



**MAPPING
ROME**

**SPRING
2019**

TOWN & TRIUMPH : ROME ON PARADE

Dear Skidmore Alumni and Friends,

These three readings, which we used in our Mapping Rome course last spring, will offer further context and clarification on the three Roman parades in our webinar: the Roman Triumph, the Jubilee Procession of 1300, and the papal *possesso*.

- 11 B. Ermatinger, J.W. 2015. "Triumphs." *The World of Ancient Rome: A Daily Life Encyclopedia*, 583–6. Greenwood.

A basic introduction to the Roman triumph, from its political and religious overtones, to the route of the actual procession.

- 23 C. Kessler, H.L. and Johanna Zacharias. 2000. "The *Acheropita* Approaches Its Destination." (Excerpts.) *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim*, 89–106. Yale University Press.

The authors veer toward historical fiction in describing an evening torchlight procession in the very first Jubilee Year, 1300. The protagonist is a female pilgrim who has journeyed to Rome, and who has joined the procession of the *Acheropita* (a sacred painting of the Christ) from the Lateran district to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. The reading begins after the procession has passed the Basilica of San Clemente, and reports what the pilgrim sees, hears, and — perhaps most important — remembers as she walks through the heart of medieval Rome.

- 23 D. Stinger, C.L. 1985. "Urbs Roma: Liturgy and Ceremony." *The Renaissance in Rome*, 53–7. Indiana University Press.

Stinger not only describes with some care the *possesso*, the ceremony by which a pope took possession of the city, he informs us of the games and entertainments sponsored by newly crowned pontiffs. Here we find Renaissance popes self-consciously recreating pagan forms of patronage.

We thank you for attending our presentation and hope you find these readings illuminating.

Arrivederci,

Dan Curley, Classics

Gregory Spinner, Religious Studies

Ermatinger, J.W. 2015. "Triumphs."
The World of Ancient Rome: A Daily Life Encyclopedia, 583–6. Greenwood.

TRIUMPHS

During the Republic, one of the greatest military honors was the triumph. If a general was successful in battle, there was a possibility that he could achieve a triumph, a religious and civil event, which only the Senate could decree. According to the history and law a general's army normally could not enter the city without the approval of the Senate. A way for this to occur was for the Senate to decree a triumph, which in turn allowed the general to move his army from outside the walls into the city. The Senate would receive the general and his report outside the city, usually at the Temple of Bellona, and determine if a triumph was to be granted.

Its origin lay with the Etruscans and was governed by religious rules to ensure the state did not suffer from the gods. The general had to hold a magistrate with

the power of *imperium*, that is, the right to command an army. Later this rule was dropped, but during the early-mid Republic, this was in force. The magistrates who held this power were dictator, consul, and praetor; the offices of *proconsul* and *propraetor* were later included. The general had to have a victory over an army of at least 5,000. It could not be gained against citizens, that is, in a civil war. Between 220 and 70 BCE, there were about 100 triumphs. The general was called *triumphator* and he could maintain his *imperium* for the day he was inside the city. This was because as soon as a general entered the city, he lost his *imperium*. He would then be allowed to be called *triumphator* for the rest of his life. The general rode in a chariot drawn by four horses.

The procession started outside the city, originally in the Campus Martius and proceeded through the *Porta Triumphalis* into the *circus Flaminius* and then entered the city proper at the *Porta Carmentalis*. Here the army then marched into the Circus Maximus. From here the army moved to the *Via Sacra* and then through the Roman Forum up to the Capitoline Hill to the Capital and the Temple of Jupiter.



Arch of Constantine, Rome, Italy, ca. 315 CE. The highest honor awarded to a conquering general was a triumph, often enhanced with a pictorial description in the triumphal arch, as seen here with Constantine's arch celebrating his victory over Maxentius in 313 CE. The triumph during the Republic was the only time a general could enter the city of Rome with his men. (Totophotos/Dreamstime.com)

The procession started with the magistrates, senators, and then followed by trumpeters, and then came the spoils of war. The triumph then had representations of the conquered region perhaps with models of forts, ships, or other examples of the conquered army; the general's honors from the other cities were then carried and followed by the white bulls, which were to be sacrificed. The procession then had more gifts and the prisoners of war. The first of these were the most distinguished captives who had been spared for the triumph and who upon the end usually were taken away to prison and executed. Occasionally, the prisoners were spared, but usually not during the Republic. The prisoners were followed by the general's lictors with their *fascēs* and then the musicians and priests. The general then arrived in his chariot drawn by four white horses. He wore a wreath of bay leaves and wore the cloth of Capitoline Jupiter from the temple on the Capitoline. The *tunic* was purple with gold palm shoots, a *roga* with golden stars on a purple background; he also carried an ivory scepter in his left hand with an eagle on top while in his right he carried a branch of bay. Over his head a golden crown of Jupiter was held by a slave who would remind the general that he was only a man. The general's sons then rode behind the chariot on horseback. The soldiers then followed the general marching up the rear. The general then arrived at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Throughout the city the people would assemble and shout praises to the conquering general and his army. The festival and procession were to be only for a day, but ultimately they were increased to several days as time went on.

If a general had his official triumph refused by the Senate, he could undertake his own by going to the temple of Jupiter Latiaris on the Alban Hill. Often a general might be refused a triumph but given an ovation, a sort of mini-triumph. Here the general either entered on foot or horse with a wreath of myrtle. One aspect of the triumph was the dispensing of gifts by the general. These gifts were made first to the state in the form of booty and then to his soldiers and finally to the people. When Pompey returned from the east and marched through the streets of Rome, he carried in carts bullion and over 75,000,000 *drachmae* of silver coin, which was enough to keep the city of Rome alive for an entire year, more than the annual tax returns. Included in his triumph were Mithradates' gold throne and other gold objects including statues and goblets. While Mithradates was dead and his ally Tigranes had escaped, their images were displayed along with other captives. Sometimes a general might not be able to be present for his own triumph; in 118 CE, Trajan celebrated a triumph for his victories over the Parthians in the east. Instead of the emperor, a mannequin was substituted since he had died the previous year.

The triumphs and ovations were reserved for the conquering general during the Republic. In the early Empire, Augustus allowed his relatives to celebrate

triumphs, but when M. Licinius Crassus (grandson of the triumvir) won a victory over the Scythians in 29 BCE and killed the enemy leader himself thus being entitled to not only a triumph but also the *spolia opima* which was an ancient religious and military honor then the general stripped the enemy leader of his arms and deposited them in the temple. Augustus denied Crassus this honor reserving the honor of triumphs for the imperial family.

An additional aspect different from triumphs and ovations were the supplications or *Feriae Imperativae*. The supplications were originally decreed by the Senate for either intercession during times of crises or for days of thanksgiving for a victory. Unlike the triumphs and ovations that had set days and were rigidly enforced, the supplications had grown from just one day to occasionally a few. Nevertheless, by the time of the late Republic their use had grown considerably. After Caesar's campaign season in 57 BCE in Gaul, 15 days were voted, and two years later 20 were decreed. Cicero proposed 50 days after the battle of Mutina in 43 BCE, while Augustus celebrated 55 different supplications for a total of 890 days or roughly 16 each time. These days were celebrated so that the populace could be treated to a spectacle and celebration.

The permanent commemoration of a triumph was often an arch. Several survive in the Roman world. In Rome the arches of Titus celebrating his victories over the Jews, Septimius Severus over the Parthians, and Constantine over Maxentius still stand. In the southern part of Italy, in Brindisi, the arch of Trajan still stands. In addition to arches there are two monumental columns still standing in Rome; one commemorates Trajan's victory over the Dacians and the other by Antoninus Pius probably over the Sarmatians. All these monuments date from the Empire. Triumphs allowed the public to see the great general after his victories and share his celebrations. The average individual was able to be part of the victories without fighting.

Kessler, H.L. and Johanna Zacharias. 2000. "The *Acheropita* Approaches Its Destination." (Excerpts.) *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim*, 89–106. Yale University Press.



THE *ACHEROPITA* APPROACHES ITS DESTINATION

Leaving S. Clemente, the pilgrim turns left (north) to rejoin the procession, which is now streaming down the venerable via Labicana. This ancient artery is leading the marchers directly toward the godless Colosseum (fig. 82), which they skirt counterclockwise. As they round the great, abandoned amphitheater, the light of thousands of candles brings into view the massive Arch of Constantine (fig. 83). Dedicated in 315 to herald the emperor's victory over Maxentius three years before, the arch commemorates the triumph of Christianity over the pagan empire.

Rome's first Christian emperor seems to have wanted, in his arch, a monument that would associate him in the eyes of the people with the merits and might of his illustrious predecessors. This was to be accomplished literally by the appropriation of pieces from his imperial forebears' memorials. Thus, alongside reliefs from Constantine's age, parts of monuments erected in the days of Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–38), and Marcus Aurelius (161–80) are embedded in the imposing fourth-century structure. The result is a showy pastiche of sculptural styles that impart diversity and color to the great arch's impressiveness.

In the Heart of Ancient Rome

The pilgrim can see that something not far ahead has slowed the progress of the procession. Word travels back that the bottleneck is the procession's mandatory movement through a much older and much smaller arch that commemorates the deeds of the Emperor Titus (79–81). Passage through the narrow opening

Opposite top:

82

Colosseum and, in the distance, medieval campanile of Sta. Maria Nova (now Sta. Francesca Romana), and columns of the ancient Temple of Venus and Rome. Begun by Vespasian in 72 C.E. and completed by his son Titus in 80, the great amphitheater could hold some seventy-five thousand spectators at gladiatorial games. During the Middle Ages, it became identified as the Temple of the Sun, where, according to the *Mirabilia*, "Phoebus dwelled; with his feet on the earth, he reached to heaven with his head and held in his hand an orb that signified that Rome ruled over the whole world." Fragments of a statue of an emperor, identified as the sun god, were displayed in the Lateran campus (see figs. 20, 21).



83

Arch of Constantine: As they processed by the Colosseum toward the Forum, pilgrims would certainly have detoured to examine the monument to Christianity's triumph in Rome. The Palatine Hill, largely abandoned in the Middle Ages, is visible to the right. (A building of the United Nations is seen through the left opening.)

Arch of Titus. The magnificent ancient pavement of the via Sacra, which led to the Arch of Titus, was buried during the Middle Ages, but the road into the Forum remained a major passageway for pontiffs and their attendants.



of the Arch of Titus (fig. 84) marks a fundamental point in tonight's procession; first, the *Acheropita* must be paraded through the arch, and then every participant in the procession follows.

High reliefs hewn into the walls of the arch's passageway after the death of Titus suggest the significance of this rite (fig. 85). The reliefs on the right side depict Titus entering Rome in a triumphal chariot; those on the left represent the parade of spoils celebrated on this spot a decade earlier, after the conquest of Jerusalem—the seven-branched candelabrum and other objects from the Temple in Jerusalem. Most of this Jewish booty is now kept at the Lateran beneath the altar in the basilica of St. John. Legend has it that the *Acheropita* was originally among these spoils; moreover, when brought to Rome, the icon is said to have cured Vespasian, Titus's father, of a grave illness. The procession tonight thus recapitulates the original event but inverts its meaning: God's Chosen People are now the victors. And they bear a different palladium.

The New Testament justifies the conquest of the Jewish Temple. In his Gospel, the Evangelist Mark reports that Christ vowed to "pull down this temple, made with human hands, and in three days [to] build another, not made with hand" (in Greek, *acheiropoieton*; 14.58). And Mark introduces the dramatic



85

Arch of Titus, relief. The depiction of the Roman troops passing through the arch with the Temple menorah and other spoils brought from Jerusalem in 70 C.E. had clear significance for the pilgrims following the *Acheropita* through this arch in the procession on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption in 1300.

image of “the curtain of the temple torn in two from top to bottom” at the moment of Christ’s death (15.38). When the *Acheropita* passes beneath the arch depicting Titus’s victory each year, it thus states the message that Christ had fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Mark’s Gospel. In so doing, it also recalls the supersession of the temple cult of the Jews by Christ’s sacrifice and reminds the citizens of the “New Jerusalem” that pagan Rome, too, had a preordained role in God’s sacred plan.

As the marchers emerge from beneath the Arch of Titus in the wake of the *Acheropita*, the ancient imperial Forum sprawls before them. Once a bustling hub of commerce and government at the heart of the pagan city, the Forum has been allowed to deteriorate into a great basin filled largely with half-buried pagan ruins and haphazard later dwellings. One can discern, amid the disorder, many edifices dedicated to Christian worship, most appropriated pagan buildings, a very few erected expressly for Christian practice. Prominent to the right, the great, gloom-filled Temple of Peace dominates the view in the northeast corner of the Forum (fig. 86). This massive structure has long since been abandoned and let fall fall into ruin; when built by Maxentius and remodeled by Constantine, it served as a court of law. In the distance, the old Curia, where the Roman Senate once sat, presents a barely discernible profile; now the Curia is a church dedicated to St. Hadrian, and it is the procession’s ultimate goal within the Forum.

Directly before the hulk of Maxentius’s courthouse, though dwarfed by it, stands the oratory of SS. Peter and Paul. Pope Sergius I (687–701) established the oratory on this spot on the via Sacra (holy road) to mark the place where, according to numerous apocryphal texts, Peter and Paul confounded Simon Magus, a magician in the court of the malevolent emperor Nero. The feat of the

Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine (Temple of Peace). All that remains of the imposing early fourth-century law courts are the massive vaulted chambers that originally formed one of the aisles.



guileful Simon was to impress the emperor by managing to fly. To reveal Simon's feint as mere trickery and not the result of God's intervention, the apostles brought him down with appeals to Christ. In retaliation, Nero had Peter and Paul taken away to their deaths. Depressions left in stone by Peter's knees as he called to God for help can still be seen in the little chapel (fig. 87).

The first meeting of Mother and Son. Adjacent to the oratory and clearly marked by a sturdy bell tower stands the church of Sta. Maria Nova (New St. Mary's), built on a platform once occupied by the great Temple of Venus and Rome (fig. 88). As the name suggests, Sta. Maria Nova is a relative latecomer among the Christian edifices in the Forum. Pope Leo IV (847–55) had it built to replace the much older church of Sta. Maria Antiqua (Old St. Mary's), which stood at the foot of the Palatine Hill, where it had been devastated by an earthquake. Even Leo's "new" church has suffered; after it was consumed by a fire, it had to be reconstructed at the time of the elevation of Pope Honorius III (1216–27).

All the crowd stops here to catch what for most of the marchers is a first glimpse of Pope Boniface and to witness a first reenactment of Christ's meeting with his mother. The brothers of the Confraternity of the Savior, who have been carrying the *Acheropita* through the night, have set up the icon, in its jeweled

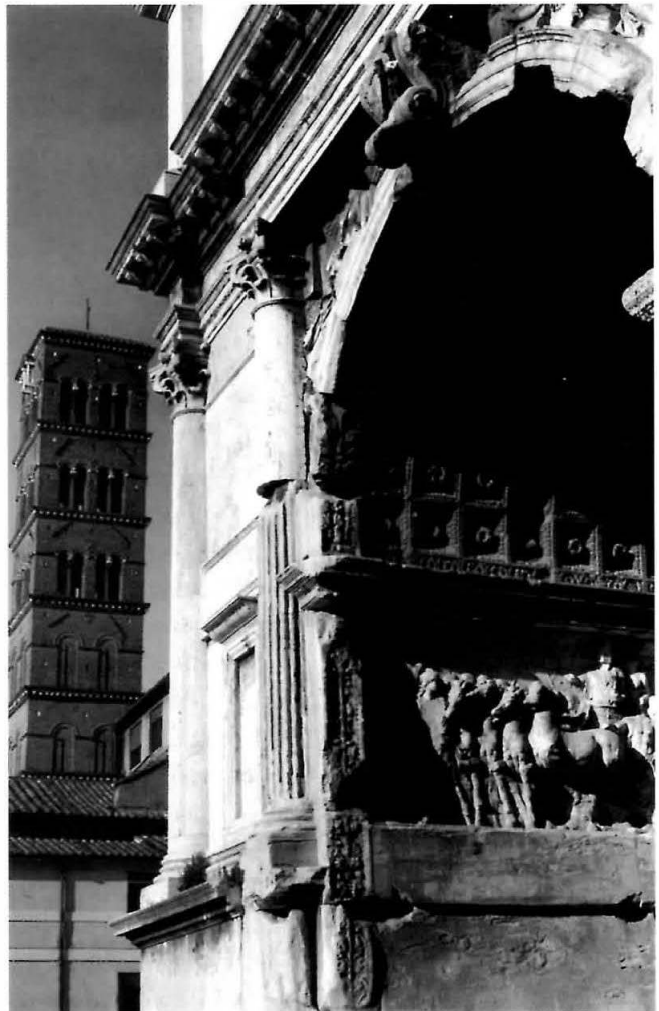


87

Knee prints of St. Peter in Sta. Francesca Romana (Sta. Maria Nova). The oratory that once marked the spot in the Forum where the two apostles exposed Simon Magus's trickery has long since vanished, but the imprints of Peter's knees, left in stone and venerated there, are preserved in a nearby church.

88

Arch of Titus and Sta. Francesca Romana. The relief of the emperor's victorious entry into the Forum offered an ancient parallel for the pope's triumphal procession.



Santa Francesca Romana, icon. The enormous depiction of the Virgin and Child (Mary's head alone is twenty-one inches high) was constructed in the thirteenth century to incorporate, and thus preserve, fragments of a sixth- or seventh-century encaustic painting, which had first been venerated in the church of Sta. Maria Antiqua in the Forum and then moved to higher ground in Sta. Maria Nova.



protective case, on the columned portico of Sta. Maria Nova. Alongside the *Acheropita* has been placed the ancient image of the Virgin and Child (fig. 89), which has been brought outside from its place on the altar of Sta. Maria Nova. The pope, surrounded by cardinals and attendants, bows down at the base of the *Acheropita*'s case (see fig. 59). He opens two little doors that give access to the icon's feet. In homage, the prelate pours water infused with basil onto the feet, with this gesture reenacting the episode, recounted in the Gospels, in which Christ washes the feet of Peter and the other apostles.

Overwhelmed, every man, woman, and child in the crowd falls to his and her knees, and the chant of *Kyrie eleison*—Praise the Lord—fills the night air. Then, slowly, they rise to resume their ritual walk.

The church of Saints Cosmas and Damian. Bypassing an impressive portico to the right of the via Sacra, the marchers reach their next goal in mere minutes. This is the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian. Like most of the sanctuaries here, it, too, began as something else—in fact, not as one but as two ancient structures. Specifically, a Roman library provided a foundation for the church (in fact, the interior is still revetted with the original geometrical marble *opus sectile*), and



90

Saints Cosmas and Damian. The church was constructed during the sixth century of existing imperial buildings, the so-called Temple of Romulus (foreground) and a library structure (behind). Today the two are again separated. The rotunda belongs to the Forum; the church is entered from outside the Forum from the *viale dei Fori Imperiali*.

a temple once dedicated to the Emperor Maxentius's son Romulus now serves as an antechamber. The handsome entrance to the cylindrical vestibule, comprising porphyry columns supporting a spoliata architrave (fig. 90), recalls nothing so much as the portal of the Lateran baptistery (see fig. 9); a dedicatory inscription, referring to Constantine, seems to confirm the affiliation. In fact, like the nearby Temple of Peace, the central-planned structure on the Forum's *via Sacra* was probably begun by Maxentius, perhaps as a monument to himself and his co-emperors, and, again like the Temple of Peace, it was completed by Constantine. Since the pontificate of Felix IV (526–30), however, the imperial monument has served as the vestibule to a church dedicated to two sainted Syrian brothers, both doctors, who performed many miracles and were martyred for Christ.



93

San Lorenzo in Miranda. Following Pope Felix IV's concession, to the Church, of imperial property in the Forum, which established Sts. Cosmas and Damian, many other ancient structures were gradually ceded to Christian usage. The great temple that Antoninus Pius built in 141 C.E. as a shrine to his wife, Faustina, is documented as a church from the eleventh century onward. The ancient Curia (the medieval church of St. Hadrian's) is visible beyond.

94

St. Hadrian's. During the course of the Middle Ages, the Roman Curia served as a church dedicated to St. Hadrian. It was a principal destination of the Assumption Eve procession.

(pp. 98–100: The pilgrim lingers inside SS. Cosmas & Damian for a while, then emerges from her reverie and rejoins the main procession.)

Ceremonial departure from the Forum. Returning to the via Sacra, the pilgrim discovers that the bearers of the *Acheropita* and most of the throng have bypassed this church and, having in fact traversed most of the length of the Forum, have already reached the church of St. Hadrian. She hurries past the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda built into the second-century Temple of Antoninus and Faustina (fig. 93) and dedicated to the much-venerated Roman saint Lawrence. And skirting the rebuilt basilica Aemilia, she rejoins the crowd gathered before St. Hadrian's (fig. 94). This church marks the starting point of most Marian observations, and it is an obligatory way station on tonight's trek to Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome's primary site of the Virgin's cult. For the *Acheropita*, it is the midpoint of the Assumption Day eve journey and the only church so far that the Lateran Christ icon actually enters.

Of the ancient buildings in the Forum that have been transformed into churches, St. Hadrian's bears the greatest significance. Erected as the seat of the



St. Hadrian's, interior. Following the ebb and flow of cultural preferences, almost all the medieval interventions were obliterated early in the twentieth century to restore the Curia's ancient aspect, the apse for instance. Only fresco fragments in the lateral niches, depicting St. Hadrian's life, remain from the Middle Ages.



Roman Senate by the Emperor Diocletian (287–305), that legendary persecutor of Christians, it was dedicated by Pope Honorius I (625–38) to a martyred third-century saint. Although it has been Christianized, the building retains to this day the banked platform (fig. 95) that once provided seating for the aristocratic governors of the pagan empire. Also surviving is much of the original opus sectile decoration. Honorius introduced an apse into the northwest wall and constructed an altar and presbytery before it; over the centuries, the building has increasingly taken on the character of a standard church. It now has a nave and side aisles, frescoes depicting St. Hadrian's life and death, and outside, a campanile. The building's original function has never been forgotten, however, and when the cardinals who accompany the pope enter it, they become quite literally what the great eleventh-century Church reformer Peter Damian (1007–72) once called “the spiritual senators of the universal church.”

The canon who heads the Assumption Day eve procession has set on the altar of St. Hadrian's the great silver cross that he has carried from the Lateran (see figs. 61–62), positioning it in such a way that the Crucifixion at the center of its back provides a backdrop for the Eucharist. When, during the Mass, a priest raises over his head the sacramental bread, the Eucharist's archetype—the body



96

Capitoline Hill. A medieval defense tower is still conspicuous at the far right of the Capitoline palace.

of Christ—appears behind it. And certain other scenes on the great cross take on new meaning when they are seen behind the altar: Isaac bound atop the altar, Cain and Abel making offerings of grain and meat, and Joseph anointing the altar at Bethel—all in line with the Crucifixion—become meaningful Old Testament precedents and, hence, prophecies of the celebration of the Mass. In this way, sacred history enters the present and becomes real.

As the procession leaves St. Hadrian's, it describes an almost closed loop. Instead of proceeding to the Capitol, which rises nearby over the west end of the Forum, it returns almost to its earlier stopping place at Sta. Maria Nova. (By following this course, the marchers turn their back on the ancient center of Rome's government on the Capitoline Hill, which today presents a recently built senatorial palace and the new Franciscan basilica of Sta. Maria in Aracoeli, fig. 96.) The procession stops short of Sta. Maria Nova, turning into a narrow passageway just beyond SS. Cosmas and Damian beneath the abandoned ruin of the Temple of Peace (fig. 97).

To adhere to tonight's course, each marcher must now pass by the Arch of Latona, a cavelike mouth that opens in the foundation of the great, gloomy ruin (fig. 98). It is here that, according to legend, the dragon still lives that Pope



97

Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius and church of Sta. Francesca Romana. Well into the nineteenth century, before the changes brought about by modern excavations and systematization, the Forum preserved much more of its medieval character. The level of the via Sacra and adjacent space before Sta. Francesca Romana was essentially that of the Middle Ages. Much clearer in this century-old photograph than it is today is the passageway through which the Assumption Day procession passed, at the far left between SS. Cosmas and Damian and the basilica of Maxentius and Constantine.

Sylvester himself had conquered, converting the pagan skeptics to Christianity. Much as Sylvester's weapon had been words prescribed by Peter, the marchers' protection tonight will be the *Acheropita*, which has already been borne deep into the maw of the dragon's cave.

The uphill road to Mary's basilica. The procession passes through the ancient Forum of Nerva with its renowned colossal statue of the goddess Minerva still visible in her temple; the figure is now headless, another witness to Christianity's triumph over the pagan gods. In the distance are churches constructed into the walls of the Imperial Forum—Sant'Urbano ai Pantani, SS. Quirico and Julietta, and, within the hemicycle of the forum of Augustus, the church of St. John the Baptist (fig. 99). Beyond these rises the tower of the Militias, one of the most prominent of Rome's many defensive towers, built upon earlier Byzantine and ancient foundations. Moving alongside the imposing tower of the Conti, a fortified residence for one of the city's most powerful families, the marchers pass beneath an ancient arch and begin the ascent through the narrow streets of the



98

Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius, Cave of Latona. The opening into a passageway beneath the Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius was believed to be a dragon's lair, spawning the legend that, in this spot, Pope Sylvester had vanquished the monster and secured Rome's safety.

99

Imperial Forum. Shadows of medieval churches—outlines of peaked roofs, holes for beams, and even vestiges of apses—still mark the walls of classical buildings in the Imperial Forum. The Tower of the Militias is visible in the distance at the far left.



Capocci towers. Although heavily restored, the two towers near the church of St. Silvester (S. Martini ai Monti) provide a vivid impression of the fortified palaces that filled Rome at the time of the first Jubilee (see fig. 18). As in the fresco of Peter's martyrdom in the Sancta Sanctorum, such fortified residential complexes characterized the city's urban center. (The Baroque staircase in the foreground leads to the apsidal end of the church.)



Esquiline Hill. The procession bypasses the church of St. Peter in Chains, which the Empress Eudocia founded some nine hundred years ago to house the chains from which an angel released the imprisoned St. Peter.

Everywhere lookout towers erected to defend other grand houses pierce the night sky, some more than ten stories high (fig. 100). Two of the most impressive—the towers of the Capocci and Cantarelli families—loom directly overhead as the procession snakes its way through the steep Clivus Suburbanus to Sta. Lucia in Selci (fig. 101), another Christian building erected on an ancient ruin rife with mystery. Here, on this very day nearly half a millennium ago, Pope Leo IV exorcised a basilisk lurking in the ancient fountain of Orpheus. It is surely not by chance that the church right next to Sta. Lucia is dedicated to Sylvester, Leo's sainted papal predecessor who subdued another dragon in another ancient lair, the Arch of Latona. And the fact that the procession has passed both sites of papal triumph reenacts the special power of the *Acheropita*; the pilgrim is forcefully reminded of God's continuing protection of the faithful in his sacred city, through his servants, the popes of the Roman Church.

Stinger, C.L. 1985. "Urbs Roma: Liturgy and Ceremony." *The Renaissance in Rome*, 53–7. Indiana University Press.

A similar traversing of Rome's topography as a ritualized means of proclaiming political and spiritual purpose was central to papal coronation rites. With the conclusion of the actual consecration ceremony in St. Peter's, the newly crowned pope marched in procession to St. John Lateran, the cathedral church of Rome. This ceremonial passage was known, significantly, as the *possesso* (literally, taking "possession"). Originating in the ninth century, the *possesso* had been gradually embellished in the course of the Middle Ages, reaching high points of pomp and splendor in the coronations of Innocent III and Boniface VIII.¹⁴⁸ Even during the Great Schism the *possesso* continued to be performed by the popes in Rome, but from Nicholas V on, and particularly in the coronations of Alexander VI and Leo X, it became ever more elaborate in its pageantry, and more purposeful in articulating the ideals, expectations, and intentions of individual popes.

The route of the *possesso*, known as the Via Sacra or Via Papalis, went from Piazza S. Pietro to Castel Sant' Angelo, then crossed Ponte Sant'Angelo to Monte Giordano, passed close to the southern end of Piazza Navona, proceeded to the church of S. Marco, traversed the Capitoline Hill, threaded through the Roman Forum, marched past the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum, then ran uphill past S. Clemente and S. Quattro Coronati to the Lateran. The cortege, the exact composition of which was specified in the Ceremonial books, acquired added splendor in the course of the fifteenth century. Papal servants, the captains of the *rioni* of Rome each with the flag of his district, representatives of the Knights of St. John and other military orders, the Roman barons, papal secretaries, the papal singers, non-Roman clergy, abbots from the city's monasteries, the cardinals, and the heads of the various papal tribunals and other members of the Curia—all had their designated places in the hierarchically arranged order of procession. Near the front the consecrated host was carried on a white horse surmounted by a baldacchino. The pope, coming near the end, also was borne on a white horse, and his presence, too, was dignified by a baldacchino. The sacramental real presence of the Body of Christ and the person of the Vicar of Christ thus were accorded equal treatment and marked the focal points of the procession. In addition, the colorful garb of men and horses, the fluttering standards, the glittering gold of the processional cross and thuribles, and the dazzling jewels of the papal triple tiara—all contributed to the overall sense of splendor.¹⁴⁹

At several points on the ceremonial route to the Lateran, ritualized acts, also specified in the Ceremonials, occurred. The first was the meeting of the pope with the leaders of Rome's Jewish community at Monte Giordano (though Burchard states that to avoid possible anti-Jewish riots this took place within the confines of Castel Sant'Angelo). The Jewish leaders offered to the pope the Torah, asking him to adore it, and to

approve and confirm it. The pope, holding the Hebrew text, responded that he commended the Law, but condemned the Jews' understanding and observance of it on the grounds of their refusal to recognize in Jesus Christ the Savior promised by the prophets. Then he allowed the Torah to fall to the ground.¹³⁰

This curious rite seems to have served several functions. First, it comprised a formal recognition by the papacy of the Roman Jewish community, which existed in the ghetto located in an area bounded by the Tiber and the Via delle Botteghe Oscure. This recognition seems to have been understood as a basic legal agreement, extending papal protection to the community. Second, in a religious sense, the pope as Vicar of Christ in condemning the Jewish Torah asserted in a dramatic way the supplanting of the old dispensation by the new. Third, as the Florentine humanist Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia pointed out to the Byzantine classicist Manuel Chrysoloras in a letter describing the *possesto* of Gregory XII (1405), ancient Roman custom obliged subject peoples to submit to a newly chosen Emperor by commending themselves to his protection and by presenting to him their law. If, Angeli remarks, such peoples avoided the imperial presence, the Emperor might not wish to spare them, but on the account of the law, which the Caesars rarely scorned, he might be inclined to compassion.¹³¹ In performing a similar act, the popes thereby emulated a Roman precedent for imperial government.

At Monte Giordano also, and at three other designated spots en route to the Lateran, including the church of S. Marco, an official of the papal household tossed coins to the crowd. Jacopo da Scarperia again likened this to acts of the ancient Roman Emperors, and noted that during his stay in Constantinople he had seen the Byzantine Emperor do the same thing.¹³² When Julius II celebrated a triumph in Bologna in 1506 following papal conquest of the city, he arranged, prompted by the same imperial precedent, for the tossing of gold and silver coins to the throngs lining the processional route. Indeed, the coins were newly minted for the occasion and contained an appropriate legend.¹³³ Not to be outdone, Leo X, when he made his ceremonial *entrata* into his native Florence in 1515, ordered the exact same monetary amount (3000 ducats) of coins to be flung to the Florentines as Julius had expended in Bologna.¹³⁴

Once the pope reached the Lateran basilica, he sat in an ancient marble seat in the portico of the church known as the *sedes stercoraria*. It was thus called, according to the Ceremonial books, inasmuch as when the cardinals honorably lifted him from it these words could truly be said: "he lifts up a poor man from the dust, and a pauper from dung, so that he may sit with princes and possess the throne of glory." Then, standing next to the *sedes stercoraria*, the pope threw three fistfuls of coins to the crowd, saying "gold and silver are not mine; what I have I give to you."¹³⁵

Inside the Lateran complex, the pope was conducted to another

ancient seat, a double one made of porphyry. Sitting in the right side, the new pontiff received from the Prior of the Lateran a rod "as a sign of rule and correction," and the keys to the Lateran basilica and palace "signifying the power of closing and opening, binding and absolving." The pope then shifted to the other seat, where a girdle of red silk with an attached purple purse containing precious stones was placed around him. The Lateran clergy then kissed his feet, and the pope again threw coins to the crowd, saying "he distributed, he gave to the poor, his justice will abide forever and ever." Afterwards the pope went into the Sancta Sanctorum to pray, and then followed a banquet. At length the pontiff returned, in the evening, to the Vatican.

These ritual elements of the *possesto*—meeting the Jewish leadership, tossing coins, the Lateran formalities—were traditional ones dating back to the Middle Ages, though the detailed account Burchard provides indicates their continuing significance for the Renaissance papacy. Moreover, a number of the ceremonial actions were more closely tied to Roman imperial precedent, following the general pattern of Roman Renaissance culture. With the later Renaissance popes, however, especially Leo X,¹³⁶ the procession itself, rather than specific rites, increasingly occupied center stage. Sumptuous costumes bedazzled observers, and the temporary triumphal arches lining the Via Papalis became ever more elaborate.

Leo X was elected pope on 11 March 1513 and crowned eight days later, but his *possesto* was delayed until 11 April, partly to avoid conflict with the ceremonies of Holy Week, but also to allow ampler time to be devoted to preparations. The date chosen was, significantly, the Feast of St. Leo (Pope Leo I), the Medici pontiff's great fifth-century namesake, but it also happened to coincide with the anniversary of Leo's capture the previous year at the Battle of Ravenna, when his fortunes had fallen to their nadir. The eleventh day of the month was auspicious for Leo: one of the triumphal arches, in fact, showed eight scenes from his life with an explanatory inscription noting that all the most decisive events, including his birth, the day he was named a cardinal, his forced departure from Florentine territory during Charles VIII's invasion, his capture at Ravenna, his election as pope, and now his *possesto*, had all occurred on that day.

As for the costumes, perhaps the most splendidly dressed members of the papal retinue were the musicians—fittingly so, since Leo proved to be a great musical patron. Dressed in Leo's livery of white, green, and red velvet, they sported gold-lace embroidery on their chests, embellished by a diamond, and white, green, and red feathers with the word *SEMPER* (a well-known Medici motto dating back to the time of Cosimo *Pater Patriae*). On their backs appeared a yoke with the word *SVAVE*, an allusion to the *impresa* Leo had chosen as cardinal, with its echo of the Gospel phrase:

"*Jugum meum suave est, et onus meum leve*" (My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:30).¹³⁷

Diamonds and golden balls (*palle*) were familiar Medici devices, and both appeared in profusion along the route to the Lateran. Lions also abounded on the triumphal arches, suggestive not only of Leo's name and of regal qualities, but more particularly of the messianic sense of Revelation 5:5: "*Ecce vicit Leo de tribu Juda, radix David*" (Behold the lion from the tribe of Judah, the scion of David).

Various personages from both sacred and secular history appeared on the arches, too, as exemplars for Leo's pontificate. These included Aaron (with the admonition that scrupulous attention to the liturgical cult would restore religion) and Moses (constant adherence to divine will would bring defeat to the enemies of Christ), as well as Numa and Antoninus Pius (identified as Romans who had spared the shedding of blood and thereby had earned the "trophy" of peace).

Numerous classical gods and goddesses likewise made their appearance, especially Apollo, a reference to the hoped-for patronage of letters and the arts under Leo. Similarly, a large frieze on the arch sponsored by Agostino Chigi bore the inscription: "Venus had her time [referring to the amorous proclivities of Pope Alexander VI]; Mars had his time [an allusion to Julius II's wars]; now Pallas Athena has her time." Another arch showed Astraea, the goddess of justice and the last deity to leave earth at the end of the Golden Age, holding a sword in her right hand and a ball in her left; the inscription stated: "At length I have returned from heaven." Paired with this was a figure of Christ with the keys in hand and the words "I give to you the kingdom of heaven and earth." Hailed in other arches as the sustainer of virtues and eradicator of vices, Leo here was seen as restoring divine justice to a troubled world. Other inscriptions heralded a reign of peace in which the Golden Age would return, and with all the arts, both mechanical and intellectual, restored to their proper prominence in human society, "Rome will be golden."

Repeatedly, the theme recurs of a new time breaking in, of the celestial world manifesting itself on earth through the actions and policies of "*Leo X Pontifex Optimus de Coelo*." One arch proclaimed him as "the new star of longed-for tranquillity;" on another painted display he was depicted in heaven surrounded by palm branches, with Sts. Peter and Paul at his right hand while on his left an angel sounded a trumpet from which a banner with the papal arms unfurled. Below appeared a rainbow (the goddess Iris) and beneath it mountains, streams, and plains, luxuriant foliage, and men and women, with the inscription: "The world is opened, and the King of Glory comes forth."

Pageantry in Leo's *posse*, prepared by Leo himself in collaboration with Paris de Grassis,¹³⁸ functioned on many levels. Ancient rites, solemnly performed, offered living testimony to the continuity of papal sanctity

and to the sacredness of Rome, which served as stage and backdrop to their enactment. At the same time, the dazzling splendor of the procession and decorations affirmed the wealth and power of the new pontiff, and in their poetic allusions and elaborate artistic conceits revealed the extraordinary creative talents Renaissance Rome could call upon. Beyond this beckoned the fulfillment of time, seemingly imminent in the triumphal promise of *Leo de tribu Juda*.

Rome, then, provided the stage upon which the newly elected pontiffs ritually established the fundamental nature of their authority. In a similar way, the city functioned as an arena in which pent-up demands for sport, violence, and play could find a stylized and controllable outlet. During the days before Ash Wednesday, the city was given over to the licensed games and frivolities of Carnival.

Medieval Rome had celebrated these last days of feasting before the privations of Lent with tournaments, hunts, and races at Monte Testaccio, the hill outside Porta S. Paolo formed from the sherds of broken amphorae—the refuse from the centuries of alimentary supply to the capital.¹³⁹ Paul II transformed the Roman Carnival by shifting most of the races to the Via del Corso, where he could conveniently view their conclusion from his Palazzo di S. Marco, by adding to their number, and by introducing masquerades, allegorical floats, and elaborate public banquets.¹⁴⁰ A regular schedule of races and other festivities came to be established, lasting ten days in all. Among these were the races of the Jews, young men, old men, donkeys, buffalo, and horses—held as much to provide opportunities for betting as for the competition.

Some events continued at Testaccio, including the attaching of pigs and bulls to carts, then launching them down the hill. At the bottom the hurtling carts smashed to pieces and the waiting mob slaughtered the animals—a practice preserving, it seems, an echo of the medieval ritual sacrifice there of a bear, bullocks, and a cock, symbols of demonic temptations and fleshly urges to be subdued in the weeks before Christ's Resurrection. As in other aspects of Roman popular culture, humanists wondered if these practices could be traced back to antiquity. Flavio Biondo mentions in *Roma instaurata* that while watching the bull sports at Testaccio, the Roman lawyer Lelio della Valle asked him if Varro had recorded the ancient Romans holding the same spectacle. Now, Biondo states, he is able to answer that they did hold so-called *ludi taurii* in the last days of February, but that in fact these were the *equiria*, the horse races held in honor of Mars run in the Campus Martius.¹⁴¹