodoro, Santa Maria in via Lata, SS Nereo e Achilleo are just some examples.<sup>100</sup> Rather, what can be drawn from this comprehensive list is the significance of their location within the city of Rome. Bertolini's summary and Falesiedi's more recent diagram<sup>101</sup> have shown how the *diaconiae* were all strategically placed in the few still densely populated areas of Rome, gathered around the main hills, along the river banks or the main communication routes of the city.

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<sup>97</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 505-6; Davis (ed.), vol. 2, p. 157; 'in abditis, sine misericordiae fructu repperiens', *Codice Topografico*, p. 282.

<sup>98</sup> See supra, p. 127.

<sup>99</sup> These are S. Lucia in Orphea; S. Vito in Macello; S. Agata in diaconia; S. Maria in via Lata; S. Teodoro; S. Lucia in Septem Vias/Septizonium; SS Alessio e Bonifacio; SS Silvestro e Martino; S. Martino iuxta Petrum; S. Maria in Domnica; SS Nereo e Achilleo. The list is explained/prefaced in Davis (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 175-8; see also *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, pp. 21-2.

<sup>100</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 61-4.

<sup>101</sup> Bertolini, *Ibid.*; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 110-12

Santa Maria in Cosmedin, S. Giorgio al Velabro, S. Teodoro and Santa Maria Antiqua were situated one after the other, proceeding from the banks of the Tiber towards the north side of the Palatine hill, into the Forum. Within the Forum, lying along the via Sacra, were SS Sergio e Bacco, S. Hadrian and SS Cosma e Damiano. Also proceeding from the banks of the Tiber and following the curve of the river north along the Isola Tiberina, was S. Angelo in Pescheria (S. Paolo Apostolo), accessible through the *porticus Octaviae*, while following the river south, in the opposite direction, just below the Aventine Hill, was SS Alessio e Bonifacio. Along the south side of the Palatine Hill and the Circus Maximus, just before the Celian Hill was Santa Lucia in Septizonium. The only *diaconia* on the Celian hill was Santa Maria in Domnica. Along the north side of the Esquiline Hill, however, were Santa Lucia in Orphea and S. Vito in Macello, both established in connection with previous Roman buildings: the *porticus Liviae* and the meat market also named after her (*macellum Liviae*). Sant' Agata in *diaconia* was placed beyond Trajan's forum and market, on the Quirinale, at the beginning of the *Alta Semita* – the long straight arterial route leading out of Rome to the north-east. Santa Maria in via Lata was located along another main communication route, that which, starting from the Capitolium/Campidoglio, led eventually to the via Flaminia and, outside Porta Flaminia, to the north side of the city. West of this was the Campus Martius, an aristocratic neighbourhood where the *diaconiae* of Santa Maria in Aquiro and S. Eustachio were located. The only church which can be seen as an exception to this pattern is SS Nereo e Achilleo, which was situated at the start of the via Appia, within the city walls and opposite the large complex of the Baths of Caracalla. Overall, this group of 18 urban *diaconiae* is evenly spread throughout the heart of 'Roman' Rome, and it is thus not surprising that so many of them tend to be associated with former civic structures, such as temples, markets, *thermae*, aqueducts, structures that may, originally, have facilitated the establishment of 'welfare' centres in the fifth/sixth centuries.

This frequent combination of *diaconia* and earlier Roman building has some potential for further discussion. The administrative and organizational *continuum* between the Roman system of the *annona* and the episcopal control of charity has already been established, but the correlation is strengthened by the almost constant physical and architectural connection between the diaconal buildings and the pre-existing structures belonging to the *annona* and the Roman markets. The most recent school of thought claims this architectural link to be largely untenable, being based on untrustworthy sources and unreflected by the archaeological evidence.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand the idea of a correspondence between the two does persist: Falesiedi for example, despite presenting the flaws of such an approach, does not hesitate to illustrate the match between each *diaconia* and its pre-existing associated Roman building.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the observations made by Bertolini linking the logistic potential of sites close to the river banks and the distribution of foodstuff, which probably arrived by waterways (and ultimately from the sea-port of Ostia), although argued against in the most recent scholarly debate, retain their practical and intuitive value, even more so within an early medieval context.

Certainly, the re-use of pre-existing structures fits well within a common and widespread practice of re-use in the city of Rome, especially when it is considered that, regardless of the attached church-oratory, the diaconal buildings, used to stock and distribute grain and/or food, would maintain a function very similar to their original Roman one. The re-use of structures is here combined with a re-use of functions. In addition, the location of the *diaconiae*, focusing along the banks of the Tiber is particularly noteworthy and has been convincingly interpreted, as noted above, as a feature that would guarantee and facilitate the smooth transport of a large quantity of goods, that

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<sup>102</sup> See Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 108-9, supported by Guidobaldi's research, see Pani (ed.), *Christiana Loca*; more balanced is Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 177-8.

<sup>103</sup> Falesiedi, *Ibid.*

would be easily and quickly stocked in the nearest – and largest – structures, and then slowly re-distributed to the other *diaconiae*, as needed.<sup>104</sup>

A completely different picture is presented by the five *diaconiae* established around St Peter's. While they all seem to pre-date their first mention in the written sources, intensive papal interest in this area only developed during the mid-eighth century, especially under Stephen II who was also – and not coincidentally – one of the main protagonists in the alliance with the Franks. This topographical shift towards the new foundations in the area of St Peter's, as well as the association of some *diaconiae* with *xenodochia* – commenced and institutionalised by Stephen – forms part of what can be considered a mid-eighth-century programme of steady and long-lasting re-organization of the entire system of charitable institutions. It also seems that this reflects the shift of power, control and alliances from Byzantium towards the Carolingian world. If not a marked preference, there was a clear interest in the new establishment or renovation of institutions around St Peter's rather than those located at the heart of ancient Rome. This area affirmed itself as the main focus for pilgrims and visitors to Rome, especially those coming from the north, and projects carried out here could point to an intentional plan to promote and respond to such status quo.

### 3.2 e) Water and *diaconiae*

The analysis of the topographical location of the *diaconiae* has underlined and demonstrated their connection with earlier Roman structures. Aqueducts are just one of these, but their consistent presence link to an important feature of most *diaconiae*, meaning both the buildings and the activities performed there: this is their frequent interplay with water, which has been mentioned in several studies and raises some challenging considerations.

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<sup>104</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 73. Further investigation on this point could clarify if the Tiber was also used as a means of transportation for people.

Water represented a major concern in a Christian culture, especially in the late antique period and in a city like Rome, where the classical concept and use of public baths were still vividly present. In his monograph, Squatriti eloquently describes the clashing of these attitudes:

Roman society was most noted for its willingness to allocate huge hydraulic resources to such unnecessary things as bath and bathing [...] patronage of public baths by prominent citizens was replaced by Episcopal patronage, and the charitable washings of the eighth century are a faint echo of the public establishment.<sup>105</sup>

It is well-established that bathing in Roman society was primarily a social activity, and baths are a constant architectural feature of Roman cities throughout the Empire. It is therefore not surprising that when bishops started taking control of the public activities and buildings, in Rome as elsewhere, they would have to deal with some controversial aspects of this particular and popular activity. Bathing as a social custom was successfully adopted in Lombard Italy,<sup>106</sup> but it was exactly this intense ‘socializing’ surrounding the baths that constituted a problem and a danger in Christian eyes; the episcopal patronage of public baths perhaps reflects ‘an attempt to create morally unobjectable baths’.<sup>107</sup>

However, water was still a practical necessity, not just for hygienic purposes but also for ritual cleansing and purification. Again, Squatriti cites the example of a *balneum publicum* attached to a *diaconia* in tenth-century Nocera, while a charter dated 720 from Lucca refers to ‘laymen endowing a *xenodochium* with baths for welcoming of pilgrims’; furthermore in late seventh-century Naples, the *diaconia* established by Bishop Agnellus provided free soap.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> P. Squatriti, *Water and society in early medieval Italy, AD 400-1000*, Cambridge 1998.

<sup>106</sup> Examples from Pavia, Salerno and Benevento are provided from Squatriti, *Water and society*, pp. 48-52

<sup>107</sup> Id., p. 58.

<sup>108</sup> Id., pp. 46-7, 52; also Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, p. 87. Production of soap is also attested in Ravenna, Pavia, Rome and Lombard Italy.

In Rome, the *Liber Pontificalis* attests, from a very early date, to the continual efforts of the Popes to provide water, often in projects not connected with the establishment or renovation of *diaconiae*. Pope Hilarius (461-8) built a bath (*balneum*) at S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, while Pope Symmachus (498-514) built a second fountain outside St Peter's atrium (*in atrio alium cantharum foris in campo posuit*) and one at the oratory of St Andrew.<sup>109</sup> He also built a bath (*balneum*) at the martyrial basilica of St Pancras, and outside St Paul's he built steps and a fountain, but also had water laid on and built a bath.<sup>110</sup> Later popes, especially Hadrian I (772-95) and his successor Leo III (795-816), seemed also particularly aware of the need for the aqueducts' upkeep.<sup>111</sup>

In this respect it has been already mentioned that the placing of a *diaconia* in the vicinity of a Roman aqueduct seems to be a consistent feature: water was, not surprisingly, a key factor in charitable institutions, not least because it was essential to one of the services provided by the *diaconiae*, the *lusma*, or ritual bath. Judging by the evidence, the *diaconiae* should not be considered different from other churches when it comes to liturgical and ecclesiastical practices. Nevertheless, there is evidence of at least one special ceremony occurring at the *diaconie*. The provision of food and a bath at a *diaconia* certainly responded to the practical needs of the poor, but the ritual bath called *lusma* – and the choice of the Greek word to describe it is probably not coincidental<sup>112</sup> – implied more than the chance of being able to wash or being washed.<sup>113</sup> The unusual term is

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<sup>109</sup> In the Latin text the word *cantharum* is used in both instances; he also built 'a convenience for people to use when they needed' (*usum necessitatis humanae fecit*). *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 245, 262; Davis (ed.), vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>110</sup> '*ante fores basilicae grados fecit in atrium et cantharum; et post absidam aquam introduxit, ubi et balneum a fundamento fecit.*' *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 262.

<sup>111</sup> Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 68-72; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 105-6; R. Coates-Stephens, 'The Walls and Aqueducts of Rome in the Early Middle Ages, AD 500-1000' in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1988), pp. 166-78, esp. pp. 171-8. It has been suggested that the Einsiedeln Itinerary could be dated to after the renovations of the *Forma Virginis* (the aqueduct that served the area of S. Maria in via Lata) by Pope Hadrian I; see Davis (ed.) vol. 2, p. 156.

<sup>112</sup> See Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', p. 53 fn. 3.

<sup>113</sup> In relation to the idea of 'being washed', it is important in this context to remember the liturgical use of the 'washing of the feet' on Maundy Thursday, attested at least by the end of the seventh century, and associated with baptismal rituals as early as the fourth century, and the fact that it was a rite generally intended as a demonstration of humility and service.

found in the *Liber Pontificalis* life of Hadrian I and Formula 95 of the *Liber Diurnus*. Combining the information from both sources, it transpires that the poor would proceed from the *diaconiae* to the bath on a weekly basis, led by the *dispensator* and the *diaconitae*, while singing Psalms and Litanies to atone for their sins; once there they would receive their bath and food.<sup>114</sup> This suggests a ceremony charged with spiritual meaning and significance, one that was aimed at cleansing and purifying the body and soul of the assisted.

It cannot be demonstrated that this ritual was provided by all Roman *diaconiae*, nor which baths the poor would use. Furthermore, when picturing this ritual, the numbers of people involved in this practice, the processes of their selection, the space required, and how this would be navigated, all need to be borne in mind. Yet, this is never discussed in the sources, presumably because it was a familiar custom, and so it was not crucial to describe it, so much as simply recording its existence, persistence, and its specific relevance to the *diaconiae*. Also significant is the absence in the scholarly literature of accounts considering the structural and architectural layout of the *diaconiae* and their location in relation to the baths. In this context it may be that, as Durliat has proposed, a fee would have been paid to make use of the baths, as happened in the traditional, widespread and 'secular' Roman baths.<sup>115</sup>

The association of bathing with the *diaconiae* also raises the role of water, not only as a cleansing agent, but also as a therapeutic one. Until at least the seventh century the concept of curative springs or waters was accepted and widespread, from both a Christian and non-Christian point of view, by monastic communities as well as lay users.<sup>116</sup> The medicinal function of water can be connected to some *diaconiae* when considering the site selected for their foundation. Indeed, Niederer has underlined the links between saints associated with healing, and those chosen as dedicatory saints for some of the

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<sup>114</sup> See *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 506; Davis (ed.) vol.2, pp. 156, 165; Bertolini, 'Per la storia delle diaconie', pp. 50-55; Falesiedi, *Le diaconie*, pp. 104-5; Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>115</sup> Durliat, *De la Ville Antique*, p. 176.

<sup>116</sup> Squatriti, *Water and society*, pp. 53-6.

diaconal churches-chapels (SS Cosma e Damiano, S. Vito, S. Giorgio, S. Eustachio, S. Martino), while also discussing the miraculous wells found at some of the sites.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, at least two *diaconiae*, SS. Cosma e Damiano and Santa Maria Antiqua, were established on sites of pagan medical centres: the area around Santa Maria Antiqua in the Forum was close to the lake dedicated to the goddess Juturna, which had restorative waters, and to the Temple of Castor and Pollux, long associated with healing and medicinal powers. The multiple layers of significance of this site in its pagan context are further reflected in the dedication of one of the chapels of Santa Maria Antiqua, the Chapel of Physicians, where it has been suggested that the practice of incubation would have taken place.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the iconography of the adjacent Oratory of the Forty Martyrs has recently also been interpreted as knowingly pointing at the cults previously celebrated in this area.<sup>119</sup>

Overall, *diaconiae* can be seen to have been a well-established feature in the Roman landscape; but their reality was much more complex and problematic than has hitherto been accepted. Certainly, several aspects deserve further discussion, in particular when considering the issues of architecture and decoration. However, before turning to this subject, the role of the *xenodochia* the other major welfare provider in Rome, needs to be examined.

### 3.3 Xenodochia

The use of the Greek word *xenos* (foreigner) suggests that the role of *xenodochia*, institutions first established in the eastern Christian world (at Edessa and Caesarea, for example), was initially to provide for foreigners or strangers,

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<sup>117</sup> Niederer, 'Early medieval Charity', p. 292.

<sup>118</sup> D. Knipp, 'The Chapel of the Physicians at Santa Maria Antiqua' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), pp. 1-23. See *infra*, pp. 179-82.

<sup>119</sup> K. Gulowsen, 'Some Iconographic Aspects of the Relationship between Santa Maria Antiqua and the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs' and G. Kalas, 'Topographical Transitions: The Oratory of the Forty Martyrs and Exhibition Strategies in the Early Medieval Roman Forum', both in *Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano cento anni dopo*, J. Osborne – J.R. Brandt – G. Morganti (eds), Roma 2004, pp. 187-98 and pp. 199-211. See also Llewellyn, pp. 196-7. For discussion, see *infra*, pp. 179-82.

although the poor and sick were soon assimilated into their ranks, probably in the belief that they were all equally outsiders and marginalized figures, lacking the connections or resources needed to integrate them and make them active members of the society in which they lived.

Chronologically, the *xenodochia* appear earlier in the sources than the *diaconiae*.<sup>120</sup> Their first mention in the western world is in two letters of Jerome, where he praised the work of the noble Romans Pammachius and Fabiola, who almost competed in providing for the poor and sick, eventually joining their efforts and establishing a *xenodochium* at Portus (Ostia).<sup>121</sup> This not only confirms the powerful and proactive element that lay evergetism was within the recently Christianized senatorial elites of late antique Rome,<sup>122</sup> but also, in the accurately chosen words of Jerome, creates a possible allusion to his contemporary situation and, with the references to Aeneas and the Tiber, Abraham and travellers, a link between the legendary, Classical past of Rome and its present role of Christian pilgrimage destination.

Although the *Xenodochium Aniciorum* appears for the first time in a letter of Gregory the Great, with a second citation two centuries later in the list of Pope Leo III,<sup>123</sup> it can in all likelihood be ascribed to the fifth century, and more precisely to a member of the powerful *gens* Anicia, to which Gregory himself belonged. An inscription, found in the area of the *porticus Minucia/Crypta Balbi*,<sup>124</sup> mentions one Anicius Faustus *xenodokos*.<sup>125</sup> He was probably responsible

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<sup>120</sup> This section is drawn mainly from R. Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi. Gli xenodochia a Roma tra il V e il IX secolo' in *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 19-20 (1996-1997), pp. 203-226.

<sup>121</sup> 'I hear that you have erected a hospice for strangers at Portus and that you have planted a twig from the tree of Abraham upon the Ausonian shore [...] Like Æneas you are tracing the outlines of a new encampment; [...] when he reached the waters of the Tiber [...] here after their long privations you propose to satisfy travellers with sudden plenty.' Jerome, letters 66 and 77 (dated 397 and 399). See PL vol. 22.

<sup>122</sup> As noted supra, pp. 42-44, Pammachius is also considered the traditional founder of the *titulus Pammachii*, later SS Giovanni e Paolo, on the Celian Hill.

<sup>123</sup> *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum libri*, CCSL, 140A, Book 9 ep. 8; Martyn (ed.), *Letters of Gregory*, pp. 551.

<sup>124</sup> By the later church of Santa Lucia de' Calcarario (destroyed in 1935-7), to which the oratory listed in the life of Pope Leo refers ('*oratorium Sanctae Lucie in xenodochio qui dicitur Anichiorum*'); see Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', pp. 205-7.

for establishing the *xenodochio*, confirming the interest and patronage of the *gens* Anicia in this particular part of Rome.<sup>126</sup>

The *Xenodochium Valerii* is also mentioned for the first time in the Gregorian epistles,<sup>127</sup> and in this case too the establishment of the institution must date back to the fifth century and be ascribed to another powerful patrician Roman family, the *gens* Valeria. The Celian Hill, where the lavish remains of their *domus* have been excavated, has been traditionally regarded as the location of this *xenodochio*.<sup>128</sup> Santangeli Valenzani – following the information provided by Leo’s list, referring to the oratory attached to the *xenodochium* and dedicated to S. Abbacyrus<sup>129</sup> – suggested that this institution was instead situated in the area of the Trajan’s Market. The fact that both these late antique *xenodochia* are still mentioned at the time of Leo, albeit being remembered mostly for their oratories, could provide evidence of their long-lasting activity and importance.

Considering these institutions from the supposed date of their establishment, rather than the time of their first inclusion in the written sources, can allow for the inclusion of some relevant information contained in the life of Pope Simmachus (498-514), who built *pauperibus habitacula* at S. Peter’s, S. Paolo and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura;<sup>130</sup> these were probably just lodgings, but they seem to fall into the same category of assistance of the *xenodochia*. The life of Pope Vigilius (537-55), on the other hand, contains a straightforward reference

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<sup>125</sup> Identified with *Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus*, three times *praefectus Urbi* and *consul* between 408 and 438. Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Remains of the so-called Monasterium Boetianum, founded by the philosopher Boethius (*Anicius* Manlius Severinus Boetius) have been recently recognized in the same area. Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum libri*, CCSL, 140, Book 9, ep.p 67 and 83; Martyn (ed.), *Letters of Gregory*, pp. 584-5, 593-4; see also in the life of Pope Stephen III, in connection to a gruesome incident involving the Lombard priest Waldipert; in some ways this incident seems to confirm, or at least support, the nature of this *xenodochium* as a centre where medical assistance could be provided, *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 473; Davis (ed.) vol. 2, p. 94.

<sup>128</sup> See Santangeli Valenzani, ‘Pellegrini, senatori e papi’, pp. 207-10.

<sup>129</sup> The name probably originates from the corruption of the names of the saints *Ciro* and *Giovanni*, eastern martyrs associated with healing and care for the sick.

<sup>130</sup> ‘*Item ad beatum Petrum et ad beatum Paulum et ad sanctum Laurentium pauperibus habitacula construxit*’. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 263.

to a *xenodochio*, although not one established by the Pope himself. Again it is possible here to witness an act of lay evergetism, this time coming from the victorious general Belisarius, who founded a *xenodochio* on the via Lata.<sup>131</sup> Although no direct correspondence can be found in Leo's list, it seems almost certain that it coincides with the '*oratorium Sanctae dei Genitricis, sito in xenodochio Firmis*', where Firmis is probably a misunderstanding of '(in) Formis', being in the vicinity of the Forma Virgo, the aqueduct serving that area of Rome. If this is the case, the site of the oratory dedicated to the Virgin could be identifiable with that of the church of Santa Maria in Trevi, earlier known as Santa Maria 'in *xenodochio*'.<sup>132</sup>

Following a similar reasoning, the single reference in Leo's list to SS Cosma e Damiano's oratory 'in the *xenodochio* called Tucium' bears no immediate comparison to any identifiable building.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, a twelfth-century mention of the '*venerabile ptochium iuxta palatium Lateranense*' is perhaps relevant here:<sup>134</sup> 'Tucium' could well be a misreading of the Greek word (ptochium/πτωχειον), a synonym of *xenodochium*, elevated from a generic to proper noun for its special meaning. In the life of Pelagius II (578-90) this is the word used where he is said to have 'made his own house into an almshouse for the aged poor'.<sup>135</sup> It thus seems plausible that the 'Lateran Ptochium/xenodochio Tucium' is no more than the Pope's own foundation; the choice of Greek terminology is also consistent with an early date of establishment.

Two more charitable buildings not previously mentioned – nor matching any pre-existing institution – are associated with Gregory the Great. A *xenodochium* at St Peter's appears in the life of Stephen II as a hospital dedicated to S. Gregory, which was by the later pope paired to the separate, independent *diaconia* of S. Silvestro. The second Gregorian *xenodochium* was situated on the

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<sup>131</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 296-302, esp. p. 296; Davis (ed.) vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>132</sup> Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', p. 210; in the same area there was also the *diaconia* dedicated to the Virgin.

<sup>133</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, p. 25.

<sup>134</sup> Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', p. 210.

<sup>135</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 309.

via Nova, and was probably an earlier foundation. The via Nova runs parallel to the via Appia and the *xenodochium* has often been associated with the later *diaconia* of SS Nereo and Achilleo and the area of the Terme di Caracalla, although the basis for this association is far from clear.<sup>136</sup>

Almost 150 years separate these citations from the next, which date to the life of Stephen II (752-7), who restored four pre-existing *xenodochia*, that had been long 'deserted and disordered',<sup>137</sup> and established, *ex-novo*, another three: one called 'in Platana', which was soon after probably absorbed by the pre-existing *diaconia* of S. Eustachio, and two in the area of St Peter's, both also associated from the very start with the *diaconiae* in the area, one dedicated to the Virgin and the other to S. Silvestro. These three *xenodochia* are not mentioned later, even in the thorough list of Leo III, although here it seems that their existence might be implicit in their partnership with the *diaconiae*; it could be argued that at this point the administrative status and probably charitable work of both *diaconiae* and *xenodochia*, had merged together.

This however, was not always the case. In John the Deacon's *Life of Gregory*, *diaconiae* and *xenodochia* are mentioned as separate institutions, and although it has been argued that this source reflects more the reality at the time of its author (ninth century) than that of its main subject (late-sixth/early-seventh century), it must be noted that the explicit association of some *xenodochia* with *diaconiae* seems to have occurred only with Stephen II, and that the four 'late-antique' *xenodochia* are still enumerated in the list of Leo III in a group that is distinctively divided from that of the *diaconiae*.

*Diaconiae* and *xenodochia* were separate institutions, caring for different people, and most of all providing different services, especially at the beginning. While the *diaconiae* seemed to be more responsible for the supply of food, the

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<sup>136</sup> Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', pp. 211-3.

<sup>137</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 440, 'quae a diuturnis et longiquis temporibus destituta manebant et inordinata'; Davis (ed.) vol. 2, p. 52; the four pre-existing *xenodochia* are in all likelihood Aniciorum, Valerii, Ptochium Lateranense and in via Lata, see Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', p. 218.

main feature of the *xenodochia* was arguably that of providing lodging. Although their functions are vague and never clearly stated, and any clear definition of who the assisted were is absent from the sources or the relevant literature, there is evidence that one Anglo-Saxon visitor to Rome, and an authoritative one, lodged in a *xenodochium*. Willibald's *Life of Saint Boniface*, recounts how the Bishop stayed *in xenodochia*, at least in 722 during one of his pastoral visits to Gregory II (715-31).<sup>138</sup> What seems almost sure, although it is one of the main points of misunderstanding in general and scholarly literature, is that the *xenodochia* were never hospitals, but hospices or hostels, where the care provided was not related to the health of the assisted but, at least in origin, to their means (or lack of them). This does not necessarily mean that medical assistance has to be completely ruled out from the functions of the *xenodochia*: rather, it was not the original or main reason for their establishment. Having said this, the last *xenodochium* to be considered is one mentioned only in the list of Pope Leo, not even defined using the Greek name, but the Latin 'hospitale'.<sup>139</sup> It is nevertheless interesting in the context of this discussion because its oratory, and soon after the whole complex built in the area of St Peter's, was dedicated to S. Peregrinus (S. Pellegrino/S. Pilgrim), providing a clear hint to its function and the probable identity of its users.

In this brief overview of the history of the *xenodochia*, the lack of new foundations in the seventh century is conspicuous. On one hand, after the late-antique foundations of the fifth/sixth-century, the system was well-structured and functioned accordingly; it did not need improvement or enlargement, especially in the complex political situation dominated by the Gothic wars. On the other hand, the eight-century 'revival' can be explained by the new wave of 'customers', whose needs were pressing, and who also provided the necessary wealth to embark on the construction of new buildings, the refurbishment of existing ones, and a general reorganization of the structures. A similar process

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<sup>138</sup> See *supra*, p. 107.

<sup>139</sup> Santangeli Valenzani, 'Pellegrini, senatori e papi', p. 214.

can certainly be observed in the different phases of life of the *diaconiae*. A new political perspective, new pilgrims, new influences and patronage, are all elements that fit in a 'restructuring of Rome' within a more northern-European perspective.

Finally, a few suggestions can be made on the administration of these institutions. Different phases of activity, or styles of control can be recognized, from senatorial families to Popes, with the interesting case of Belisarius, included in the *Liber Pontificalis*. This citation might suggest that his foundation was the result of a combination of lay and ecclesiastical patronage, while it is also possible that Belisarius – the imperial general – sought to place himself within that same prestigious tradition of Roman evergetism.<sup>140</sup> How *xenodochia* were routinely organized and managed is almost impossible to say: in Jerome's letter about Fabiola,<sup>141</sup> it seems that she took care of finding monks to run her 'hospital' before her death, while those mentioned as administrators in Gregory's epistles are all ecclesiastics. The architecture of the *xenodochia* provides no information as nothing remains of their original material structures.

### 3.4 Summary

In his recent article on 'welfare and monasticism' in early medieval Rome,<sup>142</sup> Dey chose to focus on the 'charitable institutions' of Rome in the period from the 730s onwards, so as to provide the picture of a relative uniform system, mainly because it is only at this stage that the information, especially in realm of the historical sources, becomes richer. This choice, albeit understandable from a methodological point of view, creates a potentially misleading situation, one in which the continuous evolution of the *diaconiae* and *xenodochia* from as early as the fourth century and their specific interaction with pre-existing Roman institutions are not taken into account. This in turn misses any real

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<sup>140</sup> See supra, p.45; the foundation by Ricimer of Sant'Agata dei Goti.

<sup>141</sup> PL, vol. 22, ep. 77.

<sup>142</sup> Dey, '*Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia*'.

understanding not only of the functions these institutions covered, but also of the various reasons behind their establishment. The detailed analysis of origin, patronage and location, extended over the longer period of time in which *diaconiae* and *xenodochia* existed and functioned, offer a more complete and nuanced context for these institutions and their activities. Furthermore, considering these ‘charitable institutions’ in relation to the Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome, provides an interpretative key transforming them from scholarly theoretical entities, to actual and active ones, seen and possibly used by citizens and pilgrims alike. Consequently, the problematic absence of structural evidence for *diaconiae* and *xenodochia* becomes even more conspicuous, a detail almost too easily dismissed. This raises obvious issues in connection to a supposed and strongly advocated ‘monastic origin’:<sup>143</sup> if – as stated by Dey – ‘these charitable institutions were not only staffed by monks, they were cloistered communities’,<sup>144</sup> it would be useful to have at least some suggestion of how they were architecturally and topographically situated in the complex, hybrid and fluid visual fabric of Rome. Practical aspects, spatial considerations and artistic characteristics involved in the depiction of *diaconiae* and *xenodochia*, and how they were negotiated by the supposedly resident and cloistered monks, remain sadly unaddressed.

It is certainly true that, despite the numerous Anglo-Saxon pilgrims visiting Rome, from the early seventh-century well into Carolingian times, information about where they stayed, or if they made use of such a complex network of ‘charitable institutions’ remains scanty. Nevertheless, the insight gained from the analysis of these structures can only provide the premise for some working hypotheses on the daily life and experiences of an Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>143</sup> Dey disagrees with Durliat’s interpretation affirming that the French historian ‘was unwilling to accept the close connection between monasteries and charitable activities’. It seems more likely that what Durliat is arguing against is the Eastern monastic origin of the *diaconiae*, and not the fact that they were staffed by monks. The same concepts of ‘monks’ and ‘monastic’ are hugely problematic, especially when applied to the city of Rome, and Dey duly notices it in the last and most interesting part of his article, pp. 412-22.

<sup>144</sup> Dey, ‘*Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia*’, pp. 410-1.

travelling to and staying *ad limina Apostolorum* and thus enrich the overall picture of the early medieval Rome they would have encountered: composite, vibrant and often contradictory.