

CHAPTER 2

Rome of the pilgrims and pilgrimage to Rome

2.1 Introduction

As noted, the sacred topography of early Christian Rome focused on different sites: the official Constantinian foundations and the more private intra-mural churches, the *tituli*, often developed and enlarged under the patronage of wealthy Roman families or popes. A third, essential category is that of the extra-mural places of worship, almost always associated with catacombs or sites of martyrdom. It is these that will be examined here, with a particular attention paid to the documented interaction with Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, providing insight to their visual experience of Rome.

The phenomenon of pilgrims and pilgrimage to Rome was caused and constantly influenced by the attitude of the early-Christian faithful and the Church hierarchies towards the cult of saints and martyrs. Rome became the focal point of this tendency for a number of reasons, not least of which was the actual presence of so many shrines of the Apostles and martyrs of the early Church. Also important was the architectural manipulation of these tombs, sepulchres and relics by the early popes: obviously and in the first place this was a direct consequence of the increasing number of pilgrims interested in visiting the sites, but it seems also to have been an act of intentional propaganda to focus attention on certain shrines, at least from the time of Pope Damasus (366-84).¹ The topographic and architectonic centre of the mass of early Christian Rome kept shifting and moving, shaped by the needs of visitors and – at the same time – directing these same needs towards specific monuments; the monuments themselves were often built or renovated following a programme rich in liturgical and political sub-text.

¹ C. Carletti, 'Viatores ad martyres. Testimonianze scritte altomedievali nelle catacombe romane' in G. Cavallo & C. Mango (eds) *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina: ideologia e funzione*, Spoleto 1995, pp. 197-225, p. 198.

It is possible that the cult of the holy person evolved, in part, from the Roman practice of anniversary visits, symbolic offers of food – the so-called *refrigeria* – and the funeral banquet held by the families immediately after the death of their relative,² in the tomb itself or in its close vicinity, where the newly dead virtually participated in the feast, and their families could thus still share their company and lingering presence. Examples of these practices are reflected in some architectural features of the catacombs, such as the spacious rooms without sepulchres but with additional wall-benches, a well and a fountain at the ‘Ipogeo dei Flavi’ in the Catacomb of Domitilla.³ They are moreover reflected in the iconography of some of the catacombs’ decoration, with banquet scenes that could later easily be adapted to express the Christian meanings of the Eucharist, the Last Supper or the *Fractio Panis* (PI.29).⁴ The funerary celebrations also happened at pre-defined days following the death (3rd, 7th, 9th and 30th/40th day), and then during the annual celebrative period of the *Parentalia*, on the 13-21 of February, which ended with another banquet, the *Caristia*, an occasion for families to reunite, reconcile and renew their family ties.⁵ These festivities thus combined a private and familiar function with a use of the grave that was communal, public, and bound to happen at specific times; their influence on the attitude towards the holy shrines in many of the Christian

² Small amounts of food and drinks were left inside the tomb, as a means of giving relief (*refrigerium*) to the deceased. V.Fiocchi Nicolai, F. Bisconti, D. Mazzoleni, *Le Catacombe Cristiane di Roma: origini, sviluppo, apparati decorativi, documentazione epigrafica*, Regensburg 2002 (2nd ed.), pp. 45-6 [English translation by Cristina Carlo Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette, V.Fiocchi Nicolai, F. Bisconti, D. Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: history, decoration, inscriptions*, Regensburg 2002 (2nd ed.)]; A.M. Giuntella, ‘Note su alcuni aspetti della ritualità funeraria nell’alto medioevo. Consuetudini e innovazioni’ in G.P. Brogiolo, G. Cantino Wataghin (eds) *Sepulture tra IV e VIII secolo. 7° Seminario sul Tardo Antico e l’Alto Medioevo in Italia Centro Settentrionale*, Mantova 1998, pp. 61-75, esp. p. 68; Brown, *Cult of Saints*.

³ L. Pani Ermini (ed.), *Christiana Loca: lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio*, Roma 2000, pp. 64-6. [Hereafter *Christiana Loca*].

⁴ Id., pp. 74-5.

⁵ It is interesting to note how the traditional period of the *Parentalia* and *Caristia* seems to coincide with the period of the Presentation to the Temple. The *Lupercalia* and other February rites associated with fertility and purification may also have had an impact on the chosen date for the feast of the Purification of the Virgin.

ceremonies of the early period is thus quite understandable.⁶ The shift from commemorating the person and their tomb to the veneration of the place itself, even when finally dissociated from the presence of bodies or relics,⁷ was not difficult.⁸ In this respect the whole city of Rome could be considered as the pilgrimage place *par excellence* or even as a relic itself.⁹

The tombs and cemeteries of Rome were thus the main goal of pilgrimage to the city, while the churches functioned as containers, but also catalysts and monumental markers. The importance of cemeteries in outlining the evolution and patterns of pilgrimage to Rome should not, therefore, be underestimated, especially when considering the artistic aspects and influences displayed within them. There were:

miles of subterranean passages which today are called 'catacombs' after the *coemeterium ad catacumbas* (now known as the Catacomb of St Sebastian) on the Via Appia Antica. From this one site, the knowledge of which was never lost, the term 'catacomb' became generic for all such underground cemeteries.¹⁰

In the early phases the catacombs were constantly expanding and changing shape and features, usually in response to the pilgrims' interest and actual presence, a phenomenon that was growing in numbers and becoming geographically more extensive. To name just a few examples: the 100m long gallery in the 'Catacomba di Pretestato' – originally a water tank for the collection of rain – was used from the second century as a subterranean passage along which smaller chambers and groups of sepulchres could be clustered. This was so impressive it was referred to as *spelunca magna* in the later,

⁶ *Christiana Loca*, pp. 63 and 74.

⁷ J. Osborne, 'The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages' in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 53 (1985), pp. 278-328, p. 295.

⁸ See *infra*, pp. 89-101.

⁹ C. Carletti, 'Scrivere i Santi': Epigrafia del Pellegrinaggio a Roma nei Secoli VII-IX', *Settimane XLIX*, Spoleto 2002, pp. 323-62, 343.

¹⁰ Carletti, 'Scrivere i Santi', p. 280. All translations from Italian to English are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

medieval itinerary *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*,¹¹ and three main rooms were strategically marked with monumental and architectonically prestigious doors and arches.¹² Another example is the so-called 'regione di Sotere' in the catacomb of Callisto (**Pl.30**), where the tunnels often open into rooms of exceptional dimensions, which sometimes substitute the usual square form with a more particular, and striking, circular or polygonal one, emphasized by the opening of niches in the walls.¹³

As mentioned, the pioneer in the systematic process of transformation of the cemeteries into cult-shrines was probably Damasus, whose programme of conversion of the tombs into memorials was achieved through the medium of monumental inscriptions and *elogia martyrum* to signpost all the sites deemed worthy of mention, thus creating a capillary network for visitors and the faithful. Even though the *Liber Pontificalis* is quite laconic about the extent of his work, stating simply that he 'searched and discovered many bodies of holy martyrs, and also proclaimed their acts in verses',¹⁴ the number of epigraphic survivals bears witness to a programme that was both intensive and homogeneous. The epigraphs were carved in 'filocalian' letters¹⁵ and display a unified, standardized intervention (**Pl.31**).¹⁶ These same inscriptions were often the only means of preserving the memory of minor saints and martyrs: sometimes they are one of the few sources to put together the story of cult sites otherwise irreparably destroyed, disguised behind centuries of alterations or simply forgotten after the relic's translation. These survivals could also be the only proof of the existence of the cult of saints/martyrs otherwise recorded, often spuriously, only in the *Acta* or legendary *passiones*. Alongside this

¹¹ See infra p. 67 and Appendix.

¹² *Christiana Loca*, p. 21.

¹³ *Id.* pp. 56-60. See also Fiocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, Mazzoleni, *Catacombe Cristiane*, pp. 40-2.

¹⁴ 'multa corpora sanctorum requisivit et inuenit, quorum etiam uersibus declarauit'. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 212; Davis (ed.), p. 30.

¹⁵ From the name of the Pope's secretary and calligrapher. For a description of this style see A. Petrucci, *Breve Storia della Scrittura Latina*, Roma 1992 (II ed.), pp. 56-7.

¹⁶ *Christiana Loca*, p. 102. Examples still 'in situ' can be found for instance at Sant' Agnese, S. Sebastiano or in the Popes' Crypt in the catacomb of Callisto.

programme, structural solutions (external and internal stairs; re-excavating and enlarging entire sections of the cemeteries) were undertaken to improve access to and use of the underground sites, by their very nature difficult to reach and explore. The whole idea was therefore one of propaganda and pastoral coordination: Damasus' activities aimed to channel the early Christian practice of funeral commemoration into more ordered and official events – so that the various and often unorthodox practices would focus on controlled, approved and correct saints – and at the same time to create visual and monumental solutions, such as the inscriptions that, being read aloud or copied, could constitute a portable and permanent memory of the tombs, sepulchres and sites.¹⁷

During the course of the sixth century the cemeteries gradually ceased to be used as places of burial. This was probably due to the complex and unstable political condition of Rome at the time. The Gothic wars (535-53) inflicted a series of blows on the city: in 18 years Rome suffered no fewer than five assaults and sieges. As a result, the population retreated inside the Aurelian walls and normal urban life underwent general disruption, rendering the situation in the suburbs, or generally 'outside' the city walls, precarious and dangerous.¹⁸ Thus, in this period cemeteries began to be established inside the city and around churches,¹⁹ in contrast with the traditional and enduring Roman law concerning

¹⁷ Carletti, *'Viatores ad martyres'*, pp.198-99. See also the political and schismatic implications of Damasus' programme analysed in M. Sághy, *'Scinditur in partes populus: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome'* in *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp. 273-87. On *sylloges* and *epigrammata* see: A. Silvagni, *'La silloge epigrafica di Cambridge'* in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 20 (1924, pp. 49-116); Facsimile, Umschrift, Übersetzung und Kommentar, G. Walser (ed.), Stuttgart 1987; R. Sharpe, *'King Ceadwalla's Roman Epitaph'* in *Latin learning and English lore: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature for Michael Lapidge*, K. O'Brien O'Keefe & A. Orchard (eds), Toronto 2005, vol.1 pp. 171-93.

¹⁸ Osborne, *'Roman Catacombs'*, pp.280-83. It is the so-called question of the *'disabitato'* in the early medieval topography of Rome: a contrast, within the city walls, between still densely settled areas and increasingly abandoned ones, quickly reverting to countryside. See also Krautheimer, *Rome*, p. 68.

¹⁹ Osborne, *'Roman Catacombs'*, p. 283. Examples given are the Esquiline hill, the Castro Pretorio, the Oppian hill, Trastevere near the church of S. Cosimato and then near S. Maria Antiqua, S. Clemente and S. Lorenzo in Lucina. See also A. Augenti, *'Iacere in Palatio. Le*

extra-mural burial that had prevailed until that time, and the earlier practice of using the tomb of a saint or martyr as the focal point for subsequent burials.²⁰ The martyr's tomb was considered as a relic, and proximity to it indicated a closer association with salvation through the physical presence and intercession of the saint there buried.²¹

Despite the emergence of intra-mural cemeteries, however, interest in their extra-mural counterparts remained high. This can probably be explained by the importance attached to the original location of a burial or site of martyrdom, even if the place was no longer an active cemetery. In this respect it is also worth noting how the subterranean cemeteries often functioned as the burial places of the early popes;²² the cult of St Peter expanded to incorporate his successors, regardless of whether they were saints. St Peter, as the Apostle and martyr *par excellence*, was at the same time the first bishop of Rome and later regarded as the first pope of the Church, and this meaningful combination of associations was extended to his successors. Much of the information regarding the popes' burials and their martyrdoms was also recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the first version of which was probably compiled around the 540s,²³ exactly when the interest in catacombs and pilgrimage sites was renewed.

There are many hints pointing to this phenomenon in the architecture of the main catacombs: the crypt of Pope Calixtus (217-22) on the via Aurelia, for example, was possibly first upgraded in the sixth century with the creation of an imposing flight of stairs to convey pilgrims to the main 'attraction', the tomb of the Pope himself, that was ultimately isolated by the construction of a wall.²⁴ The church and tomb of Sant'Ippolito²⁵ on the via Tiburtina underwent – during

sepoltura altomedievale del Palatino' in Brogiolo, Cantino Wataghin (eds), *Sepulture tra IV e VIII secolo*, pp. 115-21.

²⁰ It must be noted that these intra-mural burials did not belong to saints or martyrs and thus did not originate cult-sites.

²¹ Brown, *Cult of Saints*, pp. 33-5.

²² See Appendix for more details on the number of Popes buried in the catacombs.

²³ See *supra*, fn.

²⁴ *Christiana Loca*, p.132.

²⁵ See *supra*, p. 51.

the papacy of Vigilius (537-55) – a similar change: the site of the tomb itself was isolated from the rest of the catacomb, and a gallery and stairway built to improve accessibility only to specific parts of the catacomb.²⁶ Another structural change peculiar to this period was the creation of the so-called basilica *ad corpus*: early examples of this process can be found in the small basilica of Felice and Adauto, at the catacomb of Commodilla, and the larger monumental three-apsed basilica dedicated to SS Nereo and Achilleo at the catacomb of Domitilla, both dating to the papacy of John I (523-6) (PI.32-33).²⁷ The obvious practical reason for building larger churches was the presence of the now considerable crowds both willing to visit the martyrs' tombs and also to take part in the liturgy celebrated in such a close contact – both physical and spiritual – with the saints' relics.²⁸

This was a trend that continued under successive popes, in a renewed atmosphere of revival that resulted in even more significant and monumental churches. Pope Pelagius II (579-90) probably built the large single-apsed *aula* dedicated to St Hermes at the cemetery of Bassilla and was certainly responsible for the magnificent church of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura (PI.34). The architectural and decorative programme of Pope Honorius (625-38) was even more ambitious: he renewed all the sacred equipment for St Peter's; rebuilt and

²⁶ This renovation could be also linked to a recurrence of the Laurentian schism of 30 yrs before and its Novatianists echoes and thus be interpreted in the light of uniformity and concord against it. Reflections of this issue can be seen in Damasus' politic and in that of Symmachus as well. The same emphasis on concord and unity advocated by Damasus through his epigrams could also possibly emerge from his preference for twin/group saints: they could evoke concord (in their death), the sharing of power/protection and a sense of community even in a deeply divided context. Scattered relics/relic parts of the same saint enhance this sense of Catholicism and fraternity throughout different communities. See Brown, *Cult of Saints*; Sághy, '*Scinditur in partes populus*'; Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church'.

²⁷ *Christiana loca*, pp. 124-6 with photographs. The same pope presented the churches of St Peter, San Paolo fuori le mura, Santa Maria Maggiore and San Lorenzo fuori le mura with gifts from the Emperor Justin. Seemingly the pope himself brought the gifts to the churches. This not only suggests a procession, but has probably a connection with both stationary liturgy and the relation between the translation of relics/presenting of gifts to a Church and the Imperial *adventus*. Regarding this see Brown, *Cult of Saints*, pp. 98-101 and G. Clark, 'Translating relics: Vitricius of Rouen and fourth-century debate' in *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), pp. 161-76. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 275-8; Davis (ed.), p. 52.

²⁸ *Christian Loca*, p. 132.

lavishly decorated the church of Sant'Agnese on the via Nomentana (PI.35); built the martyrial churches of S. Cyriacus on the via Ostiense, the Santi Quattro Coronati on the Celian Hill, S. Pancras on the via Aurelia; and renewed the church of SS Pietro e Marcellino at the via Labicana.²⁹

From the mid-eighth century the political situation reverted to instability, with the Lombards threatening Rome.³⁰ This influenced and accelerated the process of translation of the relics into the urban shrines and churches,³¹ while the increasing 'hunger' for relics within the Carolingian world, which had recently impacted on the horizons of Rome, probably provided the economic means to feed this renewed and growing interest in pilgrimage and relics.³²

2.2 Itineraries

In turning now to consider in more detail how the pilgrims would approach and access the rich and sometimes confusing heritage of the holy sites of Rome, the so-called pilgrims' 'itineraries' provide some useful insights. Much has been written about these texts, which have been considered important accounts or detailed 'guide-books' of the sites that visitors to Rome would have toured.³³ As is clear, Rome was the privileged pilgrim site: an early example of this is provided by Fulgentius of Ruspe (465-533) who, in the account of his life, is said

²⁹ All these were extremely popular pilgrimage sites.

³⁰ Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', pp. 289-91.

³¹ The removal of the relics from the catacombs does not necessarily imply the abandoning of the catacomb itself as a pilgrimage site. See Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 291.

³² Id., pp. 294-5.

³³ Almost all works dealing with pilgrims and/or pilgrimage to Rome mention the itineraries: Osborne calls them 'the earliest itineraries for Roman pilgrims', in 'Roman Catacombs', p. 285; according to Carletti they are 'vere e proprie guide - i ben noti *Itineraria* altomedievali specificamente realizzati allo scopo' and 'vere e proprie guide dettagliate e circostanziate, direttamente funzionali alle necessita' dei pii visitatori', in *Viatores ad martyres*, pp. 199 and 201; V. Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's journey to Rome' in *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990), pp. 197-246 defines them as 'guide-books of the churches of Rome', p. 200; in the more recent D. J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages. Continuity and Change*, Woodbridge 1998, they are 'the so-called pilgrim guides', p. 97; see also P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, pp. 173-98.

to have gone to Rome and '*sacra Martyrum loca venerabiliter circumiuit*',³⁴ giving exactly this idea of 'touring' the sepulchres and relics. Given this perceived importance, it is worth paying closer attention to these complex sources, investigating them to discover who might have written them and for whom, and analysing their diffusion and manuscript survival.

2.2 a) The Ampullae List from Monza

The first example is not generally considered to be part of the group of early 'itineraries', but in this context it seems worth discussing.³⁵ It comprises a list written to accompany a collection of *ampullae* containing sacred oil taken from the lamps burning at the martyrs' tombs.³⁶ The collection was put together by one '*Iohannis indignus et peccator*'³⁷ to be presented as a gift to Queen Theodolinda at the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). Each vial had a papyrus label (*pittacia*) attached, giving information about its content and provenance, and they were accompanied by an overall list/summary, also written on papyrus (*notula*). The text on the labels has almost entirely faded, so it is essential to compare it with the general list to have some understanding of the names which, to exacerbate the problem, do not exactly match those labels that can be deciphered.³⁸

Obviously, the names of saints and martyrs written in this text are, at one level, nothing more than items in a list, yet they do indicate which shrines were considered the most important at the time. In it catacomb saints predominate.

³⁴ *Vita S.Fulgentii a quodam eius discipulo conscripta ad Felicianum Episcopum. Acta Sanctorum.* <http://acta.chadwyck.co.uk> (accessed March 2008); 'after having toured the sacred sites of the most venerable saints'.

³⁵ All the texts discussed below are published in R. Valentini & G. Zucchetti (eds), *Codice Topografico della Citta' di Roma, vol.II*, Roma 1942. [Hereafter *Codice Topografico*] See also the more recent discussion in C. Leyser, 'The temptations of cult: Roman martyr piety in the age of Gregory the Great' in *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp. 289-307, esp. pp. 296-9.

³⁶ It seems that the original *ampullae* are not extant, but the Cathedral Treasury of Monza interestingly preserves at least 16 pilgrim's *ampullae* from the Holy Land, dated to the sixth century.

³⁷ *Codice Topografico*, p. 47.

³⁸ *Codice Topografico*, p. 31.

As noted in the editorial commentary,³⁹ it is unlikely that the list would indicate or imply a specific route followed by pilgrims, or even the one followed by the 'humble John' in putting together his gift-collection. The catacombs visited are not cited in any convenient order. Thus, we 'travel' from the via Cornelia (St Peter), then move south to the via Aurelia and Appia, followed by a north-east detour to the vie Salaria and Tiburtina, then return within the city walls towards the Celian Hill (SS Giovanni e Paolo) before going outside again on the via Nomentana, followed by a new stop south on the via Appia; this is followed by a return to the north, again on the vie Salaria Vecchia and Nuova, only to turn south again, for a third stop on the via Appia, and eventually reach the final destination on the via Ardeatina. As will become clearer in analysing the other 'itineraries' below, it seems unlikely that such a hectic plan would constitute a traditional pilgrimage route of Rome. It does, nevertheless, provide an indication of the saints and their resting places deemed worthy of attention by a pilgrim to Rome in the late sixth century.

2.2 b) The *Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae*

The second example, more generally considered to be one of the 'itineraries', is the so-called *Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae*,⁴⁰ contained in a single late-eighth-century manuscript from Salzburg but now in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 795), although probably compiled during the pontificate of Pope Honorius (625-38).⁴¹ In addition to the *Notitia*, this manuscript also contains a number of Alcuin's works and letters; a letter of Charlemagne to Alcuin; works by Augustine and some excerpts of the Church Fathers; a treatise on Latin orthography; and the Greek, Runic and Gothic alphabets. The *Notitia* itself is followed by a second, independent 'itinerary', which is in turn preserved in two more manuscript exemplars.⁴² As Vienna Cod.

³⁹ *Id.*, pp. 32-3.

⁴⁰ *Id.*, pp. 67-99.

⁴¹ See *Codice Topografico*, pp. 69-70

⁴² The so-called *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum*, see *infra*, pp. 72-5.

795, in addition to preserving the *Notitia*, is one of the three main witnesses to Alcuin's correspondence written during his lifetime, it has received considerable attention. As a result, it has been possible to establish the places and dates of origin of the two larger collections 'with unusual precision'⁴³ through palaeographical and codicological evidence. It was, according to Bullough's analysis, written by:

a remarkable array of scribes at (Arch)bishop Arn's northern-French abbey of St-Amand during – almost certainly – the year 799...and that – very soon after completion – was taken to Arn's archiepiscopal see, Salzburg, and remained there.⁴⁴

Bullough also admits that the hypothesis that Arn himself, who went to Rome to receive the *pallium* in 798,⁴⁵ had brought back a copy of the two Roman topographical texts copied in a quire of the manuscript (ff. 184-91v), is not to be excluded. If this is indeed so, it could be argued that this 'itinerary' reflects the success of the pilgrims routes, which were still followed, more than a century after the actual *Notitia* was compiled. It could even reflect the churches that Arn himself visited when he went to Rome, or, more speculatively, that the itinerary was given or copied from one that Alcuin himself owned, or had used, during his visits to Rome.⁴⁶

Regardless of such specific considerations, it does seem that Alcuin had mixed feelings towards the 'Eternal City': the only two churches he explicitly mentioned in the entire corpus of his works are St Peter's and St Paul's.⁴⁷ Yet, despite having no direct proof that Alcuin had followed one or more 'itineraries' round the city during his visits, he does describe Rome as 'surrounded by a circle (*corona*) of holy Apostles and innumerable martyrs'.⁴⁸ It is almost too easy to hear here the echo of the words of Fulgentius of Ruspe, or those often repeated in the *Liber Pontificalis* to mark the martyrdom, for example,

⁴³D. Bullough, *Alcuin: achievement and reputation*, Leiden; Boston 2003, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 44 and 51-2. See also Leyser, 'The temptations of cult', pp. 292-3.

⁴⁵ W.J. Moore, *The Saxon pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum*, Fribourg 1937, p. 77.

⁴⁶ In the late 770s with Ælberht and then again in 780-1.

⁴⁷ Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 245-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

of the early popes (*martyrio coronatur*), or the almost formulaic sentence iterated in the 'itineraries' themselves: 'the countless multitude of saints and martyrs'.⁴⁹ It is also likely that Alcuin's knowledge of older epigraphic verses had come, in part, from Rome: in this respect, it is interesting to note how another itinerary of Rome, the so-called 'Einsiedeln itinerary', was probably intentionally combined with a sylloge of inscriptions from Rome in a single manuscript, whose origin Bullough ascribes to Fulda.⁵⁰

It is certainly worth noting that Alcuin used a line of Pope John VII's epitaph in the *tituli* for Bishop Arn's restored tomb of St Amand and the restored cathedral church at Laon.⁵¹ It is possible here that a parallel was intentionally drawn between a pope renowned for his architectural interventions – for example at St Peter's and Santa Maria Antiqua – and the German bishop who had possibly visited exactly those places while in Rome. Indeed, Arn may have acted as a 'new John VII' in restoring the tomb of the patron saint of his own see, while Alcuin in turn could have well had news from Arn of the places he was visiting while in Rome. We know that Alcuin wrote to Arn very frequently in 798-9, but unfortunately 'not one of the letters addressed to him by Arn has been preserved'.⁵²

Returning to Vienna Cod. 795, the (probably) slightly later copy of the second itinerary included in it, the *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae* also occurs in another manuscript originally from Salzburg (now Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1008);⁵³ this is not dependent on the book compiled at St-Amand. Moreover, the itinerary in Cod. 795 was copied by a scribe who does not figure elsewhere, and then completed by two others who had contributed to earlier sections of the codex.⁵⁴ This means the

⁴⁹ See Appendix.

⁵⁰ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 246 n. 351 and p. 278. See *infra*, pp. 75-8.

⁵¹ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 278. See also, A. Silvagni, 'La silloge epigrafica di Cambridge' in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 20 (1924), pp. 49-116. On John VII see *infra*, ch.4.

⁵² Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 41. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ See *infra*, pp. 72-5.

⁵⁴ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 45 n. 100.

Notitia was integral to the process of compiling of the Vienna manuscript, a detail confirmed by the fact that the quire containing the itinerary is preceded and followed by quires containing Alcuin's letters.⁵⁵ It is also worth mentioning here that this same manuscript contains a letter of recommendation for messengers on their way to Rome.⁵⁶

Despite its title, the text of the *Notitia* mentions and describes only one church within the city of Rome, the *titulus Pammachii* on the Celian Hill. Subsequently, it literally 'enters' the city through the Flaminian Gate (*deinde intrabis per Urbem...*),⁵⁷ while the remainder describes in detail the cemeteries outside the city walls, travelling in a clockwise direction along the main 'vie consolari' (Flaminia, Salaria Vecchia e Nuova, Nomentana, Tiburtina, Labicana, Latina, Appia, Ardeatina, Ostiense, Portuense, Aurelia e Cornelia), before closing with a description of St Peter's (Pl.36).

As mentioned above, the account has been dated to 625-42, but the final section on St Peter is probably later (mid-eighth century).⁵⁸ This includes mention of the body of Gregory the Great buried at St Peter's, which might reflect no more than the simple memory of one of the most venerated bishops of Rome, but could also be directed at Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, who had a special reverence for the 'apostle' of their evangelization.⁵⁹ According to the commentary in the most recent scholarly edition of this work, the compiler of the *Notitia* was most likely someone who had personally visited the sites or who was writing following the first-hand directions of just such a visitor.⁶⁰ It is

⁵⁵ Obviously, nothing but a codicological study of the manuscript could tell if this is the original arrangement of the quires.

⁵⁶ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 48 and n. 108. Finally, there has also been the erroneous conjecture that Alcuin himself was the author of these two itineraries the *Notitia* and the *De Locis*, no doubt for the strong connections of the only manuscript containing both accounts with the Anglo-Saxon scholar. This was proved wrong by De Rossi. See Moore, *Saxon pilgrims*, p. 75 n. 7 and *Codice Topografico*, p. 71.

⁵⁷ *Codice Topografico*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Codice Topografico*, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Leyser, 'The temptations of cult', p. 293.

⁶⁰ *Codice Topografico*, p.70.

extremely interesting to note that the itinerary 'talks' directly to the pilgrim/traveller; the text is entirely composed in the second person:

you will go east until you shall reach the church of John the martyr on the via Salaria...then you will go south on the via Salaria until you will arrive to St Hermes... .⁶¹

Certainly, personal knowledge can be assumed: the author has an exhaustive understanding of the different routes and shortcuts connecting the main consular ways; he often gives helpful details to characterize the exact location of tombs, sepulchres and underground burials; he specifies if they are above or below ground, as well as providing the precise arrangement of multiple tombs within the same cemetery.⁶² The language used is almost technical, presenting an account of topographic clarity. Along with the geographical accuracy of the description, the other striking characteristic of the *Notitia* is the enormous number of cemeteries and tombs and saints and martyrs mentioned.⁶³ Underground Rome is presented as a place swarming with *cubicula*, *speluncae*, bodies and names, implying that in each instance the visitor would know or would be told the *passio* of their martyrdom. We are often provided with at least some details of the relations of groups of martyrs: husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, virgins and twin brothers, popes, bishops and deacons. Also, in a few instances we are given some historical or architectural details, alluding to

⁶¹ *Id.*, p. 74: '*deinde vadis ad orientem donec venias ad ecclesiam Iohannis martiris via Salinaria...deinde vadis ad australem via Salinaria, donec venies ad sanctum Ermetem...'*

⁶² For instance, the description of the cemetery on the via salaria Nuova where Pope Sylvester was buried states that 'Pope Syricius [was buried] at his feet, and on the right Pope Celestinus and the bishop Marcellus, and Philip and Felix and a multitude of saints under the main altar, and the martyr Crescentius in a sepulchre/cave (*spelunca*) and the martyr and saint Prisca in another, and Fimites/Simitrius sleeps in a sepulchre/tunnel (*cubiculo*) as you are going out...'. *Id.* p. 77.

⁶³ See Appendix for an idea/appraisal of the number of martyrs mentioned. No less than 121 names are listed, including Popes and plus the 40 martyrs of Sebaste, a group of 30 unnamed martyrs and Santi Quattro Coronati, all venerated in the cemetery *Ad Duas Lauros* on the via Labicana.

features of the martyrdom or characteristics of the churches.⁶⁴ According to the *Notitia*, the catacombs in the seventh century were literally full of life.

2.2 c) The *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum*

The next account worth considering is the *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae*.⁶⁵ It is recorded in three manuscripts: one containing the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* (Vienna Cod. 795); a Salzburg manuscript of ninth- or tenth-century date, also in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1008);⁶⁶ and a tenth-century manuscript now at the University of Würzburg (Theol.fol. n.49). In Vienna Cod. 1008 the text is placed between a sermon and *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, possibly by Isidore of Seville, while in the Würzburg manuscript, interestingly, it is preceded by Bede's Martyrology, but written by a different and apparently later hand.⁶⁷ In the earlier Vienna manuscript (Cod. 795) it is also significant that – as already mentioned – the account follows the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* but in a different, although contemporary, hand. Moreover, it features many additions, both interlinear and in the margins: these seem to be taken in part from the preceding text of the *Notitia*, but also from another, unfortunately unknown, but seemingly reliable source.⁶⁸ The additions are written in at least two different hands, and could possibly reflect more information about Rome collected by other pilgrims who had followed the same itinerary and then amended it or integrated the information. In each manuscript the *De Locis Sanctis* is followed by a separate, short list of churches,

⁶⁴ For example, the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo on the Celian Hill is called '*basilica magna et valde formosa*'; the Basilica of S. Valentino is '*basilica magna, quam Honorius reparavit*'; on the via Nomentana we arrive '*ad ecclesiam Sanctae Agnae quae Formosa est...et ipsam episcopus Honorius miro opera reparavit*' or '*ad ecclesiam Sancti Laurentii: ibi sunt magnae basilicae duae, in quarum speciosore et pausat*'; or the church of St Pancras, who was buried '*in formosa ecclesia via Aurelia, quam sanctus Honorius papa magna ex parte reaedificavit*'. All the above examples are from *Codice Topografico*, pp. 72-3, 79-80, 93. The fact that Pope Honorius (625-38) is the only one whose works of renovation are mentioned could indicate that the text was compiled at the time or soon after his bishopric.

⁶⁵ *Codice Topografico*, pp. 101-31.

⁶⁶ See *supra*, p.69.

⁶⁷ *Codice Topografico*, p. 102.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

with no description or directions, which has its own title: *Istae vero ecclesiae intus Romae habentur*. Like the *Notitia Ecclesiarum*, the *De Locis* has been assigned to the mid-seventh century, but unlike the *Notitia*, it starts at St Peter's and then moves anti-clockwise along the main consular routes (PI.37). Overall, it is less detailed in its topographical directions and generally more synthetic, but again it deals primarily with the suburban cemeteries and basilicas. Although it seems to be less a first-hand account of someone who actually travelled this itinerary than the *Notitia*, it is still extremely thorough in its inclusion of all the saints and martyrs, albeit less concerned with the topographically specific location of their resting places than the *Notitia*.⁶⁹

The *Istae vero ecclesiae* that follows the *De Locis* gives an incomplete list of 26 churches (the last five are blank) within the city of Rome, all defined as *basilica*.⁷⁰ As the editorial commentary notes, it is unclear why this list was added at the end of the main 'itinerary', as the principle behind the order in which the churches are mentioned remains obscure.⁷¹ The closing sentence of the list: '*In his omnibus basilicas per certa tempora publica statio geruntur*',⁷² seems to suggest that it represents a catalogue of the churches that functioned as different *stationes* during the liturgy.⁷³ If this is indeed the case, the order of the churches in the list is also significant, as is the fact that only a few churches are provided with extra annotations beside the name and dedication. Here, one of

⁶⁹ See Appendix.

⁷⁰ It seems apparent that, in the early stages of official Christianity, the names and definitions chosen for the buildings as places of worship were quite varied and had a fluid meaning. Nevertheless, the choice of 'Basilica' can point to a larger or at least more 'public' church, and sometimes one with a fairly 'standard' architectural form.

⁷¹ 'A quale scopo sia stato messo al termine dell'itinerario l'elenco delle chiese intramurane, non e' chiaro, come resta tutt'altro che evidente il criterio seguito nel loro ordinamento.' *Codice Topografico*, p. 104.

⁷² 'Public stations are held in all these churches/basilicas at given times'.

⁷³ The stationary liturgy in Rome was introduced by Pope Hilarius (461-8): 'in urbe vero Roma constituit *ministeria qui circuissent constitutas stationes*' (in Rome he arranged services to circulate around the established *stationes*), *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 242-8; Davis (ed.), p. 42. An interesting document about the stationary practice could probably be found in the life of Pope Vitalian (657-72) and the visit of the Emperor Constans II during his papacy. Here, the Emperor himself visited the four so-called patriarchal basilicas (St Peter's, St Paul's, St Mary's and St John the Lateran) and then followed the Pope in his Sunday *station* to St Peter's. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 343-5; Davis (ed.), pp. 73-4. See also Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship*.

the most revealing pieces of information is the placing of the church of Santa Anastasia immediately after St John the Lateran (here simply named *Basilica Constantiniana quae et Salvatoris...et sancti Iohannis dicitur*) and Santa Maria Maggiore, the first two churches in the list. For Santa Anastasia the following comment is added: *ubi cruces servantur quae portantur per stationes*.⁷⁴ Also important is the fact that the fourth church on the list is Santa Maria Antiqua. This means two stations on the Palatino are provided, while with the fifth we move to Sancta Maria Rotunda (the Pantheon, or Santa Maria ad Martyres); the sixth is Santa Maria in Trastevere, which has the additional note: *ibi est imago sanctae Mariae quae per se facta est*.⁷⁵ Finally, it is worth underlining that only four other churches are distinguished with such additional information: two concern the relics to be found there, the *graticula* at San Lorenzo (in Lucina) and the chains at San Pietro in Vincoli; two concern the presence of the venerated body of the dedicatory saint in the church, *basilica quae appellatur Iohannis et Pauli, ubi ipsi ambo in uno tumulo iacent* and *basilica sci. Bonifaci martyris, ubi ipse dormit*.⁷⁶ It could be argued that the choice of more ‘popular’ names for some of these churches, and the close association of some of them with venerated icons or relics, might in turn indicate a ‘popular’ origin for this list, maybe one that reflected actual liturgical practice. On the other hand, from a topographical point of view it seems difficult to identify the list as an actual processional itinerary, especially not one to be covered on a single celebration, given the seemingly haphazard way in which the church are listed, with regard to relative location and distance. Finally, a possible dating for the compilation of

⁷⁴ ‘Where are kept the crosses, which are taken to the stations’.

⁷⁵ ‘Here is the image of Saint Mary that is self-made/painted’.

⁷⁶ ‘Basilica which is named after John and Paul, where they both rest in one tomb’ and ‘basilica of St Boniface martyr, where he sleeps’. See E. Russo, ‘L’affresco di Turtura nel cimitero di Commodilla, l’icona di S.Maria in Trastevere e le piu’ antiche feste della Madonna a Roma’ in *Bullettino dell’Istituto Storico per il Medioevo* 88 (1979), pp. 35-85, esp. pp. 58-60. He sustains that this list, which he calls itinerary, has a popular nature, as reflected by some of the non-official names of the churches mentioned, like ‘Sancta Maria Rotunda’ or ‘Sancta Maria Transtiberis’, and some descriptive additions to ‘impress the mind and heart of the pilgrim’, like the mention of some of the relics. Russo also adds that the final allusion to the churches being *stationes* is not to be taken in a literal sense, as some of those churches never were *stationes*, but indicating that they were see of generic papal functions.

this list, or at least a *post quem* indication, is directly linked to the dating of the icon of the Virgin preserved at Santa Maria in Trastevere. Overall, this document raises a number of questions that are difficult to answer, but it nevertheless represents in all likelihood a view of those churches which were recognized as central in seventh/eighth-century Rome, in the eyes and the experience of inhabitants and possibly pilgrims alike.

2.2 d) The Itinerary of Einsiedeln

Continuing with an analysis of these ‘itineraries’, perhaps the most renowned is the so-called ‘Itinerary of Einsiedeln’.⁷⁷ This is just one of a collection of texts that is included in a miscellaneous manuscript with a complex history: it was probably copied, but not necessarily compiled, at the monastery of Reichenau,⁷⁸ and then belonged to Pfafers (St Gall) before being finally given to the monastery of Einsiedeln, Switzerland (Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln, 326), where it remains.⁷⁹ The five quires of which the manuscript is composed, all in different hands, were put together by the curator of the monastic library between 1324 and 1360; the fourth quire (ff. 67r-97v) contains the Itinerary.⁸⁰

The Einsiedeln Itinerary is not a list or simple account of churches: it opens with a collection of epigraphs that contain a fragment of an independent itinerary, followed by another eleven itineraries, all departing from different gates of Rome and often overlapping (**Pl.38**).⁸¹ It is therefore more than just a

⁷⁷ *Codice Topografico*, pp. 155-207.

⁷⁸ The Latin name of Reichenau, *Augia Dives*, is the origin of the name chosen by Del Lungo (see following footnote) for his anonymous author, ‘l’anonimo augiense’; despite this, Bullough ascribes it to Fulda (see supra p.69).

⁷⁹ There is a facsimile of the sylloge contained in this manuscript, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung und der Pilgerfuhrer durch Rom (Codex Einsidlensis 326): Facsimile, Umschrift, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, G. Walser (ed.), Stuttgart 1987; also C. Huelsen, *La Pianta di Roma dell’anonimo einsiedelnse*, Roma 1907; and the recent S. Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia e gli scritti dell’Anonimo augiense (Einsiedeln, Bibliotheca Monasterii ordinis sancti Benedicti, 326 [8 nr. 13], IV, ff. 67v-86r)*, Roma 2004.

⁸⁰ The other texts are: I. *Notae [Valerii Probi Notae]*; II. *Gesta Salvatoris [Gesta Pilati, Evangelium Nicodemi]*; III. *Liber Poenitentialis*; V. *De Inventione S.Crucis vel Acta apocrypha S.Judae-Quiriaci*. Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, p. 15.

⁸¹ See also the description and plate in *Christiana Loca*, pp. 248-9

group of routes through eighth-century Rome; it was probably intentionally preceded by the *sylloge* of epigraphs and it is also followed by a description of Rome's city walls and a liturgical appendix.⁸² The information in the *sylloge* and Itinerary often complete and expand each other; it has also been suggested that one of the criteria for selecting the inscriptions was to compare the programme of the contemporary popes with those of some inspirational precursors, Damasus, Gregory the Great and Honorius.⁸³ The most interesting feature of the itineraries is that they present the monuments to the right or left of the visitor travelling the given tour. Furthermore, not only are the churches mentioned, but also a series of Roman monuments and remains of the Urbs: thermal baths, columns, obelisks, *fori*, aqueducts and other – obviously still visible and worth mentioning – elements of a past that was an integral part of the Roman landscape.⁸⁴

The most recent and complete work on the Einsiedeln triptych is by Del Lungo. He argues strongly, from the onset, that the *sylloge*, itinerary and description of the walls were originally written in Rome, not in a single phase, but during several stages of information gathering and drafting, undertaken during the pontificates of Hadrian I (772-95) and Leo III (795-816). While the dating, the Roman origin and the idea of the three texts as a coherent whole are all convincing, it seems less likely that, as he puts it, this bulk of information was needed for a 'special occasion' and then collected by someone who witnessed or participated in this particular event.⁸⁵ In Del Lungo's opinion, the context for creating the Einsiedeln triptych was the series of visits of Charlemagne to Rome, started in 774 and culminating with his coronation in 800. The archetype of the quire containing the three texts would be produced – in multiple copies – for all the guests and retinue of the Frankish king to

⁸² Unfortunately the liturgical appendix is not included in the edition in the *Codice Topografico*, nor seems to be part of any other of the Einsiedeln editions.

⁸³ Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, p. 84.

⁸⁴ L. Pani Ermini, 'Forma Urbis: lo spazio urbano tra VI e IX secolo', Cisam 2001, pp. 255-324, esp. pp. 311-13.

⁸⁵ Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, p. 13.

describe and prove not only the glory of Rome, continuing and growing from its imperial past, but also the power and efforts of the popes in keeping that glory alive, through a constant programme of renovation and reconstruction. The argument that stresses the emphasis on the popes' rebuilding works is persuasive and supported by their *Vitae* in the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, it does not necessarily follow that the source was especially compiled and used on the specific occasion of Charlemagne's visits, nor that it was produced and distributed in multiple copies, and that one of these quires belonged to a witness/participant to this visit, who then deposited it at Reichenau.⁸⁷

Overall, Del Lungo's hypothesis implies that the itinerary was a display of power, of the potential of Rome, presented by one ruler to another. As is already clear,⁸⁸ the popes were responsible for and active in the maintenance, renovation and upgrading of Rome, and this is certainly true of Hadrian and Leo, whose activities were connected to the shift of power from Lombard and Byzantine collaboration towards that of the Franks.⁸⁹

One of the striking contributions of Del Lungo's work is his idea that the sites in the itineraries are not necessarily mentioned to be visited, but rather to be seen or read, to act as signposts in the landscape of Rome.⁹⁰ This explanation provides a neat solution to the scholarly discussions and arguments concerning the inner contradictions of some of the routes, and how monuments, which are often very distant from each other, could be portrayed and grouped together.⁹¹ It certainly fits with the idea of someone guiding a group of people around Rome, describing sights close to the visitors, while also pointing out more on the horizon or at higher levels, using the most conspicuous sites, monuments

⁸⁶ Although, it could be suggested that a single coherent programme was conveyed by both sources, being the *Liber Pontificalis* and the Itinerary probably the works/outcome of the same circle.

⁸⁷ Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, pp. 18-9; 106; 151; 163. He also provides a *stemma codicum* at p. 25 and even a guess of the original dimension of the archetype, p. 165.

⁸⁸ See *infra*, ch.1.

⁸⁹ Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, pp. 77-8, 82-7.

⁹⁰ *Id.*, p. 97, n. 67.

⁹¹ See *Codice Topografico*, pp. 157-8.

and symbols of Imperial and Christian Rome (triumphal arches, aqueducts, obelisks, gates and obviously churches) as visual aids for orientation.⁹² Finally, it needs to be mentioned that the description of the city walls probably does not represent the contemporary (eighth-century) condition and reality of the walls, but in all likelihood an ambitious, potential programme of improvement of Rome's fortifications.⁹³

Before turning to the last itinerary, and the only one to witness an actual journey to Rome, that of the Archbishop Sigeric,⁹⁴ it is worth considering a few points related to the itineraries discussed above. As Birch rightly suggests,⁹⁵ it seems unlikely that the pilgrims would have used these texts as 'guide-books': the rarity of the surviving copies (apart from the *De Locis*, they are all unique exemplars) indicates they could have not possibly been widespread or common. They seem rather to provide a reflection and witness of what was actually already happening in Rome, as opposed to giving suggestions about places to visit. Finally, it is not at all clear that these texts were written or compiled with a pilgrim-reader in mind. Further insight to the purpose of these accounts could probably be gleaned from an analysis of the other texts contained in the same manuscripts: at a first glance these seem to be associated with martyrologies, the history of Constantine (namely his conversion), the cult of relics and liturgy.

2.2 e) The journey to Rome of Archbishop Sigeric

Although much later, the account of Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury's journey to Rome in 990 is the only one directly related to an actual pilgrimage to Rome, and is, moreover, Anglo-Saxon in its reference. It survives in only one eleventh-century manuscript (London, BL Cotton Tiberius B.v)⁹⁶ and describes

⁹² Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, pp. 88-90. Plus UCC ☺

⁹³ *Id.*, pp. 144-6, contrary to the interpretation in *Codice Topografico*, pp. 160-1.

⁹⁴ Recently published in the paper by Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric'.

⁹⁵ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, p. 97.

⁹⁶ Facsimile edition in P. McGurk, D.N. Dumville, M.R. Godden & A. Knock (eds), *An Eleventh-Century Illustrated Miscellany (British Library Cotton Tiberius B.V. part I)*, Copenhagen 1983 (Early English Manuscript in Facsimile 21).

not only the places visited in Rome, but also the stops between Rome and Anglo-Saxon England. In Rome itself, the Archbishop recounts that he visited 23 churches, both within and outside the city walls (PI.39); the account was probably compiled upon his return to England.

Sigeric's diary is noteworthy because it is not a comprehensive list or description of the churches of Rome, but rather a selection made by one individual when visiting *ad limina Apostolorum*.⁹⁷ The 23 sites that he visited are all included in previous itineraries or 'guides': all the martyrs' shrines outside the walls (eight if we consider St Peter's) are mentioned in the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* and in the *De Locis*; eight of the 14 urban churches visited are listed in the *Ista vero ecclesiae*; 18 in total are included in the Einsiedeln 'itineraries'. It is impossible to assess Sigeric's familiarity with the earlier itineraries, although the choices in his route certainly provide further evidence of the enduring centrality of these churches for visitors and pilgrims.

Two further aspects need to be noted: first, it seems unlikely, even for the most confident and indefatigable traveller, to cover the whole itinerary in just two days (Day 1, churches 1-16; Day 2, churches 17-23). Second, it is clear that the suburban *basilicas* and catacombs were still very important; Sigeric visited the cemetery at S. Valentino, S. Sebastiano, *ad aquas salvias* (SS Pietro e Marcellino), S. Pancrazio and also the martyrial churches of Sant' Agnese, S. Lorenzo and S. Paolo fuori le mura. It is very likely that Sigeric stayed in Rome longer than the two days outlined in the itinerary, and so may have visited more churches than those listed in his account. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a theme underlying and possibly motivating Sigeric's selection of churches: namely, a specific devotion towards the Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the more traditionally local saints of Rome (Lorenzo, Agnese, Cecilia, Sebastiano, Pancrazio).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric', p. 201.

⁹⁸ Id., pp. 225-6.

Despite this potential devotional background, it is necessary to bear in mind that Sigeric's journey was occasioned by the need to collect his *pallium*, the symbol of unity and privilege granted by the Pope to a new archbishop. Initially this was sent from Rome, and Bede records how it was thus bestowed on the archbishops of the newly-founded see of Canterbury.⁹⁹ Elsewhere, Pope Symmachus sent Cesarius of Arles his *pallium* in 513, and Pope Gregory III sent it to Boniface in 732. However, this apparently common and long established practice of being sent the *pallium* seems to have come to an end during the eighth century, or even later according to Levison.¹⁰⁰ Some examples of the lack of an established custom at this time are Egbert and Eanbald of York, both of whom were sent their *pallia*, in 735 and 780/781 respectively;¹⁰¹ on the other hand, Arn of Salzburg received his *pallium* in Rome in 798, in person.¹⁰² Subsequently, this custom became more formally observed, and nine out of fourteen archbishops of Canterbury went to Rome for their *pallia* between 925 and 1066.¹⁰³ This represents not only a more intimate connection and unity with the Papacy, but also, in all likelihood, an attempt to counteract the autonomous aspirations of some metropolitan sees. Finally, it is interesting to note that the route travelled by Sigeric, with all its 80 toponyms mentioned as stops on the way from Rome back to Canterbury, through France and Belgium, is the basis of the subsequent and then modern route of the Via Francigena: this is still the suggested itinerary for visitors wishing to accomplish a true pilgrimage to Rome from England, France or the Alps.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Augustine received it from Gregory the Great in 601 (HE, I.29, pp. 104-7); Justus received it from Pope Boniface in 624 (HE, II.8, pp. 158-61); Honorius received it from Pope Honorius in 634 (HE, II.18, pp. 196-9).

¹⁰⁰ W. Levison, 'The Protest of the Bishops of Britain against Papal Demands in Connexion with the Pallium', in his *England and the Continent in the eighth century*, London 1946, pp. 241-8.

¹⁰¹ The latter did not receive it directly, but through Alcuin, sent to Rome by the Northumbrian king Ælfwald.

¹⁰² An earlier exception is the journey to Rome of Archbishop Wighard of Canterbury in 667, but it seems he travelled not just to have his election confirmed and receive the *pallium* but to be actually consecrated. See F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford 1943, 3rd ed. 1971, pp. 130-31 and Moore, *Saxon pilgrims*, p. 17.

¹⁰³ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 467.

¹⁰⁴ For contemporary reference see <http://www.viafrancigena.eu> (accessed 31/03/08)

Considered together, these accounts certainly demonstrate a long-lasting interest in visiting the city of Rome. They also show how, throughout the early Middle Ages, pilgrims and other travellers from different and distant countries would have been familiar with the churches, cemeteries and sites of Rome, by means of texts that had probably been compiled by other visitors, thus fostering the knowledge and devotion not only of their dedicatory saints, but especially of the holy places, in all their geographical, topographical and architectural reality.

2.3 Graffiti

In addition to these valuable and largely acknowledged sources, further, and perhaps even more impressive evidence of this interest can be found in the substantial number of graffiti left by visitors in the Roman catacombs.¹⁰⁵ These not only confirm or expand the knowledge of which sites the pilgrims would visit in Rome, but also provide a still very vivid image of who those visitors were, and a possible estimate of the number of pilgrims involved in this phenomenon. While the topic has been discussed, especially in Italian scholarship, it is generally treated with an exclusive focus on the palaeographical elements of the practice, even when considering the ‘foreign’ visitors: indeed, their identification sprung mainly from the palaeography of the writing itself and onomastic considerations. Nevertheless, although the presence of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims is acknowledged by several studies on the subject, and almost taken for granted in the current literature, it seems to have generated little discussion, and it has only been used to confirm, rather than integrate and enrich, the information contained in historical sources.¹⁰⁶ The implications of the graffiti, as well as the visual context of the catacombs in

¹⁰⁵ Carletti, *Viatores ad martyres*, and id. ‘Scrivere i Santi’.

¹⁰⁶ See for instance the very brief mention in Smith, *Europe after Rome*, pp. 282-3 or the single paragraph devoted to graffiti in a monograph devoted to the medieval pilgrimage to Rome, Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, p. 21.

which they were scratched by the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, have never been considered.

While writing one's name on a monument as a reminder of having visited it is not today regarded as advisable, the attitude of early medieval visitors to Rome was somewhat different. From the very early graffiti at St Peter's tomb, dated from the second century onwards,¹⁰⁷ it seems that the name of the faithful was scratched to be left in eternal contact with the saints' tomb and body, taking part and sharing in his or her presence at the tomb itself. Initially, graffiti were often complex texts including the name of the writer, the name of the saint/martyr and a prayer, invocation or request.¹⁰⁸ This practice has been interpreted as the reflection of a writing culture still present and widespread among the generally educated visitors, but it also conveys the idea of a dialogue with the eponymous saint, as well as with the other visitors to the sites who were equally able to read and write, and therefore of engaging them as an expected audience.¹⁰⁹ Subsequently, however, the graffiti became simpler, the relationship between writer and audience disappeared, as did mention of the saint or martyr.¹¹⁰ Here the dialogue operates in only one direction: pilgrims would simply write their name to mark their physical presence in the holy place. In other words, they were privately communicating with the holy place itself ('disconoscimento dell'eponimo').¹¹¹

Over and above such considerations, it is also important not to forget practical aspects relating to the graffiti in the catacombs and their survival. Here, different variables must be borne in mind: the specific underground conditions where the contrast between light and dark would have been quite evident; the time the visitors actually spent in the tunnels and at the graves; the presence of other visitors who could interfere with the writers; the use of unusual and

¹⁰⁷ M. Guarducci, *I Graffiti sotto la Confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano*, Citta' del Vaticano 1958.

¹⁰⁸ Carletti, 'Scrivere i Santi', p. 332.

¹⁰⁹ Id., p. 340.

¹¹⁰ A significant exception to this is provided by the interplay between the graffito with mention of S. Panfilo surrounded by visitors' graffiti. See *infra*, pp. 89-90.

¹¹¹ Carletti, *Viatores ad martyres*, pp. 210-11 and 219; Carletti, 'Scrivere i Santi', p. 343.

uncomfortable writing instruments and surfaces. All are factors that might have impacted on the act of writing.¹¹²

In turning to analyse more closely the bulk of the surviving graffiti, regardless of the various factors affecting their presence and survival, Carletti has identified almost 400 surviving inscriptions in the catacombs, the great majority in Latin (92%) with the remaining being in Greek.¹¹³ Among these, some 23 Anglo-Saxon names have been recognized, three of which are written in Old English in runes (**P1.40**), while the others are in Latin. While the Anglo-Saxons were not the only foreign pilgrims who left their names in the catacombs – Lombard, Frank and Gothic names have also been recognized – they nevertheless constitute the largest ‘ethnic’ group of foreign visitors to the catacombs: this could be explained as the reflection of their particular interest in the pilgrimage to Rome, as well as – possibly – their stronger literacy.¹¹⁴

Palaeographically, the graffiti reflect a writing *pastiche* composed of elements drawn from epigraphic styles (capitals), manuscript writings (uncial/half-uncial) and ‘usual’ or documentary writings (minuscules).¹¹⁵ Here, it is important to bear in mind the conditions of writing by scratching on a hard surface: together with a general lack of *mise-en-page* (alignment of letter-forms, spacing, dimensions of the ‘fonts’ used, etc.), this would force a writer to break the usually round letter shapes into more broken and angular forms. However, the 130 ecclesiastics identified as writers in the catacomb graffiti reveal that such considerations were not always overriding. Their writing appears to be more homogeneous and paleographically ‘correct’, generally displaying a strong preference towards the uncial. This tenacious ‘*resistenza dell’onziale*’ can probably be explained by the more formal educational background of the ecclesiastics, whose graphic culture was still strongly influenced by and modelled on the practice of manuscript reading and writing.

¹¹² Carletti, ‘*Viatores ad martyres*’, p. 222.

¹¹³ Carletti, ‘*Scrivere i Santi*’, p. 344.

¹¹⁴ Carletti, ‘*Scrivere i Santi*’, p. 352.

¹¹⁵ These and the following suggestions are mainly drawn from Carletti’s 2001 paper.

With this in mind it may be significant that, among the smaller and more specific group of Anglo-Saxon graffiti (PI.41), the overwhelming majority reflects an unmistakable tendency to uncial writing, suggesting that their authors were clerics, or at the very least educated pilgrims;¹¹⁶ only three of the 23 names (13%) are written using the runic alphabet and only one name is written entirely in minuscule. In addition, one of the most interesting features of the Anglo-Saxon graffiti is the common use of some of the most distinctive and characteristic insular letter forms: the letter ð is present in both its minuscule and majuscule form; the names ABBA and BALD are written in decorated insular capitals; most letters display the typical stylistic feature of the triangular-shaped terminals ('dente di lupo'). Overall, the Anglo-Saxon graffiti appears at five different sites: the cemetery of Commodilla on the via Ostiense (13 individuals/names); the cemetery *ad duas lauros*/SS Marcellino and Pietro on the via Labicana (eight names/individuals); the cemetery of Ponziano on the via Portuense (one name); the cemetery of Panfilo on the via Salaria vecchia (one name); and finally the cemetery of Ippolito on the via Tiburtina (one name that appears also at Commodilla). In order to contextualize the Anglo-Saxon graffiti and explore the potential links between the sites and their possible visual impact on Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, these cemeteries need to be examined in turn.

2.3 a) Commodilla

The cemetery named after the *matrona* Commodilla, owner of the original site where it was built, was renowned primarily as the resting place of the saints Felice and Adauto, probably martyred under Diocletian (284-305). A small underground *basilica* created through the enlargement of one of the principal galleries was devoted to them. It appears that this work was realized in two different stages during the fifth century, while a later renovation was carried

¹¹⁶ '...una cultura grafica di ritorno, formatasi soprattutto sull'imitazione del tipo librario latino per eccellenza, cioè l'onciale...'. Carletti, 'Scrivere i Santi', p. 354.

out under Pope John I (523-26).¹¹⁷ Here, and elsewhere in the catacomb complex, a number of frescoes have survived: these include a panel portraying S. Luke (PI.42), around which cluster the majority of the graffiti in the catacomb, a total of 42, including the Anglo-Saxon names.¹¹⁸

The Anglo-Saxon names surviving at Commodilla are:¹¹⁹

1. Abba
2. Bald [Bal pr(esbiter)]
3. Beornreð (Beornreth)
4. Bolinoð (Bolinoth) [memento d(omi)ne]¹²⁰
5. Cedvaldo (Cædwald) [diac(onus)]
6. Cedilomi
7. Ceude
8. Dene¹²¹
9. Diornoð (Deornoth) [ego diornoð serbus d(e)i]¹²²
10. Eadbald¹²³
11. Nodheah
12. Vvernoð (Wærnoth)
13. Ypis¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 276; Davis (ed.), p. 52; Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 299.

¹¹⁸ According to Carletti, *Viatores ad Martyres* p. 202. Some of the figures given in this article have been updated in his more recent article on the same topic 'Scrivere i Santi'; it is possible that the total number of graffiti at Commodilla, as well as in the other cemeteries mentioned, needs revising.

¹¹⁹ All the names here listed are given according to the spelling with which they are scratched in the catacomb and presented in the plates attached to Carletti's papers. The names have also been more recently recorded on the database 'Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England' (PASE database <http://www.pase.ac.uk/> accessed 31/03/08) sometimes with a slightly different transliteration I provided in round brackets; additional part of the graffiti are given in square brackets.

¹²⁰ The words 'memento Domine' precede both names Beornreð/Bolinoð which are written one below the other.

¹²¹ This is the name that appears also at the cemetery of Ippolito. It is not possible to determine if it was written by the same person.

¹²² This name appears twice in the same catacomb, the second time in the shortened/incomplete form Diorn. At the moment it is not possible for me to say where exactly the names are written.

¹²³ Written in Runic letters.

¹²⁴ This seems to be the only name not recorded on the PASE database.

The portrait of S. Luke around which the graffiti are clustered has been generally dated according to the inscription below the image that mentions an Emperor Constantine, identified as Constantine IV (668-85).¹²⁵ Although this identification is not incontrovertible,¹²⁶ such a dating would constitute a *terminus post quem* for the graffiti. The fresco itself shows Luke, not depicted as an evangelist, but holding a scroll and with his medical instruments, as attributes of his role as a physician.¹²⁷ This unusual iconography may explain the particular veneration for the image, implied by the number of names of faithful visitors, which could be linked to the 'curative' power of this panel.¹²⁸ The icon-like portrait is framed by thick, black and red bands and isolated quite high on a pilaster next to one of the small apses of the 'basilichetta' (Pl.32). Although there is no way to explain why this particular saint was chosen to be represented here, the position, style, and iconography may have contributed to emphasize the healing power attributed, through the saint, to this icon, one being recognized even by Anglo-Saxon travellers.

Although the St Luke fresco is 'a puzzle that seems to defy solution',¹²⁹ some scholars agree that the late-seventh-century artist may have been inspired by the other frescoes in the same hypogean space, especially that of the so-called 'Madonna di Turtura' (Pl.43). This holds a very prominent visual position within the catacomb, and it was surely seen by the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim visiting the site.¹³⁰ This large panel painting is also framed by a thick black, white and red band, and depicts the Madonna and Child, enthroned,

¹²⁵ See G. Matthiae, *Pittura Romana del Medioevo. Secoli IV-X.Vol.I. Aggiornamento Scientifico e Bibliografia* di M. Andaloro, Roma 1987, p. 121.

¹²⁶ See Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', pp. 302-05.

¹²⁷ Osborne notes similarities with other frescoes representing 'medical saints' and at the same time a not assured interpretation of the inscription as the name Luke (only the letters SCS [...]AS survive). See 'Roman Catacombs', p. 302, fn. 119-120.

¹²⁸ See *infra*, p. 179.

¹²⁹ Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 305.

¹³⁰ On the fresco see R. Farioli, *Pitture di epoca tarda nelle catacombe romane*, Ravenna 1963, pp. 13-7; Matthiae-Andaloro, *Pittura Romana*, pp. 120-1; Russo, 'L'affresco di Turtura'; Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', pp. 300-5. The dating is not unanimous, Cecchelli and Matthiae leaning towards a contemporaneity with the St Luke panel, while Farioli, Russo and Osborne date the fresco at the time of Pope John's renovation (523-6).

flanked by the two eponymous saints, Adauto to her left and Felice to her right.¹³¹ Adauto presents the widow Turtura to the Virgin, her identity and virtuous life being celebrated in the long, metric inscription painted below the fresco. This informs the reader that it was commissioned by Turtura's son, and also that she was buried within the 'basilichetta', although it has been ascertained that her tomb does not lie behind the fresco. This funerary, memorial and votive painting depicts, albeit in smaller size compared to the Virgin and martyrs, a Roman woman of some stature, probably pious, certainly wealthy, if her family was able to give such visibility to her memorial, and at the very centre the catacomb. Such patterns of patronage must have been apparent to the visitors, as they were clearly conveyed by the setting of the fresco and the accompanying inscription. Furthermore, there is evidence that liturgical functions were held in this space at least during the time of Pope Leo III (795-816): a graffito on the fresco reads '*non dicere ille secreta abboce*'.¹³² As the *secreta* were the silent liturgical prayers recited by the celebrant during the offertory, it is possible that the graffito was scratched by a zealous priest to prompt those more distracted or forgetful. In any case, it seems entirely possible that by the end of the eighth century not only was the catacomb of Commodilla still visited, but that those visits included the performance of an active liturgy in the vicinity of large, votive and venerated frescoes, which can be deemed influential for almost three centuries.

2.3 b) SS Marcellino e Pietro

Despite the popularity of Luke's fresco at the catacomb of Commodilla as a site for graffiti, the catacomb of SS Marcellino e Pietro proved the most popular, preserving 141 graffiti names, almost 43% of the total.¹³³ This wide sepulchral

¹³¹ The motif of the enthroned Madonna is one enormously popular, especially in Rome. Although the Virgin is here not represented as Regina, this fresco definitely constitutes an early version of the type, at least in Rome. See *infra*, ch. 4.

¹³² 'Do not say the *secreta* aloud'. Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 300; Carletti, '*Viatores ad martyres*', p. 203.

¹³³ See Carletti, '*Viatores ad Martyres*', pp. 201-2.

area was also known as *'ad duas lauros'*, probably from the name of the imperial property where in Constantinian times a circus basilica was erected that connected through a narthex to the mausoleum that the Emperor had ordered for himself and that was later used as the tomb of his mother. The Empress Helena came later to be regarded as a saint by association with the miraculous discovery of the relics of the True Cross; it is probably for this reason that the place of her supposed burial came to be increasingly venerated. The estate was a complex one, where the most interesting feature, recurring in several Constantinian works, is the set of portici/columnades enclosing both sides of the cemeterial basilica.¹³⁴ This area was restored and decorated as part of Damasus' programme, and again at various stages up to the time of Honorius (625-38). To him is ascribed the construction of the smaller basilica, dedicated to the eponymous saints, where most of the graffiti are preserved.¹³⁵ The graffiti in this 'basilichetta' can be therefore assigned to the period between Honorius' works of the early seventh century, and the final removal of the two martyrs' relics by Pope Gregory IV in 827.

The Anglo-Saxon names found here are:¹³⁶

1. Alaba
2. Almund
3. Ceolbert [famulus dei]
4. Giddo
5. [ego] Sassula
6. Pinca
7. Æthelfert
8. Fagihild¹³⁷

¹³⁴ See the description and illustrations in F. Mancinelli, *Le Catacombe Romane e l'origine del Cristianesimo*, Firenze 1981, pp. 39-43.

¹³⁵ Carletti, *'Viatores ad Martyres'*, p. 206.

¹³⁶ Most of these graffiti have been recorded only in Carletti's most recent article.

¹³⁷ These last two names are written in runic letters. Fagihild is the only female name recorded among the group of Anglo-Saxon ones.

Unlike those in the Commodilla catacomb, these are scratched on the undecorated walls of the 'basilichetta', while the cemetery itself preserves a wealth of third- and fourth-century frescoes of various themes, encompassing biblical and orphic scenes, Christ's miracles and representations of the Seasons. Although it is not possible to reconstruct with certainty the pilgrims' routes within the catacomb, it is probable that the pilgrims would have had access not only to the 'basilichetta', but also to other tunnels and sepulchres. Both the *Notitia* and the *De Locis* itineraries mention the martyrs Tiburtius, Gorgonius, Peter and Marcellinus as resting and being venerated in this cemetery. Indeed, the vault of one of the larger cubicles preserves a fourth-century fresco (PI.44) depicting all four martyrs flanking an image of the Lamb, which stands on a rock from which the four rivers spring. The eponymous martyrs are in turn shown praising the larger and central figure of Christ above them, enthroned as Judge and *Pantokrator* and flanked by the Apostles Peter and Paul.¹³⁸

2.3 c) Panfilo

Alongside the catacombs of Commodilla and SS Marcellino e Pietro, two sites remain to be considered, in each of which only one Anglo-Saxon name was recorded: the cemetery of Panfilo and the catacomb of Ponziano. While the other two sites – extensively researched – were popular ones and preserve a relatively large number of graffiti, the presence of an Anglo-Saxon name in a less renowned or visited catacomb can be taken as an even more significant sign of the diffusion of this phenomenon.

The cemetery of Panfilo on the via Salaria vecchia preserves the graffito of the one Anglo-Saxon pilgrim Headred [pr(es)b(ite)r]. This name – together with those of 33 other visitors¹³⁹ – is found in the larger of two consecutive cubicles that constitute the sepulchre dedicated to the almost unknown martyr Panfilus. This main room (PI.45) presents a deep *arcosolium* on the wall opposite the

¹³⁸ See *infra*, ch.6.

¹³⁹ Carletti, '*Viatores ad Martyres*', p. 202.

entrance; below it is a small altar, dated to the sixth century, made of a single block of stone, now stripped bare of the marble that probably covered it originally.¹⁴⁰ The altar has a small square opening at its base and a large round opening (maybe the *fenestella confessionis*) on its right. The top and therefore last layer of plasterwork in the main room is contemporary with or slightly later than the altar. It is to the left of this that the graffiti are clustered, including that of Headred. On the same wall is the recently discovered graffito SCS PANFILU (PI.45); this represents an unusual and extremely significant mention of the eponymous saint, one that is moreover not located on a painting of that saint, as would be expected, but in a discrete and entirely devotional way, apparently dissociated from any visual representation of the saint, and explained only by the sacred associations of the space itself.¹⁴¹ The decision by Headred to write his name here would thus indicate his intention to entrust the saint – and the other pilgrims – with his prayers.¹⁴²

2.3 d) Ponziano

The last of the Anglo-Saxon names appears in the catacomb of Ponziano on the via Portuense. The site, which is probably the least researched of the four, offers an extensive decorative scheme that is significant in the light of Anglo-Saxon viewers.¹⁴³ This was, and still is, ‘an extensive cemetery’ – partly unexplored – where most of the saints and martyrs were deemed of ‘secondary

¹⁴⁰ The elements for dating and for the general discussion on this catacomb are based on the precious information on an otherwise inaccessible site kindly provided by the correspondence with Dr Antongiulio Granelli, based on his unpublished doctoral work, ‘Il Cimitero di Panfilo sulla via Salaria vetus a Roma’. I am deeply grateful to him for sharing his first-hand knowledge of the site. Some reference can be found in A. Granelli, *Pamphili, Coemeterium*, in A. La Regina (ed.), *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae. Suburbium, Vol. IV*, Roma 2007, pp. 157-62.

¹⁴¹ Carletti, ‘*Viatores ad Martyres*’, p. 219; the graffiti are published in ICUR, X, 26317.

¹⁴² Another group of graffiti has also been preserved in a nearby gallery, on the remains of a fresco of the Virgin in a niche accompanied by the inscription DEI GENITRIX, dated to the beginning of the eighth century. See Carletti, ‘*Viatores ad Martyres*’, p. 207 and Mancinelli, *Le Catacombe Romane*, p. 48.

¹⁴³ This catacomb is also discussed at some length, compared to the others, because it was the only one that it was possible to visit. What follows is thus an integrated result of pre-existing secondary literature and first hand field-work.

importance'.¹⁴⁴ This marginal status is reflected by its sporadic mention in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which, nevertheless, records its restoration under Hadrian I (772-95) and Nicholas I (858-67).¹⁴⁵ Only eight graffiti have been discovered, including the one Anglo-Saxon name Healfred (**PI.46**). The exact location of this graffito, however, only becomes clear after a visit to the catacomb, where it is possible to ascertain that the name is located on the fresco of St Milix (**PI.50**), in the little chamber that constitutes the sepulchre of Milix and Pumenius, and probably also that of St Pollion, depicted on the main, frontal wall of the sepulchre (**PI.48-49**). The setting of this Anglo-Saxon graffito raises interesting questions about the sepulchre and its paintings, as well as the other focal point of the catacomb, the heavily decorated area of the so-called Baptistery, or sepulchre of SS Abdon and Sennen (**PI.47**).¹⁴⁶

The catacomb is located in the neighbourhood of Monteverde vecchio (south-west Rome), which, as indicated by the name, is a hill along the via Portuense, outside the city walls. Although apparently containing the remains of only 'minor' saints, it was nevertheless known of in the early medieval period, being included in both the seventh-century itineraries, possibly also because it was the burial place of two fourth/fifth-century popes.¹⁴⁷

The sepulchre of Pollion, Milix and Pumenius is a small and narrow room (c. 2m deep x 1.5m wide) that was created by blocking one of the underground galleries with a wall. This is decorated with a large image of the standing figures of Marcellinus (left), Pollion (centre), and Peter (right), identified by their names painted next to their large haloes (**PI.49**). Marcellinus holds a scroll in his left hand and blesses with his right; Pollion holds the crown of

¹⁴⁴ Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 317.

¹⁴⁵ *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 505 and vol. 2, p. 161; Davis (ed.), vol. 3, p. 232.

¹⁴⁶ The Baptistery was 're-discovered' after the sepulchre of Pollion had been identified, during Bosio's excavations of 1618. The cemetery was described for the first time in A. Bosio *Roma Sotterranea* (1632; reprinted in full-scale format in 1998 with an introduction by V. Focchi Nicolai). The paintings are described also by J. Wilpert, *Roma sotterranea. Le pitture delle catacombe romane*, Roma 1903 and, more recently, by Farioli, *Pitture di epoca tarda* and Matthiae-Andaloro, *Pittura Romana*.

¹⁴⁷ Anastasius (399-402) and Innocent (402-17).

martyrdom;¹⁴⁸ and Peter holds a scroll with both hands.¹⁴⁹ The entire panel is framed by a red and black double outline, which continues onto the lower part of the wall, to frame an area of simulated marble panelling. In the central part of the fresco, just below the figural painting, is a square opening, which seems to pre-date the decoration as it does not cut into or alter the painted frame.¹⁵⁰

The east wall (P1.50) encloses the sepulchre-memorial of the martyrs Milix and Pumenius, and it too bears a *fenestella confessionis* shaped as an arch (c. 50cm large), its intrados painted with geometric decoration in red, black and green; unlike the opening on the main wall this is set at eye level and offers a clear vision of the sepulchral chamber behind it. Furthermore, the decoration was composed (originally) around the opening. At the centre of the fresco is a jewelled cross (c. 6cm wide), which seems to stand at the apex of the *fenestella*; the central gem resembles a flower with eight petals, and the remains of foliate motifs can be seen at the base, although the lower portions are damaged due to the flaking of large portions of the plaster. The figures of Milix (left) and Pumenius (right) flank this cross; they both hold a sealed scroll: Milix is dressed in robes of the Byzantine court while Pumenius wears the customary garb of sacred figures, reminiscent of the Roman toga and tunic.¹⁵¹ The name of the Anglo-Saxon visitor Healfred is scratched on the lower part of Milix's robes.

The other area of interest in the catacomb is the so-called Baptistry or Sepulchre of Abdon and Sennen – two different names for the same site (P1.47-51). This space is accessible from what is likely the main entrance, a flight of stairs that leads down to a gallery, from which a second flight of stairs leads to an irregularly shaped room (c. 4.60m x 1.60/2.10m) filled with *loculi* (P1.52-54).¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ While apparently blessing with his left hand.

¹⁴⁹ Farioli calls it 'gesto oratorio', *Pitture di epoca tarda*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁰ It measures 40x30 cm. Although the aperture does not seem to open on a grave, it seems unlikely that the wall was re-decorated after the opening was inserted, although this must remain a possibility. Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', p. 319.

¹⁵¹ Wilpert gave full attention to the clothes represented in these paintings. See *infra*, p.96.

¹⁵² Styger suggested that originally the two flights of stairs were joined in a continuous/single one. See V. Fiocchi Nicolai, 'Considerazioni sulla funzione del cosiddetto Battistero di Ponziano

It seems that the walls were only subsequently reinforced and decorated, and the actual Baptistery was created by opening up a deep rectangular pool in the floor.

A bust of Christ is painted on the vault at the bottom of the flight of stairs (PI.53),¹⁵³ but most of the painted decoration focuses on the area around the pool. Here, the bottom wall (PI.54-55) has a deep vaulted niche decorated with a large jewelled cross and, above it, a panel depicting the baptism of Christ (John the Baptist to his right, a deer and an angel to his left, and the dove). The wall to the left has a second vaulted niche; the panel above it is decorated with a *coronatio martyrum* (PI.56) portraying the central bust of Christ flanked by the martyrs Abdon (left) and Sennen (right), receiving the crowns, and by the martyrs Milix (left) and Bicientius (right) in the *orans* pose. All can be easily identified by painted inscriptions. Painted on the continuation of the left wall is a further, fragmentary jewelled cross¹⁵⁴ the third such image in the catacomb. The cross flanked by Milix and Pumenius (PI.50) is rendered as a Latin cross, but is smaller than the other two, which are depicted in isolation, in discrete panels in the Baptistery. Of these, the cross in the vaulted niche on the north wall is the largest, but is now almost completely submerged in water; complete knowledge of its details is dependant on Wilpert's drawing of 1903 (PI.55).¹⁵⁵ This preserves the letters alpha and omega hanging from the transverse arm of the cross, attached by chains; above, and resting on the arms, are two large lit

sulla via Portuense', Z. Mari, M.T. Petratra, M. Sperandio (eds), *Il Lazio tra antichità e medioevo: studi in memoria di Jean Coste*, Roma 1999, pp. 323-32.

¹⁵³ A close comparison to this Christ – dated from the sixth (Belting) to the mid-seventh century (Osborne) – can be drawn with the Christ depicted at Generosa, where (see infra) it also appears a representation of the *coronatio*. Another example of bust of Christ in catacombs is in the crypt of S. Cecilia at S. Calixtus: this – also dated to the eleventh century – can be on the other hand compared with the later bust of Christ always at S. Ponziano (vaulted top of stairs S2; see following note).

¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the vault at the top of the flight of stairs S2 is decorated with a large bust of Christ with a crossed/jewelled halo, dated to a much later period, probably tenth/eleventh century. See Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', pp. 321-22 and Fiocchi Nicolai, 'Considerazioni', p. 326.

¹⁵⁵ This drawing, contrary to the opinion of Farioli, is trustworthy. Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', n. 237, p. 320.

candles. The cross itself is covered in jewels and pearls, and seems to spring from a rock, together with flowers and branches.

The dating of these paintings in the Catacomb of Ponziano has been of major concern to scholars discussing the decoration of Roman Catacombs, or early medieval Roman art more generally. Osborne, followed by Fiocchi Nicolai, dates all the paintings to the mid-seventh century, mainly on an iconographic basis and in connection with the information contained in the itineraries. Other scholars have instead recognized a marked stylistic difference between the frescoes of the sepulchre and those of the Baptistery, and dated them accordingly, from the sixth to the seventh centuries. Thus, Farioli, following Wilpert and Cecchelli, dates the painting of Pollion, Marcellinus and Peter to the sixth century, describing the figures as majestic, painted by a fine artist, and reminiscent of mosaic programmes of isolated figures set between windows, as in the late-fifth- or early-sixth-century mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna.¹⁵⁶ Wilpert also pointed to what he considered the fine depiction of the jewelled crown held by Pollion, and, while dating the frescoes to the sixth century, he judged the quality of the execution of the representation of Milix and Pumenius as 'inferior' to that on the main wall.¹⁵⁷ Wilpert also identified the words '*indulgentia... abundans*' painted under the cross arms, after the removal of mineral sediment, although the persistent infiltration currently encrusts and disfigures the painting to the extent that the figure of Pumenius, the inscription and part of the cross are barely legible.¹⁵⁸ The cross, like the figures, is dated by Farioli, Wilpert and Cecchelli to the sixth century. Matthiae also discussed the -paintings, and dated them on a stylistic basis, differentiating

¹⁵⁶ Farioli, *Pitture di epoca tarda*, pp. 17-9.

¹⁵⁷ Wilpert also mentions a stalactite layer/crust covering the paintings and suggested that it had probably already formed in 1618, when Bosio's initial excavations of the site took place, and that this should be blamed for Bosio's not very reliable representation of Milix (with the tonsure and 'absurd' clothing). It is interesting to note that Bosio's reproduction of catacombs paintings follow, throughout his work, the style and conventions of seventeenth-century drawings and engravings: most of the times they are quite unreliable, but still very important witnesses, especially for the less accessible or now damaged/destroyed sites.

¹⁵⁸ The plate in Farioli's work is clear, while Osborne mentions the 'heavy surface encrustation'.

the panel with Pollion (late sixth century) from that with Milix and Pumenius (early seventh century) and the frescoes of the Baptistery (late seventh century): in general he described the rendering of the figures as quite poor and provincial, apart from the 'noble' panel of Pollion, for which he deemed Byzantine influence to be more evident.¹⁵⁹

It is not surprising that the only suggestion of a possible date for the Anglo-Saxon graffito 'Healfred' is strictly connected to the dating of the paintings: while most commentators, through discussion of the style of the paintings, have assigned various dates within the sixth century, the palaeographer Carletti, who agrees with Osborne on the mid-seventh century date of the frescoes, assigns the graffito between this date and the early eighth century.¹⁶⁰ It is also worth mentioning that at least two of the paintings in the Baptistery bear witness to their patronage through the inscription: 'DE DONIS D(E)I ET S(AN)C(TO)R(UM) M(ARTYRUM) ABDON ET SENNEN GAUDIOSUS FECIT', which is painted in white letters just above the *coronatio* panel; a second inscription is placed under the bust of Christ at the bottom of the main flight of stairs and reads: 'DE DONIS D(E)I GAUDIOSUS FECIT'. Unfortunately Gaudiosus has yet to be identified, although the formula 'De Donis D(e)i' is also found on a marble *pergola* from S. Adriano al Foro Romano, dating in all likelihood to the papacy of Hadrian (772-95).¹⁶¹

The iconographic significance of decoration may provide further insight into the use of the catacomb and its graffiti; in Wilpert's discussion of the frescoes, he described the various types of clothing worn by the saints, describing a *lacerna* (cloak) depicted in the 'late' fresco at Ponziano, which

¹⁵⁹ Matthiae-Andaloro, *Pittura Romana*, pp. 117-20.

¹⁶⁰ Carletti, 'Viatores ad Martyres', p. 203.

¹⁶¹ 'Gaudiosus made (this) as gifts to God and to the Holy Martyrs Abdon and Sennen'; the first inscription is fairly damaged and has been completed/interpreted by Marucchi. Farioli, *Pitture di epoca tarda*, p. 25; Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', pp. 320-1. About Pope Hadrian inscription see AA.VV., *Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi*, Roma 2000, p. 79. It is possible that, being these formulaic 'hadrianic' inscriptions found in the Baptistery, only the Baptistery was the object of the Pope's restoration, and thus the suggestions of a different date for the paintings in the Sepulchre and those in the Baptistery would find a possible historical verification.

includes four different cloaks in the one scene: Christ with cruciform nimbus emerging from the clouds wears the tunic and *pallium*; the martyrs Abdon and Sennen wear a sleeved tunic, the *lacerna*, and the Phrygian cap; Milix wears a tunic and *clamyds*; while his companion Bicientius is tonsured and wears the clerical tunic and *penula*.¹⁶² Thus, as noted by Wilpert, Milix, who appears twice in the catacomb's paintings, is portrayed wearing different robes: in the Sepulchre he is depicted as a Byzantine dignitary, and in the Baptistery he wears the short military cloak of a soldier. Given the potentially diverse datings attributed to these frescoes (and therefore to the Anglo-Saxon graffito on them) this distinction may well provide further information concerning the dating of the paintings. Rather than pointing, stylistically, to different phases of decoration, the varied portrayals of Milix within a single space suggest that they may have been produced at a point when an official belonging to the Byzantine elite was also a member of the *exercitus* of Rome. This would link the image to the reality of Rome, at a time when the imperial presence in Rome was still active and recognizable.¹⁶³

In turning to consider the iconographic significance of decoration, some elements can provide not only additional information concerning the dating of the paintings, but also evidence about the possible changing function of the chambers. Here, the *coronatio* scene is worth considering in detail. Only two other examples of this subject appear in catacomb paintings: one at the Catacomb of Generosa (ante 682), the other in the now destroyed Oratory of Santa Felicita at the Trajan Baths (variously dated between the fourth and the eighth centuries, but with a slight preference for the first half of the sixth

¹⁶² Wilpert, *Roma Sotterranea*, chapt. III, par. 42 'Il vestiario nelle pitture delle catacombe'. In his work Wilpert grouped the paintings according to the themes represented. As we have seen, he dated the frescoes at Ponziano to the sixth century and probably defined them 'late' because dealing mainly with the very early phases of catacomb decoration.

¹⁶³ Possibly at the time of Justinian's re-conquest of Rome, although Roman nobility of Byzantine and military origin and status is attested throughout the seventh- and early eighth-century. See T.S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers. Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800*, London 1984.

century).¹⁶⁴ Despite their rarity in catacombs, martyrs or saints holding crowns are a common subject, both in Byzantine-inspired mosaic decoration in Ravenna (Battistero Neoniano – mid-fifth century; Battistero degli Ariani – early sixth century; S. Apollinare Nuovo – mid-sixth century) (PI.57) and – with slightly different details or composition – in Rome (PI.58): in the apse mosaics at SS Cosma e Damiano (Pope Felix IV, 526-30) and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura (Pope Pelagius II, 579-90), where the martyrs hold their crowns; or in the mid-seventh century apse mosaic at S. Stefano Rotondo, where the *manus dei* holding the crown is depicted in a clipeus above the bust of Christ. In none of these examples, however, are the saints crowned by Christ himself, as is the case at Ponziano.¹⁶⁵

Likewise, the badly damaged fresco in the Catacomb of Generosa (PI.59) portrays three of the four saints flanking Christ (Simplicio and Viatrice on the left; Faustino and Rufiniano on the right), standing and in the traditional pose of holding their crowns in their veiled hands. Here, the central full-length figure of Christ is represented putting the crown in the hands of S. Simplicio, while holding the book in his left hand. Coincidentally, these four martyrs are mentioned in the *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum*, under the via Portuense, immediately following the list with Ponziano's martyrs. Thus, this rare, in an underground context, iconography of the *coronatio* – although with variations in the composition – survives only in two catacombs, which are furthermore on the same via, and recorded under the same heading in one of the itineraries.¹⁶⁶

The *coronatio* panel at Ponziano seems not only to be one of three such images, but is also unique in depicting the martyrs in the act of being crowned

¹⁶⁴ See M. Valenti, 'Trasformazione dell'edilizia private e pubblica in edifici di culto cristiani a Roma tra IV e IX secolo', (unpublished thesis) 2003. Available online at <http://www.santamelania.it> (accessed March 2008).

¹⁶⁵ It should be mentioned that this particular iconography reminds the early images of the Apostles Peter and Paul being crowned, and ultimately links back to the Imperial iconography of crowning the two *Caesars*. See also the '*traditio clavis*' at Commodilla, and Pope Damasus predilection for 'pairs' of saints and martyrs, *supra*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁶ Unfortunately there is no possibility to trace the iconography of the third *coronatio* scene, in the Oratory of Santa Felicità.

by Christ himself, rather than holding or offering them to God. It is a more active representation of the coronation, almost an acknowledgement of their martyrdom, with the emphasis on the gift and recognition by Christ rather than on the symbolic, static figure of the martyr holding his or her jewelled wreath. The five-figured panel on the west wall of the Baptistery thus depicts a narrative action of the *coronatio*, while the fresco of Pollion with Marcellinus and Peter in the Sepulchre area is more traditionally rendered, with Pollion holding the crown – symbol of martyrdom – in his veiled hand, flanked by the equally static figures of the saints with their scrolls, also held in veiled hands.

It might be argued that the portrayal of an ‘active’ *coronatio* was chosen intentionally as part of the decoration of the Baptistery to underline its possible original function as the sepulchre of the martyrs Abdon and Sennen. Nevertheless, it is also consistent with the overall decorative programme of the chamber, especially if this was meant to stress the transformation of the resting place into a baptistery. The paintings effectively combine both themes, and the choice of the ‘active’ *coronatio* serves to emphasize Abdon and Sennen’s achievement; martyrdom was a direct path to sanctity, but the same path could be started and achieved through the new life of baptism.

Turning to consider the large, free-standing cross in the vaulted, bottom niche of the Baptistery, it clearly bears a highly symbolic and multi-layered meaning in such a context, and is moreover directly associated with the representation of the Baptism of Christ, painted on the panel just above. This decoration not only underlines the use of the space as a baptistery, but furthermore strengthens the sense of veneration and holiness of the place. In this site the ritual of baptism would take place in imitation of Christ, ‘witnessed’ by the cross, symbol of martyrdom, resurrection and eternal life, accompanied and surrounded by the presence of two martyrs, who are represented in such a way that their own sacrifice and victory over death are acknowledged by Christ Himself. This idea of renewal focused on what was probably the original burial place of Abdon and Sennen, and is even more

evident when the cross is taken into account, emerging from a rock on which grow branches and flowers. This detail serves as a double reference to the Tree of Life and to the Rock of Golgotha, and so points again to the death and resurrection of Christ.¹⁶⁷ In addition, it has been further suggested that the pool was used not (or not only) as a baptistery, but also as a form of constant relic *ex contactu*: the water was made holy, possibly even healing, by the presence of the martyrs and its vicinity to them and their tomb.¹⁶⁸

With this in mind it is worth returning to the itineraries (the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* and the *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum*) and noting the order in which the martyrs are listed: this provides further insight into how the site was perceived and experienced by visitors and – possibly – on the date of the paintings. In the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* the entry reads:

Discendis in antrum [...] Pumenius martir ibi quiescit, et Milix martir in altero loco, et omnis illa spelunca inpleta est ossibus martirum. Tunc ascendis [...] et in alio Polion martir quiescit. Deinde intrabis in ecclesiam magnam: ibi sancti martires Abdo et Sennes quiescunt.¹⁶⁹

From this it could be inferred that when the itinerary was compiled the relics of Pumenius, Milix and Pollion were not in the sepulchre built after their relocation: rather they were in two, if not three separate tombs, placed at different levels of the catacomb (discendis...tunc ascendis...). On the other hand, the relics of Abdon and Sennes had already been removed to a large church, in all probability a basilica *ad corpus* to which the pilgrims had access

¹⁶⁷ G. Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, Gütersloh 1968. [English transl. by J. Seligman, *Iconography of Christian Art*, Lund 1972, vol. 2, pp. 7-9.]

¹⁶⁸ Focchi Nicolai, 'Considerazioni', p. 327. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the presence of a Baptistery is not the most obvious feature of/in a catacomb: there is only one other documented instance, and this is the Baptistery in the Catacomb of S. Gennaro in Naples, dated to the mid-eighth century and also decorated with a panel painting of the Baptism of Christ.

¹⁶⁹ 'Descend in the cave [...] : the martyr Pumenius here rests, and the martyr Milix in a different place, and all that cave is full with the bones of the martyrs. Then go up [...] and in a different (place) Polion martyr rests. And after you will enter a large church: here sleep the saints Abdon and Sennen.' *Codice Topografico*, pp. 91-2.

after visiting the underground passages.¹⁷⁰ This could indicate that the Sepulchre of Pollion, Milix and Pumenius and the Baptistery are indeed characterized by separate and independent stages of decoration. On the other hand the *translatio* of Abdon and Sennen's relics does not automatically entail that their burial place was turned into a Baptistery (and accordingly decorated) at that time. The compiler, and therefore the user-reader of this itinerary, seems to emphasize here the geography of the catacomb, the location of the tombs and the action of walking in the galleries, to identify and participate in the presence of the many martyrs buried or commemorated there.

The text in the *De Locis* is shorter:

Iuxta viam Portuensem [...] sanctus Abdon et sanctus Sennis, sanctusque Milix et sanctus Vincentius, sanctus Polion, [...] sanctus Pymeon [...] dormiunt.¹⁷¹

In this case, listing the four names and pairing them, Abdon and Sennen, Milix and Vincentius, strongly implies reference to the *coronatio* panel, while the subsequent mention of the names Pollion and Pumenius, separated by a saint Julius,¹⁷² may suggest that at the time these two martyrs still rested in separate parts of the catacomb. It seems also to imply that the compiler, as the reader-user of this itinerary, enjoyed a more visual experience, recalling the fresco where all the martyrs were represented, regardless of the presence of their relics.

Here, combining such precious written sources as the itineraries with the material history of the site provides two very different perspectives on the same catacomb. This indicates that several potential and personal perceptions and experiences of a single site were possible for a visitor to that site. Of these, one

¹⁷⁰ Fiocchi Nicolai, 'Considerazioni', p. 327. This could mean that the sepulchre of Milix and Pumenius, with its decoration, was added at a later stage to the already existing blocked room with the panel painting of Pollion. The two frescoes could thus be in the same room but date to a different period. This may have been implicitly suggested by Farioli, when she pointed out that the face of Pumenius seems inspired by that of Pollion.

¹⁷¹ 'At the via Portuense, Saint Abdon and Saint Sennen, and Saint Milix and Saint Vincentius, Saint Pollion, Saint Pumenius [...] sleep.' *Codice Topografico*, pp. 107-8.

¹⁷² Not otherwise recorded on the via Portuense. He might actually belong to one of the cemeteries on the via Aurelia which is right before the Portuense in the itinerary, added by mistake to the wrong section.

individual Anglo-Saxon pilgrim has been identified, Healfred, whose name is scratched on the painting of the martyr Milix. A little known, probably local martyr was chosen as the repository of the name and devotion of a traveller from a distant land. As Milix's name is not preserved in any *passio*, despite being mentioned in both the mid-seventh century itineraries, it is unclear whether he appealed to the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim as a warrior or military martyr, or whether Healfred chose to leave his mark on the painting because of the jewelled cross flanked by Milix and Pumenius. It is entirely possible that Healfred experienced this site in one or both ways witnessed by the itineraries, and although he left his 'signature' on Milix's fresco it seems unlikely that he did not visit the Baptistery: the lack of graffiti in that area must be explained by practical reasons (the presence of water and the room being less freely accessible than the rest of the catacomb, precisely because of its use as a Baptistery or relic chamber). Considered together, the most likely date of Healfred's visit seems to be the second half/end of the seventh century, especially if the importance of the representation of the cross as connected to the papacy of Sergius I (687-701) is acknowledged.¹⁷³

2.4 Summary

Overall, pilgrims seemed to have been drawn to the catacombs for several reasons, and pilgrims from Anglo-Saxon England were apparently part of that well-established trend. They visited the most popular catacombs and the overlapping evidence of itineraries and graffiti confirms a phenomenon that was steadily growing during the seventh and eight centuries. Furthermore, close analysis of the Anglo-Saxon graffiti in relation to the catacombs, and careful consideration of the individual frescoes where the graffiti were inscribed, contribute to gain a wider understanding of the varied and dynamic experience that pilgrims could have when visiting the catacombs in early medieval Rome. The visual backdrop encountered by the Anglo-Saxons in the underground

¹⁷³ See *infra*, ch.4.

cemeteries included frescoes dating from third to seventh centuries; in addition, visits probably included participation in the liturgy, which could be communal or public (like at the cemeteries of Commodilla or the Baptistery at Ponziano), or could take place in a more private manner, as witnessed by the prayer-like graffiti in the sepulchre of Milix and Pumenius at Ponziano, or close to the altar in the catacomb of Panfilo.