Representations of architecture in late antiquity

Beatrice Leal

Text and bibliography: 99021 words.

Abstract

Buildings and architectural metaphors occupy an important place in early Christian literature. Heaven was conceived of as a city, Christ is a cornerstone, apostles and prophets are foundations and pillars, the Virgin Mary is a gateway to salvation and believers are living stones. This dissertation studies the equally inventive range of visual architectural symbolism in the art of the late Roman Empire and its successor states. Taking examples from across the Mediterranean basin, from Rome to Syria, it investigates why buildings were so often chosen for illustration and how they functioned as images, often as active protagonists within compositions.

Chapter one deals with late fourth-century funerary monuments; chapter two discusses the early fifth-century apse mosaics of Roman churches; chapter three covers the mosaic floors of Syrian and Jordanian churches from the fourth to seventh centuries, and chapter four moves between the Umayyad eastern Mediterranean and Carolingian and papal Rome, to discuss the renewed enthusiasm for architectural imagery in the eighth and early ninth centuries.

Buildings embodied many positive qualities, such as stability, tradition, authority, civilisation and wealth, and the open-endedness of architectural iconography enabled viewers to read multiple meanings into one image. The flexibility of architectural symbolism, the role of depicted buildings as both agents and mediators, and their effectiveness as embodiments of material splendour all contributed to the impact of architectural imagery. This dissertation shows how images of buildings were inventively deployed, especially at times of heightened social competition, as powerful expressions of institutional and religious identity and personal status.

Contents

Introduction

The built environment shapes our understanding of the world. Much of life – including making and experiencing images – takes place in or around buildings; social relations are expressed, maintained and challenged through the creation and control of structures and spaces; and most belief systems locate and celebrate the sacred in some kind of architectural setting.

Artists of many cultures have shown a preference for architectural motifs, from Gothic and Gandharan micro-architectural sculptures, to the architectonic compositions of Italian Renaissance paintings and Iranian miniatures.[1] I have chosen to approach the topic through the art of late antiquity, around the Mediterranean basin, in the late Roman Empire and its successor states.

In the three 'religions of the book', buildings are given symbolic importance. Heaven is described as a city in the Bible, and as a pavilion or a mansion with upper chambers in the Qur'an.[2] The Temple remained an important concept in Christian and Jewish thought, long outliving its physical existence. Architectural metaphors feature prominently in the Bible: for example, Christ is a cornerstone and a door

---

[1] On Gothic microarchitecture see Timmermann 2009, and on Gandharan arcaded compositions see Rowland 1946; Ebert 1994; Zubair 1997. For Italian examples see the London National Gallery online publication to accompany their 2014 exhibition 'Building the picture: architecture in Italian Renaissance painting', *http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/exhibition-catalogues/building-the-picture* (accessed 14/03/2016). For Iranian miniatures see Pauty 1935; Graves 2011, and for medieval Islamic architectural ornament in other media, Graves 2010.

[2] Revelation 21:10; Surahs 29:58; 34:37; 39:20.

(Acts 4:11; John 10:1), the apostles and prophets are foundations and pillars (Ephesians 2:20; Galatians 2:9), the Church is also a pillar (1 Timothy 3:15), believers are living stones (1 Peter 2:5), and those with faith look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Late antique and medieval theologians extended these metaphors, and devised new ones; for example the sixth-century *Akathistos* hymn describes the Virgin Mary as a sheepfold, a key to the doors of paradise, a steadfast foundation, a gate of sublime mystery, a gateway of salvation, a perfect dwelling, a pillar of virginity, an unshakeable tower and an unbreachable wall.[3]

This thesis studies the equally inventive range of visual architectural symbolism. I investigate why buildings were so often chosen for illustration, and in what circumstances they were depicted, and what they might have conveyed to their viewers.

The scope of the thesis

Late antiquity varies in length depending on the author. I follow the proposal for a 'long late antiquity', stretching from c.250-800.[4] According to Averil Cameron, late antiquity "has come to denote not simply a historical period but also a way of

---

[3] Limberis 1994, pp.149-158.

[4] On the 'long late antiquity' see Bowersock, Brown and Grabar 1999, esp. introduction and Kennedy, 'Islam', pp.219-237. For historiography and critiques see Cameron 2002; Marcone 2008; Rebenich 2009.

interpreting it".[5]   Bryan Ward-Perkins describes it as "a very flexible period, nowadays generally defined in cultural terms."[6] Both authors convey the sense that the definition of late antiquity remains open to question. A period which saw the spread of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the splitting of that empire, the 'fall' of the western half and the rise of various alternative powers, and finally the growth of the early Islamic Empire, cannot usefully be given a single definition. An advantage of the term 'late antique' is that it does not attempt to do this. Instead, one of the defining features of the epoch is its changeability, with various cultural and political groupings co-existing or competing. And individuals and groups that wished to create new identities for themselves – whether on the grand scale of the Roman popes, or within the micro-hierarchies of a single village – often used art as a method of self-definition.

Increasingly, power and position were gained and displayed through the Church. For this reason, my thesis focuses on artworks commissioned in Christian contexts. There are equally interesting architectural depictions in Jewish and pagan art, and I do not mean to suggest that the Christians invented a totally new form of architectural symbolism. However, the influential social role of the Church offers the widest range of situations to study the uses of these symbols. The exception is in the last chapter, where I discuss the creation of an Islamic architectural iconography at the end of late antiquity, and the ensuing renewed interest in architectural symbolism on the part of the Carolingians and their papal allies.

---

[5] Cameron 2012, p.7. Cameron associates the late antique 'method' in particular with Peter Brown.

[6] Ward-Perkins 2001, p.240. On the opposing hypotheses of continuity and catastrophe in the post-Roman world, also see Ward-Perkins 1997; Wickham 2005, pp.10-14.

Carolingian and Islamic architectural imagery need to be dealt with as topics in their own right, but here they form the end point to the story.

I only briefly discuss secular-imperial architectural images, for example on late Roman coins and consular diptychs.[7] However, it is important to note their existence as a source of architectural motifs, since connotations of officialdom, authority and tradition are relevant to the interpretations of images of buildings in other contexts.

Because my aim is to cover the range of uses of architectural imagery, not to claim one overall meaning for any particular motif, I make use of physically disconnected material, selecting groups of well-preserved examples from wherever they appear across the Mediterranean. I do not see any evidence for one-way influence from major 'centres'; patrons and artists working in villages in Jordan seem to have been just as ambitious and iconographically inventive as those working in papal Rome.[8] There are no remaining examples of architectural representations from late antique Constantinople, and I do not try to guess what they might have been, although medieval Byzantine manuscripts and icons with their elaborate built settings suggest that an earlier tradition probably existed. There are some large gaps in my survey; for example there is not room to discuss the depictions of Jerusalem on Georgian stele, or the columnar canon tables of late antique Insular and Frankish

---

[7] Coins: Smith 1978; Chrétien-Happe 2004. Diptychs: Olovsdotter 2005, pp.157-178.

[8] For the decentred development of actual architecture see Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, p.97.

manuscripts.[9]   However I hope to have covered enough ground to make the case for the widespread use of motifs of buildings and cities, with a shared repertoire of potential meanings.

I also seek to avoid an East-versus-West model.   There are differences in the available evidence; most of the eastern Mediterranean mosaics I discuss were floors uncovered archaeologically and the upper levels of decoration that went with them are lost, whereas the Italian examples tend to be apse and wall mosaics in churches still used today, with a millennium-and-a-half's worth of renovations and modifications around them.   However, the themes dealt with in the mosaics, such as the institutional identity of the church, and the social identity of the patrons, remain broadly similar.   Throughout late antiquity connections were made across and beyond the Mediterranean basin through trade, pilgrimage, ecclesiastical administration and diplomatic missions, so despite regional variations there was a considerable degree of common cultural understanding.

Literature review

One of the first to draw attention to the potential scale of the subject of architectural imagery was Paul Lampl.   In a short article he catalogued various formats of depicted building between the fourth and twelfth centuries.[10]   He was mainly concerned with identifying types, and their relationship with possible built

---

[9] See Gagoshidze 2014 on the Georgian material, and Nordenfalk 1938; Rosenbaum 1955; Nordenfalk 1992; Neuman de Vegvar 2007a on the architecture of cannon tables.

[10] Lampl 1961.

prototypes. A decade later, Earl Baldwin Smith carried out a more in-depth study.[11]

His book is wide-ranging, taking examples from several centuries BC up to the

1300s. There is a strong emphasis on continuity, with no explanation as to why

images were more popular in some periods than others. Smith focuses on the

visual and ideological links between palaces, temples and cities, but looks less at

how representations of these structures might have functioned in different

contexts. Art historians have also discussed antique and medieval architectural

iconography within studies of the symbolic meanings of actual architectural

forms.[12] The earlier writers tended to propose universal meanings for these forms.

More recent authors prefer to discuss how different groups of people might have

viewed and used structures, emphasising the roles that buildings play in the

construction of social landscapes.[13]

There are some surveys of architectural motifs on particular types of artefact, such

as reliquaries,[14] censers,[15] and sarcophagi.[16] Some individual images have attracted

---

[11] Smith 1978.

[12] Brown 1942; Lehman 1945; Smith 1950. The most in-depth iconographical study of
medieval architecture is Günter Bandmann's *Early medieval architecture as bearer of
meaning*, in which he proposes that forms in the abstract (*the* dome, *the* column) carried
meanings across cultural and temporal divides, "illustrat[ing] a commonality of concepts":
Bandmann 1951, p.45.

[13] For example Onians 1988; De Jong 2008; Sexton 2009.

[14] Bagnoli, Klein, Mann and Robinson (eds.) 2010, esp. Palazzo, pp.99-110; Elsner 2015.

[15] Gousset 1982; Westermann-Angerhausen 2014, pp.59-63; 86-93; 99-104.

[16] Altmann 1902; Lawrence 1927; Lawrence 1932; Elderkin 1935; Sansoni 1969; Haarløv
1977; Thomas 2011; Platt 2012.

special attention, for example the mosaic cityscape of Santa Pudenziana,[17] and the Madaba map.[18] There are also fairly large bibliographies on images of the Temple and of the Holy Sepulchre.[19] One specialised category of architectural image has attracted more attention than all the others: representations of heaven, in the form of the Heavenly Jerusalem.[20] In my opinion, the label of Heavenly Jerusalem has been too indiscriminately applied to architectural forms in Christian art. However, there is often a paradisiacal side to the images I discuss below, and the bibliography on architectural visions of heaven remains a useful resource. There are also studies of late antique and medieval images and concepts of cities in general.[21] The 1989 *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne* devoted a whole section to discussions of images of cities in art and literature, the authors debating the existence of a Christian city-type, the development of the polygonal walled city motif, and theological distrust or approval of cities.[22] In her book *A distant city*, Chiara Frugoni compares images and descriptions of cities from late antiquity to the Renaissance, in an investigation of how the images, and the settlements

---

[17] Conant 1956; Schlatter 1992; Schlatter 1995b; Pullan 1998; Carile 2012, ch. 4.

[18] Avi-Yonah 1954; Donner 1992; Ortolani 1994; Piccirillo and Alliata (eds.) 1999.

[19] Temple: Krinsky 1970; Rosenau 1979; de Silva 1996; Cohen-Mushlin and Kühnel 1997-8.
Holy Sepulchre: Kroesen 2000; Ousterhout 1990; Morris 2005; Neuman de Vegvar 2007a.

[20] Gousset 1974; Colli 1983; McClung 1983; Kühnel 1987; Butterworth 1994; Cohen-Mushlin and Kühnel 1997-8; Lidov 1998; Lutan 1998; Meyer 2003; Fleischer 2004; Muessig and Putter 2007; Carile 2009; Carile 2012.

[21] Baltrušaitis 1954; Lavedan 1954 ; Rosenau 1974; Bertelli 1999; Lilley 2004; Grig 2012.

[22] Duval (ed.) 1989.

themselves, might have been experienced.[23] Various writers have also discussed the topographical architectural vignettes in the mosaics of Jordan.[24]

Microarchitectural ornament is a sub-topic of its own. The term was coined by Francois Bucher in relation to Gothic architecture, and most of the literature on the subject deals with later medieval artefacts.[25] More broadly, several authors have discussed the cross-cultural fascination with miniaturised forms.[26] Part of the appeal of miniatures seems to be their complexity, and the attraction of complex patterns is an equally widely-recognised phenomenon.[27] Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos have advanced the discussion with their valuable analysis and catalogue of miniaturised architectural forms in Byzantine art in *Architecture as Icon*, and the topic will hopefully attract more attention in the future.[28] No research has yet focused on the vast amount of architectural ornamentation on

---

[23] Frugoni 1991. For other case studies of medieval urban experiences based on literary evidence, see Goodson, Lester and Symes (eds.) 2010.

[24] See chapter three.

[25] Bucher 1976, Timmermann 2009; Kratzke and Albrecht (eds.) 2008. For microarchitectural sarcophagi see n.16 above.

[26] Millhauser 1983; Mack 2007.

[27] Millhauser 1983, p.131. For the apotropaic functions of intricate patterns see Trilling 1995; Gell 1998, ch. 6.

[28] Ćurčić and Hadjitryphonos 2010. See Elsner 2015 for the architectural framing of relics in medieval Byzantine art. A conference held in December 2014, 'Microarchitecture and Miniaturized Representation of Buildings', at the Institut Nationale d'Historie d'Art, Paris, will hopefully lead to more publications on the subject.

Carolingian ivory book covers; this would be a chapter too far for my thesis, but the subject certainly needs exploring.

My thesis fits into a gap in the literature, as an investigation of the functions of architectural imagery of late antiquity. It will explore more widely than the existing catalogues and analyses of individual types and tropes, and attempt to go beyond identifying textual inspirations for images, to see why these motifs – of all those available to the artists and patrons – were chosen, and what they were meant to do.

Themes and methodology 1: agency and mediation

Two running themes of this thesis are agency and mediation: how images of buildings appear to act, and how they often act to connect viewers with otherwise distant spaces, persons, or states of being. In *The mediation of ornament*, Oleg Grabar makes a case for the role of architectural decoration in generating connections between objects and people, and I develop this concept below.[29] I also make use of the theories of Alfred Gell. Gell argued that in 'art-like situations', people treat objects as people, sometimes recognising that their agency is secondary, dependent on human action, but sometimes attributing it to the object itself. He therefore proposed interpreting art objects based on what they do, their relationship to action, rather than purely what they 'mean'.[30] Other authors have questioned the concept of object agency, but the core of Gell's argument, for seeing the engagement between art objects and viewers/users as active, remains

---

[29] Grabar 1992, p.44, ch. 4.

[30] Gell 1998, esp. ch. 1 and 2.

extremely influential.[31] This seems a particularly useful theory in the context of late antique Christianity. When sacred objects, images and buildings were routinely believed to contain the presence of Christ and the saints, and a whole class of images – the *acheiropoieta* – were believed to be made by and to channel divine agency, the boundaries between person and object were especially permeable.

Within compositions, buildings can be seen as agents when they take the place of human characters, or accompany them as active parts of a scene. Sometimes they directly replace a specific figure, as in fig. 29 in chapter one, where Peter and Paul acclaim a building marked with an ansate cross as a proxy for Christ. Images of buildings often visually dominate compositions, and in some cases are presented as the focus of attention of depicted characters, the structures appearing to determine the action around them. To put this in Gellian terms, they are the active part of the index (the image), in relation to the other motifs which interact with them. Buildings can also act as commentators, telling the viewer something about the status or significance of a person, place or object.

As well as standing in for or conditioning images of people, depicted buildings often commemorate and draw attention to actual human action. This applies most directly to commemorations of patronage; so for example a mosaic image of a building may embody and record the donation of that mosaic, while implying that the donor also paid for the entire building in which the mosaic lies. As manufactured forms, buildings reference human action more generally. Structures chosen for depiction are often large and grandiose, monumentalising the object or

---

[31] See Hoskins 2006 for a more recent discussion of object agency, and Morphy 2009 for a critique.

building on or in which they appear. They are also often visually complex, with small repeated elements such as drafted ashlar or decorative mouldings, making clear the effort and virtuosity of the mosaicists, and calling to mind the even greater labour put into the imagined prototype. However magical or heavenly a depicted building appears, such material details keep them grounded, and I suggest that part of their appeal is this bringing together of familiar and otherworldly forms.

Buildings and walls are inherently transitional, marking boundaries and distinguishing one space from another. When buildings are represented as integral parts of the decoration of actual structures there is also a sense of the image mediating between the real built space and the space of the depiction. Buildings seen from the outside, as they almost always are in late antique art, suggest an invisible but potentially accessible space inside or beyond them, and it will be seen that images of architecture are often compositional gateways, leading the viewer deeper into a decorative programme.

Themes and methodology 2: Flexible and relative symbolism

There are many positive qualities associated with buildings. They can represent safety and stability, tradition, culture, ceremony and authority, civilisation, hospitality, wealth, power and comfort, and probably more besides. Negative associations are harder to find. With the exception of prisons, there are few 'bad' buildings in Christian narratives (or non-Christian ones). Whole cities are slightly different; there is the trope of the sinful city, full of pride and self-importance and short on morals, but while these were enthusiastically described, they were rarely depicted in late antiquity. This means that architectural depictions could call on a range of desirable connotations, and that one building could stand for several

14

things at once. Many motifs in Christian art had fairly fixed meanings, and iconographies were developed to make the most-frequently told stories and situations recognisable, but architecture seems to avoid specific symbolic codification. I argue that the open-endedness of architectural iconography was one of its main advantages, encouraging viewers to read several of the potential positive meanings into one image.

As Henry Maguire has shown, meaning in Byzantine art was often conveyed by comparisons. Rather than a motif or style having absolute significance, it was determined by how it was set against others, either in the same image, or in ones from similar contexts.[32] Maguire gives an example of the varying depictions and descriptions of colour. Earthly polychromy, *poikilia*, was contrasted in some cases with the pale gold of heaven, which could be described as colourless, but in other contexts gold would itself be described as multi-coloured.[33] Just as colours may evoke strong associations without having universal meanings, I argue that depictions of architecture are best interpreted in terms of their specific context, and that even within one composition they may be open to more than one interpretation. For example, an image of a bejewelled ciborium might appear otherworldly and paradisiacal in comparison with the real fabric of the church in which it is viewed, while seeming familiar and solid compared with more abstract or idealised motifs depicted alongside it. So while the case studies below include iconographic analysis, and draw comparisons with architectural metaphors in late antique literature, I do not attempt to find fixed or generalised meanings for

---

[32] Maguire 2012, p.130, 144.

[33] Maguire 2012, p.130.

particular built forms separate from their place within a composition. In each chapter I also discuss the wider social contexts of the images, particularly asking questions about patterns of architectural patronage – what kinds of building were being invested in, by whom, and what their relationship was to the patrons and viewers of the images – in order to understand why one motif might have different inflections at different times. It is also important to consider the likely patterns of movement and behaviour around the images, and their visual accessibility to different social groups. Among the authors whose work I follow in this approach are Jaś Elsner and Ann Marie Yasin.[34]

Themes and methodology 3: modes of representation and reality

Because buildings are such familiar and tangible forms, their depictions seem to come with almost automatic associations of solidity and reality. This has led to some confusion in the art historical literature. Several of the images I discuss below have been described as realistic or naturalistic, which in my opinion over-simplifies a more complex situation of simulated space. The area of art history in which these issues tend to be dealt with is a long way from late antiquity. Computer game and film theorists have analysed the construction and reception of 'realities', and identified the factors likely to influence viewers' or players' perceptions of constructed worlds.[35] Writers in film and game studies often describe these creations in terms of 'hyper-realism'. I prefer to use the term verism. Verism has

---

[34] Elsner 1994, 1995, 2013; Yasin 2005, 2009, 2010.

[35] For example see Aitken and Zonn (eds.) 1994, esp. Hopkins; Wolf 2012; Kapell and Elliot (eds.) 2013.

no more of a basis in antique terminology than hyper-realism.[36] However, my aim in using this term is to make what I think is a productive comparison with the visual tactics of veristic Roman portraiture. In particular I want to highlight the strategic rather than the mimetic qualities of the images.[37] One of the techniques identified by film theorists for creating an "illusion of completeness" is the inclusion of incidental details, especially flaws. For example, *Star Wars* "portrayed a lived-in universe; vehicles and equipment had dirt, scratches, rust and other grit that contributed to a 'used' appearance with the wear-and-tear of a past history."[38] The "wrinkles and warts and other physical defects" of Roman veristic portraiture can be seen in a similar light, as iconographical markers of authenticity, referring to desired personal qualities and signalling life-likeness without necessarily resembling the subject.[39] In the same way, certain details of depicted buildings act as clues to the viewer of the genre of the image, and as prompts to accept the image in a certain way. One of the iconographical markers of architectural authenticity is detail, especially detail defining materials, such as stonework and window mouldings, and individually-outlined roof tiles. Other indicators are haphazardness, asymmetry and variety: buildings shown at odd angles, or obscuring each other, and different types of structure shown close together. The second mode of representation I discuss, which exists in opposition to the veristic,

---

[36] Franz Wickhoff was the first to describe Roman portraits as realistic or illusionistic, in opposition to 'idealised' Greek sculpture: Wickhoff 1900, pp.18-19, and verism was still a new term in English art historical writing in the 1950s: Richter 1955, p.39.

[37] For a critique of the realist reading of Roman portraits see Nodelman 2002, pp.38-41.

[38] Wolf 2012, p.43, also p.50 on the 'saturation effect' of detail.

[39] Richter 1955, p.39. For modes of late antique portraiture and iconic depiction, see Kitzinger 1976; Belting 1994, ch.4 and 5, esp. pp.98-99; Fleischer 2001.

is the ideal or iconic, in which the viewer is not persuaded to accept the structure as real, but encouraged to treat it as emblematic. Iconic buildings are usually symmetrical, and shown in frontal view, separated from other structures or motifs. Detail is focused on decorative or potentially meaningful features, and if their materiality is emphasised at all, the materials are luxurious – gold, jewels and textiles. These structures can represent otherworldly spaces, somewhere beyond normal materiality, or act as icons of completely abstract concepts. As will be seen in the case studies below, the iconic and veristic modes are defined in relation to each other, sometimes co-existing in the same composition. Indeed, one of the key advantages of architectural imagery is the way in which symbolic forms can gain presence by their veristic qualities – for authenticity, just add architecture.

Chapter outline

In chapter one I look at the architectural imagery which decorated early Christian tombs, from catacomb paintings to the city-gate sarcophagi of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Taking mainly Italian examples, I show how individuals used images of built structures to define their religious and social identities. Although there was an existing pagan tradition of architectural funerary motifs, for example the half-open door to the afterlife, a new symbolic repertoire was developed for Christian tombs. City walls were used as symbols of urban Christian identity, advertising the deceased's access-all-areas pass to paradise. Visual associations between columns and saints were also particularly popular on fourth-century Christian sarcophagi, alongside similar metaphors in contemporary literature, emphasising the link between *ecclesia* as building, and as community. As definite but permeable boundaries between insides and outsides, buildings make good symbols for the transition between life and death. I show how this potential was

exploited in the fourth and fifth centuries, in the context of changing burial practices and the spread of Christianity into urban elites, to create particularly inventive and elaborate monuments.

In chapter two I discuss three architecturally-inclined wall mosaics, in the fifth-century Roman churches of Santa Sabina, Santa Pudenziana and Santa Maria Maggiore. Commissioned at a time of expanding ecclesiastical patronage, all three churches have ambitious decorative programmes. Within them, buildings took on the roles of characters, amplifying the significance of depicted human figures, or replacing them completely. As on the sarcophagi, architectural motifs were also used as metaphors of Christian 'community', defined by the Church. This chapter also introduces a motif that recurs throughout (and beyond) late antiquity – a pair of jewelled city gates, or entire cities, sometimes identified as Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Beyond celebrating the places of Christ's birth and resurrection, the image can be interpreted in various ways, and I argue that their conventional identification as symbols of the converted Jews and Gentiles is misleading. In analysing the three mosaics, I show how depictions of ideal structures within actual buildings blurred the lines between the Biblical past, the present, and the heavenly future. Chapter two ends with a discussion of Roman apse mosaics of the sixth to ninth centuries, in which the range of architectural representation diminished, being largely limited to the repeated images of the two jewelled cities, and patrons holding model churches.

Chapter three moves to the eastern Mediterranean, to the church floor mosaics of Syria and Jordan between the mid-fifth and seventh centuries. The architectural images here have a more down-to-earth flavour. In contrast to the exotic golden and jewelled confections of the West, we see veristic images of earthly churches

and cities. The most complex architectural compositions are the earliest in the sequence, the mid-fifth-century floor of the church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayyibat al-Imam in Syria, and the latest, the eighth-century mosaic of the church of St Stephen at Umm ar-Rasas in Jordan. The bulk of the topographic mosaics of Jordan and the 'church portraits' of Syria are simpler, and have a more restricted range of meaning. They predominantly seem to be used as indicators of wealth – either as commemorations of church patronage, or as images of the riches of the abundant earth. They may also have defined the functions of certain areas of church buildings. The central characters in the majority of the Jordanian mosaics are plants, not buildings, and this chapter will explore the possible reasons for limiting architectural iconography in this way.

In chapter four I document the renewed interest in the symbolic treatment of buildings at the very end of late antiquity. This is apparent in the decoration of Lombard and Carolingian churches, in Carolingian ivory carvings and manuscript illuminations, and in objects and mosaics from contemporary Rome. At the same time a distinct strand of architectural iconography was developed in early Islamic art. This chapter is structured around two case studies from opposite sides of the Mediterranean, the portico wall mosaics of the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus, completed in 715, and the arch mosaic of Santa Prassede in Rome, laid around a century later. I finish with Santa Prassede not only because it was the most ambitious architectural programme designed in Rome for several centuries, but also because it marks a turning point in architectural symbolism in Christian art, moving to a more recognisably medieval model of the Heavenly Jerusalem. I discuss this fresh interest in using images of buildings to convey significant meaning, with old motifs reworked and new ones developed, in the context of the

changing systems of power. New dynasties were once again creating visual identities for themselves, the Carolingians, Umayyads and the popes all to some extent seeing themselves as the heirs of the Roman Empire.

The rotunda of St George, Thessaloniki: an introductory case study

In the following four chapters, I argue that built forms play more important roles than previously acknowledged, promoting them from being mere background to being leading actors. I will start by introducing a composition which consists, in its remaining parts, of almost nothing *but* architecture. The grandiose golden mosaics of the Rotunda of St George in Thessaloniki provide a good introduction to some of the key points of the thesis, a sneak preview of architectural motifs in action.

The rotunda was built during the reign of Galerius (305-311), next to his palace, most likely intended as either a temple or mausoleum. Then, probably in the late fourth or early fifth century, it was converted into a Christian building with the addition of an ambulatory and an eastern apse.[40] In this second phase, the church was connected to the Arch of Galerius by a colonnaded walkway, perhaps still part of the palace complex, and may have served as an imperial palatine church.[41] After conversion to a church, the interior of the drum and dome were covered with mosaics.[42] They showed Christ in a central medallion at the top, carried by four

---

[40] Mentzos 2001, p.61, 73-78.

[41] Mentzos 2001, p.69. Alternatively (or in addition) it may have been a martyrium: Kleinbauer 1972, p.55.

[42] Exactly when the mosaics were laid is debated, with dates between the late fourth and early sixth century proposed: Kleinbauer 1972, pp.86-107; Spieser 1984, pp.160-164; Torp

angels; on the next register down, a number of figures (with only their feet still preserved) walk across a green landscape; and below that – the lowest layer and the only one more-or-less intact – a dazzling assortment of golden buildings, inhabited by saints (fig. 1).[43] The mosaics are of high quality, and extremely impressive even in their damaged state.

There are seven architectural panels, with an eighth above the apse now lost. The structures have large double-storeyed central elements, and symmetrical domed or gabled wings to either side. The buildings are composed in pairs across an E-W axis: the NE and SE panels show hexagonal buildings in the foreground with domes above (fig. 2); in the N and S panels polygonal ciboria are depicted in front of peacock-feather niches, with gabled buildings above (fig. 3); to the NW and SW there are domed ciboria in front of gabled buildings topped by canopies (fig. 4), and in the western panel there is a columned exedra, also with a canopy above (fig. 5). Inside the ciboria and the flanking buildings are various articles of ecclesiastical paraphernalia: books, screens, fountains, jewelled crosses and candlesticks. Lamps and jewelled crowns hang from the ceilings, curtains are pulled back beside openings or wound around columns, and birds perch next to vases and crosses on the rooftops. In the western panel (and so perhaps in the lost eastern one), the domes of the flanking wings of the building sprout waving leaves. The buildings have brightly coloured decorative mouldings, roof tiles and jewelled bands, otherwise they are almost entirely golden, as is the background. In front the buildings, either side of the ciboria or altar-like structures, stand sixteen named

---

1991; Mentzos 2001, pp.71-79; Bakirtzis, Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Mavropoulou-Tsioumi 2012, pp.115-116.

[43] Bakirtzis, Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Mavropoulou-Tsioumi 2012, figs.22-70.

male saints, in pairs and threes, all with their arms raised. Taking into account the missing eastern panel, there were probably twenty of them originally. The saints are a mixture of ecclesiastics, soldiers and civilians, young and old, and were mostly known as martyrs.[44]

I do not intend to reanalyse the mosaic in detail here, but rather use it to outline some of the qualities of architectural imagery that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. My first point is the ambiguity of the structures. Almost everyone who writes about the mosaics takes the dome composition to represent heaven in some form.[45] But as Hjalmar Torp points out, while the buildings very loosely recall the description of the Heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation, they have undergone important modifications.[46] They are shown without any overly-specific motifs that would pin them down to being the apocalyptic city, such as a river, the Lamb or the four winged beasts. They do not even follow the biblical description of the architecture, beyond a general impression of precious materials – no pearl gates, in fact no gates at all, and the jewels are not divided into their twelve canonical types. Instead the buildings incorporate features from other visual

---

[44] On the appearance of the saints, see Kiilerich 2007.

[45] Sotiriou 1972, p.224, describes the scene as "Heavenly Church, Lidov 1998, p.341, sees it as "the New Jerusalem descending from Heaven", and Mentzos 2001, p.74, suggests that it is "the lower zone of Heavenly Jerusalem". Alternatively, Kleinbauer 1982, p.29, 34, 36, suggested that the structures represent an idealised version of the rotunda itself, and the orants living or recently dead donors.

[46] Torp 2002, p.7. Kleinbauer 1972, p.29, makes a similar point when he talks of a "selective integration" of references to the Second Coming.

traditions: the golden roofs and elaborate cornices are reminiscent of palaces,[47] the furnishings, and perhaps the tripartite format, suggesting church settings, and some inspiration may come not from actual structures at all, but from the earlier architectural images of elite domestic paintings.

Maria Sotiriou has suggested that the buildings represent a Heavenly Church, of which earthly churches are the antitype.[48] Torp on the other hand proposes that the golden structures represent the Tabernacle, as described in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, with "gold pillars supported by silver bases and decorated with similar silver capitals…all around shone the brightness of these precious metals… Furthermore, there were curtains artistically woven of diverse colours".[49] Both interpretations seem plausible, but it is interesting that the representation is not exact in either case – with the altars and crosses removed, the buildings do not look much like churches, and it seems unlikely that they literally represent eight slightly different Tabernacles, with no arks or mercy-seats in sight. The imagery is open-ended, combining the iconographies of church, temple, palace and heaven, encouraging overlapping interpretations.

The structures also appear physically ambiguous; the impression is less of solid buildings than of a series of golden spaces held together with columns, somewhere between interiors and exteriors. This leads on to my next point, that the architectural space is transitional, apparently permeable, leading to the other levels

---

[47] Carile 2013, pp.105-115.

[48] Sotiriou 1972, pp.223-224.

[49] Torp 2002, p.12; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 171-172; Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p.97.

of the programme. As the lowest layer of mosaics, it is in the closest contact with

viewers, directly above the arches of the actual built space they stand in, and gives

them a way in to the more idealised zones above.[50] Compositions of banded

designs, with an architectural band at the bottom, were also used in the mosaics of

Sant' Apollinare Nuovo and the Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna. The human

figures are also arranged in layers. Christ and the angels are the most inaccessible,

set in the most dematerialised surroundings. The figures on the next layer down,

perhaps prophets or elders, wear apostolic costumes of sandals and white robes,

in a simply outlined landscape, so again they are set apart from the everyday world.

The architectural layer on the other hand is inhabited by differentiated and named

saints, who wear detailed contemporary costumes, and look outwards towards the

viewer, holding out their arms. The buildings and their saints are set at the border

between the material world of the viewer and heaven, and as Sotiriou suggests, act

as the gateway. The buildings are the main protagonists of the lower level,

dwarfing the saints, so the human figures should probably be seen as secondary,

enhancing the effect of the architecture and welcoming the viewer into it, rather

than being the focus of the composition.

Thirdly, the mosaics vividly illustrate the ability of architectural imagery to convey

extravagant splendour. After a certain point, you cannot add more jewelled

costume to a depicted person without overwhelming the figure, but no such

restriction applies to adding extra layers of ornament to buildings; those in

Thessaloniki even have jewelled bobbles on top. This is distilled architecture –

buildings with the boring bits taken out – leaving only the features which convey

---

[50] Nasrallah 2005, p.495, also discusses the mediating role of the architecture.

grandeur and glitz. As I discuss in chapter two, a vision of heaven recounted by Gregory the Great included golden houses reserved for people who gave their wealth to the Church.[51] The sixth-century vision of St Martha also revealed that the saints each received their own palace in heaven.[52] So there was a theological justification for the display of architectural wealth, providing that enough signifiers of church or heaven were also included. The desire to impress the viewer, and to advertise the earthly varieties of wealth and status, are likely to have been in play at Thessaloniki, and in many of the case studies in the chapters below. It is interesting that Torp suggests the frescos of San Julián de los Prados, Santullano, as the closest visual comparison to the mosaics of the rotunda.[53] Santullano was a royal foundation, built for Alfonso II of Asturias (791-842). The later scheme is not identical to the mosaics of the rotunda, but the overall aesthetic is similar. The church in Thessaloniki was connected to an imperial palace, and, according to Aristotle Mentzos, the mosaics may have been commissioned on the occasion of Valentinian's promotion to Caesar in the 420s.[54] Laura Nasrallah argues that the martyrs in the rotunda, in their rich courtly or ecclesiastical costumes and their palatial settings, were intended to depict a "new senatorial class" of Christian elite.[55] Either way, the golden architecture adds imperial-scale grandeur, giving extra scale and sparkle to what was already a grand building.

---

[51] Brown 2015, p.27; Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4:37; PL vol.77, col.388; Zimmerman 1959, pp.239-242; p.312 below.

[52] Carile 2009, p.94.

[53] Torp 2002, pp.5-6; Schlunk and Berenguer 1957, pp.18-31, 53-105, pl.2-17.

[54] Mentzos 2001, pp.78-79.

[55] Nasrallah 2005, p.490, 507.

The ambiguity and flexibility of architectural imagery, the role of buildings as mediators, and their effectiveness as embodiments of material splendour will be recurring themes throughout this thesis. Another quality shared by the mosaics of the Rotunda of St George and some of my other case studies is that they are noticeably difficult to interpret, or even to place in clear comparisons with others, appearing to be unique, experimental programmes. On the other hand, individual components of the rotunda programme, like the arch hung with a lamp, or the curtain twisted around a column, were repeated many times in other compositions, over centuries. In the chapters below I look at a range of architectural depictions, from the exceptional to the standard, to discover what they might have conveyed to their original viewers.

The story now starts a couple of centuries before the mosaics of Thessaloniki were laid, in the catacombs of Rome, with the first examples of Christian architectural symbolism.

Chapter one: architecture in late fourth- and early fifth-century funerary art.

The majority of the earliest known Christian art is commemorative. There are records of mosaics, wall paintings, textiles and precious metal fittings and objects in churches of the fourth century, but for the most part we do not know what they looked like. And such artefacts are outnumbered by the thousands of remaining decorated sarcophagi, and other tomb markers such as catacomb paintings, incised stone plaques and gold glass medallions.

This chapter considers aspects of the new visual language of commemoration that was created on memorials of the late fourth and early fifth century, constructing

an image of a Christian community to which the living viewer and the deceased belonged, in relation to pagan or heretic outsiders. This language was heavily architectural, using built structures to visualise concepts of group identity and personal salvation. Compositions and motifs were repeated, in different combinations and variations, not only on a large number of sarcophagi but also on less expensive forms of memorial. This repetition and variation shows how early Christian patrons in different sections of society visualised their ideas about death and the afterlife using a shared range of forms: the tower, the column, the gate and the walled city. I propose that these structures were intrinsically powerful carriers of referential meaning, associated with many positive qualities, but without being resolved as fixed signifiers of any one of them.

The distinction between the inside and outside of the depicted structures is important, but rarely straightforward. Fictive openings, barriers and screens imply boundaries that can be crossed, redefining the space of the viewer on one side and leading them into the imagined spaces on the other. Placed on the outsides of tombs, the images are physical limits between the living and dead. They are also mental barriers, directing attention away from the closed stone box to the elsewhere of the afterlife, distant from the viewer but still visually accessible.

The chapter starts with tentative beginnings of a symbolic treatment of buildings in a number of catacomb paintings. I then focus on two formats of memorial in which a specifically Christian architectural repertoire first appears: the columnar and the city-gate sarcophagi. Lastly, I discuss how the forms associated with these types were copied and modified in other media. This chapter also introduces some of the key architectural metaphors elaborated by early Christian writers, which were reimagined and represented in different forms throughout the first millennium,

such as the apostles as columns or towers, Christ as a door, and the Christian community as a city.

Catacombs

The oldest surviving Italian catacombs probably date to the late second century, and remained in use until around the end of the fifth century, providing approximately 41,800 individual burial spaces in Rome alone.[56] In some cases these chambers were shared by pagans, Christians and Jews, and many popular elements of the painted decoration, such as fruit, flowers and birds, do not overtly advertise religious identity and could have been equally used by all groups.[57] Micro-architectural forms – painted columns, screens and panelling – were sometimes used to enhance the spaces, pushing back the walls of rather claustrophobic chambers; again these conventions do not seem to be restricted to one or other religious sect.[58] Where Christian tombs can be clearly identified, the most common figural images depicted around them were the Good Shepherd, orant figures and scenes from Biblical 'rescue' stories such as Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah, Noah and the three youths in the furnace.[59] The human actors in these narratives were

---

[56] Bodel 2008, p.185. The majority of burials in Roman catacombs date to between 350 and 450, and the latest recorded burial was in 535: Osborne 1985, p.280.

[57] Johnson 1997, esp. pp. 52-53; Elsner 2003, pp.116-117.

[58] E.g. Ferrua 1991, fig.141, 147.

[59] For example, Wilpert 1903, pl.5, 9, 13, 16, 25, 26, 42, 43, 45, 47, 55, 56, 58, 137, 172, 212.

generally shown in isolation, without the distraction of detailed architectural or landscape settings.

In some cases buildings were treated as significant elements in narrative scenes. Several examples of scenic architecture are present in the 'New Catacomb' on the Via Latina. This complex of thirteen painted chambers was dug and decorated in four phases, the majority of the paintings associated with phases II (c.315-325) and IV (c.350-370).[60] All painted phases include the familiar scenes of rescue and ornamental motifs, but also Old and New Testament stories previously unknown in catacomb decoration, several of which are given architectural settings. Sometimes, the buildings are demanded by the story, as in the depiction of the tomb in the two paintings of the Raising of Lazarus in cubicula C and O.[61] But in one or two cases, the depicted architecture seems to go beyond or even contradict the narrative, and it seems likely that it was invested with more complex meanings. For example, in a painting in cubiculum O of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, a stone exedra is depicted behind Christ, despite the Biblical description of the miracle – in fact, the whole point of the miracle – as happening in a deserted rural place (fig. 6). The composition functions as an honorific frame for Christ, recalling the placement of statues of Roman emperors or deities in exedrae in public spaces.

---

[60] Ferrua 1960; Tronzo 1986, chapter 2, esp. p.17; Ferrua 1991, fig.3.

[61] Ferrua 1991, fig.67, 137. Lazarus' tomb is shown as a gabled building, with steps up to a door on the façade, and narrow windows on the side. The identification of similar buildings next to Samson killing the Philistines, and behind the soldiers gambling for Christ's clothes, is trickier; Ferrua suggests that one is the temple which Samson would later pull down, and the other Christ's tomb: Ferrua 1991, fig.87, 119.

An additional layer of meaning may have been given to this traditional honorific

architecture in a later cubiculum in the San Gennaro catacombs in Naples, probably

decorated in the fifth century. Either side of a central niche, which is likely to have

contained an image of Christ, are two lunettes each enclosing a pair of standing

figures. On the right are Saints Paul and Lawrence, identified by inscription, and on

the left are Saint Peter, recognisable by his distinctive hairstyle, and an unidentified

man, perhaps either Saint Stephen or Saint Januarius (figs. 7 & 8).[62] Behind each

pair of men there is an exedra, terminating in substantial columns which stand

beside them in the foreground, reaching to their shoulders. The columns are

highlighted with diagonal shading to give them depth, also suggesting fluted

marble, while the carved structure behind them is much more lightly sketched.

Given the metaphorical correlation of saints and apostles with pillars or columns,

which will be discussed below (pp.35-37), it seems likely that the visual match was

deliberate. A fragmentary painting from the Catacombs of Praetexstatus also

shows St Paul next to another figure, presumably St Peter, against a background of

tall tower-like buildings of roughly human proportions (fig. 9).[63]

The clearest example of a building being given an overtly symbolic meaning in the

decoration of a Christian catacomb comes from a third-century cubiculum in the

San Gennaro complex. Three women are depicted in the act of building a

crenellated tower (fig. 10).[64] The image appears to be inspired by the mystical

poem, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, in which the author has a vision of female

personifications of Virtues standing by a tower, representing the Church, in which

---

[62] Fasola 1974, p.102, fig.69, pl.6:b.

[63] Wilpert 1903 pl.181; Bisconti 1989, fig.9.

[64] Fasola 1974, p.26, fig.14.

the "square white stones which agree exactly in their joints" are the apostles and clergy.[65] In the poem, the tower is constructed by young men, and the decision to show the women themselves as the builders effectively makes it clear that the scene is allegorical, distancing it from representations of actual building-sites.[66] While this composition is not known to have been repeated elsewhere, the concept of the Church as a tower remained important throughout late antiquity.

There was a long-standing Roman tradition of visualising the entrance to the afterlife as a door or gateway.[67] Closed or half-open doors were represented on urns and ash chests from the third century BC, and on sarcophagi from the second century AD.[68] These resemble the doorways of buildings, perhaps tombs or temples, often shown in some detail with door-knockers and decorated panelling.[69] The passage between life and death is depicted in this way in cubiculum F of the Via Latina catacomb, with a figure vanishing through a hinged door on one side wall, and on the other, a door being held open by two figures, perhaps welcoming the deceased to the afterlife (fig. 11). While this chamber also contains Old Testament scenes, the doorway image is not specifically Christian; taken from the traditional iconography of commemoration, it does not make a strong statement of religious identity.[70] More often, in the catacombs, these gateways were depicted as freestanding arches. For example, a mid-to-late fourth-century painting above a

---

[65] Hermas, *The Shepherd*, Vision III:2-8; Taylor 1903, pp.77-90.

[66] For example the construction scene in the tomb of Trebius Justus: Casalone 1962, fig.4.

[67] Casagrande-Kim 2012, ch.6, esp. pp.180-181; Elsner 2013.

[68] Haarløv 1977, p.31, 42, and catalogue.

[69] Haarløv 1977, fig.12, 26b, 46, 52b.

[70] Casagrande-Kim 2012, p.196.

pagan tomb in a mixed pagan-Christian catacomb shows Vibia, the deceased, being escorted by the 'good angel' through a simple archway into the Elysian Fields (fig. 12).[71] In a phase II painting from the Via Latina complex, the gateway of Eden through which Adam and Eve are expelled is shown as an arch of this kind.[72] Other examples of the archway motif from pagan contexts have been found in the Isola Sacra at Ostia.[73]

There were occasional depictions of cities in the catacombs, although without the iconographic complexity of the imagery on later sarcophagi. In the arcosolium of cubiculum B of the Via Latina catacomb, Jacob and his sons are shown travelling towards Egypt, represented as a walled city by a river. The city has a large gate on the near wall and the tops of grand buildings are visible inside (fig. 13). Formally this is not an innovation; cities were depicted in a similar way in non-Christian narrative paintings. For example, a first-century Pompeian painting of Daedalus and Icarus shows a city in the background, also in partial bird's-eye view, with tall gates and a selection of buildings inside (fig. 14).[74] However, the prominence of the city in the catacomb, which fills almost half the lunette, seems to take it beyond being mere background to having some distinct significance of its own. In the first half of the fourth century, the literary trope of the Church as a city had yet to develop. However, it is possible that it functioned as a more general representation of a pleasant destination for the deceased, building on both the Roman awareness of Egypt as a wealthy place, and typological interpretations of Jacob's journey to

---

[71] Wilpert 1903, pl.132.

[72] Ferrua 1991, fig.53.

[73] Calza 1928, fig.15; Angelucci et al 1990, fig.41, 53.

[74] House of the Priest Amandus, Pompeii, east wall of triclinium: Wirth 1968, fig.98.

Egypt towards the end of his life as a spiritual journey towards Christ. Jacob makes this journey after it is revealed to him that his son Joseph is still alive, and ruler of all of Egypt (Genesis 45:25-28). Ambrose takes Joseph to be a type of Christ, and comments on this passage "notice how the Scripture says that he is alive and ruler of the whole land, for he opened his storehouses of spiritual grace and gave the abundance to all men."[75] The city appears hospitable and prosperous – it has a large open door, emphasised by the angle of the receding walls to either side, and the river running below it is full of fish. So the architecture draws attention to the feature of the narrative most suitable for a tomb, the welcoming journey's end.

There is also an unusual painting in the third-century Hypogeum of the Aurelii in which a city seems to have been depicted as part of the underworld, with the deceased being welcomed before the gate in a ceremony of *adventus*.[76] The religious persuasion of the Aurelii is disputed; according to different authors they were pagans, Christians or Gnostics.[77] Regardless of the correct answer, the imagery seems drawn from a shared cultural visualisation of life after death, in which the city again appears as a desirable location for the afterlife, without necessarily having more specific significance. In itself, the fact that the imagery cannot be used to identify the religious affiliation of the owners of the tomb indicates that a distinctive Christian architectural iconography had not yet been fully developed.

---

[75] Ambrose, *De Joseph Patriarcha*, PL vol.14, col.670B; McHugh 1972, p.234.

[76] Bisconti 1989, pp.1314-1315, fig.5-6.

[77] Bisconti 2011; Casagrande-Kim 2012, pp.155-165.

The similarity between pagan and Christian ideas of gateways to paradise is also evident in written descriptions. In the first-century poem *Punica*, Silius Italicus describes Hades as having ten gates. The first eight are for different categories of dead people (soldiers, farmers, children, etc.), but the last two are special:

> Next, in a place apart and radiant with gloom dispersed, stands a shining portal which leads to the Elysian Fields by a secret shady path; and here dwell the righteous… Last is the tenth gate; glittering with gold, it enjoys the privilege of light and shines as if the moon's disk were close beside it. By this gate souls rise again to heaven.[78]

Punica was probably written in the 80s-90s AD, at around the same time as the Book of Revelation, and there is a distinct resemblance between the shining and glittering gold doors of the one and the twelve pearly gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem of the other.

Developing from this shared iconography, the concept of an architectural afterlife was reworked and elaborated on Christian sarcophagi of the later fourth century. A new iconography of built forms was created to signal the special status of Christ and the apostles, and to display specifically Christian concepts of salvation after death.

Pillars of the community

A marble sarcophagus was an expensive option for Roman burial, but they were still affordable enough for many thousands of individuals to have commissioned

---

[78] Silius Italicus, *Punica* XIII:530-560, Duff 1934, pp.243-245; Casagrande-Kim 2012, p.112.

them, again including Christians, Jews and pagans.[79] Non-Christian sarcophagi frequently incorporated micro-architectural elements, sometimes with an identifiable meaning, such as the door to the underworld mentioned above, but more often as frames or dividers for figures, in the form of columns and piers.[80] The motif of the half-open door was rarely used on Christian sarcophagi.[81] However, narratives and figures were routinely framed and separated by the traditional architectural supports.[82] The medium might appear to lend itself 'naturally' to such forms. Sarcophagi were carved from the same marble as columns and capitals, and the techniques used to make a full-size capital in the round and a miniature version in high relief would basically have been the same. Nevertheless, there is an important difference; despite the illusion of a structural

---

[79] See Couzin 2014, pp.275-284 for the range of costs of Christian sarcophagi.

[80] Altmann 1902, pp.52-53; Elderkin 1935, p.518; Haarløv 1977, pp.99-100; Thomas 2011, pp.392-393; Platt 2012, esp. p.223.

[81] Goffredo 1998, pp.201-202, 235-236, argues that the 'scenes of entry' characterised by doorways were replaced by 'scenes of introduction' into a *civitas*-paradise, c.f. p.53 below.

[82] Out of a sample of 200 sarcophagi, 62 were too fragmentary too tell whether the sarcophagus originally included architectural imagery. Of the remaining 138, 92 (67%) had some architectural imagery. Data taken from Rep.III, which covers the widest geographical area (France, Algeria and Tunisia). An impressionistic survey of the other two volumes, both covering Italy, suggest that the figure would be similar or higher. Of the 25 sarcophagi listed in Snelders 2005 table 1, 24 have architectural articulation of some sort.

function, columns on sarcophagi are still images of columns and their presence demands an explanation.

As compositional markers, columns and pilasters stand somewhere between ornamentation and representation, and between the space of the image and that of the viewer. Defining the corners of sarcophagi or dividing one area from another, they are arranged according to the shape of the box, and often presented as structural features, conceived as holding up the lid. In this sense, the scaled-down columns are part of the world of the viewer (fig. 15). However, when depicted immediately next to carved figures, they regain a monumental scale, simultaneously belonging to the space of the image (fig. 16). The columns veer between the two spheres, bridging the gap between image and viewer. This compositional use of columns was common to pagan and Christian sarcophagi, and on both it seems that columns and human figures were to some extent interchangeable, in particular on strigilated sarcophagi where either one or the other was usually set at the corners.

While columns seem always to have been a decorative option, a more expressive treatment of architectural supports can be seen on the sarcophagi on which columns dominate the composition. Known, reasonably enough, as columnar sarcophagi, these present the entire face of the box as an architectural construction, almost always as a setting for series of figures.[83] Pagan predecessors of the Christian columnar sarcophagi were produced across the Roman Empire

---

[83] On columnar sarcophagi as a type see Lawrence 1932; Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp.76-80; Thomas 2011, with summary of earlier studies pp.390-392.

from the mid-second century.[84] The majority have been found in Italy and France, with a smaller number of particularly elaborate examples from Turkey.[85] On pagan and Christian examples alike, smooth, fluted or spiral columns are connected by architraves, raking cornices or arches, often highly-decorated with lace-like patterns of drilled holes, plant scrolls, or small figural motifs. On the more ornate examples, the arches contain scalloped shell niches. Across the fourth-century Mediterranean, as for at least two hundred years previously, these features signified grand urban architecture. Taken at face value, the ensembles resemble public arcades or theatre facades, market gates or nymphaea – structures emblematic of urban civilisation and cultured living.[86] In some cases it seems possible that the connection with civic architecture was made at the time. For example, an inscription on the lid of the elegant columnar sarcophagus of the city prefect, Junius Bassus, describes the city itself grieving during the funeral procession: "even the rooftops of Rome seemed to weep, and the very arcades along the street to groan".[87] So although the scenes between the decorated columns are from the life of Christ, the architecture is linked to the life and death of the prefect. However the main innovation of the Christian columnar sarcophagi lies in the relationships between these architectural settings and the Biblical characters depicted within them.

On the pre-Christian examples, the niches were occupied by gods, heroes, Muses and other personifications. They often appear as statues, set on bases or assuming

---

[84] Thomas 2011, p.350.

[85] Koch and Sichtermann 1982, fig.11, 98, 99, 151, 168, 234, 254, 266, 487-489.

[86] Onians 1988, figs.31-32, pp.53-58; Thomas 2011, pp. 393-394, 402-403.

[87] Cameron 2002, pp.228-229; Elsner 2008, p.29.

the poses of popular statue-types (fig. 17).[88] In this way the depicted columns and

figures belong to the same level of representation, as scaled-down versions of civic

sculptural display. Characters such as Venus and Hercules appear at home framed

by these monumental stage-sets, since their images actually were displayed in

public spaces. Sculptures of the apostles, however, were not. With the possible

exception of the figures of Christ, angels and apostles described as adorning the

fastigium in Constantine's Lateran basilica, there is little evidence for early Christian

sculpture in the round.[89] Other exceptions, like the statues of Jonah and the Good

Shepherd in the Cleveland Marbles group, were probably designed for a private

house, not for public display, and in general statues seem to have been treated with

some suspicion by early Christians, equated with paganism and idolatry.[90] Given

this, the Old and New Testament characters on the sarcophagi are likely to have

been intended as 'real' – images of the living apostles and prophets, rather than

images of their images. The figures gesture towards Christ or the viewer, with

hands or scrolls breaking the boundaries of the columnar frames, emphasising their

lively activity and presence (fig. 18). The non-statue-like representation of the

biblical figures in turn complicates the resemblance of the architectural settings to

pieces of monumental public furniture (after all, what would the apostles be doing

---

[88] Koch and Sichtermann 1982, p.79; Thomas 2011, p.416.

[89] *Liber Pontificalis* 34:9-10; Duchesne 1981 vol.1, p.172; Davis 2000, p.16; De Blaauw

  2001.

[90] Cleveland marbles: Dinkler 1979, p.410; Kitzinger 1978. Attitudes to statues: Meier

  2003, p.41. For Christian reactions to pagan statues in Constantinople, see James 1996,

  p.18.

standing in the niches of a nymphaeum?), and encourages a more allegorical interpretation of the architectural surroundings.

The niches, ornamental cornices and spiral shafts of columnar sarcophagi do not resemble the outsides of early churches, which in the west generally had plain facades of unarticulated brickwork.[91] Until the end of the fourth century the basilicas co-existed with older house churches which were even less architecturally distinguished.[92] Perhaps due to this lack of elaborate external architecture, few early Christian artworks unambiguously represent the outsides of churches, in contrast to the later standardisation of the ideograph for 'church' – an apsed basilica, with a door on the short side – which recurs from the sixth century onwards. A possible exception is the Vatican Grottoes sarcophagus inv. no.31528, dated to the third quarter of the fourth century. The side panels are filled with images of masonry structures – some with apses, others centralised and domed, all with high arched windows and curtained doors (figs. 19 & 20).[93] As they form the background to scenes set in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's Passion, they cannot be literal representations of churches, nevertheless they convey a sense of a sacred cityscape, recalling basilicas or martyria. But whatever meanings were attributed to the buildings, they are relegated to the side panels. The most visible front panel was composed in a columnar format, with highly decorated vine-scroll shafts set as isolated elements (fig 21).

---

[91] E.g. *Corpus Basilicarum* I, fig. 101, *Corpus Basilicarum* IV, fig.185. For the interiority of early Christian architecture see Hansen 2001, esp.p.71.

[92] White 1990, pp.136-137.

[93] Rep.I:677, Koch 2000 pl.65.

On many of the columnar sarcophagi, a central figure of Christ is surrounded by his disciples. Strong visual connections between apostles and columns are created by the placement of heads and capitals and bases and feet at the same height, and by similar decorative detailing of capitals and heads and drapery and fluting (fig. 22).[94] On a late fourth-century sarcophagus now in Krakow, the connection is made especially apparent (fig. 23).[95] The apostles match the columns in height, their beards and hair are carved using the same drilled technique as the capitals next to them, and the wreaths which they carry in their hands, their crowns of martyrdom, are repeated above the capital of each column, presenting the columns themselves as crowned, aniconic doubles of the figures. Such juxtapositions upgrade the architectural backgrounds from being settings for the apostles, to being a commentary on them.

The descriptions of "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be columns" (Galatians 2:9), and of the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), along with the promise in Revelation 3:12, that "him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God", were picked up on and elaborated by a number of early Christian writers.[96] The association between apostles and columns was not limited to the three men named in Galatians, for example Tertullian

---

[94] Rep.I:53.

[95] Rep II:136.

[96] Onians 1988, pp.70-73, and p.72 for the metaphorical distinction between piers and

   columns. The word used for 'pillar' in the Vulgate is *columna*.

describes St Paul as an "immoveable column of discipline".[97] The fourth-century rhetorician Marius Victorinus made it clear that the description should be seen in terms of the structure of the Church: "these men … who were deemed to be pillars, meaning those who uphold the church as pillars hold up the roof and the rest".[98] Linking the quaking of the earth at the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:51) to the shaking of the pillars of the earth in Job 9:6, and to Psalm 75:3, "The earth is melted…I have established the pillars thereof", Ambrose wrote that:

> The pillars of the world were moved when the chief priests did not believe. But old pillars were moved that new ones might be established, just as God himself thought it proper to say, 'I have established the pillars thereof'. Learn what pillars he has established: 'Peter and James and John, who were considered the pillars, gave to me and to Barnabas the right hand of friendship.'[99]

Augustine interpreted the establishment or strengthening (*confirmavit*) of the pillars in Psalm 75 as the apostles' relief at the Resurrection:

> Therefore those pillars which rocked at the Passion of the Lord, by the Resurrection were strengthened. The beginning of the building has cried out

[97] Tertullian, *On Morality*, ch.16:6, PL vol.2, col.1011A; *http://www.tertullian.org/articles/claesson_pudicitia_translation.htm*, accessed 09/09/15.

[98] Marius Victorinus, *Victorini in epistolam Pauli ad Galatas*, Book 1; PL vol. 8, col. 1160B; Cooper 2005, p.274.

[99] Ambrose, *The prayer of Job and David*, Book 1:5; PL vol. 14, col.802D; McHugh 1972, pp.336-337.

through the pillars thereof, and in all those pillars the architect himself has

cried out. For the apostle Paul was one pillar of them when he said, 'Would ye

receive a proof of him that speaks in me— Christ?'[100]

Ambrose also identified the "legs (like) pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine

gold" of the Beloved of the Song of Solomon 5:15 as the apostles in their preaching,

founded on the 'fear of the saints': "Therefore, apostolic preaching is firmly

established in the fear of the wise, just as the column is supported by its golden

base."[101] Jerome extends the metaphor of the column even further:

> These and other passages [Galatians 2:9, Revelation 3:12 and 1 Timothy 3:15],
>
> inform us that the apostles and all believers, not to mention the church itself,
>
> are called pillars in Scripture and that there is no distinction between the body
>
> and its limbs because the body is divided into members which comprise it.[102]

Finally, Paulinus of Nola used columns as metaphors for the ordered thoughts of

well-behaved Christians: "Christ Himself will set up columns in us, and dismantle

the old pillars which impeded the path within our souls."[103] In other words, the

---

[100] Augustine, *Commentary on Psalms* 75:6, PL vol.36, col.950; NPNF1, vol.8, pp.766-767.

  Another fourth-century commentary on the Psalms, previously associated with Rufinus

  of Aquileia, makes a similar connection between the reassurance of the frightened

  apostles and the 'establishment' of the pillars of the earth: Anonymous, *Commentary on*

  Psalm 74; PL vol.21, col.954B.

[101] Ambrose, *Sermon 5 on Psalm 118*; PL vol. 15, col.1264D-1265B; for a similar statement

  see Ambrose, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, ch.5; PL vol.15, col.1937D.

[102] Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, Book 1; PL vol.26, col.337B; Cain 2010, pp.102-103.

[103] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem 28:305*; Walsh 1975, p.305; Onians 1988, p.72.

references to columns scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments were routinely associated with the apostles, and also with ordinary believers and/or their faith. The popularity of the columnar design alongside representations of the apostles on fourth-century Christian tombs suggests that this symbolic understanding was not lost on the sarcophagus-buying public.

Another indication of the allegorical use of columns is their particular association with Peter and Paul. For example, on a fourth-century strigilated sarcophagus from Rome, the corners are marked by two columns, each inscribed with a Chi Rho, while the central field displays Christ standing between Peter and Paul (fig. 24).[104] This combination of columns, the two Roman apostles, and the Chi Rho is also found on gold glass bowls of the later fourth century, discovered in their positions of secondary use as tomb markers. On some, Peter and Paul are shown either side of a column topped by a Christogram, the column in this case standing for Christ (fig. 25).[105] On another fragmentary bowl, the column is topped with a plaque carrying Peter and Paul's names.[106] On the strigilated sarcophagus, the paired columns bearing Christ's mark could similarly be read as doubles for Peter and Paul, attributes signalling their stability and strength of faith. Other gold glass medallions show series of standing saints alternating with columns bearing their names, almost as if a columnar sarcophagus had been rolled into a circle (fig. 26); again, the columns are directly identified with the saints.[107] Elsewhere, Christ, Peter and Paul are physically associated with columns. On a sarcophagus from Marseille, Christ

---

[104] Rep I:652.

[105] Morey and Ferrari 1959, nos.76, 455.

[106] Morey and Ferrari 1959, no.88, also see no.79.

[107] Morey and Ferarri 1959, nos.240, 307; Zanchi-Roppo 1969, p.44, no.34.

acts as the central column of the eight-bay arcade, with the two middle arches converging on the top of his head (fig. 27), and on the back of the city-gate sarcophagus from Sant' Ambrogio in Milan, Peter and Paul stand in front of columns, the capitals sprouting from above their heads, while a third capital is just visible either side of Christ's neck (fig. 28).[108] An interesting variation on the theme of Christ as a built structure, providing further evidence of the early Christian experimentation with architectural forms, comes from two sarcophagi from the south of France, from Rodez and Toulouse, on which Peter and Paul are shown acclaiming a building marked with a cross on one of the short sides (fig. 29), while on the front they make the same gestures towards Christ in human form.[109]

Columnar sarcophagi were also often decorated with sequences of narrative scenes from the Old and New Testaments. The architectural frames mark the gaps of time and place between the vignettes, but also bridge those gaps, bringing together otherwise disjointed elements into a single whole, prompting typological readings which would link them together.[110] For example, on a sarcophagus from Arles, Christ is flanked first by a pair of disciples carrying the loaves and fishes, then Peter and Paul, then the sacrifice of Isaac and Moses with the brazen serpent (fig. 30).[111] The miracle of the loaves and fishes and the two Old Testament scenes relate typologically to the eucharist; placed either side of Peter and Paul, the miracles are presented in terms of the sacraments of the contemporary Roman Church. The

---

[108] Marseille: Rep.III:300, Koch 2000 pl.160; Milan: Rep.II:150, also see p.45 below.

[109] Rodez: Rep.III:470; Toulouse: Rep.III:548.

[110] Roberts 1989, pp.95-100; Malbon 1990, pp.114-115. Elsner 2008, p.28, also notes that in some cases the dividing columns can make the scriptural scenes easier to distinguish.

[111] Rep.III:22; Koch 2000, pl.145.

architectural detailing is equally part of this message. Each man stands in a scalloped niche framed by fluted pilasters, and square masonry blocks are outlined inside the niches. The emphasis on the blocks of stone is likely to be significant. Taking stones as a metaphor for individual believers, Augustine wrote that "by the hands of those who preach the truth, the stones cut down from the mountains are squared so that they may enter into an everlasting structure"; squared stones were also identified as the apostles and clergy, forming the tower of the Church, in the Shepherd of Hermas.[112] The structural elements and human figures carry equal symbolic weight, working in combination to represent the 'everlasting structure' through which the sacraments were administered.

A variation on the columnar type shows Christ enthroned among a crowd of followers in front of an entire columned building or portico. The best-known example is the sarcophagus of Bishop Concordius of Arles, d.374, on which a colonnaded building surrounds Christ and his disciples (fig. 31).[113] The carver has given the building three-dimensionality and depth; the projecting wings of the roof imply that the colonnade continues around the seated group, and the low-relief heads in the background indicate the space beneath the portico. The scene is one of teaching. Christ's book is inscribed with the words '*Dominus legem dat*', 'The Lord gives the Law'. This phrase more commonly accompanied images of Christ presenting a scroll to Peter and Paul, in the set-piece of early Christian art known

---

[112] Augustine, *Commentary on Psalms* 121:4, PL vol.37, col.1620; Plumpe 1943, p.10; for Hermas see p.27 above. Square stone blocks are also depicted in the niche behind a lone female saint on a sarcophagus from Rome: Rep.I:682, also see Rep.I:842.

[113] Rep.III:65; Zanker 1995, p.293, fig.159a-b; Koch 2000 pl.153. For other examples see Rep.III:66; Rep.III:157.

as the *traditio legis*.[114] Here, the names of the Evangelists are also written on four

of the books and scrolls held by the seated men, indicating, in Wolfgang Binsfeld's

words, that "the Law is enshrined in the Gospels".[115] The inscriptions also present

the gathering as an allegory of Christian doctrine, not merely a historical scene of

Christ preaching. The depiction of an architectural surround for teaching is an

innovation. Although colonnaded public spaces had been nominally associated

with pagan philosophers – the Stoics were named after the *stoa* in which they

taught – on pre-Christian sarcophagi philosophers were not represented in

porticoes but in interiors, characterised by hanging drapery, or else surrounded by

the distinctive jumble of architectural and natural forms of the sacred grove.[116]

Occasionally pagan sarcophagi did show philosophers against architectural

backgrounds, but there are no counterparts for the regular line-ups of apostles and

columns on the sarcophagus of Concordius, or for such a coherent depiction of built

space.[117] Here, the structure can be seen as embodying spiritual knowledge, the

twelve spiral columns representing the teachings contained within the books held

by the twelve men, brought together by the new Law into one structure. The

inscription on the lid describes Concordius as being in God's 'starry hall' (*siderea

aula*), drawing further attention to the represented building.

The popularity of columnar compositions on Christian sarcophagi was probably not

due solely to the developing exegesis on saints as the pillars of the Church. More

general associations with stability, tradition and wealth may also have come into

---

[114] See pp.46-49 below.

[115] Binsfeld 2000, p.36.

[116] Zanker 1995, figs.145, 150, 160.

[117] E.g. Zanker 1995, fig.144.

play.[118]   Looked at in isolation, the columnar frames still call to mind the architecture of civic sculptural display, and although fewer structures of this sort were actually being built by the fourth century – the economic crisis of the 200s leading to the lowest level of patronage of public buildings for two centuries – this is unlikely to have lessened the value of their images.[119]   Also, despite the innovations in composition, alternating figures and columns was already a traditional format for memorials, and would have been familiar to stone-carvers and patrons.   However, the symbolic potential of architectural forms, and in particular the visualisation of the association between apostles and columns, seems to have been especially resonant in the fourth and early fifth centuries.

It is possible that such interpretations were also applied to real buildings. There seems to have been an equally innovative engagement with columnar articulation inside the churches of the fourth century. Roman civic halls often relied on piers for structural support, but the load-bearing longitudinal colonnades of the Constantinian churches were new, with a closer resemblance to public porticoes

---

[118] Michael Greenhalgh suggests that marble was excused negative connotations of worldly luxury precisely by the equation of marble columns with saints, allowing Christian patrons to display costly materials without too much angst: Greenhalgh 2009, p.62. For Paulinus of Nola's description of the replacement of plaster-covered piers by marble columns at the shrine of St Felix see Paulinus of Nola, Poem 27:382-395; Walsh 1975, p.284.

[119] Smith 2003, p.160.

than to earlier basilicas.[120] The placement of medallion portraits of popes above the columns in Old St Peters and San Paolo fuori le mura, probably in the first half of the fifth century, and in the later fifth-century decoration of Saint Demetrios in Thessaloniki, suggests that from an early date the understanding of columns as figures extended to the interiors of the churches, the structure becoming representation, the colonnades congregations.[121] This development of 'figural' columnar architecture runs parallel with the compositions of the sarcophagi. That is, the tombs were not necessarily decorated with columns in imitation of the interiors of churches, but both churches and sarcophagi deployed a language of saintly columnar figures as part of a wider discourse of the Church as a structure built from people.

City-gate sarcophagi

The expressive use of architectural imagery on tombs can be seen in its most fully developed form on a group of elite memorials of the late 300s, known as city-gate sarcophagi. The production of Christian sarcophagi seems to have dropped in the second half of the fourth century, alongside an increase in quality of those that were commissioned, probably reflecting on the one hand, the concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer patrons, and on the other, their increasing concern

---

[120] Mitchell forthcoming. For the shift of exterior colonnades to the insides of churches see Wharton 1995, p.68; Jacobs 2014, p.265, n.7, and Kinney 2007, Kinney 2011 on the early Christian 'discourse of columns'.

[121] St Peter's: Andaloro 2006b, pp.411-415; San Paolo fuori le mura: Andaloro 2006b, pp.372-378; Saint Demetrios: Cormack 1969, pls. 1-9. Also see Mitchell 2014, p.174.

with displaying their religious identity and status through their memorials.[122] The

most sophisticated examples of the city-gate sarcophagi can be associated (with

varying degrees of certainty) with some of the highest-ranking state officials. They

form an unusually coherent group, linked not only by their architectural forms but

by details of iconography and decoration. In particular, there seems to have been

a strong association between the depiction of gates and the Giving of the Law to

Peter and Paul. This iconography belongs to a developing rhetoric of Christian

identity in terms of urban citizenship, in which salvation was imagined as permitted

entry to a guarded city.

In 1927, Marion Lawrence highlighted the similarities between five sarcophagi

decorated with city gates.[123] These are the sarcophagus in the basilica of Sant'

Ambrogio in Milan, the 'Borghese sarcophagus' found in the mausoleum of Sextus

Petronius Probus behind Old St Peter's, now in the Louvre, the sarcophagus of

Flavius Gorgonius in Ancona Cathedral, that of Catervius, most likely Flavius Iulius

Catervius, in the Cathedral of San Catervo in Tolentino, and an anonymous

sarcophagus found in the Vatican cemetery, now in the Capella Colonna, St Peter's

(figs. 32-36).[124] Flavius Gorgonius, who died after 386, was a praetorian prefect, an

officer of the treasury and possibly the *comes rerum privatarum*, the officer who

---

[122] Couzin 2014, pp.296-297.

[123] Lawrence 1927, p.6, 12, 15, figs. 1-18.

[124] Milan: Rep.II:150; Katzenellenbogen 1947; Sansoni 1969, figs.1-4; Koch 2000, pl.78-81;

Louvre: Rep.I:829 and III:428; Sansoni 1969, figs.5-8; Koch 2000, pp.304-305; Huskinson

2011, pp.68-69; Ancona: Rep.II:149, Sansoni 1969, figs. 9-12; Koch 2000, pl.75-77;

Tolentino: Rep.II:148; Sansoni 1969, figs.13-16; Ioli 1971; Nestori 1996; Koch 2000, pl.82-

83; St Peter's: Rep.I:675; Sansoni 1969, figs. 17-19; Koch 2000, fig.46.

administered the Emperor's estates. Flavius Iulius Catervius died after 379, and had

also been a praetorian prefect. The sarcophagus found in the mausoleum behind

St Peter's is not inscribed. Sextus Petronius Probus is assumed to have been buried

in the columnar sarcophagus in the same chapel, but the grand city-gate memorial

is likely to have been for a prominent member of his family; Probus was again a

praetorian prefect, as well as a consul and a proconsul of Africa.[125] So the group of

tombs can be roughly dated to the 380s-90s, commissioned by some of the most

powerful figures in the late Roman imperial administration. It is possible that these

patrons knew each other, and they would have moved in the same social circles.

The concepts chosen for display on their monuments, and the forms chosen to

express them, are likely to have been part of a shared ideology of the upper class

Christian officials of the late fourth century, perhaps even a visual marker of their

identity within this group. The city-gate format was also used in a reduced form on

other less prestigious sarcophagi, and certain aspects of the compositions were

repeated on even less expensive types of grave marker. The elite examples, being

the most detailed and well-preserved, offer the best opportunity to examine the

significance of the architectural compositions.

With the possible exception of the sarcophagus in St Peter's, which is inaccessible

to study, the five monuments were decorated on all four sides for the maximum

visibility and display of carved marble – presumably also increasing the expense of

the commissions. Gates are carved on all four sides of the sarcophagus in Milan,

on three sides of the sarcophagi in the Louvre and Ancona Cathedral, and on the

---

[125] Gorgonius: PLRE I, p.399; Probus: Bagnall et al 1987, p.5, pp.270-371; PLRE I, pp.736-

740; Catervius: PLRE I, pp.186-187.

two short sides of the other two examples. They are shown as tall arches, topped

with either rectangular or T-shaped crenellations, sometimes with distinct towers

or sections of wall between the arches. The masonry blocks of the walls are

outlined on all five. There are some strips of decorative details, mostly around the

tops of the arches. Compared with real city gates, the arches are magnified and the

towers reduced, so that the battlements run in a straight line along the top of the

sarcophagi. On the sarcophagus of Gorgonius (fig. 34), the gates are reduced

further, with exaggerated T-shaped battlements attached directly to the top of the

curve of the arch, and no intervening walls at all. Lawrence saw this as a

degeneration of design indicating a later date, but it could also be seen as a

reduction of all inessential features, an achievement of a more concentrated

expression of gate-ness.[126] Even where the gates are abbreviated to a point where

they would be physically impossible to build, the three consistent features are tall

open arches, crenellations and indicated stonework. The simplification of cities to

these elements can be seen in earlier images. In a second-century mosaic from the

Baths of the Cisiarii in Ostia, and a first-century mosaic in the Roman palace in

Fishbourne in Britain, city walls are depicted as two or three courses of large blocks

of stone, topped by thin T-shaped battlements, and pierced by arched gates (figs.

37 & 38).[127] In a medallion commemorating Constantius I's *adventus* into London

(fig. 39), the city is shown as a section of wall and two gate-towers, the gateway

itself obscured by a civic personification. In addition to being recognisably city-like,

in the context of their representation on sarcophagi the qualities associated with

---

[126] Lawrence 1927, p.8.

[127] Ostia: Calza and Becatti 1975, building no.3, region II, fig.60; Fishbourne: Cunliffe 1998,

fig.33.

these three architectural features are also important. Tall open gates suggest access and openness, whereas battlements are defensive fortifications, implying a protective barrier. The stones of the wall-towers display the strength of the structure, but could also be understood as metaphors for individual members of the Church, and, increasingly in the late fourth century, for saints and their relics.

The Milanese sarcophagus is the most elaborate of the city-gate group, in fact one of the most elaborate of all surviving early Christian sarcophagi.[128] It is aligned with the structure of the fourth-century church of S. Ambrogio, lower than the present-day floor, so probably in its original position.[129] It stands between the north aisle and the nave, with all four of its carved sides visible. It is undated, and without an inscription naming the deceased, but given its prominent position and high quality it is likely to have been made for someone in the imperial court, which was based in Milan until 402. Christ teaching the apostles is shown on the front, and the *traditio legis* on the back; in both cases Christ is standing on a rocky mound, with the Lamb of God in front. On front and back, two small figures adore the Lamb and Christ's feet, and on the base at the back twelve sheep emerge from two crenellated gates at the corners, processing towards the Lamb. The Sacrifice of Isaac is shown on the left-hand short side, alongside a scene of the deceased being welcomed by three saints, and the right hand side shows the giving of the Law to Moses, Noah in his Ark, Elijah's ascension and the temptation of Adam and Eve.[130] The gates behind the characters are modelled in depth, so that both sides of the

---

[128] Rep.II:150; Lawrence 1927, p.6, figs. 2-4; Katzenellenbogen 1947; Sansoni 1969, p. 10; Koch 2000, pp.304-305, pl.78-81.

[129] Tcherikova 1999, p.48.

[130] On the images of the deceased see Katzenellenbogen 1947, p.252.

fortifications are visible (fig. 40). The flat surfaces are rendered as stone blocks with raised outlines, and there are decorated bands along the edges of the arches and beneath some of the crenellations. On both sides, Christ is framed by a separate structure. On the front, he stands in a scalloped niche supported by two pilasters, and on the back in front of a curved architrave resting on three capitals, the columns themselves standing directly behind Christ, Peter and Paul.

While the Sant' Ambrogio sarcophagus is the most detailed of the group, the other four sarcophagi share many of the same elements.[131] Most notably, on four of the five, the main panel displays a single non-scriptural scene, rarely shown on earlier tombs, the *traditio legis* or the Giving of the Law. Rows of city gates also form the backdrop to the *traditio legis* on the sarcophagi from Aix-en-Provence (fig. 41) and Moutier-Saint-Jean (now lost), and arguably on a further three fragmentary tombs.[132] Even in cases where the city-gate composition was modified and reduced, to be combined with a number of smaller scenes, the association between gates and the Giving of the Law persisted, for example on a sarcophagus from Rheims, where a lone gate is depicted behind the scene (fig. 42), and in a similar

---

[131] For example, similar selections of Old Testament scenes were depicted on their short sides: Moses receiving the Commandments appears four times, as does the sacrifice of Isaac. Elijah's Ascension is shown three times, and the Hebrews refusing to worship the idol, twice. Catervius' memorial stands slightly apart from the group, not displaying the more common Old Testament stories or the *traditio legis*, but it nevertheless resembles the other four in the appearance of the city gates, and in the composition of the three men turning away from the idol: Lawrence 1927, p.12.

[132] Aix-en-Provence: Rep.III:25, Koch 2000, pl.154, Sansoni 1969, fig.34; Moutier-Saint-Jean: Rep.III:357; Sansoni 1969, p.75; fragments: Sansoni 1969, fig.29, 32, 33.

composition from Saint Maximin in France.[133] On another monument from the Vatican Necropolis, a pair of gates is shown behind the figures (fig. 43), while on a tomb from Verona, decorated architraves supported by fluted columns are shown behind episodes from Christ's Passion, and gates behind the central scene of the Giving of the Law (fig. 44).[134] The association of gates with the *traditio legis* seems to have been a regional fashion, centred on Rome. According to Bas Snelders, out of the twenty-three sarcophagi showing this scene which are likely to have been made in Roman workshops (including the Sant' Ambrogio sarcophagus), three are too fragmentary for the full design to be made out; of the rest, eleven had city gates, eight had columnar designs, and only one had no architectural imagery at all.[135] Outside Rome, the story is different. Out of six sarcophagi depicting the *traditio legis* made in Ravenna, Marseille or unknown locations, four have columnar compositions and the other two do not have architectural settings. Although the sample is too small to be conclusive, this pattern supports the theory that city-gate sarcophagi were fashionable among the upper circles of state officials, who might be more likely to commission their tombs in the capital. It also suggests that the Giving of the Law itself was a particularly Roman image.

The law in question is the new rule of Christ, but beyond this, the significance of the scene is debated.[136] It could theoretically be reduced to a very simple composition. It requires Christ holding one end of a scroll, Peter on one side

---

[133] Rheims: Rep.III:465; Saint Maximin III:499, Koch 2000, pl.155.

[134] Vatican: Rep.I:28; Koch 2000, fig.44; Verona: Rep.II:152, Koch 2000, pl.73.

[135] Snelders 2005, table 1.

[136] Schumacher 1959; Davis-Weyer 1961; Berger 1973.

reaching out to hold the other end of it and Paul standing on the other side.[137]

However, as Snelders and Reidar Hvalvik have pointed out, the scene almost always

included additional elements.[138] The most common was the rocky mound with the

four Rivers of Paradise flowing from it, followed by palm-trees. Most also included

at least one of a range of additional motifs: a phoenix, processions of sheep, a

central Lamb of God and an assembly of ten apostles, in addition to Peter and

Paul.[139] City-gates should also be added to this list. So, why was the *traditio legis*

so popular, especially in funerary contexts, and what did city gates have to do with

it?

The sheep-fold and the city: baptism as a gateway

One possibility is that the *traditio legis* was a view into a heavenly future. The palm-

trees, rivers and phoenix all seem to set the scene in a paradisiacal landscape, and

the inclusion of Paul in the assembly of the apostles places the image outside

historical earthly time.[140] If so, the gates could be the entrances to heaven,

although, as I discuss below, which side of the walls they represent is open to

question. Hvalvik argues that the eschatological aspects of the *traditio legis* have

---

[137] Berger 1973, p.104 ; Binsfeld 2000, p.35.

[138] Snelders 2005, p.322, 324-325, table 1; Hvalvik 2006, p.406. Also see Rasmussen 2001,
   pp.23-24.

[139] Out of twenty-nine sarcophagi listed, twenty-seven have mounds with rivers, and
   sixteen have at least one palm-tree: Snelders 2005, p.325, table 1.

[140] Augustine even complained about such images, on the grounds that naïve viewers took
   them too literally, believing that Peter and Paul had actually met in life: Augustine, *On
   the Harmony of the Gospels* I:10:16; NPNF1, vol.6, p.84.

been overstated, and that it should instead be seen in relation to the historical foundation of the Church.[141] However, images of the Church and of Paradise were so conceptually intertwined that fine distinctions between them are probably unnecessary, as Cyprian makes clear:

> The Church is like Paradise: within her walls she encloses on the inside fruit bearing trees… and those trees she waters by the means of four rivers – that is, by the four Gospels; by them she generously spreads in a saving and heavenly flood the graces of baptism.[142]

This could practically be describing one of the city-gate sarcophagi. And as Cyprian highlights, the connecting point between Church and Paradise, and the method of entrance into both of them, was baptism. I suggest that the image of the *traditio legis* was closely related to baptism, and that in the context of funerary monuments, it visualised the deceased's initiation into the Church, and resulting entry into heaven.[143] There was a close conceptual connection between baptism and death, articulated in St Paul's dramatic statement in Romans 6:4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Baptism represented both the death of the un-baptised sinful individual, and the means of eventual victory over death.

---

[141] Hvalvik 2006, p.431, 436.

[142] Cyprian, Letter 71:10:3; Clarke 1989, p.59; also see Hvalvik 2006, p.429.

[143] For a similar line see Schumacher 1959, pp.151-152.

The mount with the four rivers, which almost always accompanied the Giving of the Law on sarcophagi and which should therefore be considered as an integral part of the scene, can be understood as baptismal. The four rivers of Paradise named in Genesis, the River of Life described in Revelation, the 'living water' of Christ (John 7:38; Revelation 7:17), and the River Jordan were treated as overlapping bodies of water, all potentially referring to the waters of baptism.[144] In at least two cases on the city-gate sarcophagi, the mound with the rivers has the sacrificial Lamb standing beneath it, and the blood of the "lamb without blemish" (1 Peter 1:19) was another figure for baptism.[145] The Giving of the Law was often shown on sarcophagi in combination with the Mission of the apostles, with the other ten apostles gathered around Christ, Peter and Paul. Christ's command to the twelve apostles was also directly related to baptism: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:18-19). The combination of the Mission of the apostles and *traditio legis* presents Peter and Paul as leaders of the apostles, setting the command in a Roman context and making it clear which of the 'nations' had priority.[146]

On several of the city-gate sarcophagi, the *traditio legis* is also accompanied by miniature processions of sheep. On the sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio, a frieze under the back panel shows twelve sheep emerging from small gates at the corners (fig.

[144] See for example Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ*, NPNF2, vol.5, p.522; Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit*, Book 1, chapter 16:179; NPNF2, vol.10, p.114; Jensen 2012, p.185.

[145] Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens* 3:12-19; Harkins 1963, p.60. See Jensen 2011 p.61 for the baptismal imagery on the city-gate sarcophagus of Gorgonius.

[146] Hvalvik 2006, p.409, 411-412.

45). On the Capella Colonna sarcophagus, the full-size gates only appear on the short sides, while the apostles receiving the Law on the front are framed by trees. However, small gates and sheep are depicted below their feet (fig. 36). An early fifth-century sarcophagus from Marseille has a similar frieze at the top (fig. 46).[147] Although limited by space, the miniature doorways have the same masonry lines and arched openings which defined the larger city gates, and on the Milanese sarcophagus they were also shown with crenellations.

One possibility is that the combination of building and sheep stood for the Biblical sheepfold, which again has baptismal associations. The description in John 10:1-2 of Christ as the "door of the sheepfold" and the "gate of the sheep" which "if any man enter in, he shall be saved", makes clear the distinction between those permitted access to the sheepfold and any 'thieves and robbers' who might attempt – unsuccessfully – to gate-crash. The officially-sanctioned way into the sheepfold was through baptism, and catechumens were repeatedly referred to as sheep.[148] To take one example, a sermon formerly attributed to Augustine instructs baptismal candidates to keep Psalm 23:1, 'The Lord is my Shepherd', in mind as they approach the font, and to understand the sheepfold in John 10 as the Church that they are about to enter.[149] So on the Sant' Ambrogio and Capella Colonna

---

[147] Rep.III:301.

[148] On allegorical sheep and baptism, see Jensen 2011, pp.257-258; Ferguson 2009, p.599, 613.

[149] Pseudo-Augstine, Sermon 366 I-III; Hill and Rotelle 1995, pp.288-289. See Wright 1939, pp.44-45, for the importance of sheep as Jewish and Christian symbols.

sarcophagi, the sheep moving through their little gates, heading in orderly fashion towards the rivers in the middle, can easily be understood as baptised souls.

However, the depicted buildings do not literally look like sheep-folds. Actual shepherds' huts or sheep-pens are easily recognisable in rural scenes on pagan and Christian sarcophagi. They look organic, made of branches or bundles of reeds (fig. 47), and they are set by themselves within landscapes. The small structures on the city-gate sarcophagi, on the other hand, are made of squared stones and placed in pairs on facing corners. Another significant building type for early Christians, which is likely to have been relevant in these cases, was the tower. Towers also had a connection to sheep. Jerome makes frequent reference in his writings to the 'Tower of the Flock'. The phrase comes from Micah 4:8: "And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come…the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." This was thought to refer to an actual tower 1000 paces from Bethlehem, still standing in 680 according to Adomnan's description of Arculf's visit to the Holy Land.[150] According to Jerome, this was the tower by which Jacob pitched his tent (Genesis 35.21) and the location of the Annunciation to the Shepherds, as well as a sign of Christ's birth, predicted in Micah 4:8.[151] Jerome also makes a connection between the tower of the flock and the parable in Matthew 21:33, in which a tower was built in a vineyard. Matthew in turn refers back to Isaiah 5:2: "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill… and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein". In Jerome's commentary, the winepress inside the tower is explained as an altar, and

---

[150] Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, bk.2, ch.6; Wilkinson 1977, p.105.

[151] Jerome, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* 35:21; PL. vol.23, col.992B; Hayward 2001, p.73.

flock is identified as another word for company or congregation.[152] In other words,

the tower is a type of the Church. Similarly, in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermas'

third vision is of a stone tower being built, which is revealed to him as an image of

the Church.[153]

The towers imagined by Matthew, Jerome and the author of *The Shepherd* would

presumably have been freestanding structures. A tower – *pýrgos* or *tyrris* in Greek,

turris in Latin – could be either a stand-alone building, or part of a city wall.[154] In

rural areas, especially in the eastern Roman Empire, shepherds really did build

towers to watch their flocks from, and vineyard owners as storehouses; there were

hundreds of such stone towers scattered around the countryside.[155] They were

generally much smaller than wall-towers, some only single storeyed, and were

usually not fortified.[156] In cities on the other hand, and especially in the west where

rural towers were less common, towers would have indicated defensive walls. The

towers flanking the processions of sheep on the sarcophagi appear more like these

---

[152] Flock as congregation: Jerome, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* 35:21; PL. vol.23,

col.992B; Hayward 2001, p.73. Winepress as altar: Jerome, Commentary on the Prophet

Micah 2:2; PL. vol. 25, col.1190D. Later, in the early ninth century, Hrabanus Maurus

was to write that the Tower of the Flock could stand for the Church, or for Mary: *De*

Universo, Book 14, chapter 1; PL. vol.111, col.384D-385B.

[153] Hermas, *The Shepherd*, Vision III:2-7, Taylor 1903, pp.77-87. Also see Onians 1999,

pp.286-287. The word used is *pýrgos* in the Greek text, *turris* in the Latin.

[154] Liddell and Scott 1901, p.1348, 1591; Lewis and Short 1962, p.1919. The Greek plural

for tower, *pýrgoi,* also signified city walls or ramparts: Liddell and Scott 1901, p.1348.

[155] Decker 2006, p.516.

[156] Decker 2006, pp.501-502, 504.

urban watchtowers, merging the Biblical concept of the Tower of the Flock with the strength and protection of the more familiar city defences, and echoing the larger city-gates on the main face of the tomb. The sheep-fold was reimagined as a city.

Controlled entrance into an enclosed community of Christians – leading to eventual access to Heaven – was also a repeated theme in fourth-century discussions of baptism.[157] The basic statement of baptism as an entrance is given in John 3:5: "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". More specifically, initiation as a Christian was often described as entry into a new city. Writing in Antioch in the fourth century, Theodore of Mopsuestia equated baptism with the civic procedures of citizenship. He pushed the metaphor as far as it would go, to cover practical details such as the applicant's character being questioned before admission, and an inhabitant of the city who knew the local customs being assigned as a sponsor.[158] John Chrysostom described baptismal candidates as being 'inscribed' as citizens "in a different state, the Jerusalem above", using the contemporary technical term for civic registration.[159] Similarly, in a discussion of Christ's baptism, Chrysostom called on his listeners to "having crucified [the world] to thyself, show thyself with all strictness a citizen of the city of the heavens."[160]

---

[157] Jensen 2012, ch.2, and pp.54-56 for the concept of Christians as a separate race or nation.

[158] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homily II*; Mingana 1933, p.25; Jensen 2012, p.85.

[159] Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens* 4:6; 4:29; Harkins 1963, p.68, 77; for this and other examples see Rapp 2010, p.18.

[160] Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew* XII:4; NPNF1, vol.10, p.78

When carved onto sarcophagi, the *traditio legis* referred not only to the creation of the Church, but to the personal initiation of an individual entering it through baptism. Whether directly associated with baptismal imagery or with the resulting access to Paradise after death, images of entrances and gateways were therefore entirely appropriate.

Inside-out cities and encircling saints

The architectural coverings of the city-gate sarcophagi play with viewers' perceptions of the depicted spaces. On the long sides of the sarcophagi in Milan, Paris and Ancona, the gates and apostles are irregularly spaced, and individual apostles' heads are not placed beneath the centres of the arched openings. As a result, the picture-space seems deeper than it did on the columnar sarcophagi. There, the columns and figures alternated in the foreground, they were given equal prominence and placed in a direct relationship with each other. On the city-gate sarcophagi, the apostles appear to be standing at some distance from the wall. On the Milanese tomb, this sense of distance is heightened by a curtain which runs along behind the men at head-height, separating them from the walls. The architecture functions like a stage set, creating the illusion of depth in a restricted space. The identification of this space is not straightforward. The whole point of a wall is that it has two sides. In the case of a city wall, the difference between the inside and outside is particularly distinct, and in the case of a heavenly city, the difference is vital. Different features of the imagery deliberately point in different

directions, presenting the exterior of the box simultaneously as an inside and an outside.[161]

The features relating to baptism and the *traditio legis*, discussed above, seem to set the scene inside the gates of the New Jerusalem.[162] The more detailed examples, like the S. Ambrogio sarcophagus, contain almost all the features specified in Revelation as being within the walls: there are the "twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21: 14), and the Lamb itself in the middle; there are the four rivers flowing from the mound that Christ and the Lamb stand on (Revelation 22:1; Genesis 2:10), and the trees of life on either side (Revelation 22:2; Ezekiel 47:12). The sarcophagus from Aix-en-Provence is more minimalist; even so, there are the apostles and the four rivers, with a pair of donor figures kneeling beside them. So although the represented architecture physically surrounds the dead body, it can be understood as folded inside-out, enveloping the image of the deceased kneeling at Christ's feet, showing them already inside the celestial city (fig. 48).[163]   The rest

---

[161] As far as I am aware, the question of which side of the city walls we are looking at on the sarcophagi has not previously been seen as particularly important. Lawrence, Sansoni and Koch do not comment on which side is shown, Katzenellenbogen sees it as the inside, and Milburn as the outside. Katzenellenbogen 1947, p.251; Milburn 1988, p.74.

[162] Katzenellenbogen 1947, p.251; Sansoni 1969, p.77.

[163] Small figures of the deceased worshipping Christ appear in the *traditio legis* compositions on at least five city-gate sarcophagi: Rep.I:675, II:149, II:150, III:25 and III:428/I:829; Snelders 2005, p.332. Some pre-Christian architectural sarcophagi also played games with insides and outsides, seeming to represent both sides of the threshold at once: see Casagrande-Kim 2012, p.182 on the Velletri sarcophagus.

of the iconography then reminds the viewer how they gained entrance: through

their baptism, referenced by the Lamb and the rivers towards which they extend

their hands, and via the institution of the Church, referenced by the *traditio legis*.

While the carved gates do not closely resemble the New Jerusalem of Revelation,

they followed later visionary descriptions of heaven, at least in their colour. Traces

of paint remain in some cases, and it is probable that all the sarcophagi were

originally brightly coloured. On the tomb of Catervius the interiors of the arches

were painted black and the gates were yellow, and traces of gilding were found on

a city-gate sarcophagus from Aix-en-Provence.[164] Yellow or gold walls depart from

the biblical description, which specifies walls of jasper and gates of pearl: green and

white. However this description was not the only one available to artists and

patrons. Later writers expanded on the biblical imagery, giving different and more

detailed reports of the architecture of heaven. One such account, written in the

late fourth century, is known as the *Revelation of Paul*:

> And the angel says to me…Come, follow me, and I shall show thee the place of
>
> the righteous. And I followed him, and he set me before the doors of the
>
> city. And I saw a golden gate, and two golden pillars before it, and two golden
>
> plates upon it full of inscriptions. And the angel said to me: Blessed is he who
>
> shall enter into these doors; because not every one goeth in, but only those
>
> who have single-mindedness, and guiltlessness, and a pure heart….[165]

---

[164] Nestori 1996, p.97; Sansoni 1969, p.74

[165] Anonymous, *Revelation of Paul*; ANF vol.8, p.577.

Other late antique visions of heaven equally stressed the golden glow of the paradisiacal city.[166] So where the gates on the sarcophagi were painted yellow, to represent gold, this would have picked up on one of the established features of heaven according to contemporary belief. By implication, the viewer standing in front of the tomb is also inside the walls, with no barriers between them and the vision of heaven. This view makes little sense if pushed too far – it is unlikely that the inside of the tomb was thought of as being an exterior – but the decision to turn the city inside-out was a particularly effective method of emphasising the certainty of the dead person's welcome within.

However, the opposite interpretation is equally possible. In literal terms the represented walls are exteriors from the spectator's point of view. They also mark the conceptual barrier between the living and dead. The outward-facing apostles block any view through the arches, leaving the other side of the wall a mystery – as good a way to visualise the passage to the afterlife as the half-open door on earlier sarcophagi.[167]

Despite the yellow-gold colour of the walls, the appearance of the architecture itself is ambiguous. The carvers did not make any attempt to depict the other indicator of heavenliness – and arguably the clearer one – of walls made from jewels. In late antiquity precious stones were conventionally represented

---

[166] Carile 2009, esp. p.96.

[167] See Elsner 2013, pp.189-191, on containers whose decoration draws attention to the inaccessibility of something hidden within, while entertaining the fantasy of access to it, and their particular relevance in funerary contexts. Also see pp.61-63 below on the Pola Casket.

according to their shapes as much as their colours, as alternating ovals, rectangles and lozenges, which could easily have been modelled or outlined on the faces of the gates had they been wanted.[168] The sarcophagus from Ancona, and three fragments from Rome, have simple decorative mouldings around the edges of the arches, but on none of the city-gate sarcophagi are the wall surfaces jewelled.[169] Instead, the outlined masonry blocks highlight the earthly materiality of the architecture, making the walls look as strong, solid and stone-like as possible.

Given this, the depicted walls can also be understood as protective exteriors. The fortifications and emphasised stonework of the carved gates both stress their defensive aspect. In conjunction with the standing figures, the walls could also be seen as an embodiment of the protection offered by Christ and the apostles, standing guard over the deceased within the box. This relationship between the saints outside the walls, and Christian faithful inside, parallels the positions of martyr saints buried in the suburban cemeteries surrounding Rome and many other cities.[170] These saints were themselves often described as fortifications.[171] Two late-fourth-century writers who took this metaphor particularly to heart were John Chrysostom, based in Antioch and Constantinople, and Paulinus of Nola in Italy. In

---

[168] See Volbach 1976, pl. 5, no. 9-11 for jewelled thrones and footstools on consular diptychs. For the use of oval sapphires and rectangular jaspers or emeralds to represent the twelve types of stones in the foundations of heaven see Gage 1993, p.73.

[169] Fragments: Sansoni 1969, fig.23 (Cemetery of San Sebastiano), fig.29 (Teutonic Cemetery, Vatican), fig.32 (Istituto Protettorato di San Giuseppe).

[170] Spera 2003, p.38.

[171] For the Roman cult of martyrs' relics: Thacker 2007, esp. pp.29-30; Goodson 2007, pp.54-55.

his discussion of Romans 16, Chrysostom wrote "This body (of St Paul) is a wall to that city (Rome), which is safer than all towers, and than thousands of battlements"; in the same homily he describes Paul as "that impregnable wall; that tower unshaken!"[172] In a passage describing the distribution of Egyptian martyrs' relics, he praises Egypt for providing so many relics with which cities elsewhere can be protected, for "the bodies of these saints fortify our city more securely than any wall that is of adamant".[173] Chrysostom also wrote of SS Juventinus and Maximinus: "It is fitting to address them together as pillars, and lookouts, and guard-towers… For truly like pillars they hold up the Church, and like guard-towers they wall it in."[174] Along similar lines, Paulinus of Nola commented on Ambrose's transfer of the relics of Gervasius and Protasius to Milan, comparing it to the Constantinopolitan acquisition of Timothy and Andrew:

> When Constantine was founding the city named after himself… the god-sent idea came to him that since he was embarking on the splendid enterprise of building a city that would rival Rome, he should also emulate Romulus' city with a further endowment, by gladly defending his walls with the bodies of the apostles. He then removed Andrew from the Achaeans and Timothy from Asia. And so Constantinople now stands with twin towers, vying with the eminence

---

[172] Chrysostom, *Homily 32 on Romans*, 16:17-18; PG vol.60, col.677, 680; NPNF1 vol.11, p.560, 563.

[173] Chrysostom *Encomium on Egyptian Martyrs*, ch.1; PG vol.50, col.694; Mayer 2006, p.211.

[174] Chrysostom, *Encomium on SS Juventinus and Maximinus*, part 3; PG vol.50, col.575-576; Mayer 2006 p.99

of great Rome, or rather resembling the defences of Rome in that God has

counterbalanced Peter and Paul with a protection as great.[175]

For Paulinus, the presence of saints' relics also transformed settlements into great

cities:

> Nola, happy in having Felix as your protector, you win fame from your saintly
>
> citizen… You have won the title of city second to Rome herself, once first only
>
> in dominion and conquering arms, but now first in the world through the
>
> apostles' tombs.[176]

In another poem, Paulinus contrasted the 'spiritual armament' of God with the

comparatively unreliable protection of the mere city walls available to non-

believers.[177] Other writers used similar phrases, for example the author of the fifth-

century *Life of Symeon Stylites,* explaining why Symeon's body was brought to

Antioch: "the city had petitioned and besought him with many groans and tears to

transport him there so that he might be its fortified wall and it might be defended

by his prayer."[178] This trope of saints as defensive towers and walls developed

alongside the first translations of saints' remains from one city to another, and the

growth of devotional practices at their suburban shrines. As well as justifying the

potentially shocking act of disturbing graves, it contributed to the growing rhetoric

---

[175] Paulinus of Nola, Poem 19:329-342; Walsh 1975, p.142. Also see Roberts 2001, p.553;

Mango 1990, p.52.

[176] Paulinus of Nola, Poem 13:26; Walsh 1975, p.76.

[177] Paulinus of Nola, Poem 26:99-114; Walsh 1975, pp.257-258.

[178] Syriac Life of Simeon Stylites 125; Doran 1992, p.192; Rapp 2010, p.15.

of Christian urban identity, in which the Church was equated to a city, and whole cities claimed as Christianised spaces.

As mentioned above, the process of becoming a baptised Christian was compared to gaining citizenship of a new city, the metaphor being used to describe both the living congregation and its heavenly destination. The flip-side of the exclusivity of membership of this city was the possibility of exclusion from it. To emphasise a line from the *Revelation of Paul* quoted above, "Blessed is he who shall enter into these doors; *because not every one goeth in*". The gates of the sarcophagi can be seen as reminders that one does not simply walk into New Jerusalem; the entrances are guarded. The occupant of the sarcophagus had, of course, passed the test. Access to earthly cities could also be restricted on religious grounds. In the late fourth century, imperial legislation banned those labelled as heretics from urban areas.[179] An anti-heretical law of 398 condemns Jovinian for holding meetings "outside the walls of the most sacred city" of Rome; for unorthodox ideas to even approach the city – defined by its walls – was seen as a threat.[180] In his work of around 370, *Against the Donatists*, the African bishop Opatus described the Donatist bishop Victor as

> …a bishop without a people. For neither flock nor people can that handful be
> termed, who amongst the forty and more basilicas in Rome, had not one place

---

[179] Maier 1995, esp. pp.234-235. See also Pope Leo I's Sermon 9:4, which forbids Manicheans from the city of Rome: NPNF2, vol.12, p.120.

[180] Maier 1995, p.235.

in which to assemble. Accordingly they closed up a cave outside the city with

trellis-work, where they might have a meeting-house…[181]

He goes on to argue that, lacking the authority of St Peter's *cathedra*, Victor and his

followers would not be able to escape the gates of hell, which only Peter's keys

could guard against.[182] Access to basilicas in or near to Rome therefore defined the

legitimacy of a congregation – their status as a 'people' – and was a condition of

their passage through the gates under Peter's control. To be demonstrably

associated with a city, as the images of the deceased are on the sarcophagi, could

imply orthodoxy; showing that one was not only a Christian, but the right sort of

Christian.

Viewed as the walls of the deceased's own city, the architectural backdrop would

also have had connotations of power and prestige. City gates sometimes featured

on late Roman coins, and in addition to being major public works of defence and

urban definition, they were sites of imperial triumphal processions and *adventus*

ceremonies.[183] As Ann Marie Yasin emphasises in her discussion of Christian

memorials and identity, one of the functions of any grave marker is to construct

and maintain the social position of the deceased, and the air of officialdom and

---

[181] Optatus of Milevis, *Against the Donatists* 4; Vassall-Phillips 1917, p.72.

[182] Vassall-Phillips 1917, p.73.

[183] MacCormack 1981, pp.30-31, p.33. Victory parades and *adventus* ceremonies at city

gates: McCormick 1986, pp. 14-16; Dey 2010, pp.19-27; Dey 2011, pp.140-141. Coins

and medallions: Smith 1978, p.13; Kent, Hirmer and Hirmer 1978, pl.18:65, 152:585,

152:589, 156:611, 163:647.

status conferred by city walls may have been as important as any theological interpretations.[184]

Cities, gates and towers: three variations

All the above interpretations of the gates on sarcophagi are likely to have operated in tandem. The representation of a city as its defining boundary walls was able to stand simultaneously for the inside of the gated community of the Christian afterlife, and the outside of the deceased's hometown, an embodiment of spiritual protection after death, and a mark of status. The symbolic flexibility of towers and city-gates can also be seen from their further development into free-standing motifs. I will briefly make three detours to follow the motifs as they were reworked in different contexts and media, in the process of which they acquired new associations.

Gates and congregations

Firstly, the pair of simple freestanding city gates was transferred to a wider range of objects, not directly related to funerary commemoration. The best example is the Pola or Samagher casket. The casket was made slightly later than the city-gate sarcophagi, around the year 400. It was found in the village of Samagher, near Pola in Croatia, where it had been used to contain relics buried beneath an altar.[185] The fragmentary scene on the lid is familiar from the sarcophagi. Christ stands above the mound with the four rivers, giving the Law to Peter and Paul (fig. 49). At the

---

[184] Yasin 2005, p.433.

[185] Volbach 1976, no.120, p.85; Buschhausen 1971, pp.219-223.

bottom right-hand corner is an arched gate with round flanking towers and defined courses of masonry, with two sheep emerging from it, moving towards the central mound where a Lamb may also have been depicted. Presumably the gate and sheep were mirrored on the left-hand side. There are palm-trees beside the apostles, and as far as can be seen from the remaining pieces of ivory, there were miniature palm-trees behind the sheep. The front panel shows six apostles beneath arches of palm-trees, either side of a Lamb standing in front of an empty throne, again with a mound and four rivers.[186] On the other three sides are scenes of Christian worship, set in detailed architectural surroundings. On the back, a man and woman kneel at the closed door of a sanctuary, with male and female orant figures beside them (fig. 50). On the left side of the box is a triple-arched facade, the larger middle arch closed with a lattice-work door (fig. 51). A woman, man and child approach the door, and pairs of men and women stand at the sides. On the right-hand side, six figures stand beneath a polygonal canopy decorated with scrolling plants (fig. 52). Again there are two women and two men at the sides. One of the central pair reaches out her hand, possibly towards a screen of some sort. On all four sides of the casket there are four distinct registers of carving. There are bands of laurel leaves at the bottom, and two levels above the main scenes: the top level inhabited by pairs of birds and jewelled crosses, and the lower by more sheep walking through arched gateways towards unadorned crosses (fig. 53).

A popular interpretation of the casket is that the scene on the lid was copied from the lost apse mosaic of Old St Peter's and the front panel from the apse mosaic of the Lateran basilica, and that the other three sides depicted Roman churches; the

---

[186] Guarducci 1978, fig.1, 23-25.

shrine on the back framed by twisty columns has attracted especial interest as a possible representation of the sanctuary of Old St Peter's.[187] However, as Jaś Elsner says in his recent analysis of the casket, which I take as the basis of mine here, the "obsessive focus" on matching the images with specific Roman churches is probably not appropriate, and it is unlikely that they were ever intended as such precise references. Instead, the three scenes express the tension between restriction and access to the sacred, by their repetition of closed doors and screens, and the suggested possibility of glimpses through the depicted lattices and curtains.[188] Doors were as often described as revealing or leading to God, for example in Revelation 3:20, Christ says "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."[189] The closed doors of the depicted churches stand between the worshippers and the contents of the shrine/box, but the owner of the casket is given a privileged vision of Christ in paradise on the lid, as well as having access to whatever was originally inside the box, perhaps relics from the start. Even within the images, the church buildings are shown as at least partially accessible. The presence of women and children makes it clear that the figures are members of the congregation, not clergy, and they engage closely with the buildings, the central figures touching them.

---

[187] Buddensieg 1959, esp. pp.166-184, fig.13, 30; Guarducci 1978, pp.16-27; Bisconti 2009, pp.221-227, fig.2. The back panel was first claimed as a representation of Old St Peter's by Anton Gnirs, 1908, pp.34-35. Guarducci 1978, p.106, interprets the left-hand panel as the exterior of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and the right-hand panel as its sanctuary; Bisconti 2009, p.227, suggests that the right-hand side shows the Lateran baptistery.

[188] Elsner 2013, pp.187-188.

[189] Elsner 2013, p.218 for Biblical references to doors as locations of God's presence.

Elsner also notes that the banded composition creates a sense of upwards movement "from the material to the ethereal," from the life-like church interiors of the main panels, to the idealised structures and worshippers transformed into lambs, to the undefined space of the birds and jewelled crosses at the top.[190] On an enormously reduced scale, the role of the gateways on the middle layer of the casket can be compared to that of the golden buildings in the rotunda at Thessaloniki – they maintain a link between the recognisable world below and the idealised zone above. A small but important detail which helps to make this connection is the fabric of the gates. As on the sarcophagi, the building-blocks of the walls are outlined, but unlike on the sarcophagi they do not appear to be stones, instead they resemble the traditionally narrow Roman bricks. Brick did not have the same symbolic potential as stone in the abstract, but in this context the material seems meaningful, since churches of the early fifth century (at least in Italy, where the casket was probably made) were faced externally with bricks, just as the scene on the left-hand side depicts. On this face of the box especially, the gate-towers almost appear to be part of the same structure as the church, separated only by a dentilated frame, which itself could be seen as part of the building, as a cornice. Even on the other two sides where there are spatial gaps between the gateways and the shrines, the conceptual connection is maintained by the shared focus of the sheep and humans on a central point. Something of the same effect is given in an early fifth-century ivory carving of the Nativity and Adoration, originally part of a diptych or book cover (fig. 54).[191] There, the brick-built arcade running behind

---

[190] Elsner 2013, p.220.

[191] Volbach 1976, pp.59-60, no.114, pl.34.

the two scenes relocates them in a contemporary church setting, casting the ox, ass and Magi as members of the congregation alongside the owner of the book.

As a rectangular container probably designed to hold human remains, the Pola Casket had some common ground with sarcophagi. The motif of gate-tower and sheep was also transferred to quite different objects. It became so simplified over time that it is sometimes hard to recognise, implying that there were a lot more repetitions than we currently know of. One example is a pair of carved ivory plaques in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated between the fifth and sixth centuries (figs. 55 & 56).[192] Peter and Paul are shown standing underneath arches, and on the archivolts of each arch, two pairs of sheep head towards a cross. They walk away from some extremely sketchily-carved gates, shown as simple rectangular blocks with projections to indicate the tops of the opening, and crosshatched scratches for stonework and perhaps crenellations (fig. 57). The ivory is interesting in that it shows the gateways as part of the decoration of another architectural form. We know from surviving mosaics that similar images were depicted in apses (see chapter two), but in the monumental versions, the motif was often peripheral, and on the ivory it is the only decoration of the arch.[193] A third even more simplified example can be seen on a marble sigma table probably made in Rome, dated 400-600, also in the MMA (fig. 58).[194] Tables like this were used for graveside feasts, so it would probably have been in the personal possession of a

---

[192] MMA 17.190.54 and 17.190.55; Weitzman 1979, no.504, pp.560-562.

[193] The gates lead directly out of the columns, perhaps also playing on the metaphor of saints as pillars of the Church.

[194] MMA 47.100.50; Weitzmann 1979, no.576, pp.637-638.

family.[195] Along the bottom edge of the table-top four sheep move towards a Chi

Rho. The structures from which they emerge are shown simply as thick curved lines

forming half-arches, with two square crenellations projecting from each (fig. 59).

The battlements are attached directly to the top of the curve, as on the sarcophagus

of Gorgonius.[196]

The casket, ivory plaques and table-top are all small-scale personal objects,

designed to be touched and manipulated, and to be seen from close-to. The

carvings on the Pola casket emphasise lay participation in the rituals of the church,

and the potential accessibility of the divine. The combination of the 'gates of the

sheep' with recognisable types of church architecture draws the viewer inwards,

including them in the depicted congregations and the corresponding flocks (of

sheep and birds), and awarding the owner of the casket a direct vision of the sacred.

On the other two objects, the decision to include the abbreviated gate-towers also

reinforces the concept of belonging, and membership of the Church. By

themselves, the sheep adoring the cross or Chi Rho would be enough to convey the

idea of worship; what the gates draw attention to is their presence in a privileged

space, into which the viewer is also welcomed.

Urban expansion

---

[195] At 82 x 89 cm, the table-top is comparable to the smaller of the privately-

commissioned grave covers and tables found in Spain, North Africa and Cyprus: Kitzinger

1960, pp.26-27; Roux 1973.

[196] Sarcophagus of Gorgonius: Rep.II:149. Tables for funerary feasts also borrowed images

from columnar sarcophagi, see Kitzinger 1960, fig. 12.

As well as being simplified, the gates could also be expanded. This can be seen on two funerary markers of the late fourth or early fifth centuries. Both show the *traditio legis*, and owe something of their composition to the sarcophagi discussed above, but with the paired gates enlarged to become two entire cities.

The first is a small gold-glass roundel which once formed the bottom of a bowl, probably made in Rome (fig. 60).[197] The circular field is divided into two. The main scene shows Christ standing on a mound above a river labelled IORDANES. Peter receives the scroll on the right, and Paul stands on the left, in front of a palm-tree with a phoenix perching in it. The scene also contains scattered leaves and flowers and a partly damaged inscription, PIE Z..., which almost certainly read PIE ZESES: 'Drink! Live!'[198] The bottom quarter of the roundel shows two cities, labelled IERVSALE on the left and BECLE on the right. These have towered walls topped with pointed crenellations, and there is a suggestion of a gate on the front wall of each. Three sheep stand in front of each city, facing a mound with four rivers flowing from it, and a ram (not a lamb for once) standing on top.

Most gold glasses have been found in their secondary locations, broken and set into the mortar sealing loculus tombs. Like sarcophagi, they were used to mark pagan, Jewish and Christian graves, but unlike sarcophagi they were not restricted to the well-off. Many have generic images and inscriptions (such as PIE ZESES), but they could also be personalised with names and portraits, so buyers probably had the option to select images reflecting their preferences and beliefs, even if choosing

---

[197] Vatican Collection inv. no. 422; Zanchi-Roppo 1969, pp.196-197; Morey and Ferrari 1959, no.78, p.19, pl.13; Weitzmann 1979, p.560.

[198] Morey and Ferrari 1959, p.19; Grig 2004, p.204.

from a set stock of designs.[199]   Once the fashion for using the decorated bottoms

as tomb seals was established, this is also likely to have been taken into account in

the design of the bowl.[200]   Gold glass bowls were probably made for a variety of

occasions such as weddings, funerals, New Year celebrations and saints' days, and

they may also have been commissioned by rich individuals as gifts for their

clients.[201] For glasses with Christian themes, baptismal gifts are another possibility,

and the prominent River Jordan and the message of 'Drink!   Live!' point to

resurrection through baptism as the theme of the image in this case.   By

commemorating the places of Christ's birth and resurrection, the images of

Jerusalem and Bethlehem celebrate the rebirth of the owner of the bowl, whether

at their baptism or death.   A sarcophagus in San Celso, Milan, achieves a similar

effect with more specific architectural references to the two narratives, showing

the stable of the Nativity at one end of the tomb, and Christ's Sepulchre at the other

(fig. 61).[202]   On the glass bowl, the resemblance to the gateway imagery on

sarcophagi also implies that the cities stand in for the heavenly destination, made

accessible through the baptism referred to by the Jordan and the four rivers.

The second artefact is an incised marble slab, 85 x 30cm, now kept at the Palazzo

Bonifacio VIII in Anagni, probably originally from the catacombs on the Via Salaria

---

[199] Cameron 1996, pp.299-300; Grig 2004, p.208.

[200] For example, the similarity of marriage portraits on gold glasses and sarcophagi

suggests that, even if the bowls were produced for marriages, their later role in burial

was probably considered. Croci 2013, p.51.

[201] Cameron 1996, pp.298-299; Grig 2004, pp.204-205, pp.211-212; Croci 2013, pp.45-46.

[202] Rep.II:250.

in Rome (fig. 62).[203] Again it shows Christ standing on the mountain with the rivers,

between Peter, Paul and two palm-trees. On the same ground-level but on a much

smaller scale there are six sheep on each side, coming out of two cities at the bases

of the trees. The cities are shown in more detail than on the glass bowl, with three

towers each, defined masonry lines, and tops of roofs visible above the walls. They

are not named, or distinguished from each other in any other way. Sarcophagi and

mosaics have both been proposed as the inspiration for the design.[204] There are

formal similarities with both. The small scale of the cities and sheep separates them

from the three men in the same way that miniature gates and sheep formed friezes

along the bottom of sarcophagi, and in later apse mosaics paired cities were placed

in a band below the main field. As was proposed for the lid of the Pola Casket,

Dimitri Cascianelli has recently suggested the grave slab copied the lost apse mosaic

of Old St Peter's.[205] Being lost, it is rather difficult to judge, but in terms of content,

as a commemorative object it seems more likely that sarcophagi would have been

the model.[206] The fact that the cities are not named or distinguished supports the

idea that they should be seen together, as a single signifier. All options are left

open – the cities *could* stand for Jerusalem and Bethlehem, for birth and

resurrection, but they can equally be interpreted as scaled-up versions of the gates

---

[203] Garrucci 1880 pl.484:14; Belting-Ihm 1960, fig.5. pp. 35-36; Testini 1973-4, pp.720-722.

[204] Testini 1973-4, p.725, 378-379.

[205] Cascianelli 2013. For the hypothesis that the Old St Peter's apse mosaic inspired city-

gate sarcophagi: Rasmussen 2001, p.39; Andaloro 2006b, pp.87-90.

[206] Testini 1973-4, p.736. Snelders 2005, p.328, p.330, claims that the triangular

composition of the traditio legis was well-suited to sarcophagi, and need not have been

adapted from a mosaic.

on the sarcophagi, visualising the deceased's permitted entry into the sheepfold of the Church.

On both these objects, the cities appear marginal, small and at the sides or bottom of the composition. Nevertheless, they significantly add to the meaning of the central images. They bring together and clarify the various concepts referred to by the other motifs: Christ's birth and resurrection, the *traditio legis* as the birth of the Church, and the deceased's own resurrection after death through baptism and initiation into that Church, imagined as becoming a citizen of the city of God.

Santa Costanza

The third variation of the gate-tower motif has a slightly more institutional slant. It can be seen in the mosaic decorating the southern side-apse of Santa Costanza in Rome. Santa Costanza was attached to the cemetery church of Sant'Agnese. It is commonly dated to the 350s-370s, and identified as the original mausoleum of Constantina, the Emperor Constantine's daughter.[207] However, drawing on archaeological evidence for an earlier triconch chapel attached to the south wall of Sant'Agnese, David Stanley has argued that Santa Costanza was not built until the early fifth century, most likely during the pontificate of Innocent I (401-417).[208] Stanley suggests that the rotunda then functioned both as Constantina's mausoleum, and a martyrium dedicated to Saint Agnes. Any definite conclusion will depend on more archaeological data, but from an iconographical point of view,

---

[207] Andaloro 2006a, p.61, Andaloro 2006b, pp.84-85.

[208] Stanley 1994, p.260, fig.17; Stanley 2004, p.123, p.135; *c.f.* Rasch 2000, pp.155-156.

the later date makes sense, since the mosaic appears to be a development of the motifs popular on late fourth-century sarcophagi.

The side-apse mosaic shows Christ on the mound with rivers, Peter and Paul receiving the law, and two pairs of sheep by their feet. Behind each apostle stands a tall building and a palm-tree (fig. 63). The buildings are simple in design, made of large stone blocks, without windows or crenellations. They appear to have tiled roofs. They are not shown as part of a wall, and there is nothing to suggest that they represent cities or city-gates. On the other hand they are too solidly built to literally be sheepfolds, as in a pastoral scene. In contrast to the earlier images with pairs of gates, the buildings are not directly associated with the sheep, but with Peter and Paul. They are also merged with the palm-trees, which appear to be growing directly from their roofs. In proximity to Peter and Paul, the "twin towers of Rome", the tall freestanding structures seem most likely to represent towers.[209] As discussed above, the Tower of the Flock was an image of the Church, and together with the flourishing palm-trees the buildings represent the growth and life of the institution, and in particular the Roman Church, under the protection of its two apostles. The Santa Costanza mosaic therefore displays the themes developed in late fourth-century elite funerary sculpture in a monumental form, and nudged in a more institutional direction, appropriate enough in an imperial mausoleum.

---

[209] For the alternative suggestion that they are *sukkot*, booths used during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, see Noga-Banai 2010, pp.140-142, who compares the mosaic buildings to structures represented on a fragment of gold glass: Morey and Ferrari 1959, no.116, p.27, pl.20; St Clair 1985.

Architectural motifs in late fourth- and early fifth-century funerary art: conclusion

To a large extent, the architectural imagery of early Christian sarcophagi reflected traditional themes and functions. The boxes were carved to resemble buildings or spaces seen from a distance, and to appear larger and more substantial than they actually were, minimising the viewer's awareness of the dead body a few centimetres away and replacing it with an idealised and more manageable vision of their afterlife, just as earlier memorials had. But there was also significant innovation. On Christian columnar sarcophagi, the carved figures were brought into more immediate contact with the viewer, presented as living characters within their architectural framework. At the same time the sarcophagi visualised the equivalence between columns and apostles, creating a powerful image of the living church. The city-gate sarcophagi, and the transition of the city, gate and tower motifs to being powerful symbols in their own right, were also innovations. By the first decade of the fifth century, this range of building types would have been familiar from a large number of publically-displayed memorials, associated conceptually with the process of baptism-death-salvation, and compositionally with a selection of other motifs: sheep, palm-trees, and the triad of Christ, Peter and Paul. As will be seen in chapter two, the motif of the paired cities continued to develop in new directions, away from specifically funerary contexts.

The combination of the concepts of church, heaven and city, and the visualisation of successful entry into the ensemble, would have had a strong appeal in a funerary context. The resonance of the theme may have been heightened by changes in accepted behaviour in and around city limits. The banning of heretics from urban Christian communities would have added relevance to the idea of membership of the Church as admittance to a fortified structure. The initial transfers of saints'

remains from their graves was already taking place, although burial inside the walls

of cities was still prohibited by law, and the clustering of tombs in cemeteries, while

legally acceptable, was a further change in practice from their previous dispersal

along main roads.[210] The city-gate sarcophagi were commissioned by one of the

first generations to be affected by these changes, perhaps a factor in their

ambiguous appearance, allowing for their interpretation as either side of the

defining walls. This iconographical bet-hedging – emphasising the material and

physically-present nature of the depicted structures, at the same time as their

heavenly status – stresses the certainty of the deceased's welcome at the gates of

paradise. This statement may have been particular desirable precisely because its

truth was in doubt. In the late fourth century the doctrine of the afterlife still had

gaps in it; Peter Brown describes how St Augustine was swamped with questions

about what really happened after death, noting that the questions came in

particular from richer parishioners.[211] These individuals would have been from the

sarcophagus-buying classes, and the architecturally-bolstered impression of

inevitable entry into paradise may partly be a response to their insecurities. The

depicted buildings also constructed an image of a stable, coherent and well defined

Christian community – with sound foundations and strong walls – in situations

which were in fact extremely unstable. The late fourth and early fifth century saw

political and economic upheavals, splits and 'heresies' already multiplying inside

the Church, and increasing social differentiation within congregations.   The

symbolism was popular despite the reality, or more likely, because of it.

---

[210] Spera 2003, p.35.

[211] Brown 2015, p.58.

Chapter two: architectural imagery in fifth-century Roman mosaics

Three exceptional mosaic programmes of the early fifth century can be seen in the Roman churches of Santa Pudenziana (c.401-417), Santa Sabina (c. 422-432) and Santa Maria Maggiore (c.432-440). Despite restorations and losses, the mosaics are preserved or recorded well enough to give an idea of their original appearance. In Santa Sabina and Santa Maria Maggiore, elements of the decoration in the nave also survive. All three mosaics are strongly architectural, with built structures playing major roles. In each case, the designers used representations of buildings to comment on and define the accompanying figures or motifs, and to visualise communities and concepts. The architectural compositions also engaged with the spaces of the basilicas in which they were viewed, providing visions of celestial structures to which the earthly churches formed the gateway.

Patronage and innovation

Before looking at the individual case-studies, and the distinctive ways in which architectural imagery was used in each, there are some factors to take into account in relation to the churches and their mosaics collectively. One is changing patterns of patronage. Images of buildings often draw attention to the act of construction, and this is particularly the case when the images are part of the fabric of an actual building. Although in none of the three mosaics is there a literal representation of the fifth-century church in which they were displayed, it seems likely that connections between the two- and three-dimensional structures were intended, the former adding to the grandeur of the latter and promoting the actions of the patrons as spiritual achievements.

Santa Pudenziana and Santa Sabina were titular churches. Charles Pietri identified the *tituli* as a post-Constantinian phenomenon, products of lay aristocratic patronage and the increasing Christianisation of the Roman upper classes. Pietri suggested that the label *titulus* signalled the continued rights of the lay owner over the church, and their provision of properties to raise income for the maintenance of the building.[212] The legal status, patronage and management of these churches have recently been re-investigated. Julia Hillner has proposed that in the early fifth century, rather than indicating private ownership, the title of *titulus* denoted an urban church acquired and controlled by the pope.[213] Hillner also makes the case for a high level of clerical patronage of the *tituli*, Santa Sabina and Santa Pudenziana being two examples. She points out that the clergy was increasingly made up of wealthy men, although below senatorial rank and outside of Rome's traditional aristocracy, capable of funding the construction of basilicas from their own resources, either singly, as at Santa Sabina, or in a small group, as at Santa Pudenziana.[214] Kristina Sessa has further suggested that although the *tituli* were legally controlled by the pope, in practice their priests had a fair amount of autonomy in their management.[215] This was a period in which architectural patronage suddenly became available to new sections of Roman society. For a number of wealthy middle class men, their position in the clergy enabled them to make their mark on the city in a way not previously possible. These men ensured that their personal patronage, despite being channelled through the institution of

---

[212] Pietri 1976, pp.90-96, pp.504-506 (Santa Sabina), p.564 (Santa Pudenziana).

[213] Hillner 2006, p.61; Hillner 2007, p.236.

[214] Hillner 2006, p.63, 66-68; Guidobaldi 2003, p.6, 10.

[215] Sessa 2012, pp.231-232.

the Church, got public recognition through prominent dedicatory inscriptions. The choice of architectural imagery in the decoration of these churches needs to be seen in this context. The privileging of buildings as embodiments of Christian community and the value placed on ecclesiastical foundation which is apparent in the programmes of the two titular churches, are likely to have had a particular resonance for the patrons and congregations of these new basilicas.

Santa Maria Maggiore, on the other hand, was a papal foundation. The mosaic programme seems to highlight papal authority, and to counterpose the positions of priest/pope and king/emperor. This could be seen purely in terms of papal self-assurance, in the power vacuum caused by the relocation of the emperor to Ravenna.[216] However, Santa Maria Maggiore was built on imperial land, and Sixtus' gifts to the basilica of gold liturgical objects – of a sort not seen since the Constantinian period – would have been impossible without access to the imperial court through which the gold supply circulated.[217] In addition, although the siege of Rome in 410 did not result in much damage to the infrastructure of the city, the Gothic troops looted gold and silver church furnishings, making the institution more reliant on imperial funding for some time afterwards.[218] Thus, in Peter Brown's

---

[216] Krautheimer 1961, p.301; Krautheimer 1980, p.46.

[217] Gillett 2001, pp.145-146; Neil 2011, p.56; Brown 2012, p.457. For a list of the gifts:
Liber Pontificalis 46.3; Duchesne 1981 vol.1, pp.232-233; Davis 2000, pp.36-37. On his own behalf, Valentinian also gave more luxury gifts to Roman churches than any emperor since Constantine: Gillett 2001, p.145.

[218] Neil 2011, p.56. For the 410 siege and its effects on Roman society: Burns 1994, chapter 8; Dunn 2009. See *Liber Pontificalis* 45.2; Duchesne 1981 vol.1 p.230; Davis

words, rather than demonstrating "the first great age of papal Rome", the foundation of Santa Maria Maggiore represented, from the emperor's point of view, "a momentary return…to the golden age of Constantine."[219] This state of affairs may not have been seen in quite the same golden light by the pope, and the circumstances of construction, although different from those of the titular churches, would equally have given an edge to the symbolic depictions of architectural forms. The decision to use buildings to visualise theological concepts, especially referring to the foundation of the Church as a whole, would strengthen the pope's status as guardian and patron of Roman Church, a statement which would need to be made all the more emphatically if the papacy's authority in the city was not yet certain.

The mosaics of Santa Pudenziana, Santa Sabina and Santa Maria Maggiore stand alone in studies of early Christian art; they have few close comparisons in the decoration of later Roman churches, nor do the three compositions resemble each other.[220] Although it is difficult to quantify, one of the factors which seems to stimulate artistic innovation is the desire of individuals or groups for self-definition

---

2000, p.36, for a list of silver gifts presented by Celestine to the basilica of Julius "after the Gothic conflagration".

[219] Brown 2012, p.457.

[220] This apparent uniqueness may result in part from the loss of contemporary works. A now-destroyed mosaic on the south wall of the tower at Santa Costanza was described in the sixteenth century as showing Christ and apostles seated in Paradise flanked by two women, sounding similar in composition to the apse of Santa Pudenziana, and the marble revetment of the same church included architectural forms, as in Santa Sabina. Müntz 1878, p.355, 362; Stanley 2004, p.126.

against others. So the situation described above – with the imperial court, the papal administration, the clergy, and newly-converted aristocrats all vying to make their mark on the landscape of Rome – may go some way to explaining the level of innovation displayed in these decorative programmes. The drawback with creating a totally new image is that the audience may not understand it, and the mosaicists did not make a complete break with tradition. On the contrary, they relied on some of the same motifs as the sarcophagi discussed in chapter one, such as paired city-gates or entire walled cities, and a single building as a backdrop for the gathering of Christ and the apostles. However, these images acquired new meanings. In their institutional settings, placed high above the heads of viewers at the focal points of the churches, they would have been experienced in very different ways from the carved buildings on the sarcophagi.[221] In his discussion of originality in early medieval art, Lawrence Nees has laid out alternatives to the Weitzmannian 'model-seeking' approach, which in its recognition of the importance of artistic traditions downplays the role of creativity.[222] Nees argues that even where models can be identified, the recombination of such models in new ways should be recognised as intentional innovation.[223] One of the distinctive features of the fifth-century mosaics is precisely this manipulation of relatively conventional architectural forms to create new images.

---

[221] Church interiors were divided, gendered spaces, and not all images would have been equally visible to all sections of the congregation: Neuman de Vegvar 2007b, pp.99-100. However, the images discussed here were located high up on the walls or in the apses above the altar, and were probably visible to most users of the space.

[222] Nees 1992, pp.81-82.

[223] Nees 1992, p.89, 81.

Space, materiality and location

Another feature common to all three mosaics is an interaction between the viewer's space and the represented space. An illusion of depth is created, presenting the space of the church as extending into the image. By joining the structure of the individual church with the ideal or heavenly structures represented within it, such images would have been instrumental in constructing the concept of the Church as an embodiment of the New Jerusalem. According to Jerome, whose writings were popular in Rome in the early fifth century, the heavenly city was not to be understood in physical terms as something which would one day appear in Palestine, but as a permanent state of being existing throughout the Church.[224] This belief gave church buildings an unusual status, as material projections of an immaterial sphere. Slightly paradoxically, or perhaps a case of having your apocalyptic cake and eating it, this was expressed through the use and depiction of precious materials. The mosaicists made the most of their opportunity to depict heavenly riches, with jewelled crosses, thrones and gates, and golden roofs and walls. It is probable that the furnishings of the church would have echoed them. The use of large numbers of lamps and shimmering, multi-coloured materials in late antique churches has sometimes been seen as an expression of anti-materialism, an attempt to dissolve the physicality of the buildings.[225] However, given the evident pride with which popes and priests recorded their patronage of the structure and decoration of the churches, and given the prominence of architectural forms in the mosaics, this new aesthetic can also be seen as an

---

[224] E.g. Jerome *Commentary on Isaiah* Book 13, ch.23; PL vol.24, col.470; Scheck 2015, p.622. Also see Schlatter 1995b, p.73, and p.88 below.

[225] Hansen 2001, p.72, p.74.

attempt to raise the material of the church to a higher level of reality, to make visible its status as more than the sum of its parts.

Various authors have raised the possibility that the mosaic of Santa Pudenziana represent specific places: Jerusalem, Bethlehem or Rome. I disagree with these theories (see p.83 below), but they have the advantage of drawing attention to the wider issue of different modes of architectural depiction. As outlined in the introduction, the terms I use for the two main methods of representation are the iconic or ideal on the one hand, and the veristic (as opposed to realistic) on the other. A good example of their combination on one artefact is the Vatican Grottoes sarcophagus mentioned in chapter one (p.34). On the short sides, New Testament scenes are displayed against a background of stone buildings with curtained doors and arched windows (fig. 20). The level of detail, down to the rivets on the doors and the pins holding back the curtains, encourages the viewer to interpret the structures as 'real', and therefore as confirming the historical reality of the depicted narrative, although there is no suggestion that particular existing buildings are represented. The front of the sarcophagus, on the other hand, is decorated with elaborate vine-scroll columns dividing Old and New Testament scenes (fig. 21). The colonnade exemplifies the second mode of architectural representation, non-locational and symbolic, invoking the link between apostles and columns, as well as more general associations of grandeur and regeneration.

A similar juxtaposition can be seen in the mosaics. The detail and variation of the buildings in the apse of Santa Pudenziana, or the Old Testament scenes in the nave of Santa Maria Maggiore, appear in contrast to the box-like golden cities of the Santa Maria Maggiore arch mosaic, or the impossibly stretched jewelled gateways of Santa Sabina. Some of the architectural imagery in these mosaics had a

locational function, with enough detail to create a workable illusion of place. But in no case can the verism of the depicted buildings be taken as 'realistic', in the sense of a mimetic depiction of an actual building. Sometimes represented buildings occupy ground between the two modes, and further fine-tunings can be made on the basis of relative appearances within one mosaic, as for example on the arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, where the towered city motif is repeated with varying levels of idealisation in different contexts. However, the depicted buildings in this chapter predominantly belong to the more symbolic idiom, as icons of institutions, communities, or states of being. Insofar as the mosaics were viewed within the architectural spaces of their churches, their connection with a specific location is essential to their meaning. But in an iconographic sense, the architectural forms tend towards the universal.

Santa Pudenziana

Christian use of the site of Santa Pudenziana, which had previously been occupied by an apartment block and nymphaeum, is recorded from the 380s.[226] The story of the construction and decoration of the basilica was told in a series of inscriptions, all originally displayed inside the church. The building works took place towards the end of Siricius' pontificate (384-399), under the patronage of the priests Ilicius, Leopardus and Maximus. This information was recorded in two inscriptions, one incised on marble slabs and one in the apse mosaic on the open book held by Saint

---

[226] *Corpus Basilicarum* 3, pp.287-296; Guidobaldi 2002; Brandenburg 2004, pp.137-142,

Andaloro 2006a, p.307.

Paul.[227] The date of the mosaic itself, during the pontificate of Innocent I (401-417), was given by a third inscription at the lower edge of the conch of the apse, now lost, again naming the three priests as patrons.[228] A fourth inscription gives the

[227] Marble inscription: *Salvo Siricio episc ecclesiae sanctae et Iilicio Leopardo et Maximo presb…*: 'When Siricius bishop (pope) of the holy church was in good health, when Ilicius, Leopardus and Maximus were priests …': de Rossi 1867, p.52. The slabs were reused as part of a later medieval pulpit, and copies of them are currently displayed in the south aisle of the basilica. Mosaic inscription: *fund[ata] a Leopardo et Icilio <sic> Valent[iniano] Aug[usto] et Eutyciano co[n]s[ulibus]* – founded by Leopardus and Ilicius (during the reign of) Valentinian Augustus and in the consulship of Eutycianus: De Rossi 1867, p.53; *Corpus Basilicarum* 3, p.279. Eutycianus held the office of *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis* from 397-399 and 404-405, but the inscription must refer to his earlier consulship, during the reign of Valentinian II (371-392): Bagnall et al 1987, p.74, p.331. The opening words of Matthew's gospel now visible on Paul's book are an early modern replacement.

[228] *Sal[vo] Innocent[io] episcopo [Ili]cio Maximo, et [—-] pre(sby)teris Le[opardus —-marm]oribus et pict[uris] decoravi[t]*: 'When Innocentius the bishop (pope) was in good health, when Ilicius and Maximus were priests […] Leopardus decorated (the church) with marble cladding and painting': *Corpus Basilicarum* 3, p.280. An obituary inscription dated 384 was also noted in the sixteenth century by Alessandro Pasqualini, and since lost: *Leopardus lector de Pudentiana…def. VIII Kal. Dec. Ricomede et Clearco Con*: Leopardus, the reader of Pudentiana, died on the 24th November in the consulship of Ricimer and Clearchus (384): De Rossi 1857, p.153, Bagnall et al 1987, p.303. The lector may not be the same Leopardus named as patron in the later dedicatory inscriptions, since the latest is dated well after his death, but it is possible that if he had contributed a significant amount of money, his patronage would have continued to be commemorated.

dedication of the church; in the mosaic, Christ holds an open book with the message
Dominus Conservator Ecclesiae Pudentianae – "the Lord is / I the Lord am the
protector of the church of Pudentiana".[229]   The sequence of inscriptions shows
considerable continuity of patronage. Ilicius, Leopardus and Maximus continued to
manage and fund the church over twenty to thirty years, probably almost their
entire working lives. The inscriptions also show the patrons' enthusiasm for the
commemoration of themselves and their building works, in the best late Roman
tradition of evergetism.

In its current state, the apse mosaic shows Christ enthroned between Peter, Paul
and eight other apostles, the two Roman apostles being crowned with wreaths held
by veiled women (fig. 64). Behind Christ's throne is a mound topped with a golden
jewelled cross, and the four winged beasts of Ezekiel's vision float against the red
and blue clouds of the sunrise. Christ and the apostles are seated before a long
building with a golden roof and six arched openings, with at least ten separate
buildings in the background, the largest two near the centre. The picture is
complicated by eighth-century modifications, sixteenth- and nineteenth-century
restorations, and damage caused by the construction of a new altar in 1711.[230] The
lost motifs include an eighth-century monogram of Pope Hadrian I, two apostles, a
lamb and a dove. With small variations, two seventeenth-century watercolours

---

[229] Schlatter 1989, p.162, argues that the term *conservator* was unusual in a Christian
context, more often used to mean protection from military danger, implying that the
mosaic postdates Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. C.f. Mathews 1993, p.98, who dates the
mosaic to the 390s. For all four inscriptions: *Corpus Basilicarum* 3, pp.279-280; Pietri
1977, pp.377-378; Schlatter 1989, p.156; Hillner 2006, p.63, n.34-36.

[230] Matthiae 1967, p.55; Andaloro 2006a, p.309.

show the Lamb standing on a mound below the central throne (figs. 65 & 66).[231] The dove appears above the Lamb's head, flying downwards.[232] The sketch by Antonio Eclissi also shows a continuous stretch of roof and columnar façade behind the cross, connecting the two buildings on either side. However, the drawing was made after the interventions of Cardinal Caetani in 1588, and does not necessarily reproduce the original composition. All that can safely be said about the architectural background is that both sides contained a number of buildings. Those on the viewer's left are original in part, while those on the right were almost completely reconstructed in the nineteenth century. The placement of the two largest buildings either side of the cross, one rounded, the other angular, is fairly certain, confirmed on the right by the original areas of mosaic (fig. 67).

Several interpretations of the programme have been proposed, with particular attention given to the architectural elements. Many commentators see the assembly of Christ and the apostles in the foreground as taking place in Jerusalem, in the courtyard of the church of the Holy Sepulchre with Golgotha rising behind it.[233] Jerusalem being the complicated place it is, this could either mean the actual city in the future, at the moment of the Second Coming, or the Heavenly Jerusalem in a permanently existing present. Some scholars have preferred a combination of

---

[231] Antonio Eclissi, c.1630s, Osborne and Claridge 1996, p.306, fig.142; Anonymous, seventeenth century, Osborne and Claridge 1998, p.74, fig. 176. A sketch by Alfonso Ciacconio, 1595, Cod.Vat.5407, Berchem and Clouzot 1924, fig.64, shows a simplified version of the composition without background buildings, also with dove and Lamb.

[232] Cross, lamb and dove were also depicted together in the apse of the basilica of St Felix at Nola: Paulinus of Nola, Letter 32:10, Walsh 1966, p.45.

[233] For example Finegan 1992, p.268; Thunø 2002, p.27; Hahn 2012, p.79.

these options. Guglielmo Matthiae argues that the mosaic is "a theophany inspired

by the Second Coming", with the apostles in their role as judges.[234] In his view the

scene is not post-apocalyptic, but set in the New Jerusalem which had existed as a

physical place from the moment that Constantine's Martyrion was erected,

transforming the historical city into a living allegory.[235] The background is not

necessarily in the same conceptual space as the foreground, and again there are

several existing hypotheses as to where it is. Broadly speaking, scholars are divided

into two camps: one holding that the background represents a historical city, the

other that the setting is allegorical. Within the first camp, opinion differs as to

whether the whole mosaic depicts Jerusalem, or only the left-hand side, with the

right showing Bethlehem.[236] A minority have claimed that the setting is Rome.[237]

Taking the allegorical position, Hugo Brandenburg writes that "above the golden-

roofed portico…the buildings of Heavenly Jerusalem are depicted."[238] Jean Spieser

---

[234] Matthiae 1967, pp.59-61.

[235] Matthiae 1967, p.61.

[236] Authors who have described the background as the historical Jerusalem include

L'Orange and Nordhagen 1966, p.51, 105; Kühnel 1987, p.66; Hellemo 1989, p.53;

Wilken 1992 p.124: "behind [the portico] stand a series of buildings that can be clearly

identified as the new Christian buildings in the city, the Martyrium, the Anastasis, the

Imbomon, and the Eleona church"; Mathews 1993, p.98. Cynthia Hahn, 2012, p.79,

describes the mosaic as "a geographically 'realistic' depiction of Jerusalem". Armstrong

1967, pp.93-94 and Milburn 1988, p. 217 see the background as representing both

Jerusalem and Bethlehem. For earlier bibliography on both hypotheses, Matthiae 1967,

p.58, footnotes 15 and 16.

[237] For the bibliography for this now mostly disregarded theory see Matthiae 1967, p.58.

[238] Brandenburg 2004, p.142.

manages to combine all the options, proposing that "the celestial Jerusalem is represented in the image of terrestrial Jerusalem", and Eugene Kleinbauer wrote that the setting "may be identified as either the earthly Jerusalem or the heavenly Jerusalem", perhaps implying that the two were blurred together in fifth-century viewers' minds.[239] Fredric Schlatter, the most recent author to discuss Santa Pudenziana, regards the gathering as taking place at the end of the world. He sees the golden-roofed structure in the foreground as Ezekiel's visionary Temple, which was itself taken as an image of the universal New Jerusalem.[240] Schlatter then identifies the mound supporting the Cross as the Mount of Olives, and the buildings in the background collectively as Jerusalem, presumably the historical city.[241]

Cities singular and plural

Any, and possibly all, of these theories may be partially correct. But there is a bigger unanswered question – why show the Last Judgement in an architectural setting at all? And in particular, why are there buildings in the background? Backgrounds were not automatic components of early Christian mosaics. For example, in both the side-apse mosaics at Santa Costanza, the plants and buildings are at roughly the same depth of picture plane as the figures. If the gathering of the apostles in the courtyard is taking place in (a) Jerusalem, it might seem logical to show a cityscape behind them. But this would be to use the logic of the wrong millennium. The early Christian approach to the visible and material was largely symbolic. During the first few centuries AD the concept of reality became increasingly disassociated from the

---

[239] Spieser 1998, p.65; Kleinbauer 1972, p.37.

[240] Schlatter 1992, pp.283-284; Schlatter 1995b.

[241] Schlatter 1992, pp.282-285.

experienced world. Images could be keys to enlightenment and salvation if correctly interpreted, but this did not depend on their mimetic visual relationship to a model.[242] This change in viewing practice resulted in a change in the value of 'realism'. Images could point towards a conceptual reality, but their direct representation of a physical prototype was less likely to be important, particularly in the context of devotional art. When interpreting figural images, art historians routinely take this into account. We know that the Lamb on an early Christian sarcophagus is not the same as a lamb in a pastoral scene on a non-Christian one (which although it may bring to mind broader concepts of spring and birth, is still basically a baby sheep), and where a picture of a woolly four-legged animal lacks the context to tell which is meant, we at least accept that there are two possible ways of interpreting it. The same logic can be applied to images of buildings. The correspondence between the appearance of the mosaic skyline and a view experienced in the everyday world would not necessarily have held much value for fifth-century viewers.

A depiction of all the major churches of Jerusalem and/or Bethlehem will not do as an answer either, due to the non-hieratic presentation of the buildings. Iconic structures were sometimes shown in early Christian art, Christ's tomb being the most popular (fig. 68).[243] In all known examples, it stands alone, and is easily

---

[242] Elsner 1995, esp. Chapter 6, and pp.40-41 for an example of the symbolic interpretation of architectural images in a first-century pagan text. Also see Mary Carruthers' discussion of medieval attitudes to image and memory: "pictures are cognitive in nature; their degree of mimetic realism is emphatically not a quality of importance to Isidore (of Seville)": Carruthers 1998, p.201.

[243] Volbach 1976, pl.33:110. Also see Weitzmann 1979, no.452, 453, 524, fig.76.

recognisable by the actions of the figures around it. If all the buildings in the mosaic represented significant sacred sites, one would expect to see them in full view, equally sized or at least scaled in order of importance, not jostling with each other for space. For example, the gabled basilica to the left of the domed building above St Paul's head has been described by several writers as the Martyrion.[244] But the likelihood that the "the very testimony to the Saviour", as Eusebius called it, would be shown off-centre and only marginally larger than the buildings next to it, is small.[245] Specific important buildings would also have been clearly identifiable. The Roman audience would not have known what the actual buildings of Jerusalem looked like, so any depiction of them would have had to include unmistakable and well-known features, or, as will be seen in chapter three where specific locations *are* depicted, explanatory inscriptions.

The buildings visible above the golden rooftop are a good example of the veristic mode of architectural depiction. They are irregular, asymmetrical and varied, with finely modelled details of cornices and tiles. These features have given some modern viewers an impression of "almost photographic realism".[246] But they may have had a different significance to their original audience. The variety of different

---

[244] Lowrie 1947, p.147; Conant 1956, p.6; Pullan 1998, pp.411-412; de Blauuw 2014, p.148.

[245] Eusebius probably used the word *martyrion* with the meaning of testimony: Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3:33; Cameron and Hall 1999, p.135, 281. Also see Osterhout 1990, p.46.

[246] Milburn 1988, p.217. Also see L'Orange and Nordhagen 1966, p.51, who describe the scene as "a topographically accurate representation of Jerusalem", and "a highly naturalistic setting", and Oakeshott 1967, p.66, who comments on the "remarkable naturalism" of the buildings.

architectural types is systematic enough to appear intentional. Roofs are domed, gabled, pyramidal or crenelated; flat or rounded facades are seen front-on or in three-quarter profile, openings are square, arched, or both on the same building. In contemporary literature, a list of variants within a category was the accepted form for an exhaustive survey of a type.[247] Variations on the theme of architecture, rather than suggesting realism, could therefore have been seen as an encyclopaedic range of all buildings.

The style of the buildings in the background also sets them into deliberate contrast with the curved structure enclosing Christ and the apostles. There is a strong tonal separation between the two zones, distinguishing the buildings of the skyline, picked out in white and grey tones, from the vividly coloured areas above and below them. In the poetry and visual arts of late antiquity, there was a preference for the combination of differentiated brightly-coloured elements.[248] The rows of jewels on the cross and throne, the scattered red and blue clouds, and the varied poses and facial types of the apostles follow this aesthetic.[249] The taste for visual brilliance extended to literary descriptions of architecture. In late antique poetry, Rome was often described metonymically as its dazzling golden rooftops. For example, a passage in Claudian's panegyric to Honorius, in which he names Rome as the preeminent city of rulers, concludes that: "vision is stunned by the flash of metal; confused it loses its capacity to discriminate in the profusion of gold".[250] As

---

[247] Roberts 1989, p.78.

[248] See Roberts 1989, ch.2, pp.38-65, James 2003.

[249] Although the right-hand group of apostles are modern reconstructions, the seventeenth-century watercolours show a similar range of poses.

[250] Claudian, *6 Cons. Hon*, 51-52; Roberts 2001, p.546.

well as being a topos of glorifications of Rome, gilded roofs were noted features of Constantine's Holy Sepulchre and Church of the Apostles.[251] The golden tiles in the foreground of the mosaic thus picked up on a contemporary feature of architectural ekphrasis with both imperial and sacred connotations. Gold tesserae also highlight the vertical axis formed by the cross and Christ's tunic and throne, which is bisected by the horizontal strip of the roof, forming the larger golden cross-shape which structures the composition. Scattered gold tesserae appear in the clouds, on the beasts, and on the clothes of the apostles, and the veiled women are clothed entirely in gold. The other dominant colours are the red and blue of the clouds, indicating the dawn of the Last Day.

The washed-out colour of the background buildings therefore needs explaining. The white of the walls could show marble, but the depiction of roof tiles in greyscale is unusual (fig. 69). In the fifth-century Vatican Vergil, for example, walls were shown as white or brown, but roofs were almost always red.[252] At Santa Maria Maggiore, all the mosaic buildings – from humble houses in the Old Testament scenes to allegorical representations of the Church – have red and/or gold tiles. One possibility is that the mosaicists at Santa Pudenziana intended to imitate the sunlit sacral-idyllic landscapes of much earlier domestic wall paintings with buildings in grisaille (fig. 70).[253] Unlike the Pompeian examples, however, the

---

[251] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3:37, 4:58; Cameron and Hall 1999, p.136, 176. On shining palace roofs see Carile 2009, esp. pp.96-97; Carile 2013.

[252] Wright 1993, fol.7v, 13r, 24v, 27r, 28r, 33v, 39v, 49r, 52r, 58r. There are two white-roofed exceptions (fol.18v, 45v), both temples.

[253] For more examples, Peters 1963, figs. 32, 143, 156, and p.62, where he discusses this type of composition under the term 'oligochrome' – little-coloured.

mosaic contains no natural forms, and whereas the architecture of the paintings tends towards the sketchy, the mosaic buildings are defined and imposing. So although secular landscape paintings may have provided one of the visual models, the overall effect in the mosaic is new.

The change in colour scheme effectively emphasises the different status of the two types of building. The subdued appearance of the buildings in the background raises the impact of the golden fittings in the foreground; the idealised nature of the structure in which the apostles sit is defined by its contrast to the rest. In Schlatter's opinion, the curved building was based on Jerome's interpretations of Ezekiel's temple, which were circulating in Rome at this time. A key point in his argument is the detail of the golden grilles in the arches, which he identifies as the *fenestras obliquas* (oblique or slanted windows) of the temple, which Jerome explained as latticed windows.[254] However, *fenestras obliquas* also feature in the description of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings 6:4, and other key features of Ezekiel's temple such as palm-trees by the doors are not shown. Lattices and screens often surrounded shrines, and so they are likely to have been an indication of generic sacrality, perhaps inspired by Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel, but applicable more widely to any temple or heavenly structure.[255]

---

[254] Schlatter 1995b, p.69.

[255] See for example Eusebius' description of the church at Tyre, *History of the Church* 10:4:44; Maier 1999, p.354: "and finally placed in the middle, the holy of holies, the altar, and, that it might be inaccessible to the multitude, [the bishop] enclosed it with wooden lattice-work, accurately wrought with artistic carving, presenting a wonderful sight to the beholders". Latticed screens are also shown on sanctuary doors on the

Another oddity of the grey-and-white cityscape is its lack of a surrounding wall.[256]

As seen in chapter one, the conceptual link between 'city' and 'towered wall' was strong; often no more than a section of wall between towers was needed to represent the whole (for example fig. 39). In the third and fourth centuries AD, real city walls were sometimes built for cosmetic more than defensive reasons, to give settlements the desired metropolitan look.[257] So the view at Santa Pudenziana of an urban setting with no wall is so unusual as to call into doubt whether a city is represented at all. On the one hand, the avoidance of the convention for an image of a city could be a strategy to convey its immediate presence – you can't see the wall because you're already inside it. An analogy for this would be the absence of Mount Tabor in the Mount Sinai apse mosaic of the Transfiguration, which Elsner has read as implying the presence of the viewer on the mountain with the Transfigured Christ.[258] On the other hand, the composition at Sinai is effective precisely because the mountain is not shown at all, giving the viewer full freedom to imagine it as the one under their feet. The detailed background at Santa Pudenziana implies a setting, but a peculiarly un-defined one.

The comprehensiveness of architectural types, the lack of a defining wall, and the tonal differentiation of the two spaces work together to create an image of cities plural. In the presence of the apocalyptic images of the Last Day, the background

---

Vatican sarcophagus no.31528 and the Pola Casket (figs. 19 and 51 above), and in front of a sanctuary depicted in a fifth-century eastern Mediterranean mosaic now in the Louvre (fig. 141 below).

[256] This point is also made by Betori 2000, p.400.

[257] Dey 2010, pp.19-27.

[258] Elsner 1994, Elsner 1995, pp.112-113.

visualises the cities of the world – not one physical place, but *all* physical places. The muted tones of the background also tell us that this is a subordinate zone in relation to the foreground and the central axis. On this point, Schlatter's theory of the influence of Jerome's ideas seems likely. Jerome was insistent that the New Jerusalem should be disassociated from any particular physical location, seeing it instead as a state of being shared by the entire Church: "And all flesh shall come to adore the Lord, when the true worshipers shall worship not on Mount Gerizim, nor in Jerusalem, but in the spirit, and in truth."[259] The architectural division of the scene illustrates the superseding of the historical and material world at the moment of the Second Coming, when Christ will reappear in New Jerusalem, imagined not as a geographical place, but as a state of existence reached through participation in the Church. Thus the foreground belonging to the anticipated future is open, directly accessible to the worshippers standing in the church, while the background of the present is distanced.[260]

Christianising the city

The juxtaposition of the apostles with the assemblage of buildings above them may also be significant. The match is clearest in the case of the two largest buildings

---

[259] Jerome*, In Hiezechielem* 14:45:18, PL vol. 25, col.455A. See also *In Hiezechielem* 11:36:16, PL vol.25, col.344B: "Anyone who is of the house of Israel, and he discerns the peace of Christ…shall dwell in their own land, that is, the Church"; Schlatter 1995b, p.73, p.76. Also see Ambrose, Letter 70:13, PL vol.16, col.1237B, who locates Jerusalem and Bethlehem within every believer's soul.

[260] According to the calculations of the third-century theologians Hippolytus and Julius Africanus, the Second Coming was due in 500 AD: Fredriksen 1991, p.153.

above Peter and Paul (fig. 71). Elsewhere it is less precise, but the impression is still of two complementary groupings – one of men, one of buildings. It is noticeable that the skyline is a very selective representation of the material world, composed entirely of large stone buildings. Whether or not they depict any particular city, none of the buildings can be anything other than urban; this is a city-centric world view. Cities occupied a contradictory place in early Christian thought. With the exception of Christ's Passion, the New Testament is set in the countryside and small towns, and the crucifixion was explicitly interpreted as a mark against the city of Jerusalem, leading to its destruction.[261] However, following these events, metropolitanism and Christianity became more closely linked through the careers of the apostles and the city-based cathedrals. A discourse on cities as sinful continued, for example in Jerome's eyes the "display, power, and size of the city, the seeing and the being seen, the paying and the receiving of visits, the alternate flattery and detraction" made Rome unsuitable for a life of Christian contemplation.[262] Even so, Jerome had to admit that Rome also has the "trophies of the apostles and martyrs".[263] And alongside the rhetoric of the decadence of cities, there was an increasingly popular narrative of their conversion to Christianity – often phrased in terms of behaviour towards pagan and Christian buildings:

---

[261] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3:33; Cameron and Hall 1999, p.135, describes the

   remade Jerusalem of Constantine's time as "facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which

   after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in devastation, and paid the

   penalty of its wicked inhabitants."

[262] Jerome, Letter 46:12, NPNF2 vol.6, p.64.

[263] Jerome, Letter 46:12, NPNF2 vol.6, p.64.

The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world.[264]

We have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum,—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods.[265]

Lanes and crossings and places of public concourse are freed from lascivious and voluptuous songs...our whole city has become a church since the workshops are closed and all are engaged throughout the day in general prayers.[266]

The golden Capitoline decays, all Rome's temples are covered with soot and spiders' webs; the city has changed its orientation, and a flood of people hurries past the half-ruined shrines to the tombs of the martyrs.[267]

Holiness has gained the ascent in almost every nation… [The Christians'] pious shout strikes the sky with praises of the eternal Lord, and the summit of the Capitol shakes and totters. Dilapidated images in deserted temples tremble on being struck by the holy voices and smitten by the name of Christ.[268]

And most relevant to the mosaic of Santa Pudenziana, Jacob of Serugh linked this architectural evangelism directly with the apostles:

---

[264] Anon, *Letter to Diognetus* 6:2, Jefford 2013, p.147.

[265] Tertullian, *Apology* 37, ANF vol.3, p.86.

[266] Chrysostom, *On the Statues* 15:3, NPNF1 vol.9, p.439.

[267] Jerome, Letter 107:1, NPNF2 vol.6, p.469.

[268] Paulinus of Nola, Poem 19:67-70, Walsh 1975, p.133.

The Apostles of the Son go out into the world… Twelve workers he sends out

to restore the earth, but these are efficient builders and they put everything

back in order… They throw to the ground and topple down the places of

vanity, and as true architects they build churches the entire world over. From

them, the whole world learnt the service of the truth and now begins to build

the holy temple of God.[269]

Given this association between Christian expansion and the physical appropriation
of cities and their grandest buildings, it is possible to see the mosaic as a two-tiered
representation of the triumph of the Church. In the background we see the spread
of Christianity throughout the present world, with emphasis on the apostolic
foundation of churches in all major cities. And in the foreground the apostles
themselves gather in the New Jerusalem to which every earthly church forms the
gateway.

The central group of the mosaic also represents the progress towards salvation in
terms of martyrdom, visualised dramatically by the large golden cross. The hill on
which the cross stands is largely made up of blue tesserae, forming indistinct shapes
resembling the clouds to either side of it, with gold highlighting at the edges. These
details indicate that it is not a 'real' hill – even if a jewelled cross monument existed
on Golgotha before the one erected by Theodosius II, this is not literally what is

---

[269] Jacob of Serugh, *Homily on the fall of idols* 7:318, Landersdorfer 1912, p.420. Jacob

also imagined the rant of the devil: "The houses that I had built to vanity [Christ] has

destroyed, and he has pulled down the temples of the demons everywhere. He has

taken away the stones and wood from which the idols' temples were made, and used

them for his buildings: thus he mocks mine." Jacob of Serugh, *Homily on the fall of idols*

8:379-382, Landersdorfer 1912, p.422. Also see Hansen 2001, p.80.

represented.[270] The cloud-like mound can be seen as an attempt to universalise the location of the last judgement, moving away from a focus in the earthly Jerusalem, in conformity with the belief in a worldwide Church. The idea that the power of the cross was not limited by geography was also encouraged by the dispersal of its relics, already underway. The theme of martyrdom is expressed again by the crowns given to Peter and Paul by the two women. Their gold veils, echoing Christ's tunic and the cross, suggest they are personifications.[271] They are sometimes taken to be the Churches of the Jews and Gentiles. However, their primary role does not appear to be to represent the two traditions, since unlike the personifications at Santa Sabina they do not hold books and are not labelled to distinguish them from each other. Instead they single out Peter and Paul from the larger group, and draw attention to their martyrdoms. In addition, as far as can be seen from the portions of original mosaic, the buildings above the heads of Peter and Paul are both centrally planned, one rounded and one hexagonal or octagonal, forms which were often used for early Christian martyria.[272] The emphasis on Peter and Paul may reflect the location of the two apostles' relics, along with fragments of the True Cross, in Rome. Although the Church was strictly speaking everywhere, from the point of view of a Roman audience, some cities, i.e. Rome, were probably more holy than others.

---

[270] For Theodosius II's cross, see Grabar 1943-1946 vol.2, p.188, 276.

[271] Matthiae 1967, p.57. Also see Schlatter 1995a.

[272] Grabar 1943-1946 vol.1, ch.3; Ward-Perkins 1966. Similar forms were adopted by baptisteries, which were thematically linked to martyria, being sites of symbolic death and renewal. On the importance of centrally-planned buildings in the early Christian 'architectonic imagination' also see Betori 2000, pp.400-402.

The presentation of salvation in architectural form would have had consequences for viewers' attitudes towards the actual building of Santa Pudenziana. The way the patrons used inscriptions within and around the apse mosaic suggests they were aware of these implications. While a dedicatory inscription came as standard in early Christian churches, four is perhaps excessive, and the placement of the name of the building and its patrons on the books held by Christ and St Paul is unusual. These two texts work together, Paul's book proclaiming the act of construction by the human benefactors and Christ's announcing his role as protector of the building. These books would otherwise be interpreted as the Gospels, and may still have been by illiterate members of the congregation, and there is an apparent mismatch between the profound significance of books in Christian iconography and the very locally specific information displayed on them. This suggests a high level of identification, on the part of patrons and audience, between the physical built space of their parish church, and theoretical concepts expressed in its decoration. While the message of the worldwide spread of Christianity does not depend on the buildings in the background being literally identifiable, there is nevertheless a connection between the virtual space of the mosaic and the three-dimensional space of the basilica.[273] Juxtaposed with the prominent statements about the construction of the church, this iconography claimed Santa Pudenziana as a constituent part of the New Jerusalem, and

---

[273] The virtual space would normally be mapped onto the real space of the curved apse. In this case, having been converted from an earlier feature, probably a nymphaeum, the 'apse' is barely curved at all, and a more pragmatic reason for the architectural composition could have been to create an illusion of depth.

presented Ilicius, Leopardus and Maximus as church founders following in the tradition of the apostles.

Santa Sabina

The titular church of Santa Sabina was built under the patronage of Peter of Illyria, a priest, during the pontificate of Celestine I (422-432). The mosaic programme was probably finished a few years later, during Sixtus III's time in office (432-440).[274] The basilica stands on the Aventine Hill, a wealthy residential district in the late Roman period, and it probably replaced an earlier church on the site.[275] The interior decoration combined the latest innovations in Christian symbolic representation with traditional techniques and motifs of elite domestic settings. The decoration of the nave is the most completely preserved, with a matching set of fluted columns of Proconnesian marble and Corinthian capitals, a zone of marble revetment in the spandrels of the arches, and large arched windows high in the nave walls above.[276] The mosaic decoration of the nave has been lost, and the painted decoration of the aisle walls only survives in small fragments. The lower half of the mosaic on the west wall is preserved; the upper half of this composition and the mosaic on the apsidal arch are known only from seventeenth-century records.[277] The apse mosaic

---

[274] Andaloro 2006b, p.292, p.303. On the twentieth-century restorations see Muñoz 1938.

[275] Brandenburg 2004, pp.167-168; Spera 2013, p.127.

[276] The present window grilles are modern copies of fragments from the eighth or ninth century, but the window openings are original: Muñoz 1938, p.30; Bellanca 1999, p.14; Bolgia 2013, p.219 for the selenite panes.

[277] Mosaics: Darsy 1961, p.23, p.47; Andaloro 2006b, pp.293-297 (west), and pp.301-304 (east). Remains of various phases of painted decoration have been found on the aisle

was replaced by a painting by Taddeo Zuccari in the 1580s.[278] The fifth-century designers made use of architectural forms in the decoration of both nave and sanctuary, in marble revetment and mosaic, in a coordinated programme which transformed the fabric of the church into a three-dimensional metaphor of living stones.

Living stones

The revetment in the nave was composed from porphyry, serpentine and pavonazzetto veneers, with smaller details in giallo antico and africano (fig. 72).[279] There are three parts to the design. The first element is a band running above the apexes of the arches, marking the transition to the zone of mosaic decoration above, now lost but probably Biblical scenes. The band has an alternating pattern of lozenges within rectangles, squares, and circles within squares. In late antiquity this combination of shapes indicated jewels, a connection made clear at Santa Sabina by their repetition in the border of the arch mosaic (fig. 73). Below the jewelled border in the nave, red and green rectangular panels frame enigmatic motifs – circles topped with crosses and ribbons, supported by thin upright stands (fig. 74). They reference a range of objects, all with associations of power and

walls, dating between the fifth and thirteenth centuries: Darsy 1961, p.48 and p.104, fig.23; Corpus Basilicarum IV, p.93.

[278] Andaloro 2006b, p.300.

[279] Andaloro 2006b, p.297. For the '*quadricromia neroniana*' colour scheme, also see Guidobaldi 1985, p.224; Buonaguro 2006, p.302.

protection: shields, mirrors, flabella, and orbs.[280] The panels are directly above the columns, and appear as continuations of them. Similar designs were originally painted above the columns on the aisle walls.[281] Above three columns (probably originally four, marking a cross-axis at the eastern end of the nave), the round objects are replaced by ovals with wave-edged contours, the so-called silver plate

---

[280] As mirrors, flabella or shields, the objects would have been associated with protection from evil, and with light. For the early Christian belief in the apotropaic power of mirrors see Maguire, Maguire and Duncan-Flowers 1989, pp.6-7. In a fifth-century mosaic in the basilica of Chrysopolitssa in Paphos a mirror shown as a disc on a stand appears opposite a Solomon's Knot (another effective demon repellent), the two flanking a Chi Rho as if to protect it – thank you to Jane Chick and Richard Maguire for this example. Flabella may have functioned in a similar way, transmitting light and spiritual protection in equal measure as they moved: Kessler 2012, pp.17-19. For a comparison of mirrors with lamps, see Agnellus' description of Bishop Datus in the *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* 9: "Like a mirror his face shone clearly over all"; Deliyannis 2004, p.108. For round shields and/or mirrors painted at the tops of walls see Wirth 1968, fig.47, pl.7a. Astrological globes and sundials also appeared as spheres on top of columns, symbolising eternity and the afterlife when depicted on sarcophagi: Zanker and Ewald 2012, p.54, fig.40 and p.61, fig.48. When held by emperors and Victories, orbs represented cosmic and worldly power: Lecoq 1995, pp.14-15. A globe topped with a cross, and containing a relic of the True Cross, was said to have been held by Constantine's statue on the porphyry column in Constantinople: Nicephorus Xanthopoulos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7:49; Bralewski 2011, p.91. Together, these models gave spheres connotations of eternal triumph and power.

[281] Darsy 1961, p.104; Corpus Basilicarum IV, p.93.

design. All these motifs have parallels in contemporary and earlier Roman domestic decoration.[282]

The third element in the marble programme is imitation *opus quadratum*, with pavonazzetto blocks outlined in serpentine and porphyry. This motif also has late Roman parallels. A fresco of *opus isodomum*, in colours representing Numidian marble, porphyry and alabaster, runs around a room at cornice level in the late third- or early fourth-century house underneath SS Giovanni e Paolo (fig. 75).[283] In another room in this house, the upper walls are painted with large white blocks of stone with bevelled edges outlined in red. Masonry patterns also appear in panels of revetment at S. Costanza, and later in the sixth-century cathedral at Poreč.[284] In the most impressive example, at the late fourth-century reception hall of Porta Marina near Ostia, serpentine, porphyry and giallo antico veneers were cut to

---

[282] For similar geometric borders see the alternating squares and lozenges framing a marble floor in a fourth-century house excavated beneath the Vittorio Emanuele monument in Rome: Buonaguro 2006, p.305, fig.1, fig.8; a border of rectangles and diamonds in an early fourth-century cubiculum in the catacombs of Marcellinus and Petrus: Guidobaldi and Guidobaldi 1983, pp.117-118, figs.31-32; and a fragmentary border of circles and bi-coloured squares from the fourth-century phase of San Crisogono: Guidobaldi and Guidobaldi 1983, pp.415-416, fig.132. For discs on columns or stands at Ostia see Falzone, Pellegrino and Broillet 2001, fig.8. Comparisons for the silver plate design can be seen on the painted dadoes of the mid-fourth-century Hypogeum of the Via Livenza: Andaloro 2006b, p.254 fig.1, p.257 fig.4; in *opus sectile* in the Lateran Baptistery: Andaloro 2006b, p.355, fig.8; and in the Porta Marina hall: Becatti 1969, pl.67.

[283] Andaloro 2006b, p.224.

[284] S. Costanza: Andaloro 2006b, fig.30; Poreč: Terry 1986, fig.20.

represent a whole wall of brick bands surrounding poised tufa blocks (fig. 76).[285] This design, known as *opus reticulatum mixtum*, was popular from the first to third centuries AD, and was realised in actual brick and tufa in many buildings at Ostia. A peculiarity of this design was that an expensive material was used to imitate a fairly cheap and commonly-used one, and the Porta Marina hall shows how exotic marble veneers could be used to enhance the status of a space regardless of the material depicted.[286]

The marble *opus quadratum* of Santa Sabina on the other hand imitates a classical masonry type, often used for the facing of grand Imperial period buildings.[287] It was not used in the construction of churches, which were usually brick-faced, as Santa Sabina is, so the decoration of the inside of the nave was not simply a more expensive duplication of the outside. There are few Biblical references to brick, and most are negative, relating to the Tower of Babel or to the labour of the exiled Israelites (Exodus 1:4; Exodus 5:16). In two places brick is contrasted negatively with stone: Exodus 11:3, "And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar", and Isaiah 9:10, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones". In the secular world, brick was also seen as second-rate compared to stone, illustrated by the quote attributed to Augustus, "I found a city of brick and left it a city of marble".[288] Without suggesting that brick was seen in itself as a negative material, it is quite possible that at Santa Sabina the re-packaging of the

---

[285] Becatti 1969, pp. 102-104, pp.136-139, pl.75-78; Kiilerich 2014, pp.181-186.

[286] Kiilerich 2014, p.181. For relative costs of wall-facing techniques: DeLaine 2001, table 11.3.

[287] Malacrino 2010, p.113, 123.

[288] Seutonius, *Life of Augustus* 28; Edwards 2000, p.58.

brick structure of the church as cut stone, using marble veneer, took on a positive meaning. In the context of a church, the conspicuous display of stonework would also have been significant due to the persistent symbolic treatment in Scripture of stone (*lapis*) and rock (*petra*).[289]

In Matthew 16:18, Christ is reported to have said "thou art Cephas, and upon this rock (Aramaic: *kipha*) I will build my church", a fairly feeble pun which gained an extremely popular place in Christian literature in its Latin and Greek translations. To take a few examples:

> Make an effort, therefore, to be a rock! ... Your rock is your faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church. If you are a rock, you will be in the Church, because the Church is on a rock. If you are in the Church the gates of hell will not prevail against you...He who has conquered the flesh is a foundation of the Church; and if he cannot equal Peter, he can imitate him.[290]

> Jesus said to divine Peter: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.' Now by the word 'rock', Jesus indicated, I think, the immoveable faith of the disciple. Likewise, the psalmist says: 'Its foundations are the holy mountains.' Very truly should the holy apostles and evangelists be compared to holy mountains for their understanding was laid down like a foundation for posterity.[291]

---

[289] On living stones see Plumpe 1943, and on cornerstones see Coomaraswamy 1939; Ladner 1942; McKelvey 1962; and more recently on both, in relation to the Romanesque sculpture at Vézelay, Low 2006.

[290] Ambrose, *Commentary on Luke* 6:95-98; PL vol.15, col.1693-1694.

[291] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah* Book 4, ch.2; PG vol.70, col.939.

And if we too have said like Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living

God… we become a Peter… For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those

drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and upon every

such rock is built every word of the church… for in each of the perfect, who

have the combination of words and deeds and thoughts which fill up the

blessedness, is the church built by God.[292]

The Bible contains many more masonry-based images, which lent themselves to allegories of church construction. The foundation and "precious corner stone" (*angularum pretiosum*) in Isaiah 28:16, the "head stone of the corner" (*lapidem…caput anguli*) that the builders rejected in Psalm 118:22, and the "living stones (*lapides vivi*), [that] built up a spiritual house" in 1 Peter 2:5 are clearly shaped stones, not rough lumps of rock.[293] And as quoted in chapter one, Augustine talked of "the hands of those who preach the truth", presumably the clergy, squaring quarried stones "so that they may enter into an everlasting structure".[294] Other writers talked of Christological stones and rock in the same breath, such as Justin Martyr: "for I have shown that Christ was proclaimed by the prophets in

---

[292] Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12:10; ANF vol.9, p456. For other examples see

Dijkstra 2016, p.91, 146, 253, 350, 462. Paulinus of Nola, Letter 32:10; PL vol.61, col.336,

also described the apse mosaic of his new basilica as showing "*Petram superstat ipse*

petra Ecclesia", which Dijkstra 2016, p.253, translates as "the rock itself of the Church

standing on a rock", meaning St Peter, and Walsh 1967, p.145, as "Christ himself, the

Rock, stands on the rock of the Church".

[293] Plumpe 1943, p.9.

[294] Augustine, *Commentary on Psalms* 121:4, PL vol.37, col.1620; Plumpe 1943, p.10.

parables a stone (*lithos*) and a rock (*petra*)".[295]   The Syriac theologian Aphrahat

wrote that:

> [Faith] is like a building that is built up of many pieces of workmanship… in the
>
> foundations of the building stones are laid, and so resting upon stones the
>
> whole edifice rises until it is perfected. Thus also the true stone, our Lord Jesus
>
> Christ, is the foundation of all our faith… By the stormy blasts [this building]
>
> does not fall, because its structure is reared on the rock of the true stone.[296]

Similarly, Ephrem the Syrian wrote "a rock shall be for me the foundation, for on

thy rock have I built my faith; the secret foundation of my trust, shall support my

walls."[297] So, in the same way that all mentions of water in the Bible seem to have

been treated as fair game for baptismal allegories, rocks, stones and foundations

were comprehensively co-opted as metaphors for Christ, Saint Peter, faith, and the

Church. The decorators of Santa Sabina actively encouraged such associations. In

the inscription on the west wall, the patron's name – Peter, *Petrus* – is placed at the

centre of the mosaic, vertically between the words *Christi* and *fundavit,* 'founded',

recalling Christ's praise of his apostle Peter.[298] Coming as near as was tactfully

possible to comparing himself to St Peter, Peter of Illyria presented Santa Sabina as

the church built on the rock – perhaps also inspired by the fact that the basilica

---

[295] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* ch. 113, ANF vol1, p.255.

[296] Aphrahat, Demonstration 1:2, Valavanolickal 1999, p.21.

[297] Ephrem the Syrian, *Nisibene Hymn* 1:8; NPNF2, vol.13, p.168.

[298] Thunø 2007, pp.31-32.

stands at the top of the Aventine hill – and reinforced this vision with living stones of *opus sectile* along the nave.[299]

The city and the cornerstone

The architectural imagery of the mosaic framing the apse completes the theme of the sacralisation of the fabric of the church (fig. 73). The mosaic is now lost, but was recorded in 1690 by the ecclesiastical archaeologist Giovanni Ciampini.[300] Although it is not possible to be certain of the accuracy of the fine details in Ciampini's record, the main features are two cities or sections of city wall with tall arched gateways flanked by towers, with buildings visible inside. The city walls are divided into alternating rows of square blocks, and jewelled or pearled bands. Between the two structures are bust portraits of fourteen men, perhaps an expanded set of apostles, with Christ at the apex and nine doves flying inwards above them.

The gated structures could either represent two cities, or two entrances into one city. The popular view is that they are Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and Jerusalem and Bethlehem have in turn been widely assumed to be symbols for the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione* and *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*, or the Jewish and Gentile converts,

---

[299] Jerome even specified that the living stones of the church must be cut and polished on both sides, practically describing marble revetment: Jerome *Commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians* 2:19, PL vol.26, col.476.

[300] Ciampini vol.1, pl.47.

together constituting the Christian Church. [301] Guglielmo Matthiae went as far as to say that "the connection of these [cities] with the two *ecclesiae* and with the two princes of the apostles is obvious."[302] In my opinion this is an oversimplification of a much more diverse iconography. As seen on the gold glass bowl in chapter one, Jerusalem and Bethlehem were sometimes depicted together as cities (disregarding the fact that Bethlehem was in reality a village), and cities labelled as Jerusalem and Bethlehem appear at Santa Maria Maggiore, and in a number of later mosaics. But given the vastly different social and physical contexts of a privately-owned bowl and a papal church, it cannot be assumed that they were understood in precisely the same way across these contexts. On sarcophagi, and on other small-scale objects, pairs of isolated gates seem to have been developed from an extended city wall format and used to represent a single location.[303] Equally, two cities were sometimes depicted without distinguishing inscriptions. There is no written evidence for an association in late antiquity between the Palestinian cities

---

[301] E.g. Papandrea 2012, pp.109-110; *http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Sabina*, accessed 31/03/2016. Nolan 1934, p.27; Matthiae 1967, p.153 and Brenk 1975, p.47 associate Jerusalem with Peter and the converted Jews and Bethlehem with Paul and the gentiles, while Frugoni 1991, pp.26-27 matches the pairs the other way round, and Van der Meer 1938, p.47, points out that on the Vatican gold glass Paul is paired with Jerusalem, as he also is in the mosaic of SS Cosmas and Damian. Bishop 1906, pp.254-255, 280, states that the cities symbolise the Jews and Gentiles, without suggesting which is which.

[302] Matthiae 1967, p.167, n.26. For statements of the theory of the two *ecclesiae* as cities see among others Huskinson 1982, p.39; Colli 1983, p.130; Thunø 2015, pp.76, 144, 258-259; Dijkstra 2016, p.374.

[303] See chapter one, p.50, pp.61-68.

and the two *ecclesia*.[304] Given the Church Fathers' enthusiasm for spotting symbols

for Jews and Gentiles, their silence on the subject is fairly good evidence that this

was not a common interpretation of the two cities.[305] In other words, paired cities

do not necessarily represent Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and even where Jerusalem

and Bethlehem are clearly depicted, there is no reason to think that they

automatically refer to the Jews and Gentiles. This is not to say that the two cities

could never have been understood as representing the two communities, but there

is no evidence for anything like the systematic equation made by modern art

historians.

In the case of Santa Sabina, there are no records of inscriptions to suggest that the

structures were intended as two separate cities. Precisely because the decorative

---

[304] A survey of 470 entries containing the word 'Bethlehem' in the *Patrologia Latina*

revealed one oblique reference connecting Bethlehem with Synagogue. I searched

under the two most common spellings, 'Bethlehem' and 'Bethleem', covering writers up

to the late Carolingian period, and then cross-checked results for references to

'Jerusalem' and 'Hierusalem'. The one potentially relevant result occurs in Sermon 18 of

the mid-fifth-century bishop of Ravenna, Peter Chrysologus, PL vol.52, col.0248A;

reprinted (but translated without the word 'Bethlehem') in Palardy 2004, pp.83-85.

Chrysologus described Bethlehem as the house of St Peter, and Peter's mother in law,

who was cured of a fever by Christ (Matthew 8:14-15), as a type of Synagogue.

However, this sermon does not mention Jerusalem as a metaphor for the Church, or for

anything else. Data taken from *Patrologia Latina*, http://pld.chadwyck.com/.

[305] Common examples were the ox and ass, or the shepherds and Magi. According to

Origen, Nazareth stood for the Jews and Caphernaum for the gentiles: Origen, *Homilies

on Luke* 33:1; Lienhard 1996, p.134. See de Lubac 1988, pp.197-199 for more allegorical

pairs.

programme at Santa Sabina includes personifications of the Jewish and gentile converts at the west end of the basilica, the gates at the east end can be most easily understood as a unified location, separated so as to fit symmetrically either side of the apse. For one thing, the women are clearly labelled, so if the gates had been designed to represent places with distinct meanings, it seems likely that this would have been similarly spelt out. Second and more importantly, the whole point of showing the two personifications was to emphasise their unity within the Church. In this sense, their separate characteristics were less relevant than the fact that they were now joined. Apart from their inscriptions, the two women on the west wall appear similar, and they are both subordinate to the large blue and gold inscription with its central statement of Peter's foundation of the church. And while the two *ecclesiae* were not associated with specific locations, they were nevertheless described in architectural terms – as two walls united by Christ as the Cornerstone. Augustine was especially keen on this metaphor, regularly repeating it in his sermons for Epiphany. For example:

> For the shepherds coming from nearby typified these Jews who deserve to be united to Him so that both they and we, whose vocation from afar was signified by the coming of the Magi, might remain, no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, built up on the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus Christ Himself the chief cornerstone.[306]

> For He, the cornerstone, the peace of two walls arising from no small difference, namely, that concerning circumcision and uncircumcision, was

---

[306] Augustine, *Sermon for Epiphany* 200:3; Muldowney 1959, pp.66-67.

born so that they might be united in Him who became our peace and who made both one.[307]

The antiphon '*O Rex Gentium*', in use in the sixth century or earlier, contained similar language, naming Christ as the cornerstone "making both nations one".[308] In a more generalised statement of Christian expansion and unification, Jerome rephrased Zacharias 9:16 to create an image of stony congregations multiplying across the world: "Regarding these [living] stones, in a mystical sense it is said 'the holy stones shall encircle the earth'; with them Christ builds his church on a rock".[309]

It is possible that Zuccari's painting in the apse was based to some extent on remains of an earlier mosaic.[310] If so, then the central figure would have been Christ, probably surrounded by the apostles. A single city on the arch, with its entrances either side of Christ, would have represented the Church in which the two groups personified on the west wall were brought together, the 'two walls' of the converts connected to the cornerstone by the demonstrative stonework of the nave walls. It is also possible that the ambiguous term 'head stone of the corner' was understood as a keystone, a spot occupied in Santa Sabina by the bust of Christ

---

[307] Augustine, *Sermon for Epiphany* 201:1; Muldowney 1959, p.67. See also Sermons 199:1, 202:1, 204:2-3, Muldowney 1959, p.59, 71-72, 78-81.

[308] *http://www.liturgies.net/Advent/prayers/oantiphons.htm*, accessed 06/04/2016.

[309] Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* Book 15 ch.7, PL vol.24, col523A. Thanks to Kristi Bain for this translation. Alternatively Scheck 2015, p.689, translates the phrase *lapides sancti volvuntur super terram* as "holy stones are rolled on earth", although on p.401 he translates a similar reference to Zacharias 9:16 as "according to the prophet these [living stones] form a circle upon the earth".

[310] Matthiae 1967, pp.78-79; Balass 1999, pp.106-108.

at the centre of the arch.[311] Along the nave walls, traces of mosaic above the marble revetment probably belonged to Biblical scenes. It would certainly fit with the rest of the programme if the Old Testament was depicted on the south and the New Testament on the north – and it is tempting to guess that Saint Peter played a major role in the latter.

Fifth-century artists working in smaller-scale media also seem to have been aware of the symbolic possibilities of rocks and stones. For example, on an ivory carving from Milan showing the Marys at Christ's Tomb (fig. 77), the rough rock sat on by the angel is highlighted by the precise ashlar of the sepulchre, and on the wooden doors of Santa Sabina several scenes, including the Adoration (fig. 78), the Crucifixion (fig. 79), and Peter's denial, are given full backdrops of square stones.[312] Cities and/or pairs of gates were familiar as markers of Christian identity on sarcophagi; the extra ingredient at Santa Sabina is the integration of symbol with structure. By picking up on various aspects of the nave decoration, the mosaicists merged the depicted space with the real space of the church. The lines of the arched clerestory windows appear to continue in the arches of the jewelled gates, which were similarly proportioned and set only slightly higher on the wall (fig. 80). The shapes of the geometric *opus sectile* border were echoed by the border of precious stones of the mosaic on the apsidal wall, and to judge from later mosaics, the same combinations of colours may have been used to represent jewels on the towers, although this was not recorded by Ciampini. Finally, the strongly defined blocks of the mosaic cities reinforced the value of the stonework in the nave. Late

---

[311] Coomaraswamy 1939, p.67; Ladner 1942, p.59.

[312] Jeremias 1980, pl.41, 52.

antique churches turned Roman conventions of religious buildings inside out. Their designers avoided the grand columnar facades of temples, and put all their decorative efforts into the insides.[313] At Santa Sabina the architectural scheme simultaneously opens up the nave, presenting it as an exterior forecourt to the depicted city on the arch.

Santa Maria Maggiore

The most ambitious architectural iconography of fifth-century Rome can be seen in the mosaic decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore. Depicted buildings are again used to project an image of Christian dominance and expansion, and in this case also the primacy of the Roman pope. The basilica itself is extremely impressive; at 92 metres long, only the Lateran, Old St Peter's and St Paul's were larger. The nave was constructed in a grand classical style with spoliate entablature and ionic capitals, rare in late antique churches, again with the exception of the large Constantinian basilicas.[314] The nave walls were decorated with stucco pilasters and spirally fluted colonettes flanking tall arched windows. Beneath the windows, mosaic panels show a selection of Old Testament scenes, and the chancel arch mosaic carries scenes from the infancy of Christ.[315] The apse mosaic has not survived, but most writers believe it to have contained an image of Mary and the

---

[313] On the early Christian 'interiorization of space' see Hansen 2001, p.71.

[314] Krautheimer 1980, p.47, fig.41.

[315] For discussions of the iconography and conservation of the mosaics, see Karpp 1966; Brenk 1975; Andaloro 2006a, pp.269-294; Andaloro 2006b, pp.306-346. On restorations see Nordhagen 1983; Spain 1983.

Christ Child.[316] The mosaic programme was completed during the reigns of the

emperor Valentinian III (425-455) and pope Sixtus III (432-440).[317]

The twenty-nine surviving mosaic panels in the nave show events from the lives of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on the south, and Moses and Joshua on the north. The

majority include architectural settings, which can be divided into houses, temples

and cities, and a handful of unique structures. The houses and temples are similar,

distinguishable mainly from the context of the story. They are usually shown in

three-quarter perspective, with red-tiled roofs, white or grey walls, and a door in

the near wall (fig. 81). Houses are shown where the text of the Vulgate specifies a

tent (*tabernaculam*); for example, in the case of Genesis 18:6, "And Abraham

hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures

of fine meal'".[318] Similarly, temples are shown where the tented Tabernacle

features in the narrative. Cities are shown as tall towered walls with outlined

stones, arched gates and the tops of buildings visible inside (fig. 82). Distinctive

one-off buildings include a semi-circular niche framing Jacob and Rachel's marriage,

shepherds' huts, and the Pharaoh's palace.[319] The main function of all these

structures appears to be to define types of settings, as domestic, urban, sacred, or

– by the absence of architecture – wilderness. Buildings are set to one side or in

---

[316] Andaloro 2006b, pp.343-344. *C.f.* Saxer 2001, p.51, who suggests it was an image of

  Christ alone.

[317] The construction and mosaics were almost certainly started under pope Celestine I

  (422-432): Saxer 2001, pp.56-57.

[318] Karpp 1966, pl.32.

[319] Karpp 1966, pl.61, 66, 85.

the background, and are not shown in full, suggesting that they are secondary to the action.

On each side of the arch above the apse, the mosaic is divided into four registers, forming an irregularly-shaped grid of eight fields plus a ninth at the apex of the arch (fig. 83). The central image at the top consists of a *Hetoimasia* or prepared throne, a dedicatory inscription, Peter and Paul, and the four apocalyptic beasts. It is distinguished from the scenes to either side by a higher ground level and the inward-facing pose of the apostles. The fields in the lowest register contain images of Jerusalem and Bethlehem as jewelled cities. Starting from top-left, the other six scenes are the Annunciation, Christ's Presentation at the Temple, the Adoration of the Magi, an apocryphal episode from the Flight into Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the Magi before Herod. In several cases, the designers significantly altered the Infancy stories. The depiction of the Adoration ignores the well-established iconography for this scene; the Presentation and the arrival at Sotinen are not known to have been shown before, but depart from the written descriptions of the events. The narratives are out of synch chronologically, not in sequence whether read from left to right, from top to bottom, or in a circle.[320] The choice of scenes is unusual – the Adoration but not the Nativity, two panels dedicated to the actions of Herod, and one non-canonical story. Scholars have proposed various readings of this combination of narratives, which change quite

---

[320] Excluding the golden cities, the chronological order is Annunciation top left > Magi before Herod bottom right > Adoration middle left > Presentation top right > Massacre of Innocents bottom left > Sotinen middle right.

dramatically depending on which characters are thought to be represented.[321] Only Herod is named by inscription, and aside from the Christ-Child, the identity of the most of the figures is not obvious. For example, the three individuals towards the left in the Presentation have been identified either as (left to right) Mary, Simeon and Anna, or Sarah, Joseph and Mary, and the veiled woman at the Presentation and Adoration has been seen as Mary, Anna, Rachel, Salome, a Sybil, Sophia, Ecclesia and Synagogue.[322]

I propose that the buildings and cities depicted in the mosaics should be seen as equally central to the understanding of the arch programme. Without solving all the problems caused by the complex iconography, analysis of the architectural symbolism can clear up at least some of the confusion. Firstly, as spatial and conceptual markers the structures define what types of events are represented and how they should be interpreted, articulating and clarifying the narratives. They draw attention to the fact that the scenes do not all exist on the same level of reality. Some are clearly otherworldly, some are set on earth, and some are ambiguous. The multiple realities are signalled by three different types of structure, which also follow the horizontal divisions of the mosaic: jewelled cities at the bottom, earthly cities in the middle, and church- or temple-like buildings at the top. The repetition of these three building types gives coherence to the

---

[321] For debates on iconography see Brenk 1975; Spain 1979; Sieger 1987; Miles 1993; Warland 2003; Davis-Weyer 2005.

[322] Brenk 1975, p.20; Spain 1979, p.535; Warland 2003, p.133. For the veiled woman, see Künzle 1961-2, pp.172-176; Jastrzębowska 2009-2010, p.161, n.94; Thérel 1962.

otherwise rather disconnected stories, and facilitates the drawing of parallels between them.

Secondly, the architectural motifs in the arch mosaic participate in the scenes as characters. They stand for individuals and groups, and in some cases act as the main protagonists. Each structure is set in the foreground, and is depicted in its entirety. The relative scales of buildings and people vary but in each case the buildings take up a significant amount of the picture space, and are relatively close in size to the human characters. The overall theme of the mosaic is the Incarnation, and the resulting birth of the Church. The jewelled cities at the springing of the arch present Christ's dual incarnate nature as God and man; the middle two rows display human recognition of and reactions to Christ's birth, and in the top register the Annunciation and Presentation are used as frameworks for an allegory of the transition from Temple to Church.

Bread and jewels

Apart from their gold inscriptions, HIERVSALEM on the left and BETHLEEM on the right, the jewelled cities are nearly identical (figs. 84 & 85). Bethlehem has been heavily restored and only the top part of the city wall and the rooftops inside are original.[323] However, in the original areas the outline and jewelled decorations match those of Jerusalem, so it is plausible that the rest of the composition did too. The central walls of the hexagonal cities are pierced by tall arches, through which trabeated columns are visible leading diagonally inwards, mirroring the colonnade of the actual church. The walls are golden, dotted with emeralds or jaspers,

---

[323] Brenk 1975, pp.33-34.

sapphires and pearls, and the buildings inside are mainly basilicas with columnar facades. Six sheep stand in front looking up at each city, their backs turned to the viewer.

The decision to distinguish the cities with labels suggests that they were intended to represent a pairing of some kind. They are unlikely to be double visions of apocalyptic or paradisiacal cities; as Beat Brenk has pointed out, there was no such concept as 'the Heavenly Bethlehem'.[324] The pairing proposed in chapter one for the two cities on the gold-glass and tomb slab (figs. 60 & 62), of birth and Resurrection, could perhaps fit with the Infancy scenes on the arch above, but there are no corresponding references in the mosaic to Christ's Passion. Other popular twosomes referred to in theological literature were SS Peter and Paul, the Old and New Testaments, Jews and Gentiles, and the human and divine natures of Christ. This last seems the most applicable here, making the cities a unique double portrait of Christ in architectural form. The first reason for this is the visual treatment of the cities. As the sole subjects of the lowest level of the mosaic, they do not function to define a space, or serve as background to a narrative. Instead, they are presented as agents. In general shape and decoration, but also in the treatment of the motif as a self-contained entity, they resemble the jewelled *Hetoimasia* at the centre of the arch. The throne, framed in a roundel, also has the status of a character, standing in for a figural image of the absent Christ. The portrait-like quality of the cities is reinforced by the behaviour of the sheep, which gather around the structures, looking up at them in interest or veneration. As when subordinate humans are depicted smaller than imperial or divine figures, the sheep

---

[324] Brenk 1975, p.34.

and cities are disproportionate in scale, but close enough for interaction to seem possible. Sheep were often combined with cities in other late antique images, but in almost all cases they are shown walking out of the gates. Here, turning their tails to the viewer, they appear to be acclaiming or adoring the cities. A comparable example of figures facing away from the viewer in order to address a more important character is the diptych of Probianus, c. 400 (fig. 86).[325] The status of the cities as portraits is also strengthened by their placement as pendent figures in the springings of the arch, a position taken on the arch of S. Paolo fuori le mura by Peter and Paul.[326]

A second argument in favour of Christological cities comes from the theologians. As discussed above, Jerusalem and Bethlehem were not understood at this time as figures of the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione* and *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*. However, Bethlehem was often the focus of exegetical writing in another context. Based on the meaning of the Hebrew word '*Bet/Beth'* as 'house', writers developed interpretations of various Biblical place names beginning with this syllable. Bethlehem was translated as 'House of Bread'. Almost every author to mention Bethlehem drew attention at some point to its etymology. Many added a reference to bread from Heaven (Exodus 16:4, Nehemiah 9:15, Psalm 105:40), or specifically to the New Testament description of Jesus as "the true bread from Heaven" (John 6:32) or "the living bread which came down from Heaven" (John 6:51).[327] The

---

[325] Volbach 1976, no.62, pp.54-55, pl.34.

[326] Matthiae 1967, pl.37.

[327] For example, Ambrose, *De Iacob et vita beata,* 2:5, PL vol.14, col.626D-627B; Jerome, *Homilies on the Psalms* 23, PL vol.26, col.1115A; Ewald 1964, p.189; Maximus of Turin,

House of Bread was also taken as a metaphor for the Church.[328] One of the few writers to compare Bethlehem with Jerusalem was Jerome, and he did so by referring to this meaning of its name.

> But the names of the Holy Cross and the Resurrection do not signify the city, but a location, not the size or the riches of the former, by means of which the people of the Jews were destroyed, but the glory of sanctity, which our poor little Bethlehem possesses, having no gold and precious stones, but the bread that was born there.[329]

Other writers stressed the importance of Bethlehem as the location of Christ's humble birth *secundum carnem* – 'according to the flesh' – linking the flesh to the bread of the place-name.[330] In the context of Christ's humility, writers often emphasised that Bethlehem was an out-of-the-way place, barely civilised at all.[331] Bethlehem therefore represents Christ's physical Incarnation and human nature, demonstrated by the humble circumstances of his biological birth.

The terrestrial city of Jerusalem, for its part, was the site of the Resurrection and Ascension by which Christ's divine nature was revealed, and would be the seat of

---

Homily on the Nativity 8:3, PL vol.57, col.239B; John Chrysostom, *Sermon for the Epiphany*; Toal 2000, p.223.

[328] Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, fragment 40; Ledegang 2001, p.309.

[329] Jerome *Commentary on Jeremiah* 4:19:10-11, PL vol.24, col.802; Graves and Hall 2011, p.119.

[330] For example, Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 1:8, PL vol.76, col.1103D-1104B; Hurst 2009, p.54.

[331] For example Augustine, Ex Sermone de Natali sancti Quadrati, PL vol.39, col.1732.

Christ's thousand year reign before the eventual universal resurrection through which the saved would share his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4, Revelation 20:4).[332] In his sermons on the Resurrection, Leo I stressed that the risen Christ retained his two natures, but in a changed form, now glorified and incorruptible.[333] In a letter to Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem, Leo also wrote of the "incontrovertible" proofs of Christ's two natures in the places of the Holy Land. When he talks about Bethlehem, he talks about Christ's human infancy, youth and adulthood, then he shifts to Jerusalem, telling Juvenal to consider the Sepulchre "from which by divine power He rose" and the Mount of Olives where the angels confirmed Christ's Second Coming.[334] By their equally glitzy appearance, the cities in the mosaic give equal prominence to Christ's two sides, as required by the declarations of the recent council of Ephesus of 431: "the Word from God the Father has been united by hypostasis with the flesh… and is therefore God and man together."[335]

---

[332] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80: "there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged." See also Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12:20; ANF vol.9, p.462: "It was necessary that He should go unto the Jerusalem below, and there suffer many things… and might be killed in the Jerusalem below, and having risen from the dead might reign in Mount Zion, and the city of the living God—the heavenly Jerusalem."

[333] Leo I, Sermon 71:4; NPNF2, vol.12, p.183. For Leo I's sermons on Christ's two natures in relation to the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, also see Sieger 1987.

[334] Leo I, Letter 139:2, NPNF2, vol.12, p.170.

[335] Cyril of Alexandria, Third letter to Nestorius; Tanner 1990 p.59. Also see Barclift 1997, pp.231-234 for Leo I's insistence that close combination of Christ's two natures exalted his human aspect (and that of the rest of humanity) to the level of the divine.

A supporting cast of cities

In the middle rows the Adoration of the Magi and Massacre of the Innocents are depicted on the left, and the Magi before Herod and a less familiar image on the right (figs. 87-90). The latter probably shows an episode from the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, in which the population of the town of Sotinen acclaimed Christ during the Flight into Egypt.[336] Apart from the Massacre of the Innocents, each composition includes a city, placed along the arch like stepped voussoirs, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem the springing stones. The upper cities are less regularly shaped than Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and contain jumbles of buildings arranged at different angles. The colour scheme consists mainly of greys and browns for the walls, with red for the tiled roofs. The cities are placed at the inner edges of the scenes, and the figures nearest to them face away from them, towards the focus of the image, the Christ Child or Herod. The cities indicate the locations of Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Sotinen, but without representing them in any differentiated sense, or being labelled for definite identification. They are similar to the cities depicted on the walls of the nave, such as Jericho, Canaan, and Gibeon, which can only be told apart from the context of the stories.[337] The cities of the Old Testament stories have comparable red, brown and white colour schemes, and are also placed at the edges of the compositions. This can probably be categorised as 'real time' architectural depiction, closer to the veristic mode than the idealised golden cities, and so more suitable for historical scenes. In a comparable way to images of anonymous onlookers authenticating the miracles they witness, the cities ground

---

[336] Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 22-24; Rhodes 1975, pp.75-76; Brenk 1975, p.29.

[337] Karpp 1966, pl.128, 133, 143.

the events in the material world; apparently secondary to the main action, they convey the message that 'this actually happened'.[338] Their contrast with the iconic cities below signal that the actions around them are to be understood as taking place on a more mundane level of reality.

The cities also symbolise the communities which recognised, worshiped or opposed Christ, arranged in a series of opposites and equivalents moving horizontally and vertically across the arch. The peculiar non-chronological arrangement of stories appears to have been designed to contrast positive reactions to the Incarnation in

	EQUIVALENCE	
CONTRAST	**Adoration of the Magi** Positive recognition by exotic pagan priests/magicians Gifts acknowledging Christ as king and priest	**Acclamation at Sotinen** Positive recognition by Roman pagan priest/philosopher and ruler Implied acknowledgement as king and priest
	Massacre of Innocents Negative recognition by king	**Magi before Herod and priests** Negative recognition by king and Jewish priests
	EQUIVALENCE	

(The arrows reading EQUIVALENCE run horizontally across the top and bottom; CONTRAST runs vertically on both left and right sides.)

the upper row, with negative reactions underneath (table 1).[339]

The scheme also illustrates Christ's recognition (both friendly and hostile) by temporal and religious authorities, and so his own dual role as king and priest. A

---

[338] For example, the figure witnessing the Visitation scenes in the sixth-century mosaic at the Euphrasian basilica, Poreč: Maguire and Terry 2007, pl.126. For witnessing in early medieval art see Deshman 1989, pp.50-54.

[339] For the use of similar contrasts in Leo the Great's sermons: Sieger 1987, p.87.

third binary is implied on the upper middle register, where the acceptance of Christ by the exotic eastern Magi is matched with a scene of the conversion of a Roman community.[340] Seeing the mosaic as an exercise in 'compare and contrast' may explain some of the discrepancies in the apocryphal scene. As Sieger notes, the mosaic does not closely follow the story of Christ's arrival at Sotinen.[341] The main point of the narrative, the idols falling from their altars, is not shown. The man in an *exomis* tunic accompanying the governor Aphrodisius is dressed as a classical philosopher, not a priest, and the governor himself is dressed in an emperor's purple cloak and diadem (fig. 91). The iconography of the two groups meeting outside the city walls is that of an *adventus* ceremony, a civic welcome extended to an arriving imperial figure.[342] The episode is framed so as to match the Adoration opposite as closely as possible, and is given an added flavour of Romanitas. The account in Pseudo-Matthew is taken as a starting point, but the didactic message overrides the narrative; the falling idols are removed, changing the scene to a more straightforwardly positive one of welcome by a Roman town.

The equivalence of the towered walls with the populations inside is expressed by the replacement of the city by the crowd in the Massacre of the Innocents (fig. 88). The group of mothers and babies have vertically striped clothes rising to closely-packed heads and faces, mirroring the cities with their narrow multi-coloured sections of wall below the rooftops. The direct representation of the community

---

[340] The magi were described by Leo the Great as standing for "the fulness of the nations":

Leo I, *Sermon on the Epiphany*, 33:3, NPNF2, vol.12, p.146. However their outfits in the

mosaic mark them out as distinctly un-Roman.

[341] Sieger 1987, p.86.

[342] McCormick 1986, p.90.

as people rather than architecture singles out the scene. This may be because the Massacre of the Innocents was the first instance of Christian martyrdom and a prefiguration of the deaths of the apostles and saints, placing a higher importance on the human bodies involved.[343] Encompassing the entire known world, the cities stand in for larger communities – Jews and pagans, 'foreign' Magi and Romans – in the context of their reactions to the Incarnation.

The Ark gilded inside and out

At the top of the arch, the Annunciation and Presentation scenes visualise two key episodes of the foundation of the Church and its replacement of the Jewish Temple, a statement of religious triumphalism which naturally lends itself to architectural expression. This is illustrated by a progression of three buildings leading from the closed Temple on the left to the transformed temple of the (Roman) Church on the right. The main players in these scenes are Mary, a composite Simeon-Saint Peter figure, and the three architectural characters, the humans acting as catalysts for the transformation between the symbolic structures.

At the moment of the Annunciation, Mary is seated between two stone buildings (fig. 92). The short sides facing her are filled by large doorways framed by columns. Later images of the Annunciation often included Joseph's house, but the buildings on the arch appear grander than houses, and it is not clear why Joseph's house should be shown twice.[344] A gabled stone building with columned entrance was

---

[343] Berthon 1997, pp.34-35; Augustine, Sermon 120, *On the feast of the Holy Innocents* 2:1, PL vol.39, col.2153; Quodvoltdeus *De Symbolo* 4, PL vol.40, col.655.

[344] See for example Maguire 2012, figs.2-5, 5-8, 5-16, pl.19.

also used in the nave panels to indicate the Tabernacle (fig. 93).[345] So it is possible that the structures represent the Temple, Mary's home and the setting for several Apocryphal stories of her early life. However, by itself this still does not explain why two buildings are shown. They are more emphatic than the buildings in the nave mosaics, being larger and set in the foreground. They are also shown in more detail, with potentially meaningful elements emphasised, such as the columns with prominent flower-like capitals either side of the door, perhaps the pillars with capitals of lilies in the Solomonic Temple (1 Kings 7:15-22). The coverings of the entrances are significant. The golden lattice-work doors of the structure on the left are closed and the opening above them is covered by a triangular curtain (fig. 94).[346] The blocked door sets up a strong contrast with the welcoming sanctuary opposite on the right, in which similar curtains are pulled back to reveal a lit lamp (fig. 95). The two buildings tell the viewer why the Annunciation is important, marking the change from the veiled inaccessibility of the old Temple to the openness and illumination of the new Temple of the Church. They are 'before-and-after' pictures, proclaiming the significance of the Incarnation more directly than any of the figures in the scene could.

In Herbert Kessler's words, the Temple curtain was thought of as "the veil of Christ's flesh through which the Christian faithful gain access even to the Holy of Holies."[347]

---

[345] Karpp 1966, pl. 118.

[346] See n.255 above for latticed doors. The Temple veil was also often shown covered with a reticulate pattern: Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, Sinai St Catherine's, cod.1186, fol.79r; Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p.56, fig.147; Kessler 1993, pp.63-64, fig.4.

[347] Kessler 1993, p.63.

This flesh was provided by Mary in her role as spinner of the Temple veil, as she is shown in the mosaic.[348] Mary herself also personified the Church. The concept of the institution as a woman was well established; Clement of Alexandria had described the Church as a virgin mother two centuries earlier, although without mentioning Mary by name.[349] In the second half of the fourth century, Ambrose directly stated that Mary was a figure for the Church, and Ephrem the Syrian wrote "Let us call the Church by the name of Mary, for she is worthy of the double name".[350] Mary was also described by many theologians as the 'Ark of the New Covenant":

> At that time, the Saviour coming from the Virgin, the Ark, brought forth His own Body into the world from that Ark, which was gilded with pure gold within by the Word, and without by the Holy Ghost.[351]

> For the holy Virgin is in truth an ark, wrought with gold both within and without, that has received the whole treasure of the sanctuary.[352]

---

[348] Evangelatou 2003, p 263. The open curtain on the right may also refer indirectly to the tearing of the veil at the moment of Christ's death (Luke 23:45).

[349] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I:6; Gambero 1999, p.71. Also see Thérel 1973, pp.17-18; Maunder 2008, pp.28-29.

[350] Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke*, 2:7; PL vol.15, col.1555; Gambero 1999, p.198. Ephrem the Syrian, *Sermon on the night of the Lord's Resurrection* 7:2; Lamy 1882, col.534; Livius 1893, p.268. Also see Stroll 1997, p.174.

[351] Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel* 6; PG vol.10, col.648; ANF vol.5, p.179.

[352] Gregory Thaumaturgus, *On the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary*, homily 1; ANF vol.6, p.60. Alternatively, Livius 1893, p.89, translated the passage as "The ark is verily

Now what else should we say the Ark was but holy Mary?... The former

contained in it the Law, the latter the Gospel... The Ark, indeed, was radiant

within and without with the glitter of gold, but holy Mary shone within and

without with the splendour of virginity. The one was adorned with earthly

gold, the other with heavenly.[353]

She is herself the Ark gilded inside and out, sanctified in body and spirit, in

which is kept the gold thurible, the gold vase with the manna and the rest.[354]

The descriptions of Mary and the Ark as golden are particularly relevant here.

Mary's gold costume in the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore has been seen as a

sign of her status, either as quasi-imperial, as a forerunner of Maria Regina

iconography, or as the mark of a '*femina clarissima*', a late Roman noblewoman.[355]

However the colour can be more convincingly understood as appropriate to her

role as the personified Ark. In addition, wherever she appears in the mosaic, Mary

is accompanied by angels – the "cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony"

---

the holy Virgin, gilded within and without, who received the treasure of universal

sanctification."

[353] Anonymous sermon 42:6, listed among the works of St Ambrose; PL vol.17, col.688;

Livius 1893, p.77.

[354] Proclus *Oratio* 6; PG vol.65, col.753-756. For similar statements see Epiphanius,

Weights and Measures 35, in Dean 1935, p.53; Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of

Turin* 71:216, in Gambero 1999, pp.106-107.

[355] Brenk 1975, pp.50-52; Fried 2000, p.7; Osborne 2003, p.136. Nilgen 1981, p.19. Sieger

1987, p.85, describes the costume as "court garb" indicating Mary's descent from the

royal line of David, and Stroll 1997, p.175, describes her as wearing "the clothes of a

princess of the court of Constantinople".

(Exodus 25:22).[356] The prestige given to the Virgin Mary on the arch has previously been understood in the context of the council of Ephesus of 431, and its decision to award Mary the title *Theotokos*, 'bearer of God'.[357] However the council issued no decrees about Mary specifically, and during the debates her status and title were only briefly mentioned in the context of the main topic, which was firmly Christo-centric.[358] Leo I, who as Sixtus' archdeacon could have had significant influence over the design of Santa Maria Maggiore, saw Mary as important in supplying Christ with a human nature untouched by original sin.[359] He likened her role to the Church, as not just passively containing but as actively generative: "By the Spirit, Christ is born from the body of his unsullied Mother; by this same Spirit, the Christian is reborn from the womb of the holy Church."[360] In her role as *Maria*

---

[356] From the later fifth century, Mary was regularly shown between two angels, for example in the Basilica Euphrasiana at Poreč, c 550: Vassilaki 2000, fig.45; Terry and Maguire 2007, II, pl.4; and on a sixth-century ivory diptych in Berlin: Volbach 1976, pp.91-92, no.137, pl.71; Vassilaki 2000, fig.12. In the Adoration of the Magi at Santa Maria Maggiore, the angels are gathered more closely around Christ, but a similar interpretation applies – Christ's throne replaces the Mercy Seat which the Cherubim cover with their wings (Exodus 25:20), and the unusually large footstool resembles the Ark carried in the nave panels. Thanks to Richard Maguire for this point.

[357] Kalavrezou 1990, p.166; Vassilaki 2005, p.xxviii. For the council decisions: Tanner 1990 vol.1, pp.52-58.

[358] Price 2008, esp. p.93.

[359] Leo I, Letter 28:2, PL vol.54, col.759; Gambero 1999, p.305.

[360] Leo I, Sermon 29:1, PL vol.54, col.227; Gambero 1999, p.308.

ecclesia (or perhaps a new term is needed, *Maria arca*), Mary is mirrored in the lighted church to the right; both are containers of the New Covenant.

The house of the elect

The third building on the right hand side of the arch repeats the message of transformation from Jewish Temple to Church, in the most iconographically complicated scene in the entire programme. The structure simultaneously brings the action home, alluding to the Church of Rome. In the bottom right-hand corner of the image, Joseph lies asleep with an angel standing over him, perhaps indicating that this vision of the Church is occurring in his dream. The ideological messages are conveyed at the (considerable) expense of the narrative of Christ's Presentation, and there are aspects of the scene which refuse to fit neatly into a single interpretation. I will focus on what can be gathered from the architectural components of the scene, leaving aside the question of the precise identification of all the figures.

The scene is the only one on the arch to have a full architectural setting, with a continuous golden arcade running behind the figures and an entire building on the right (fig. 96). Beat Brenk's suggestion that the arcade represents the gilded Temple interior (e.g. 2 Chronicles 3:4) next to the façade in a folded-out format is plausible in terms of the imagined space.[361] Visually, the arcade connects the characters, encouraging viewers to interpret them together, either in the same literal space-time, or conceptually. Standing in front of the arcade, from left to right, are two

---

[361] Brenk 1975, p.20. For folded-out architectural representations in the early middle ages, see Lampl 1961.

angels, Mary holding the Christ Child, an old man, a third angel, and a woman in a dark veil. Approaching them from the right is a white-haired man wearing a long white tunic, pallium and sandals, who stretches out his hands towards the Holy Family. Directly behind him stand a crowd of bearded men in short tunics, emerging from behind a temple-like building. This is the most detailed architectural image in the whole mosaic (fig. 97). The gable is decorated with an egg-and-dart motif, there are sculpted heads or masks spaced along the edges of the roof, and there are four columns on the façade. In the centre of the tympanum is a golden statue of a seated personification with orb and spear, in between what may be two shields. There are white curtains with black patches pulled back at the sides of the doorway, and a lighted hanging lamp, as in the door of the open church on the left-hand side of the arch. The building is set on the top of a rocky hill, and approached by flight of stairs, the rocks of the hill visible just to the left of the steps.

Two pairs of birds are depicted on the steps in front of the temple: white doves going in, and brown speckled turtledoves moving away from the door. In Luke 2:24, following the rules laid down in Leviticus 12:8, Mary and Joseph needed to bring either two doves or two young pigeons to the temple as an offering, not both.[362] The rest of the mosaic, as will be seen below, is structured in terms of opposing and complementary pairings, so it is likely that the birds have an emblematic function. They are active, moving in and out of the temple under their own steam, and closer to its open door than any of the people. The men in the crowd gesture in the same direction, through the door – whatever the larger scene is about, it appears to be

---

[362] Brenk 1975, p.21, suggests that the artist may have been following Pseudo-Matthew, who says that the couple brought both.

exemplified in this image of the building and the four birds. In his homily on the Song of Songs, Origen made a distinction between the turtle-dove, *turturis*, and dove, *columba*. According to him, both represent the Holy Spirit. However, the Spirit only appears as a dove when it is clearly understood. When mysteries are hidden, the Spirit is represented as a turtledove, which lives far away from humans up in the mountains; when mysteries are revealed directly it appears as a dove, a bird that lives amongst us.[363] The sacrifice of the doves was a ritual of purification, and Origen also commented on this in his homily on Luke, concluding "He who for the sake of the whole world was born…was not purified in the Lord's sight by such victims as purify all other men. Rather, just as he had arranged everything in a new manner, so too he had new offerings".[364] Both third-century texts were translated into Latin by Jerome, and could have been known by the clergy of Santa Maria Maggiore. The Presentation was the moment when the priest Simeon recognised Christ, saying "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation…a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). So in narrative terms, the building is the Temple in Jerusalem at the moment of Christ's Presentation, mirroring the miracle of the Annunciation opposite. But on a more fundamental level it represents the moment at which the old Temple was transformed by the presence of the Incarnate Christ, the revelation of mysteries that had previously been hidden, with the white doves of the revealed Holy Spirit taking up residence in the 'new manner' of temple, the Church. A further comparison with the Annunciation scene may have been intended; as the New Ark, Mary also contained

---

[363] Jerome's translation of Origen, *Homily on the Song of Songs* 2:12; PL vol.23; col.1142; Lawson 1957, p.303. On doves and turtledoves also see Hodne 2009, pp.162-164.

[364] Origen, *Homilies on Luke* 14; Leinhard 1996, pp.56-61.

the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), which is shown as a white dove descending on her as she sits spinning.

As has been pointed out by scholars for a century now, the golden statue holding a spear and globe on the pediment, and the carved human heads on the cornice beneath the roof, seem out of place on the Jewish Temple.[365] The image cannot have reflected the actual appearance of the Temple in Jerusalem; Josephus' first-century description specifically says "nor was it on the outside adorned with any work of the painter or engraver".[366] However, it is unlikely that Roman viewers would have known what a building destroyed almost four hundred years before looked like. Some of the features of the building can be explained by reference to possible models, for example the decision to give this building four columns. A pedimented building with four columns was the conventional form for the Temple and for Torah shrines in synagogue mosaics throughout late antiquity (fig. 98).[367] A similar structure, with a flight of steps up to the door as in the Santa Maria Maggiore image, was depicted on a gold glass bowl made in Rome (fig. 99).[368] Bar Kokhbar coins also showed the Temple as a building with four columns (fig. 100).[369] Several

---

[365] Wilpert 1916 vol.1, pp.482-483; Grabar 1971, pp.216-225; Kantorowicz 1963, p.119; Brenk 1975, p.21; Warland 2003, pp.130-132.

[366] Josephus, *The Jewish War* Book 5, ch.5:2; Whiston 1915, p.344.

[367] Hachlili 2009, pp.20-24, pl.2:1-2; Hachlili 2013, pp.192-209; Talgam 2014, fig.383, 416-418, 420.

[368] Morey and Ferrari 1959, p.27, no.116, pl.20; St Clair 1985, fig.2.

[369] Mildenberg and Mottahedeh 1984, pp.33-45, fig.1. Bar Kokhbar coins may have been taken to Rome by soldiers – one was found in a Roman soldier's grave in Brigetio, Hungary: Eck 1999, p.81.

of the coins minted for Aelia Capitolina after the Roman victory showed a four-columned gabled building with images of Jupiter or a Tyche in the gateway, both often holding a spear or sceptre.[370] So, the mosaicists' visual references for a temple in Jerusalem, whether they turned to imperial Roman or Jewish sources, would have been of roughly the type shown in the mosaic.

The statue on the tympanum has led Rainer Warland to interpret the building as the temple of Venus and Roma, which stood on the Velian Hill, not far from Santa Maria Maggiore.[371] With the entire scene transferred to Rome, Warland casts the figure in the long white tunic as St Peter, and the crowd on the right as senators, representing the population of the city.[372] However, the long-haired crowd are not shown as Romans senators. They are taken from the same stock of characters as the Old Testament stories in the nave, so it seems likely that they are in fact priests and elders.[373] Having said this, the man in white does resemble St Peter as he is shown standing by the *Hetoimasia* at the centre of the arch.[374] The two make similar gestures, reaching out towards Christ either in his human or symbolic form. The man in the Presentation scene is given an important place in the middle of the

---

[370] Meshorer 1989, p.27, 38, nos. 10, 11, 18, 19, 78, 79.

[371] Warland 2003, p.130.

[372] Warland 2003, p.133, also see Kantorowicz 1963, p.120; Brenk 1975, p.23.

[373] The men near the temple wear the same short tunics and boots as those carrying the Ark of the Covenant in the nave. The man next to Mary and Christ is similarly dressed, with the addition of the orange cloak which marks out Joseph elsewhere on the arch. The cloaked men at the front of the group of elders are dressed as high priests, like those shown advising Herod in the register below.

[374] The top half of the face of St Peter has been restored.

composition, and is the only figure in motion apart from the birds. I suggest that

he should be seen as both Simeon and Peter. In both roles he can easily be seen as

leading the gathering of Jewish elders towards Christ. But Simeon's prophecy is

inclusive, also referring to the gentiles: "For my eyes have seen your salvation,

which you have prepared in the sight of *all* nations" (Luke 2:30-31, emphasis

added). As Warland says, one of the implications of introducing St Peter into the

Infancy narrative is to move the story Rome-wards, but the relocation of the scene

does not have to be taken literally. Rather it can be seen as a reminder that the

centre of the newly-converted nations is Rome, and its head the pope, as Peter's

successor. Sixtus had his own name placed directly beneath the image of St Peter

at the top of the arch, reminding viewers where his authority came from. Wilpert

suggested that the statue in the tympanum of the temple referred to the Roman

domination of Jerusalem; this may well be so, but in terms of papal claims for

centrality more than as Roman imperialist propaganda (although both are

possible).[375] The appearance of the building may also refer to the rebuilt Temple

as a figure for the Church. The prophecy of the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple

in Haggai 2:9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former",

was interpreted by Augustine as a reference to the Church: "Therefore the glory of

this New Testament House is greater than the glory of the Old Testament house…

[it is] the house built up of the elect, which henceforth shall dread no ruin."[376] The

'elect' or chosen people are also directly referred to in Santa Maria Maggiore, in

---

[375] Wilpert 1916 vol.1, p.483; Brenk 1975, p.21. A political statement of Roman

  appropriation of the Jewish Temple may also reflect the high levels of anti-Semitism in

  early fifth-century Rome: Miles 1993.

[376] Augustine, *City of God*, 18:48; NPNF1 vol.2, p.390.

the inscription at the top of the arch: XYSTVS EPISCOPVS PLEBI DEI, "From Pope Sixtus to the people of God". Thus the people of God are implicitly the Romans of Rome, and Santa Maria Maggiore itself the house of the elect.

Architectural imagery in fifth-century Roman mosaics: conclusion

The fact that all three mosaics were commissioned by clerics may explain the complexity of their imagery. Their frequent choice of architectural metaphors created visions of Roman Christian communities as fundamentally linked to their church buildings, *ecclesia* as congregation merging with *ecclesia* as place. If the faithful had been represented by other kinds of symbol, for example animals (doves, deer, sheep), there would be some ambiguity as to whether these stood for all Christians, or for each individual Christian viewer. Using buildings as symbols leaves no doubt that the meaning is collective, and raises the value of the grand congregational basilicas. It was in the early fifth century that Christianity first began to be conceived of as a 'majoritarian' religion to be followed by everybody, not one religion among others.[377] As Peter Brown describes it, this was a "strident new age", in which Augustine could confidently talk of "the entire human race converging on the Crucified", an outlook not even considered in the previous century.[378] All three programmes can be seen as instrumental in constructing this attitude; at a time of expanding church patronage, their architectural forms

---

[377] Brown 2012, p.34.

[378] Brown 2012, p.34; Augustine, *Dolbeau Sermon* 25:510, trans. Hill and Rotelle 1997, p.382.

presented the construction of church buildings in terms of the foundation and victory of *the* Church.

Jewelled cities: the sequel

The first half of the fifth century seems to have been an experimental period. In the innovative mosaic compositions of Santa Sabina, Santa Pudenziana and Santa Maria Maggiore, distinctive architectural designs carried the theological weight of the compositions. The fashion for such ambitious architectural imagery was relatively short-lived. By the 500s Roman apse mosaics settled into a more standardised pattern, which would persist until the ninth century. Architectural motifs remained important, but they were removed from their position centre-stage. No further outstanding architectural compositions comparable to Santa Pudenziana are seen in Rome until 817, and the arch mosaic of Santa Prassede which I discuss in chapter four. In this section I look at two recurring architectural motifs of the intervening period: jewelled cities and model churches, exploring the shared themes and associations of these images, and the cumulative effect of their repetition.

Popes and models

Images of model churches have been studied within the growing body of literature on depictions of patronage in the early middle ages.[379] As Ann Marie Yasin

---

[379] Images of late antique and early medieval patronage generally: Jäggi 2002-3; Yasin 2010; Caillet 2011; Caillet 2012; Thunø 2011. Model churches: Cuneo 1969, pp.202-214, fig.2-17a; Lipsmeyer 1981; Gardelles 1987; Beuckers 2001; Klinkenberg 2009.

describes, in the sixth century living patrons, almost always clerics, start intruding into the otherwise otherworldly gatherings of Christ, Mary and the saints, in the apses of churches in Italy and Istria, and at least one case in Palestine.[380] Architectural donor portraits belong to this wider visual language of partnership with the saints. In Rome, they seem to have belonged to a specifically papal iconography.[381] Model churches were depicted in the hands of the reigning popes in the churches of Saints Cosmas and Damian (526-530, Felix IV), San Lorenzo fuori le mura (579-590, Pelagius II), Sant' Agnese fuori le mura (625-638, Honorius I), the San Venanzio chapel in the Lateran Baptistery (640, John IV), John VII's funerary chapel in Old St Peter's (705-707), Santa Prassede and Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (c 822, Paschal I) and San Marco (829-831, Gregory IV).[382] In each case the patron carries the model with covered hands, holding it across his body in the direction of the central figure, but with his head facing towards the viewer (figs 101-108). The donors stand on the viewer's left, on the favoured right-hand side of Christ or the

---

[380] Yasin 2010, esp. pp.44-48.

[381] The only Roman example of an architectural portrait of a non-papal donor is in the mid eighth-century Theodotus chapel of Santa Maria Antiqua, where the building is proffered by Theodotus, a consul and *primicerius defensorum* (senior church official): Wilpert 1916 vol.4, pl.179, 182; Osborne 1979, pp.59-61; Rettner 1995 fig.9, 10. Model buildings are also held by Bishops Ecclesius and Euphrasius in the mid sixth-century apse mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna and the Euphrasian basilica at Poreč, respectively: Deichmann 1958, pl.311, 353; Terry and Maguire 2007, pl.2, 22; Klinkenberg 2009, pp.39-42.

[382] Nordhagen 1965, pl.6, 18, 19b (Old St Peters); Matthiae 1967, pl.78 (SS Cosmas and Damian), 89 (S Lorenzo), 90 (S Agnese), 104 (S Venanzio), 144 (S Prassede), 215 (S Marco); Wisskirchen 1992, fig.12 (S Prassede).

central saint.[383] They are all depicted in highly-visible positions, usually in or above

apses.

As shown in chapter one and in the first section of this chapter, pairs of cities or city

gates had been used in Christian art since the fourth century, in a variety of contexts

and with equally varied possible inflections. There are some constant features of

their appearance in Roman apse mosaics, and some apparently optional ones. In

SS Cosmas and Damian the cities are at each end of a band at the bottom of the

apse; at San Lorenzo fuori le mura they are shown in the lateral spandrels of the

apsidal arch, and they are at the top corners of the wall in the San Venanzio chapel

(figs. 109 - 111). The later mosaics of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Santa Prassede

and San Marco follow the pattern of Cosmas and Damian with pairs of cities in the

apse flanking processions of sheep (fig. 112); at Santa Cecilia there is also a second

pair at the top of the apsidal arch accompanying a line of female saints[384]. Apart

from at SS Cosmas and Damian, where the cities are composed from light grey

tesserae indicating marble, they are golden and jewelled, with rows of pearls

separating the gold blocks. The cities are labelled as Jerusalem and Bethlehem in

some cases and unidentified in others (table 2). Where Jerusalem is named, it is on

the left.[385] The paired cities also seem to be a largely Roman phenomenon. The

exceptions are in San Vitale and Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, both dating

to Ravenna's ecclesiastical building boom of the mid sixth century.[386]

---

[383] The exceptions are Bishop Ecclesius of Ravenna and Theodotus in Santa Maria Antiqua.

[384] Ciampini vol.2, pl.51.

[385] The only exception in Rome is the twelfth-century mosaic of San Clemente.

[386] Deliyannis 2010, p.201

	Left of mosaic (Christ's right)	Right of mosaic (Christ's left)
Santa Maria Maggiore 430s	**Peter** **Jerusalem**	**Paul** **Bethlehem**
SS Cosmas and Damian 526-530	**Paul** **Jerusalem**	**Peter** **Bethlehem**
San Lorenzo fuori le mura 579-590	**Peter** **Jerusalem**	**Paul** **Bethlehem**
San Venanzio chapel 640	**Paul** Anonymous city	**Peter** Anonymous city
Santa Cecilia in Trastevere 820s	**Paul** Anonymous city	**Peter** Anonymous city
Santa Prassede 820s	**Paul** Anonymous city	**Peter** Anonymous city
San Marco 829-831	**Paul** **Jerusalem**	**Peter** **Bethlehem**

The cities have been interpreted as apocalyptic visions of heaven, or of the ever-present celestial Church. Maria Cristina Carile has shown that they also drew inspiration from late antique perceptions of imperial palaces.[387] As they were in earlier mosaics, they also continue to be identified, without any obvious justification, with the *ecclesia ex circumcisione* and *ecclesia ex gentibus*.[388] I suggest instead that they should be considered together with the model churches, as linked components of a single image, primarily relating to the construction of a papal corporate image. Firstly, pairs of cities were represented in the same mosaics as model churches in at least seven Roman churches: SS Cosmas and Damian, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, the San Venanzio chapel, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Santa

[387] Carile 2009, 2012, 2013.

[388] Most recently by Thunø 2015, pp.258-259.

Prassede and San Marco.[389] Secondly, while paired cities and architectural donor images both outlast the period covered by this thesis, remaining popular into the Romanesque and later medieval periods, from the sixth to ninth centuries the architectural repertoire of Roman mosaicists seems essentially to have been limited to these two forms.[390]

The jewelled cities and small-scale churches were fitted into mosaics dominated by human bodies. Christ, apostles, martyrs and clerics are depicted either in simply-outlined celestial landscapes or in splendid isolation. The mosaics show the popes in reciprocal client-patron relationships or even friendships with the saints, who put their arms around the pope's shoulders, introducing them to Christ in return for the dedication of their church. Model churches clarify the nature of these

---

[389] Outside Rome, the two are only depicted together in San Vitale in Ravenna.

Architectural donor portraits are shown without paired cities in the Euphrasian basilica in Poreč, and Sant' Agnese, the Theodotus Chapel, and the funerary chapel of John VII in Rome. Cities appear without a model church in Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna: Deichmann 1958, pl.383, 40, 411.

[390] For tenth-century Transcaucasian carvings of model churches as images of royal patronage see Jones 2004, pp.146-147, fig.1, 2, 4; Jones 2007, pp.43-59; Carile 2014, and for later medieval Serbian examples see Marinković 2007. Later examples of architectural models can also be seen in the tenth-century mosaic in the south-western tympanum of the narthex of Hagia Sophia: Kähler and Mango 1967, pl.91; in the eleventh-century frescoes of Sant' Angelo in Formis in Capua: Demus and Hirmer 1970, pl.18; carved onto a twelfth-century altar at Avenas in Belgium, and on a capital in Autun cathedral: Gardelles 1987. Jewelled cities are shown in the twelfth-century mosaics of San Clemente and Santa Maria in Trastevere: Matthiae 1967, pl.228-229, Riccioni 2006, pl.15, 29b.

relationships. Popes are generally described as offering their churches to Christ or the saints, but this is not totally accurate. The prime example of gift-giving in early Christian art was the Adoration of the Magi, which quickly developed a recognisable iconography. This was noticeably not used for the donor portraits. The Magi walk in profile towards Christ and Mary, looking at them, with their tribute in outstretched arms (fig. 54 & 78). Other late antique scenes of gift-giving used the same conventions.[391] The popes on the other hand stand in frontal poses and look straight ahead, in some cases turning slightly towards the central figure, but not enough to suggest walking towards them. The churches are held across the popes' bodies, mostly not at arms-length, but held close to their chests, sometimes overlapped by their robes. The popes are not shown giving the churches away as much as hanging on to them: these are images of permanent patronage relationships with the pope as the agent.

The model buildings were not necessarily mimetic representations of the actual churches. At San Lorenzo the image more or less matches the reality, with three windows on the façade above a triple entrance, although the depicted doorways are trabeated and the real ones are arched. However even where the model does not resemble the building, a relatively high level of detail works to make the buildings more believable as objects. For example in the San Venanzio chapel, where the model does not resemble the chapel attached to the baptistery, shading and incidental detail such as the fringed curtain and the cornice around the apse

---

[391] See for example the scene of tenants paying a landowner on the mid-third-century Igel column in Trier: Dragendorff and Krüger 1924, pl.9, and in more extreme poses of submission, the barbarians paying tribute on the late-fourth-century obelisk of Theodosius in Constantinople: Kiilerich 1993, fig.24.

work to give the image solidity and presence.[392] The model churches are presented

as equivalent in value to the jewelled books and martyr's crowns held in the veiled

hands of the other figures in the mosaics.

Urban continuity

If this aspect of the architectural models is fairly easy to understand, the jewelled

cities are more complicated. One way of approaching the question is to ask what

would be missing from the mosaics if the cities were not there, or what they bring

to the apses that the images of saints do not. The answer can be summed up in

three keywords: unity, urbanism and continuity.

One of the objections to the theory that the cities represented the Jewish and

Gentile converts is that while they are frequently depicted in the same mosaics as

Peter and Paul, the apostles to the two groups, they are not matched with them in

any coherent way – Paul is shown on the same side as Jerusalem twice, with

Bethlehem in another two cases, and with anonymous cities three times (table 2,

p.127). However, there may be something in the importance of the cities as a

symmetrical duo, comparable to the treatment of Peter and Paul as a unit of two

equal partners expressing the unity of the Church.[393] Even where the cities are

named, the distinction between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is minimised. At SS

---

[392] The exception is the building held by John VII in the chapel of the Theotokos, which

looks like a Monopoly house with almost no detail at all. Possibly the pope wished to

emphasise the relatively humble nature of his chapel within Old St Peter's, in line with his

claim to be the 'unworthy servant' of the Mother of God.

[393] Pietri 1961; Huskinson 1982.

Cosmas and Damian, the river Jordan is named in fairly large letters on one line (fig. 113), but the names of the cities are tiny, squished inside the gates of the cities on two lines (fig. 114). Presumably if the mosaicists had wanted to, they could have placed the inscriptions above the cities, on the same level as the Jordan. It is interesting that in the apse of Santa Prassede, which is based on the design of Cosmas and Damian, IORDANES is again inscribed in the middle, but the two cities are not named at all. In the San Venanzio chapel and in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, the cities are again anonymous. In San Lorenzo fuori le mura and San Marco they are named as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, but in both cases the lettering is small and awkwardly squeezed in (figs. 115 & 116).[394] Whether or not any of these inscriptions were actually added later, they appear to be afterthoughts in a compositional sense, or perhaps a rationalisation for an aesthetically appealing symmetry. Far from distinguishing the two sides of the mosaic, the cities unite them. Like the columns on the corners on sarcophagi, the solid structures defining the edges of the apse mediate between the picture space and the three-dimensional structure. The best example of this comes from the twelfth-century mosaic of San Clemente, where the two cities wrap around the corners of the apse, but even in the earlier mosaics they help to locate the processions of sheep within the space of the sanctuary.[395]

It might seem odd to talk about images of urbanism in connection with cities apparently occupied by giant sheep. And the mosaicists were obviously not

---

[394] The tesserae around the inscription Bethlehem at San Lorenzo seem to be disturbed, and it is at least possible that the name was added later. Jerusalem at San Lorenzo and Bethlehem at San Marco are restorations.

[395] Romano 2006, p.209, fig.1, p.216, fig.14.

drawing on experiences of everyday cities for the jewelled walls. However, the buildings inside the walls are surprisingly differentiated, and relatively detailed for their small scale. The two exceptions, where the city is shown almost entirely by its walls, are in Ravenna. In Rome, all the paired cities come with a full range of structures, including tholos-type buildings and multi-storey halls with balconies at San Venanzio, statues on columns at San Marco, sundials at Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, and triumphal arches and monuments with shell niches at Santa Prassede (figs. 112 & 117). At Cosmas and Damian, the city walls as well as the buildings appear down-to-earth, and only the hanging pearls in the doorway indicate that the city is more than it seems (fig. 109). The details of the buildings are redundant in a depiction of heaven. They have more to do with the expectations of earthly city centres, although transferred to an otherworldly setting. A display of everlasting urbanism may have been especially important in the context of the somewhat less shiny reality. During the second half of the fifth century and into the sixth, the Roman population declined dramatically, perhaps by ninety percent. The city was to some extent deurbanised, and certainly it changed in structure and appearance.[396] Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani describes a "severe dilution of the density… where nuclei of population concentrated around main thoroughfares or cultic buildings would alternate with vast abandoned areas that were used as rubbish tips or cemeteries."[397] Peter Brown outlines how during the 500s, "on all levels of society…a general impoverishment set in. The fourth-century

---

[396] Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004 pp.21-27, fig.1; Santangeli Valenzani 2007, pp.67-68;

[397] Santangeli Valenzani 2007, p.68.

age of gold became a memory".[398] Despite this, debates and rhetoric about the
sanctified wealth of the church continued fairly unchanged from the previous
generations.[399] And what wealth there was, was concentrated in churches – the
mosaics do not just represent gold walls, they *are* gold walls, even if thinly-covered
ones. In this context the cities appear as repeated invocations of continued urban
splendour in a heavenly and therefore indestructible form.[400]

The arch mosaic of San Lorenzo is a good example. Pelagius II came to power during
the Lombard siege of Rome in 579, after decades of war and economic crisis. The
previous twenty-five years had seen no major gifts to existing churches, and only
one building project recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*.[401] The mosaic combines
architectural motifs and inscriptions to advertise Pelagius' rebuilding of the city.
Pelagius holds his church on the left side of the arch, and St Lawrence stands next
to the pope with his arm around him, the first example of this intimate connection
between saint and patron in a church mosaic (fig. 118).[402] The dedicatory
inscription around the bottom of the apse, now re-painted at the top of the arch,
described the rebuilding of the church "amidst swords and outrages of enemies."
This inscription and a second one around the curve of the arch also talk about the

---

[398] Brown 2012, p.481.

[399] Brown 2012, pp.482-485.

[400] Ennodius of Pavia's Panegyric to Theodoric, written c.504-508, uses a similar rhetoric of
golden rebirth: "Under your generous government I see the unexpected beauty of cities
risen from ashes, and the palatine roofs glow golden everywhere": Haase 1991, p.31.

[401] The basilica of Phillip and James, now the SS XII Apostoli, under John III. *Liber
Pontificalis* 63:1; Duchesne 1981 vol.1, p.305; Davis 2000, p.61.

[402] Bolgia 2006, p.9.

new church in terms of light: "As the Lord supplanted darkness with created light, so [here] brilliance as of a thunderbolt rests on things once hidden" and "O deacon…rightly [now] a worshipful light returns to your temples."[403] The two cities in the spandrels are set directly below west-facing windows – are these the lighted temples? It seems possible at least that some ambiguity was intentional. The cities are heavily restored, but the inner edges marking their positions are original (fig. 119). They are depicted in the same space as the figures, and Pelagius' foot almost touches the top of the walls of the left-hand enclosure. The buildings inside are modern restorations, but it is likely that they were on roughly the same scale as the model church, as they are in other mosaics. Pelagius therefore appears to be stepping up from inside the walls of the shining city, carrying one of its buildings with him. St Lawrence holds an open book next to the church, inscribed with the words *dispersit dedit pauperibus*, a quote from Psalm 112:9 "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor". This could refer to Lawrence himself, who was famous for calling poor people 'the treasures of the Church', but could also be seen as Lawrence's comment on Pelagius – one of the pope's other building projects was to turn his own home into an alms-house.[404] The same psalm promises that "wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever." In the fifth and sixth centuries, treasure in heaven was believed to be purchased by earthly donations to the Church. For example, an inscription on the mid-fifth-century tombstone of Hilary, bishop of Arles, announced that he had "bought up heaven with earthly gifts", and in 594, not long after the dedication of San Lorenzo,

---

[403] Thunø 2011, p.290.

[404] Ambrose, *On the duties on the clergy* 2:28:140, NPNF2, vol.10, p.65. *Liber Pontificalis* 65:2; Duchesne 1981 vol.1, p.309; Davis 2000, p.63.

Gregory I described heavenly mansions made of golden bricks (*laterculos aureos*) as the reward awaiting those who regularly gave alms.[405] The riches implied by the jewelled city are presented here as a direct consequence of Pelagius' patronage.

The third aspect of the small-scale churches and the jewelled cities is their cumulative construction of tradition. Styles changed, new formats were experimented with, new saints and popes took their places, but the cities and architectural models remain more or less the same. This could be unthinking conservatism on the part of the mosaicists, but it could also be a deliberate appeal to precedent. Continuity was an important issue for the papacy. The theoretically unbroken line back to Peter was the basis of orthodoxy, and popes looked backwards to their predecessors for support.[406] The overall iconography of the apse mosaics in which the cities appear is often apparently apocalyptic, but repeated over centuries the message is likely to have been more about the permanent presence of the Church than an immediately expected Second Coming.[407]

Pairs of cities would already have had ideological baggage from their association with earlier phases of Roman Christianity. However they are peculiarly imprecise symbols. They are too marginal to be taken as fully-realised visions of heaven, although they pick up on contemporary descriptions of the celestial city. Their walls

---

[405] Gregory I, *Dialogues* 4:37; PL vol.77, col.388; Brown 2015, pp.27-29.

[406] For example, popes of the sixth and seventh centuries looked back to Leo I's writings as the "primary link in the chain of orthodox authority" going back to Peter: Llewellyn 1974, pp.377-378

[407] See Thunø 2015 for the argument against an eschatological reading of these mosaics.

are obviously fantastical, but the buildings inside them are recognisable earthly types. Since no theologians wrote about a Heavenly Bethlehem, or consistently about any two cities as allegories, there was no single authoritative explanation to follow. It seems possible that this lack of clarity was a positive advantage. They are approximate – roughly heavenly, plausibly related to the Church, and recognisably city-like – and therefore reusable, and easily adaptable to any situation. In the words of Julia Smith, early medieval Rome "was both a place and an idea".[408] I suggest that the jewelled cities and model churches worked together as 'ideas' of papal Rome, visions of a functioning city with churches at its centre.

---

[408] Smith 2000, p.317.

Chapter three: Syrian and Jordanian church floor mosaics

Chapter two presented two aspects of architectural imagery in Rome. On the one hand, a variety of architectural forms were given major parts in early fifth-century compositions, differing from each other in appearance but all expressing ideas of Christian 'community' and the triumph of the Church. On the other hand, certain architectural motifs became standardised, used over a longer period with a more limited range of meanings, predominantly relating to patronage and connecting earthly foundations with heavenly treasure. This chapter follows distinct but parallel trends in architectural imagery on the other side of the Empire, on the church floor mosaics of the eastern Mediterranean.

The chapter begins with fifth- and sixth-century examples from modern Syria, which have mainly been found in the north-west region between the Coastal Mountain Range and the desert (fig. 120). Some depict church buildings, often with a high level of detail, others show more idealised shrine-like structures. The key case study is the exceptional and (until recently) well-preserved fifth-century mosaic at Tayyibat al-Imam, where, as in the Roman examples, architectural forms were given top-billing as characters, embodying the major themes of the floor. A number of more fragmentary Syrian mosaics allow a picture to be built up of the different contemporary modes of architectural representation, with as before a distinction drawn between iconic and veristic structures. The story is then picked up by the mosaics of the sixth and seventh centuries in Jordan, mostly located in or near to the fertile lands of the coastal region and the Jordan River valley. While built forms are fairly common components of these floors, they are channelled into a supporting role to human and, above all, to plant motifs. In many cases images of buildings were used to make statements about patronage, and to signal

abundance, often in conjunction with Nilotic motifs. The most famous of the Jordanian floors, the Madaba map, differs significantly from the other mosaics in context and format, and is therefore dealt with in a separate section at the end of the chapter. This chapter focuses on the better-documented mosaics from Syria and Jordan, but it should be noted that there are similar examples of architectural imagery in contemporary floor mosaics from Palestine, North Africa and Turkey.[409] Hopefully a future study can develop a fuller picture of the situation across these regions.

There are some obvious differences between the fifth-century Roman mosaics and the eastern Mediterranean examples. Mosaic floors with architectural representations remained popular over a three-hundred-year period across an area roughly covered by modern Syria and Jordan. The geographic and chronological distances often prevent direct comparisons being drawn between the mosaics – whereas the patrons and congregation of Santa Maria Maggiore are likely to have seen the apse of Santa Pudenziana, such awareness cannot be assumed here. Beyond the interest in architectural imagery itself, the Syrian compositions are not closely comparable to those in Jordan. The local context for each floor will therefore be taken into account as far as possible. Having said this, there are strong similarities among many of the floors in Jordan, and in the case of three late sixth-

---

[409] Palestine and Israel: Talgam 2014, fig.160, 175, 176, 351, 369, 383, 448, 452; North Africa: Dunbabin 1978, pl.43-45, 49, 50, 75. On the cityscape of the fifth-century Megalopsychia mosaic from Yakto near Antioch, see Dunbabin 1999, pp.180-181, figs.194-195; *http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/yakto*, accessed 17/04/2016.

century mosaics at Umm ar-Rasas examined below, patrons and audiences probably overlapped.

The difference between the decoration of apses or walls and floors also needs to be taken into account. In 427 Theodosius II issued an edict forbidding the depiction of the Cross on floors, a prohibition which seems to have applied also to figural images of Christ or the saints, and late antique writers explicitly described floors as fitting places for the depiction of the material world, as opposed to the celestial zone of the apse.[410] In spatial and functional terms, floor mosaics have to be seen in relation to the movement of individuals across them, articulating the space in which they enacted the liturgy.[411] From the point of view of a person walking across a mosaic, the images continually change in appearance, inviting participation in the virtual space or narrative, very different in effect to a static apse mosaic viewed from a distance. The apparently down-to-earth flavour of the Jordanian mosaic floors may therefore be in part related to their location, and the contrast between them and the jewelled cities of the Roman mosaics should not be overstated. Unfortunately, apse decorations do not survive in any of the eastern churches with architectural floors, so there is no way of knowing whether they contained appropriately heavenly buildings. Despite these differences, and the peculiarities of iconography and composition discussed below, there are important points of consistency. Across the Mediterranean, the most ambitious programmes of architectural imagery coincided with an early period of expansion in church

---

[410] *Codex Justinianus* 1:8:1; Krueger 1954, p.61. For mosaic floors as the earth see p.164 below.

[411] For the application of this approach to Roman secular mosaics, see Moholt 2011, pp.288-289.

patronage and construction. And in Jordan and Syria just as in Rome, representations of built forms continued to be used as components of church decoration for a long time thereafter, alongside and within more stable institutional iconographies.

The secondary literature on the eastern Mediterranean mosaics is often concerned with the question of realism. In part, the debate has been skewed by an anomalous example, the Madaba Map. Since the map does not belong with the main group either in terms of its function or its appearance, conclusions drawn from the one cannot be applied directly to the rest.[412] However, the question of realism still has to be considered in relation to the images of cities and basilicas elsewhere. The term is used to refer to the intention to represent a particular place, and also to the level of success – whether a place is recognisable in the image; either way, the agency is awarded to the prototype, the actual building or city which the mosaic claims to represent. In one model, icons representing buildings may be simplified and schematic, but the purpose of their representation is to refer to actual places, and their significance depends on the viewer's interest in the prototype. The topographic mosaics of Jordan have often been interpreted in this light. In another scenario, the appearance of a depicted building or city could be directly based on the mosaicist's knowledge of the original, in a 'portrait' mode. The detailed images of individual churches found in Syrian mosaics appear to fall into this category. As in chapter two, I use the concept of verism for the analysis of these images, treating features such as asymmetry and incidental detail as iconographic strategies for indicating how an image should be understood. The preoccupation with vignettes

---

[412] See p.183 below.

of cities and churches as accurate representations of archaeologically-known structures has tended to lead to the isolation of the motifs – as seen for example in Duval's detailed typological catalogues – and to discussions of their formal characteristics and likely models rather than their functions. Little has previously been written on the images in the context of their settings within the overall design of their pavements, and their possible relationships to patterns of viewing, movement and practice within churches. This chapter seeks to set the architectural forms back into their surroundings.

The Syrian mosaics

Tayyibat al-Imam

The fifth century was a period of innovation in Syrian ecclesiastical architecture, culminating in a forty-year building boom, c. 480-520, in which a number of major churches and cathedrals were constructed.[413] The church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayyibat al-Imam, about 35 miles north of Homs, got in ahead of the curve; it is dated by mosaic inscription to 447. The body of the church is no longer standing and its plan is only partially known from excavation.[414] It had two aisles, divided from the nave by piers, with a raised platform for a bema-throne in the centre of the nave. The sanctuary lies beneath a modern road, and could not be excavated. According to a plan displayed at the site, there were seven doors, three at the west end, and two in each side wall. The mosaic which covers the nave and aisles is the

---

[413] Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, p.141, 151.

[414] Zaqzuq and Saadé 1987; Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, and Duval 2003, pp.243-245, n.36 for subsequent bibliography.

most complicated of the surviving Syrian pavements, with three different genres of architectural motif (fig. 121).

Firstly, the panel directly in front of the chancel, to the east of the bema, shows an idealised landscape of symmetrically arranged creatures and structures (fig. 122).[415] In the centre the Lamb of God stands beneath a domed ciborium hung with curtains and lit by candles and a lamp. To either side is a large peacock, then two hexagonal or octagonal ciboria sheltering fountains. Below the Lamb is an eagle standing on a mound, with the four Rivers of Paradise flowing down to form one large river along the bottom of the panel. Deer are drinking from the river, and phoenixes and pheasants are perched above the ciboria. Either side of the central domed structure are two walled cities, Bethlehem on the left and Jerusalem on the right. A large church building can be seen inside the wall of each city. Lastly, the composition contains two dedicatory inscriptions, one above the cities referring to the construction of the entire church, and one set into the river naming the donors of the mosaic panel.

Dotted around the rest of the church, four more inscriptions commemorate the donors of particular sections of mosaic.[416] The most prominent commission, covering a larger area of floor than the eastern nave mosaic, was a panel to the west of the bema-throne. An inscription records that it was paid for by Theodosius and his wife and sons.[417] This section is also heavily architectural. The floor in front of the bema is divided into square, cruciform and octagonal fields, the octagons

---

[415] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, pl.6.

[416] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, pp.450-455.

[417] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, p.452.

inset with circular frames (fig. 123).[418] The dedicatory inscription is written in the easternmost circle, and the remaining six contain images of churches. These are of different types, none repeated: a cross-plan church with a central tower, a second cruciform church (only partially preserved) with a cupola, a *tholos*-like structure with towers, one basilica with aisles and one without, and a centrally-planned round or octagonal domed church. A further two churches are represented in the larger and more ornate square frames in the centre of the mosaic, an aisled basilica with a porticoed, and one with entrance arches hung with lamps and a curtain (figs. 124 & 125). The cross-shaped fields connecting the buildings contain fountains with peacocks, doves and a phoenix drinking. One fountain with a phoenix perched on it is also accompanied by a pair of lambs. Finally, there are small rectangular panels along the north and south sides of the composition, oriented outwards towards the aisles. Two depict pairs of fish, one a pair of birds, and one a scene with two camels carrying goods away from a building (fig. 126). This building is shown with less detail than the churches in the centre. It is two-storeyed and made of stone, otherwise without identifying features.

Thirdly, buildings are depicted in several places along the aisles. The north aisle is decorated with a thin strip of figural mosaic sandwiched between frames of medallion interlace, and the intercolumniations are filled with geometric patterns. The central band of mosaic is divided into two. The shorter western panel has a dedicatory inscription at its east end, then a leopard chasing a ram and a pair of grazing sheep. The eastern section also has an inscription at its east end, commemorating a group of unnamed patrons, above a large vase. The writing and

---

[418] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, pl.13, figs.10-16, 44-62.

vase are oriented towards the west, while the rest of the design faces south into the nave. Moving from east to west, there is a city gate with a twisty-branched fruit tree growing through it, followed by two mules carrying a chest towards a city. The city is depicted as a cluster of stone buildings and towers. On the left there is a polygonal structure flanked by towers and another with an upper-level arcade; these may depict a single church in folded-out view, or two separate buildings, perhaps a church and a grand civic building (fig. 127). To the west of the city there is a gabled building with arched windows, probably a church, alone on top of a rocky hill. The gate, mules, city and hill appear to be part of a single scene. To the west again, there is a separate episode of a lion chasing an onager.

On the south side of the nave, an inscription towards the east end records the family that paid for the flooring of the aisle. A wide acanthus border surrounds a central field with five episodes of animal hunting or combat spaced along the aisle: a leopard chasing a deer and gazelle, a bear chasing an ostrich-like bird, a lioness and a bull confronting each other, a leopard attacking a deer, and a lion chasing a wild ass. In between the animals are fruit trees and flowering plants. To the west of the sequence of chasing animals is a depiction of a large basilical church, flanked by two trees, possibly cypresses (fig. 128). The southern intercolumnar spaces are also decorated with figural mosaic. The first and third panels from the west show ducks and plants, and the second and fourth show pairs of chasing animals. In the second, a dog with a collar chases a fox or wolf away from a settlement, depicted as a stone house and a column topped by an orb, perhaps a sundial (fig. 129).

This description of all the components of this rather complex floor is necessary in order to set the architectural images in their full context, and to distinguish between their various types. The structures in the area between the sanctuary and

the bema are the most idealised, the least material. Almost every motif in this section of mosaic comes from the most accessible repertoire of Christian imagery, an institutionally-recognised level of iconography where it can be said with reasonable certainty what is symbolised: the Lamb of God representing Christ in his sacrificial, eucharistic aspect (John 1:29), the fountains under the ciboria and the deer drinking from the stream referencing the Word of God and baptism (Psalm 42:1), the eagle standing for the resurrected Christ and phoenixes for resurrection in general, and peacocks for incorruptibility.[419] Furthermore, the peacocks with their round tails resemble flabella placed either side of an altar, emphasising the sacrificial aspect of the Lamb. They also recall the cherubim who flanked the Holy of Holies.[420] As will be seen below, similar ciboria were depicted in a number of Syrian mosaics alongside comparable constellations of motifs. At Tayyibat al-Imam, the composition intertwines the themes of eucharistic sacrifice, life-giving Word and baptism, and the resulting resurrection. In this context, the shrine-like ciboria sheltering the fountains (fonts) and the Lamb (altar) must stand for the institution of the Church which houses the sacraments and enables the transformative liturgies to take place. Their arrangement in a trio with the domed structure in the middle even mimics the form of a basilica with a central apse flanked by pastophoria. However, these are highly abstracted representations, referring to the Church as an ideal, appropriate to their allegorical setting. By framing the more

---

[419] Eagles: Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms* 103:8, NPNF1, vol.8, p.506; also Isaiah 40:31, Psalm 103:5. Phoenixes: Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical lectures* 18:8, NPNF2, vol.7, p.136. Peacocks: Augustine, *City of God* 21:4; NPNF1, vol.2, p.454.

[420] On cherubim, flabella and peacocks see Maguire forthcoming.

overt symbolic motifs, the canopied structures comment on them, placing them in an institutional context.

The cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem repeat the message in another tone. They are more material in appearance than the ciboria. The churches within the walls are shown with a comparable level of detail to those in the western nave mosaic, with blocks of stone outlined and shaded, and decorative details such as hanging curtains and denticulated cornices. The surrounding motifs tell us that they are symbol-cities, not direct topographic representations of the earthly Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Despite this, they are relatively fully realised; the materiality of the sacred sites is foregrounded even though the structures themselves are generic. The major distinction between the two is that Jerusalem is surrounded by tall flame-like trees, cypress or fir, while Bethlehem is not. Most of the rest of the panel was carefully symmetrical in composition, so the difference here would have been sharp when the floor was undamaged. Fir and/or cypress trees had been described by Isaiah as 'everlasting signs' of the Lord (Isaiah 55:13: *abies*, fir, in the Vulgate, and *kyparissos*, cypress, in the Septuagint), and in Hosea 14:8 God tells the prophet "I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found." So while both cities are shown as sacred enclosures, Jerusalem is privileged, indicating its status as the site of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. This may also explain why, unusually, Bethlehem is on the left.[421] A viewer standing in the nave, reading the cities from left to right, could see the pair in terms of the New Testament narrative, leading

---

[421] Jerusalem is on the viewer's left in the six Italian church mosaics to depict a named pair of cities: see chapter two, table 2. As Campanati notes, the mosaic at Tayyibat al-Imam is the only one in the eastern Mediterranean to show Jerusalem and Bethlehem together as cities: Campanati 1999, p.174.

from Christ's birth in Bethlehem to the Crucifixion in the form of the Lamb, to the Resurrection at Jerusalem. This visual strategy can be compared with the composition of the Annunciation at Santa Maria Maggiore, where a closed temple stands to the left and an open structure to the right, visualising the new Covenant resulting from the Mary's acceptance of the Incarnation. At Tayyibat al-Imam, the sacrificial Lamb is the crucial middle point around which the narrative revolves, but the message is broadly similar. And as at Santa Maria Maggiore the architectural motifs are full protagonists, going beyond being frames or backdrops to become actors on the same level as the Lamb.

Moving further westwards, the mosaic carpet beyond the bema-throne echoes the theme of resurrection through the sacraments of the Church, highlighting the material structures of the institution more strongly. The church buildings in the medallions resemble known types, and are depicted in detail, with asymmetrical features and some attempts at perspective, differing in style from the schematic ciboria to the east. This has inevitably raised the question of realism. The excavators wrote that the cruciform church in the middle of the floor "without doubt evokes the sanctuary of St Simeon Stylites", the inference being that the other buildings may represent other well-known Syrian sanctuaries.[422] In this case, the detailed rendering of the structures would be a reflection of the mosaicists' knowledge of the prototypes. However, it seems unlikely that the simpler structures depicted here were intended as particular churches – one unaisled

---

[422] Zaqzuq and Saadé 1987, p.332. Campanati 1994, p.271, points out that Qalat Siman was built later than the church at Tayyibat al-Imam, but agrees that the building could refer to an earlier cruciform church, giving the example of S. Babylas in Antioch, c.379: Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, p.75, fig.34.

basilica looks much like another – and none is accompanied by an inscription to pin down its identity. The decision to represent many different kinds of building can equally be explained as an attempt to catalogue all the variations on the theme of 'church', as in the apse of Santa Pudenziana (p.84). The representation of multiple churches may also relate to the dedication of the basilica to 'the Holy Martyrs'. The phrase was used in late antiquity to refer to various groups of saints, but whoever they were, the communal dedication may be echoed in the depicted network of sacred buildings.[423] The two cruciform structures especially resemble martyria, but all churches would have contained relics, and there may well have been an association between a church building and the person of the saint venerated within it. The churches appear as stand-alone subjects within their frames, as saints would be, with varied physiognomies and attributes.

The most prominent of these characters are the two large churches in the central square fields. The church with the atrium in the western panel is shown with a disorienting perspectival effect, hard to decipher, perhaps deliberately designed to capture the attention. The squares and the architectural medallions surrounding them create two cruciform accents in the middle of the floor, the angled border panels around them giving an impression of three-dimensionality, as if the buildings in their frames were raised. The axiality of these images, and their busyness and

---

[423] The date of construction of the church, 447, may fit with a dedication to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, whose relics were apparently installed in Constantinople during the episcopate of Proclus, 434-446: Maraval 2002, p.71, Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History,* 9:2:18; NPNF2 vol.2, p.420. John Chrysostom also used the title 'the holy martyrs' to describe an unknown number of saints who were roasted on iron grilles: Chrysostom, *On the Holy Martyrs*; Mayer 2006, p.217.

variety, cast the churches as the dominant motifs. The cross-shaped panels with the fountains are visually subordinate, linking the buildings and framing them at the northern and southern edges. As on the eastern mosaic panel, the fountains, lambs and birds collectively symbolise the Word, baptism, sacrifice and resurrection. The cross-shaped frames around the fountains also emphasise the connection between baptism and Christ's death (Romans 6:4), and therefore with the resulting new life. But, in comparison to the roles played by the ciboria and paradisiacal creatures east of the bema, the situation has been reversed: now the non-architectural images provide the commentary, and the buildings take centre-stage. In combination, the fountains, crosses and buildings represent access to salvation through the church, not just as an abstract concept, but as a physical structure.

The architectural panels create a path across the floor, mirroring the viewer's experience of the actual church, and defining the space as progressively more sacred as one moves towards the altar. The churches depicted in the square panels are arranged in sequence; the one with the large atrium is to the west of the composition, nearer to where the actual narthex and exterior courtyard would have been, while the one further east is shown with a curtain and lamps hanging from an arcade, that is, with elements of interior furnishing. The central axis is also distinguished by the two cruciform buildings, pivots around which the other motifs revolve, one right in the middle of the floor and one marking the entrance to the western part of the nave. The dome of the latter looks eastwards to the domed tholos which shelters the Lamb in the mosaic in front of the sanctuary, and possibly to a now lost ciborium over the altar. This building at the western end of the nave, and the churches in the two eastern lateral medallions, are also surrounded by the

same flame-like fir trees that cluster around Jerusalem. These distinctive trees seem to have been deployed at Tayyibat al-Imam as symbols of life and rebirth, used in anticipation on the threshold and with increasing emphasis nearer the sanctuary.

The location and visibility of the images within the church must also be taken into account. The donor of the mosaic in the western part of the nave thought it worth mentioning in the inscription – slightly redundantly – that his patch of floor lay behind the 'throne'.[424] The raised platform in the centre of the nave is usually known as a bema, and was a prominent central focus in many west Syrian churches. In manuscripts from eastern Syria bemas are described as supporting the bishop's throne, but archaeological evidence from the west of the country makes it clear that here they were used as platforms for preaching, and the 'thrones' which sat on them were lecterns.[425] Emma Loosley has argued that western Syrian bemas were peculiar to the primary congregational church in an area. Bema churches were usually the first built in a settlement, there was only ever one per community, and bemas were present only in churches open to the laity, not in monasteries.[426] The throne standing on the bema at Tayyibat al-Imam was therefore probably the main congregational focus of the building, raising the significance of the mosaic-paved area in front of it.

---

[424] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, p.452.

[425] Loosley 2012, p.67, p.96, p.103, fig.217-219 for an example of a throne-lectern from Bennawi, near Aleppo.

[426] Loosley 2012, pp.51-52.

The similarity between the motifs accompanying the tholos-like structures to the east of the throne, and the churches to its west, may indicate that both central spaces were reserved for the clergy; both are notably different from the more mundane motifs decorating the aisles. Some members of the congregation probably looked towards the bema from the aisles, standing behind the notional screens of close-set mosaic grids which flank the platform to the north and south. Although nothing of the structure at Tayyibat al-Imam now remains, according to Tchalenko bemas were often substantial pieces of furniture, some four or five metres wide and at least 1.5 metres high, and would have blocked the view into the sanctuary for anyone standing further west at ground level.[427] However, it is possible that this is not the principal viewpoint for which the mosaic programme was designed. Many Syrian basilicas had internal galleries on three sides, on which the higher-ranking members of the congregation gathered.[428] Preaching from the bema can therefore be envisaged as directed upwards, as well as sideways. The two areas of nave mosaic at Tayyibat al-Imam clearly harmonise with each other thematically, creating an architecturally-defined progression moving eastwards towards the throne and then on to the altar. The clearest view of the pavement, in which the whole programme could be taken in, would have been from a western gallery. This suggests that the patron of the western section of floor belonged to the elite section of the congregation who used it. The fact that he referred to the area to the west as lying behind the throne, as if looking from the east end of the

---

[427] Tchalenko 1951, p.81, pp.98-121 for examples.

[428] For example at Qasr ibn Wardan: Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, p.248, and at el-Bara, p.151 below. Where churches with towers are depicted in Syrian mosaics, the towers almost always have windows, perhaps suggesting staircases for accessing galleries.

building, also raises the possibility that he was in a social group with some access to the sanctuary.

The architectural images in the aisles are of a different kind again. The majority of the space is taken up with motifs from the animal world, mostly predators chasing prey. In his analysis of a mosaic from Heraklea Lynkestis in Macedonia, in which a leopard disembowelling a deer and an ox facing down a lion accompany a peacefully grazing antelope and a tethered dog, Henry Maguire suggests that together they are "a depiction of the terrestrial world, with its cycles of death and renewal".[429] At Tayyibat al-Imam the architectural motifs are inserted into a similar natural cycle, abundant with fruit trees and at least twelve different species of animal. The civilised world is summarised as cities, churches, and harnessed mules carrying goods. The camels and building at the edge of the mosaic in the western nave also fall into this category. In the vignette of a dog chasing a fox away from a house and a sundial, nature and urbanism seem directly to clash. The fox may have been associated with enemies of the Church, from the Song of Songs 2:15, which describes foxes as spoiling the vines of tender grapes. The buildings in the aisles are haphazardly arranged, according to the logic of their mini-narratives. From the point of view of someone walking along the aisles, they are also depicted sideways. This may hint at another function of the images, that of indicating the main direction of movement along the space; similar directional arrangements of architectural motifs can also be seen in the mosaics at Homs and el-Bara discussed below. The scene at the east end of the north aisle has been interpreted as a translation of relics, with the mules carrying a reliquary from a city on the right,

---

[429] Maguire 2000, p.20.

represented by a lone gate, to another more fully represented city on the left.[430]

This composition and the lone basilica stand at the heads of their respective aisles, indicating a route following the direction of the animals chasing each other along the mosaic – eastwards on the south and westwards on the north. Apart from the basilica in the south aisle, which has finely-detailed cornices, windows and roof-tiles, the buildings are relatively simple. One type, a rectangular stone structure with gabled roof, is repeated several times. The significance of the architectural images along the aisles appears to lie in their contrast with the wild animals, not in their particular features. They therefore needed less detail than the churches in the nave; their identity as buildings – as structures of the civilised world – was enough to contrast them to the violent natural episodes around them. So, just as the architectural imagery in the nave refers to the regulation of human life within the Church, the buildings in the aisles may have expressed the human regulation of nature. And as in the nave, the architectural vignettes are the more inventive. Hunting pairs of animals were commonplace in eastern Mediterranean mosaics, but the built sequences in the scenes of relic translation and the dog chasing the fox have few close parallels elsewhere.

Moving to the more fragmentary Syrian examples, two types of image recur. One is the aisled basilica, as in the south aisle of the Church of the Holy Martyrs, the other is the idealised ciborium.

---

[430] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999, p.448; for comparisons see Dunbabin 1999, p.180; Piccirillo 1993, fig.28.

Homs

In 1988, a rescue excavation near the al-Nouri Mosque in Homs uncovered a late antique church (fig. 130). The excavator, Nessib Saliby, proposed dating the building to the fifth century, noting that a later date would also be possible.[431] The building had an octagonal central space defined by alternating columns and piers rising from a stylobate, surrounded by an ambulatory, also octagonal except on the western side where it opened onto a north-south narthex. There may have been three western entrances leading into the narthex, although only the south door remained at the time of excavation. An apse at the south end of the narthex housed four burials, two of which were above ground in reused Roman sarcophagi.[432] The central octagon was paved in *opus sectile*, the ambulatory and narthex with mosaic. The ambulatory mosaic was organised in trapezoidal panels, with borders of poised squares and chevrons, undulating ribbons, and acanthus-scroll. One fragment in the centre of a panel had a tessellated design of stylised four-petalled flowers and crosses. A church is represented in the largest area of preserved mosaic, in the middle of the narthex. This building was set within a rectangular panel with plain inner frames, roughly 170 x 280 cm, probably oriented westwards so as to face anyone entering through a central door.[433] The aisle was around 4.9 m wide, so the image of the basilica with its surrounding borders would have filled the greater part of the space. The architectural composition is bordered along its lower edge by a

---

[431] Saliby, Griersheimer and Duval 1999, p.392.

[432] Saliby, Griersheimer and Duval 1999, p.386.

[433] The only published article on the church does not specify the direction of the image, but the fact that the photographs were taken from the short ends of the depicted building argue against it facing north or south across the aisle.

strip of egg-and-dart pattern, then an acanthus-scroll. On the right-hand side, a small strip of tesserae indicates that there was another rectangular frame to the south of the one remaining. The depicted building is a basilica with exterior colonnade, aisle and clerestory windows, a pedimented façade and an apse with a tower beside it (fig. 131). The image is detailed, down to the voussoirs around the windows, with each block of masonry outlined on the side wall (fig. 132). In his discussion of the mosaic Noel Duval argues that the tower beside the apse may metonymically indicate a city.[434] While it is possible that the tower denoted a city wall, visually the image of the church dominates so the question remains: what is it doing there?

Clearly the image is not of the octagonal church in Homs itself. It broadly resembles north Syrian basilicas, for example those at Kharrab Shems and Qalb Lozeh.[435] Duval also pointed out that the vertical features on the apse resemble the fluted pilasters which often articulated the exteriors of churches in the region.[436] While the image is detailed, it is not particularly ornate, and it lacks details which might mark it out as one church rather than another. There is no accompanying inscription. The verism of the image categorises it as a 'real-life' church, a structure like ones viewers would have seen before, but not a portrait of any one building in particular. The fragment of border preserved immediately to the south of the panel with the church also raises the possibility that this was one of a series running along the narthex – given the dimensions of the space, perhaps the central image of three. As at Tayyibat al-Imam, a series of types may have been represented –

---

[434] Saliby, Griersheimer and Duval 1999, pp.394-400, figs.13-15 and 20.

[435] Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, figs.98, 109.

[436] For example the façade of Qalat Siman: Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, fig.107.

basilical, octagonal and cross plan, perhaps – evoking stations in a processional sequence.

Since the octagonal church in Homs does not have an eastern apse, the altar presumably stood in the marble-paved octagon. The congregation would have gathered in the ambulatory, standing on the pavement of geometric and vegetal patterns. Although the architectural mosaic is linked to the ambulatory floor by the shared acanthus border, it seems to define a distinct space. If a row of churches ran along the narthex, this may have indicated a second focal point of the church, the quadruple burial in the southern apse. Saliby suggested that the tombs at Homs may have contained martyrs' relics.[437] In this case, the apsed entrance space would have been a separate liturgical area, with the faithful facing along it, at right-angles to the central octagon. Alternatively the graves may have been those of high-ranking patrons of the church. This seems a more likely explanation for burials in the narthex; it would be unusual for the main relics of the church to have been kept in such an immediately accessible location, open to catechumens as narthexes generally were.[438] If the deceased had contributed towards the fabric of the church in Homs, the architectural imagery could have called to mind their benefactions, and a catalogue of churches could also represent the local congregations who would hopefully commemorate the dead in their prayers. Either way, the probable trio of churches would have marked out the narthex as an important space in its

---

[437] Saliby, Griersheimer and Duval 1999, p.386. In its form, the church at Homs resembles the martyrium of San Vitale at Ravenna, also Santa Costanza in Rome.

[438] For examples of patrons' tombs in the southern apses of the narthexes of the Cypriot churches of Kalavassos-Sirmata and the south basilica at Peyia, see Maguire 2012, Gazetteer no.26 & 54, p.26, 56.

own right, separate from the central liturgical area, and would have emphasised movement along it, towards the burials.

El-Bara

Church E5 is the smallest of the six churches in the north Syrian town of El-Bara, one of five arranged in a rough north-south line near to the wadi (fig. 133). The building has been dated to the mid-sixth century on stylistic grounds.[439] It is a two-aisled basilica with an eastern apse, and a western narthex with a staircase leading to an upper gallery which ran around three sides of the church. There was a small room to the north of the apse, and an extended room to the south leading to an outer enclosure, both with a higher floor level than the apse. These side rooms have steps down into the aisles, and directly into the apse. Low benches ran along the outer edges of both aisles.[440] The only remaining fragments of floor mosaic are in the north aisle. The largest, at the east end of the aisle, in front of the raised room north of the apse, depicts a towered basilica. The image measures roughly 150 x 120 cm, and is oriented towards the south.[441] The building is represented from the side, with four towers, a colonnade and clerestory windows (fig. 134), similar to the image at Homs. Above it is an inscription, *tou agiou stefanou*, '[The church] of St Stephen'. The church is framed on three sides by an inner border of saw-tooth triangles, then a wider border of interlace. To the west of the church is a fruit tree, and there are stylised flowers in the background. At the west end of the aisle, there is a fragment of a second inscription, aligned with the first: …*atonou*,

---

[439] Fourdrin 1992, p.184.

[440] Fourdrin 1992, p.185.

[441] Fourdrin 1992, p.186, figs.3, 17.

probably part of another saint's name, the genitive case again suggesting a dedication. A flower is just visible in the background, as is a section of the saw-toothed border in a smaller fragment above the inscription. These patches of mosaic presumably belonged to a single scheme of decoration, of alternating churches and fruit trees. The available space would allow three churches to be represented along the aisle. In this case, as at Homs and in the aisles at Tayyibat al-Imam, the architectural procession may have worked to direct movement along the space.

It is unclear what the aisle was used for in this church, and what purpose the directional decoration might have served. If the sequence continued in the south aisle, the architectural strips might have led worshippers towards the central eastern apse. However, evidence of a screen between the aisle and nave in the south-western intercolumniation implies that the aisles were self-contained spaces, functionally distinct from the nave and the apse. Another possibility is that the series of churches and trees was confined to the north aisle, leading towards the small north room. The aisles were probably not the main congregational spaces. The first-floor gallery appears to have been spilt into a privileged area at the west end, which faced the altar and had stone parapets, and the side spaces, which had lower roofs, wooden screens, and less visibility into the apse. The gallery could then have provided for two or three ranked social groups within the congregation, leaving the ground-floor aisles free for other purposes. The benches indicate that people were expected to gather in the aisles, and one possibility is that the room beside the apse housed relics, and the aisle was reserved for approaching devotees.

The churches represented here would have been difficult to view face-on. To anyone moving along the aisle, the buildings and inscriptions would be sideways, and for someone sitting on the benches, they would be upside down. This hints that they were not conceived of as having an iconic status; unlike the motifs which decorated the sanctuaries of Syrian and Jordanian churches, which almost always faced west for maximum visibility, they probably did not indicate a sacred presence, or convey sacramental themes. The depiction of a series of buildings suggests a community of churches and of congregations, as well as the community of the saints they to which were dedicated. The westernmost church in the aisle was perhaps named for a local saint, since the ending *...atonos* is not a common one. Given this, and the striking alignment of five actual churches in the town of el-Bara, the mosaic churches may have stood for local places of worship, visualising pilgrimage or stational procession between them. In this case, the significance of the images would be to articulate the action of moving past them, casting this action as part of a larger network of devotional movement, so their restricted visibility would not matter. The surviving image does not closely resemble church E5 itself, since there is no evidence that this had corner towers. The representation is of a common church type, basically the same as those in the mosaic at Homs, in the south aisle at Tayyibat al-Imam, and in a fragment in the Louvre discussed below, so it may well have been a generic representation, relying on the accompanying inscription for identification as a specific building. It is also possible that to viewers familiar with the local area, it would have been understood as the

largest of the churches in the town, the al-Husn basilica (E1), which did have four towers.[442]

The visual rhetoric is one of shared identity between the users of the various churches of el-Bara, an interlinked community of saints and their worshippers, flourishing like the fruit trees which grow beside the churches. Alternatively, and probably more realistically, the images may reflect issues of competition and prestige. In a small settlement with a lot of churches – five grouped close to each other, probably constructed in a relatively short space of time – the patrons, clergy and congregation of each are likely to have felt the need to assert their identities. It is perhaps significant that church number 5 is the smallest of the group, and according to the excavator, was the last to be built; the need in this case would probably have been all the stronger.[443] By bringing together a number of churches in mosaic form, the designers of the floor may have hoped to appropriate their reputation, allowing the smaller church to bask in the reflected glory of its more impressive neighbours, and asserting an equal status with them.[444]

Fragments

The Musée du Louvre owns two mosaic fragments from the eastern Mediterranean which depict church buildings, undated but assigned stylistically to the fifth century.

---

[442] Tchalenko 1953-58, vol.1 p.32, vol.2 pl.81, 212; Fourdrin 1992, p.188.

[443] Fourdrin 1992, p.171.

[444] The incorporation of several churches into the decoration of one also obscures any divisions of sect, language or social group, presenting the depicted places of worship as denominationally united.

Their exact origin is unknown, but they are similar enough to others in the Syrian group to be included here. One shows an aisled basilica with a tall door and three tiers of windows on the west façade, two towers and an apse at the east end, and side doors into the aisles (fig. 135).[445] The west doors and the openings into the aisle are hung with white curtains. The second panel shows a similar building, except without towers and following slightly different conventions in the representation of tiles and masonry (fig. 136).[446] The mosaicists included details of ecclesiastical paraphernalia – curtains, candles, screens, and crosses on the rooftops – but none which could identify the buildings precisely, and no inscriptions. Both images are slightly smaller and less elaborate than the churches depicted on the pavements at Homs and el-Bara.[447] They may have been subsidiary motifs, perhaps set into grids containing a series of images, as at Tayyibat al-Imam, or strips, as at el-Bara. The basilica without towers was very likely placed at the edge of a floor, or at the edge of a subdivision within one, since there is a strip of a widely-used wavy border design running along its upper edge. If the mosaic was located in an aisle, this means that the church would probably have been oriented north-south, sideways-on from the point of view of an eastern-facing congregation. The outer frames around the other church have been lost, removing any clues to its position.

Ciboria

---

[445] Cat.no. 3676; Duval 1972, fig.1.

[446] Cat.no. 3677; Duval 1972, fig.4.

[447] No.3676 is 68 x 109 cm, no.3677 is 100 cm square, both measured to inner border around church.

Lastly, there are several Syrian mosaics depicting shrine-like structures, similar to those in front of the sanctuary at Tayyibat al-Imam. There are (or were) two in the museum at Marrat an-Nouman, one originally from a church in Qan'ah, and the other from Tall Khinzir (figs. 137 & 138).[448] There was another in the archaeological museum at Hamah (fig. 139) and a fourth is in the National Museum in Copenhagen (fig. 140), the original provenances of which are unknown.[449] They all show centralised open structures with four columns supporting a roof, either domed or pyramidal, with a lamp hanging in the central opening. The spaces between are decorated with screens, flowering plants or candles. Three of the four are accompanied by pairs of peacocks with circular fanned tails, and one by a pair of deer. All of them have flower-covered backgrounds. In three cases, the mosaic has been cut so closely around the ciboria that it is impossible to tell whether they belonged to a group of structures. The border is still visible in the mosaic from Qan'ah, showing that the shrine stood by itself as the central motif at the top of a rectangular panel; the animals and trees below are oriented at right angles to the building, and the border continues past them, perhaps suggesting a location at the east end of a nave.

Following Underwood's work on the symbolism of the Fountain of Life, Raffaella Campanati argues that these structures reference Christ's Tomb.[450] This is convincing in the case of Tayyibat al-Imam, where the sacrificial Lamb of God stands under such a canopy, and plausible in the other instances, but it does not exhaust the possible meanings of the motif. Ciboria were multi-functional symbols, capable

---

[448] Shehade 1997, p.31, and unnumbered plates at end; Campanati 1994, p.284, fig.10.

[449] Hamah: Paribeni 1994, p.352, fig.1; Copenhagen: Donati 1996, p.163.

[450] Underwood 1950; Campanati 1994, p.288.

of referring to fountains, tombs or shrines and altars (which overlapped conceptually in any case), so the dominant meaning in each instance depends on their context, and on the accompanying motifs. For example, the pair of peacocks which accompany several of the shrines steer the meaning towards the Church as the New Temple, recalling the cherubim either side of the Ark in the Holy of Holies. A mosaic in the Louvre sheds light on another possible angle. It depicts a shrine with the familiar curtains, screens and hanging lamp, flanked by trees and set in a circular frame (fig. 141). Inside the shrine, a cross is enthroned on a large red cushion, with alpha and omega inscribed below the seat. The clue to the significance of this composition is given by the unusual addition of a locust and a rather deformed rabbit on the ground outside the sanctuary, the rabbit nibbling a bunch of grapes on a vine stem. Beneath the locust is an inscription ὅτε ἡ ἀκρ[ί]ς : 'When the locust...', and below the rabbit, in larger letters, is written Χρ[ιστὲ] Βοί[θι]: 'Christ, help/protect!'[451] The first phrase refers to the passages in 2 Chronicles 6:28-30 and 1 Kings 8:37-39, on the bringing of the Ark to the Temple: "When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities... then hear from heaven, your dwelling place." The building in the mosaic, therefore, is the remade Temple, the Church, and the enthroned cross represents the Ark of the new Covenant with Christ. The rabbit eating the grapes is likely to represent the faithful being nourished by the eucharist, constantly threatened by pests (the forces of evil, perhaps heretics), but defended by the formula invoking Christ's protection. Jean-Pierre Sodini also recorded a fragment of mosaic showing a domed ciboria with a hanging lamp and decorated screen, with three smaller domes appearing above a

---

[451] Thanks to Stephen Mitchell for this translation.

stone wall to the right (and perhaps originally also to the left, where the mosaic has been cut off) accompanied by a Greek inscription ΒΟΙΔΑ or ΒΟΙΔΛ (fig. 142). Sodini proposes that Boida was the name of a village, shown as the walled structure on the right, however if the last letter of the inscription is a lambada, it is also possible that it is a contraction of *boethi doulou*, 'protect your servant/slave'.[452] This fragment, and the one in the Louvre, suggest that the ciborium was an empowered image of God's presence on earth, to which prayers for personal protection and salvation could be directed.

The Syrian mosaics: conclusion

At Tayyibat al-Imam, architecture is central to the composition of the mosaic, literally and figuratively. The mosaic could be set alongside its contemporaries in Rome, and slightly later compositions in Ravenna and Thessaloniki, as the product of a first wave of interest in the expressive potential of architectural forms. Buildings in different modes – idealised, veristic, generic – are deployed to set the tone and convey key ideas on each area of floor. This is the only known example from Syria in which apparently life-like church buildings take prime position as the main subject of a composition. As an architectural statement of Christian presence, the basilica itself would have been extremely impressive, especially in a village – the area of the mosaic alone, which does not cover the sanctuary or narthex, measures 20 x 26 metres. The church construction and mosaic decoration were paid for by several groups of people, both clerical and lay, some of whom had enough social clout to get their names recorded within the waters of the Rivers of Paradise at the foot of the chancel steps. The use of images of buildings to express

---

[452] Sodini 1993, p.286, fig.2. Thanks to John Mitchell for the alternative reading.

theological concepts represents patronage as a devotional act, correlating expenditure on earthly structures with access to the heavenly landscape depicted before the altar. Although none of the other case studies shows architectural images in quite such a prominent role, as far as can be judged from their state of preservation, buildings still appear to have been common motifs in ecclesiastical mosaics into the sixth century, given the number of fragments which have survived. The buildings fall into two distinct types, idealised ciboria and veristic churches, which are distinguished by their method of representation and by their location within the mosaics. Following the concept of relative symbolism, each helps to confirm the significance of the other by their differences. The motif of the ciborium was repeated with strikingly little variation, with a set range of attributes and flanking elements – reticulate screens, candles and lamps, peacocks, deer – which either had fairly clearly defined meanings, or persistent associations with sacred prototypes, such as Christ's tomb or the Temple. They were shown frontally and symmetrically, and invariably in the centre of a composition. Where their location can be identified, they seem to have stood at the east ends of naves and in sanctuaries, both areas probably used by the clergy more than the congregation. They are fairly large and seem to have been oriented towards the west for maximum visibility.

The more life-like churches, on the other hand, were represented asymmetrically, and as far as is known they were not displayed in sanctuaries. It is likely that sequences of diverse church forms were used at Homs and el-Bara, and in the nave at Tayyibat al-Imam there seems to have been a deliberate attempt to avoid any repetition of types. Across these case studies, the type most frequently shown is the apsidal basilica in side-view, in some instances with a high level of detail and

virtuosity. This appears to be an iconographic strategy to emphasise the earthliness and materiality of the structure (as well as indicating the quality of the mosaic), rather than to be necessarily geared towards identifying a specific site. The images generally appear similar, without identifying features, and only in one case, at el-Bara, is a basilica named. Determining the status and function of the images is not straightforward. With the exception of Tayyibat al-Imam, where they fill the middle of the nave, the churches discussed above were depicted in what could be thought of as slightly marginal spaces – aisles and narthexes. However, these were also the spaces most used by members of the congregation. In addition it should be noted that at Homs and el-Bara, the architectural images (plus their borders) dominate the spaces in which they are set; in both cases a whole area of the church is likely to have been paved with a series of buildings. In the three cases in which the mosaics have been found in-situ, and probably in the case of one of the fragments from the Louvre, the buildings were oriented sideways-on to the viewer, indicating and mirroring the likely direction of movement through the space. In other words, there seems to be a strong connection between the images of church buildings and the spaces occupied by lay-worshippers. The mosaic architecture may have functioned to direct devotees around a space or to highlight a focal point within it; unlike the sacred canopies depicted in the east ends they were not the focus themselves, but from the point of view of a member of the congregation they were probably more visible and accessible. Lastly, it seems that images of buildings were often juxtaposed with fruit trees, animals and rich plant-scrolls. This combination will become increasingly evident in the sixth-century mosaics of Jordan, although with a shift in the relative scale and emphasis of the two components, the natural motifs coming to the fore.

The Jordanian mosaics

The Jordanian mosaics with architectural motifs are found in the north-west of the modern country (fig. 120). Sixth-century mosaics with architectural imagery have been found at the church of John the Baptist in Jerash (531),[453] in the church of Lot and Procopius on Mount Nebo (either 542 or 557),[454] and at Umm ar-Rasas in the Church of Priest Wa'il (586),[455] the church of Bishop Sergius (587-8),[456] and the Church of the Lions (either 574 or 589).[457] The architectural mosaic at SS Peter and Paul at Jerash is not dated by inscription, but may be from the early seventh century.[458] More certain seventh-century examples can be seen at the church of John the Baptist in Khirbat al-Samra, 40 kilometres northeast of Amman, which was re-paved with mosaic in 634,[459] and in the Chapel of the Theotokos on Mount Nebo, added to the earlier Basilica of Moses in the first decade of the century.[460] There

---

[453] Piccirillo 1992, pp.288-299, figs.504-5, 535, 542-545; Di Segni 1999, p.174.

[454] Piccirillo 1992, pp.164-165, fig.209, 215. The inscription, giving a date of November in the sixth Indiction during Bishop John's time in office, could refer to either year: Di Segni 1999, p.175.

[455] Piccirillo 1992, pp.342-342, fig.396, 397; dedicatory inscription SEG 43-1091.

[456] Piccirillo 1992, pp.234-235, figs.336, 365, 370; Habas 2009, p.79; inscriptions SEG 37-1596-1616.

[457] Piccirillo 1992, pp.236-237, fig.337, 373; inscriptions SEG 42-1489-1493.

[458] The mosaic has been dated on stylistic grounds to the 540s, but Pierre-Louis Gatier has argued for a date in the early seventh century, when Bishop Marinus received relics from Rome: Piccirillo 1992, p.292, fig.554; Gatier 1987, p.135.

[459] Piccirillo 1992, p.305, fig.592, 596, 599; Di Segni 1999, p.177, note 221.

[460] Piccirillo 1992, p.151, fig.193, 200.

are also two eighth-century Jordanian floors in which architectural motifs play a prominent role, in the church of St Stephen at Umm ar-Rasas (718-719) and the church on the acropolis at Ma'in (719-720).[461]   A detailed catalogue of the architectural elements of all these Jordanian mosaics has been published by Duval, and good images of them by Piccirillo.[462] I shall concentrate on three sixth-century floors from the town of Umm ar-Rasas (Kastron Mefaa), in which the treatment of the built forms, and their relationship to other motifs, shed light on some of the dominant themes of the group.

One of the strongest recurring themes of Jordanian mosaic floors is the fruitful earth, shown flourishing under the aegis of the Church, and as an image of the Church itself. Many of the architectural motifs on the floors function within this narrative, with built structures appearing as indicators of plenty, like rather indigestible fruits. So before turning to the architectural examples, this section begins by outlining the typical plant-based compositions of Jordanian mosaics in order to appreciate the visual language within which built forms conveyed meaning. There was also a persistent relationship between images of buildings and the commemoration of patronage. Three mosaics laid at Umm ar-Rasas during the episcopate of bishop Sergius of Madaba in the 580s can be taken as illustrations of both these trends, and case studies of these form the next part of the chapter.

The western region of Jordan was fairly densely populated in late antiquity, with a high level of investment in church building overall, and many churches have

---

[461] St Stephen's: Piccirillo 1992, pp.238-239, figs.344-358; Ma'in: Piccirillo 1992, pp.200-210, figs. 296-312.

[462] Piccirillo 1992; Duval 2003.

survived to the present with their floor mosaics intact. As the list above suggests, architectural imagery remained consistently popular as an element of floor design, generation after generation. The mosaics could be laid in churches near to each other, sometimes directly adjoining, over a hundred years apart, and some of the conventions for the depiction of buildings and cities persisted throughout the period.[463] However, the visual language of architectural forms did change over the centuries, and this chapter concludes with one of the latest topographical mosaics of Jordan, in the eighth-century church of St Stephen's at Umm ar-Rasas, in which images of buildings are used in a more complex and integrated manner than in any of the sixth-century examples. The choice of Umm ar-Rasas for the case-studies is largely based on the extremely good preservation of many of the floors at the site, but it is also valuable to be able to analyse a group of mosaics which late antique viewers themselves would also have been able to compare. Some of the peculiarities of the mosaics below may be local to Umm ar-Rasas, and the varying working-practices of the mosaicists and interests of the patrons will have been played out in different ways at other sites, nonetheless similar architectural images found elsewhere confirm the general trends.

The church as vineyard

---

[463] For example, at Umm ar-Rasas, the church of Bishop Sergius (587) adjoins the church of St Stephen (718-19); also at Jerash, where the churches of St John the Baptist and SS Peter and Paul, built perhaps 80 years apart, both have mosaics depicting Egyptian cities.

In just over half of all the Jordanian churches in which mosaics are preserved, the centre of the nave is dominated by a large looping vine or acanthus-scroll.[464] The two are often combined, most commonly with a central field of vines surrounded by an acanthus border, sometimes the other way around. The central scroll can also be a hybrid between the two, with acanthus leaves forming vine-like swirls, hereafter referred to as acanthus-vines since they reference both species. The scrolls are inhabited by wild and domestic animals and birds, inanimate objects, and humans engaged in various activities. Plant motifs dominate in the presbyteries, often fruit trees or vines. Trees also appear in borders and naves, and vine- and acanthus-scrolls in aisles.[465]

Following Christ's self-identification as the 'true vine' (John 15:1), the plant was employed from fairly early on as a metaphor for the Church. Syriac theologians were particularly keen on viticultural language. Aphrahat, probably based near Mosul early in the fourth century, wrote that "[Christ] is the vineyard of truth and his Father is the vinedresser; we are the vines which are planted in his midst", and, addressing fellow-clergy: "Our beloved sons of peace, disciples of Christ… You are

---

[464] 46 out of 90 mosaics (51%) contained vine and/or acanthus-scroll. If the count is restricted to the Jordan Valley area, where 67 mosaics are at least partially preserved, the proportion with vine and/or acanthus decoration goes up to 58%. Just over a quarter of the 90 churches had acanthus borders of some sort. These figures include floors where the nave mosaic has been destroyed; if only entire floors were counted, the proportion containing vine/acanthus decoration would be higher again. Data taken from Piccirillo 1992. Also see Dauphin 1987 for examples, esp. pp.185-186.

[465] Piccirillo 1992, fig.137, 197, 213, 266, 338, 391, 425, 507. On Jordanian vine-scroll floors as Trees of Life, see Bucci 2001, esp. p.100.

the vines in the vineyard."[466] Aphrahat often used vine-based allegories to describe Christians replacing the Jews as God's favourites:

> And they platted a crown of thorns that had sprung up in the vineyard, and placed it on the head of the Son of the Lord of the vineyard. For from the time that the vineyard was made, it displayed these fruits. Therefore its Lord uprooted it [the vineyard of Jerusalem] and cast it in the fire; and planted good fruit-bearing vines in the vineyard, and such as gladden the husbandman. For Christ is the vineyard, and his Father is the husbandman; and they who drink of his cup are the vines. Therefore vineyard was formed instead of vineyard.[467]

Ephrem the Syrian also used vines as metaphors for Mary, and for the Church.[468] In the visual arts, an early example of the vine as the Church from the western Mediterranean may have been the fifth-century apse mosaic of S. Maria in Capua Vetere, now lost, which probably showed Mary in her role as *Maria ecclesia*,

---

[466] Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 14:38-39; Valavanolickal 2005, pp.93-95.

[467] Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 5:22; Valavanolickal 1999, p.90. For other examples see *Demonstration* 14:3-5, 37-38, 48; *Demonstration* 16:3; *Demonstration* 19:11; Valavanolickal 2005, pp.51-54, 90-93, 110, 130, 181, and for discussion see Murray 1975, p.95.

[468] Ephrem the Syrian, *Homily on our Lord* 2; NPNF2, vol.13, p.306: "Mary budded forth, a new shoot from Eve the ancient vine; and new life dwelt in her"; *Hymn on the Nativity* 6; NPNF2, vol.13, p.238: "The husbandmen came and gave glory to the Vineyard that sprang of the root and stem of Jesse, the Virgin Cluster of the glorious Vine." For the Church as vine see *Hymn on the Church*; McVey 1989, 221-224.

enveloped by a large scrolling vine inhabited by birds.[469] Whether or not comparable designs accompanied images of Christ or Mary in the apses of Jordanian churches, on their floors the vines are emphatic, exuberantly filling the space, almost overwhelming the smaller scenes and figures contained within them.[470]

The inhabitants of the schematic vineyard appear to be the creatures and situations of everyday experience. The animals go beyond the range of overtly Christian symbols; there is the odd paradisiacal peacock or phoenix, but there are also camels, horses, dogs and donkeys, which belong squarely on earth. They stand alongside scenes of farming and hunting, and objects such as bird cages, vases and wine-presses. These could all potentially have carried allegorical meanings; however the expression of such concepts through the medium of familiar objects leaves interpretations open to question. While it cannot be ruled out that each animal or object had deeper symbolic associations, at least in the minds of the clergy, they also depict the things of daily life. Many of the motifs also share a common denominator of relating to food and drink, or more generally to the produce of the land. A contrast can be drawn between the compositions of the nave floors and those in the sanctuaries. The naves teem with bustling, almost disordered life, with animals and people in movement. Mosaics at the east ends of the churches, while also frequently depicting plants and animals, almost always show them in strict symmetry, idealised and static, as is the case in the three sixth-

---

[469] Belting-Ihm 1960, p.56, fig.10; Korol 1994, p.138, fig.5. Christ and Mary are also surrounded by a vine on Paschal I's cruciform relic casket: Thunø 2002, pp.94-96, fig.67.

[470] A fragment of painting from the wall framing the apse of the Church of Priest Wa'il does include plant ornament, framing at least one figure of a saint, see p.176 below.

century floors from Umm ar-Rasas. This contrast is backed up by contemporary writings. In the sixth-century mosaics of S. Demetrios at Nikopolis, an inscription describes the decoration as representing "the boundless ocean having in its midst the earth", and in the seventh century Maximus the Confessor wrote that

> God's holy church in itself is a symbol of the sensible world as such, since it
>
> possesses the divine sanctuary as heaven and the beauty of the nave as earth.
>
> Likewise the world is a church since it possesses heaven corresponding to a
>
> sanctuary, and for a nave it has the adornment of the earth.[471]

The plant-filled Jordanian floors also fit into a broader iconographic tradition of luxury and plenty. The acanthus-vine in the Church of Bishop Sergius contains personifications of Ge (Earth), Abyss (Ocean), and the Seasons, and similar personifications can be seen in two church mosaics on Mount Nebo, laid a few decades earlier.[472] These figures, taken from a pre-Christian repertoire of benevolent powers, were also popular in secular mosaics.[473] Acanthus and other

---

[471] Kitzinger 1951, fig.18, pp.100-102; Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia* ch.3; Berthold

1985, p.189. Also see the hymn to the Edessa cathedral, line 4: "Indeed it is an

admirable thing that in its smallness it (the cathedral) should resemble the great world,

not in size but in type"; Mango 1986, p.58.

[472] Ge is depicted in the upper church of the priest John and in the church of St George at

Khirbet al-Mukhayyat near Mount Nebo: Maguire 1987, pp.69-72, fig.76, 77; Piccirillo

1992, p.174, p.178, fig.227, fig.244. The mosaic in St George's also has the four seasons:

On the earthly paradise generally see Daniélou 1953; Maguire 1987.

[473] See for example the fifth-century mosaic of the House of Ge and the Seasons in

Antioch: Cimok 2000, p.276. The Seasons were also depicted on the floor mosaic of the

Hippolytus Hall in Madaba: Piccirillo 1992, p.66, fig.13, 14, 26, 27.

plant-scrolls were widely used as a decorative motif in the eastern Roman Empire, probably always with connotations of luxuriant growth, wealth and regeneration, and vine and acanthus designs decorated secular buildings up to the highest level of society, as for example in the Great Palace of Constantinople; the vine was also the plant of Dionysus.[474] Equally, while the fruit trees on sanctuary floors could be given theological interpretations, trees were also used as the central motifs on secular mosaics.[475] This love of plant motifs, strongly apparent in churches but present in a much wider range of contexts, suggests that a Christian understanding of the vine as the Church overlaid an existing preference for such designs, in which their connotations of abundance and renewal were as important as any specific religious meaning. The architectural motifs below all appear within and alongside these luxuriant plants, in some cases standing apart from them, and in others almost overwhelmed by them.

Iconic images of ciboria form an exception to this rule, continuing to be depicted in central positions in sanctuaries, as they had been in Syria, as symbols of sacred focus. For example, towards the east end of the upper chapel of Priest John in the Wadi Afrit, finished in 565, there is an image of a temple-like façade surrounded by peacocks and fruit trees.[476] The pediment is decorated with stylised flowers and a

---

[474] Acanthus-scroll border in the palace at Constantinople: Dunbabin 1999, fig.244; and Talgam 2014, fig.462 for an inhabited acanthus-scroll in a secular building at Jerash. Inhabited vine-scrolls decorated the floor of a fifth- or sixth-century seaside villa in Caesarea: Hachlili 2009, p.136, fig.VI:17, pp.11-12 for more examples. Vine-scrolls in synagogues: Talgam 2014, pp.326-328, figs.196-203, 209-218, 400, 404-405.

[475] Talgam 2014, p.108, fig.153.

[476] Piccirillo 1992, p.174, fig.228.

central scallop shell, and supported by striated marble columns (fig. 143). The inner columns frame an inscription asking for salvation for the patrons of the church, and the ornate building in its paradisiacal setting seems best interpreted as a visualisation of this salvation, not as a picture of an actually existing temple. In Ya'amun in north Jordan, a mosaic of the late fifth or sixth century shows a ciborium with a hanging lamp at the east end of the south aisle, approached by three figures with outstretched arms (fig. 144).[477] Whether this is an aniconic image of the Adoration of the Magi as the excavators suggest, or the Maries at the Tomb, or a non-narrative image, the structure seems fairly two-dimensional, only notionally architectural. Similarly, a schematic image of the Jerusalem Temple in the seventh-century Theotokos chapel on Mount Nebo appears as a signifier of holiness rather than as a representation of a building.[478] This iconography also overlapped with Jewish depictions of the Temple, for example on the mosaic floors of the synagogues at Hammat Tiberias, Beth Alpha and Khirbet Susiya (fig. 98).[479] The tradition even continues in early Islamic depictions of the mihrab, for example in an eighth-century floor mosaic at al-Ramla.[480] The more earthly images of churches and cities below do not belong to this tradition however, but form a new one of their own.

---

[477] Turshan 2010, fig.3-6.

[478] Piccirillo 1992, p.151, fig.200.

[479] Hachlili 2013, pp.192-209, fig.IV:54-55, V:42, V:43; Talgam 2014, fig.338, 358, 369, 383, 418, 420.

[480] Rosen-Aylon 1976, p.116, pl.23.C.

Sixth-century mosaics at Umm ar-Rasas

The Church of Bishop Sergius

The acanthus-vine-scroll in the nave of the Church of Bishop Sergius forms forty roundels in ten rows (fig. 145). They frame personifications of Earth and Ocean, a selection of animals – difficult to identify due to iconoclastic damage, but including oxen, sheep and lions – and eleven named figures.[481] Three of these are ploughing, one is hunting, one is carrying a bed and one a book, and two are associated with images of church buildings. The first building, in the second row from the east, is an unaisled structure in flattened three-quarter profile. A curtain hangs between open double doors, and there is a row of upper windows along the side. To the right of the entrance is a man swinging a censer, with an inscription naming him as 'Ouesou the deacon' (fig. 146). To the left of the church is a pair of figures identified as 'the children of John'. The second architectural element, in the sixth row from the east, is a pair of buildings (fig. 147). The larger one has a striped feature along the side, perhaps representing an aisle roof, with clerestory or gallery windows above, and an opening hung with a curtain on the short side. The smaller building is unaisled, again with a curtained opening on the short side. To the right of these two churches stands a man with a child on his shoulders pointing towards them, and to the left is a figure named Soel pushing an ox-drawn plough. The position and scale of the church buildings indicate their role within the composition. They are not set above the other inhabitants of the acanthus-vine by their location or size, in fact they are slightly smaller than the people accompanying them. Framed by their own roundels of acanthus-vine, they are more prominent than mere

---

[481] On the names see Piccirillo 1994, p.262, 267.

attributes such as Ge's cornucopia and Abyss' steering oar; nevertheless, the human figures are still the more active characters, with the buildings in a supporting role.

Excavations have shown that there was a building to the southwest of the Church of Bishop Sergius, and another to the east beneath the later church of St Stephen, so the depicted pair of buildings could perhaps refer directly to their location.[482] However in both cases the buildings are fairly simply sketched out; they function as context for the figures next to them, with little emphasis laid on fine architectural details. These figures almost certainly represent patrons of the church. Ouesou, Soel, and the children of John, shown directly engaged with the church buildings – the deacon with his censor taking part in liturgical activity – are given prominence over the other people depicted in the mosaic by this association. Alongside images of ploughing and hunting, the churches are presented as valuable components of a well-ordered landscape, growing from the acanthus-vine under the management of a select group, the 'workers in the vineyard' (Matthew 20:1).[483]

An inscription in the east border of the nave mosaic also provides a significant justification for placing a high value on church buildings. The inscription is set in the centre of a rectangular panel, with ducks and flowering plants on either side. It quotes the text of Psalm 87:2: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the tents of Jacob." One possible interpretation of this text is given by Theodoret of Cyrus, active in Syria or southern Turkey about a century before the mosaic was

---

[482] Piccirillo 1991, p.357.

[483] One woman is also mentioned indirectly, through the two figures identified as 'the children of Sophia'.

laid. In his commentary on psalm 87, Theodoret makes a sharp distinction between symbolic buildings and real ones.[484] He starts by running through the most frequently quoted biblical architectural metaphors – the apostles as foundations and Christ as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), Peter, James and John as pillars (Galatians 2:9), Peter as the rock of the Church (Matthew 16:18), and St Paul's description of Abraham as a man "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). On the basis of these texts, he says,

> We learn there is a heavenly city of some kind, called Jerusalem, with no towers and ramparts nor gleaming with sparkling stones, but conspicuous for choirs of saints and adorned with an angelic way of life.[485]

This is in direct contrast to the description in Revelation and to the images of the Heavenly Jerusalem which emphasise precisely the towers of sparkling stones. Theodoret also sounds a note of doubt in his phrase 'a city of some kind' which is merely *called* Jerusalem. In his view, the heavenly city is not literally an architectural construct, and is perhaps not a physical place at all. Crucially, he then explains that "the churches on earth [are] the gates of this city, through which it is possible to enter it." His interpretation would argue against architectural representations of paradise, but would add meaning to images of contemporary church structures. The placement of the psalm right in front of the gate through the screen into the sanctuary highlights the connection with the actual church.

---

[484] The commentary was written in the first half of the fifth century, probably in Cyrrhus, near Antioch.

[485] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Psalm 87*, 1-2; Hill 2001, pp.77-78.

Even if not directly inspired by Theodoret's commentary, it seems likely that the inscription was intended to present the newly-constructed church as a 'gate of Zion'. The decision to represent certain of the patrons beside church buildings – although their presence in the mosaic alone would presumably have been enough to identify them as donors – highlights the importance placed on the physical structure as such a gateway.

The Church of the Lions

A similar composition on the floor of the Church of the Lions reinforces the relationship between architectural imagery and the display of patronage (fig. 148). Here buildings are not incorporated into the central acanthus-vine, but concentrated between the main nave and the sanctuary, at the north edge of the panel in front of the chancel steps, between the two eastern piers of the north arcade (fig. 149). The architectural design appears as a two-dimensional extension of the chancel screen, filling the space between the two north-eastern piers, marking out a notional barrier along the north edge of the panel before the steps. The cluster of buildings is identified by inscription as Kastron Mefaa, that is Umm ar-Rasas itself. The settlement is divided into two parts, the top half fortified with substantial towers and high walls, representing the *kastron*, and the lower half more vaguely outlined, with buildings grouped around a column. Both halves contain multi-storeyed gable-roofed buildings, probably churches. Originally the town bordered a procession of donors, whose names are still partially preserved at the top of the mosaic panel.[486] The figures are covered by a later mosaic with a simple geometric pattern; this phase is likely to post-date the period of iconoclasm

---

[486] '…ios the Egyptian', 'Anoi…' and '…kontes': SEG 42:1490b.

in the 720s, since it appears to overlay the patches of re-shuffled tesserae which first disguised the figures (fig. 150). Evidently the image of the city itself remained popular, and non-controversial, throughout. By comparison with more fully preserved panels in similar positions in the Church of Bishop Sergius, and in the later church of St Stephen, the figures of donors were probably full-length, equal in size to the city. Positioned in front of the altar, they would have been the main subject of the panel. The city would have indicated and located their activity as patrons, almost as if they were its tyches guaranteeing its fortune.

The column in the lower half of the image is crowned with a cross, and stands at the top of three wide steps. It has been suggested that it represents a stylite saint's platform, identified with the prominent tower to the north of the settlement (fig. 151).[487] The actual tower stands next to a church, a multi-storeyed building which may have been a hostel, and a great cistern, supporting the theory that it was a pilgrimage destination. Certainly, the column and cross stand out as the most distinctive feature of the mosaic town, so it is likely that they marked some sort of devotional focus. The question is why the mosaicists would choose to represent the tower as a stepped column. The contemporary mosaic in the Church of Priest Wa'il contains several structures easily recognisable as towers, showing that conventions for their depiction existed. There is also the question of where the

---

[487] Marino and Piccirillo 1991; c.f. Bowersock 2006, p.69, fig.3.4, who describes the tower as 'modern', and suggests that it is a "distant descendent…echoing the ancient emblem of Mefaa", that is, that it was built as some kind of memorial to an original column. This is extremely unlikely; the build of the tower conforms to sixth- to eighth-century practice and the decoration of the impost capitals crowning the upper chamber, while difficult to date precisely, appear to be from this period.

column is shown. While topographic accuracy is a problematic concept to apply to late antique architectural images, here the mosaic seems to follow the layout of the town relatively closely in its overall form. The lower half of the vignette approximately resembles the location of the Church of the Lions, outside the *kastron* but near to it, in a densely built-up area including several churches. In the eighth-century image of Umm ar-Rasas at St Stephen's, the town is similarly divided into a fortified half and an outer suburb, with a column on three steps in the extra-mural area (pp.189-190, fig.177). So in both mosaics the column is shown as the centre of the district outside the fortifications, whereas the tower lies a kilometre and a half outside the town, with few buildings around it. While it is possible that the column in the mosaic represents the nearby tower, the discrepancies are quite noticeable for a depiction of a monument which worshippers would have known well.

Lone monumental columns were powerful landmarks in cities throughout the late Roman world. The Piacenza pilgrim, writing around 570, contemporary with the mosaic, describes a column near Diospolis (modern Lod):

> On this highway, not very far from the city, stands a marble column in the middle of the road. In former times the Lord was being taken towards it to be scourged, it was lifted up by a cloud and escaped, and was set down in this place... On top of it stands a cross made of iron. You can climb it by steps, and people take lights and incense up it.[488]

---

[488] The Piacenza Pilgrim, *Travels from Piacenza*, section 25; Wilkinson 1977, p.84.

Adomnan, writing around a century later, included in his account of Arculf's visit to Jerusalem "a very tall column which stands in the middle of the city", which both commemorated the spot at which the newly-discovered True Cross had once revived a dead man, and marked Jerusalem as the centre of the world.[489] The pilgrim Theodosius also described an iron cross on a marble column at the point on the Jordan where Christ was baptised.[490] To these examples can be added the serpent column of Constantinople, which may also have been seen as marking a cosmic centre-point, and the commemorative columns of Constantinople and Rome.[491] So freestanding columns, with or without crosses on top, were common urban landmarks, commemorating events from the sacred or imperial past, and attracting powerful legends.[492] They also acted as lightning conductors for

---

[489] Adomnan, *The first book on the holy places*, 11:1-4; Wilkinson 1997, p.99. On the other

hand, Sophronius of Jerusalem, writing in the 580s, identified the rock of Golgotha as

the "navel-point of the earth", making no mention of a column: Sophronius,

Anacreontica 20:29, Wilkinson 1977, p.91.

[490] Theodosius, *On the sites of the Holy Land* 20; Wilkinson 1977, p.69.

[491] Columns in Constantinople: Bassett 2004, cat. nos. 109, 138, 141, p.227.

[492] On miraculous and commemorative columns also see Agnellus of Ravenna's account of

the Basilica Ursiana itself bursting into song under the influence of a visiting holy man,

when he leaned against a pillar during the service: "Therefore after this man was buried,

the bishop ordered the said column to be surrounded by a small screen…and he ordered

a small cross to be fixed there for an eternal memorial": *LPR* 130; Deliyannis 2004, p.253.

The commemorative use of columns continued into the early Islamic period, for example

the one deployed by al-Walid I in the Great Mosque of Damascus to mark the location of

the relic of John the Baptist's head: Khalek 2011, p.98. For the baptismal significance of

the cross-and-column motif see Khalek 2011, pp.105-108.

supernatural presence in the present – the column at Diospolis, for example, was famous for curing people possessed by demons.[493]   So it is possible that the mosaicists converted the local tower to a column in order to improve on reality, endowing the town with a higher grade of monument.   There is also the possibility that there was in fact a monumental column at Umm ar-Rasas, marking the centre of the settlement outside the walls.   None is visible now, but a marble column would almost certainly have been reused.

The combination of a column and cross was also widely used in other media as a sign of Christian identity and presence.   For example, on a sixth-century ampulla now in the treasury of Monza cathedral, Mary and Elizabeth at the Visitation are flanked by two columns supporting crosses.[494]   Here the pillars may represent the two holy foetuses, or perhaps foreshadow their deaths.   A column with a Chi Rho on top is depicted on a Roman gold glass medallion between full-length images of SS Peter and Paul, either an aniconic representation of Christ or a more abstract symbol of the faith (fig. 25).[495]   In northern Syria, columns topped by crosses were also inscribed onto doors and other structures.[496]   Finally, the reverses of Byzantine coins from the sixth century onwards depicted crosses with elongated shafts set at the top of flights of steps.[497]   The mosaic in the Church of the Lions taps into this iconography, presenting the town as inhabited and protected by divine presence,

---

[493] Account of the Piacenza Pilgrim, section 2:25; Wilkinson 1977, p.84.

[494] Grabar 1958, p.19, pl.5; Weitzmann 1979, p.566, fig.79.

[495] MMA no. 16.174.3; Weitzmann 1979, no.508, pp.570-571.

[496] Lassus 1947, p.286, pl.46:3; Frankfurter 1990, p.186.

[497] Grierson 1999, fig.5, 9, 19, 20.

either in the person of a stylite saint outside the town, or channelled through a more central columnar monument.

Zooming out to look at the whole floor, the composition of the mosaic splits the main body of the church into distinct zones, distinguishing between the mundane world in the nave and the idealised space of the sanctuary. The opposed pairs of lions and deer depicted in the bema are symmetrical and orderly, standing together between tidy fruit trees. The side apses are equally balanced and static in their compositions of birds and vases. The peaceful coexistence of lions and deer departs from normal experience, and probably refers to Isaiah 11:6: "And the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the young calf and bull and lion shall feed together." In contrast to this area of calm, all is lively and bustling in the acanthus-vine in the nave. The people and animals lean one way and another, engaged in their various actions, off-centre within their acanthus frames. Surrounding the landscape of inhabited acanthus is a border of alternating fruit trees and human figures, one carrying a censer and one perhaps a basket. Again the figures appear to be in motion, as can be seen from the clothing of the person near the south-east corner, which billows outwards from the tilted body. Even the trees around the nave are distinguished from those in the bema, being less evenly proportioned, with lop-sided branches and shoots. The hierarchy of spaces is clearly displayed – the further east you look in the building, the more the mosaic floor reflects the peace and perfection of paradise. At the same time, the world depicted in the nave is a benign place, chaotic but flourishing.

The image of Umm ar-Rasas occupies the transitional space between the two worlds. It is part of the human sphere of the nave, but the most privileged part, displaying some of the order which is perfected in the images around the altar. The

town is entirely composed of the straight lines and clearly-defined shapes of its buildings, with no animals or plants, distinguishing the built from the 'natural' earth of the acanthus-vine and its inhabitants. It is shown with people, but they are not to scale with the buildings and presented as their inhabitants, rather they tower above the cityscape as if they were its gods. To emphasise the point, the main feature of what now appears as an 'architectural' section of mosaic would originally have been named patrons of the church. Some of the figures in the nave are given names and some are not. Perhaps the design was organised on a sliding scale of donations: so much to have your name by a small person in the acanthus-scroll, a bit more to go in the border, and the highest bidders to have their names recorded in the panel before the chancel? This is complete speculation, but it is safe to say that the city accompanies the most prominent group of patrons. The urban landscape raises this small group above their neighbours in the nave, showing them as benefactors of the entire settlement.

The Church of Priest Wa'il

The third mosaic to be considered also shows buildings alongside figures. In contrast with the previous case-studies these figures are not donors, however, they may still relate to the act of foundation of the church. The Church of Priest Wa'il is one of a pair of conjoined churches outside the north-west corner of the fortified town. The larger building of the pair is known as the Church of the Tabula Ansata, probably built in the first half of the sixth century.[498] A door in the north-west corner of this church leads into the east end of the south aisle of the Church of

---

[498] Abela and Pappalardo 1999, p.479.

Priest Wa'il. The Church of Priest Wa'il also has two entrances into the south aisle, the direction of approach from the nearby town.

The arrangement of the mosaic is different to the two examples discussed above. Instead of an inhabited plant-scroll, the floor of the nave shows loosely composed scenes of people and animals in a landscape (fig. 152). At the east end of the nave is the dedicatory inscription, again unlike the previous two examples, only naming a single clerical patron:

> At the time of the most pious Bishop Sergius, this holy temple was built and completed by the care of the priest Wa'il in the month of Dius in the fifth indiction of the year 481 [586 AD]. This is the priest and his servant.[499]

A man is depicted in the middle of the floor just to the west of the inscription, presumably Wa'il himself. He holds a sprouting branch in one hand, which he is accepting from (or passing to) another man seated on a stag. Beside them stand two other figures brandishing sticks. Below is a scene of relic transfer, similar to that seen in Tayyibat al-Imam, with two mules carrying a chest. A single person stands below, roughly in the centre of the nave, reaching up to touch the reliquary. The western half of the mosaic carpet shows a hunt on two levels. The whole floor is dotted with tall leafy millet-like plants. The bema follows a more typical symmetrical pattern with a clump of acanthus and grapes flanked by cows, and a

---

[499] SEG 43-1091; Piccirillo 1992, p.242. Wa'il is an anglicisation of Oulesu, potentially one of the names recorded on the floor of the Church of Bishop Sergius. The churches were built within a couple of years of each other, so it is possible that same people would have been involved in both.

geometric design on the floor inside the apse. Uniquely for a Jordanian church of

this period, a fragment of the painted decoration of the apse also remains, showing

a seated saint holding a book, with a border of birds in roundels and some kind of

plant motif.[500] Both aisles are paved with a mosaic of inhabited acanthus-scroll,

and the nave and aisles are divided by a two-bay arcade. On the north side, the

western inter-pier space is decorated with a scene of fishermen in boats among fish

and water plants. Further east is a coiled sea monster, apparently swimming

alongside a boat. Both these panels are oriented to the south, facing the main

entrances to the church. On the south side of the nave, the space between the pier

and the chancel steps displays a man in a red cloak holding a whip above his head;

unusually he is placed so as to be seen from the east, presumably designed to be

seen from the entrance from the Church of the Tabula Ansata at the end of the

south aisle.[501] Finally, the south-west inter-pier space contains four bust figures

(one now missing) holding cornucopias with water flowing from them, each

accompanied by a cluster of buildings (fig. 153). This panel also faces south towards

the external doors.

The four half-figures were initially identified as female tyches or seasons, but it is

clear from the cornucopia of running water that they are personifications of rivers,

almost certainly male.[502] So, three of the panels dividing the aisles from the nave

---

[500] Piccirillo 1993, p.318, figs.13-14.

[501] Habas 2009, p.80, suggests that this figure might represent a camel-driver, and a

   benefactor of the church.

[502] Piccirillo 1992, p.43, describes them as "iconographically identical" Seasons; Duval

   2003, p.267, and Bowersock 2006, p.82, call them tyches, and Abu Dayyeh 2002, p.24,

share the theme of water, in three recognisable forms. The sea monster and boat

most likely belong to the story of Jonah.[503] Rivers full of fish and plants are common

in Jordanian church mosaics, belonging to a long-established tradition of depictions

of the Nile as a river of plenty. And in the context of a church, a group of four rivers

would be the Rivers of Paradise, personifications of which are also depicted in a

number of late antique mosaics.[504] However, although the rivers were fairly regular

occupants of church floors, the decision to represent them in a built environment

is unusual.   Elsewhere the personifications were shown in natural settings,

emerging from their rivers or sitting beside them, usually with plants growing

around to emphasise the resulting fertility of the land. As in the vignette of Kastron

Mefaa in the Church of the Lions, there is no organic life depicted here; the

---

describes them as "half naked women. For an identification of these figures as male

rivers, see Poulsen 2014, pp.214-215; and as female rivers, Talgam 2014, p.209.

[503] For the Jonah cycle on a sixth-century church floor at Beth Guvrin see Ovadiah 1974,

pl.46; Hachlili 2009, fig.4:24, pp.89-91.

[504] The Rivers of Paradise appear on mosaics at the chapel of Theodore Martyr in the

Madaba Cathedral complex: Piccirillo 1992, p.117, figs.111-115; the Church of the Rivers

and the Church of St Paul at Umm ar-Rasas: Piccirillo 1992, p.241, fig.390; Piccirillo 1997,

p.386, fig.5, pl.28; the Jabaliyah baptistery in Gaza: Humbert 1999, pp.216-218; Church B

in Hadrianopolis-Paphlagonia, Turkey: Patcı and Altun 2014, p.187, 189-194, fig.9-11; the

basilica of Thyrsos at Tegea in Greece: Maguire 1987, pp.24-28, fig.15-16; and Qasr el-

Lebia in Libya: Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980, fig.10, pl.7. Humbert 1999,

p.217, believes that the figure of Geon at Jabaliyah is female due to the water flowing

from their nipples, however the tousled hair and emphasised arm muscles suggest a

male personification. For the iconography of Rivers of Paradise also see Février 1956;

Maguire 1999; Maguire 2002, pp.25-27; Hachlili 2009, pp.180-181.

212

cityscapes entirely replace plants as the companions of the rivers. If the buildings were analogues to the more traditional vegetation, they could have visualised the power of the waters to bring life to human settlements. The analogy is not direct though – in comparison with the plants next to the personifications in St Paul's church at Umm ar-Rasas, the groups of buildings are exceptionally prominent, as large as the bust-figures, and as detailed.

The four rivers were associated with different areas of the world:

> And a river proceeds out of Eden to water the garden, thence it divides itself into four heads. The name of the one, Phisom, this it is which encircles the whole land of Evilat, where there is gold… And the name of the second river is Geon, this it is which encircles the whole land of Ethiopia. And the third river is Tigris, this is that which flows forth over against the Assyrians. And the fourth river is Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14, Septuagint translation).

The Geon was generally agreed to be the Nile, and the land of Evilat through which the Phisom flowed may have been the Arabian Peninsula.[505] So although the rivers do not literally flow in the four cardinal directions, they covered enough of the known world to be treated as global landmarks; for example, Cosmas Indicopleustes spaced their personifications more or less evenly around the four sides of the rectangular earth in his map of the world.[506] From the point of view of an Umm ar-Rasasian with some awareness of geography, two of these rivers were to the north-east, one to the south-east, and one to the south-west. The concept

---

[505] For the geographic locations of the four rivers see Maguire 1999, pp.179-180.

[506] Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p.54, pl.9a, 61, fig.136; Anderson 2013, pp.40-42, pl.15.

of their world being surrounded by the waters thus had some basis in reality, perhaps reinforced by their proximity to the other major river of the Christian mental landscape, the Jordan. So, one possibility is that the clusters of buildings represent the four-cornered world, in the form of cities irrigated by the great rivers, brought together within one mosaic in the same way that Earth and Ocean were on the floor of the Church of Bishop Sergius.

This still does not fully explain the depictions of the buildings, since the rivers by themselves would have carried the same sense of geographical totality. Nor does it entirely fit with the appearance of the buildings. The two fully preserved groups of buildings are practically identical, and contain four types of structure: simple crenelated towers at the edges which probably represent city walls, larger towers with doors opening onto upper rooms, churches, and ordinary houses shown as cubes with flat roofs and high-up windows. The third architectural group appears to consist of a church with a columned atrium in front of it, and again a tower. Wall towers and churches were the two essential features of the late antique city ideograph, and these two structures were often used to refer to a complete settlement. But the decision to add vernacular architecture to the mix is unusual. Square flat-roofed houses would have been recognisable to every viewer as normal components of an eastern Mediterranean town, but they were not part of the conventional iconography of one. This break with convention may indicate that the mosaicist wanted to depict a familiar place, rather than one of the famous metropolitan centres. The addition of the houses in front of the churches also draws attention to their congregations, as the combination of church buildings and everyday activities did in the mosaic of the Church of Bishop Sergius.

Another oddity is the appearance of the larger towers. All three have upper openings, two with wide-open doors, through which a single column can be seen. On the one hand this draws attention to the upper room of the tower, and on the other it displays the column as a significant feature or entity. All three towers are next to churches. Similar towers with upper-storey rooms in which columns bisect the opening are depicted in the sixth-century mosaic at SS Lot and Procopius on Mount Nebo (fig. 154) and on a fragment now in the Benaki museum, again in conjunction with churches.[507] It is possible that this repeated design represents an upper chapel in a church tower. Columns carried substantial theological baggage, as discussed above, so they could also have been designed to visualise a sacred presence within the chapel. At the Church of Priest Wa'il, the column is further emphasised by the open doors. The probable stylite tower outside Umm ar-Rasas may have led viewers to interpret the revealed column as a relic, marking the saint's continued presence within the community. However it would be odd for Umm ar-Rasas literally to be shown four times. Perhaps it is more likely that the mosaicists chose a format close to the local self-image, taking the surroundings of the congregation as the norm for a town. The demonstrative ordinariness of the houses below the churches also raises the possibility that the buildings relate to Kastron Mefaa, less directly than in the Church of the Lions, but in the sense that they are a familiar type of structure conveying a sense of normality. As a result, the Rivers of Paradise appear to be more physically present – their sources were in Eden, but the picture focuses on their presence in the tangible world. A comparable example of architecture being used to emphasise the materiality of a character is

---

[507] Lot and Procopius: Piccirillo 1992, p.215, fig.209, 215; Benaki museum fragment:

Assimakopolou-Atzaka 2006, fig.21, 22.

given by Henry Maguire, who points to the solid architectural frames of Evangelist portraits as reminders to the viewer that the authors were witnesses to Christ in the flesh.[508]

Although the architectural image of the Rivers of Paradise is unique, it was not unheard of for the trope of four rivers to be applied to individual cities. Adomnan's account of Arculf's travels in the later seventh century describes Damascus as

> ...a large royal city...surrounded by a wide circuit of wall, which is fortified with closely-spaced towers. Around the outside of the walls it has many olive groves, and the four large pleasant rivers which run make it wonderfully fertile.[509]

The River Tora splits from the Barada at the edge of Damascus, and many smaller tributaries of the two spread throughout the city. In no way can this situation be accurately described as four rivers, but the simplification makes perfect symbolic sense, emphasising the fruitfulness of the region and lending the 'royal city' a flavour of Eden.[510] It may be relevant that at some point during late antiquity, three wadis around Umm ar-Rasas were dammed in order to provide permanent irrigation for terraced fields.[511] Inspired by this, Wa'il may have decided that three out of four rivers was near enough, and commissioned an image of urban life under the personal protection of the Rivers of Paradise. The relocation of the rivers from

---

[508] Maguire 2012, p.144, 152.

[509] Adomnan, *De locis sanctis* II, ch.28; Wilkinson 1977, p.109.

[510] Along similar lines, Constantinople was inaccurately awarded seven hills, to match those of Rome: Krautheimer 1983, p.60.

[511] Abu Dayyeh 2002, p.32.

their normal rural background to a townscape sets them into a closer relationship with the inhabitants of the depicted houses, and the congregations of the churches. Being the most innovative in design, this is the most puzzling of the three mosaics, and I have not discussed all of its possible implications; to take one example, the emphasis on water may point to the presence of a so-far undiscovered baptistery nearby. Broadly however, as in the other two cases, the buildings appear in the context of commemorations of patronage and celebrations of a fertile land. Much of the nave mosaic seems to revolve around the individual donor, showing him presiding over a field of tall plants, holding a sprouting branch aloft like a sceptre. The single figure supervising the translation of relics in the centre of the floor may also represent the priest. The church was probably built at the same time that the presbytery of the adjoining Church of the Tabula Ansata was provided with a large new relic deposit underneath the altar.[512] The scene of relic translation in the smaller church might then record the act of donation, linking the two buildings closely together, and implying (truthfully or not) that Wa'il was responsible for both.

The Madaba Map

Before moving to the eighth century, there is another mosaic to deal with, which stands out as more properly topographic than any so far discussed. On the Madaba Map, something approaching a realistic mode of depiction can be seen, in which the actual position and appearance of a settlement has some relationship with its

---

[512] The relics were translated before the first half of the seventh century, predating
  another phase of renovation datable by ceramic inclusions: Abela and Pappalardo 1999,
  p.481.

depiction on the floor, at least in the case of the larger cities.[513] In his articles on the architectural iconography of eastern church mosaics, Noel Duval cites the vignette of Jerusalem in the Madaba Map as the only definite example of a 'detailed and realistic' depiction, as opposed to generic motifs.[514] Thirty years earlier, Ingrid Ehrensperger-Katz categorised the image of Jerusalem in the Madaba Map as distinctively realistic and representational. She concluded from this that Byzantine representations of cities were purely topographic indicators, without symbolic significance, and saw the Jordanian architectural mosaics as collectively following in the tradition of the cartographic symbols in the Tabula Peutingeriana, as schematic references to real places.[515] Giorgio Ortolani describes the Madaba Map as uniquely realistic within the Byzantine repertoire, while belonging to the same tradition of the 'emblematic representation' of churches and cities seen at Ma'in, Umm ar-Rasas, and the other sites mentioned above.[516] Raffaella Campanati sees the individualised images of sanctuaries and cities as evidence of a "genuine sacred topography" aimed at guiding pilgrims to the holy places, with the Madaba Map as the preeminent example.[517] Similarly, Glen Bowersock sees the Madaba Map as the beginning of a representational "city tradition" in which actual monuments were recognisably depicted, which lasted for the next three centuries.[518] The most recent writer to interpret the architectural images of Jordanian mosaics as naturalistic is Hendrik Dey, describing the image of Alexandria in the church of St

---

[513] Piccirillo 1992, pp.94-95, fig.61-77.

[514] Duval 1999, p.134; Duval 2003, p.219, p.282.

[515] Ehrensperger-Katz 1969, p.14, 19, 27.

[516] Ortolani 1994, p.59, 61.

[517] Campanati 1994, p.290; Campanati 1996, p.129.

[518] Bowersock 2006, pp.80-81.

John the Baptist at Jerash as possessing "basic verisimilitude…immediately recognisable to anyone with firsthand experience of Alexandria's urban layout"; again, he bolsters this point with a comparison to the Madaba Map.[519]

Whether stressing or down-playing the extent to which the Madaba Map differs from other contemporary mosaics, writers have placed them together in the category of church decoration, presuming a devotional significance for the map. The most common hypothesis is that the map was a pilgrimage guide, either literally providing information for travellers or prompting a microcosmic pilgrimage around one church.[520] However, as I argue elsewhere, it is unlikely that the map was originally designed for a church; instead it probably decorated a secular building.[521] Firstly, there is no devotional content in the imagery or inscriptions, and secondly the format of the mosaic is more appropriate to a transverse north-south hall than to the current east-west arrangement in which the colonnades of the nave cut across the map. Based on the emphasis placed on the territories of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the demonstrative literacy of the map, and the location of the building by a city gate, it is possible that the hall was used for judicial hearings.

The distinctive features of the map which lie behind the claims of accurate representation are the portraits of the larger cities of the region: Gaza, Diospolis, Azotus Paralus, Charach Mouba, Neapolis, Eleutheropolis, Ascalon, Maiumas,

---

[519] Dey 2014, p.196, and pp.197-205 for discussion of the map itself.

[520] Literal: Avi-Yonah 1954, p.34; Donner 1992, p.30; Piccirillo 1992, p.29; Campanati 1996, p.12. Metaphorical: Talgam 2014, p.243. C.f. Pullan 1999, p.169; Bowersock 2006, p.28.

[521] Leal forthcoming.

Pelousin, and above all Jerusalem, which has received the lion's share of attention.[522] The remainder (and the majority) of the places on the map are represented by more standardised ideographs, sometimes of churches, more often of gate-towers (fig. 155). The metropolitan centres are irregular and differentiated, with numerous small buildings placed at odd angles, some with flat roofs, some with gables, some fronted by columns (fig. 156). A semi-circular portico is depicted in Gaza (fig. 157), and another curved structure, possibly a theatre, in Neapolis. Each major city is also shown with at least one colonnaded street. Compared with the cities on the floor of St Stephen's, where the space within the walls could be filled by a single church, or at Ma'in (p.188 below), where the walls have been omitted and the city represented by the church alone, the mosaicist of the map was notably even-handed in the representation of the built environment – more detailed, and much less focused on churches. This can best be understood as the result of a specific set of priorities, distinct from those operating on the mosaic floors of churches. In a secular context, the emphasis on the civic attributes of cities – their porticoes and plazas, and their variety of different buildings – would be appropriate. In particular, columnar streets were one of the perceived indices of civilised life in the eastern Mediterranean, signalling civic status and identity.[523] Short strips of columns indicate *viae porticatae* in the Nilotic cityscapes at St John the Baptist and SS Peter and Paul in Jerash, and the row of columns in the image of Eleutheropolis at St Stephen's could perhaps be understood as a street; however, the map is unique for its insistence in depicting them. The fact that the mosaicist

---

[522] Jerusalem: Piccirillo 1992, fig.63; Donati 1996, p.159; Tsafrir 1999, p.161.

[523] Segal 1997, pp.5-10; Pullan 1999, p.165; Mango 2001, pp.29-30, 40-43; Jacobs 2014, esp. p.267 in relation to the Madaba map.

emphasised civic amenities does not necessarily mean that the ground-plans are accurate, but it does suggest an interest in the cities for themselves which is not seen elsewhere. The Madaba Map is also unusual for the sheer number of images of buildings, far more than in the rest of the contemporary mosaics put together. The mosaic map has been dated stylistically to the mid-sixth century, roughly the same period as the three floors of the 580s at Umm ar-Rasas.[524] The majority of architectural mosaics in Jordan are from unambiguously ecclesiastical contexts, and the unique character of the motifs on the floor of the Madaba hall can be explained by this crucial difference in setting. The contrast between the map and the rest effectively highlights the limited uses of architecture in sixth-century ecclesiastical decoration, where buildings – even churches – were subordinate to the all-encompassing iconography of the vineyard.

St Stephen's, Umm ar-Rasas

A renewed engagement with architectural iconography in a church setting can be seen in the latest of the Jordanian architectural mosaics. The shift of the centre of power from Constantinople to Damascus in the seventh century does not seem to have particularly troubled the citizens of Umm ar-Rasas, who in 718 confidently embarked on another major church-building project.[525] The basilica dedicated to St Stephen the Protomartyr was built next to the Church of Bishop Sergius, and given one of the most elaborate of all the Jordanian mosaic floors. Here, in addition to evoking associations of earthly riches and stability as they had done on the sixth-

---

[524] Avi-Yonah 1954, pp.16-18; Madden 2012, p.496, 511.

[525] Dedicatory inscription of 718: Piccirillo 1994, p.245; Di Segni 1999, p.178. See Britt 2015 for Christian communities in Palestine and Arabia in the early Islamic period.

century floors, buildings were treated as fully-integrated elements of the composition, structuring the space of the church and defining the significance of the mosaic programme.

The centre of the nave is filled with forty-two vine scroll roundels, containing birds, animals, hunters and grape-gatherers (fig. 158). Outside this, still within the space of the nave, is a Nilotic border with fishing boats, river creatures and ten named Egyptian cities (figs. 159-168). Moving outwards again there are vignettes of fifteen Palestinian and Jordanian cities, arranged in two strips in the intercolumniations of the nave arcades (figs. 169-183). The aisles are paved with chalices, fruit, flowers and birds set in geometric frames, with a bolder and more complex design in the north aisle. There is a panel of fruit trees and standing figures immediately in front of the bema, and the chancel itself has a geometric mosaic, laid in a second phase in 756.[526] At the east ends of the aisles and nave there are portraits of named donors alongside images of two settlements, Limbon and Diblaton (figs. 184 & 185).[527]

The Jordan Valley cities

In the northern intercolumnations, from east to west, are Hagiapolis (Jerusalem), Neapolis (Nablus), Sebastis, Caesarea, Diospolis (Lod), Eleutheropolis (Beit Guvrin), Askalon and Gaza. On the south side are Kastron Mefaa (Umm ar-Rasas),

---

[526] Piccirillo 1994, p.242.

[527] Inscriptions record at least seventeen patrons for the floor, with a mixture of Arabic and Greek names. Staurachius, one of the mosaicists, came from Hesban, and Kaioum, one of the donors, was a monk of Mount Nebo. Piccirillo 1994, pp.242-251; Habas 2009, p.82.

Philadelphia (Amman), Madaba, Esbounta (Hesban), Belemounta (Ma'in), Arioupolis (Rabba) and Karak Mouba (Kerak). The settlements are arranged in a deliberate pattern, with some reference to geographical reality. Crucially, the cities depicted on the north side of the nave are all east of the Jordan valley, while those on the south side are all on the west side of the river (fig. 186). In other words, they cast the space in between them as the River Jordan. This has implications for the interpretation of the inhabited vine scroll. As discussed above, the vine or vineyard was widely understood as a figure of the Church. The main body of the scroll is an actual vine, not an acanthus-vine (although it springs from a cluster of acanthus leaves), and in addition to being loaded with bunches of grapes, there is a basket full of grapes in one of the circular fields and vintagers in at least two others; the designers seem to have been making the most of the metaphor. By associating the vineyard with the River Jordan, the framing strips of cities give a particular slant to the familiar composition, highlighting the sacrament of baptism through which members of the congregation enter the Church, and the means by which the institution promised them salvation. This reading is confirmed by the stag shown bending its head towards a flourishing plant on the main western doorstep of the basilica. Following the opening verse of the forty-second psalm stags were closely associated with baptism, and here it marks the doorway leading towards the baptistery of the complex, situated at the north-west corner of the adjoining Church of Bishop Sergius.[528]

The mosaic also depicts an actual river, the Nilotic border running continuously around the vine scroll. The implicit merging of the Jordan with the Nile has

---

[528] Moskvina forthcoming.

theological logic to it, since in different ways they were both considered to be rivers of Paradise. The Nile was associated with the Geon, one of the four rivers flowing out of Eden, while as the water of Christ's baptism the Jordan was understood to be the River of Life of Revelation.[529] In addition, there was a spring named Gihon in Jerusalem, at which King Solomon was anointed (1 Kings 1:45). As a prefiguration of Christ's baptism, this may have encouraged the idea of a connection between the River Geon/Nile and the Jordan.[530] Although theorists sometimes contrasted the pagan Nile with the Christian Jordan, in practice both were represented as positive sites of sacred power, and Nilotic images were common on Jordanian church floors throughout late antiquity (pp.195-196 below). In depicting its course between the bands of Jordanian cities, the implication is that the Jordan shares the Nile's attributes as a giver of life and wealth. This association would have been backed up by direct experience of the Jordanian countryside – the contrast between the dry steppe and the fertile river valley would have been as impressive in the eighth century as it is now. The Egyptian cities are spaced at regular intervals, alternating with fishing boats and surrounded by plants, birds and fish, giving an impression of a safe, civilised river. Together, the two borders show urban centres as fruits of a well-watered landscape, complementary motifs of abundance and growth to the pastoral episodes in the central portion of the floor.

The contemporary church of Ma'in (719-20), around 20 miles from Umm ar-Rasas, has a similar scheme, although less fully preserved (figs. 187-188). Although the surviving portions of mosaic do not show a river, the locations along the borders

---

[529] On the Christian Nile see Hermann 1959, p.38, Maguire 1999, esp. p.181.

[530] For example, the baptismal connotations of Solomon's anointing in the Gihon are

pointed out by Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical lecture 21:6; NPNF2, vol.7, p.355.

are also arranged as if the nave were the Jordan (fig. 189); the cities shown on the north side of the nave are to the east of the river, and the cities on the south side are on its west bank. The cities are shown as grand multi-storeyed buildings, some with apses and domes. They alternate with pomegranate, pear, and other fruit trees. So again architectural forms complement images of the benign and well-ordered natural world. An inscription in the northern chapel of the church quotes from Isaiah 65:25: "And the lion will eat straw like the ox". In the same chapter, Isaiah reports God's promise of a "new heavens and a new earth", in which the people "shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them" (Isaiah 65:17-21). This connection is not made explicitly in the mosaic, but it seems possible that the border of buildings and trees also referred to this vision, locating the 'new earth' in the towns and cities of Jordan. The arrangements at Ma'in of large buildings and fruit trees, and at St Stephen's of buildings along a river, both framing a central space, are conceptually similar to the early eight-century portico mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus, although very different in style. In the sixth-century mosaic of the Church of the Lions at Umm ar-Rasas, trees and donors had alternated around the nave to represent the flourishing community that supported the church, but at Ma'in and at St Stephen's, and on a grander scale at Damascus, depictions of ideal landscapes took architectural form.

Going back to the outer border of Jordanian-Palestinian cities at Umm ar-Rasas, they also act as spatial and directional markers. The lines of named settlements present the floor as a geographic space to be travelled across. The cities create a visual boundary between the nave and aisles, guiding the visitor along the arcades.

City walls and columns or piers were also both symbols of strength and stability.[531] The alignment of the images between the piers, visually forming part of the arcade, presents the cities as structural elements of the building, supporting the piers and lending them greater monumentality.[532] The arrangement of the cities along the two banks of the Jordan provides some more clues to how the space of the basilica may have been used. Within the two borders, the cities do not follow their real-life sequence from north to south, but are placed to give the more significant settlements higher visibility. Anyone approaching the church from the town would have been likely to enter the church through two doors towards the east end of the south aisle.[533] The two southern doors opened onto a large paved courtyard running along the south side of the church, with benches around the walls, and a covered space at the east end. The courtyard also had two south doors, facing towards the main settlement of Umm ar-Rasas.[534] On entering, visitors would find themselves facing the section of the mosaic closest to home. In the border directly in front of the doors are images of Amman, the regional capital, Madaba, the centre of the diocese, and Kastron Mefaa itself (figs. 179-181). Kastron Mefaa, at the head of the sequence, is shown twice the size of the other cities, divided into two sections, the smaller upper panel depicting the *kastron* and the larger one the

---

[531] For city walls as Christian metaphors for strength and safety see Rapp 2013; pp.157-159. Columns: Onians 1988, p.85; Kinney 2011, esp. pp.189-190.

[532] City images are also set between columns in the church of Lot and Procopius on Mount Nebo, and the Church of the Lions and the Church of Priest Wa'il at Umm ar-Rasas.

[533] There are also three doors at the west end, which led down steps to the sixth-century Church of Bishop Sergius and to an apsed room between the two churches, and indirectly to a baptistery at the north-west corner of the complex.

[534] Piccirillo 1991, p.351, fig.17, pl.54.

extra-mural area containing a column and a grand ecclesiastical building hung with lit lamps. This last structure has a door at each end and a triple-arched front, but no apse, so it seems possible that it represents the narthex of a church rather than the main body. It is the largest church depicted in the border, and perhaps stands for St Stephen's itself, equivalent to a 'you are here' sign in front of the entrance. It should be noted however that it does not literally represent the southern courtyard, which did not have triple arches – the emblematic representation takes precedence over the mimetic.

The sequence of the rest of the cities articulates a possible route through the building. Nearest the altar are the two centre points of the known world, from a local point of view: Jerusalem and Kastron Mefaa. The western ends of the borders on both sides contain cities in the south of the region, away from the main centres of population and trade, which for Umm ar-Rasas were largely situated to the north.[535] Moving eastwards, the borders show the main cities of northern Jordan and Palestine. Seen as a circuit, this progression constitutes a visual pilgrimage between the two easternmost sites. Individuals moving around the nave from the southeast doors would start at image of their own church and the freestanding column, potentially marking a local holy site, then travel away from home as they walked down the south aisle, and back towards the ultimate pilgrimage destination of Jerusalem on the other side of the church.[536] At the end of the north aisle is an

---

[535] Umm ar-Rasas was situated towards the south of the Jordan Valley regional exchange network in the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods. Its glass was imported from Galilee, and pottery from Jerash: Bessard 2013, p.382, figs. 1 and 2.

[536] The processional route probably incorporated the other buildings in the complex – rather than crossing the central nave space defined by the lines of cities, worshippers

apsidal chapel with an altar, accessible through a screen, which may have contained

relics – a pilgrimage destination in reality.

On a different note, the connection proposed earlier in the chapter between architectural imagery and the commemoration of patronage is confirmed by the two eastern panels at the ends of the aisles, close to the main altar and immediately to the east of the entrance on the south side.[537] The majority of the donor images and inscriptions are concentrated here, along with architectural depictions of Limbon and Diblaton (figs. 184 & 185). Neither place has been securely identified, and they have been taken to be small villages, long-since abandoned.[538] It is interesting to note, in this case, that the village of Limbon is around the same size as the metropolises depicted in the intercolumniations, even larger than some of them. It is shown as a pair of multi-storeyed buildings, one above the other, their many windows emphasising the grand scale of the structures. Diblaton is smaller, fitted in above the heads of the patrons on the north side. It is nevertheless clearly

---

may have left St Stephen's through the now-blocked door at the west end of the south

aisle, moved through the adjoining apsidal room, then into the south aisle of the Church

of Bishop Sergius, from where they could access the baptistery, or move back into the

north aisle of St Stephen's. Alternatively, the progression could be read from west to

east on both sides, as a journey from the unfamiliar and distant towards the known. In

practice there would have been many different possible routes through the various

buildings of the complex; the circuit suggested above is the most visible, due to the

articulation of the mosaic cities.

[537] On the strategic placement of dedicatory images and inscriptions in late antique

churches see Yasin 2009, ch.3.

[538] Duval 2003, p.274; Bowersock 2006, pp.172-173.

intended to represent an imposing building, with double columns each side of the door on the façade, and five windows on each short side.   The location of the entrance on the long side suggests that this is a secular structure rather than a church perhaps a large villa. There is nothing to indicate that the two buildings of Limbon are churches; they could plausibly also represent houses. It is telling that the patrons chose to be depicted alongside the buildings of their home towns – possibly their own homes – and to set them into the scheme of major urban centres, in confident expression of equivalence. Like the images of Kastron Mefaa, these are statements of local identity, but ones made unilaterally by a small group of individuals, in which the image of the settlement functions to commemorate their own status as benefactors.

Realism again

Inspired by this fascinating glimpse into the eighth-century Jordanian landscape, some scholars have interpreted the fifteen intercolumnar cities as accurate representations of the contemporary world. Most recently, Glenn Bowersock has argued that the cities were "precise topographic reference[s], not…stylized or conventional representation[s]".[539] However, unlike the two villages, the cities are closely integrated into the central composition of the nave mosaic, and the most important criteria for their appearance are likely to have been programmatic, internal to the design of the floor. The identity of each city is given unambiguously by its inscription, so the question is whether the architectural motifs were composed so as to repeat this information in visual form, depicting buildings associated with a particular city. The architectural vignettes are differentiated, but

---

[539] Bowersock 2006, p.80.

within set limits. The ingredients are walls and wall-towers, basilical buildings, and centralised buildings. This repertoire allowed for some variety, but even so the same compositions recur. The most striking example is the round structure with a conical roof and three columns in the image of Jerusalem, which, it has been suggested, represents the Holy Sepulchre.[540] This is perfectly plausible, since Christ's Tomb was often shown as a centralised round building with a columnar façade.[541] However, an almost identical building is the central feature of Askalon, and a similar structure is depicted in Caesarea.[542] A particular building can only be identified, even in the case of a monument as iconic as the Holy Sepulchre, when additional information, in this case the label HAGIAPOLIS, is given. Elsewhere, while still probably carrying associations of holiness, it may have been intended more generally as denoting a shrine; the task of distinguishing between the two would be left to the more literate viewers who were not reliant on the architectural image alone.

The degree of repetition or individualisation in each case may also have been conditioned by the positions of the cities on the floor. The four cities in the north-west intercolumniation are the least individualised on the north side, with almost identical wall towers and similar compositions; although the forms of church building within their walls vary, the impression of uniformity and repetition is stronger. In the north-eastern section, the pattern is broken up. All four compositions are different, and the two panels nearest the altar, Jerusalem and

---

[540] Bowersock 2006, p.77, describes it as "unmistakable".

[541] For example, Weitzmann 1979, pp.564-566, figs. 76, 79, cat. nos. 452, 520, 564.

[542] For Caesarea's centrally-planned church see Avni 2014 p.46, fig.2.3.

Neapolis, are especially distinctive.[543]   The departure from the formula distinguishes this area of floor and signals the approach to the altar. On the south side of the nave, Philadelphia appears almost identical to Madaba, except it has three basilicas instead of one, and Esbounta resembles Belemounta, but with angled city walls at the bottom of the panel instead of a flat line. The most distinctive panel in the sequence is Kastron Mefaa, again nearest the altar. Thus individualisation and conventional stylisation seem to have been used in tandem as iconographic strategies, indicators of the importance of the settlement within the programme, and – unless it is believed that some cities were actually more generic in their form than others – relating only incidentally to the actual appearance of each place.

Bowersock also argues that the choice of regional cities as decoration shows a high level of "urban self-confidence", a point echoed most recently by Hendrik Dey.[544] This is stronger ground, moving the emphasis from the details of appearance of the cities to their identities as cities in the first place. The inhabitants of Kastron Mefaa responsible for the design of the mosaic were demonstrably claiming civic status for their settlement, presenting it as equal (or superior) to all the major centres of the day. The choice of design expresses a conception of the surrounding world in built terms, an awareness of belonging to a network of cities and ecclesiastical centres. With the exception of Kastron Mefaa and Belemounta, the depicted sites

---

[543] Overall, the cityscapes on the north side of the nave were composed with a wider range of building-shapes than on the south. Differences in small formal details such as roof tiles and battlements, and the small leafy designs which preface the inscriptions on the south, suggest that different mosaicists were responsible for each side.

[544] Bowersock 2006, p.117; Dey 2014, p.191.

were all bishoprics, and the interest in self-definition as one of a network of Christian cities could perhaps be seen as a semi-political statement of continued presence under Islamic rule. The depiction of the cities in a supporting role to the vine scroll of the Church, and the prominent incorporation of at least one church in each vignette, could be thought of as 'reclaiming' them as Christian centres. However, this was not an overtly made point, and there is no evidence for sharp clashes over religious identity at the time the mosaic was laid – the conquest was a couple of generations in the past, the burst of iconoclasm in the 720s still to come, and elsewhere there is evidence that Muslims and Christians of this period shared places of worship.[545] Instead the design seems to reflect a reawakened interest in the medium of architectural representation which was shared by the Umayyad elite and the artists who worked for them.

The Egyptian cities

The cities depicted along the banks of the Nile in St Stephen's are located mostly in the Delta area, although unlike the Jordanian and Palestinian cities their order does not follow a geographical sequence. Going clockwise from the north corner of the east border, they are labelled as Tamiathis, Panau, Pelousin, Antinau, Eraklion, Alexandria, Kasin, Thenesos, Kynopolis and Pseudostomon. To compose the Egyptian cities, the mosaicists used some of the same components as for the Jordanian ones, such as square crenelated towers and double-storeyed basilicas. Again compositions are repeated with small variations; for example Alexandria and Eraklion are similar (figs. 164 & 166). The decorative elements of the Egyptian cities are more elaborate than those in the outer border, with columns and capitals given

---

[545] Guidetti 2013.

shading and ornamental detail (for example fig. 160 & 168). The vignettes are also more abbreviated. City walls are only hinted at with pairs of towers, and in the case of Kasin the whole settlement is represented by one tower and one tall building (fig. 167). Multi-storeyedness is emphasised, with windows indicating three or four floors for most structures. By far the most prominent features of the Jordanian cities are their surrounding walls, so the lack of walls in the inner Nilotic section, combined with the elongation and the decorative elaboration of the buildings, gives the Egyptian cities a fantastical air. None of this necessarily had much to do with the actual land of Egypt. In early Christian and pre-Christian art, Egypt was often represented in architectural terms, and the Nile had long been emblematic of abundance.[546] Coming out of these interlinked traditions, buildings were incorporated into the repertoire of Nilotic iconography, to the extent that Egyptian cities could evoke the qualities of plenty and exotic grandeur even without the river. The most elaborate examples of Nilotic architecture in Jordanian mosaics are at Jerash, where two mosaics include sequences of ornate Egyptian cities within lush landscapes of fruit trees. On the floor of the church of St John the Baptist a thin strip of river runs below the cities (fig.190 & 191), while in SS Peter and Paul the Egyptian locations by themselves were apparently enough (fig. 192).[547] Nilotic cities were also depicted in the church floor at Umm al-Manabi, and probably in the church of St John the Baptist at Khirbat al-Samra, where Rachel Hachlili suggests that two unnamed cities represent Alexandria and Memphis; as at SS Peter and Paul the Nile itself is not depicted.[548] Outside Jordan examples include an image of

---

[546] Nilotic mosaics generally: Hachlili 1998; Hamarneh 1999; Hachlili 2009, pp.101-102.

[547] Piccirillo 1992, fig.504, 535, 543, 554.

[548] Umm ar-Manabi: Hamarneh 1999, pp.216-217; Khirbat al-Samra: Hachlili 1998, p.113.

Alexandria in the Nile Festival Building in Sepphoris,[549] another in the fourth- or fifth-century House of Leontis at Baysan,[550] and a late sixth-century depiction of 'Egyptos' as a single city in a chapel at Haditha (fig. 193).[551] Images of single buildings were also combined with Nilotic motifs at the Church of Lot and Procopius (fig. 154) and at Zay al-Gharbi; the towered basilicas can either be interpreted as churches or entire cities.[552] In Roman art, Egyptiana usually conveyed a sense of the exotic, and the Nile Delta was far enough away to be outside most viewers' direct experience, although trade between Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean may have brought the place-names to their attention.[553] In Avi-Yonah's words, "Egypt in antiquity filled the role which 18th-century Europe reserved for China – that of an exotic country…different from the rest of the civilised world."[554] So in one sense, the mosaicists of St Stephen's were following a well-worn tradition. However, they took the familiar iconography a step further. By placing the two sequences of cities together, the local and the exotic, they brought the near-paradisiacal abundance of the Nile right to Kastron Mefaa's doorstep.

The Jordanian mosaics: conclusion

---

[549] Weiss and Netzer 1996, fig.61; Talgam 2014, fig.448.

[550] Zori 1966, p.131, figs.3-4, p.12; Hachlili 1998 p.106, p.111; Talgam 2014, fig.160.

[551] Hachlili 2009, p.97; Talgam 2014, fig.176, and fig.175 for a similar but unnamed city at
   Beth Guvrin.

[552] Piccirillo 1992, fig. 209, 677; Duval 2003, p.269, fig.26.b.

[553] Bessard 2013, p.386.

[554] Avi-Yonah 1972, p.122.

The mosaic floors of the eastern Mediterranean are famous for their architectural iconography. However, with the exception of the eighth-century floors of St Stephen's and Ma'in, buildings were channelled into a relatively limited range of forms. Vegetal motifs had priority, as human figures did during the same period in the West, and there are dozens of Jordanian floors with exuberant plant-based compositions that contain no architectural components at all. The Madaba map is the exception that proves the rule. It is the only sixth-century mosaic in the region in which buildings dominate the design, and in which plant motifs are almost entirely absent, probably precisely because it was not commissioned for a church.

Where they were depicted, buildings coexisted with and complemented the vegetal motifs, appearing as elements of civilisation within a flourishing and fertile landscape. A variation on the theme is the correlation between architecture and water sources, seen in one form in the scene of the Four Rivers in the Church of the Priest Wa'il. The other main context for the depiction of architecture seem to have been the commemoration of patronage, seen explicitly in two of the examples above where buildings are accompanied by donors and inscriptions giving their names. Choricius described the apse mosaic of the sixth-century church of Saint Sergius in Gaza as showing the Virgin and Child and a group of unidentified saints, and next to them, the local official and patron of the church, Stephen:

> …a person who is an all respects like an emperor… he has donated the church
> to his fellow-citizens… He it is, who standing next to the patron [saint] of the
> church, asks him to accept the gift graciously; the latter consents.[555]

---

[555] Mango 1986, p.62; Yasin 2010, pp.47-48.

From this description, it seems very likely that the gift was shown literally as a model church, as in Italian mosaics of the time. So in at least one case, architectural imagery on the upper walls of the church also drew attention to the act of patronage. Images of buildings could also blur the boundaries between generalised Nilotic scenes and contemporary ones of ecclesiastical participation; for example at St John the Baptist in Jerash, figures carry censors between the Egyptian cities, mimicking the action of worshippers walking around the ambulatory in which they are depicted.[556] The ability of mosaic buildings to commemorate the real-life investment in their three-dimensional counterparts may have had particular relevance at Umm-ar-Rasas, where a large number of individuals were involved in church construction projects in a short space of time – thirty-eight personal names are recorded on just the three mosaics discussed here, the majority of them lay-people.[557] The Jordanian and Palestinian mosaic repertoire also included idealised architectural markers of sacrality, fulfilling similar functions to the ciboria in the Syrian mosaics. These ciborium- or temple-like structures can easily be distinguished from images of earthly buildings by their symmetrical and ornate appearance, their attributes such as lamps and peacocks, and by their central

---

[556] Buildings may also have been associated with figures of patrons at Khirbat al-Samra; above, below and between the two cities are obliterated patches of mosaic, the result of iconoclasm, which presumably depicted animals or people: Piccirillo 1992, pp.304-305, fig.592, 596, 599.

[557] The figure does not take into account the individuals referred to as 'the children of…', only the named parents. Benefactors recorded with the formula 'whose name/s God knows' are also not counted. On the commemoration of donors at Umm ar-Rasas: Habas 2009, pp.77-85, fig.5-7. Additional dedicatory inscriptions were found on stone screens and posts in the Church of Bishop Sergius: Piccirillo 1994, p.265.

position within the mosaics, often in the sanctuary. The more varied images of churches and cities took more marginal places in the developing iconography of eastern Mediterranean church mosaics. During the eighth century, however, architecture returned to greater popularity. On the floor of St Stephen's buildings are fully integrated into the composition and to a large extent define it.

The developments in architectural imagery in church decoration need to be seen in the context of contemporary patterns of actual architectural patronage. In the last quarter of the sixth century, the public profile of the Church expanded dramatically in Umm ar-Rasas, with six new churches datable by inscription and another four by style or archaeological context.[558] Similarly, in the small town of Rihab in northern Jordan, eight churches were built and a ninth renovated between 594 and 635.[559] These two sites were part of a wider trend. Whereas during the fourth to sixth centuries construction seems to have taken place mainly in cities, from the later

---

[558] For the Church of Priest Wa'il (586), Church of Bishop Sergius (587-8) and Church of the Lions (either 574 or 589), see n.455-457 above. The other three dated by inscriptions are St Paul's (578 or 593): Piccirillo 1997, p.393; SEG 47-2082; the Church of the Rivers (579 or 594): Piccirillo 1992, p.240; SEG 42-1488; and the Church of the Reliquary (586): Piccirillo 2006, pp.384-385. The Church of the Palm Tree shares a narthex and dividing wall with the Church of the Rivers; according to Bujard it was built slightly later but in a similar style, and is probably roughly contemporary: Piccirillo 1992, fig.392; Bujard 1996, p.176. The Church of the Tabula Ansata pre-dates the adjoining Church of Priest Wa'il, and was probably built in the first half of the sixth century: Abela and Pappalardo 1999, p.479. Chapel of the Peacocks: Piccirillo 1998, p.679; Church of the Aedicula: Piccirillo 1991, p.331.

[559] Di Segni 1999, p.165.

sixth until the mid-eighth century the majority of recorded building projects in Provincia Arabia and Palaestina were in villages and small towns: 67% as opposed to 32% in cities.[560] This does not necessarily indicate a decline in standards of living, and civic amenities often continued to be maintained.[561] However it does indicate a change in behaviour, with donors no longer concentrating their investment in high profile urban landmarks, but in their local churches, in hundreds of smaller construction sites dotted across the countryside. This was also a time of division between different Christian denominations – Nestorians, Monophysites and Chalcedonians – and perhaps between Arabic-, Syriac- and Greek-speaking congregations.[562] The construction of two adjoining but physically disconnected churches of different types at Umm ar-Rasas (the Church of Bishop Sergius and the Church of the Aedicula) may suggest distinct groups of users, competing or incompatible. Perhaps in response to such situations, the mosaics commissioned

---

[560] Di Segni 1999, pp.164-165. Also see Liebeschuetz 2001, pp.63-74; Walmsley 2007, p.41; Avni 2014, pp.224-225, 338.

[561] During the sixth century colonnaded streets were repaired at Antioch, Jerash, Gaza, Dara and Scythopolis/Baysan: Mango 2001, p.30, p.43. The latest phase of building work of the nymphaeum at Gadara dates to the seventh century: Savage, Zamora and Keller 2004, p.530. In sixth-century Baysan the nymphaeum was still functioning, and the western bathhouse was expanded; the latter remained in use until the early seventh century: Tsafrir and Foerster 1997, p.131. On the privatisation of public space in late antique cities see Baldini Lippolis 2007; Jacobs 2009. For the repair and/or neglect of city walls see Crow 2001; Jacobs 2012, p.118, table 1. For a summary of the continued prosperity of the sixth-century cities of Syria, Palestine and Arabia, in contrast with western regions, see Liebeschuetz 2001, pp.54-63.

[562] Hussey 2010, pp.10-24.

during this period of 'localism' appear to be particularly concerned with presenting the(ir) Church as a cohesive community. The common formula of plant-scrolls encompassing pastoral vignettes in the nave and an idealised heavenly landscape in the sanctuary bound together individuals and their daily activities within one vineyard. Such compositions had theological justification, emphasising the unity of the Church and its guidance and protection of the local congregation – the ideal model for a mosaic from the clergy's point of view. Architectural imagery tends to pull towards the specific, and perhaps also towards the secular world, and may have been seen as less amenable to this rhetoric. Buildings evoke associations of strength and tradition, wealth and prestige, as well as more overtly religious concepts. These qualities, which made architectural forms such good potential symbols, may have made them too ambiguous at times. It is even possible to imagine some tension between the clergy, keen to promote their church as a corner of the universal earthly paradise, and individual donors, more concerned with marking their part in the construction of the building. The tension may not have been openly expressed – I am not suggesting a battle between pro- and anti-architecture camps in the design of every mosaic. But this difference in emphasis may explain why, despite the popularity of architecture in sixth-century mosaics, images of earthly churches and cities had specialised functions, subordinate to the more universal symbol of the vine-scroll. And certainly, where architecture does appear in these mosaics, it appears as a confident visualisation of local identity and wealth.

Chapter four: architectural imagery at the end of late antiquity

The eighth and ninth centuries were ones of dramatic state- and empire formation (or loss, depending on whose side you were on). The major winners were the members of the Marwanid branch of the Umayyad family, caliphs of the early Islamic Empire which stretched from Afghanistan to north-west Africa, and the Abbasid dynasty which replaced them in 750. In second place came Charlemagne and his successors, replacing the Merovingians and Lombards as rulers of much of modern France, Germany and Italy. On a smaller scale again, the Roman popes successfully established their claim over the territories of the Republic of St Peter in central Italy. This period also saw a resurgence of architectural symbolism across the Mediterranean. In this chapter I argue that these two facts are connected, and that patrons across the Mediterranean saw architectural imagery as an effective way to visualise and reinforce the notions of authority, stability and splendour with which they wished to associate themselves. After outlining some of the trends of early Islamic architectural imagery, I look at the grandest example of the period, the mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus, commissioned by caliph al-Walid. In the second half of the chapter I return to Rome to look at the ninth-century mosaics of Santa Prassede, and contemporary trends in architectural imagery in the Carolingian West.

The architectural iconography of early Islam

The artists and architects working for Umayyad patrons made use of a variety of models, looking to classical and late antique traditions from across the

Mediterranean, as well as further east.[563] So it is no surprise to find some familiar architectural motifs decorating early Islamic objects and buildings. But more than this, there seems to have been an *increased* interest in ideologically charged architectural depictions, of a kind that had been rare in Christian art for almost three hundred years.

Comparisons with the Christian examples discussed in the first three chapters do not reveal many differences directly relating to religious doctrine or practice. Although some architectural forms such as the niche are likely to have gained a deeper devotional meaning in an Islamic context, in this case as the mihrab, niches had already been used for centuries to indicate a sacred or honorific focus.[564] The comparison between Christian and Islamic architectural imagery is most valuable for the light it sheds on the social aspects of the iconography. This was a situation in which an emerging ruling class needed to construct and display its identity, defining itself against secular and religious contemporaries outside the borders of the empire, as well as a large proportion of the population within it. The fact that architecture was one of the key modes chosen for visual experimentation confirms the symbolic adaptability of built forms, and their ability to convey concepts of community, institutional identity, tradition, and power.

Some late antique motifs and formats continued to be used with little change. Columns, arches and niches were still used to frame figures, dividing one scene or narrative from another when used in sequences, as on an eight-century brazier

---

[563] Grabar 1987, ch.2; Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins 2001, pp.7-8, 78-79.

[564] Grabar 1987, pp.115-116; see Brenk 2010 for the pre-Islamic significance of apses and niches.

from al-Fudayn or the central vault of the audience hall of Qusayr Amra (figs. 194 & 195), or as a shorthand for a palatial setting in the floor painting at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi (fig. 196), or singly to honour an important person, as in the throne niche at Qusayr Amra (fig. 197).[565] On the sides of the same niche, arcades frame personifications of the four seasons, together with associates of the enthroned prince (fig. 198). The jewelled frames of the arches take inspiration from late antique church mosaics, and the overall format is not vastly different from arcades of Bacchic figures depicted on fourth-century tapestries (fig. 199), or even columnar sarcophagi (fig. 17).[566] Ornate screens were also depicted in conjunction with important figures, for example again at Qusayr Amra, where the pattern on the screen of a balcony changes in front of a richly-dressed figure, probably the patron al-Walid ibn Yazid (fig. 200).[567] Golden screens with almost identical patterns appear on the balconies of the grandest buildings in the mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus (fig. 206 below) suggesting that they were understood as a defining feature of elite architecture. At the mid-eighth-century palace of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi a stucco panel depicts a female figure, perhaps a personification, beneath an arch or niche looking over a similar screen (fig. 201).[568] A study of a wider selection of such images is needed, but as a first hypothesis it appears that screens shifted in function from being signifiers of sacrality in Christian art to being

---

[565] Qusayr Amra: Vibert-Guigue, Bisheh and Imbert 2007, pl. 15, 47. Qasr al-Hayr: Schlumberger 1986, pl.34.

[566] Tapestries: Rutschowscaya 1990, pp.83-87.

[567] For early Christian comparisons, see the screened *kathisma* on the fourth-century Obelisk of Theodosius: Kiilerich 1993, fig.10, and the screens either side of St Menas on a seventh-century ivory plaque: Weitzmann 1979, p.578, no.517.

[568] Genequand 2011, pp.368-371, fig.13.

markers of secular status. It also seems that the function of such screens was primarily related to display, not concealment.

There were also some continuities between Christian and Islamic literary metaphors of built forms. The five principles on which Islam is described as being supported or raised – testifying to God, prayer, paying zakat, pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and fasting for Ramadan – were known as the pillars of faith, *arkan al-din* or sometimes *amud al-din*.[569] This did not inspire architectural allegories to the same extent as the Biblical description of apostles as columns; nevertheless there is evidence that columns, piers and tent-poles, which could all be referred to as *amud*, were acknowledged as significant forms. The most overtly allegorical reference to columns is found in one of the collections of sayings and stories of Muhammad, the hadith, describing a vision experienced by Abdullah bin Salam:

> I saw a dream during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger and narrated it to him.
> I seemed to be in a garden… in the midst of it, there stood an iron pillar, with
> its base in the earth and its summit in the sky: and upon its summit there was
> a handhold. It was said to me: Climb up this… I narrated the dream to Allah's
> Apostle, whereupon he said: That garden implies al-Islam and that pillar
> implies the pillar of Islam. And that handhold is the firmest faith.[570]

There also seem to have been conceptual links between column as architecture, as script, and as ideal. *Amud* means column in Hebrew as well, and was used to

---

[569] Sahih Muslim 16c, Book 1, Hadith 21. *Arkan*, singular *rukn*, can also mean corner and foundation.

[570] Sahih Muslim 2484a, Book 44, Hadith 211. All hadith quoted are taken from *http://sunnah.com/*.

describe a column of script in a Torah scroll, or a whole page of a book, in addition to its architectural meaning.[571] The term is also recorded in Islamic literature from the ninth century with the meaning of principles or essential supports, for example in debates over the *amud al-shi'r*, 'the essentials of poetry', or al-Muqaddasi's description of reliable witnesses as the "supports and pillars" of his geographic writing.[572]

Whole buildings could also be significant as focuses of belief or as allegories. In a parallel to the Judeo-Christian concept of the heavenly Temple or Church, the Ka'ba had a celestial equivalent, located above it – the House of God or Frequented House (*Bayt al-Ma'mur*), around which 70,000 angels pray daily.[573] According to the seventeenth-century Shiite cleric Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, earlier traditions record that the first Ka'ba was a tent which God sent down from heaven to Adam, with tent-pegs of gold, purple ropes, and a central pole or pillar of ruby – a description reminiscent of the Old Testament tabernacle.[574] Along more earthly lines, in early ninth-century panegyric poems, caliphs were praised for constructing

---

[571] Avrin 1978, p.73.

[572] Ajami 1981, p.30; al-Muqaddasi, *The best divisions for knowledge of the regions*; Collins 1994, p.3.

[573] Quran 52:4; Sahih al-Bukhari 3207, Book 59, Hadith 18; Sahih Muslim 164a, Book 1, Hadith 323; Busse 1988, p.239.

[574] Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Stories of the Prophets* vol.1:2; *http://www.al-islam.org/hayat-al-qulub-vol-1-allamah-muhammad-baqir-al-majlisi/merits-adam-and-hawwa*, accessed 02/05/2016.

the 'house of glory', *bayt al-majd*, for themselves and their subjects, an architectural metaphor which signified the entire state.[575]

The mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus

Alongside the continuity outlined above, there was also innovation. The most impressive examples of early Islamic architectural imagery are the wall mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus. The mosque was built between 706-714/15 during the caliphate of al-Walid I, on the site of the church of St John the Baptist, itself built within the precinct walls of a Roman temple. The church in the centre of Damascus had remained in use under the previous two caliphs, and was finally appropriated after an agreement to return other churches outside the city to Christian ownership.[576] The new mosque had a covered hall along the southern qiblah wall, with three longitudinal aisles crossed by a wider north-south nave. On the north side of the enclosure was a courtyard surrounded by porticoes (fig. 202).[577] The main entrance is on the east, and there are also entrances in the west and north walls. The interior of the prayer-hall was decorated with spoliate columns and capitals, marble revetment, and an elaborate gilded marble vine-scroll frieze.[578] The façade and the porticoes were covered with marble at ground level, and mosaics above. The mosaics have only survived on the western side of the courtyard and in small patches on the façade of the prayer-hall, but it seems likely that they originally covered all three sides of the covered area of the court, and

---

[575] Sperl 1977 p.29; Sperl 1989, p.24.

[576] Grabar 1987, pp.104-105; Guidetti 2013, p.231.

[577] Creswell 1979, pp.151-196, fig.83, 90.

[578] Flood 2001, chapter 3, esp. pp.57-63.

before the fire of 1893, the interior of the prayer-hall too.[579] In the early eleventh century, the Iranian author al-Tha'alibi described the mosque as "one of the wonders of the world in its beauty and uniqueness", in particular for the beauty and detail of its ornamentation, and the tenth-century geographer Ibn al-Faqih wrote that you could spend a hundred years there, and continually see something new.[580]

All the entrances to the mosque lead into the arcades around the courtyard, so the mosaic programme would be one of the first things to attract a visitor's attention, setting the tone for their experience of the mosque. The longest surviving stretch of mosaics is on the western interior wall of the portico, between the western entrance to the mosque and the north-west corner. This shows a series of imposing and highly-decorated buildings and clusters of smaller structures on the banks of a river, interspersed with larger-than-life trees (fig. 203).[581] The river runs along the bottom of the mosaic, and the assortment of buildings is arranged roughly symmetrically along it. There are four clusters of small buildings at each end of the mosaic (fig. 204), followed by larger single structures, a curved portico with towers on the left (fig. 205) and a ciborium with four columns on the right, both with more small buildings above them. Another group of assorted buildings separates these from the centrepiece of the wall, two polygonal pavilions connected by screened walkways to multi-storeyed structures with central domes or apses (fig. 206). In

---

[579] Flood 2001, p.32.

[580] Flood 1997, p.72; al-Tha'alibi, *The book of curious and entertaining information* 10:157; Bosworth 1968 pp.118-119; Ibn al-Faqih, *Concise Book of Countries*, 'Damascus'; Massé 1973, p.132.

[581] Förtsch 1993, fig.1.

between all these buildings are tall trees of different varieties, some laden with fruit. The trees grow from the riverbank or appear above roofs, and the central tree between the two pavilions grows up from a golden platform. The background is golden, and the main colours of the buildings are blue, green and gold for the major structures, and white or light brown with blue-green roofs for the smaller ones. The main buildings have richly patterned columns, with strings of pearls hanging between them. There are floral motifs on their roofs, cornices and walls, and in one case golden vines twine round a pair of columns (fig. 207).

The trees and buildings were repeated on a grander scale on the arch over the main entrance into the prayer-hall (fig. 208). The mosaics here are badly damaged, and are largely modern replacements, but appear to show two pairs of trees matching the height of the arch, and groups of buildings on high columned bases jutting out from the curve. The three structures at the top are the most impressive, three- or four-storeyed confections of towers, arches and columns, with more trees growing from them (fig. 209). The one in the middle is the most damaged, but seems to have consisted of a polygonal structure with steps leading into it, supporting an arch framing a column or pier, with piled-up sequences of columnar buildings to either side. According to nineteenth-century reports, mosaics of "palm trees and palaces" were also depicted inside the prayer-hall, but no traces of these remain.[582]

Pillars and pearls

---

[582] Flood 2001, p.32.

Some writers have suggested that the mosaics in the porticoes depict an idealised version of Damascus, or of palaces or cities across the Umayyad Empire.[583] This seems to have been the line taken by medieval authors; for example, the tenth-century geographer al-Muqaddasi wrote that "few are the kinds of tree, and few the well-known towns that are not represented on these walls."[584] A self-congratulatory image of a perfected Damascus also seems to be hinted at in the speech supposedly made by al-Walid on the completion of the mosque: "Inhabitants of Damascus, four things give you a marked superiority over the rest of the world: your climate, your water, your fruits, and your baths. To these I wanted to add a fifth: this mosque."[585] The mosaics certainly depict water and fruits, and the flourishing trees imply a pleasant climate. However there is nothing in the mosaic that closely resembles the urban landscape of Damascus, or the mosque itself; in fact the groups of buildings may not be cities at all, due to their lack of walls.

Another popular explanation is that the mosaics represent paradise.[586] In the Quran, paradise was described as a garden with flowing rivers and pavilions, "upper chambers" or "chambers built high" set aside for believers.[587] More details were

---

[583] Franz 1959; Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins 2001, p.26.

[584] Al-Muqaddasi, *The best divisions for knowledge of the regions*; Collins 1994, p.145; also see Rabbat 1995, pp.167-168, for a fourteenth-century description of the mosaics as showing cities, villages and the Ka'ba.

[585] Quatremère 1845 vol.2, pp.269-270 ; Flood 2001, p.1.

[586] Brisch 1988; Flood 2001, pp.32-33, who also points out that an eschatological reading of the scene does not rule out others.

[587] See Surahs 9:72; 25:75; 34:37; 39:20; 55:46-72.

given in the hadith; for example one explained that the pavilions were constructed from enormous pearls, and another that paradise was made from "bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron."[588] Just as the label of Heavenly Jerusalem can be overenthusiastically applied to architectural depictions in Christian contexts, there is a danger of an automatic assumption of paradisiacal symbolism in depictions of gardens or grand buildings in Islamic settings. According to Fairchild-Ruggles, there is no evidence that the Quranic descriptions led to an association between earthly and heavenly gardens in eighth- to tenth-century Andalusia; fertile gardens were valued as gardens, in particular reflecting the wealth and means of the owner, not as glimpses of paradise.[589] Terry Allen writes of the "vacuous vision" which lumps together all floral motifs, all niches, all domes in Islamic art and architecture as references to paradise without contextual evidence, and Christian Lange warns against the reduction of Islamic art to "a single dominant rationale… [of] irrational otherworldliness", downplaying aesthetic and social motivations.[590] In a mosque, however, a reference to heaven can reasonably be considered, and there is some evidence of a contemporary scheme of decoration where this was explicitly intended – the mosaicists of al-Walid I's mosque in Medina are said to have explained "we made them according to the images of the trees and palaces of paradise."[591] Nevertheless, the mosaics of Damascus are not a direct illustration of Quranic descriptions of paradise any more than the Christian images discussed in

---

[588] Jami` at-Tirmidhi, vol.4, Book 12, Hadith 2526.

[589] Fairchild Ruggles 2000, pp.218-221.

[590] Allen 1995. Also see Leaman 2004, pp.121-122, 187; Lange 2016, p.261.

[591] Sauvaget 1947, p.81; Lange 2016, p.250.

the chapters above were of the Book of Revelation; some factors were chosen for depiction, some were ignored, and some new ones were added. The most obvious omissions from the scene are the inhabitants of the buildings. All the passages in the Quran describe a lived-in heaven on a human scale, going into details of the silk and brocade clothes, couches and carpets, food and drink in silver vessels, and beautiful companions, among whom believers will spend their afterlife. To say that the setting in a mosque prevented the depiction of people only moves the question along a bit – why choose to depict paradise at all, if the main attractions had to be left out? Or to put it another way, since buildings were not the most characteristic features of heaven in literature, why were they emphasised in visual form?

The number and extent of the depicted structures go beyond Quranic descriptions, appearing to be whole settlements. The smaller buildings are mostly tall, all with upper windows and with a mixture of flat, gabled and pagoda-like roofs. They are shown at different angles, close together and partially obscuring each other. As has already been discussed, detail in architectural imagery can be used to different ends. In some cases the representation of varied building types in close proximity can be a sign of the veristic mode of depiction, a cipher for 'reality'. However, even these small buildings have pearls hanging in their doorways, and the gigantic trees and gold background make an everyday setting unlikely. Instead the result is a clear distinction between the simpler buildings and the symmetrical, frontally-viewed larger structures. On the latter, the details all are geared towards the depiction of valued materials – the fine marbling of the columns, the modelled floral cornices, and the strings of hanging pearls.

The west wall runs along one of the short sides of the courtyard, so the imagery originally may have been subordinate to a longer mosaic sequence to the north.

250

But taking the wall as a self-contained composition, the symmetry of the landscape presents the pavilions and the multi-storey buildings in the centre, and the trees between them, as the main subjects. Oleg Grabar contrasted the architecture at Damascus with the golden structures in the rotunda of St George in Thessaloniki (pp.18-19, figs. 1-5 above), seeing the latter as a background, even if a meaningful one, to the standing saints.[592] I think the golden structures of the rotunda are more important players than this, but certainly in the mosque the larger buildings are the dominant characters, disproportionally more elaborate than the smaller structures, which gather around them like courtiers around a ruler. The basic outline of the composition of a few opulent buildings among a larger number of more humble ones, coexisting in a flourishing and loosely paradisiacal landscape, can be seen as an architectural depiction of social hierarchy where even the lowest levels are elevated and prosperous. This model corresponds to early Islamic descriptions of heaven:

> The Messenger of Allah told me that when the people of Paradise enter it, they will take their places according to their deeds… Chairs of light and chairs of pearls and chairs of rubies and chairs of chrysolite and chairs of gold and chairs of silver will be placed for them. Those who are of a lower status than them, and none of them will be regarded as insignificant, will sit on sandhills of musk and camphor, and they will not feel that those who are sitting on chairs are seated better than them.[593]

---

[592] Grabar 1987, pp.88-89.

[593] Sunan Ibn Majah vol.5, Book 37, Hadith 4336.

The trees between the buildings can also be seen as figures. The impression is strongest in the case of the central triad, with one tree almost appearing to be enthroned on a golden platform between the two pavilions, flanked by another two appearing from behind screens. Collectively, the trees may represent the Companions of the Prophet, or all believers. According to a hadith, Muhammad said "The example of a believer is like a green tree, the leaves of which do not fall... it is the date-palm tree."[594] The structure of the mosaic programme which encourages the reading of the trees as people, and implies their interrelationship within a group, is provided by the architecture. The theory that the mosaics represent the whole Islamic empire may therefore not be far off the mark, despite the fact that it is not shown literally in terms of cities. Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins-Madina suggest that the mosaics combined visions of paradise and allusions to earthly buildings in order to create a political statement of the "imperial theme of rule over the natural and human world…idealized into the representation of a 'Golden Age'."[595] In an almost exact parallel with the logic of early Christian theologians, at least those in charge of the fundraising, Islamic writers linked architectural patronage to paradisiacal real estate – a hadith records that Muhammad said "Whoever builds a mosque for Allah, Allah will build something similar for him in Paradise".[596] In the mosaics of the portico, the rich gold veining

---

[594] Sahih al-Bukhari 6122, Book 78, Hadith 149. Also see Surah 48:18, "Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, [O Muhammad], under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest."

[595] Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins 2001, p.26.

[596] Jami` at-Tirmidhi vol.1, Book 2, Hadith 319; Another version of the same hadith, Sunan Ibn Majah vol.1, Book 4, Hadith 738, reports that even if the mosque is as small as a

of the green marble is shown in detail, especially on the two central pavilions. This

may refer to a hadith which describes a structure with pillars of gold and green

chrysolite awaiting a conqueror in heaven, perhaps particularly suitable for a

caliphal vision of paradise.[597] According to the eleventh-century *History of*

Damascus by Ibn Asakir, the Umayyad court poet al-Farazdaq wrote that "the

inhabitants of Damascus possessed within their walls one of the palaces of

paradise, that is to say, the mosque of the Umayyads", and although the presence

of the dynastic name suggests this is Ibn Asakir's paraphrase rather than a direct

quote, it is probable that the flattering comparison with a palace was also made at

the time.[598] Built seventy years after the conquest of Damascus, after the two

preceding caliphs had failed to reach agreement with the Christian inhabitants, the

new mosque must have been seen as a major triumph for al-Walid I, as was his

rebuilding of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.[599] The choice of palatial buildings

as motifs in both of these high-profile mosques may have represented a particularly

caliphal view of a constructed paradise, with idealised images of palaces matching

---

sparrow's nest, it will become a house in heaven. For the Christian equivalents see

Brown 2015, p.27, 66.

[597] Sunan Ibn Majah vol.4, Book 24, Hadith 2780; Sunan Ibn Majah vol.5, Book 37, Hadith

4336. Also see Bloom 1993, pp.135-136 on the *qubbat al-khadra* or green domed

palaces of the seventh and eighth centuries.

[598] Quatremère 1845 vol.2, pp.275-276; Flood 2001, p.34.

[599] As well as al-Farazdaq, the court poet Nabigha ash-Shaybani wrote about the

construction of the mosque in triumphal terms, describing al-Walid as pulling up the

foundations of the church "out of the entrails of the earth": Creswell 1958, p.66. Also

see Ibn al-Faqih, *Concise Book of Countries*, 'Damascus'; Massé 1973, p.132.

the splendour of the mosques they had built, set amongst the 'high chambers' of their subjects.

The arrangement of structures on the entrance arch follows a similar pattern, with a concentration of grand buildings in the centre accompanied by a supporting cast of simpler ones, large and small alike bursting into life and putting out leaves. As at Santa Maria Maggiore, the structures appear as stepped voussoirs supporting the arch. The motif at the very top of a column or pier beneath an arch is almost completely modern, but if it follows the lines of the original, may represent some kind of celestial mihrab, housing a 'pillar of the faith'.

The mosaics around the courtyard combined motifs and formats taken from various sources. As discussed in chapter three, many churches in sixth- and seventh-century Jordan and Palestine were decorated with mosaics showing flowing rivers, flourishing fruit trees – and buildings, sometimes set by the rivers to create Nilotic scenes, and sometimes depicted alone. However the Damascus mosaics are not straight copies; the buildings in the foreground are much more elaborate than any of the topographical images on Jordanian church floors. Partly this must be due to the scale of the job – a caliphal commission would have put pressure on the mosaicists to outdo themselves.[600] But the mosaicists' virtuosity seems to have been targeted at the architecture; the trees remain similar in their form and level of detail to examples in earlier mosaics, although made with higher quality materials. Finbarr Barry Flood has traced the pre-Islamic roots of the hanging pearl motif, not to architectural imagery on the Levantine mosaic floors close to home,

---

[600] For theories on the origin of the mosaicists, see Flood 2001, pp.20-21.

but to the grander apse mosaics of Rome and Ravenna.[601] Late antique topographic

mosaics also tended to show isolated images of churches and cities, not whole

landscapes. Perhaps the best comparison, although it is totally different in style

and details of content, is the Madaba Map, in that it also visualises an architectural

hierarchy within a prosperous landscape, with large differentiated vignettes of

major cities dotted amongst smaller more standardised representations of towns

and villages. As I have already argued, the Madaba Map probably decorated a

secular civic building, in which the architectural imagery legitimated the social

relationships between the users of the hall.[602] Although the buildings and river on

the walls of the mosque have strong paradisiacal overtones, this comparison might

be taken to support the hypothesis of a social function of the mosaic as a vision of

the Umayyad state, flourishing under the reign of al-Walid. Comparisons can also

be made with much earlier works. The curved portico by the river is a composition

found in late Roman mosaics, for example at Piazza Armerina in Sicily (fig. 210) and

Carthage in North Africa.[603] The arrangements of smaller buildings also recall

Roman sacral-idyllic landscapes in which isolated structures were set among

prominent trees (fig. 211), or the piled-up architectural compositions of Pompeian

paintings, and have little in common with sixth- or seventh-century depictions of

walled cities.[604]

---

[601] Flood 2001, ch.2, esp. pp.17-20. Flood states that the Roman and Ravennate mosaics

were inspired in turn by Constantinopolitan models, but without giving examples.

[602] Leal forthcoming, and p.183 above.

[603] Dunbabin 1978, pl.126, 127.

[604] On the possible antique models for the mosaics see Förtsch 1993.

Architectural depictions in Islamic art have sometimes been explained in terms of aniconism, as one of the alternatives artists had to turn to when the representation of humans and animals was forbidden.[605] In fact much early (and later) Islamic art does include living creatures, and there are plenty of examples in which architectural forms were used to frame and draw attention to figures. I propose that the buildings in the mosaics of the Great Mosque should be seen as actively chosen symbols in a positive sense, rather than backgrounds hurriedly promoted in the absence of figures. There are many options for aniconic decoration – as shown by the wide variety of subsequent mosque decoration across the Islamic world – but here buildings were selected for their associations of sacred presence, order, and material grandeur. I now briefly discuss two cases in which buildings were given an equally central role, on a seventh- or eighth-century brass plate, and on the frontispieces of the roughly contemporary Sana'a Quran.

The Berlin plate and Sana'a Quran

The brass plate, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin, is incised with an image of a large building surrounded by a circular arcade, in the midst of a lively tangle of leaves (fig. 212). The building has an arched door or niche on the ground floor, arched windows running the length of the upper storey, and three domes on the roof. The central dome is decorated with a large stylised flower, and pairs of similar flowers grow on either side of the door, along with two palm-trees. There are projections from the roof on either side, perhaps representing a balcony

---

[605]Fowden 2004 p.289: "The only striking innovation in mosque decoration was not, then, an addition to the old repertoire but a subtraction – that of the human and animal form", c.f. Flood 2012, p.253.

encircling the building, supported on poles which descend to vases at ground level. Beneath the structure there is a large stylised pair of wings resembling those on Sassanian royal crowns, a motif which was also adopted for the mosaic decoration of the Dome of the Rock.[606] In the doorway is a thin rectangular form with projections, either I-shaped and standing on one step, or T-shaped and standing on two (fig. 213). A pole on steps, either I- or T-shaped, often with a ring around it near the top, can be seen on some pre-reform Umayyad coins (fig. 214), taking the place of the cross on the reverses of the Byzantine coins on which they were modelled.[607] The building on the plate is probably not a palace. Scenes of aristocratic life were often shown on plates, but they always included human figures. Their absence suggests that the design had a religious meaning of some sort. However, the structure does not precisely resemble a mosque; the upper-floor arcade and the projecting balconies seem more suited to a residential building. I propose that it carried an allegorical meaning, in the same way that the temple-like buildings in Santa Maria Maggiore did not have to literally resemble fifth-century basilicas to convey the notion of the Church. The details around the doorway suggest an iconic representation, an allusion to a recognised form or symbol. This is supported by the fact that the same form was used on coins, a medium in which recognisable iconography contributes to the acceptance of the currency. Perhaps the shape in the doorway is the 'pillar of Islam' set in the garden of Abdullah bin Salam's dream; perhaps the entire structure is the *Bayt al-Ma'mur*,

---

[606] The plate was once thought to be Sassanian, and the building to represent a fire temple or the throne-hall of Khosrow II: Ringbom 1951, fig.15, 16, 18, 23-25, pp.51-56, 78-84. It is now thought more likely to be early Islamic: Weber 2014, pp.30-31; Nees forthcoming.

[607] Broome 1985, fig.15; Grabar 1987, fig.17.

the heavenly analogue of the earthly Ka'ba, the wings beneath it standing in for the hosts of praying angels. What is certain is that both the building and the focal point of the pillar are presented as significant subjects.

Codex Ṣana'a DAM 20-33.1 is an illuminated Quran, found in the Great Mosque of Sana'a in Yemen.[608] On the evidence of the style of the script and decoration Hans-Caspar von Bothmer and Alain George have attributed the manuscript to the late seventh or early eighth century, a date range supported by carbon dating.[609] The book is a luxury item, almost half a metre square, written in fine Kufic calligraphic script with ornamental borders and surah dividers. There are three illustrated pages at the beginning of the Quran, an eight-pointed star with trees sprouting from a circular design in the middle, followed by a double-page spread of two multi-storey buildings, now rather damaged (figs. 215 & 216). The buildings are almost entirely composed of rows of arches divided by columns, with circular lamps hanging in each arch. They have flat roofs planted with trees and flowers, and there is an arch or niche flanked by pairs of columns in the centre of the left-hand roof, also hung with a lamp. The right-hand building has a wide flight of steps up to a double door in the centre and a projecting side-door (probably originally one on each side). There is a rectangular space in the middle of the building between the rows of arches, with tall double columns on each side and an asymmetrical feature near the top, possibly a minbar, beneath a niche with a decorated vault hung with

---

[608] Von Bothmer 1987; Grabar 1992, pp.155-160, fig.127 and 128, pl.16 and 17; George 2010, pp.79-86.

[609] Von Bothmer 1987, p.9; George 2010, p.79. C.f. Bloom 2000, pp.22-23, n.15, who proposes a ninth-century date, and Blair 2006, p.125, who has reservations about the accuracy of the carbon dating.

another lamp. The left-hand building also has a projecting side-door, but as far as it is possible to tell, did not have a main door. There is a square space in the middle of the arches, perhaps a courtyard, containing a vase of flowers or possibly a fountain. The spandrels of the arches and the edges of both buildings are decorated with delicate floral patterns, the columns between the arches have chevron marbling, and the double columns are painted with undulating veins of marble.

The niches, arcades and hanging lamps, the central courtyard on one building and the possible minbar on the other, identify the buildings as mosques.[610] Grabar has suggested that the images may combine elevation with plan views and interiors with exteriors, so that the arches represent arcades inside the prayer-halls, rather than upper-storey windows.[611] This is a plausible reading, but it would nevertheless be unusual. There was a convention in late antiquity for unfolded architectural images, showing the front and both sides of a basilica at once, but not for cut-away views like this – churches tended to be shown either as whole buildings from the outside, or hinted at through details of their interiors such as ciboria. Whatever is going on here, the illustrators invented a new format for it. Again, the buildings can be interpreted as iconic images, as visualisations of faith or the House of God, alluding to mosques but not directly representing them. The lamps and arches are repeated beyond what would be necessary to identify the building as a mosque, and they take precedence over features like the courtyard, occupying more space than they would in any actual mosque. The multiplication of lamps and niches can

---

[610] For an example of an early Islamic mosque lamp found at Medina Elvira near Granada, in al-Andalus, see Dodds 1992, p.207, no.8.

[611] Grabar 1992, p.156.

probably be linked to surah 24:35 of the Quran: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly star". Although the arcades could well represent plan views of interiors, the first impression of multi-storeyedness created by the tiers of arches may also have been important, both in terms of the Quranic reference to the upper chambers of heaven, and the practice of locating the reception rooms of elite buildings on upper storeys – if this is God's House, it would have needed an upstairs. These are mosques reinvented as ideals, accessible through the words of the Quran.

Placed at the front of the book, the permeable buildings with their open arcades lead the reader inwards. This may also explain why two slightly different structures were depicted, moving from the right-hand image with the double doors to the left-hand one with the interior court. The delicate curling patterns which run in a band around the edges of the building are very similar to those used throughout the rest of the book as page borders and surah dividers (fig. 217), adding to the sense of identity between book and building.[612] As Alain George has discussed, a number of early Qurans were illuminated with architectural ornamentation.[613] Perhaps due to the dual meaning of column as an architectural and textual form, columns were chosen as one of the few non-abstract motifs depicted between surahs in early manuscripts of the Quran (fig. 218).[614] They were sometimes combined with floral motifs, to give a sense of living architecture, or possibly a living book *as* architecture, in the same way that architectural canon tables in contemporary

---

[612] Von Bothmer 1987, fig.17-20, 24, 26, 27.

[613] George 2010, pp.84-85, figs.53-58.

[614] Déroche 2004.

Bibles functioned as entrance porticos to the Gospels.[615] In Alain George's words, "These manuscripts were part of the ritual and iconography of their religious buildings which, in turn, they mirrored in their pages."[616] It is also interesting to note the similarities between the decorated arcades and hanging lamps of the Sana'a manuscript and those in Carolingian canon tables.[617] However the overall impression given by the frontispiece of the Quran is unique. Codices like the Sana'a Quran would have been display items, elite commissions.[618] The experimentation with architectural iconography in their adornment is another indication of its popularity at the top of Umayyad society.

Back to the classics (1)

Architectural compositions can also be found in secular contexts, in some of the Umayyad palaces and bath-houses. Small fragments of painting showing architectural forms were retrieved in excavations at Khirbet al-Mafjar in Palestine (fig. 219), but the best-preserved examples are in the tepidarium of the bath-house of Qusayr Amra, dating to the second quarter of the eighth century.[619] Three of the four lunettes of the vault are decorated with scenes of naked women, children and winged erotes. All three are structured around architectural settings. On the south

---

[615] Nordenfalk 1992, p.30; Brown 2003, p.181, 304.

[616] George 2010, p.85.

[617] For example KM vol.1:2, pl.2, 17, 25, 29, 30, 67, 83, 84, 97.

[618] Four other early Qurans of similar size and quality have been found, although without comparable frontispieces: George 2010, pp.87-89.

[619] Khirbet al-Mafjar: Hamilton 1959, pl.97b; Qusayr Amra: Vibert-Guigue, Bisheh and Imbert 2007, pl.68.

lunette, a woman carries a baby through an imposing and ornate doorway (fig. 220-222). The west lunette shows women bathing, accompanied by at least one winged eros, against a composition of arches, windows and doors, arranged in a stepped formation to fill the space of the arch. On the east wall three women are bathing a small child, beneath a structure with a central arch or apse decorated with swirling scrolls, probably vines. The narrative(s) on these walls are very likely taken from classical mythology. Given that there is a painting of Dionysus and Ariadne in the next room, they may be episodes from the infancy of Dionysus. Greek culture was highly valued in the Umayyad court, especially by the patron of Qusayr Amra, the poet and caliph-in-waiting al-Walid ibn Yazid.[620] The main subjects of the programme in this room are the mythological characters, and the precise role of the architecture is difficult to judge, especially since these paintings have not yet been cleaned in the ongoing conservation work by the Italian Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro. For now, it is interesting to note that complex architectural backdrops were chosen for this reinvention of the mythological cycle. In the classical Roman tradition, scenes of naked goddesses had generally been set outdoors, so again this is probably not a direct copy of a single earlier model. Rather, it may draw together various strands, perhaps putting together architectural confections of Roman wall paintings with figures from mosaics or sculpture. The paintings also pick up on features of the actual building in which they were viewed. The vine-covered arch over the scene of bathing on the east lunette recalls the intense vine-scroll decoration of the small vaulted rooms flanking the throne niche in the audience hall, and the door on the south lunette

---

[620] Fowden and Key Fowden 2004, pp.98-106.

262

through which the main character walks is set above the real door of the tepidarium (fig. 223).[621]

The architectural iconography of early Islam: conclusion

Umayyad patrons certainly appreciated the impact and iconographic potential of actual buildings. In the Dome of the Rock, spoliate columns of different colours and types were arranged strategically with the most dramatic red ones aligned with the entrances, perhaps either in reference to the famous 'flame-coloured' columns of the nearby Nea Ecclesia, or directly taken from the Christian building.[622] Another example is the characteristic rounded towers of the 'desert palaces', used more for their aesthetic and symbolic effect than for defence.[623] There was a resurgence of urban display – the Umayyad rulers revived existing city centres with new markets and shopping streets, as well as palaces and mosques.[624] They also founded a number of new cities along classical lines, with rectangular plans crossed by grids of streets.[625] The early Islamic elite even appropriated a civic vocabulary for their palaces, for example at Anjar, where the extended palatial complex was given

---

[621] Side rooms: Vibert-Guigue, Bisheh and Imbert 2007, pl.22, 23, 114.

[622] Nees 2016, pp.103-108.

[623] Hillenbrand 1999, pp.93-94.

[624] For example at Apollonia: Roll and Ayalon 1987; Baysan: Khamis 2001; and Jerash: Simpson 2008.

[625] Al-Ramla: Luz 1997, pp.36-37; Anjar: Finster 2003, pp.217-218, 212; Ayla: Whitcomb 1994. On 'Islamic urbanism' see Kennedy 1985; Hillenbrand 1999; Walmsley 2007, pp.72-107.

towered walls, colonnaded shopping streets and a tetrapylon.[626] Buildings were

clear embodiments of royal ambition, and recognised as such. In the words of the

tenth-century Andalusian caliph Abd al-Rahman III, patron of the palatial city of

Madinat al-Zahra:

> When kings want to immortalise the memory of their loftiest thoughts, they
>
> do so through the language of architecture. A building, when it is of noble
>
> proportions, reflects the majesty and rank (of its builder).[627]

Architectural imagery was therefore appropriate for the creation of an imperial

visual identity, speaking of tradition and power, and stability. It was also suited to

religious expression – forms such as niches and columns already had sacral

associations belonging to the shared heritage of the religions of the book, but they

were not absolutely tied down to Christian ideology; they did not pose an

ideological threat like crosses but could be adopted and remodelled to new

purposes. More work is needed on early Islamic representations of architecture,

and the theories put forward here are tentative. Nevertheless, the examples above

seem to confirm that firstly, there was a strong interest in the expressive

possibilities of built forms among Umayyad patrons and makers, and secondly, that

they went beyond merely copying existing motifs, to combine and reinvent old

formats, and to develop new ones.

---

[626] Hillenbrand 1999; Finster 2003.

[627] Fairchild Ruggles 2011, p.78.

Architectural imagery in the Carolingian period

The last case study comes from ninth-century Rome, the capital of the 'Republic of St Peter'.[628] Studies of the last twenty years have emphasised that the popes of the Carolingian period had their own political agendas, running alongside and sometimes in opposition to those of their powerful allies.[629] The popes used various means to assert their autonomous identity. The *Donation of Constantine*, retrospectively legitimising the pope's temporal sovereignty over a sizeable portion of Italy and spiritual authority over the whole world, dates to this period, first mentioned by Hadrian I in 778 in a letter to Charlemagne.[630] Visual statements also played important roles in the creation and display of papal status. The apse mosaic of Leo III's triclinium at the Lateran palace is a good example. According to drawings made before the restorations of the 1730s, Leo and Charlemagne were depicted kneeling either side of St Peter on the right-hand side of the arch. The kneeling pope is shown on the left, at Peter's right hand. The depiction of a secular ruler obtaining a saint's blessing was unusual, but the main message is the precedence of the contemporary pope, and the dominant authority of Peter.[631]

Artists working for both Carolingian and papal patrons looked back in time for their models, reworking late Roman motifs and styles to express elite identity and

---

[628] On the papal state see Noble 1984, pp.57-58, chapter 5.

[629] McClendon 1996, pp.104-105; Emerick 2001, pp.140-141, 150-151; Goodson 2010,

  p.43, 77-78, and ch.6.

[630] Noble 1984, pp.134-137.

[631] Ladner 1941, pp.13-25; Walter 1970, pp.157-160, 170-176; Luchterhandt 1999; Bauer

  2004, pp.109-114.

power.[632] The creative engagement with late antique forms of ivory carving is probably the most well-known example of Carolingian court art.[633] There was also a renewed fashion for opus sectile floors in Roman churches.[634] The return to elaborate architectural imagery is an equally important aspect of the visual culture of the period, although it has not previously attracted the same attention. Architectural motifs appear in mid eighth- to ninth-century ivory carvings, manuscript illuminations, wall paintings and mosaics, in some cases almost crowding out the figures beside them. An extreme example is the Adoration of the Lamb in the Gospels of St Médard of Soissons – the Lamb, Evangelist symbols and adoring elders being completely side-lined by the architectural fantasy that fills most of the page (see pp.245-247). Architectural forms dominated the luxurious Gospel books produced during the reigns of Charlemagne and his descendants, both in their Evangelist portraits and canon tables, and on their ivory book covers (fig. 224-225).[635] Microarchitectural artefacts were also produced, such as

---

[632] Carolingian rulers, and the Lombards before them, may also have been inspired in this by the Umayyad example, but that is a different story: Mitchell 2014.

[633] For recent work and older bibliographies on Carolingian art and '*renovatio'* see Steigmann and Wemhoff 1999; Bertelli and Brogiolo 2000; Van den Brink and Ayooghi 2014. For Carolingian ivories see Goldschmidt 1914; Fillitz 1999. For the creative reworking rather than simple imitation of antique models see Mitchell 2008; Büchsel 2016.

[634] McClendon 1980, p.157 for the opus sectile floor of the San Zeno chapel in Santa Prassede.

[635] Manuscripts: KM vol.1:2 1933, pl.17, 25, 47-49, 51, 69, 71, 74, 92, 94, 95; KM vol.2, pl.1, 3, 4, 38-41, 54, 56, 58, 60, 67-81, 94-97, 104, 106. Ivories: Goldschmidt 1914, pl.2,

Einhard's triumphal arch reliquary, adopting forms associated with imperial tradition and power.[636] Actual buildings seem to have been considered in allegorical terms, on the evidence of the dedicatory of the Palatine Chapel at Aachen:

> When the living stones are linked in peaceful harmony and in even numbers
>
> all stand together, the work of the lord who built the whole hall shines brightly
>
> and the pious labour of mortal men is crowned with success. Their structure
>
> of perpetual beauty will abide if the author protects it in its perfection and
>
> holds sway over it. Thus may it be God's will that this entire temple, which
>
> the emperor Charles built, may rest upon a stable foundation.[637]

The author (*auctor*) is God, but the lord (*domini*) is Charlemagne. The inscription comes close to comparing the works of the two, alluding to Christ's statement that he would build his church on a rock, and perhaps also to the "city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" of Hebrews 11:10. In its evocation of divine construction work, a comparison can be made with the dedicatory inscription of Santa Sabina, written some four centuries earlier, with its (not very) hidden message of *Petrus…fundavit*. The role of architecture in the artistic productions sponsored by the Carolingian court needs discussing in more detail than is possible in this dissertation, although in the conclusion I briefly return to the St Médard Gospels Adoration scene. Here I look at one of the most publically-visible examples of the 'architectural turn' of the Carolingian period from the papal side, the apse

---

3, 10, 12, 15, 22, 29, 31, 35, 41, 53. On ivories and manuscripts see Laffitte and Denoël 2007; Nees 2009.

[636] Noga-Banai 2013.

[637] Bandmann 2005, p.271, n.51.

and triumphal arch mosaics commissioned by pope Paschal I in 817-818 for the new church of Santa Prassede in Rome.

The mosaics of Santa Prassede

The compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis* recorded that:

> The church of Christ's martyr St Praxedes, built a long time ago, was now suffering such fatigue from its great age that collapse to foundations was threatening its ruin; this venerable pontiff (Paschal I)…shifted and erected it in another place not far away, an improvement on what it had formerly been.[638]

The mosaics which decorate the apse, the apsidal arch and the 'triumphal arch' in front of it transform the sanctuary of the church into a dazzling landscape of blue and gold (fig. 226). Christ stands in the centre of the apse, with Peter and Paul either side of him, each ushering forwards a female saint, presumably the sisters Praxedes and Pudenziana. Paschal stands on the outside of the apse on the left (Christ's right), holding a model of the church (fig. 106). Balancing him on the right-hand side of the apse there is a haloed cleric, possibly St Zeno, holding a book. The seven figures stand on a gold ground, with the river Jordan running in front of them. Below is a wide gold band on which twelve sheep walk away from two jewelled cities towards a central Lamb (fig. 117). On the spandrels of the apsidal arch, the twenty-four elders offer wreaths to an enthroned Lamb at the top. Flanking the

---

[638] *Liber Pontificalis* 100:8, Duchesne 1981 vol.2, p.54; Davis 1995, p.9.

Lamb along the top of the arch are the four winged beasts holding books, four angels, and the seven golden lampstands of Revelation 1:12.

The triumphal arch, between the nave and the transept, carries a single composition, of a golden city set in a meadow of red flowers (fig. 227).[639] The city is shown as an elongated hexagonal box, made up of gold blocks set with emeralds and pearls. Christ and two angels hover above the centre of the city. Nearest to Christ are two women, one veiled and the other wearing the same rich costume as the saints in the apse below. They are probably the Virgin Mary and St Prassede. Next to St Prassede, St Peter stands holding a pair of golden keys, and John the Baptist stands next to Mary. Beyond them are eleven more apostles, all holding crowns. At the edges of the city, above the heads of the apostles, are two more figures dressed in white, a young man on the left holding a tablet with the word *lege*, and an old man on the right accompanied by an angel, who gestures towards Christ. These are most likely Moses and Elijah, in an abbreviated depiction of the Transfiguration, which is shown in full with a similarly contrasted pair of prophets in the San Zeno chapel, and in the slightly earlier arch mosaic of SS Nereo ed Achilleo.[640] There are gates on two of the short sides of the hexagonal city, with angels standing in them. Outside the left-hand gate, another angel leads a varied group of people forward, men and women in lay and clerical dress, all holding crowns. A similar group of people is ushered towards the city on the right, led by Paul and an angel. St Peter stands just in front of the gate, again holding a pair of

---

[639] For the term triumphal arch see *Liber Pontificalis* 100:8; Duchesne 1981 vol.2, p.54; Davis 1995, p.10.

[640] San Zeno: Wisskirchen 1992, fig.52, 53, 55; SS Nereo ed Achilleo: Matthiae 1967, pl.136, Thunø 2015, fig.37, 38.

gold keys (fig. 228). In the spandrels below, two more crowds of martyrs, dressed in white tunics and carrying crowns and palm fronds, look up in expectation of admission to the heavenly city.[641]

On the one hand, continuity and tradition seem to have been important to the designers of Santa Prassede. Both the form of the building and the iconography of the mosaics make visual reference to earlier Roman churches. Although at 45 by 30 metres, Santa Prassede was on a smaller scale than Old St Peter's, its designers appear to some extent to have taken it as a model, giving the new church a continuous transept, and a nave lined with spoliate entablature and Corinthian columns.[642] As many writers have noted, the compositions of the apse and apsidal arch are almost identical to those of the sixth-century church of Cosmas and Damian.[643] The two architectural forms depicted in the apse – the pair of jewelled cities and the model church – both have long pre-Paschalian backstories in Roman mosaics, and as I proposed in chapter two, the persistence of this iconography is likely to have been at least partly due to its associations with traditional stability.

The composition of the triumphal arch, on the other hand, is new. The mosaicists' biggest innovation was to depict heaven as an inhabited structure, with apostles inside the walls, and angels and St Peter at the gates – a far more literal illustration of the literary Heavenly Jerusalem than any seen so

[641] Wisskirchen 1992, pp.2-3, fig.30, 41, 42.

[642] On comparisons with Old St Peter's and Santa Maria Maggiore, see Krautheimer 1942, pp.17-20; Emerick 2001, pp.149-150; Emerick 2005, pp.46-50; Goodson 2010, pp.86-87.

[643] For example Nordhagen 1976, p.159; Mauck 1987, p.813; Bolgia 2006, p.11; Thunø 2014, p.223.

far.[644] The small jewelled cities which were repeated in earlier mosaics (and in the apse of Santa Prassede) are only seen from the outside. There is little indication of space between city walls and rooftops, giving the whole the impression of a solid lump of precious metal. These compressed cities may have functioned well as signs but they are not easy to interpret as places. The city on the arch, on the other hand, represents heaven as a three-dimensional space.

Little boxes

The first point to make about this imagery is the overlap between the space of the basilica and the depicted space of heaven. I argued in chapter two that this was a shared feature of the fifth-century architectural mosaics, where details of the depicted and actual buildings were aligned. In the intervening period, the fundamental identity of church and heavenly city (which remained a constant feature of theological literature) was limited to emblematic representations, in the

---

[644] The representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem as a three-dimensional city inhabited by saints remained popular for centuries to come; later examples include twelfth-century illustrations of Augustine's *City of God*, Florence Bibl. Laurenziana MS. Plut. 12.7, f.2v, and Prague Metropolitan Chapter of San Vitus, Bibl. MS. Lat. A7, f.1v, a twelfth-century fresco in the abbey church of St Theudère at Saint Chef in France, and a thirteenth-century fresco in the Bishop's Chapel at Gurk Cathedral in Austria: Gatti Perer 1983, cat. nos.127, 128, 133, 166.

juxtaposition of the small pairs of cities and the model churches. At Santa Prassede, however, it is again presented directly in an immersive architectural vision.[645]

The vision focuses on the function of the church as a container of saints. For the dedication of Santa Prassede, Paschal collected relics of 2,300 saints from various extra-mural cemeteries, which he housed beneath the altar of the new church, accessible via the annular crypt, entered via two staircases in the transepts. Finding and successfully translating relics was a sure sign of God's approval of the discoverer, so this unprecedented concentration of sanctity in one building was well-timed at the beginning of Paschal's reign.[646] As Goodson and Thunø have argued, the crowds of saints arriving at the walls of the golden city on the arch can be seen as the celestial equivalent of the transfer of their bones, first within the walls of Rome and then into the basilica.[647] The *Liber Pontificalis* records a great procession of "all the Romans, bishops, priests, deacons and clerics" when the relics were translated, presumably with Paschal at their head.[648] Joseph Dyer also put

---

[645] The intense mosaics of the San Zeno chapel repeat the gold of the city walls and the bright red flowers which grow at their feet, along with a second image of the Transfiguration – perhaps intended to provide the viewer with an even closer view of the interior of the city. See Wisskirchen 1992, fig.54-65.

[646] Bolgia 2006, p.11, 14; Goodson 2010, pp.221-222, 254; *Liber Pontificalis* 100:15; Duchesne 1981 vol.2, p.56; Davis 1995, p.16 for Paschal's vision of St Cecilia in which she endorses his search for her relics. Brown 1981, pp.91-93 for divinely-sanctioned relic collecting more generally.

[647] Goodson 2010, pp.154-155; Thunø 2014, p.224; also Mauck 1987, p.814.

[648] *Liber Pontificalis* 100:9; Duchesne 1981 vol.2, p.54; Davis 1995, p.11; Emerick 2001, p.130.

forward the theory that the mosaic imagery was inspired by Antiphon 107, which was used for relic depositions and the dedications of churches: "From Jerusalem may the relics come down and salvation from Mount Zion; [through them] there will be protection of this city", the city in this case being Rome.[649]

Visual comparisons between collections of relics in earthly churches and celestial companies of saints were not new. For example, in the seventh-century chapel of San Venanzio at the Lateran baptistery, John IV is depicted alongside the Dalmatian saints whose relics he translated.[650] The pope holds a small model church, and cities are represented in framed-off fields above the saints.[651] However, the figures themselves stand against a uniform gold background which gives no indication of a material setting. A determined viewer could draw parallels between the chapel with its relics, and the celestial city in which the saints reside, but the message is not emphasised. At Santa Prassede on the other hand, the venerated saints are given full architectural support, allowing much clearer links to be drawn between the heavenly city and the structure of the basilica. The elongated three-dimensional box of the city is displayed directly above the transept in which the saints' passion narratives were displayed, and which probably functioned as a martyrial chapel above the crypt, separated from the aisles by a columnar screen.[652] From a viewpoint in the nave, the two groups of saints on the arch appear from above the arms of the transepts. In addition, unlike in earlier churches where saints

---

[649] Dyer 1995, pp.94-99; Goodson 2010, p.157.

[650] Matthiae 1967, pl.104; Mackie 2003, pp.212-30, fig. 107; Mackie 1996.

[651] Thunø 2015, fig.43, 44.

[652] Paintings: Wilpert 1916 vol.4, pl.202-204.

and cities were depicted at different scales on separate registers of the mosaic, here they physically interact at a relatively realistic scale.

The walls of the city may also represent the congregation of saints in the form of their reliquaries. Saints were frequently likened to precious jewels.[653] The square golden blocks of the walls have thick outlines, and are each set with a rectangular jewel, giving them the appearance of distinct objects, and their sheer number calls to mind the hordes of saints stored in their boxes below, in a way that the relatively small crowds of saints do not. The open interior of the city also adds to its casket-like appearance. Pope Paschal commissioned two ornate reliquaries for fragments of the Cross, one of which, the so-called Cruciform Casket, displays a comparable visual meditation on containers of sanctity.[654] The incised decoration on the lid of this reliquary juxtaposes boxes of various scales as containers of, or supports for Christ: a footstool, an altar, and a stone building. The altar – a container of relics – is depicted in the centre of the cruciform lid, and is itself marked with a cross (fig. 229). At Santa Prassede, the apse over the altar has the same deep blue background as the arch before the transept, perhaps indicating that the space in which Paschal stands with his model church is inside the city walls. There is a sense of boxes within boxes: the walls of Rome protect the basilica, which encloses the walls of the depicted heavenly city and the actual relic boxes, which contain the

---

[653] Buettner 2011, esp.pp.43-45. In the late eleventh century, Thiofrid of Eternach

discussed reliquaries in precious materials in terms of spiritual visions of the Heavenly

Jerusalem: Hahn 2012, pp.205-206. Also see Thunø 2015, pp.168-169.

[654] Thunø 2002, pp.79-117, figs.65-67.

saints, and the 'real' heavenly city contains and protects all of them. The dedicatory inscription at the bottom of the apse also conflates church and heavenly city:

> [This is the] hall of the devout Praxedis, well pleasing to the Lord, in honour above the skies. It shimmers in light, adorned with diverse metals through the zeal of Paschal the supreme pontiff, foster-son of the Apostolic See. He buried many bodies of saints beneath these walls, placing them at various sites, confident that, because of them, he may be found worthy to approach the threshold of the heavens.[655]

With probably deliberate ambiguity, the hall of shining metals could equally be the basilica or the depicted city. In addition, the inscription implies a causal link between the translation of the saints within the walls of the church, and Paschal's passage over the threshold of heaven.

Gatekeeping

The second consequence of showing heaven as a full-sized and three-dimensional structure is to return to the questions of access and control discussed in chapter one. The gates of the city are blocked by angels, and none of the crowd of saints have yet made it inside. Although the dedicatory inscription describes Paschal as only conditionally 'approaching' the gate, the mosaic counteracts this statement of humility, emphasising the power of his predecessor Peter to control the entry of others. Peter is shown twice on the arch, once in the centre of the city and once outside its gates, in both cases holding a large pair of gold keys. The ability of Peter to open and shut the gates of heaven was one of the pope's main claims to power;

---

[655] Thunø 2011, p.291.

famously, at the Synod of Whitby in 664, King Oswiu claimed to have sided with the Roman delegation on precisely this basis.[656] St Peter's keys – the keys of heaven and the actual keys to the confessio of Old St Peter's – were also used as bargaining chips between the popes and Carolingian rulers. In an attempt to get Peppin on side against the Lombards, Stephen II wrote to him:

> Do not despise my entreaty nor close your ears to my claim; and then the prince of the apostles will not close the kingdom of heaven to you. I adjure you by the living and true God and by these most holy keys of the Confession of blessed Peter, which I have sent you as a token of supplication, not to prefer your friendship with the king of the Lombards to your love for the prince of the apostles.[657]

Stephen also reminded Peppin that any promises to protect papal territories were made to Peter himself and that he (Pepin) should therefore bear in mind who held the keys to heaven.[658] When Leo III was elected he also sent Charlemagne the keys to St Peter's tomb. As soon as Paschal was elected, he persuaded Louis the Pious to sign the *Pactum Ludovicianum,* guaranteeing papal lands. Louis' biographer Ermoldus describes a conversation about this treaty which implies that the keys of heaven were again part of the negotiations. When Louis made his promise to maintain "the property of the church of Peter", his priest and advisor Helisachar replied "O almighty God…and you Peter, who stand as the magnificent bearer of

---

[656] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 25; Colgrave, Collins and McClure 1994, p.159.

[657] *Codex Carolinus* 2:478-479; Daly 1973, p.61.

[658] Noble 1984, p.91. For similar letters from Stephen III and Hadrian to Charlemagne, see King 1987, pp.270-273, 277. Pope Gregory III also sent Charles Martel the keys to St Peter's tomb: Noble 1984, p.46.

the keys of heaven… and you, heaven dwellers, whose bodies Rome now keeps… I pray that you keep this king for ever and ever as the leader of his people".[659] The double image of Peter with his keys on the arch (and a third in the apse) need to be seen in this context as powerful reminders of the pope's position. The crowd of saints relying on St Peter's intercession includes lay figures and clergy. On the one hand, this accurately represents the diversity of the relics which Paschal collected, but it could also be a subtle reminder of the pope's claim to both spiritual and temporal power. In more practical terms, by gathering together such a large number of relics, Paschal was able to regulate their veneration. The collection of saints would have materially increased his authority as their guardian.[660] The translation of large numbers of saints' relics from catacombs to inner-city churches had a noticeable effect on patterns of pilgrimage and worship. Earlier popes had promoted the catacombs, and built relatively few churches inside the city walls, but this situation was reversed in the second half of the eighth century, and the number of visitors to the catacombs declined.[661] Paschal's translation of thousands of relics was the high-point of this transfer of sacrality into the city of Rome itself. The arch mosaic can therefore be seen as a double-edged statement of papal authority; Paschal admits the saints to Rome, and Peter admits them to heaven – the control that one has above, so the other has below.

A transfigured city

---

[659] Noble 2009, p.151.

[660] Goodson 2005; Goodson 2010, ch.5.

[661] Osborne 1985, pp.284-287, 291-293; Smith 2000, pp.320-321; Bauer 2004, p.144.

The presence of Elijah and Moses inside the city points to a third aspect of the mosaic city, also connected to access, this time in terms of vision. According to Isidore of Seville, the difference between the present church and the future Jerusalem was one of seeing:

> For its present pilgrimage, the Church is called Sion... it contemplates the promise of heavenly things. Therefore it took the name Sion, that means contemplation (*speculatio*). Jerusalem… means vision of peace. Then, when every kind of adversity has been swallowed up, it will possess, face to face, the peace which is Christ.[662]

In other words, the Heavenly Jerusalem is the direct vision of what the church can only dream of. The miracle of the Transfiguration was intrinsically connected with sight, and Bede took it as a kind of preview of this direct vision of the heavenly city:

> And if it was the highest good to see, along with two such saints as Moses and Elijah, the appearance of Christ transfigured on the mountain, what words are capable of explaining, what sense is able to comprehend, what the joys of the just may be when they approach Mount Sion, and they see Jerusalem, city of the living God, and the presence of many thousands of angels, and the maker of this same city, God the founder, not as in a mirror, and not darkly as now, but face to face?[663]

---

[662] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 8:1:5-6; PL vol.82, col.295.

[663] Bede, *Homily for the second Sunday in Lent*, PL vol.94, col.100. For vision and the Transfiguration see Elsner 1994, esp. pp.97-98. On Carolingian theories of vision see Noble 2005.

Hrabanus Maurus repeated Bede's words in his *Commentary on Matthew*.[664]

Other ninth-century authors took an interest in the allegorical interpretation of the Transfiguration in the context of the defence of images and the visible world. For example, John Scottus wrote:

> If Christ at the time of his Transfiguration wore two garments white as snow, namely the letter of the Divine Oracles and the sensible appearance of visible things, I do not clearly see why we should be encouraged diligently to touch the one in order to be worthy to find him whose garment it is, and forbidden to enquire about the other, namely the visible creature.[665]

Thunø has noted that the first depiction of the Transfiguration in a Roman church, in the mosaic above the apse of SS Nereo ed Achilleo, was completed in the same year as the renewed Byzantine iconoclasm of 815.[666] It is possible that the shining city on the arch of Santa Prassede was intended as a direct vision of a transfigured church, and perhaps also as a public statement of the papal opposition to iconoclasm.

Thunø compares the city on the triumphal arch of Santa Prassede with the urban background in Santa Pudenziana, seeing them as evidence of a dialogue between sister-churches, "bear[ing] witness to a long-standing and evolving concern with making Jerusalem present in Rome".[667] In their different ways they do, but if this is

---

[664] Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentary on Mathew* 5:17, PL vol.107, col.999.

[665] John Scottus Eriugena, *The Division of Nature* 3:35; PL vol.122, col.723; Lozovsky 2000, p.143.

[666] Thunø 2005, p.278.

[667] Thunø 2014, p.226.

a dialogue, the conversation was only picked up after a several hundred year pause. The mosaicists of Santa Prassede took the idea of the church as a microcosm of a heavenly city, which had been expressed in a more muted sense in the images of jewelled cities and model churches of the intervening period, and returned it to a fully-realised architectural form. I do not think that they directly intended to draw parallels with the early fifth-century apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana. Whereas the apse mosaic of Santa Prassede is recognisable as an updated version of SS Cosmas and Damian, the arch is a unique composition. Instead, I suspect that patrons four hundred years apart recognised the benefits of architectural symbolism for making statements about corporate identity and status. The reworking of early Christian iconography needs to be seen within the context of contemporary social tensions. The art of the 'Carolingian popes' is increasingly interpreted as politically charged, one of their methods of establishing and displaying their authority, in relation to the Carolingian and Byzantine rulers as well as to less powerful rivals such as the Venetians.[668] Judson Emerick described buildings such as Santa Prassede as the mass media of their time: "Those who could afford to build – and these were almost always the ruling classes – mostly used structures to shape the behaviour of others, and to claim political power and social position."[669] Exactly the same point can be made for images of buildings, with the advantage that time, money and the laws of physics were no object to what could be represented. Architectural forms demonstrate stability, and clearly-defined boundaries. They also visualise containment or control over what is inside, in this case the wealth of Rome – the wealth of the saints' relics, converted into the

---

[668] McClendon 1996; Noble 2001; Bolgia 2006, p.2, 33-34.

[669] Emerick 2001, p.129.

unmistakable material forms of gold walls and jewelled towers. The mosaic city advertises the status of Rome as the *limina apostolorum*, referred to indirectly in the dedicatory inscription in which Paschal describes his own approach to the *limen polorum*, the 'threshold of the heavens' – one threshold guarded by St Peter, and the other by his successor.

Back to the classics (2)

Another angle of the Carolingian 'architectural turn' was a fashion for including elongated classicising buildings in narrative scenes. This can be illustrated by the painted scenes of martyrdom in the transept of Santa Prassede. The images of decapitation and burial are divided by tall gabled buildings and free-standing arches shown at sharp angles (fig. 230).[670] John Mitchell has recently shown that asymmetrical angled and stilted arched openings were characteristic features of late Lombard and Carolingian painting.[671] They can be seen in New Testament and hagiographic scenes at San Salvatore in Brescia in the 760s (fig. 231) and a decade later in the New Testament cycle at St Johann in Müstair (fig. 232), in ninth-century scenes of martyrdom in St Benedict at Mals (fig. 233) and in the crypt of Epyphanius at San Vincenzo al Volturno in the 830s (fig. 234).[672] Similarly thin towers and arches are interspersed with Infancy scenes on one of Paschal's reliquaries (figs. 235).[673] In some of these images, the architectural elements probably have

---

[670] Wilpert 1916, pl.202-204.

[671] Mitchell 2013, pp.381-386; Mitchell 2014, pp.180-186.

[672] Brescia: Panazza 1962, pl.F; Peroni 2002; Müstair: Goll, Exner and Hirsch 2007, fig.46, 52, 105; Mals: Rasmo 1981, pl.15, 16, 29-34; San Vincenzo: Mitchell 1993, pl.7.

[673] Thunø 2002, pp.63-65, fig.37-39.

emblematic significance. For example, Ambrosius Autpert, abbot at San Vincenzo al Volturno in the 760s and 770s, compared Stephen, Laurence and Vincent to "milk-white columns of the temple of the lord in the holy of holies".[674] In the paintings in the crypt at San Vincenzo, there are three angled piers and columns, and two of the columns descend directly on to the heads of St Stephen and St Lawrence. A particularly elegant white archway also frames the head of one of the martyrs depicted in the north transept at Santa Prassede. Each block of stone depicted on Paschal's relic casket is decorated with a flower-like pattern, perhaps implying living stones. On the relic casket, the buildings also seem to emphasise the act of witnessing. They are often placed next to additional figures watching the central event, as if the watcher has suddenly stepped out from behind the arch to see the Annunciation or Visitation. The freestanding arches and columns also call to mind Roman images of sacral landscapes, acting like beacons of sacred presence.

Architectural imagery at the end of late antiquity: conclusion

Despite the 1,300-odd mile gap between the examples in this chapter, there are various points of comparison. In both the Great Mosque of Damascus and Santa Prassede large-scale architectural images were used to invoke ideas of religious community within paradisiacal settings, containing and defining the status of human figures in Santa Prassede, and replacing them in Damascus. The mosque-like buildings depicted in the Sana'a Quran can be compared with the architectural canon tables and settings for Evangelist portraits in western manuscripts, both functioning as monumental gateways to the following text.   A preference for populating scenes with airy, slightly

---

[674] Weber 1975-1979, p.1959; Mitchell 2014, p.175.

insubstantial, retro-classical architecture can be seen both in eighth-century Jordan at the bathhouse of Qusayr Amra, and in the frescoes in the transept of Santa Prassede, and in eighth- and ninth-century schemes of decoration from northern Italy and Switzerland. Based on similar coincidences in other media, in particular stucco, I think it is likely that these developments are connected, with the initial impetus coming from the east.[675] Whether or not this is the case, both groups of patrons and artists turned to architectural imagery to add a touch of grandeur to their compositions.

These parallels come partly from shared religious and cultural traditions, and a diffused Mediterranean-wide visual culture. The common ground between Judaeo-Christian and Islamic sacred literature and practices is likely to have encouraged the use of similar architectural motifs, for example columns and niches, although with distinctive expressions.   However, perhaps more importantly, I would argue that the comparable uses of architectural motifs relate to the social contexts of the images, in particular, the establishment or consolidation of power. The Great Mosque of Damascus and Santa Prassede were major religious showpieces, but they were also political statements. Commissioned near the start of Paschal I's and al-Walid I's reigns, they were defining monuments of their authority, making their mark in their respective capital cities. Another example of a link between architectural images and state-formation, although one I do not have time to go into here, is the adoption of Romanising colonnaded designs in the stone sculptures

---

[675] Leal 2014.

283

commissioned by the late eighth- and early ninth-century rulers of Mercia in Britain.[676]

In both Rome and Damascus, although the artists seem to have looked back across the centuries for inspiration, they transformed their models into unique compositions; both mosaics stand alone, as do the Sana'a Quran and the frontispiece of the Soissons Gospels, in Beat Brenk's words, "without precedent or successor".[677]

---

[676] Mitchell 2010. The preference for architectural imagery in eleventh-century English manuscripts such as the Caedmon Genesis, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, c. 1000-20, and Aelfric's Pentateuch, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B IV, c. 1055-65, would also be worth exploring in terms of the contemporary political situation.

[677] Brenk 1994, p.671.

Conclusion

The questions I asked in the introduction were what, how, and why: what architectural motifs were depicted in late antiquity, how did they work as images, and why were they chosen for depiction?

As to what was depicted, it is apparent that the selection of motifs was just that – a very selective view of the built environment. Despite the varying appearance of the images, they fall into a limited range of types. Everyday buildings like houses, storerooms and shops were almost entirely overlooked in favour of more grandiose structures; the architectural imagination of late antiquity was clearly more attuned to basilicas than barns. One of the most frequently repeated forms was the walled city, or the towered wall standing for the city. In many cases these were deliberately distanced from the cities of earthly experience by their gold and jewelled walls; some also borrowed from palatial iconography. Another range of structures could be grouped together under the heading of centrally-planned shrines, ciboria or pavilions. Basilical churches were also common. The most often depicted isolated forms were those associated with sacred or elite secular architecture, such as columns and niches.

These motifs were used to express a wide range of theological concepts, and to define individual and communal identities: the members of a faith, the inhabitants of a city, or the patrons of a single building. In terms of *how* this was done, there are three main ways in which architectural forms conveyed meaning. Firstly, they could work directly as symbols. Most of the evidence for clear iconographical meaning comes from Biblical and exegetical texts. There are some marvellously inventive architectural metaphors in late antique literature, and I have probably only found a small percentage of

them. The problem with using them alone as evidence is that they are difficult to narrow down; practically every ornate building in Christian art has been identified at some point as the Heavenly Jerusalem. A fair proportion of late antique architectural imagery also plays with the ideas of living stones, or pillars of the Church. However, the effectiveness of architectural symbolism seems not to have been in the symbols alone, but in their combination with a second layer of meaning(s), coming from the less strictly defined qualities and themes with which buildings were associated. Thirdly, depictions of architecture lent themselves to certain visual effects, and roles within compositions. The answer to *why* buildings were chosen for depiction in certain circumstances seems to lie largely in these second two forms of meaning, the associative and the visual.

On the columnar sarcophagi discussed in chapter one, pairings of columns and apostles illustrated the concept of the saints as pillars of the Church. The iconography of the city-gate sarcophagi picked up on the notion of membership of the Church as celestial citizenship in the City of God, and the juxtaposition of walls and apostles echoed contemporary descriptions of saints and their relics as fortified towers. However, identifying these possible textual sources for the images does not explain why they were chosen in the first place, since early Christian literature provided many non-architectural metaphors which could equally easily have been visualised. Apostles were also called doves, sheep, fishers of men and sailors; martyr saints were as often described as flowers as towers; and membership of the church was also likened to becoming a soldier or an athlete, and being adopted into a new family.[678] In funerary contexts, the preference for columns and city walls can

---

[678] Miller 2000, pp.227-233; Jensen 2012, pp.64-68, 90; Dijkstra 2016, p.79, 274, 338.

be attributed to their nature as boundary-markers. This makes them ideal communicators of concepts of access and restriction, the definition of distinct zones, and the control of movement between them. In the case of the city-gate sarcophagi, the walls represented the restricted access to salvation via the institution of the church. The architecture acted both as a barrier and an entrance, between life and death, or earth and heaven. The colonnades of the columnar sarcophagi are similarly permeable dividers between one space and another; porticoes often marked the entrances to buildings or transitions between open and covered spaces within them. The definition of boundaries can equally be seen in terms of protection, in this case the protection of the saints, who guard the deceased just as they guarded the boundaries of earthly cities. The popularity of the columnar sarcophagi may also have been due to the association of columns and niches with grand civic architecture, and the iconography of city walls predominantly appears on the tombs of imperial officials – perhaps the equivalent of colonnades for the higher pay grade. Above all, the architectural forms on fourth- and early fifth-century sarcophagi represented the personal access of the deceased to salvation, defined as entry to a controlled and civilised space.

In the three fifth-century mosaics presented in chapter two, the architectural symbolism focused on the church as an institution. At Santa Sabina, the demonstrative stonework of the nave walls leading to the city on the apsidal arch illustrated the concept of the two walls of the Jews and Gentiles joining in one structure, united by Christ the cornerstone. The diverse structures represented in the apse of Santa Pudenziana also took advantage of the double meaning of *ecclesia*, as congregation and building, to visualise the 'worldwide' spread of the Church accomplished by the apostolic mission. In Santa Maria Maggiore, temple-like buildings symbolised the Church as the renewed Temple, while cities stood for

the groups which accepted or rejected Christ's Incarnation, and for Christ himself. In this case, one of the most significant aspects of architectural forms was their ability to condense 'communities' into single structures.[679] Whereas the chaotic human side of cities was spiritually suspect, city walls could express the ideal of the Christianised community as a unified and orderly entity. Images of buildings presented the (Roman) Church as a universal institution, an undivided house.

Another characteristic of architectural imagery apparent in the fifth-century apse mosaics is interiority. Formally buildings are defined by exteriors, and they were almost always depicted from the outside, but the essential bit, the purpose of the building, is inside. The emphasis often placed on the entrances to depicted structures creates the impression of an almost-accessible space inside or beyond the walls. Displayed within actual buildings, the images blur the lines between actual and fictive architecture, drawing the viewer into the imagined inter-interior space. In iconographical terms, the jewelled cities and model basilicas discussed in the second half of chapter two visualised the belief that patronage of church buildings was rewarded with palaces in heaven, and represented the connection between the earthly and heavenly forms of the Church. The structures also embodied concepts of continuity and stability, initially by the association of monumental architecture with permanence and prosperity, and subsequently by the repetition of the motifs over a three-hundred year period.

In most of the mosaic floors discussed in chapter three, the dominant symbolism was not architectural but vegetal – the Church as vineyard, the Tree of Life, and the

---

[679] For an early modern example of the architectural construction of 'citizenship', see Duncan 1991, pp.93-94.

earthly paradise. Buildings and cities were depicted within these schemes as images of abundance and patronage. The two exceptions where built structures were central to the compositions are the earliest, in the church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayyibat al-Imam, and the latest, in St Stephen's at Umm ar-Rasas. In the former, churches were presented as sacramental symbols, enabling the rites of baptism and the eucharist. In the latter, processions of cities invoked a Holy Land activated by the River Jordan as the context for the flourishing vine in the centre of the nave, and defined Umm ar-Rasas as a sacred site on a level with Jerusalem. On the eastern Mediterranean floors, the materiality of architecture appears to have been particularly important. Of all the images I have discussed these were the most detailed, and the most convincingly veristic, with occasional instances of vernacular architecture. In the apse mosaics of fifth-century Rome, I argued that idealised architectural forms functioned as universalising symbols of Christian 'community'. In contrast, the effect of the more down-to-earth buildings is one of particularity. Juxtaposed with the enveloping ecclesiastical vine-scroll, the structures represent concrete locations, the social networks within which individual churches were constructed, and the patrons responsible for them. The physical presence of buildings could also be used to structure the space of a church, indicating processional movement between one location and another, and distinguishing between earthly and heavenly zones. Nilotic architecture appears to have been categorised somewhere in between the two realms, as a vision of a perfected earthly city.

The architectural iconography of early Islamic art surveyed in chapter four was based on concepts fairly similar to the Christian variety, but it developed in its own directions. Columns were valued as symbolic forms as 'pillars of the faith', and there was a conceptual overlap between structural and textual columns. Paradise

could be envisioned as pavilions or palaces with upper rooms, and although mosques had no official status as a heaven on earth, the illustrations of the Sana'a manuscript suggest that mosque buildings could be understood symbolically as gateways to the revelations of the Quran. The other major iconographic development discussed in chapter four was the depiction in Santa Prassede of an unmistakable Heavenly Jerusalem, with the apostles along the walls and St Peter at the gate. The mosaicists also combined the association between saints' relics and precious stones with the allegorical understanding of saints as living stones. In both cases, buildings appear as constructions of social order and organisation. In the Great Mosque of Damascus, the different scales of building create a vision of a hierarchically ordered paradise, a clear illustration of varied forms within a united whole. In a different context, Hilary of Poitiers noted the ability of buildings to represent differentiation and hierarchy:

> A city, however, must consist of diverse types of buildings. For everything is
>
> not a wall, a gate, a tower, nor is everything a main road, a colonnade, a shop,
>
> nor is everything a home, a forum, temples or an imperial building. Moreover,
>
> just as the residences differ from one another, so also do the ranks of the
>
> inhabitants.[680]

Differences of dress, scale and position can distinguish one human figure from another, but there are limits to how far this can be taken while allowing the bodies to relate to each other within a composition. In the Great Mosque of Damascus, the varied buildings together with the trees take on the roles of human figures, together composing the *Ummah*. In Santa Prassede on the other hand, as in the

---

[680] Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on the Psalms* 121:14, PL vol.9, col.666; Burns 2012,

p.196.

earlier Roman mosaics, a community (of saints this time, but by implication also their devotees) is shown in relation to a single structure, the city or Church overseen by the pope. In the Umayyad, Carolingian, and papal courts, architectural motifs equally seem to have been used for their connotations of imperial tradition and heritage.

There are also some common visual and compositional attributes of architectural motifs which have been apparent across the four chapters. Firstly, ambiguity. Perhaps because buildings frame almost all of everyday life, any one architectural feature can call several settings to mind. On top of this, the pick-and-mix effect of the theological literature, in which any structure named in Scripture could be given a variety of different allegorical interpretations, makes buildings extremely flexible as symbols. Thus few of the architectural images discussed above have been unambiguously identifiable as single places or concepts. Secondly, architectural images often mediate between the viewer and the picture space. They are familiar and tangible forms, and as discussed above, have built-in associations of access and interior space, almost demanding the viewer mentally to move towards them.

Thirdly, architectural imagery is an ideal vehicle for the display of rich detail. Complexity attracts the eye and the mind, creating the sense of an entire constructed world. It is probably not a coincidence that in his article on art as enchantment, the example that Alfred Gell gave of a particularly enchanting artwork he encountered as a child was a matchstick model of a cathedral.[681] There is something magical about the shrinking of what we know to be a huge and complex structure, and the illusion that all the detail has been retained, that if we

---

[681] Gell 1994, p.47.

look close enough, we would see each carved stone – a matchstick human figure might not get the same response. This gives buildings an ornamental advantage over living creatures. Increasing the level of detail makes buildings appear more impressive and more intricately worked, while the same process with humans or animals reduces their impact as iconic figures, revealing overly life-like imperfections.[682] Buildings provide opportunities for the demonstration of virtuosity and material wealth; structures can be almost endlessly compartmentalised, and each component can be decorated, gilded, and hung with pearls.

In brief, the associated qualities and characteristics of buildings which made them effective as symbols were access/restriction, community, stability, material presence and wealth, and imperial tradition. Such concepts are politically loaded, and frequently used (not only in late antiquity) by people with power, in order to demonstrate and maintain it.

Almost all my examples are taken from religious contexts, either funerary or devotional. However, the factors determining the *selection* of this imagery seem to have been primarily social. The most innovative architectural imagery was commissioned by elites, often by those who had only recently made it to the top, or were perhaps still on the way up. The city-gate sarcophagi appear to have been commissioned by individuals in high imperial offices at the end of the fourth century. In the early fifth century, images of churches and cities were deployed by a clerical class growing in confidence and wealth. And at the end of late antiquity,

---

[682] Clothing also provides excellent scope for flawless detail, and textiles may well perform some of the same functions as depicted architecture – a topic which would be interesting to follow up in future.

the emerging political players – the Umayyads, the Lombards and then Carolingians, and the newly assertive popes – used architectural symbolism to construct visions of authority, paradisiacal splendour and imperial heritage. Actual palaces, churches and city walls were facts of social status and control, not just symbols of them, and architectural imagery shares in the glory. Particularly at times of social change, those attempting to establish themselves at the top made use of architectural imagery in order to construct ideas of church, city, or empire as they wanted them to be, and as they wanted others to understand them.

To finish, I will illustrate these points with one more case study, the full-page illustration opposite the opening *Plures fuisse* prologue of Saint Jerome at the beginning of the Gospels of St Médard of Soissons, produced sometime in the early ninth-century and owned by Louis the Pious.[683] The frontispiece shows a four-columned porch in front of a tall white building with alternate projecting and recessed faces. The Evangelist symbols appear in large roundels in the entablature above the columns, topped by a golden fascia containing the sea of glass of Revelation 15:2. Above them stand the twenty-four Elders venerating the Lamb of God (fig. 236).[684]

Institution and unity

Taking the clearest symbolic meaning first, this is a composite architectural author portrait, showing the four Evangelists as columns. There is textual support for this

[683] Paris Bibl. Nat. Ms. lat. 8850, f.1b; KM vol.2, pl.67; Mütherich & Gaehde 1977, p.39, pl.4; Laffitte & Denoël 2007, p.98. On Louis the Pious' gift of the Gospels to the monastery of St. Médard at Soissons in 827, see KM vol.2, p.70.

[684] Walker 1948, p.3; Brenk 1994, pp.670-674; Laffitte & Denoël 2007, pp.97-100.

view; Hrabanus Maurus wrote that tops of columns represented "the minds of the teachers of the faithful, by whose thoughts dedicated to God all their works and words are guided."[685] Already in the second century Irenaeus had described the Gospels as the four pillars of the Church, and later writers echoed the trope.[686] However, the authors could equally have been represented, as elsewhere, by four portraits.[687] The choice of architectural imagery more directly emphasises the unity of the four supports within one structure, representing the harmony of the four Gospels.[688] The main subject of the picture is not the Lamb, but the four Evangelists united in the composite structure of the Church.[689] There is also a visual link with canon tables, the rectangular towers of the building between the columns taking the place of the numbers summarising the concordances of the Gospels.

Access and mediation

---

[685] Hrabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, 14:23; PL vol.111, col.404-405; Onians 1988, p.75; Mitchell 2014, p.175.

[686] Irenaeus, *Against heresies* 3:11:8; PG vol.7, col.835; ANF vol.1, p.428. For a later example see Paterius, *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* 1:2:44; PL vol.79, col.742.

[687] For example the Aachen Gospels, Aachen Cathedral, f.14v, and Vivian Bible, Paris Bibl. Nat. MS. Lat. 1, f.329v; KM vol.1:2, pl.73; KM vol.3:1, pl.35.

[688] Brenk 1994, p.671.

[689] See Brenk 1994, pp.672-673 for the relationship between the illustration and the content of the prologue opposite, in which Jerome emphasises the authority of the four canonical Gospels, and the unity of the Old and New Testament as shown by the reappearance of Ezekiel's four beasts in the Apocalypse of St John.

Next, the architecture suggests ways through the image, and into the Gospels which follow. The evangelical columns form an entrance portico, its curtains pulled back. Behind, the iconostasis-like screen of the building is pierced with dozens of windows, suggesting the possibility of access although the interior remains a mystery. The composition is also layered, with monochrome walls filling the majority of the page, and golden ones above. As in the apse of Santa Pudenziana, the contrasting colours define two zones of existence, the structure as a whole standing for the Church in its earthly and heavenly forms, and leading from one to the other. The words of Revelation 4:8, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty", from the preface to the eucharistic prayer of consecration, are inscribed on the building, indicating that the mystery revealed by the red curtains is sacramental – the blood of the Lamb and the veil of Christ's flesh.[690]

Ambiguity

The building is not inspired by one particular Biblical text, instead combining different visual models from sacred and secular architecture. Ezekiel and Solomon's temples were both multi-storeyed structures with narrow windows (1 Kings 6:4, 6:8; Ezekiel 41:6, 41:16); given the emphasis in Jerome's prologue on Ezekiel's vision the former is perhaps more likely as a model, but both are possible. The form of the curtains resembles the veil over the Holy of Holies in a later Bible of Charles the Bald.[691] Curtains twisted around columns also appear in Carolingian ivory carvings of the Annunciation, Visitation, and miracle at Cana, to articulate both splendid interior settings

---

[690] On Christ as veil see Kessler 1993; Evangelatou 2003, pp.263-265.

[691] Bible of San Paolo fuori le mura, Rome, f.32v, f.40v,; KM vol.6:2, pl.288, 229.

and the witnessing of mysteries (fig. 237).[692] The richness of the veined columns, the white marble and the bronze lion's head – like the lions on the doorways of the palatine chapel at Aachen – could refer to either palatial or sacred settings, appropriate to the courtly-ecclesiastical context in which the book was probably made. The structure also alluded to Roman civic architecture; for example, going back to the early Christian catacomb of Domitilla, the gravedigger Diogenes was represented against a similar monumental backdrop of angled white walls dotted with little windows (fig. 238).[693] According to Adolf Boeckler and Beat Brenk the building resembles the *scenae fons* of a Roman theatre, however I think it can more convincingly be seen as a non-specific vision of *Romanitas*.[694]

Materiality

The building is not presented as 'real', being well towards the idealised end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, the materiality of the architecture is important, as shown by the attention given to the marbled patterns of the columns and the different decorated capitals and bases. The building behind the four columns is subdivided, and articulated with cornices or string courses and lines dividing the blocks of stone. Compared with some of the case studies above the building is relatively minimalist, but the effect is still one of luxurious detail. By its definite physical presence it reifies the abstract idea

---

[692] Goldschmidt 1914, pl.2, 22:46-47, 27:67a, 29:72, 31:75.

[693] Wilpert 1903, pl.180.

[694] Boeckler 1956, pl.6, 8c; Brenk 1994, p.672, fig.44, 46.

of the harmony of the four Gospels, and adds richness to the book as an object.

In a book written in gold ink about a God, and owned by an emperor, the first thing the designers wanted the reader to see was a building. To repeat the words of caliph Abd al-Rahman III:

> When kings want to immortalise the memory of their loftiest thoughts,
>
> they do so through the language of architecture.[695]

---

[695] Fairchild Ruggles 2011, p.78.

Bibliography

Abela, John and Carmelo Pappalardo. 1999. 'Umm al-Rasas - campagna 1999'. *Liber Annuus* 49, pp.479-483.

Abu Dayyeh, Abdel Sami. 2002. 'The old city of Um er-Rasas (Mefa'a): nomination file submitted to the World Heritage Bureau and Committee for inscription on the World Heritage List'. Published online at *http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1093.pdf*.

Aitken, Stuart and Leo Zonn, eds. 1994. *Place, power, situation, and spectacle: a geography of film*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Ajami, Mansour. 1981. 'Amūd al-Shi'r, legitimization of tradition'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 12, pp.30-48.

Alföldi-Rosenbaum**,** Elisabeth and John Bryan Ward-Perkins. 1980. *Justinianic mosaic pavements in Cyrenaican churche**s***. Rome: L'Érma di Bretschneider.

Allen, Terry. 1995. 'Imagining paradise in Islamic art'. Published online at *http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/ip.html*, accessed 10/04/2016

Altmann, Walter. 1902. *Architectur und Ornamentik der Antiken Sarkophage*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

Andaloro, Maria. 2006a. *La pittura medievale a Roma, 312-1431. Atlante: percorsi visivi. Volume I: Suburbio, Vaticano, Rione Monti*. Milan: Jaca Book.

2006b. *La pittura medievale a Roma, 312-1431. Corpus, volume I: L'Orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini, 312-468.* Milan: Jaca Book.

Anderson, Jeffrey. 2013. *The Christian topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes.* Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

ANF = Cleveland Coxe, Alexander. 1885-1897 (ten volumes). *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. New York: Christian Literature Company.

Angelucci, Sergio, Ida Baldassarre, Irene Bragantini, Maria Giuseppina Lauro, Vanni Mannucci, Alberto Mazzoleni, Chiara Morselli and Franca Aglietti. 1990. 'Sepolture e riti nella necropolis di Isola Sacra'. *Bollettino d'Archeologia* 5-6, pp.49-113.

Armstrong, Gregory. 1967. 'Imperial church building in the Holy Land in the fourth century'. *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30(3), pp.90-102.

Assimakopolou-Atzaka, Panayiota, trans. Maria Ioannou. 2006. 'Fragment of a mosaic with an architectural representation at the Benaki Museum'. *Benaki Museum Journal* 6, pp.1-12.

Avi-Yonah, Michael. 1954. *The Madaba mosaic map: with introduction and commentary*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

   1972. 'The Haditha mosaic pavement'. *Israel Exploration Journal* 22(2/3), pp.118-122.

Avni, Gideon. 2014. *The Byzantine-Islamic transition in Palestine: an archaeological approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Avrin, Leila. 1978. 'Architectural decoration and Hebrew manuscripts'. *Manuscripta* 22, pp.67-74.

Bagnall, Roger, Alan Cameron, Seth Schwartz and Klaas Worp. 1987. *Consuls of the later Roman Empire*. Atlanta: American Philological Association.

Bagnoli, Martina, Holger Klein, Griffith Mann and James Robinson, eds. 2010. *Treasures of heaven: saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe*. Baltimore: Walters Art Museum.

Bakitzis, Charalambos, Eftychia Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Chrysanthi Mavropoulou-Tsioumi 2012. *Mosaics of Thessaloniki: 4th to 14th century*. Athens: Kapon Editions.

Balass, Golda. 1999. 'Taddeo Zuccaro's fresco in the apse-conch in S*.* Sabina, Rome'. *Assaph* 4, pp.105-124.

Baldini Lippolis, Isabella. 2007. 'Private space in late antique cities'. In: *Housing in late antiquity: from palaces to shops*, ed. Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel and Alexander Sarantis. Leiden: Brill, pp.197-238.

Baltrušaitis, Jurgis. 1954. 'Villes sur arcatures'. In: *Urbanisme et architecture. Études ecrites et publiees en l'honneur de Pierre Lavedan*. Paris: Henri Laurens, pp.31-40.

Bandmann, Günter. 1951, trans. Kendall Wallis, 2005. *Early medieval architecture as bearer of meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Barclift, Philip. 1997. 'The shifting tones of Pope Leo the Great's Christological vocabulary'. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 66(2), pp.221 – 239.

Bassett, Sarah. 2004. *The urban image of late antique Constantinople*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauer, Franz Alto. 2004. *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter: Papststiftungen im Spiegel des Liber Pontificalis von Gregor dem Dritten bis zu Leo dem Dritten*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.

Beard, Mary. 2007. *The Roman triumph*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Becatti, Giovanni. 1969. *Scavi di Ostia volume 6: Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*. Rome: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato.

Bellanca, Calogero. 1999. *La basilica di Santa Sabina e gli interventi di Antonio Munoz*. Rome: Conventu Sanctae Sabinae.

Belting, Hans, trans. Edmund Jephcott. 1994. *Likeness and presence: a history of the image before the era of art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Belting-Ihm, Christa. 1960. *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Berger, Klaus. 1973. 'Der traditionsgeschichtliche Ursprung der "Traditio legis"'. *Vigiliae Christianae 27(2), pp.104-122.*

Bertelli, Carlo. 1999. 'Visual images of the town in late antiquity and the early middle age'. In: *The idea and the ideal of the town between late antiquity and the early middle ages*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo and Bryan Ward Perkins. Leiden: Brill, pp.127-146.

Bertelli, Carlo and Gian Pietro Brogiolo. 2000. *Il futuro dei Longobardi. L'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno*. Milan: Skira.

Berthold, George Charles. 1985. *Maximus Confessor: selected writings*. New York: Paulist Press.

Berthon, Eric. 1997. 'À l'origine de la spiritualité médiévale de l'enfance: les saints Innocents'. In: *La petite enfance dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, ed. Robert Fossier. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires de Mirail, pp.29-38.

Bessard, Fanny. 2013. 'The urban economy in southern inland Greater Syria from the seventh century to the end of the Umayyads'. In: *Local economies? Production and exchange of inland regions in late antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan. Leiden: Brill, pp.377-421.

Betori, Alessandro. 2000. 'Il mosaico absidale di S. Pudenziana in Roma come fonte per lo studio dell'architettura tardoantica.' In: *Atti del VI Colloquio dell'Associazione Italiana per lo Studio el la Conservazione del Mosaico*, ed. Federico Guidobaldi and Andrea Paribeni. Ravenna: edizioni del girasole, pp.397-410.

Beuckers, Klaus Gereon. 2001. 'Stifterbild und Stifterstatus: Bemerkungen zu den Darstellungen Papst Paschalis I., 817-24, in Rom und ihre Vorbilder'. In: *Form und Stil: Festschrift für Günter Binding zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Stefanie Lieb. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Binsfeld, Wolfgang. 2000. 'Dominus legem dat'. *Tekmeria* 5, pp.35-38.

Bisconti, Fabrizio. 1989. 'Le rappresentazioni urbane nella pittura cimiteriale Romana: dalla citta reale a quella ideale', In: *XIe congrès international d'archeologie chrétienne*, ed. Noel Duval. Rome: École française de Rome, pp.1305-1321.

2009. 'La capsella di Samagher: il quadro delle interpretazioni'. In: *Il Cristianesimo in Istria fra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo. Novità e riflessioni. Atti della giornata tematica dei Seminari di Archeologia Cristiana, Roma – 8 marzo 2007, 217*-231, ed. Emilio Marin and Danilo Mazzoleni. Rome: Pontificio istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, pp.217-231.

2011. 'Ipogeo degli Aureli: alcune riflessioni e qualche piccola scoperta'. In: *Le pitture delle catacombe Romane: restauri e interpretazioni*, ed. Fabrizio Bisconti. Todi: Tau Editrice, pp.47-58.

Bishop, William Warner. 1906. 'Roman church mosaics of the first nine centuries with especial regard to their position in the churches'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 10(3), pp.251-281.

Blair, Sheila. 2006. *Islamic calligraphy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bloom, Jonathan. 1993. 'The Qubbat al-Khadra and the iconography of height in early Islamic architecture.' *Ars Orientalis* 23, pp.135-141.

2000. 'The introduction of paper to the Islamic lands and the development of the illustrated manuscript'. *Muqarnas* 17, pp.17-23.

Bodel, John. 2008. 'From *columbaria* to catacombs: collective burial in pagan and Christian Rome'. In: *Commemorating the dead: texts and artifacts in context*, ed. Laurie Brink and Deborah Green. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp.177-242.

Boeckler, Adolf. 1956. *Formgeschichtliche Studien zur Adagruppe*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Bolgia, Claudia. 2006. 'The mosaics of Gregory IV at S. Marco, Rome: papal response to Venice, Byzantium, and the Carolingians'. *Speculum* 81(1), pp.1-34.

2013. 'New light on the 'Bright Ages': experiments with mosaics and light in medieval Rome'. In: *New light on old glass: recent research on Byzantine glass and mosaics*, ed. Liz James and Chris Entwistle. London: British Museum Press, pp.217-228.

Bosworth, Clifford. 1968. *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information. The Lata'if al-ma'arif of Tha'alibi. Translated with introduction and notes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bowersock, Glenn. 2006. *Mosaics as history: the Near East from late antiquity to Islam.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Bowersock, Glenn, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar. 1999. *Late antiquity. A guide to the postclassical world*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Bralewski, Sławomir. 2011. 'The porphyry column in Constantinople and the relics of the True Cross'. *Studia Ceranea* 1, pp.87-100.

Brandenburg, Hugo. 2004*. Ancient churches of Rome from the fourth to the seventh century: the dawn of Christian architecture in the West*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Brenk, Beat. 1975. *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

1994. 'Schriftlchkeit und Bildlichkeit in der Hofschule Karls des Grasen'. In: *Testo e Immagine nell'alto medioevo. XLI settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*. Spoleto: CISAM, pp.631-691.

2010. *The apse, the image and the icon: an historical perspective of the* **apse** *as a space for* **images.** Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.

Brisch, Klaus. 1988. 'Observations on the iconography of the mosaics in the Great Mosque at Damascus'. In: *Content and context of visual arts in the Islamic world*, ed. Priscilla Soucek. University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.13-20.

Britt, Karen. 2015. 'Through a glass brightly: Christian communities in Palestine and   Arabia during the early Islamic period'. In: *Sacred precincts: The religious architecture of non-Muslim communities across the Islamic world*, ed. Mohammad Gharipour. Leiden: Brill, pp.259-276.

Broome, Michael. 1985. *A handbook of Islamic coins*. London: Seaby.

Brown, Michelle. 2003. *The Lindisfarne Gospels: society, spirituality and the scribe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brown, Donald. 1942. 'The arcuated lintel and its symbolic interpretation in late antique art'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 46(3), pp.389-399.

Brown, Peter. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: its rise and function In Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2012. *Through the eye of a needle: wealth, the fall of Rome, and the making of Christianity in the west, 350-550 AD*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

2015. *The ransom of the soul: afterlife and wealth in early Western Christianity*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Bucci, Giovanna. 2001. *L'albero della vita nei mosaici pavimentali del Vicino Oriente*. Bologna: University Press Bologna.

Bucher, François. 1976. 'Micro-architecture as the 'idea' of Gothic theory and style'. *Gesta* 15(1/2), pp.71-89.

Büchsel, Martin. 2016. 'Formgenese karolingischer Elfenbeine: Strukturen der Antikenrezeption'. *Convivium* 3(1), pp.41-58.

Buddensieg, Tilmann. 1959. 'Le coffret en ivoire de Pola, Saint Pierre et le Latran'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 10, pp.157-195.

Buettner, Brigitte. 2011. 'From bones to stones: reflections on jewelled reliquaries'. In*: Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, ed. Bruno Reudenbach and Gia Toussaint. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, pp.43-59.

Bujard, Jacques. 1996. 'Les églises géminées de la forteresse de Kastron Mefaa / Umm er Rasas (Jordanie)'. *Antiquité Tardive* 4, pp.172-177.

Buonaguro, Stefano. 2006. 'Il pavimento in opus sectile conservato nella gipsoteca del Vittoriano a Roma: tipologia, cronologia e livello qualitativo.' *AISCOM* 11, pp.301-310.

Burns, Paul. 2102. *A model for the Christian life. Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on the Psalms*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Burns, Thomas. 1994. *Barbarians within the gates of Rome: a study of Roman military policy and the Barbarians, ca. 375-425 A.D*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Buschhausen, Helmut. 1971. *Die spätrömischen Metallscrinia und frühchristlichen Reliquiare.* Vienna: Böhlau.

Busse, Heribert. 1988. Jerusalem and Mecca, the Temple and the Kaaba. An account of their interrelation in Islamic times. In: *The Holy Land in history and thought*, ed. Moshe Sharon. Leiden: Brill, pp.236-246.

Butler, Howard Crosby and Enno Littmann. 1905. 'Preliminary report of the Princeton University expedition to Syria'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 9(4), pp.389-410.

Butterworth, Philip. 1994. 'A similitude of paradise: the city as image of the city'. In: *The iconography of heaven*, ed. Clifford Davidson. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, pp. 146-161.

Caillet, Jean-Pierre. 2011. 'L'image du dédicant dans l'édifice cultuel (IVe -VIIe s) aux origines de la visualisation d'un pouvoir de concession divine'. *Antiquité Tardive* 19, pp.149-169.

    2012. 'L'évolution de la notion d'évergétisme dans l'antiquité chrétienne'. In: *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin*, ed. Jean-Michel Spieser and Élisabeth Yota. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, pp.11-24.

Cain, Andrew. 2010. *St Jerome, Commentary on Galatians*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Calza, Guido. 1928. 'Rinvenimenti nell'Isola Sacra'. *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* 4, pp.133-175.

Calza, Guido and Giovanni Becatti. 1975. *Ostia*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato.

Cameron, Alan. 1996. 'Orfitus and Constantius: a note on Roman gold-glasses'. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9, pp.295-301.

2002. 'The funeral of Junius Bassus'. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 139, pp.288-292.

Cameron, Alan and Stuart Hall. 1999. *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cameron, Averil. 2002. 'The 'long' late antiquity: a late twentieth century model.' In: *Classics in progress. Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Timothy Peter Wiseman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.165-191.

2012. *The Mediterranean world in late antiquity*. London: Routledge.

Campanati, Raffaella Farioli. 1994. 'Città, edifici e strutture architettoniche nei mosaici pavimentali del Vicino Oriente: Giordania e Siria'. *Felix Ravenna* 145-148, pp.97-143.

1996. 'I luoghi santi della Palestina secondo la documentazione musiva e gli oggetti devozionali'. In: *Dalla terre alle genti: la diffusione del cristianesimo nei primi secoli*, ed. Angela Donati. Milan: Electa, pp.122-132.

1999. 'Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the iconography of church sanctuary mosaics'. In: *The Madaba map centenary: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period,* ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.173-177.

308

Carile, Maria Cristina. 2009. 'Imperial palaces and Heavenly Jerusalems: real and ideal palaces in late antiquity'. In: *New Jerusalems: hierotopy and iconography of sacred spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov. Moscow: Indrik Press, pp.78-101.

2012. *The vision of the palace of the Byzantine emperors as a Heavenly Jerusalem*. Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull 'Alto Medioevo.

2013. 'The imperial palace glittering with light: the material and immaterial in the sacrum palatium'. In: *Hierotopy of light and fire in the culture of the Byzantine world*, ed. Alexei Lidov. Moscow: Theoria, pp.105-135.

2014. 'Buildings in their patrons' hands? The multiform function of small size models between Byzantium and Transcaucasia'. *Kunsttexte* 3, pp.1-14.

Carruthers, Mary. 1998. *The craft of thought: meditation, rhetoric, and the making of images, 400-1200*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Casagrande-Kim, Roberta. 2012. 'The journey to the underworld: topography, landscape, and divine inhabitants of the Roman Hades'. Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University.

Casalone, Carla. 1962. 'Note sulle pitture dell'ipogeo di Trebio Giusto a Roma'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 12, pp.53-64.

Cascianelli, Dimitri. 2013. 'Pasquale Testini e la Traditio Legis di Anagni. Una copia del mosaico absidale dell'antica basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano in una lapide romana'. In: *Incisione figurate della Tarda Antichità*, ed Fabrizio Bisconti and Matteo Braconi. Rome: Pontificio istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, pp. 623-646.

Chick, Jane. 2014. 'The mosaic pavements of Qasr el-Lebia.' Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia.

Chrétien-Happe, Isabelle. 2004. 'Les représentations de temples et sanctuaires sur les monnaies romaines de Décapole et d'Arabie'. *Syria* 81, pp.131-146.

Ciampini, Giovanni. 1690-1699 (two volumes). *Vetera monimenta in quibus praecipue musiva opera sacrarum, profanarumque aedium structura ac nonnulli antiqui ritus, dissertationibus, iconibusque illustrantur*. . Rome: Johann Jakob Komarek.

Cimok, Fatoh. *Antioch mosaics*. Istanbul: Istanbul Books.

Clarke, Graeme. 1989. *The letters of St Cyprian of Carthage*, vol.4. New York: Newman Press.

Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza and Bianca Kühnel. 1997-1998. *The real and ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic art: studies in honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the occasion of his 70th birthday*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.

Colli, Agostino. 1983. 'La tradizione figurativa della Gerusalemme celeste: linee di sviluppo dal III al XIV secolo'. In: *La dimora di Dio con gli uomini: immagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo*, ed. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, pp.119-144.

Collins, Basil Antony. 1994. *The best divisions for knowledge of the regions: translation of Al-Muaqaddasi's Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma'rifat al-aqalim*. Reading: Garnet Publishing.

Colgrave, Bertram and Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, trans., Roger Collins and Judith McClure, eds. 1994. *Bede: the ecclesiastical history of the English people.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conant, Kenneth. 1956. The original buildings at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. *Speculum* 31(1), pp.1-48.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda. 1939. 'Eckstein'. *Speculum* 14(1), pp.66-72.

Cooper, Stephen Andrew. 2005. *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cormack, Robin S. 1969. 'The mosaic decoration of S. Demetrios Thessaloniki – a re-examination in the light of the drawings of W. S. George'. *The Annual of the British School of Archaeology at Athens* 64, pp.17-52.

Corpus Basilicarum = Krautheimer, Richard. 1937-1977 (five volumes). *Corpus basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The early Christian basilicas of Rome, IV-IX century*. Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.

Couzin, Robert. 2014. 'The Christian sarcophagus population of Rome'. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 27, pp.275-303.

Creswell, K.A.C. 1958. *A short account of early Muslim architecture.* London: Pelican Books.

1979. *Early Muslim architecture volume 1*. New York: Hacker Art Books.

Croci, Chiara. 2013. 'Portraiture on early Christian gold-glasses: some observations'. In: *The face of the dead and the early Christian world*, ed. Ivan Foletti. Rome: Viella.

Crow, James. 2001. 'Fortifications and urbanism in late antiquity. Thessaloniki and other eastern cities'. In: *Recent research in late antique urbanism*, ed. Luke Lavan. Portsmouth, R.I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, pp.89-105.

Cuneo, Paolo. 1969. 'Les modèles en pierre de l'architecture arménienne'. *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 6, pp.201-231.

Cunliffe, Barry. 1998. *Fishbourne: Roman palace*. Stroud: Tempus.

Ćurčić, Slobodan and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos. 2010. *Architecture as icon: perception and representation of architecture in Byzantine art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Daly, William. 1973. 'St Peter: an architect of the Carolingian empire'. *Studies in Medieval Culture* 4(1), pp.55-69.

Daniélou, Jean. 1953. 'Terre et paradis chez les pères de l'église'. *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22, pp.433-472.

Darsy, Felix. 1961. *Santa Sabina*. Rome: Edizioni Roma Marrieti.

Dauphin, Claudine. 1987. 'The development of the 'inhabited scroll' in architectural sculpture and mosaic art from late imperial times to the seventh century AD'. *Levant* 19, pp.183-212.

Davis, Raymond. 2000. *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): the biographies of the first ninety Roman bishops to AD 715*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

1995. *The lives of the ninth-century popes (Liber Pontificalis): The ancient biographies of ten* popes *from A.D. 817-891*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Davis-Weyer, Caecilia. 1961. 'Das Traditio-Legis-Bild und seine Nachfolge'. *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 12, pp.7-45.

2005. '*Cum ipso sunt in hac nativitate congeniti*: dove, throne and city in the arch mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome (432-440)'. *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 8, pp.367-394.

De Blaauw, Sible. 2001. 'Imperial connotations in Roman church interiors: the significance and effect of the Lateran fastigium'. In: *Imperial art as Christian art - Christian art as imperial art: expression and meaning in art and architecture from Constantine to Justinian*, ed. J Rasmus Brandt. Roma: Bardi, pp.137-148.

2014. 'Translations of the sacred city between Jerusalem and Rome'. In: *The imagined and real Jerusalem in art and architecture*, ed. Jeroen Goudeau, Mariette Verhoeven and Wouter Weijers. Leiden: Brill, pp.136-165.

De Jong, Mayke. 'Charlemagne's balcony: the solarium in ninth-century narratives'. In: *The long morning of medieval Europe: new directions in early medieval studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, p.277-289.

De Lubac, Henri. 1988. *Catholicism: Christ and the common destiny of man*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

De Rossi, Giovanni Battista. 1857. *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*, volume 1. Rome: Libraria Pontificia.

1867. 'I monumenti del secolo quarto spettanti alla chiesa di S. Pudenziana.' *Bulletino di archeologia cristiana* 4, pp.49-60.

De Silva , Carla Gomez. 1996. 'The Temple in the iconography of early Christian art'. *Assaph: Studies in Art History* 2, pp.59-82.

Dean, James Elmer. 1935. *Epiphanius' Treatise on Weights and Measures: The Syriac Version*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Decker, Michael. 2006. 'Towers, refuges and fortified farms in the late Roman east'. *Liber Annuus* 56, pp.499-520.

Deichmann, F. W. 1958. *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna*. Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm, Verlag für Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft.

DeLaine, Janet. 2001. 'Bricks and mortar: exploring the economics of building techniques at Rome and Ostia.' In: *Economies beyond agriculture in the classical world*, ed. David Mattingley and John Salmon. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.271-296.

Deliyannis, Deborah Mauskopf. 2004. *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.

2010. *Ravenna in late antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Demus, Otto and Max Hirmer. 1970. *Romanesque mural painting*. New York: Abrams.

Déroche, François. 2004. 'Colonnes, vases et rinceaux sur quelques enluminures d'époque omeyyade'. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 148e année* 1, pp.227-264.

Deshman, Robert. 1989. 'Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and medieval art'. *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 5(1), pp.33-70.

Dey, Hendrik. 2010. 'Art, ceremony, and city walls: the aesthetics of Imperial resurgence in the Late Roman West'. *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3(1), pp.3-37.

2011. *The Aurelian Wall and the refashioning of imperial Rome, AD 271-855*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2014. 'Urban armatures, urban vignettes: the interpermeation of the reality and ideal of the late antique metropolis'. In: *Using images in late antiquity*, ed. Stine Birk, Troels Myrup Kristensen and Birte Poulsen. Oxford: Oxbow Books, pp.190-208.

Di Segni, Leah. 1999. 'Epigraphic documentation on building in the Provinces of Palaestina and Arabia, 4th-7th c'. In: *The Roman and Byzantine Near East II: some recent archaeological research* (JRA Supplementary Series, 31), ed. John Humphrey. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, pp.149-178.

Dijkstra, Roald. 2016. *The Apostles in early Christian art and poetry*. Leiden: Brill.

Dinkler, Erich. 1979. 'Abbreviated representations'. In: *Age of spirituality: late antique and early Christian art, third to seventh century*, ed. Kurt Weitzman. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp.396-448.

Dodds, Jerrilynn, ed. 1992. *Al-Andalus: the art of Islamic Spain*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Donati, Angela. 1996. *Dalla terre alle genti: la diffusione del cristianesimo nei primi secoli*. Milan: Electa.

Donner, Herbert. 1992. *The mosaic map of Madaba: an introductory guide*. Kampen: Kok Pharos.

Doran, Robert. 1992. *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*. Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications.

Dragendorff, Hans and Emil Krüger 1924*. Das Grabmal von Igel*. Trier: J. Lintz.

Duchesne, Louis. 1981 (two volumes). *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*. Paris: de Boccard.

Duff, James. 1934. *Loeb Classical Library 278, Silius Italicus: Punica,* vol.II. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Dunn, Geoffrey. 2009. 'The care of the poor in Rome and Alaric's sieges'. In: *Prayer and spirituality in the early church. Volume 5: Poverty and riches*, ed. Geoffrey Dunn, David Luckensmeyer and Lawrence Cross. Strathfield NSW: St Pauls Publications, pp.319-333.

Dunbabin, Katherine. 1978. *The mosaics of Roman North Africa: studies in iconography and patronage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

1999. *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duncan, Carol. 1991. 'Art museums and the ritual of citizenship'. In: *Exhibiting cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp.88-103.

Duval, Noel. 1972. 'Une basilique à tours sur une mosaïque du Louvre'. *Revue archéologique*, pp.365-372.

(ed.) 1989. 'L'image de la ville dans l'art et la literature'. In: *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne*, ed. Noel Duval. Rome: École française de Rome, pp.1283-1370.

1999. 'Essai sur la signification des vignettes topographiques'. In: *The Madaba Map centenary 1897–1997: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period*, ed. Eugene Alliata and Michele Piccirillo. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.134-146.

2003. 'Les représentations architecturales sur le mosaïques chrétiennes de Jordanie. In: *Les églises de Jordanie et leurs mosaïques*, ed. Noel Duval. Beirut: Institut français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, pp.211-285.

Dyer, Joseph. 1995. 'Prolegomena to a history of music and liturgy at Rome in the middle ages'. In: *Essays on medieval music in honor of David G. Hughes*, ed. Graeme Boone. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp.87-115.

Ebert, Jorinde. 1994. 'Niches, columns, and figures in some petroglyphic Stūpa depictions of the Karakorum Highway'. *Artibus Asiae* 54(3/4), pp.268-295.

Eck, Werner. 1999. 'The bar Kokhbar revolt: the Roman point of view'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89, pp.76-89.

Edwards, Catherine. 2000. *Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ehrensperger-Katz, Ingrid. 1969. 'Les représentations de villes fortifiées dans l'art Paléochrétien et leurs dérivées Byzantines'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 19, pp.1-27.

Elderkin, G. W. 1935. 'Architectural detail in antique sepulchral art'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 39(4), pp.518-525.

Elsner, Jaś. 1994. 'The viewer and the vision: the case of the Sinai apse'. *Art History* 17(1), pp.81-102.

1995. *Art and the Roman Viewer: the transformation of art from the pagan world to Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2003. 'Archaeologies and agendas: reflections on late ancient Jewish art and early Christian art'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 93, pp.114-128.

2008. 'Framing the objects we study: three boxes from late Roman Italy'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 71, pp.21-38.

2013. 'Closure and penetration, reflections on the Pola Casket'. *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 26, pp.183-227.

2015. 'Relic, icon and architecture: the material articulation of the holy in east Christian art'. In: *Saints and sacred matter: the cult of relics in Byzantium and beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and H. Klein. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Publications, pp.13-40.

Emerick, Judson. 2001. 'Focusing on the celebrant: the column display inside Santa Prassede'. *Papers of the Netherlands Institute in Rome* 59, pp.129-159.

2005. 'Altars personified: the cult of the saints and the chapel system in Pope Pascal I's S. Prassede (817-819)'. In: *Archaeology in architecture: studies in honor of Cecil L. Striker*, ed. Judson Emerick and Deborah Deliyannis. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, pp.43-63.

Ettinghausen, Richard, Oleg Grabar and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina. 2001. *Islamic art and architecture 650-1250*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Evangelatou, Maria. 2003. 'The purple thread of the flesh: the theological connotations of a narrative iconographic element in Byzantine images of the Annunciation'. In: *Icon and word. The power of images in Byzantium. Studies presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, pp.261-79.

Ewald, Marie Liguori. 1964. *The Homilies of Saint Jerome, Volume 1*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Fairchild Ruggles, D. 2000. *Gardens, landscape, and vision in the palaces of Islamic Spain*. University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press.

2011. *Islamic art and visual culture: an anthology of sources*. Malden, MA.: Wiley.

Falzone, Stella, Angelo Pellegrino and Evelyne Broillet-Ramjoué. 2001. 'Les peintures de la Maison des Hierodules'. In: *Ostia, port et porte de la Rome antique*, ed. Jean-Paul Descoeudres. Geneva: Georg Éditeur, pp.346-360.

Fasola, Umberto M. 1974. *Le catacombe di S. Gennaro a Capodimonte*. Rome: Editalia.

Ferguson, Everett. 2009. *Baptism in the early church: history, theology and liturgy in the first five centuries*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Ferrua, Antonio. 1960. *Le pitture della nuova catacomba di Via Latina*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archaeologia Cristiana.

1971. 'La catacomba di Vibia'. *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 47, pp.7-62.

1991. *The unknown catacomb: a unique discovery of early Christian art* (trans. Iain Inglis). New Lanark: Geddes and Grosset.

Février, Paul Albert. 1956. 'Les quatre fleuves du Paradis'. *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 32(3-4), pp.179-199.

Fillitz, Hermann. 1999. 'Die Elfenbeinarbeiten des Hofes Karls des Großen'. In: *799 - Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, pp.610-622.

Finegan, Jack. 1992. *The archaeology of the New Testament: the life of Jesus and the beginning of the early church*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Finster, Barbara. 2003. 'Researches in Anjar I: preliminary report on the architecture of Anjar'. *Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture* **Libanaises** 7, pp.209-244.

Fleischer, Jens. 2001. 'Style as bearer of meaning: the transition from late antique mummy portraits to early icons'. In: *Late antiquity: art in context*, ed. Jens Fleischer, John Lund and Marjatta Nielsen. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, pp.53-70.

2004. 'Living rocks and locus amoenus: architectural representations of paradise in early Christianity'. In: *The appearances of medieval rituals: the play of construction and modification*, ed. Nils Holger Petersen, Mette Birkedal Bruun, Jeremy Llewellyn and Eyolf Østrem. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.149-171.

Flood, Finbarr Barry. 1997. 'Umayyad survivals and Mamluk revivals: Qalawunid architecture and the Great Mosque of Damascus'. *Muqarnas* 14, pp.57-79.

2001. *The Great Mosque of Damascus: studies on the makings of an Umayyad visual culture*. Leiden: Brill.

2012. 'Faith, religion, and the material culture of early Islam'. In: *Byzantium and Islam: age of transition, 7ᵗʰ – 9ᵗʰ century*, ed. Helen Evans. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.244-257.

Förtsch, Reinhard. 1993. 'Die Architekturdarstellungen der Umaiyadenmoschee von Damaskus und die Rolle ihrer antiken Vorbilder'. *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 7, pp.177-212.

Fourdrin, Jean-Pascal. 1992. 'Église E.5 d'El Bāra'. *Syria* 69(1/2), pp.171-210.

Fowden, Garth. 2004. 'Late antique art in Syria and its Umayyad evolutions'. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17, pp.282-304.

Fowden, Garth and Elizabeth Key Fowden. 2004. *Studies on Hellenism, Christianity and the Umayyads*. Paris: de Boccard.

Frankfurter, David. 1990. 'Stylites and phallobates: pillar religions in late antique Syria'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 44(2), pp.168-198.

Franz, Heinrich. 1959. 'Architekturdarstellunen auf den Mosaiken der Omayyadenmoschee in Damaskus und die frühislamische Baukunst'. In: *Aus der Welt der Islamischen Kunst: Festschrift für Ernst Kühnel*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen. Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, pp.41-47.

Fredriksen, Paula. 1991. 'Apocalypse and redemption in early Christianity. From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 45(2), pp.151-183.

Fried, Johannes. 2000. 'Römische Erinnerung: zu den Anfängen und frühen Wirkungen des christlichen Rommythos'. In: *Studien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. Matthias Thumser, Annegret Wenz-Haubfleisch and Peter Wiegand. Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag, pp.1-43.

Frugoni, Chiara. 1991. *A distant city: images of urban experience in the medieval world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gage, John. 1993. *Colour and culture: practice and meaning from antiquity to abstraction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gagoshidze, George. 2014. 'Jerusalem in medieval Georgian art'. In: *Visual constructs of Jerusalem: cultural encounters in late antiquity and the middle ages*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.133-138.

Gambero, Luigi. 1999. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: the Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic thought*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press

Gardelles, Jacques. 1987. 'Les maquettes des effigies de donateurs et de fondateurs'. In: *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au moyen âge, volume 2: Commande et travail*, ed. Xavier Barral i Altet. Paris: Picard, pp.67-78.

Garrucci, Raffaele. 1880. *Storia della arte cristiana nei primi otto secoli della chiesa. Band 6: Sculture non cimiteriali*. Prato: Gaetano Guasti.

Gatier, Jean-Louis. 1987. 'Une lettre du pape Grégoire le Grand à Marianus évêque de Gerasa'. *Syria* 64(1/2), pp.131-135.

Gatti Perer, Maria Luisa, ed. 1983. *La dimora di Dio con gli uomini: iImmagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero.

Gell, Alfred. 1994. 'The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology'. In: *Anthropology, art, and aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.40-63.

    1998. *Art and agency: an anthropological theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Genequand, Denis. 2011. 'Les décors en stuc du bâtiment E à qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi'. *Syria* 88 pp.351-378.

George, Alain. 2010. *The rise of Islamic calligraphy*. London: Saqi Books.

Gillett, Andrew. 2001. 'Rome, Ravenna and the last Western emperors'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 69, pp.131-167.

Goffredo, Daniela. 1998. 'Le cosiddette 'scene di ingresso' nell' arte funeraria cristiana'. *Rivista di archeologia Cristiana* 74, pp.197-236.

Goldschmidt, Adolph. 1914. *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII-XI Jahrhundert*, volume 1. Berlin: Cassirer.

Goll, Jurg, Matthias Exner and Susanne Hirsch. 2007. Müstair*: Die mittelalterlichen Wandbilder in der Klosterkirche*. Munich: Hirmer.

Goodson, Caroline. 2005. 'The relic translations of Paschal I: transforming city and cult'. In: *Roman bodies: antiquity to the eighteenth century*, ed. Andrew Hopkins and Maria Wyke. London: British School at Rome, pp.123-141.

2007. 'Building for bodies: the architecture of saint veneration in early medieval Rome. In: *Roma Felix – formations and reflections of medieval Rome*, ed. Éamonn Ó Carragain and Carol Neuman de Vegvar. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, pp.51-80.

2010. *The Rome of Pope Paschal I: papal power, urban renovation, church rebuilding and relic translation, 817–824.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goodson, Caroline, Anne Lester and Carol Symes, eds. 2010. *Cities, texts and social networks 400-1500: experiences and perceptions of medieval urban space*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Gousset, Marie-Thérèse. 1974. 'La représentation de la Jérusalem céleste a l'époque Carolingienne'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 23, pp. 47-60.

1982. 'Un aspect du symbolisme des encensoirs romains: la Jérusalem Céleste'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30, pp.81-106.

Gnirs, Anton. 1908. 'La basilica ed il reliquiario d'avorio di Samagher presso Pola'. *Atti e memorie della societa Istriana di archeologia e storia patria* 24, pp.5-48.

Grabar, André. 1943-1946 (two volumes). *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*. Paris: Collége de France.

1958. *Ampoules de Terre Sainte*. Paris: Klincksieck.

1971. *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin: recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'Orient*. London: Variorum.

Grabar, Oleg. 1987. *The formation of Islamic art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

1992. *The mediation of ornament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Graves, Margaret. 2010. 'Worlds writ small: four studies on miniature architectural forms in the medieval Middle East.' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

2011. 'Inside and outside, picture and page: the architectural spaces of miniature painting.' In: *Architecture in Islamic arts: treasures of the Aga Khan Museum*, ed. Margaret Graves and Benoît Junod. Geneva: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, pp.295-303.

Graves, Michael, trans., and Christopher Hall, ed. 2011. *Commentary on Jeremiah: Jerome*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Greenhalgh, Michael. 2009. *Marble past, monumental present: building with antiquities in the mediaeval Mediterranean*. Brill: Leiden.

Grierson, Philip. 1999. *Byzantine coinage*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.

Grig, Lucy. 2004. 'Portraits, pontiffs and the Christianisation of fourth-century Rome'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72, pp.203-230.

2012. 'Competing capitals, competing representations: late antique cityscapes in words and pictures'. In: *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in late antiquity*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.31-52.

Guarducci, Margherita. 1978. *La capsella eburnea di Samagher: un cimelio di arte paleocristiana nella storia del tardo Impero*. Trieste: Societa istriana di archeologia e storia patria.

Guidetti, Mattia. 2013. 'The contiguity between churches and mosques in early Islamic Bilad al-Sham'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76(2), pp.229-258.

Guidobaldi, Federico. 1985. 'Pavimenti in opus sectile di Roma e dell'area romana: proposte per una classificazione e criteri di datazione'. In: *Marmi antichi: problemi d'impiego di restauro e di identificazione*, ed. Patrizio Pensabene. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, pp.171-251.

2002. 'Osservazioni sugli edifici romani in cui si insediò l'Ecclesia Pudentiana'. In: *Ecclesiae Urbis. Atti del Congresso Inter-nazionale di studi sulle Chiese di Roma (IV-X secolo), Roma 4-10 settembre 2000*, ed. Federico Guidobaldi and Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi. Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, pp.1033-1071.

2003. 'La fondazione delle basiliche titolari di Roma nel IV e V secolo. Assenze e presenze nel Liber Pontificalis'. In: *Atti del Colloquio Internazionale: Il Liber Pontificalis e la Storia Materiale*, ed. Herman Geertman. Assen: Van Gorcum, pp.5-12.

Guidobaldi, Federico and Alessandra Guidobaldi. 1983. *Pavimenti marmorei di Roma dal IV al IX secolo*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.

Haarløv, Britt. 1977. *The half-open door: a common symbolic motif within Roman sepulchral sculpture*. Odense: Odense University Press.

Haase, Barbara. 1991. 'Ennodius' panegyric to Theoderic the Great: a translation and commentary'. M.A. dissertation, University of Ottawa.

Habas, Lihi. 2009. 'Donations and donors as reflected in the mosaic pavements of Transjordan's churches in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods'. In: *Between Judaism and Christianity. Art historical essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer. Leiden: Brill, pp.73-90.

Hachlili, Rachel. 1998. 'Iconographic elements of Nilotic scenes on Byzantine mosaic pavements in Israel'. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 130, pp.106-120.

2009. *Ancient mosaic pavements: iconographic themes, issues and trends*. Leiden: Brill.

2013. *Ancient synagogues – archaeology and art: new discoveries and current research*. Leiden: Brill.

Hack, Achim Thomas. 2006-2007 (two volumes). *Codex Carolinus: päpstliche Epistolographie im 8. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann.

Hahn, Cynthia. 2012. *Strange beauty: issues in the making and meaning of reliquaries, 400 – circa 1204*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Hamarneh, Basema. 1999. 'The River Nile and Egypt in the mosaics of the Middle East'. In: *The Madaba map centenary: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period,* ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.185-189.

Hamilton, Robert. 1959. *Khirbat al Mafjar. An Arabian mansion in the Jordan Valley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hansen, Maria Fabricus. 2001. 'Meanings of style. On the 'interiorization' of late antique architecture'. In: *Late antiquity: art in context*, ed. Jens Fleischer, John Lund and Marjatta Nielsen. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, pp.71-84.

Harkins, Paul William. 1963. *Baptismal Instructions*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Hayward, C. T. R. 2001. *Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hellemo, Geir. 1989. *Adventus Domini: eschatological thought in 4th century apses and catecheses*. Leiden: Brill.

Hermann, Alfred. 1959. 'Der Nil und die Christen'. *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 2, pp.30-69.

Hill, Edmund and John Rotelle. 1997. *The Works of Saint Augustine: a translation for the 21st century, part 3 volume 7: newly discovered sermons*. New York: New City Press.

Hill, Robert. 2001. *Theodoret of Cyrus: commentary on the Psalms, 73-150*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Hillenbrand, Robert. 1999. 'Anjar and early Islamic urbanism'. In: *The idea and the ideal of the town between late antiquity and the early middle ages*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo and Bryan Ward-Perkins. Leiden: Brill, pp.59-98.

Hillner, Julia. 2006. 'Clerics, property and patronage: the case of the Roman titular churches'. *Antiquité Tardive* 14, pp.59-68.

2007. 'Families, patronage, and the titular churches of Rome, c. 300-c. 600'. In: *Religion, dynasty and patronage in early Christian Rome, 300-900*, ed. Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.225-261.

Hodne, Lasse. 2009. 'The turtle-dove: a symbol of chastity and sacrifice'. *Ikon* 2, pp.159-166.

Hopkins, Jeff. 1994. 'A mapping of cinematic places: icons, ideology, and the power of (mis)representation'. In: *Place, power, situation, and spectacle: a geography of film*, ed. Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, pp.47-65.

Hoskins, Janet. 2006. 'Agency, biography and objects'. In: *Handbook of material culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer. London: Sage Publications, pp.74-84.

Humbert, Jean-Baptiste. 1999. 'The rivers of paradise in the Byzantine church near Jabaliyah – Gaza'. In: *The Madaba map centenary: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period,* ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.216-218.

Hurst, David. 2009. *Forty Gospel Homilies: Gregory the Great*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

Huskinson, Janet. 1982. *Concordia apostolorum: Christian propaganda at Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries.* Oxford: BAR International Series 148.

2011. '*Habent sua fata*: writing life histories of Roman sarcophagi'. In: *Life, Death and Representation: some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, ed. Jas Elsner and Janet Huskinson. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp.55-82.

Hussey, Joan. 2010. *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hvalvik, Reidar. 2006. 'Christ proclaiming his law to the Apostles: the *traditio legis-*motif in early Christian art and literature'. In: *The New Testament and early Christian literature in Greco-Roman context: studies in honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos. Leiden: Brill, pp.405-438.

Immerzeel, Mat. 2003. 'A day at the sarcophagus workshop'. *Visual Resources* 19(1), pp.43-55.

Ioli, Marco. 1971. *Il sarcofago paleocristiano di Catervio nel Duomo di Tolentino*. Bologna: Pàtron

Jastrzębowska, Elżbieta. 2009-2010. 'New Testament angels in early Christian art: origin and sources'. *Światowit* 8, pp.153-164.

Jacobs, Ine. 2009. ''Encroachment' in the Eastern Mediterranean between the fourth and the seventh century AD'. *Ancient Society* 39, pp.203-244.

2012. 'The creation of the late antique city. Constantinople and Asia Minor during the 'Theodosian renaissance''. *Byzantion* 82, pp.113-164.

2014. 'Ecclesiastical dominance and urban setting. Colonnaded streets as backdrop for Christian display'. *Antiquité Tardive* 22, pp.263-286.

Jäggi, Carola. 2002-2003. 'Donator oder Fundator: zur Genese des monumentalen Stifterbildes. *Georges-Bloch-Jahrbuch des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars der Universität Zürich* 9-10, pp.27-45.

James, Liz. 1996. '"Pray not to fall into temptation and be on your guard": pagan statues in Christian Constantinople'. *Gesta* 35(1), pp.12-20.

2003. 'Colour and meaning in Byzantium'. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11(2), pp.223-233.

Jefford, Clayton. 2013. *The Epistle to Diognetus (with the fragment of Quadratus): introduction, text and commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. 2011. *Living water: images, symbols, and settings of Early Christian baptism*. Leiden: Brill.

2012. *Baptismal imagery in early Christianity: ritual, visual, and theological dimensions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group.

Jeremias, Gisela. 1980. *Die Holztür der Basilika S.Sabina in Rom*. Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth.

Johnson, Mark J. 1997. 'Pagan-Christian burial practices of the fourth century: shared tombs?' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5(1), pp.37-59.

Jones, Lynn. 2004. 'Abbasid suzerainty in the medieval Caucasus: appropriation and adaptation of iconography and ideology'. *Gesta* 43(2), pp.143-150.

2007. *Between Islam and Byzantium. Aght'amar and the visual construction of medieval Armenian rulership*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Kähler, Heinz and Cyril Mango. 1967. *Hagia Sophia*. London: Zwemmer.

Kalavrezou, Ioli. 1990. 'Images of the Mother: when the Virgin Mary became "Meter Theou"'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44, pp.165-172.

Kantorowicz, Ernst. 1963. '*Puer exoriens*: on the Hypapante in the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore'. In: *Perennitas: Beiträge zur christlichen Archäologie und Kunst*, ed. Hugo Rahner and Emmanuel von Severus. Munster: Verlag Aschendorff, pp.118-135.

Kapell, Matt Wilhelm and Andrew Elliot, eds. 2013. *Playing with the past: digital games and the simulation of history.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

KM = Wilhelm Koehler and Florentine Mütherich. 1933-2013 (eight volumes). *Die karolingishen Miniaturen.* Berlin and Wiesbaden: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft.

Karpp, Heinrich. 1966. *Die frühchristlichen und mittelalterlichen Mosaiken in Santa Maria Maggiore zu Rom*. Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm.

Katzenellenbogen, Adolf. 1947. 'The sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio and St. Ambrose'. *The Art Bulletin* 29(4), pp.249-259.

Kennedy, Hugh. 1985. 'From *polis* to *madina*: urban change in late antique and early Islamic Syria'. *Past & Present* 106, pp.3-27.

Kent, John, Max Hirmer and Albert Hirmer. 1978. *Roman coins*, New York: Abrams.

Kessler, Herbert. 1993. 'Medieval art as argument'. In: *Iconography at the crossroads: papers from the colloquium sponsored by the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Brendan Cassidy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.59-70.

2012. 'Images borne on a breeze: the function of the Flabellum of Tournus as meaning'. In: *Charlemagne et les objets: des thésaurisations carolingiennes aux constructions mémorielles*, ed. Philippe Cordez. Bern: Peter Lang, pp.57-85.

Khalek, Nancy. 2011. *Damascus after the Muslim conquest: text and image in early Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khamis, Elias. 'Two wall mosaic inscriptions from the Umayyad market place in Bet Shean/Baysān'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64(2), pp.159-176.

Kiilerich, Bente. 1993. *Late fourth century classicism in the plastic arts: studies in the so-called Theodosian Renaissance*. Odense: Odense University Press.

2007. 'Picturing ideal beauty: the saints in the rotunda at Thessaloniki'. *Antiquité Tardive* 15, pp.321-336.

2014. 'The opus sectile from Porta Marina at Ostia and the aesthetics of interior decoration'. In: *Production and prosperity in the Theodosian period*, ed. Ine Jacobs. Leuven: Peeters, pp.169-187.

King, Paul David. 1987. *Charlemagne: translated sources*. Kendal, Cumbria: Lambrigg.

Kinney, Dale. 2007. 'Bearers of meaning'. *Jahrbuch fur Antike und Christentum* 50, pp.139-153.

2011. 'The discourse of columns'. In: *Rome across time and space: cultural transmission and the exchange of ideas c. 500-1400*, ed. Claudia Bolgia, Rosamond McKitterick and John Osborne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.182-199.

Kitzinger, Ernst. 1951. 'Studies on late antique and early Byzantine floor mosaics: I. Mosaics at Nikopolis'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6, pp.81-122.

1960. 'A marble relief of the Theodosian period'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14, pp.17-42.

1976. 'Some reflections on portraiture in Byzantine art '. In: *Ernst Kitzinger, The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West,* ed. Walter Eugene Kleinbauer. Bloomington: Indianna University Press, pp.256-269.

1978. 'The Cleveland marbles'. In: *Atti del IX congress internazionale di archeologia cristiana*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Artcheologia Cristiana, pp.653-675.

Kleinbauer, Eugene. 1972. 'The iconography and the date of the mosaics of the rotunda of Hagios Georgios, Thessaloniki'. *Viator* 3, pp.27-107.

1982. 'The orants in the mosaic decoration of the rotunda at Thessaloniki: martyr saints or donors?' *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30, pp.25-45.

Klinkenberg, Emannuel. 2009. *Compressed meanings: the donor's* model *in medieval art to around 1300*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Koch, Guntram. 2000. *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*. Munich: Beck.

Koch, Guntram and Hellmut Sichtermann. 1982. *Römische Sarkophage*. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Korol, Dieter. 1994. 'Zum frühchristlichen Apsismosaik der Bischofskirche von 'Capua Vetere' (SS. Stefano e Agata) und zu zwei weiteren Apsidenbildern dieser Stadt (S. Pietro in Corpo und S. Maria Maggiore)'. In: *Bild- und Formensprache der spätantiken Kunst, Festschrift für Hugo Brandenburg*, ed. Martina Jordan-Ruwe. Munster: Münstersche Beiträge zur Archäologie, pp.121-148.

Kratzke, Christine and Uwe Albrecht, eds. 2008. *Mikroarchitektur im Mittelalter: ein gattungsübergreifendes Phänomen zwischen Realität und Imagination*. Leipzig: Kratzke Verlag für Kunstgeschichte.

Krautheimer, Richard. 1942. 'The Carolingian revival of early Christian architecture'. *The Art Bulletin* 24(1), pp.1-38.

1961. 'The architecture of Sixtus III: a fifth-century renascence?' In: *Essays in honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss. New York: New York University Press, pp.291-302.

1980. *Rome: profile of a city, 312-1308*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

1983. *Three Christian capitals. Topography and politics. Rome, Constantinople, Milan*. Berkeley, L.A.: University of California Press.

Krautheimer, Richard and Slobodan Ćurčić. 1986. *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Krinsky, Carol Herselle. 1970. 'Representations of the Temple of Jerusalem before 1500'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33, pp.1-19.

Kroesen, Justin. 2000. *The sepulchrum domini through the ages: its form and function*. Leuven: Peeters.

Krueger, Paul. 1954. *Corpus juris civilis volume 2: Codex Justinianus*. Berlin: Weidmann.

Kühnel, Bianca. 1987. *From the earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem; representations of the Holy City in Christian art of the first millennium.* Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder Verlag.

Künzle, Paul. 1961-1962. 'Per una visione organica dei mosaici antichi di S. Maria Maggiore'. *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 34, pp.154-190.

L'Orange, Hans Peter and Per Jonas Nordhagen. 1966. *Mosaics*. London: Methuen.

Ladner, Gerhart. 1941. *Die Pappstbildnisse des Altertums und des Mittelalters. I, Bis zum Ende des Investitursstreits*. Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Artcheologia Cristiana.

    1942. 'The symbolism of the Biblical cornerstone in the mediaeval West'. *Mediaeval Studies* 4, pp.43-60.

Laffitte, Marie-Pierre and Charlotte Denoël. 2007. *Trésors carolingiens: livres manuscrits de Charlemagne à Charles le Chauve.* Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Lampl, Paul. 1961. 'Schemes of architectural representation in early medieval art'. *Marsyas* 9, pp.6-13.

Lamy, Thomas Josephus. 1882. *Sancti Ephraem Syri: hymni et sermones*. Mechelen, Belgium: H. Dessain.

Landersdorfer, P. S. 1912. 'Gedicht über den Fall der Gotzenbilder'. *Bibliothek der Kirchenvater* 6, pp.406-431.

Lange, Christian. 2016. *Paradise and hell in Islamic traditions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lassus, Jean. 1947. *Les sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*. Paris: Geuthner.

Lavedan, Pierre. 1954. *Représentation des villes dans l'art du moyen âge*. Paris: Éditions d'art et d'Historie.

Lawrence, Marion. 1927. 'City-gate sarcophagi'. *Art Bulletin* 10, pp.1-45.

1932. 'Columnar sarcophagi in the Latin West.' *Art Bulletin* 14, pp.103-185.

Lawson, R. P. 1957. *Origen: The Song of Songs: commentary and homilies*. New York: Paulist Press.

Leal, Beatrice. 2014. 'The stuccoes of San Salvatore, Brescia, in their Mediterranean context'. In: *Dalla corte regia al monastero di San Salvatore-Santa Giulia di Brescia*, ed. Gian-Pietro Brogiolo and Francesca Morandini. Mantua: SAP Società Archeologica, pp.221-245.

Forthcoming. 'A reconsideration of the Madaba Map'. *Gesta*.

Leaman, Oliver. 2004. *Islamic aesthetics: an introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lecoq, Danielle. 1995. 'Image du pouvoir: globe céleste ou globe terrestre de l'antiquité au moyen âge'. In: *Le Globe et son image*, ed. Catherine Hofmann, Danielle Lecoq, Eve Netchine and Monique Pelletier. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, pp.7-29.

Ledegang, Fred. 2001. *Mysterium Ecclesiae: images of the Church and its members in Origen*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Lehman, Karl. 1945. 'The dome of heaven'. *The Art Bulletin* 27, pp. 1-27.

Lewis, Charlton and Charles Short. 1962. *A Latin dictionary: founded on Andrew's edition of Freund's Latin dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. 1901. *Greek-English Lexicon*. New York: American Book Co.

Lidov, Alexei. 1998. 'Heavenly Jerusalem: the Byzantine approach'. *Jewish Art* 24, pp.340-353.

Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G. 2001. *The decline and fall of the Roman city*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lienhard, Joseph. 1996. *Origen: Homilies on Luke*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Lilley, Keith. 2004. 'Cities of God? Medieval urban forms and their Christian symbolism'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29(3), pp. 296-313.

Limberis, Vasiliki. 1994. *Divine heiress: the Virgin Mary and the creation of Christian Constantinople*. London: Routledge.

Lipsmeyer, Elizabeth. 1981. 'The donor and his church model in medieval art from early Christian times to the late Romanesque period'. Pd.D. dissertation, Rutgers University.

Livius, Thomas. 1893. *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the first six centuries*. London: Burns and Oates.

Llewellyn, Peter. 1974. 'The Roman church in the seventh century: the legacy of Gregory I'. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25(4), pp.363-380.

Loosley, Emma. 2012. *The architecture and liturgy of the bema in fourth- to-sixth-century Syrian churches*. Leiden: Brill.

Low, Peter. 2006. '"As a stone into a building": metaphor and materiality in the main portal at Vézelay'. *Word and Image* 22(3), pp.260-267.

Lowrie, Walter. 1947. *Art in the early church*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Lozovsky, Natalia. 2000. *'The earth is our book': geographical knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Luchterhandt, Manfred. 1999. 'Famulus Petri. Karl der Große in den römischen Mosaikbildern Leos III'. In: *799 - Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, pp.55-70.

Lutan, Sara. 1998. 'The Heavenly Jerusalem: from architectural canopies to urban landscape in the southern portals of Chartres Cathedral'. *Assaph: Studies in Art History* 3, pp.149-162.

Luz, Nimrod. 1997. 'The construction of an Islamic city in Palestine: the case of Umayyad al-Ramla'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* s.3 7(1), pp.27-54.

MacCormack, Sabine. 1972. 'Change and continuity in late antiquity: the ceremony of 'adventus''. *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 21(4), pp.721-752.

1981. *Art and ceremony in late antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

McClendon, Charles. 1980. 'The revival of opus sectile pavements in Rome and the vicinity in the Carolingian period'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 48, pp.157-165.

1996. 'Louis the Pious, Rome and Constantinople'. In: *Architectural studies in honor of Richard Krautheimer*, ed. Cecil Striker. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, pp.103-106.

McClung, William. 1983. *The architecture of paradise: survivals of Eden and Jerusalem*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

McCormick, Michael. 1986. *Eternal victory: triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium, and the early medieval West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McHugh, Michael. 1972. *Saint Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works*. Washington D.C.; Catholic University of America Press.

McKelvey, R. J. 1962. 'Christ the cornerstone'. *New Testament Studies* 8, pp.352-359.

McVey, Kathleen. 1989. *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*. New York: Paulist Press.

Mack, John. 2007. *The art of small things*. London: British Museum Press.

Mackie, Gillian. 1996. 'The San Venanzio chapel in Rome and the martyr shrine sequence'. *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 23(1/2), pp.1-13.

2003. *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage*.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Madden, Andrew. 2012. 'A new form of evidence to date the Madaba Map
mosaic'. *Liber Annuus* 62, pp.495-513.

Maguire, Eunice Dauternam, Henry Maguire and Maggie Duncan-Flowers. 1989.
Art and holy powers in the early Christian house. Chicago: University of Illinois
Press.

Maguire, Henry. 1987. *Earth and ocean: the terrestrial world in early Byzantine art*.
University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press.

1999. 'The Nile and the rivers of paradise'. In: *The Madaba map centenary:
travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period,* ed. Michele Piccirillo and
Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.179-184.

2000. 'Profane icons: the significance of animal violence in Byzantine art'. *Res:
Anthropology and Aesthetics* 38, pp.18-33.

2002. 'Paradise withdrawn'. In: *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. Antony
Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn. Washington D.C.:
Dumbarton Oaks, pp.23-36.

2012. *Nectar and Illusion: nature in Byzantine art and literature*. Oxford: Oxford
University Press.

Maguire, Henry and Ann Terry. 2007. *Dynamic splendour: the wall mosaics in the
cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč*.   University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State
University Press.

Maguire, Richard. 2012. 'Late antique basilicas on Cyprus: sources, contexts, histories'. Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia.

Forthcoming. 'Perfect servants in late antique Cyprus: eunuchs, angels and deacons'. In: *Medieval Angelology*, ed. June-Ann Greeley. Turnhout: Brepols.

Maier, Harry O. 1995. 'The topography of heresy and dissent in late-fourth-century Rome'. *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 44(2), pp.232-249.

Maier, Paul. 1999. *Eusebius – The Church History: a new translation with commentary*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.

Malacrino, Carmelo. 2010. *Constructing the ancient world: architectural techniques of the Geeks and Romans*. Los Angeles: Paul Getty Museum.

Malbon, Elizabeth. 1990. *The iconography of the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Malherbe, Abraham and Everett Ferguson. 1978. *Gregory of Nyssa: The life of Moses*. New York: Paulist Press.

Mango, Cyril. 1986. *Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453, sources and documents in the history of art*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

1990. 'Constantine's Mausoleum and the translation of relics'. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83, pp.51-61.

Mango, Marlia. 2001. 'The porticoed street at Constantinople'. In: *Byzantine Constantinople: monuments, topography and everyday life*, ed. Nevra Necipoğlu. Leiden: Brill, pp.29-52.

Maraval, Pierre. 2002. 'The earliest phase of Christian pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th century)'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56, pp.63-74.

Marcone, Arnaldo. 2008. 'A long late antiquity?: considerations on a controversial periodization.' *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1(1), pp.4-19.

Marinković, Čedomila. 2007. 'Founder's model – representation of a maquette or the church?' *Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'etudes byzantines* 44, pp.145-153.

Marino, Luigi and Michele Piccirillo. 1991. 'La torre di Umm er-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa'. In: *Materiali da costruzione e tecniche edili antiche: indagini e rilievi nell'ottica della conservazione*, ed. Luigi Marino. Florence: Alinea Editrice, pp.9-12.

Massé, Henri. 1973. *Abrégé du livre des pays*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas.

Mathews, Thomas. 1993. *The clash of gods: a reinterpretation of early Christian art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Matthiae, Guglielmo. 1967. *Mosaici medioevali delle chiese di Roma*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato.

Mauck, Marchita. 1987. 'The mosaic of the triumphal arch of S. Prassede: a liturgical interpretation'. *Speculum* 62(4), pp.813-828.

Maunder, Chris. 2008. 'Origins of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the New Testament'. In: *The origins of the cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder. London: Burns and Oates, pp.23-40.

Mayer, Wendy. 2006. *The cult of the saints: select homilies and letters by St John Chroysostom*. Crestwood, NY: St Valdimir's Seminary Press.

Meier, Hans-Rudolf. 2003. 'Ton, Stein und Stuck: Materialaspekte in der Bilderfrage des Früh- und Hochmittelalters'. *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 30, pp.35-52.

Meneghini, Roberto and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani. 2004. *Roma nell'Altomedioevo: topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato.

Mentzos, Aristotle. 2001. 'Reflections of the interpretation and dating of the rotunda of Thessaloniki'. *Egnatia* 6, pp.57-82.

Meshorer, Ya'akov. 1989. *The coinage of Aelia Capitolina*. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum.

Meyer, Ann. 2003. *Medieval allegory and the building of the New Jerusalem*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.

Milburn, Robert. 1988. *Early Christian art and architecture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mildenberg, Leo and Patricia Erhart Mottahedeh. 1984. *The coinage of the Bar Kokhba war*. Frankfurt: Sauerländer.

Miles, Margaret. 1993. 'Santa Maria Maggiore's fifth-century mosaics: triumphal Christianity and the Jews. *Harvard Theological Review* 86(2), pp.155-175.

Miller, Patricia Cox. 2000. '"The little blue flower is red": relics and the poetizing of the body.' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8(2), pp.213-236.

Millhauser, Steven. 1983. 'The fascination of the miniature'. *Grand Street* 2(4), pp. 128-135.

Mingana, Alphonse. 1933. *Theodore of Mopsuestia: commentary on the Lord's Prayer, baptism and the Eucharist*. Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons.

Mitchell, John. 1993. 'The crypt reappraised'. In: *San Vincenzo al Volturno, 1: The 1980-86 Excavations*, ed. Richard Hodges. London: British School at Rome, pp.75-114.

2008. 'The power of patronage and the iconography of quality in the era of 774'. In: *774, Ipotesi su una transizione. Seminari del Centro interuniversitario per la storia e l'archeologia dell'alto medioevo*, ed. Stefano Gasparri. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 263-288

2010. 'England in the eighth century. State formation, secular piety and the visual arts in Mercia'. In: *L'VIII secolo: un secolo inquieto*, ed. Valentino Pace. Cividale del Friuli: Comune di Cividale del Friuli, pp. 262-270.

2013. 'St. Johann at Müstair – the painted decoration in context'. In: *Wandel und Konstanz zwischen Bodensee und Lombardei zur Zeit Karls des Grossen: Kloster St. Johann in Müstair und Churrätien*, ed. Hans Rudolf Sennhauser. Zurich: Hochschulverlag, pp.373-396.

2014. 'The painted decoration of San Salvatore di Brescia in context'. In: *Dalla corte regia al monastero di San Salvatore – Santa Giulia di Brescia*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo and Francesca Morandini. Mantua: Società Archeologica, pp.169-210.

Forthcoming (2017). 'Columns and the Christian basilica'. In: *Dreaming up the middle ages*, ed. John Mitchell and John Moreland. Oxford: Archaeopress.

Moholt, Rebecca. 2011. 'Roman labyrinth mosaics and the experience of motion'. *The Art Bulletin* 93(3), pp.287-303.

Morey, Charles Rufus and Guy Ferrari. 1959. *The gold glass collection of the Vatican Library*. Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Morphy, Howard. 2009. 'Art as a mode of action: some problems with Gell's *Art and Agency'*. *Journal of Material Culture* 14(1), pp.5-27.

Morris, Colin. 2005. *The sepulchre of Christ and the medieval West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moskvina, Anastasia. Forthcoming. 'Liturgy and movement in the complex associated with St Stephen's church at Umm er-Rasas, Jordan'. *Convivium*.

Muessig, Carolyn and Ad Putter, eds. 2007. *Envisaging heaven in the middle ages*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Muldowney, Mary Sarah. 1959. *Saint Augustine: Sermons on the liturgical seasons*. New York: Fathers of the Church.

Muñoz, Antonio. 1938. *Il restauro della basilica di Santa Sabina*. Rome: Fratelli Palombi.

Müntz, Eugène. 1878. 'Notes sur les mosaiques chretiennes de l'Italie V: Sainte-Constance de Rome'. *Revue Archeologique* 35, pp.353-367.

Murray, Robert. 1975. *Symbols of church and kingdom: a study in early Syriac tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mütherich, Florentine, and Joachim Gaehde. 1977. *Carolingian Painting*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Nasrallah, Laura. 2005. 'Empire and apocalypse in Thessaloniki: interpreting the early Christian rotunda'. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13(4), pp.465-508.

Nees, Lawrence. 1992. 'The originality of early medieval artists'. In: *Literacy, politics and artistic innovation in the early medieval West*, ed. Celia Chazelle. Maryland: University Press of America, pp.77-190.

2009. 'Early Carolingian manuscripts and ivories'. In: *Les manuscrits carolingiens: Actes du colloque de Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, le 4 mai 2007*, ed. Marie-Pierre Laffitte and Jean-Pierre Caillet. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.159-184.

2016. *Perspectives on early Islamic art in Jerusalem*. Leiden: Brill.

Forthcoming. 'A copper-alloy plate with architectural imagery in Berlin… and Jerusalem?' In: *The making of Islamic art: festschrift in honour of Sheila Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand and Robert Hillenbrand. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art.

Neil, Bronwen. 2011. 'Imperial Benefactions to the Fifth-century Roman Church'. In: *Basileia: essays on imperium and culture in honour of E.M. and M.J. Jeffreys*, ed. Geoffrey Nathan and Lynda Garland. Australia: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, pp.55-66.

Nestori, Aldo. 1996. *Il mausoleo e il sarcofago di Flavius Iulius Catervius a Tolentino*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto de Archeologia Cristiana.

Neuman de Vegvar, Carol. 2007a. 'Remembering Jerusalem: architecture and meaning in Insular canon table arcades'. In: *Making and meaning in Insular art*, ed. Rachel Moss. Dublin: Four Courts Press, pp.242-256.

2007b. 'Gendered spaces: the placement of imagery in Santa Maria Maggiore'. In: *Roma Felix: formation and reflections of medieval Rome,* ed. Éamonn Ó Carragáin and Carol Neuman de Vegvar. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, pp.97-112.

Nilgen, Ursula. 1981. 'Maria Regina – ein politischer Kultbildtypus?' *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 19, pp.1-33.

Noble, Thomas. 1984. *The Republic of Saint Peter: the birth of the papal state, 680-825*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

2001. 'Topography, celebration, and power: the making of a papal Rome in the eighth and ninth centuries'. In: *Topographies of power in the early middle ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuws and Carine van Rhijn. Leiden: Brill, pp.45-91.

2005. 'The vocabulary of vision and worship in the early Carolingian period'. In: *Seeing the invisible in late antiquity and the early middle ages*, ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl Morrison and Marco Mostert. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.213-237.

2009. *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: the Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*. University Park, PA: Pennsylania State University Press.

Nodelman, Sheldon. 2002. 'How to read a Roman portrait'. In: *Critical perspectives on art history*, ed. John McEnroe and Deborah Pokinski. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, pp.38-45.

Noga-Banai, Galit. 2010. 'From a cabin in the sky to the eternal city'. *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 53, pp.140-152.

2013. 'Einhard's arch: validating a relic by visual means'. *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 40, pp.27-41.

Nolan, Louis. 1934. *The basilica of San Clemente in Rome*. Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press.

Nordenfalk, Carl. 1938. *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln*. Gothenburg: O. Isacsons boktryckerî.

1992. 'The apostolic canon-tables'. In: *Studies in the history of book illumination*, ed. Carl Nordenfalk. London: Pindar press, pp.30-40.

Nordhagen, Per Jonas. 1965. 'The mosaics of John VII (705-707 A.D.)'. *Acta ad Archaelogiam et Artium Historiam Pertine*ntia 2, pp.121-166.

1976. 'Un problema di carattere iconografico e tecnico a S.Prassede'. In: *Roma e l'eta carolingia. Atti delle giornate di studio 3-8 maggio 1976.* Rome: Multigrafica editrice, pp.159-66.

1983. 'The archaeology of wall mosaics: a note on the mosaics in Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome'. *The Art Bulletin* 65(2), pp.323-324.

NPNF1 = Schaff, Phillip. 1886-1889 (fourteen volumes). *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. New York: Christian Literature Company.

NPNF2 = Schaff, Phillip, and Henry Wace. 1890-1900 (fourteen volumes). *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2. New York: Christian Literature Company.

Oakeshott, Walter. 1967. *The mosaics of Rome*. Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society.

Olovsdotter, Cecilia. 2005. *The consular image: an iconological study of the consular diptychs*. Oxford: BAR International Series.

Onians, John. 1988. *Bearers of meaning. The classical orders in antiquity, the middle ages and the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

1999. *Classical art and the cultures of Greece and Rome*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Ortolani, Giorgio. 1994. 'Cartografia e architettura nella 'carta di Madaba''. *Palladio: Rivista di storia dell' architettura e restauro* 14, pp.55-68.

Osborne, John. 1979. 'The portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: a re-examination of the so-called 'square' nimbus in medieval art'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 47, pp.58-65.

1985. 'The Roman catacombs in the middle ages'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 53, pp.278-328.

2003. 'Images of the Mother of God in early medieval Rome.' In: *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, pp.135-156.

Osborne, John and Amanda Claridge. 1996. *Early Christian and medieval antiquities vol.1: Mosaics and wallpaintings in Roman churches*. London: Harvey Miller.

1998. *Early Christian and medieval antiquities vol.2:* Other mosaics, aarcophagi and small objects. London: Harvey Miller.

Ousterhout, Robert. 1990. 'The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior'. *Gesta* 29(1), pp.44-53.

Ovadiah, Ruth. 1974. 'Jonah in a mosaic pavement at Beth Guvrin'. *Israel Exploration Journal* 24(3/4), pp.214-215.

Palazzo, Eric. 2010. 'Relics*,* liturgical space, and the theology of the church'. In**:** *Treasures of heaven: saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, Holger Klein, Griffith Mann and James Robinson. Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, pp.99-110.

Palardy, William. 2004. *St Peter Chrysologus: selected sermons*, volume 2. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Panazza, Gaetano. 1962. 'Gli scavi, l'architettura e gli affreschi della Chiesa di San Salvatore in Brescia'. In: *La Chiesa di San Salvatore in Brescia: Atti dell VIII Congresso di Studi sull'arte dell'alto medioevo II*, ed. Gaetano Panazza and Adriano Peroni. Milan: Casa Editoriale Ceschina, pp. 5-228.

Papandrea, James. 2012. *Rome: a pilgrim's guide to the eternal city*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Paribeni, Andrea. 1994. 'Un mosaico con rappresentazione architettonica nel Museo di Hama'. In: *XL Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina: L'Albania dal tardoantico al medioevo*. Ravenna: Girasole, pp.351-259.

Patcı, Sami and Sinan Altun. 2014. 'Mosaics of early Byzantine Church B in Paphlagonian Hadrianoupolis and their iconographic analysis'. *Arkeoloji Dergisi* 19, pp.183-208.

Pauty, Edmond. 1935. **'**L'architecture dans les miniatures islamiques'. *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 17, pp.23-68.

Peroni, Adriano. 2002. 'Stucco, pittura e sinopie in S. Salvatore di Brescia e in S. Benedetto di Malles'. In: *Sinopien und Stuck im Westwerk der Karolingischen Klosterkirche von Corvey*, ed. Joachim Poeschke. Münster: Rhema, pp. 59-69.

Peters, Wilhelmus. 1963. *Landscape in Romano-Campanian mural painting*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Piccirillo, Michele. 1991. 'Il complesso di Santo Stefano a Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa in Giordania (1986-1991)'. *Liber Annuus* 41, pp.327-364.

  1992. *The mosaics of Jordan*. Amman: American Center of Oriental Research.

  1993. 'La chiesa del Prete Wa'il a Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa in Giordania'. In: *Early Christianity in context: monuments and documents*, ed. Frédéric Manns and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, pp.313-334.

1994. 'Le inscrizioni di Kastron Mefaa'. In: *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa'ah vol.1: Gli scvi del complesso di Santo Stefano*, ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.241-269.

1997. 'La chiesa di San Paolo a Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa'. *Liber Annuus* 47, pp.375-394.

1998. 'The Chapel of the Peacocks at Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa'. In: *Domum Tuam Dilexi: miscellanea in onore di Aldo Nestori*. Rome: Pontificio istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, pp.669-682.

2006. 'La Chiesa del Reliquario a Umm al-Rasas'. *Liber Annuus* 56, pp.375-388.

Piccirillo, Michele and Eugene Alliata, eds. 1999. *The Madaba Map centenary 1897–1997: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period*. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

Pietri, Charles. 1961. 'Concordia apostolorum et renovatio urbis (Culte des martyrs et propagande pontificale)'. *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 73, pp.275-322.

1976. *Roma christiana. Recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311-440)*. Rome: École française de Rome.

1977. 'Appendice prosopographique à la Roma christiana (311-440)'. *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité* 89(1), pp.371-415.

PL = Migne, Jacques Paul. 1841-1855. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina.* Paris: Imprimerie Catholique. Accessed online at http://pld.chadwyck.com/

PG = Migne, Jacques Paul. 1857–1866. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*. Paris: Imprimerie Catholique. Accessed online at http://patristica.net/graeca/

Platt, Verity. 2012. 'Framing the dead on Roman sarcophagi'. *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 61-62, pp.213-227.

PLRE I = Jones, Arnold, John Martindale and John Morris. 1971. *The prosopography of the later Roman Empire. Volume 1: A. D. 260-395*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Plumpe, Joseph Conrad. 1943. 'Vivum saxum, vivi lapides: the concept of 'living stone' in classical and Christian antiquity.' *Traditio* 1, pp.1-14.

Poulsen, Birte. 2014. 'City personifications in late antiquity.' In: *Using images in late antiquity*, ed. Stine Birk, Troels Myrup Kristensen and Birte Poulsen. Oxford: Oxbow Books, pp.209-226.

Price, Richard. 2008. 'The Theotokos and the Council of Ephesus'. In: *The origins of the cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder. London: Burns and Oates, pp.89-104.

Pullan, Wendy. 1998. 'Jerusalem from alpha to omega in the Santa Pudenziana mosaic'. In: *The real and ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic art: studies in honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, ed. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Bianca Kühnel. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, pp.405-417.

Pullan, Wendy. 1999. 'The representation of the late antique city in the Madaba Map'. In: *The Madaba map centenary: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad*

period, ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.165-171.

2005. '"Intermingled until the end of time": ambiguity as a central condition of early Christian pilgrimage'. In: *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and early Christian antiquity: seeing the Gods*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.387-410.

Quatremère, Etienne. 1845. *Histoire des sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte ecrite en Arabe par Taki-ed-din-Ahmed-Makrizi*, volume 2. Paris: Benjamin Duprat.

Rabbat, Nasser. 1995. *The Citadel of Cairo: a new interpretation of royal Mamluk architecture. Leiden*: Brill.

Rapp, Claudia. 2010. 'The idea of the ancient Greek polis in medieval Byzantium: the ancient city and its features.' Athens Dialogues Conference, November 2010, published online at *http://athensdialogues.chs.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/athensdialogues.woa/wa/dist?dis=70*

2013. 'City and citizenship as Christian concepts of community'. In: *The city in the classical and post-classical world: changing contexts of power and identity*, ed. Claudia Rapp and Harold Drake. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.153-166.

Rasch, Jürgen. 2000. 'The original mausoleum of Constantina'. *Arte Medievale* s.II, 14, pp.155-156.

Rasmo, Nicolò. 1981. *Karolingische Kunst in Südtirol*. Bozen: s.n.

Rasmussen, Mikael. 2001. 'Traditio Legis: Bedeutung und Kontext'. *Acta Hyperborea* 8, pp.21-52.

Rebenich, Stefan. 2009. 'Late antiquity in modern eyes'. In: *A companion to late antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp.77-92.

Rep. = Deichmann, Friedrich Wilhelm, Giuseppe Bovini, Hugo Brandenburg and Thilo Ulbert. 1967-2003 (three volumes). *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.

Rettner, Arno. 1995. 'Dreimal Theodotus? Stifterbild und Grabstiftung in der Theodotus-Kapelle von Santa Maria Antiqua in Rom'. In: *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn. Stifter und Auffrageber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, ed. Hans-Rudolf Meier, Carola Jäggi, Philip Büttner. Berlin: Reimer, pp.31-46.

Rhodes, James. 1975. *The Apocryphal New Testament: being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Riccioni, Stefano. 2006. *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma.: Exemplum della chiesa riformata*. Spoleto: CISAM.

Richter, Gisela. 1955. 'The origin of verism in Roman portraits'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 45(1-2), pp.39-46.

Ringbom, Lars Ivar. 1951. *Graltempel und Paradies: Beziehungen zwischen Iran und Europa im Mittelalter*. Stockholm: Walhlström and Widstrand.

Roberts, Michael. 1989. *The jeweled style: poetry and poetics in late antiquity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

2001. 'Rome personified, Rome epitomized: representations of Rome in the poetry of the early fifth century'. *The American Journal of Philology* 122(4), pp.533-565.

Roll, Israel and Etan Ayalon. 1987. 'The market street at Apollonia-Arsuf'. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 267, pp.61-76.

Romano, Serena. 2006. *La pittura medieval a Roma. Corpus, volume IV: Riforma e tradizion 1150-1198*. Milan: Jaca Book.

Rosen-Aylon, Myriam. 1976. 'The first mosaic discovered in Ramla'. *Israel Exploration Journal* 26(2/3), pp.104-119.

Rosenau, Helen. 1974. *The ideal city: its architectural evolution*. London: Studio Vista.

1979. *Vision of the Temple: the image of the Temple of Jerusalem in Judaism and Christianity*. London: Oresko Books.

Rosenbaum, Elisabeth. 1955. 'The vine columns of Old St. Peter's in Carolingian canon tables'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 18(1/2), pp.1-15.

Roux, Georges. 1973. 'Tables chrétiennes en marbre découvertes à Salamine'. In: *Salamine de Chypre IV: Anthologie salaminienne*. Paris: de Boccard, pp.133-196.

Rowland, Benjamin. 1946. 'Gandhara and early Christian art: the *homme-arcade* and the date of the Bimaran reliquary'. *The Art Bulletin* 28(1), pp.44-47.

Rutschowscaya, Marie-Hélène. 1990. *Tissus Coptes*. Paris: Adam Biro.

Saliby, Nassib, Marc Griersheimer and Noel Duval. 1999. 'Un martyrium octogonal découvert a Homs (Syrie) en 1988 et sa mosaïque'. *Antiquité Tardive* 7, pp.383-400.

Sansoni, Rina. 1969. *I sarcofagi paleocristiani a porte de citta*. Bologna: Pàtron.

Sauvaget, Jean. 1947. *La mosquée omeyyade de Médine. Étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique*. Paris: Van Oest.

Savage, Stephen, Kurt Zamora and Donald Keller. 2004. 'Archaeology in Jordan, 2004 season'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 109(3), pp.527-555.

Saxer, Victor. 2001. *Une basilique de Rome dans l'histoire de la ville et de son église (Ve-XIIIe siècle)*. Rome: École française de Rome.

Schlatter, Fredric. 1989. 'The text in the mosaic of Santa Pudenziana'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 43, pp.155-165.

 1992. 'Interpreting the mosaic of Santa Pudenziana'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 46(3), pp.276-295.

 1995a. 'The two women in the mosaic of Santa Pudenziana'. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3(1), pp.1-24.

 1995b. 'A mosaic interpretation of Jerome, "In Hiezechielem"'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 49(1), pp.64-81.

Schlunk, Helmut and Magin Berenguer. 1957. *La pintura mural Asturiana de los siglos IX y X*. Madrid: Leon Sanchez Cuesta.

Schumacher, Nikolaus. 1959. 'Dominus legem dat'. *Römische Quartalschrift* 54, pp.1-39.

SEG = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, accessed online at http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/supplementum-epigraphicum-graecum.

Segal, Arthur. 1997. *From function to monument: urban landscapes of Roman Palestine, Syria and Provincia Arabia*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Sessa, Kristina. 2012. *The formation of papal authority in late antique Italy: Roman bishops and the domestic sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sexton, Kim. 2009. 'Justice seen: loggias and ethnicity in early medieval Italy'. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68(3), pp.309-337.

Scheck, Thomas. 2015. *Commentary on Isaiah*. New York: Newman Press.

Schlumberger, Daniel. 1986. *Qasr el-Heir el-Gharbi*. Paris: Paul Geuthner.

Shehade, Kamel. 1997. *Les mosaïques du musée de Ma'arra.* Kaslik: Institut d'Art Sacré.

Sieger, Joanne Deane. 1987. 'Visual metaphor as theology: Leo the Great's sermons on the Incarnation and the arch mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore'. *Gesta* 26(2), pp.83-91.

Simpson, Ian. 2008. 'Market buildings at Jerash: commercial transformations at the tetrakonion in the 6th to 9th c. C.E'. In: *Residences, castles, settlements. Transformation processes from late antiquity to early Islam in Bilad al-Sham*, ed. Karin Bartl. Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, pp.115-224.

Smith, Christine. 1989. 'Christian rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre'. *Vigiliae Christianae* 43(3), pp.226-247.

Smith, Earl Baldwin. 1950. *The dome: a study in the history of ideas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

1978. *Architectural symbolism of imperial Rome and the middle ages.* New York: Hacker Art Books.

Smith, Julia. 2000. 'Old saints, new cults: Roman relics in Carolingian Francia'. In: *Early medieval Rome and the Christian West: essays in honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. Julia Smith. Leiden: Brill, pp.317-339.

Smith, Rowland. 2003. '"Restored utility, eternal city": patronal imagery at Rome in the fourth century AD'. In: *Bread and circuses: euergetism and municipal patronage in Roman Italy*, ed. Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell. London: Routledge, pp.142-166.

Snelders, Bas. 2005. 'The traditio legis on early Christian sarcophagi'. *Antiquité Tardive* 13, pp.321-333.

Sodini, Jean-Pierre. 1993. 'Quelques mosaïques proche-orientales inédites (ou peu connues)'. *Bulletin de l'AIEMA* 14, pp.286-289.

Sotiriou, Maria. 1972. 'Sur quelques problèmes de l'iconographie de la coupole de Saint-Georges de Thessalonique'. In: *In memoriam Panayotis A. Michelis*. Athens: Société Hellénique d'Esthétique, pp.218-230.

Spain, Suzanne. 1979. '"The promised blessing": the iconography of the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore'. *The Art Bulletin* 61(4), pp.518-540.

1983. 'The restorations of the Sta. Maria Maggiore Mosaics'. *The Art Bulletin* 65(2), pp.325-328.

Spera, Lucrezia. 2003. 'The Christianization of space along the Via Appia: changing landscape in the suburbs of Rome'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 107(1), pp.23-43.

2013. 'Characteristics of the Christianisation of space in late antique Rome'. In: *Cities and gods: religious space in transition*, ed. Ted Kaiser, Anna Leone, Edmund Thomas and Robert Witcher. Leuven: Peeters, pp.121-142.

Sperl, Stefan. 1977. 'Islamic kingship and Arabic panegyric poetry in the early 9th century'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8, pp.20-35.

1989. *Mannerism in Arabic poetry*. Cambridge: CUP.

Spieser, Jean-Michel. 1984. *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IVe au VIe siècle: contribution à l'étude d'une ville paléochrétienne*. Paris: de Boccard.

1998. 'The representation of Christ in the apses of early Christian churches'. *Gesta* 37(1), pp.63-73.

St Clair, Archer. 1985. 'God's house of peace in paradise: the feast of tabernacles on a Jewish gold glass.' *Journal of Jewish Art* 11, pp.6-15.

Stanley, David. 1994. 'New discoveries at Santa Costanza'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48, pp.257-261.

2004. 'Santa Costanza: history, archaeology, function, patronage and dating'. *Arte medievale* 3, pp.119-140.

Stiegemann, Christoph and Matthias Wemhoff, eds. 1999. *799 - Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.

Stroll, Mary. 1997. 'Maria Regina: papal symbol'. In: *Queens and queenship in medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, pp.173-203.

Talgam, Rina. 2014. *Mosaics of faith: floors of pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land*. University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Tanner, Norman. 1990. *Decrees of the Ecumenical councils, Volume 1: Nicaea I to Lateran V*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1903. *The Shepherd of Hermas*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Tchalenko, Georges. 1951. 'Ambons syriens'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 5, pp.75-122.

   1953-1958 (three volumes). *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord: le massif du Beĺus à l'époque romaine*. Paris: Geuthner.

Tcherikover, Anat. 1999. 'The pulpit of Sant' Ambrogio at Milan'. *Gesta* 38(1), pp.35-66.

Terry, Ann. 1986. 'The 'opus sectile' in the Eufrasius Cathedral at Poreč'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 40, pp.147-164.

Terry, Ann and Henry Maguire. 2007. *Dynamic splendor. The wall mosaics in the cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč*. University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press.

362

Testini, Pasquale. 1973-1974. 'La lapide di Anagni con la "Traditio legis". Nota sull'origine del tema'. *Archeologia Classica* 25-26, pp.718-740.

Thacker, Alan. 2007. 'Rome of the martyrs: saints, cults and relics, fourth to seventh centuries'. In: *Roma Felix – formations and reflections of medieval Rome*, ed. Éamonn Ó Carragain and Carol Neuman de Vegvar. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, pp.13-50.

Thérel, Marie-Louise. 1962. 'Une image de la sibylle sur l'arc triomphal de Sainte-Marie-Majeure à Rome ?' *Cahiers Archéologiques* 12, pp.153-171.

    1973. *Les symboles de l'"Ecclesia' dans la création iconographique de l'art chrétien du IIIe au VIe siècle*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

Thomas, Edmund. 2011. 'Houses of the dead? Columnar sarcophagi as micro-architecture'. In*: Life, death and representation: some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, ed. Jas Elsner and Janet Huskinson. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp.389-435.

Thunø, Erik. 2002. *Image and relic: mediating the sacred in early medieval Rome*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.

    2005. 'Materializing the invisible in early medieval art: the mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica in Rome. In: *Seeing the invisible in late antiquity and the early middle ages*, ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl Morrison and Marco Mostert. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.265-289.

    2007. 'Looking at letters: "living writing" in S. Sabina in Rome'. *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 34, pp.19-41.

2011. 'Inscription and divine presence: golden letters in the early medieval apse mosaic'. *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 27(3), pp.279-291.

2014. ''Living stones' of Jerusalem: the triumphal arch mosaic of Santa Prassede in Rome'. In: *Visual constructs of Jerusalem: cultural encounters in late antiquity and the middle ages*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.223-230.

2015. *The apse mosaic in early medieval Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Timmermann, Achmin. 2009. *Real presence: sacrament houses and the body of Christ, c. 1270-1600*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Toal, Martin. 2000. *The Sunday sermons of the great Fathers, volume 1*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Torp, Hjalmar. 1991. 'The date of the conversion of the Rotunda at Thessaloniki into a church'. In: *The Norwegian Institute at Athens: the first five lectures*, ed. Øivind Andersen and Helene Whittaker. Athens: Norwegian Institute at Athens, pp.13-28.

2002. 'La mosaiques de la Rotunde de Thessalonique'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 50, pp.3-20.

Trilling, James. 1995. 'Medieval interlace ornament: the making of a cross-cultural idiom'. *Arte Medievale* 9(2), pp.59-86.

Tronzo, William. 1986. *The Via Latina catacomb: imitation and discontinuity in fourth-century Roman painting*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Tsafrir, Yoram. 'The holy city of Jerusalem in the Madaba Map'. In: *The Madaba map centenary: travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad period,* ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugene Alliata. Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, pp.155-163.

Tsafrir, Yoram and Gideon Foerster. 1997. 'Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean in the fourth to seventh centuries'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51, pp.85-146.

Turshan, Nizar. 2010. 'The Magi: a rare mosaic floor in the Yaʿamun church (Jordan)'. *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 50, pp.616-624.

Underwood, Paul. 1950. 'The fountain of life in manuscripts of the Gospels'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5, pp.41-138.

Valavanolickal, Kuriakose. 1999. *Aphrahat Demonstrations, volume 1: Demonstrations 1-10*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press.

2005. *Aphrahat Demonstrations, volume 2: Demonstrations 11-23*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press.

Valenzani, Riccardo Santangeli. 2007. 'Public and private space in Rome during late antiquity and the early middle ages'. *Fragmenta* 1, pp.63-81.

Van Berchem, Marguerite and Etienne Clouzot. 1924. *Mosaïques chrétiennes du IVe au Xe siècle.* Paris: Albert Morancé.

Van den Brink, Peter and Sarvenaz Ayooghi. 2014. *Karls Kunst*. Aachen: Ausstellungskatalog Centre Charlemagne.

Van der Meer, Frederik. 1938. *Maiestas domini: théophanies de l'Apocalypse dans l'art chrétien.* Rome: Pontificio istituto di archeologia Cristiana.

Vassilaki, Maria. 2000. *Mother of God: representations of the Virgin in Byzantine art.* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

(ed.) 2005*. Images of the Mother of God: perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Vassall-Phillips, Oliver Rodie. 1917. *The work of St Optatus, BIshop of Milevis, Against the Donatists*. London: Longmans, Green and co.

Vibert-Guigue, Claude, Ghazi Bisheh and Frédéric Imbert. 2007. *Les peintures de Qusayr Amra: un bain omeyyade dans la bâdiya jordanienne*. Beirut: Institut français du Proche-Orient.

Volbach, Wolfgang Fritz. 1976. *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums.

Von Bothmer, Hans-Caspar. 1987. 'Architeckturbilder im Koran: eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen'. *Pantheon* 45, pp.4-20.

Walker, Robert. 1948. 'Illustrations to the Priscillian prologues in the Gospel manuscripts of the Carolingian Ada School'. *The Art Bulletin* 30(1), pp.1-10.

Walmsley, Alan. 2007. *Early Islamic Syria: an archaeological assessment*. London: Duckworth.

Walsh, Patrick Gerard. 1975. *The poems of Paulinus of Nola*. New York: Newman Press.

1966. *The letters of Paulinus of Nola, vol.1: letters 1-22*. New York: Newman Press.

1967. *The letters of Paulinus of Nola, vol.2: letters 23-51*. New York: Newman Press.

Walter, Christopher. 1970. 'Papal political imagery in the medieval Lateran Palace'. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 20, pp.155-76.

Ward-Perkins, John Bryan. 1966. 'Imperial mausolea and their possible influence on early Christian central-plan buildings'. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 25, pp.297-299.

Ward-Perkins, Bryan. 1997. 'Continuitists, catastrophists and the towns of post-Roman northern Italy'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 65, pp.157-176.

2001. 'A brief comment'. In: *Recent research in late antique urbanism*, ed. Luke Lavan. Portsmouth, R.I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 42, pp.239-241.

Warland, Rainer. 2003. 'The concept of Rome in late antiquity reflected in the mosaics of the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome'. *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 17, pp.127-141.

Weber, Robert. 1975-1979 (three volumes). *Ambrosii Autperti Opera*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Weber, Stefan. 2014. 'Salver with architectural décor'. In: *Early capitals of Islamic culture. The artistic legacy of Umayyad Damascus and Abbasid Baghdad (650-950)*, ed. Stefan Weber and Ulrike al-Khamis. Munich: Hirmer, pp. 30-31.

Weiss, Zeev and Ehud Netzer. 1996. 'The mosaics of the Nile festival building'. In: *Sepphoris in Galilee: crosscurrents of culture*, ed. Rebecca Martin Nagy. Winona Lake: North Carolina Museum of Art, pp.127-131.

Weitzmann, Kurt. 1979. *Age of spirituality: late antique and early Christian art, third to seventh century*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Weitzmann, Kurt and George Galavaris. 1990. *The monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The illuminated manuscripts, Vol.1: from the ninth to the twelfth century*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Westermann-Angerhausen, Hiltrud. 2014. *Mittelalterliche Weihrauchfässer von 800 bis 1500*. Petersberg: Michael Imhoff.

Wharton, Annabel Jane. 1995. *Refiguring the post classical city: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whiston, William, trans. 1915. *The wars of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus*. London: J. M. Dent.

Whitcomb, Donald. 1994. 'The *misr* of Ayla: settlement at al-Aqaba in the early Islamic period'. In: *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East II: land use and settlement patterns*, ed. Geoffrey King and Averil Cameron. Princeton: Darwin Press, pp.155-170.

White, Michael. 1990. *The social origins of Christian architecture. Volume 1: Building God's house in the Roman world: architectural adaptation among pagans, Jews and Christians*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International.

Wickham, Chris. 2005. *Framing the early middle ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wickhoff, Franz, trans. Eugénie Strong. 1900. *Roman art: some of its principles and their application to early Christian painting*. London: William Heinemann.

Wilken, Robert. 1992. *The land called Holy: Palestine in Christian history and thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wilkinson, John. 1977. *Jerusalem pilgrims before the Crusades*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd.

Wilpert, Joseph. 1903. *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

1916 (four volumes). *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Wirth, Fritz. *Römische Wandmalerei*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Wisskirchen, Rotraut. 1992. *Die Mosaiken der Kirche Santa Prassede in Rom*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.

Wolf, Mark. 2012. *Building imaginary worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. New York: Routledge.

Wright, David. 1993. *The Vatican Vergil: a masterpiece of late antique art.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wright, George Ernest. 1939. 'The Good Shepherd'. *The Biblical Archaeologist* 2(4), pp.44-48.

Yasin, Ann Marie. 2005. 'Funerary monuments and collective identity: from Roman family to Christian community.' *The Art Bulletin* 87(3), pp.433-457.

2009. *Saints and church spaces in the late antique Mediterranean: architecture, cult and community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2010. 'Making use of paradise: church benefactors, heavenly visions, and the late antique commemorative imagination'. In: *Looking beyond: visions, dreams and insights in medieval art and history*, ed. Colum Hourihane. University Park. P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.39-57.

Zanchi-Roppo, Franca. 1969. *Vetri paleocristiani a figure d'oro*. Ravenna: Longo.

Zanker, Paul. 1995. *The mask of Socrates: the image of the intellectual in antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zanker, Paul and Bjorn Ewald. 2012. *Living with myths: the imagery of Roman sarcophagi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaqzuq, Abdul Razaq and Michèle Piccirillo. 1999. 'The mosaic floor of the church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam – Hamah, in central Syria'. *Liber Annuus* 49, pp.443-464.

Zaqzuq, Abdul Razaq and Gabiel Saadé. 1987. 'Nouvelles archéologiques: Les découvertes de Tayyibat al-Imâm'. *Syria* 64, pp.330-332.

Zimmerman, Odo John. 1959. *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Zori, Nehemia. 1966. 'The house of Kyrios Leontis at Beth Shean'. *Israel Exploration Journal* 16(2), pp.123-134.

Zubair, Nadine. 1997. 'Gandhara architecture and its representation'. MA dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.