Public History: Journal of History for the Public, 19(2022), pp. 41-54.

Note

Relic Translations by Pope Paul I in the Eighth-Century City of Rome

Kyoshiro Kozeni

Introduction

In the eighth century, the papacy and the city of Rome underwent great changes. At the turn of the century, both were under Byzantine rule as a Roman duchy by the Exarchate of Ravenna. Then, after gradually breaking away from that rule and weathering depredations from the Lombard Kingdom, they moved into the sphere of Frankish influence. The alliance with the Franks led to the establishment of the Papal States, and was gradually strengthened to result in the coronation of Charlemagne in 800.

David H. Miller characterizes this movement, in the wider historical context of this change of political situation, as signifying a shift of the papacy and Rome from the Eastern world into the Christian West. It was a crucial event for the political and religious development of the West throughout the eighth century, as well as for the entire Middle Ages as an era in which Christianity was ascendant.(1) We can therefore see the eighth century as a turning point in medieval history.

This understanding has persisted to the present day. For the clearest example, John Osborne has structured a recent treatise around his argument that "the eighth century might be regarded as the most important in the entire history of the city of Rome."(2) Whether he is right or not, recent years have seen a great deal of interest in Roman late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, including the eighth century.(3)

(1) D. H. Miller, "The Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century: A Study of the Ideological Background of die Papal Separation from Byzantium and Alliance with the Frank," *Medieval Studies* 36, 1974, pp. 79-133, pp. 79-80.

(2) J. Osborne, *Rome in the Eighth Century: A History in Art*, (Cambridge, 2020), p. xx.

(3) Here I cite single-author books including the eighth century. Osborne 2020; Caroline Goodson, *The Rome of Pope Paschal I (817-824): Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation*, (Cambridge, 2010); Maya Maskarinec, *City of Saints: Rebuilding in the Early Middle Ages,* (Philadelphia, 2018); Rosamond McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy: The Liber Pontificalis (The James Lydon Lectures in Medieval History and Culture)*, (Cambridge, 2020). Hendrik W. Dey, *The Making of Medieval Rome; A New Profile of the City, 400-1420*, (Cambridge, 2021). McKitterick's work is an analysis of the *Liber Pontificalis* and differs from that of the other three.

The focus of these more recent studies has moved on from Miller's time. Firstly, the framework of interest has shifted, building on earlier historiography, from papal history or the history of the Roman Church to that of the city of Rome. At the same time, the object of these studies has changed from papal ideas and ideology and changes therein (as well as the papacy's political interactions with regional powers) to the specifics of Rome and its material environment, drawing on the knowledge of adjacent fields such as art history and archaeology.(4) A particular area of interest has been the relics of Christian saints and their translation (*translatio*).

Why this focus on relics and their transfer? The eighth century saw a shift in attitude towards relics, with popes abandoning an earlier custom of avoiding relic translation to instead taking the initiative. In addition to Goodson, for whom it represents a major subject, Maskarinec and Osborne have also examined relics as a key topic. This growing interest in the movement of relics within Rome is also attested by the holding of an international workshop "Imported Relics in Rome from Damasus I to Paschal I," in October 2020.(5)

My ultimate interest is to clarify the meaning of the reorientation of the papacy and Rome by examining the purposes and backgrounds of relic translations in the eighth century. In this paper, as a starting point, I focus on Pope Paul I (757-767), the initiator of relic translation in Rome. This paper broadly consists of three parts, dealing in turn with Paul's explanations of each case of translation, a review and commentary concerning the scholarly literature dealing with Paul's aims and contexts, and my own consideration at the present stage.

1 Relics and Translations by Paul I

Before entering into the main arguments, it is necessary to give a brief account of the veneration of saints, and of relics and their translations, which provides a necessary context for understanding the arguments.

Saints were (and are) believed to be "Friends of God" and to have the power to intercede with God at the Last Judgement. By praying to the saints, people hoped that the saints would intercede for them, so that they might be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Many saints were martyrs who died for their faith at a time when Christians were persecuted. After the recognition of Christianity, the veneration of these martyrs became more and more widespread, and with the cessation of persecution, the range of "sainthood" was extended to include a new category, namely that of "confessors" who embodied the faith of Christ in their deeds. In general, martyrs and confessors are referred to collectively as "saints." Relics mediated between the people and the saints as material objects of prayer, or as saints in their own right.

(4) Recent research on the city of Rome is briefly summarized in McKitterick 2020, pp. 3-5.
(5) Maskarinec and Osborne both gave presentations at this workshop. I would like to thank Dr. Adrian Bremenkamp very much for kindly providing videos of the workshop.

There are two main types of relics. In general, the term "relic" refers to "the corpse of a saint or any part thereof," which we can describe as "bodily relic or corporal relic."[6] On the other hand, a "contact relic" refers to "any part of his clothing; anything intimately connected with him."[7] In the Middle Ages, objects that had been touched by a bodily relic or contact relic were also regarded as contact relics.[8]

Relics, in Rome as well as in other cities, were found outside the city walls. Because Roman law prohibited burial within the city walls,[9] relics were interred in suburban cemeteries outside the cities, and, especially in Rome, in catacombs, which were dug deep underground. It was also the custom not to move the body after burial, and in 386, a decree issued by Theodosius I forbade the sale or trade of bodies.[10]

Because relic translation involved the process of exhuming relics from their burial places and transferring them to other locations, was in violation of these rules. In practice, however, translation became widespread immediately after the authorization of Christianity.[11] Only the Roman Church continued to oppose the practice, even after the collapse of the Empire.[12] In the sixth century, for example, when Gregory I was asked by the Byzantine empress Constantina for a gift of part of St Paul's head or body , he refused. Instead, he presented her with a contact relic, and in a letter to her, argued for the Roman practice of forbidding the translation of bodies and criticized its active practice in Constantinople as sacrilege.[13] The letter might be seen as a symbol of the church's opposition to translation.[14] Relic translations from Rome's suburbs into

(6) Donald Attwater (ed.), *The Catholic Encyclopædic Dictionary*, 2nd ed. rev., (London, Toronto, Melbourne, Sydney, and Wellington, 1951), p. 423.

(7) *Ibid.*

(8) Hereafter I use the term of "relic" specifically with reference to "bodily relics".

(9) HOMINEM MORTUUM IN URBE NE SEPELITO NEVE URITO. Atsushi Sato, *Revised LEX XII TABULARUM; Original Text, Translation and Note*, (Tokyo, 1993), Tabula X, 1, pp. 200-201.

(10) Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Things and Holy Bodies: Collecting Relics from Late Antiquity to the Early Renaissance," in Martina Bagnoli, Holger Klein, Griffith Mann and James Robinson (eds.), *Treasures of heaven: saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe*, (Baltimore, Md. 2010), pp. 55-68, p. 56.

(11) The case of Ambrosius, Bishop of Milan, is discussed below. Emperor Constantius II also moved relics such as St. Timothy's to Constantinople, and thereafter the Byzantine emperors and their families were active in this practice. Maskarinec 2018, p. 61. Until the fall by the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople had more relics than Rome. Klein 2010, p. 58.

(12) The practice of burial outside the city walls disappeared in the sixth century with the destruction of catacombs and the inaccessibility of the suburbs during the sieges of the Gothic War. As a result, burial inside the walls, especially at city churches, became common. J. Osborne, "The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages," *PBSR* 53, 1985, pp. 278-328, pp. 281-284; Osborn 2020, pp. 3-9.

(13) C. Goodson, "Building for Bodies: The Architecture of Saint Veneration in Early Medieval Rome," in Éamonn Ó Carragain and Carol Neuman de Vegvar (eds.), *Roma Felix – Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 51-80, p. 67.

(14) However, translations into Rome from elsewhere did occur before the eighth century. Julia Smith argues that bodily relics were being deposited in papal churches by the mid-sixth century, but that they were not recorded until the mid-seventh century simply because they were not of interest to the authors of the *Liber Pontificalis*. She also rejects the view that opposition to translation was strong

the city do not appear in extant sources before the eighth century.

Such opposition to the transfer of relics in Rome changed in the middle of the eighth century under Pope Paul I. He oversaw thier removal from the catacombs outside the city walls to the churches within the city walls, and also promoted translations from Rome to the Carolingians.[15] This positive stance toward relic translation was passed on to future popes, and Paschal I is said to have transferred 2,300 saints to the Santa Prassede.[16] In the following section, I will focus on the three examples of translations carried out by Paul within the city of Rome, according to the order in which they appear in his biography in the *Liber Pontificalis*.[17] First, however, I should briefly introduce this text.

The *Liber Pontificalis* (LP) is a collection of 112 papal biographies ("Lives") compiled by the Roman Church.[18] The work began in the sixth century, and the first edition covers popes from Peter to the time of the author (the exact date and pope are disputed). Additional entries began to be compiled during the seventh century and continued, with some interruptions, until the end of ninth century. Of the Lives, those from Boniface II to Leo III, including that of Paul I, are considered to have been written contemporaneously.[19] As for the authors, it is difficult to identify their names and careers, but scholars agree that they were officials (clergy or laity) of the papal administration. They probably had accesses to two papal offices, the *scrinium*, a papal chancery which produced and preserved papal letters, and the *vestiarium*, which took responsibility for papal finances and recorded papal endowments, properties, estates, and expenditures, as well as access to the archive sources and materials relating to popes.[20] Each Life begins with a formulaic introduction of the pope's name, origin, parentage, and career before and after his accession to the throne, followed by information on his election and rival

---

and consistent. J. Smith, "Care of relics in early medieval Rome," in Valerie L. Garver and Owen M. Phelan (eds.), *Rome and Religion in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. X. Noble. Series: Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West*, (Farnham, 2014), pp. 179-205, p. 188-189. In the seventh century, three translations from other places to Rome are recorded. See, Goodson 2007.

(15) For the translations from Rome to the Carolingians, I cite three English works. Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, (Princeton, 1978); Geary, *Living with The Dead in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca, 1994); J. Smith, "Old saints, new cults: Roman relics in Carolingian Francia," in Idem (ed.), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West; Essays in honour of A. Donald Bullugh,* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 317- 339.

(16) Goodson 2007, p. 51; Eadem 2010.

(17) Louis Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis*, (3. vols, Paris, 1886-1955). Hereafter LP; Raymond Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817*, (Liverpool, 1992).

(18) I basically rely the information about LP on McKitterick 2020 in this paper.

(19) Thomas F. X. Noble, "A New Look at the *Liber Pontificalis*," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 23, 1985, pp. 347-358, p. 349.

(20) François Bougard, "Composition, diffusion et réception des parties tardives du Liber pontificalis romain (VIIIe-IXe siècles)," in F. Bougard and Michel Sot (eds), *Liber, gesta, histoire. Écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes, de l'Antiquité au XXIe siècle*, (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 127-152, pp. 128-131; McKitterick 2020, pp. 8-11.

candidates, challenges to his authority, legislation, public works, constructions, patronages, religious observance, length of reign, death and burial. It is generally agreed that the work was intended to proclaim and disseminate the legitimacy and authority of the papacy, though some see other purposes.[21]

The first case of relic translation recorded in the Life of Paul I concerns St. Petronilla. Her body, which had been laid to rest in the Catacomb of Domitilla on the Via Ardeatina outside the city wall, was transferred in 757 to a chapel dedicated to her in St. Peter's Basilica.[22] The construction of this chapel had been begun by Paul's predecessor and brother, Stephen II, and completed by Paul.[23] Petronilla, martyred during the Roman Empire, was considered by virtue of her name to be a daughter of St. Peter, and was one of the most popular saints in Rome. The chapel also housed the shawl used to baptize Pippin's daughter Gisela, who had just been born.[24]

The second instance of translation mentioned in the LP is inferred from a passage explaining that, because the burial places of the saints had been "demolished through the neglect and carelessness of antiquity," Paul "brought them [the saints' bodies] inside this city of Rome" and placed them "around the *tituli*, deaconries, monasteries, and other churches ."[25] There is very little information about this translation, and no specific churches or saints are mentioned.

The third translation took place in 761 to the monastery of San Silvestro in Capite – originally the residence of the Paul's family – when the relics of Pope Sylvester I, Pope Stephen I and many other saints were translated to a chapel built in the monastery.[26] Later sources confirm that the main church of this monastery was dedicated to Pope Dionysius, and that his relics were also transferred at that time.[27] The relics of Stephen and Dionysius are considered to have come from the Catacomb of San Callisto on the Via Appia, and those of Silvester from the Catacomb of Priscilla.[28]

2 Studies of Paul's Translations

(21) Noble considers that LP was a textbook for the education of young clergies, as well as a ready-reference for veterans. Noble 1985.

(22) LP, 1, 95.3, p. 464; Davis 1992, pp. 81-82.

(23) *Ibid.* Gregorovius wrote Stephen II completed. Ferdinand Gregorovius, (trans. Gustavus W. Hamilton), *History of the Rome in the Middle Ages (translated from the fourth German edition)*, Vol. 2, (2nd., London, 1911; repr. New York, 1967), p. 318.

(24) C. Goodson, "To be a daughter of Saint Peter: St. Petronilla and forging the Franco-Papal Alliance," in Veronica West-Harling (ed.), *Three empires, three cities: identity, material culture and legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna and Rome, 750-100*, (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 159-184, p. 161.

(25) LP, 1, 95.4, p. 464; Davis 1992, p. 82.

(26) LP,1, 95.5, pp. 464-465; Davis 1992, pp. 82-83.

(27) The inscriptions with the names of some of the saints whose relics were moved at this time can still be seen in the present St Silvestro and St Peter's, including the name of Dionysius, suggesting that his relics were also moved. Osborne 2020, pp. 173-174. For these inscriptions, Nicolette Gray, "The paleography of Latin inscriptions in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries in Italy," *PBSR* 16, 1948, pp. 38-167, pp. 52-53.

(28) Osborne 2020, p. 173.

In this section, I summarize previous studies pertaining to these three translations. Before doing so, however, it is important to point out that by the eighth century the tendency to avoid the translation of relics had weakened. From the reign of Gregory I onwards, the Roman Church was under pressure from the powers of England and Gaul to relax its aversion to translation and to distribute bodily relics.[29] In addition, the seventh century saw a large influx of Greek clergy and monks fleeing the Islamic powers to the city of Rome. This phenomenon had a profound effect on the Roman Church, and the influence of these newcomers, who were in favour of transferring relics, may have exerted significant influence on the policy of avoidance.[30]

Against this background, historians have suggested that Paul's change of policy had two aims, namely the security of the relics and the strengthening of relations with Pippin III, the first king of the Frankish Carolingian dynasty.

The most widely accepted argument, advanced by John. M. McCulloh and Osborne, is that Paul moved relics into the city to ensure their safety following the sack of reliquaries by the Lombard during the siege of Rome in 756. From January 756, the Lombard King Aistulf laid siege to the city of Rome for several months. At that time, Pope Stephen II appealed for help to Pippin, whose second expedition to Italy led to Aistulf's withdrawal. The classical understanding, from the Life of Stephen II in the LP,[31] is that during the siege the Lombards invaded the suburban cemeteries and plundered the relics.[32]

McCulloh argues that, following the attack and devastation of the cemeteries by the Lombards, Paul I finally changed the church's course and moved the relics to the city after the Lombard army's withdrawal.[33] As a basis for his argument, he cites the Life mentioned above.

Osborne substantiates McCulloh's argument that the church changed policy as way of countering the Lombards' plunder of the relics by citing other sources and the Life of another pope.[34] In a letter requesting Pippin's aid at the time of the siege, Stephen II includes the desecration and destruction of suburban churches in the list of atrocities committed by the Lombards.[35] Also, in a charter given to Leontius, an abbot of San Silvestro in Capite, Paul speaks of the desecration of the suburban cemeteries and the removal of the relics by the Lombards.[36]

---

(29) John M. McCulloh, "From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the 6th to 8th Century," in E. Dassmann and K. Frank (eds.), *Pietas: Festschrift für B. Kötting*, (Münster, 1980), pp. 313-324, pp. 318-321.

(30) Osborne 1985, pp. 288-289. rf. Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, (Princeton, 1987), pp. 272-273.

(31) LP, 1, 94, 41, pp. 451-452; Davis 1992, pp. 69-70; McCulloh 1980, p. 323.

(32) See Gregorivius1967, p. 293.

(33)McCulloh 1980, p. 323ff.

(34) Osborne 1985; Idem 2020, pp. 177-178.

(35)*Codex epistolaris carolinus*, in W. Gundlach (ed.), *MGH Epistolae III: Epistolae Merowingici et Karo1ini aevi I* (Berlin, 1892), pp. 469-657, Ep. 8, pp. 494-497.

(36) V. Federici, "Regesto del monastero di S. Silvestro de Capite," *Archivio della R. Societa Romana di Storia Patria* 22, 1889, pp, 213-300, esp. p. 257.

And that the Lombards looted relics during the siege is regarded as obvious in the story of the discovery of the relics of St Cecilia in the Life of Paschal I, an early ninth-century pontiff.[37] Based on the above, Osborne affirms the certainty of the Lombard's sacking of relics.

At the same time, however, he raises questions about the damage to the catacombs, citing Jan T. Hallenbeck's argument that the purpose of the siege was to be a temporary occupation that would drive a wedge between the Franco-Papal alliance and to exert firm influence over papacy, rather than an annexation or to establish a protectorate of the Lombard kingdom.[38] Osborne concludes that since the sack of the catacombs clearly demonstrated their utter futility as a defence for the relics, Paul moved them to ensure their safety.[39]

Both arguments see the removal of the relics as a response to the siege by the Lombards, and in both cases the safety of the relics is regarded as the motivating element. This statement is also convincing from the Lombard's perspective. While papal documents consistently denounce the Lombards as pagans and heretics, the Kingdom of the Lombards at that time had already converted to Catholicism.[40] In the first half of the eighth century, King Liutprand had purchased and subsequently translated the relics of Saint Augustine.[41] There is also a case in the Lombard Kingdom in which a relic was suspected to have been looted in 756.[42] Thus the argument that the relics were moved for the purpose of safeguarding them is quite convincing.[43]

This view, however, cannot account for all of Paul's translations. The translation of Petronilla needs to be considered in a different context. St. Peter's, to which her body was moved, was not well defended. It lay outside the city walls, and in fact was sacked by the Saracens in the nineth century together with St. Paul's.[44]

Goodson's works build on McCulloh and Osborne's arguments by adding an external

---

(37) Paschal searched for Cecilia's relic, but was unable to find them, and concluded that it was taken by the Lombards during the siege. However, in his dream, Cecilia appeared to him and told that the Lombards tried to take it away but failed to find, and informed him of the location of her body. He then searched again and finds the relic, which he moved to the church dedicated to her, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. LP, 2, 100. 15-17, p. 56; Osborne 2020, p. 178; Goodson 2007, p. 51.

(38) Jan T. Hallenbec, *Pavia and Rome: The Lombard monarchy and the papacy in the eighth century*, (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 81-83; Osborne 1985, p. 291. Miller and Noble believe Aistulf aspired to unite the Italian peninsula, and that the siege in 756 was a serious attempt to conquer Rome. Miller 1974, pp. 114-116; Miller, "Papal-Lombard Relations during the Pontificate of Pope Paul I: The Attainment of an Equilibrium of Power in Italy, 756-767," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 55: 3, 1969, pp. 358-376, p. 362, n. 4; T. F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*, (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 90, n. 126.

(39) Osborne 1985, p. 291.

(40) Goodson 2010, p. 39; Osborne 2020, p. 178.

(41) *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, in L. Bethmann et G. Waitz (eds), *MGH: Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum. saec. VI-IX*, (Hannover, 1878), pp. 12-187, VI, 48, p. 181.

(42) Osborne 2020, p. 179.

(43) The arguments of McCulloh and Osborne are echoed by Debra J. Birch. Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion*, (Suffolk; N.Y., 1998), pp. 99-101.

(44) Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy*, (London, 1968), p. 55.

political agenda. Without denying McCulloh and Osborne outright, she argues that Paul I's translations can also be seen to have been acts to maintain and strengthen the alliance with the Carolingian Pippin.(45)

The translation of Petronilla, she argues, was a symbolic display of the strong links between the Roman pope and the Carolingians. In a letter to Pippin in 758, Paul designated Petronilla as an "auxiliatrix" of the Carolingian royal family.(46) The placement in the chapel of the shawl used for Gisela's baptism was intended to create a spiritual kinship between Gisela and Petronilla, on the one hand, and between Gisela and the pope, on the other. This translation served to show the Franks that Paul I would continue the policy of his brother Stephen II, namely, to reinforce the alliance between the papacy and the Carolingian. At the same time, it showed the Romans that the Frankish kingdom was now a new partner of the pope by indicating the spiritual kinships between Gisela and Petronilla, and Paul and Pippin.(47)

Goodson sees the translation to San Silvestro in Capite in same context. Gaul had been the home of Dionysius (St. Denis), bishop of Paris, a famous saint who shared a name with Pope Dionysius, to whom the main church of this monastery was dedicated and whose relics were housed therein. A basilica built over St. Denis's body was known at that time as the abbey of Saint-Denis. In 754, when Stephen II visited the Frankish kingdom, he consecrated and anointed Pippin at very this monastery. According to Goodson, San Silvestro was dedicated to both "Dionysii ."(48) In other words, while translating the relics of an early pope that was available to him, Paul was also promoting the veneration of an important Frankish saint.(49) The translation to San Silvestro was thus also a strategic move to enhance the Franco-Papal alliance.

Goodson's statement that the relic translations were aimed at maintaining and strengthening relations with Pippin has some validity in view of the relationships between the papacy, the Lombards and the Franks at the time of the establishment of the Papal States and Paul I's accession to the papal throne. Pippin was originally pro-Lombard, and not a full-fledged ally of Rome. In the time of his father, Charles Martel, the Franks and the Lombards were allied against the Islamic powers. As a result of this friendship, Pippin attended the Lombard court as a child, where he formed a filial relationship with King Liutprand.(50) In the Frankish kingdom, together with his brother Carloman, he supported St. Boniface's missionary work and the reform of the Frankish church on the model of the Roman Church.(51) Moreover, Liutprand

(45) However, McCulloh also notes the relationship with the Carolingians from the perspective of the relics, pointing out that whereas the Byzantines and Lombards took an aggressive stance towards relics, the Franks posed no threat. He suggests that this may be why Paul began distributing relics to them. McCulloh 1980, pp. 323-324.
(46) "auxiliatricis vitae beatae Petronellae" *Codex Carolinus*, Ep. 14, p. 511; Goodson 2015, p. 161.
(47) Ibid., pp. 182-184.
(48) Goodson 2010, p. 214.
(49) The feast days of Petronilla and St. Denis were the same day. Osborne 2020, p. 182.
(50) *Historia Langobardorum*, VI, 53, p. 183.
(51) Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000*, (New York, 2009),

and his successor Ratchis held religious respect for Rome and papacy, and were (though the reservation of "relatively" is necessary here) not hostile to Rome. The policy of these two kings would have been in line with that of Pippin, who was reforming the Church at home on the Roman model. Thus, in Pippin's mind, there would not have been any contradiction between being pro-Rome and pro-Lombard.

Pippin's hostility seems to have been directed not against the Lombard kingdom itself, but rather toward the person of Aistulf, Ratchis's successor, who had taken the throne with the support of nobles who had been dissatisfied with Ratchis, and who was willing to attack Rome.(52) For this reason, after Aistulf's death in 756, some scholars, notably G. Barraclough, have suggested that Pippin began considering a return to the Frankish-Lombard alliance.(53)

On the other hand, Pippin's sympathies for the Lombard Kingdom notwithstanding, for Rome it was still a power that might someday attack again. This difference between the Carolingian and papal perceptions of the Lombards lent urgency to the need to maintain and strengthen the relationship with Pippin, and relic translation was seen as a means to achieve this.(54)

3 Relic Translation as a Means to Local Power

In this chapter I would like to add another perspective to the discussion of translations carried out by Paul I. Despite the validity of the studies presented above, they focus only on events and relations with the foreign powers of the Lombards and the Franks. The translations, however, were a kind of regional project by the pope to establish his position in the city of Rome and among its citizens. That is, Paul intended to consolidate and strengthen his power and authority in the city, and to present himself as a ruler.

Goodson focuses on relic translations and building projects undertaken by Pope Paschal I in the beginning of the ninth century and concludes that these were means of gaining and consolidating control over the city.(55) On the other hand, she draws a distinction between Paul's

---

p. 377.

(52) Miller 1974, p. 113.

(53) Barraclough 1969, p, 43.

(54) In addition to these two previous studies, Hans R. Seelinger has proposed a view of the translations as having been a response to iconoclasm. His argument, based not on sources and rather close to reasoning, is that Paul moved the relics into the city for fear of their theft from the suburban cemeteries and abuse by Greek monks. This argument is based on the conventional understanding that iconoclasm also sought to suppress the veneration of relics. However, in the context of the recent re-examination of iconoclasm in Byzantine historiography, Leslie Brubaker explicitly denies the suppression of relic veneration under iconoclasm. Accordingly, we must conclude that Seelinger's argument, although interesting, has little validity. H. R. Seelinger, "Einhards römische Reliquien Zur Übertragung der Heiligen Marzellinus und Petrus ins Frankenreich", *Römische Quartalschrift für chrisliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 83, 1988, pp. 38-75, p. 60; L. Brubaker and F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History*, (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 38-40.

(55) Goodson, "The Relic Translations of Paschal I (817-824): Transforming city and cult," in Andrew Hopkins and Maria Wyke (eds.), *Roman Bodies: Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2005),

and Paschal's relic translations, namely arguing that Paul's efforts were due to the particular circumstances of the Lombard military incursion not primarily informed by political intentions (despite their also having been political attempts connected with the Carolingians).[56] My view differs from hers on two points. While it is true that the Paul's initiative was a measure to cope with the emergency posed by the sacking of the relics, at the same time, it was an inherently political action. Moreover, Paul's intention was not only to ally himself with Pippin, but also to consolidate and strengthen the influence of the papacy by bringing relics "inside the city of Rome." This was a technique that had been carried out by bishops in late antiquity, one also connected with the urban projects by popes before Paul, which were also politically motivated. In other words, I believe that Goodson's conclusion about Paschal is equally applicable to Paul I, as well as to the eighth-century popes that succeeded him, though this will require further verification.

The popes' efforts to acquire authority and power in the city of Rome had been ongoing for some time prior to Paul's translations. Rather, the translations should be seen as the addition of new means to that same end. In this section, I will mention three such papal initiatives, namely the establishment of liturgies; the construction, repair and establishment of urban facilities, and interventions in charitable institutions.

With regard to the liturgies, popes in the eighth century attempted to assert control over citizens' religious life by means of liturgies and the assertion of absolute control over the popular veneration of the saints, which had originally begun as a voluntary act of the community. Gregory II instituted masses at the designated shrines on Lent Thursdays, which unified the city churches with respect to the papal liturgy.[57] The practice of popular and ecclesiastical veneration was also consolidated in Rome. What had originally been the popular practice of reading the passio of the saints at services was increasingly accepted by the Roman Church throughout the eighth century, ultimately leading to the formalization of a public reading at St. Peter's by Hadrian I.[58] In connection with relics, an act of Gregory III is deserving of special mention. He founded a new chapel in St Peter's to house the relics of the apostles and "all the holy martyrs and confessors," and instituted the feast of "All Saints Day" on November 1.[59]

As for city facilities, the LP records for 715-891 contain 265 references to construction, renovation, and rebuilding, including 174 projects that took place inside the city.[60] I consider

---

pp. 123-141; Eadem 2010.

(56) Goodson 2010, p. 217.

(57) LP,1, 91. 9, p. 402; Davis 1992, pp. 8-9; Maskarinec 2018, p. 88.

(58) Goodson 2007, pp. 76-77.

(59) LP, 1, 92. 6, p. 417; Davis 1992, pp. 22-23; Maskarinec 2018, pp. 128-130.

(60) T. F. X. Noble, "Paradoxes and possibilities in the sources for Roman society in the early Middle Ages," in Julia Smith (ed.), *Early Medieval Rome and Christian West; Essays in honour of A. Donald Bullugh*, (Leiden, 2000), pp. 55-83, p. 59. Noble included operations in St Peter's, St Paul's, and St. Lorenzo's fouri le Mura in project within the city.

these in the context of Euergetism, an ancient process of acquiring authority by distributing largesse to the community. While popes naturally planned to address the practical problems of the city's disrepair and the need for repair, beyond this, such projects also showcased their power through their generosity to the citizens.[61]

For projects in churches, the eighth and ninth centuries were the most active period in the early Middle Ages for the building and restoration of Roman churches.[62] In the eighth century, the period from Hadrian I to Leo III was the most active,[63] since the virtual collapse of the Lombard kingdom after Charlemagne's invasion in 774 allowed Rome to enjoy a certain degree of peace, and Hadrian I to initiate a large-scale project to restore the city's functions.[64]

Restorations to the Aurelian walls, which served as defences for the city of Rome, was another constant project throughout the eighth century. The LP relates repair ordered by Sisinius, Gregory II, Gregory III and Hadrian I.[65] In addition to the existing charitable institutions discussed below, many new charities were built or re-established by the popes in the vicinity of St. Peter's and Lateran Basilica.[66] The city of Rome at that time was home to *diaconia*, *xenodocium* and other charitable institutions that provided care for the sick, and food and beds for citizens and pilgrims. These charitable institutions, which had been run by wealthy nobles in the fifth and sixth centuries, from the end of the seventh century came under the supervision of the Roman Church, which began to found new ones, as well.[67] It was through these projects that the medieval city of Rome emerged in the eighth century.

Intervention in these charitable institutions was a strategy by which popes sought to increase their influence over existing urban institutions. Maskarinec discusses one such intervention by Zachary to San Giorgio in Velabro, a charitable institution. S. Giorgio was a *diaconia* dedicated to St. George, one of several such institutions that had existed in the city of Rome since the seventh century, as noted above. According to the LP, Zachary discovered the head of George at the Lateran and made a donation of it to the *diaconia*.[68] In doing so, Zachary brought the *diaconia* under the supervision of the papacy. In the eighth century the popes increased their

(61) Shoichi Sato has demonstrated that in sixth-century Gaul, the work of city bishops to save the poor was considered by the citizens to be euergetism. Shoichi Sato, "Saint, évêques et peuple dans la société de l'Antiquité tardive. Essai préliminaire pour l'analyse idéologique du pouvoir épiscopal (original in Japanese)," *Seiyoshi-Ronso (Studies in western history)* 5, 1983, pp. 1-14.

(62) Wickham 2009, p. 240.

(63) In 263 cases, 147 were in their pontificates (772-816). Noble 2000, p. 60.

(64) See Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*, (Princeton, 1980), pp. 109-114.

(65) Hadrian I took it twice, in one time spending for 100 libs of gold. T. F. X. Noble, "Topography, celebration, and power: the making of a papal Rome in the eighth and ninth centuries," in Mayke de Jong and Frans C. W. J. Theuws (eds.), *Topographies of power in the early Middle Ages*, (Leiden, 2001), pp. 45-91, p. 49.

(66) Ibid., p. 53.

(67) Hendrik W. Dey, "Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia and monasteries: 'Social security' and the meaning of monasticism in early medieval Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 16:4, 2008, pp. 398-422, pp. 399-400.

(68) LP, 1, 93. 24, p. 434; Davis 1992, p. 48.

intervention in charitable institutions, so that the *diaconiae* in the city were brought under papal oversight over the following half-century.(69)

This series of urban projects was intended to demonstrate the authority and power of the papacy and to strengthen its presence as ruler of the city. The cases of Gregory III and Zachary also show how relics were used by popes as means to achieve specific ends inside the city, even before Paul I undertook translations from suburban cemeteries. Yet it was through his translations that Paul greatly expanded the scope what could be accomplished by such means. It is important to note, however, that the use of relics to secure influence within the city was not a papal innovation; similar means had been used by city bishops in late antiquity. At that time when people sought protection from particular saints whom they venerated as "patrons," the bishops who led such venerations gained popular authority. In the second part of this section, I will leave eighth-century Rome to refer briefly to the case of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and that of Perpetuus, bishop of Tours as representative examples.

Ambrose was bishop of Milan in the second half of the fourth century. In 385 he discovered the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, which he placed under the altar of a basilica he had founded.(70)

P. Brown interprets this event as having secured Ambrose's victory in a dispute with Milan's leading secular families about city initiatives. Important in this context was that suburban cemeteries in this period were the private property of leading families, and were used as sites for shrines in which to deposit the relics they had acquired, in a practice known as *deposito ad sanctos*.(71) In other words, the veneration of saints was "privatized" by the leading secular families.(72) In this context, by being the first to bring new relics into his own basilica and incorporating the saints into the communal liturgy over which he presided, Ambrose succeeded in bringing such veneration into the public sphere. According to Brown, this approach by Ambrose became a model for bishops in the west.(73)

An example may be found in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. The *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours relates that bishops in Gaul (including himself) consolidated their authority in cities by associating themselves with particular saints. Perpetuus, a late fifth-century bishop of Tours, introduced and led the veneration of St. Martin. Martin, as well as also being a bishop of Tours, is described in the *Vita sancti Martini* by Sulpicius Severus as having been a saint who was

(69) Maskarinec 2018, pp. 89-90.
(70) Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago, 1981), pp. 36-37.
(71) The practice of burying the dead beside a saint. It was believed that the saint would be the protector of the deceased and would be present to defend them at the final judgment.
(72) Brown 1981, pp. 32-34.
(73) *Ibid,* p. 39.

active on a wider scale, rather than being associated exclusively with Tours.(74) Perpetuus rebuilt the basilica of St Martin and undertook the translation of the saint's remains. He also used the basilica actively in the religious life of the city.(75) Moreover, he asked Paulinus of Périgueux to render the *Dialogue* by Sulpicius Severus into verse form, as well as stories that Perpetuus had collected of Martin's posthumous miracles.(76) Through these projects, Perpetuus established St. Martin as a patron saint unique to Tours, and established his own authority in the city by positioning himself as the bishop who led the veneration of Martin.(77)

The eighth-century bishops of Rome – that is, the popes – would likely have been familiar with and taken guidance from the approach of bishops in late antiquity. That approach was especially accelerated by the translations of relics from suburban cemeteries carried out by Paul I, in a departure from older practice. Such an approach would have been impossible for popes in the seventh century, who maintained imperial practice and were reluctant to move relics into the city. On this point, Paul I and the popes who followed him are clearly differentiated from his predecessors.

Epilogue: Conclusion and Challenges

In the middle of the eighth century, Paul I carried out three translations of relics. Scholars have pointed out that these removals were emergency measures to secure the relics in the face of a crisis, as well as part of a policy to strengthen the papacy's alliance with Pippin. Against this view, in this paper I have situated the translation of relics in the context of the city of Rome proper, interpreting it as a political project to establish the position of the ruler in the city. From the LP, it is evident that a grand ceremony must have taken place at the time of these translations.(78) This would have demonstrated the greatness of the saint, while at the same time serving to present the pope as a powerful figure to the citizens. Several such projects took place in Rome in the eighth century, with the same aim. Further, the pope's use of relics to secure influence followed the model of policies observed by city bishops in late antiquity.

Finally, I would like to point out some future challenges. Since the outset of modern historiography, interest in the city of Rome and the papacy has remained high. In the past this interest was focused mainly on the political history of relations with external powers, but since the 1990s there has been a growing interest in the social, religious, and political situation inside

(74) Takashi Uesugi, "The Gallic Church and the "authority" of Bishop of Tours in the Late Fifth Century (original in Japanese)," *Seiyoushi-Gakuho (Review of western history)* 44, 2018, pp. 38-65, p. 49.
(75) Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis, *Historiarum Libri X*, in W. Levison et B. Krausch (eds.), *MGH: Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum Tom. 1, Pars. 1*, (3vols., Hannover, 1951), II, 14, pp. 63-64; X, 31, pp. 529-531.
(76) Raymond V. Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, (Princeton, 1993), p. 19.
(77) *Ibid*., pp. 18-20; Uesugi 2018, pp. 48-51.
(78) "cum hymnis et canticis spiritalibus" LP, 1, 95.3, p. 464. The same phrase is used when Life of Zachary explains his donation of the relic of St. George to S. Giorgio. LP, 1, 93. 24, p. 434.

the city of Rome. In this context, the translation of relics not as a mere emergency measure undertaken by the papacy, but rather as a political policy with a clear intention, will need to be situated in the context of Rome's political history, both in terms of its relationship with external powers, and the internal governance of the city itself. The former has been carried out by Goodson with respect to the Franks. The latter has also been undertaken by Goodson for Paschal I in the ninth century. And in this paper, I have tentatively discussed this idea in the context of the eighth century.

The next step, beyond simply pointing out that the transfer of the relics was a political project by the popes, is to inquire into the consequences of this action. Did the pope's intentions succeed or fail, and to what extent? In this way we will be able to understand in more detail the reality of the eighth-century transformation that took place inside the city of Rome, and the relationship between the papacy and Rome itself. To achieve this, it will be necessary to summarize and reconstruct the contemporary political/social situation in the city and the situation in the Roman Church by incorporating the relic translations in that context.