

# RULERS AND PATRONAGE IN LATE ANTIQUE RAVENNA

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*During Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, empress Galla Placidia, king Theoderic and later Queen Amalasantha, imperial officers and rulers, such as Exarchs, bishops and the clergy used patronage of various monumental buildings to endorse their political ambitions, social positions, and prestige, also in Ravenna, when the city became the new Imperial Seat. In this paper I will try to define this phenomenon by showing the role played by private élites since the 4th century, which grew into a general and wide trend by the end of the 8th century, during the Carolingian Age.*

**Key words:** *Ravenna, Late Antiquity, Patronage, Archaeology*

## INTRODUCTION

Ravenna is one of the few European cities where growth rather than decline has been verified during Late Antiquity and in which the imperial and ecclesiastical elites invested in new public buildings<sup>1</sup>. The reasons for this new vitality, in a period of great crisis, have justly been sought in the transfer of the imperial residence from Milan at the beginning of the 5th century and by the new demands of the imperial entourage. The first heuristic efforts of the urban elites were associated primarily with the court of Honorius. They turned to the creation of functional buildings as an expression of imperial power, including new roads, public buildings, churches and especially the Bishop's palace, and to the construction of the city walls, which remain quite unchanged to this day<sup>2</sup>. Archaeology also testifies as well to a new impetus towards the construction of sumptuous private residences, such as the one identified in Via D'Azeglio, and public buildings equipped to receive a great quantity of goods, coming from the east and from Tunisia, and designed for their redistribution in central and northern Italy. Towards the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century a new impulse towards the construction of ecclesiastical buildings emerges among the empire's elites, driven by the 'bishop builders' and private aristocrats, who identified in this type of building a vehicle for the transmission of their memory and personal power<sup>3</sup>. In this paper I will try to show the contribution that these investments made to the crisis of the Mediterranean economic system, which through its contraction determined the end of the commercial predominance of the city in comparison to the rest of central and northern Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> C. PIETRI, *Aristocrazia e clero al tempo di Odoacre e di Teoderico*, in A. Carile (ed.), *Storia di Ravenna. Dall'età bizantina all'età ottoniana. Territorio, economia e società*, vol. II. 1., Venezia, 1991, p. 287-310.

<sup>2</sup> E. CIRELLI, *Élites civili ed ecclesiastiche nella Ravenna tardoantica*, in *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 13\1, p. 301-318.

<sup>3</sup> S. GELICHI, *Ravenna, ascesa e declino di una capitale*, in G. Ripoll and J. M. Gurt (eds.) *Sedes regiae (ann. 400-800)*, Barcellona, 2000, p. 109-134; E. CIRELLI, *Ravenna. Archeologia di una città*, Firenze, 2008.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CAPITAL CITY

The transfer of the imperial 'seat of power' from Milan to Ravenna must have been intended only as a temporary measure by Honorius and, furthermore, was initiated by concern over Barbarian pressure on the north-eastern *limes*. Once, however, a large succession of dignitaries and officials had gathered inside the new residence, Ravenna became a stable centre of government. The first changes to the city are really owed to imperial authority and saw the construction of grandiose benefactions, similar only to those of the extraordinary capitals of the eastern Mediterranean<sup>4</sup>. The first benefaction that altered the urban aspect of the settlement was the construction of the imperial palace, an act that determined a move eastwards, away from the gravitational centre of the city and well outside the ancient republican city wall, along the axis of the Via Popilia (now Via di Roma)<sup>5</sup>. This new organization of the city and the arrival of the vast imperial entourage during the 5th and 6th centuries were the primary cause of an exceptional building rebirth that saw the construction of imposing public buildings, great *domus* and various forms of infrastructure<sup>6</sup>. Above all, this was due to elite patronage tied initially to the emperor, followed by the Gothic kings, and finally the exarch and the bishops<sup>7</sup>.

Besides this fundamental event, a great change in the organization of the city occurred because of the diffusion of the Christian religion, which was poorly attested in Ravenna before the 5th century. Beginning from this time, the ecclesiastical authorities also have defined their places of worship within the new imperial centre<sup>8</sup>. It is also a well-documented phenomenon in other Adriatic cities during the first twenty years of the 5th century that a new entrepreneurial tendency emerges amongst the bishops, who are referred to by some scholars as 'bishop builders'<sup>9</sup>.

Two poles of topographical aggregation were established, with the same dynamics that had characterized other Italian cities in Late Antiquity. They are based around the new imperial palace and the Bishop's palace, the former built in a new sector to the east and close to the Via Popilia, the latter nearby the Basilica Ursiana and the baptistery, behind the *domus* of the bishop itself, with wide rooms for the reception of the whole ecclesiastical community and for the civilian authorities<sup>10</sup>. This phenomenon of the decentralization of the structures of civil power breaks with the preceding administrative unity and urbanism of Roman tradition, introducing a topographical dualism between civil power and ecclesiastical power. This dualism would also mark the evolution of the urban landscape in the following centuries<sup>11</sup>. These two centres of power are flanked, at the end of the 5th century, by a third building focus, following the settlement of a new Arian cult elite that is probably attested inside an area of sparse construction set in the northeast sector of the city with two other episcopal complexes behind the city walls<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> T. W. POTTER, *Towns in Late Antiquity. Iol Caesarea and its context*, Exeter, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> G.A. MANSUELLI, *Geografia e storia di Ravenna antica*, in *Corsi di Arte Ravennate e Bizantina XIV*, 1967, p. 157-190, part. 170-172; S. GELICHI, *Il paesaggio urbano tra V e X secolo*, in A. Carile (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 153-165, part. 154.

<sup>6</sup> I. BALDINI LIPPOLIS, *La domus tardoantica: forme e rappresentazioni dello spazio domestico nelle città del Mediterraneo*, Bologna, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> N. CHRISTIE *From Constantine to Charlemagne: An Archaeology of Italy AD 300-800*, Aldershot, 2006, p. 97; E. CIRELLI, *Palazzi e luoghi del potere a Ravenna e nel suo territorio tra tarda Antichità e alto Medioevo (V-X sec.)*, in *HAM* 25, 2019, p. 283-299.

<sup>8</sup> J. H. W. G. LIEBESCHUTZ, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford, 2001, p. 374.

<sup>9</sup> G. CANTINO WATAGHIN, *Spazio cristiano e "civitates": status quaestionis*, in G. Spanu (ed.), *Materiali per una topografia urbana: Status quaestionis e nuove acquisizioni*, *Atti del V convegno sull'archeologia tardoantica e medievale in Sardegna (Cagliari, 1988)*, Oristano, 1995, p. 201-237, part. 220; P. CHEVALIER, N. JAKŠIĆ, M. JURKOVIĆ, *Zadar, ses environs et la Dalmatie septentrionale dans l'Antiquité tardive*, in *Bulletin de l'Association pour l'Antiquité Tardive* 25, 2016, p. 7-16.

<sup>10</sup> M. C. CARILE, *The Vision of the Palace of the Byzantine Emperors as a Heavenly Jerusalem*, Spoleto, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> G. P. BROGIOLO, *Le origini della città medievale*, Mantova, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> M. C. CARILE, E. CIRELLI, *Architetture e decoro del complesso vescovile ariano: ipotesi ricostruttive e modelli di riferimento*, in G. Garzia, A. Iannucci, M. Vandini (eds.), *Il patrimonio culturale tra conoscenza, tutela e valorizzazione. Il caso della "Piazzetta degli Ariani" di Ravenna*, Bologna, 2015, p. 97-127.

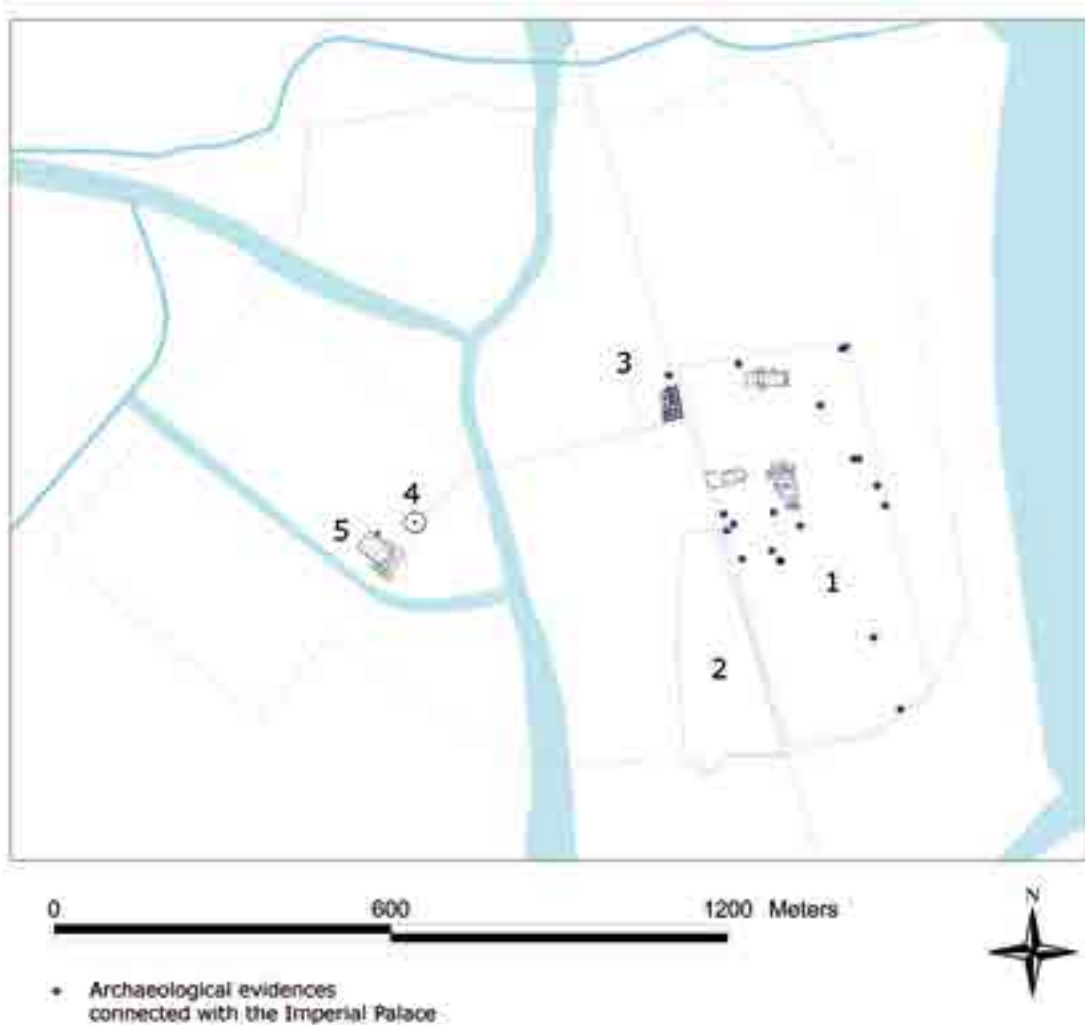


Fig. 1. The Late Antique city walls of Ravenna and the Structures of Power: 1) the Imperial Palace complex; 2) hypothetical localization of the Circus; 3) the Mint; 4) 3rd century B.C. city walls and the Bishop's Baths (Banca Popolare excavations); 5) Bishop's Palace complex and the basilica Ursiana (drawn by the author)

## THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The most important element in the transformation of the urban landscape in Ravenna in Late Antiquity is imperial building, which occurred in the areas in which construction investment reached its highest levels. Also in this category was a complex of buildings that constituted a vast district located in the southeast sector of the city, inclusive of the area between the Wandalaria Gate and the church of St John the Evangelist. The area of the imperial palace, according to this reconstruction, covered a region of around 10 hectares, excluding the Hippodrome (5 hectares) and the Mint (2 square kilometres) that still belonged, however, to the palace complex (Fig. 1)<sup>13</sup>. Another impressive building that constituted part of the imperial residence was built by Emperor Valentinian III *in loco qui dicitur ad Laureta*<sup>14</sup>, a sector of the city close to the Wandalaria Gate.

<sup>13</sup> E. CIRELLI, *Ravenna - Rise of a Late Antique Capital*, in D. Sami, G. Speed (eds.), *Debating urbanism: Between and Beyond the Wall. A.D. 300-700*, Leicester, 239-263.

<sup>14</sup> Andrea Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ravennatis Ecclesiae*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI-IX*, ed. by O. Holder Egger, Hannover, 1878, p. 298.



The palace, built by Theoderic, but not dedicated by him<sup>15</sup>, was probably situated to the north, close to the church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo<sup>16</sup>; its structures were partially identified at the beginning of the previous century during a series of archaeological excavations that were intended to locate the imperial building. In recent years, the analysis of data from the deposit in the area of the imperial building, conducted by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Bologna, allows us to hypothesize the development of the complex in at least four different phases<sup>17</sup>. The first has just been described and was identified during the excavations of G. Ghirardini; it consisted of vast reception rooms and a bath, articulated around a large rectangular courtyard (Fig. 2). Between the buildings that constituted this phase was also the Triclinium *ad Marem*, described by Agnellus as an ample tri-apsidal room facing the Adriatic Sea (Fig. 2. S) and decorated with late fifth-century mosaics, with a mythological scene. A huge quantity of evidence, situated close to Santa Maria in Porto<sup>18</sup>, reveals also the presence of a second group of buildings, probably connected to the Palace *ad Laureta*, in the region of the *Wandalaria* Gate. The complex was bounded to the north by the *Scubitum*, perhaps a building destined to be the lodgings of the soldiers charged with the protection of the palace<sup>19</sup> and by the Basilica of San Apollinare Nuovo<sup>20</sup>. The *Palatium* was completed by a considerable number of pavilions, service chambers and by two main buildings: firstly, the Moneta Aurea, that was probably the imperial Mint of Ravenna, as testified by written sources and by archaeological finds; secondly, the Hippodrome, only identified by topographic references and by cartographic evidence and located in the south-east zone of the city, facing the imperial palace<sup>21</sup>.

## THE PUBLIC/CIVIC PATRONAGE OF KING THEODERIC: THE BASILICA HERCULIS

Besides establishing the centre of imperial power and constructing the city's defences, in this period Theoderic constructed works and public infrastructure of notable economic investment, as well as numerous great monuments. We just have to think of the restoration and creation of the new road network and the improvement to the water supply plants, which operated both during the Ostrogothic age and the Exarch government. An important civil construction (or perhaps a restoration) that has unfortunately left few material traces behind can also be contributed to Theoderic's patronage: the basilica devoted to Hercules. We know very little about it and the only real mention originates from the *Variae*<sup>22</sup>, in which Theoderic asks the Pretorian Prefect of Rome, Agapitus, for the construction of a *basilica Herculis*<sup>23</sup>. Certainly the Ostrogoth king did not miss out on an opportunity to recall the myth as a representation of his power. Indeed, images of Hercules, the great hero of classical mythology, and Bellerophon graced the three-apsidal dining room of his palace<sup>24</sup>. Theoderic's displays of culture and constant nods to antiquity are a demonstration and a qualification

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<sup>15</sup> Anonimus Valesianus, *Chronica Theodericiana*, in *RIS*, t. XXIV, pars. IV. Salv., *De gubernat., Salvianus, De gubernatione Dei*, ed. by F. Pauly, Vindobonae, 1883, p. 24: *Palatium usque ad perfectum fecit, que non dedicavit*.

<sup>16</sup> P. PORTA, *Il centro del potere, il problema del palazzo dell'esarco*, in A. Carile (ed.), *Op. cit.* (n.1), p. 269-283.

<sup>17</sup> A. AUGENTI, *Archeologia e topografia a Ravenna: il Palazzo di Teoderico e la Moneta Aurea*, in *Archeologia Medievale* XXXII, 2005, p. 7-33.

<sup>18</sup> V. MANZELLI 2000, *Ravenna*, Roma, 2000, p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> M. MAZZOTTI, *Note di antica topografia ravennate*, in *CARB* 14, 1967, p. 219-231, part. 228.

<sup>20</sup> F. W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spatantiken Abendlandes*, vol. II.1: Kommentar 1. Teil. Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 171-200.

<sup>21</sup> G. VESPIGNANI, *ἸΠΠΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ. Il circo di Costantinopoli Nuova Roma. Dalla realtà alla storiografia*, Spoleto, 2010, p. 153.

<sup>22</sup> Cassiod. *Var.* 1, 6, ed. by A. Giardina, G. Cecconi, I. Tantillo, Roma, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> D. MAUSKOPF DELIYANNIS, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, 2010, p. 123-124.

<sup>24</sup> I. BALDINI LIPPOLIS, *Articolazione e decorazione del palazzo imperiale di Ravenna*, in *CARB* 43, 1997, p. 1-31.



Fig. 3. *The capture of the golden hind of Cerinea, by Hercules, Courtesy of the Museo Nazionale di Ravenna*

of his power, especially when presented on public monuments. The whole district where the basilica was built was probably dedicated to Hercules. The only artefact associated with this basilica is a bas relief of extraordinary execution, representing a scene from the capture of the Ceryneian Golden Hind. The scene, preserved in the collection of the National Museum at Ravenna, must be the work of a great sculptor of a metropolitan area (Fig. 3). The original placement of the marmoreal fragment, which is almost like a metope that must have enriched the basilica's reception room with a depiction of the labours of Hercules, is uncertain, but it allows us to imagine how sumptuous the decorative apparatus of this building must have been. The internal structure was perhaps sustained by the capitals that are now standing under the portico of the present Town Hall in Ravenna, close to the place where the basilica was probably built. These elements, on which the monogram of Theoderic is engraved, are attributed by tradition to the Church of the Goths (*Ecclesia Gothorum*) in the Arian district, but we do not have any hard evidence for this<sup>25</sup>. Many doubts remain over the original position of these capitals, which are decorated by acanthus leaves 'moved by the wind' (also referred to as 'butterfly style'), and the proximity to the *regio Ercolana* is certainly not enough to prove this association. We

should also consider that the function of the Basilica of Hercules is not clear and, according to some scholars, it is in fact a reception room of the imperial palace<sup>26</sup>. There is no doubt, however, that the Theoderician building devoted to Hercules would have been decorated by capitals similar to those that are now ascribed to the *Ecclesia Gothorum*, and for which highly skilled sculptors were enlisted, probably coming from a Constantinopolitan workshop<sup>27</sup>.

## REGION OF RELIGIOUS POWER: THE BISHOP'S PALACE AND THE BASILICA URSIANA

The Bishop's palace in Ravenna was found inside the old Roman city, such as other Adriatic cities (e.g. Zadar)<sup>28</sup>. It occupied a more central position in comparison to the new sector of the city where we have seen that the new complex of the imperial palace was constructed. This Christian complex

<sup>25</sup> F. W. DEICHMANN, *Op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 285.

<sup>26</sup> ID., *Ravenna. Geschichte und Monumente*, Wiesbaden, 1969, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> C. BERTELLI, *Testimonianze dell'arte a Ravenna dal regno goto all'esarcato*, in A. Augenti, C. Bertelli (eds.), *Santi Banchieri Re. Ravenna e Classe nel VI secolo. San Severo il tempio ritrovato, Catalogo della Mostra (Ravenna, 2006)*, Milano, 2006, p. 23-36, part. 25.

<sup>28</sup> N. JAKŠIĆ, *Il nucleo del complesso vescovile paleocristiano di Zara*, in R. Farioli Campanati et al. (eds.) *Ideologia e cultura artistica tra Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale (IV-X secolo). Il ruolo dell'autorità ecclesiastica alla luce di nuovi scavi e ricerche. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Bologna-Ravenna, 2007)*, Bologna, 2009, p. 303-312.

was the first to be created inside the city, soon after the transition of imperial authority to Ravenna (Fig. 4). A little more ancient is the shrine of Pullione, which is a *mausoleum* whose location is not known with certainty. It was mentioned only in the 9th century, in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which describes the burial of the Bishop Liberius, who died in AD 377, inside a private building close to the *Porta Nova*. During archaeological excavations, conducted by M. Mazzotti, a small funerary building was identified close to the villa over which the basilica of St Severus was built at the end of the 6th century. It is a small *sacellum* built in the second half of the 4th century, revealing a square plan with

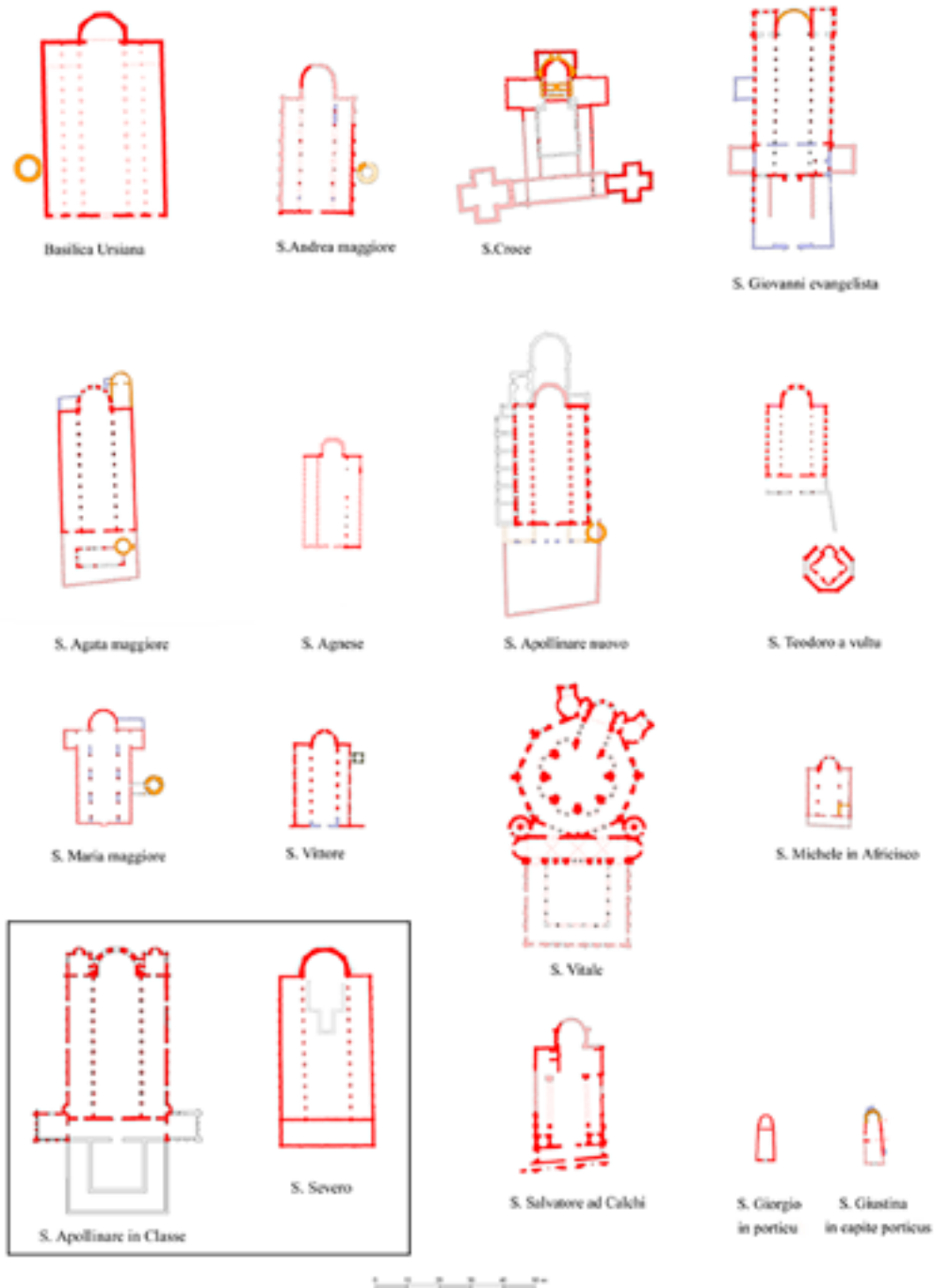


Fig. 4. Scheme of the ecclesiastical building of Ravenna since the end of the 4th c. AD



Fig. 5. Aerial view of the St. Rufillo shrine close the basilica of St. Severus at Classe

an apse to the west and wide openings on the east side and to the north. It is likely that Bishop Severus and his family were buried here (Fig. 5)<sup>29</sup>. The first Christian basilica and its baptistery were built in Ravenna a few years later, at the beginning of the 5th century, inside the bishop's private house<sup>30</sup>.

The bishop's palace structure was refined time after time and gained its final form at the end of a progressive delineation of numerous public buildings, with luxurious rooms, gardens and private baths that were still active until the 9th century<sup>31</sup>. The architectural models for the public rooms and the other buildings of the episcopal complex are in every way similar to those of the structures belonging to the imperial and secular elites of the same period. For instance, the first building added to the private residence of Ursus, known by the name of *Quinque Accubita* or *Dagubitas*, is a five-apsed dining room, two apses on each side and one on the side that was in front of the door, decorated by magnificent mosaics described by Agnellus<sup>32</sup>. Its plan recalls the shape of many aristocratic and

<sup>29</sup> E. CIRELLI *et al.*, *Settore 5 (5000) – Mausoleo Nord*, in A. Augenti *et al.* (eds.), *La basilica di San Severo a Classe. Scavi 2006*, Bologna, 2017, p. 99-108.

<sup>30</sup> E. RUSSO, *Sulla sopraelevazione neoniiana del battistero della cattedrale di Ravenna*, in *L'edificio battesimale in Italia. Aspetti e problemi*, Atti dell'VIII Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana (Genova, Sarzana, Albenga, Finale Ligure, Ventimiglia 1998), Bordighera, 2001, p. 891-914.

<sup>31</sup> M. C. MILLER, *The development of the archiepiscopal residence in Ravenna (300-1300)*, in *Felix Ravenna 141-144*, 1992, p. 145-173.

<sup>32</sup> G. DE ANGELIS D'OSSAT, *Sulla distrutta aula dei quinque accubita a Ravenna*, in *CARB 20*, 1973, p. 263-273.

public buildings, characteristic of Late Antiquity, as in the case of the room called *Dekanneacubita* in Constantinople, built between the 4th and the 5th centuries in the shape of a long apsidal room with nine more apses on each side<sup>33</sup>; a later example is the Consistorium Lateranense, built by Leo III (AD 795-816), with eleven apses<sup>34</sup>. Similar examples are also known from many luxurious villas that often introduce convivial multi-apsidal rooms, as in the case of the reception room preceded by a hallway with two opposite apses, belonging to the villa of Desenzano<sup>35</sup>. One of the *triclinia* found in the imperial palace complex at Milan had the same plan<sup>36</sup>. Furthermore, inside the episcopal complex there was a private chapel, a bath, *triclinia* and other public buildings, so that it appeared as its own considerable urban complex.

The first buildings of episcopal patronage included the great Basilica Ursiana, a basilica with five aisles that was of unparalleled grandeur in comparison to the monumental constructions of the following centuries and that was built over the private properties of the bishop himself and not on public grounds.

### THE THIRD FOCAL POINT: BASILICA, BAPTISTERY AND THE 'ARIAN' PALACE

The main investments of the Gothic king were made in the construction of the new reception room inside the imperial palace, in the creation of new religious spaces, befitting the Arian heresy, and in the construction of new buildings and infrastructures of public utility. The greater part of this building program was located in the northeast district of the inhabited area, an area up to that time deprived of euergistic constructions, if we exclude the Basilica of St John the Evangelist, that, judging from the documented archaeological evidence so far, seems to constitute the northern limit of the building activity and of imperial patronage during the 5th century. In this period, the Arian clergy built an Episcopal centre quite close to that created behind the Basilica Ursiana. It contained a complex also constituted by an Episcopal *domus*/palace, with a bath and a private chapel, and the *monasterium S. Apolenaris* (Fig. 4). During the 6th century the Gothic administration also granted significant liberty to investments by the 'Orthodox' ecclesiastical authorities. In this period, also after the death of Theoderic, numerous churches were built by Orthodox bishops, in particular by Ecclesius.

### THE CITY WALLS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURES

Since the beginning of the 5th century Ravenna was a centre of notable investment by the imperial administration in public buildings and in public infrastructure or services. The great number of river courses that crossed the city connected the imperial 'seat of power' by an easy waterway transit to the network of the Po River, and guaranteed the fortune of the settlement and its development in the following centuries. The late antique imperial administration also restored road arteries, bridges and all structures that allowed an easy interaction with the outside. The city was also endowed with a new defensive circuit (Fig. 1). Until this time Ravenna was a small city that covered around 33 hectares. The area of the *oppidum* had been, however, in continuous expansion since the early imperial age and two principal zones of settlement, to the north and the east, were extended

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<sup>33</sup> R. GUILLAND, *Études sur la topographie de Constantinople byzantine*, Berlin-Amsterdam, 1969, p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> R. KRAUTHEIMER, *Die Decaenneacubita in Konstantinopel. Ein kleiner Beitrag zur Frage Rom und Byzanz*, in W. N. Schumacher (ed.), *Tortulae. Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten* (Römische Quartalschrift, Suppl. 30), Roma, 1966, p. 195-199.

<sup>35</sup> D. SCAGLIARINI CORLAITA, *La villa di Desenzano. Vicende architettoniche e decorative*, in *Studi sulla villa romana di Desenzano*, Milano, 1994, p. 43-58, part. 53, fig. 11.

<sup>36</sup> A. CERESA MORI, *Palatium duabus turribus sublime...Il palazzo imperiale di Milano nel quadro delle immagini recenti*, in G. Sena Chiesa (ed.), *L'editto di Milano e il tempo della tolleranza. Costantino 313 d. C., Catalogo della Mostra (Milano, 2012-2013)*, Milano, 2012, p. 22-28, part. 24.

up to the borders of the future late antique urban enclosure. These structures, primarily residential in character, were already in crisis between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and were enclosed inside the vast, surrounding city walls and partly intersected by the same, as in the case of a suburban villa uncovered in close proximity to the Cybo Gate<sup>37</sup>. The new late antique city walls also included a sector of the inhabited area next to the coast, probably crossed by the Via Popilia, and known as the early medieval *Plateia Maior*. In this area two vast early Roman residences have been identified, the last one during emergency excavations conducted in Largo Farini, which also show once more the extension of the inhabited area in this sector of the city. The vast area of the imperial residence, with public buildings and the whole apparatus of necessary complexes, was created for the installation of the imperial court in this district.

The date of foundation of the city walls is not certain at the present time, although they are generally attributed to Emperor Onorio's activity (395-423), after his arrival in Ravenna in 402, and were finished by Valentinian III<sup>38</sup>. Their construction defined a vast area that was thereafter available for the construction of new service buildings of the imperial court. The boundaries, in their definitive position, contained a large area of 166 hectares, 5 times greater than that hypothesized for the Republican age. The inhabited area in Ravenna did not succeed in reaching such dimensions again in its history until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although admittedly the settlement pattern was never so intense again after the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The late antique city walls constituted 'a limit and a border' of the city during the early Middle Ages. From the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a new road system was also realized. It was planned around the area of the *Platea Maior* over the ancient Via Popilia, a road network that still dominates the urban topography today.

#### PRIVATE PATRONAGE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT BETWEEN THE 5<sup>TH</sup> AND THE 7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

Economic development and the growth of investment between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries also injected a new vitality into the construction of private houses. Some important archaeological excavations, undertaken within the city in recent years, have allowed us to discover new buildings, including one house of an elevated formal quality, which was probably connected with the demands placed by the new managing class that arose inside the city. Such aristocratic residences were designed to enable civic elites to receive a vast succession of *clientes*; they were primary places in which the aristocracy could demonstrate their own authority and exhibit power<sup>39</sup>. From the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, urban elites continued to be able to invest in the construction of imposing buildings, creating works that have left different material evidence which urban archaeology is now able to identify.

Toward the end of the century two *domus*, dating from the Augustan age and joined together inside a grandiose residence, which probably belonged to a high official of the imperial court, were transformed and monumentalized. This is the archaeological complex of Via D'Azeglio<sup>40</sup>. The excavations succeeded in investigating only a small part of the original extension of the rich late antique residence: numerous rooms have been articulated and are paved with prestigious polychrome mosaics and with *opus sectile*; there were three separate courtyards and infrastructures (Fig. 6). The rooms of this aristocratic house have a symmetrical plan, distributed around gardens and pillared porticoes, and connected by corridors. In the centre of the principal courtyard an octagonal foun-

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<sup>37</sup> G. MONTEVECCHI, *Viaggio nei siti archeologici della provincia di Ravenna*. Ravenna, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> S. GELICHI, *Le mura di Ravenna*, in *Ravenna. Da capitale imperiale a capitale esarcale*, Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo (Ravenna, 2004), Spoleto, 2005, p. 821-840.

<sup>39</sup> J. ORTALLI, *L'insediamento residenziale urbano nella Cispadana*, in M. Heinzelmann, J. Ortalli (eds.), *Abitare in città. La Cisalpina tra impero e medioevo*, Roma, 2003, p. 95-119, part. 103.

<sup>40</sup> G. MONTEVECCHI (ed.), *Archeologia urbana a Ravenna. La 'Domus dei Tappeti di Pietra'. Il complesso archeologico di Via D'Azeglio*, Ravenna, 2004.

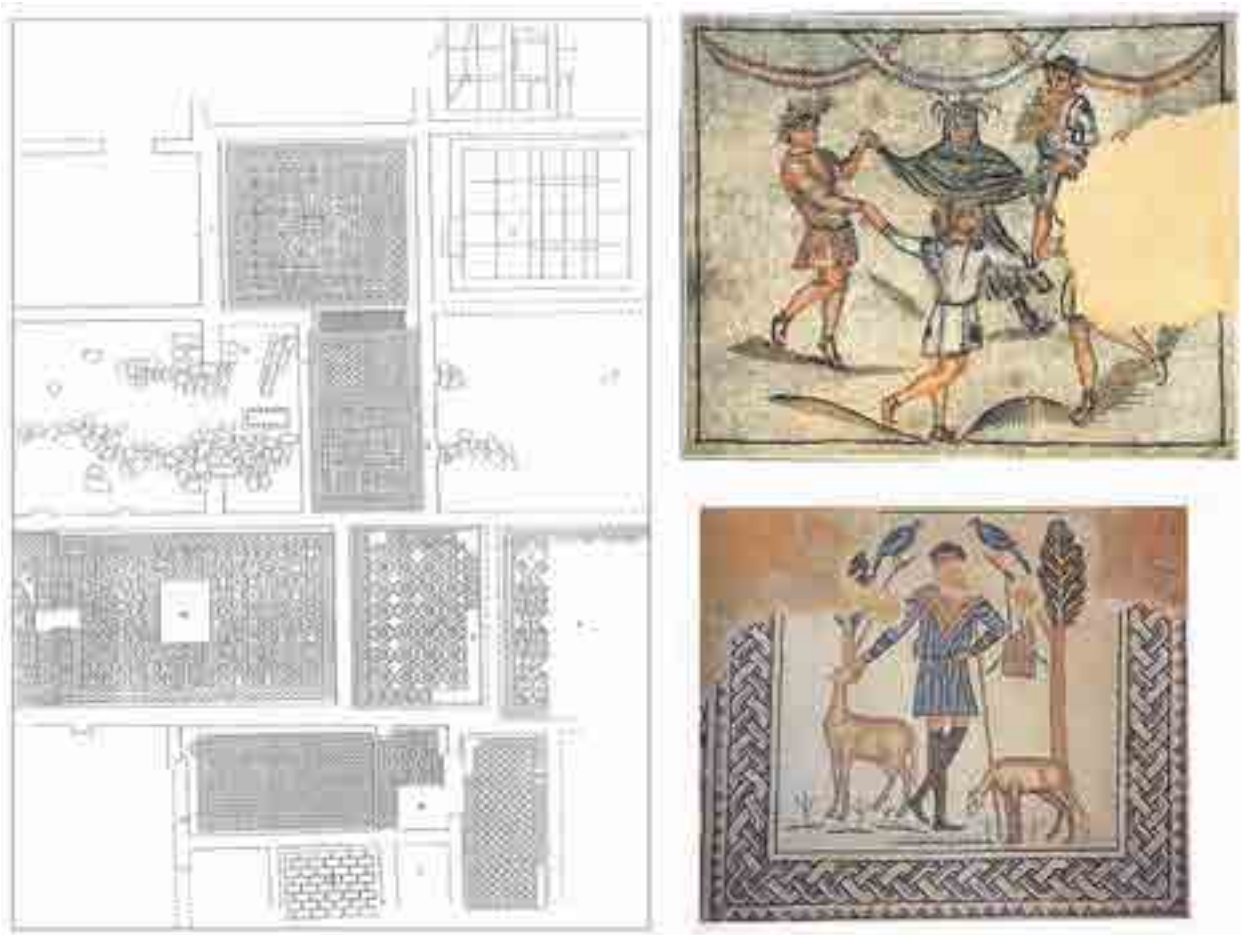


Fig. 6. Via D'Azeglio Domus and the 'Four Seasons mosaic Panel', a Late Antique residence close to the ancient Forum (drawn by the author)

tain has been discovered, which is also similar to that found in the courtyard of the imperial palace. The craftsmen were highly skilled, since they were able to produce mosaic panels, such as the one depicting the 'Dance of the Seasons', in which both polychrome-glass and stone tesserae were used, as was also the case in the more important ecclesiastical buildings. A later church was also added to the complex, over a 7th-8th century urban cemetery<sup>41</sup>.

The *domus* of Via D'Azeglio fits in a category of buildings that is certainly not representative of the common kind of private house<sup>42</sup>. This house might be compared to the Bishop's palace and to part of the residential zone of Theoderic's palace. These are luxurious buildings that some of the city's elite owned and were able to sustain despite the large economic investment. The mosaic representations, even if only partly preserved, depict ancient philosophical themes and show an aristocracy that still intended to exhibit its own culture; they also show the continued popularity of the *Iliad*, with a scene from this epic depicted inside the Dogana Domus in Faenza, and characterize it as belonging to the private sphere (fig 7). It would seem that the rest of the inhabited area was consigned instead to more ordinary residences, mostly fabricated in timber, with an intense use of wood and clay as in

<sup>41</sup> D. FERRERI, *La città dei vivi e la città dei morti. La ridefinizione degli spazi urbani e le pratiche funerarie a Ravenna e nel territorio circostante tra la tarda antichità e l'alto medioevo*, in *HAM* 20, 2014, p. 112-122.

<sup>42</sup> I. BALDINI, *Op. cit.* (n. 6).

other late antique cities, which is documented also in Ravenna during the 7th century by written and archaeological sources<sup>43</sup>.

## WAREHOUSES

Unlike a great number of other Italian cities, therefore, the new imperial residence reaped the benefits of important private efforts by the urban aristocracy and of the ambitious project of building public houses during Late Antiquity. Of notable importance in understanding the goals of this great project of urban development is also the imposing appearance of warehouses along the banks of the city's harbour area, which were discovered inside the inhabited area of Classe (Fig. 8). In fact, it was only in this period that a series of buildings was planned and completed, which were necessary to receive, maintain and redistribute the great quantity of goods and provisions that came into the city following the

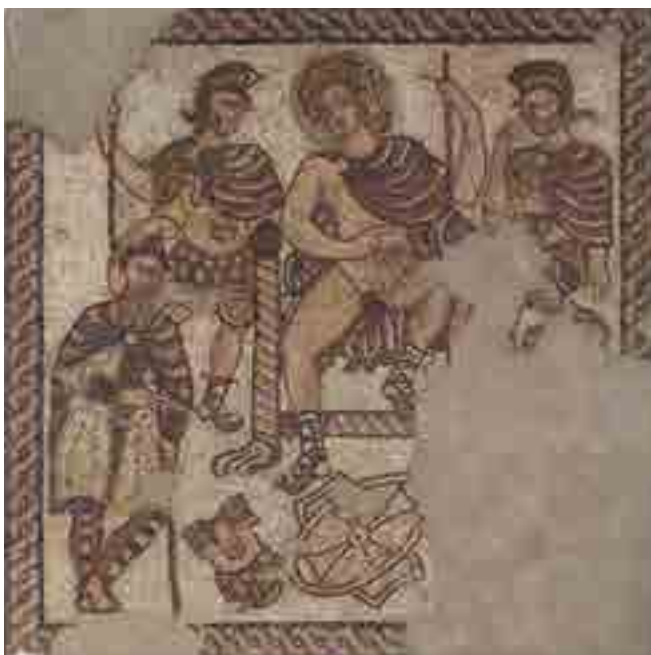


Fig. 7. *Emblema of the Dogana domus at Faenza, with the myth of Achilles*

arrival of the imperial court. At first, the monumental construction program, the uniformity and the scale of the project caused us to attribute it to imperial patronage. In this case, however, the diversity of the finds and the products that were found increases the likelihood of patronage by merchant guilds that exploited the city's new ascent to the rank of imperial centre to attract and redistribute goods coming from the entire Mediterranean Sea. The grand extent of this direct commercial traffic to Ravenna, both from the harbours of the eastern Mediterranean and from the coasts of Tunisia, has been discussed by scholars on various occasions. It reveals a new economic dynamism that allows us to frame more accurately the artistic development of a city that is also experiencing a moment of great commercial (more so than political or cultural) wealth<sup>44</sup>.

## ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS: IMPERIAL AND EPISCOPAL PATRONAGE

Nevertheless, one result of greater investment by the civil and religious aristocracies in late-Roman Ravenna was the construction of ecclesiastical buildings (tab. 1). If Bishop Urso had in fact been invested in his position in AD 405, then the cathedral in Ravenna was built at the very moment of the imperial court's transfer<sup>45</sup>. From this time a notable development in ecclesiastical building begins, which is determined to a large extent by imperial patronage and which is of such magnitude so as to drive the urban order of the city for over a millennium.

<sup>43</sup>J. ORTALLI, *Edilizia residenziale e crisi urbana nella tarda antichità: fonti archeologiche per la Cispadana*, in CARB 39, 1992, p. 557-605; S. GELICHI, *L'edilizia residenziale in Romagna tra V e VIII secolo*, in G. P. Brogiolo (ed.), *L'edilizia residenziale tra V e VIII secolo. Atti del 4° Seminario sul Tardoantico e l'Altomedioevo in Italia Centrosettentrionale (Monte Barro-Galbiate, 1993)*, Mantova, 1994, p. 157-167.

<sup>44</sup>E. CIRELLI, *Typology and diffusion of Amphorae in Ravenna and Classe between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD*, in N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, E. Nodarou and V. Kilikoglou (eds.) *LRCW 4 Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and archaeometry. The Mediterranean: a market without frontiers. Proceedings of the conference (Thessaloniki, 2011)*, Oxford, (BAR International Series 2616), 2014, p. 541-552.

<sup>45</sup>D. MAUSKOPF DELIYANNIS, *Op. cit.* (n. 23), p. 304.

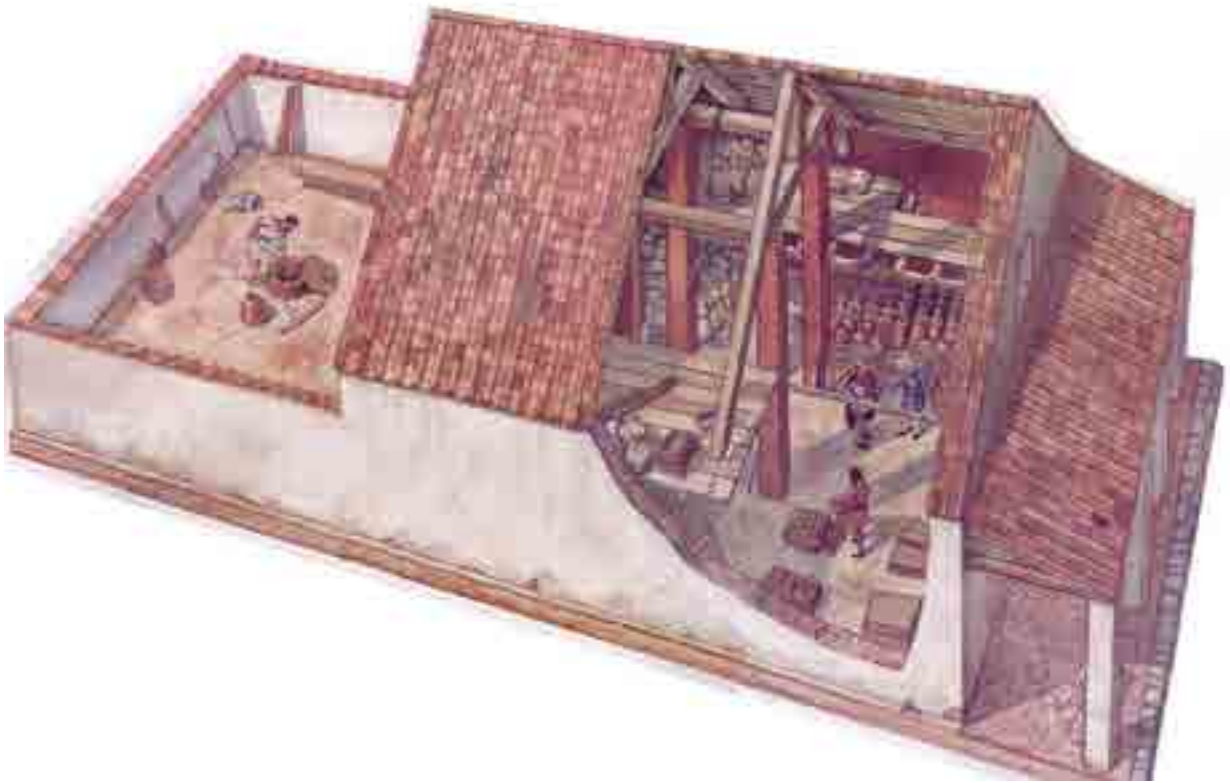


Fig 8. A (private?) warehouse from the harbour area of Classe (drawn by Giorgio Albertini)

The period of greatest construction, in this respect, is certainly the first half of the 5th century. For instance, the *Basilica Apostolorum* can perhaps be attributed Honorius' patronage<sup>46</sup>; it was originally dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul and this is where Bishop Neo was buried (450-476 AD); it was built on the eastern bank of the Padenna outside the Republican city walls<sup>47</sup>. The building was found in an intermediary area between the *Palatium* and the Bishop's palace.

It does not preserve its original form, mostly because of reconstruction efforts between the 10th and 11th centuries and subsequently in the 13th century, when the church was given to the Franciscan friary. Some excavations in the crypt, however, have allowed insight into the original form of the apse, which was probably rectangular, therefore attesting to a building with a cruciform plan<sup>48</sup>.

The same plan was certainly found in a church of notable monumental impact, which was built by Galla Placidia in the opposite sector of the city, to the north of the ancient city limit: the Holy Cross (Fig. 4). The church was erected, as in the preceding case, inside an area already occupied by buildings dating to the first imperial age, which however had been abandoned during the 4th century. It is a church characterized by a central aisle and by two external porticoes. The apse, originally rectangular in form, was separated by a sizeable orthogonal transepts to create a cruciform plan. At

<sup>46</sup> F. W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes, Kommentar II/2*, Wiesbaden, 1976, p. 309-310.

<sup>47</sup> G. GEROLA, *L'architettura deuterobizantina a Ravenna*, in *Ricordi di Ravenna Medioevale nel VI centenario della morte di Dante*, 15-112. Ravenna, 1921, p. 45-67; R. FARIOLI, *Ravenna paleocristiana scomparsa*, in *FR* 82, 1960, p. 5-96, part. 28-34.

<sup>48</sup> M. MAZZOTTI, *La cripta della chiesa ravennate di S. Francesco dopo le ultime esplorazioni*, in *CARB* 21, 1974, p. 217-230, part. 223-224; I. BALDINI LIPPOLIS, *Sepulture privilegiate nell'Apostoleion di Ravenna*, in *FR*, 153-156, 2004, p. 15-79.

Church	Chronology	Patronage
Basilica Ursiana	5th c.	Bishop Ursus
Basilica Petriana	5th c.	Bishop Peter I
Holy Cross	5th c.	Galla Placidia
St. John the Evangelist	5th c.	Galla Placidia
Basilica Apostolorum (St. Francesco)	5th c.	Imperial patronage
St Lorenzo in Caesarea	5th c.	Imperial officer (Lauricio)
St. Agnes	5th c.	Subdiaconus (Gemello)
St. Agatha	5th c.	Subdiaconus (Gemello)‡ Bishop John Angelopte‡
Arian Cathedral	End of the 5th c.	Theoderic
St. Apollinare Nuovo	End of the 5th c.	Theoderic
Ecclesia Gothorum	End of the 5th c.	Theoderic
Basilica Cà Bianca	Beg. of the 6th c.	Private patronage
St. Eusebio	Beg. of the 6th c.	Arian Bishop (Uvimundus)
St George <i>ad Tabulam</i>	Beg. of the 6th c.	Arian Bishop
St. Andrew	End of the 5th c.	Private patronage
St. Andrew chapel in the Bishop's Palace	End of the 5th c.	Bishop Peter II
St. Peter	Beg. of the 6th c.	Amalasantha
St. Mary	Beg. of the 6th c.	Bishop Ecclesius ( <i>in sua proprietate</i> )
St. Vitale	Mid 6th c.	Bishop Ecclesius\Maximian
St. Apollinare in Classe	Mid 6th c.	Bishop Ursicinus\Maximian
St. Michele <i>in Africisco</i>	Mid 6th c.	Private patronage (Iulianus Argentarius)
SS. John and Paul	Mid 6th c.	Private patronage‡
St. Stefano	Mid 6th c.	Bishop Maximian
St. John <i>in Marmorato</i>	Mid 6th c.	Bishop Maximian
St. Vittore	Second half of the 6th c.	Private patronage‡
SS. John and Barbatianus	Second half of the 6th c.	Private patronage (Baduarius)
St. Severus in Classe	End of the 6th c.	Bishop John II

*Tab. 1 – Patronage of the main church of Ravenna (5th-6th c.)*

the front of the building there was a portico with two small shrines of cruciform plan, at the extremities, which had funeral functions. Only the southern one is preserved today and known as the mausoleum of Galla Placidia<sup>49</sup>.

In the same period Bishop Peter Chrysologus built a basilica of greater dimensions than those of the cathedral (80x50m) inside the city of Classe. The building has recently been identified thanks to two fortunate seasons of excavations that have brought to light the main structures with mighty walls and alternate flooring of *opus sectile* and mosaic. At the same time the apse was recovered, but had been entirely destroyed and plundered by late medieval interventions; it is filled with a great quantity of material, among which fragments of the numerous tubular tiles that lined the apse's vault were found<sup>50</sup>. The empress' patronage is responsible for the construction of the church of St. John the Evangelist (AD 426-434), a three-aisled building with atrium in front and a polygonal apse (Fig. 4), as in the Basilica Ursiana. The church was built in the eastern zone of the city on the north side of the imperial palace, close to the *Scubitum*, the house of the palace guard.

In the same period a great cemetery church was built, dedicated to St Lawrence, a bishop and martyr from Rome, whose cult was also well followed in Milan as in Constantinople, and whose portrait was reproduced in Galla Placidia's mausoleum. St Lawrence's church was built outside the city walls, along the road that connected Ravenna to Rimini, in the suburban district of Caesarea, an area long designated as a burial site<sup>51</sup>. The financier of this important basilica was Lauricius, an imperial officer and *cubicularius*<sup>52</sup>. Just like the two Placidian churches, it is once again a venture initiated by an aristocrat associated with imperial power. The building, with its striking architecture, considerable dimensions, and above all its decorative program (*mirae magnitudinis*), was entirely expoliated in the 16th century for the construction of the church of St Mary, along Via Roma, close to the imperial palace<sup>53</sup>.

In the same period ecclesiastical elites commissioned two churches of notable importance inside the inhabited area: St Agnes (Fig. 4)<sup>54</sup> and St Agatha<sup>55</sup>. The first one was built close to the ancient Forum by Gemellus, a *sub-diaconus* during Exuperantius' episcopate, who was later buried there. Gemellus was also the administrator of Ravenna's church in Sicily (*Rector Siciliae*) and was probably involved in the construction of St Agatha at the end of the 5th century. Some scholars think that the church was patronized by Bishop John Angeleptis, well before the conquest of Italy by Theoderic<sup>56</sup>.

Ecclesiastical building in Ravenna underwent a resurgence following the long period of government by the Ostrogoth leader. Besides the construction of the Arian cathedral and related baptistery, itself linked to a new Bishop's palace, a considerable number of new foundations are also attributed to his patronage or to that of his closest officers (Tab. 1, Fig. 4)<sup>57</sup>. The most represent-

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<sup>49</sup> S. GELICHI, P. NOVARA PIOLANTI, *La chiesa di S. Croce a Ravenna: la sequenza architettonica*, in *CARB* 42, 1995, p. 347-363.

<sup>50</sup> A. AUGENTI, F. BOSCHI, E. CIRELLI, *Il sito della basilica Petriana a Classe: dalla diagnostica archeologica allo scavo*, in *OCNUS. Quaderni della Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Archeologici* 18, 2008, p. 103-116.

<sup>51</sup> F. W. DEICHMANN, *Op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 336-340.

<sup>52</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. by L. Duchesne, Paris, 1886, p. 298.

<sup>53</sup> P. NOVARA, E. CICOGNANI, *L'atterramento di S. Lorenzo in Cesarea e la costruzione di S. Maria in Porto di Ravenna*, in *Ravenna Studi e Ricerche* 1, 1994, p. 225-241.

<sup>54</sup> V. MANZELLI, *Lo scavo di Piazza Kennedy a Ravenna racconta la storia della chiesa di Sant'Agnese*, in S. Gelichi, C. Cavallari, M. Medica (eds.), *Medioevo svelato. Storie dell'Emilia-Romagna attraverso l'archeologia*, Bologna, 2018, p. 490-494.

<sup>55</sup> J.-C. PICARD, *Le quadriportique de Sant'Agata de Ravenne*, in *FR* 116, 1978, p. 31-43.

<sup>56</sup> E. RUSSO, *Scavi e scoperte nella chiesa di S. Agata di Ravenna. Seconda relazione preliminare*, in *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 60, 1987-1988, p. 13-50.

<sup>57</sup> M. MAZZOTTI, *La Anastasis Gothorum e il suo battistero*, in *FR* 75, 1957, p. 25-62; G. DE ANGELIS D'OSSAT, *Spazialità e simbolismo delle basiliche ravennati*, in *CARB* 17, 1970, p. 313-333.

ative building is St Apollinare Nuovo, originally dedicated to the Saviour<sup>58</sup> and later to St Martin like in other early medieval Adriatic cities<sup>59</sup>. This church, according to Agnellus' testimony, also had baptismal functions<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, Theoderic commissioned the construction of the *Ecclesia Gothorum*, in the area today occupied by the Rocca Brancaleone, a late medieval fortress. This sector of the city was a particular focus of the Goths' building activities. In fact, not far from here the Arian Episcopal Complex and the cathedral were found. Outside the urban boundaries, but still in the northeast area, two other churches were built, of which no material trace remains, so that we know of them only from references on historical cartography and in the written testimonies: the basilica dedicated to St. Eusebius, after Justinian's '*reconciliatio*', was patronized by Bishop Uvimundus in AD 516, and its continued existence was recorded until the 10th century<sup>61</sup>. Close by this church was the episcopal house of Uvimundus, which was demolished between 806 and 810 by the Orthodox bishop Valerius, to reuse its materials to build his own residence<sup>62</sup>. The same fate was suffered by a second Arian episcopal house close to the church of St. George *ad Tabulam*, which was built by the ecclesiastical Arian elite outside the city and close to Theoderic's Mausoleum, in the area of the *Portus Coriandro*. We do not know the identity of the financier and we are also uncertain about the name of this ecclesiastical building, which dates to the beginning of the 6th century; once more it was situated in a suburban area, some kilometres south of the city of Classe. This is the complex of Cà Bianca, a basilica of exceptional monumentality that was also equipped with a baptistery. Perhaps it was associated with an inhabited rural area, even if we do not have any historical or archaeological evidence for this notion, or perhaps it should be attributed to a rich rural landowner. It is clearly an imposing demonstration of elite wealth, even if we do not have any idea of the identity of the benefactor.

To the patronage of Amalasantha, daughter of Theoderic, in the first half of the 6th century, we can attribute the construction of a small church: the *Monasterium* of St Peter, which was coupled with an orphanage<sup>63</sup>.

The reign of Theoderic and his religious choices did not condition the activities of the 'Orthodox' bishops, who kept on building, albeit with less intensity. The construction of the small but valuable St Andrew's Chapel, situated inside the Bishop's palace, is attributed to the patronage of Bishop Peter II. Other major churches were built inside the ancient city walls between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries. One of them, involving the transformation of a previously private reception room, belonged to an aristocratic residence in the Ercolana region that overlooked the main ancient road. This church, once more dedicated to St Andrew (Fig. 4), was monumentalized after a relic (head with barb) of the apostle was transferred there on the impulse of Bishop Maximian<sup>64</sup>. On that occasion, according to the testimony of Agnellus, the bishop replaced the original wooden pillars with columns of Proconnesian marble<sup>65</sup>. Furthermore, during Ecclesius' episcopate (525-532

<sup>58</sup> E. PENNI IACCO, *La basilica di S. Apollinare Nuovo di Ravenna attraverso i secoli*, Bologna, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> N. JAKŠIĆ, *The Installation of the Patron Saints of Zadar as a Result of Carolingian Adriatic Politics*, in D. Dzino, A. Milošević, T. Vedriš (eds.), *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire*, Leiden, 2018, p. 225-244, part. 240.

<sup>60</sup> Andrea Agnellus, *Op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 336; Gerola 1916, 10-11.

<sup>61</sup> C. CURRADI, *Fonti per la storia di Ravenna (secoli XI-XV)*, in A. Vasina (ed.), *Storia di Ravenna. III. Dal Mille alla fine della Signoria Polentana*, Venezia, 1993, p. 753-839, part. 767.

<sup>62</sup> Andrea Agnellus, *Op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 334; E. CIRELLI, *Spolia e riuso di materiali tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo a Ravenna*, in *HAM* 17, 2011, p. 209-218, part. 211

<sup>63</sup> Andrea Agnellus, *Op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 333.

<sup>64</sup> S. MURATORI, *Antiche notizie archeologiche, I. Gli scavi di Sant'Andrea (1825)*, in *FR* 32, 1927, p. 42-60; M. MAZZOTTI, *La basilica di S. Andrea Maggiore in Ravenna*, in *CARB* 7, 1960, p. 253-258.

<sup>65</sup> Andrea Agnellus, *Op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 329.

AD) a basilica dedicated to St Mary (S. Maria Maggiore) was built inside his own property, close to the basilica of The Holy Cross in a sector of the city that was starting to become crowded with religious buildings, especially if we consider that a few years later the construction of the Basilica of St Vitale, commissioned by the same bishop, would be underway close by<sup>66</sup>. Bishop Ursicinus, the successor of Ecclesius, began the construction of and dedicated the church of St Apollinare in Classe, which was subsequently consecrated by Maximian. This was an imposing building and the perfect affirmation of the role of the bishop, both in relationship to imperial authority and to the Patriarch of Constantinople.

New investments in the building of ecclesiastical houses are recorded in the period following the conquest of Ravenna. The most important enterprises can be traced to the episcopates of Maximian and Agnellus. In this period, perhaps the most prosperous in the history of the city, the construction of St Vitale was completed. This is without doubt one of the most prestigious buildings of the late-Roman Mediterranean (Fig. 4)<sup>67</sup>. The church was probably designed by a Constantinopolitan architect and was built over a long period of time. Construction began under Ecclesius' patronage (Fig. 9), during Amalasantha's governance, and finished in the first years of Maximian's episcopate (AD 548), as monograms engraved on the *pulvini* testify. The church was probably inspired by St Lawrence in Milan and demonstrates a new elaboration of the same architectural thought, making it unique on the Italian peninsula and in the late antique world.

Iulianus Argentarius, a private banker who financed St Vitale, also paid for the construction of the small church of St Michael in Africisco with his own funds (Fig. 4)<sup>68</sup>. The building was commissioned in AD 545. Argentarius also furnished the necessary capital to build St Apollinare in Classe, with the aid of his son-in-law, Bacauda<sup>69</sup>. It is a small building with a square plan, influenced by its Constantinopolitan model, and with a polygonal apse, which by this time was typical of Ravenna's ecclesiastical architecture.

The patron of the small but very important church of Sts John and Paul, close to the city walls, is unknown. The church was probably built in mid- 6th c. and was the recipient of many donations, even during the early Middle Ages, from private aristocrats such as, for example, Adeodatus, the *primus strator praefecturae*, in AD 596. (Fig. 10)



Fig. 9. Bishop Ecclesius shows the model of the church of St. Vitalis in the mosaic's vault of the apse

<sup>66</sup> G. DE ANGELIS D'OSSAT, *La Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore a Ravenna e le dimore sovrane della Seconda Regio*, in CARB 22, 1975, p. 145-156.

<sup>67</sup> C. BERTELLI, *Op. cit.* (n. 36), p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> P. GROSSMANN, *S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna*, Mainz, 1973.

<sup>69</sup> F. W. DEICHMANN, *Contributi all'iconografia e al significato storico dei mosaici imperiali di S. Vitale*, in FR 54, 1951, p. 5-26.

Another great and important church built during the Justinianic period was the Basilica of St Stephan, which, unfortunately, remains undiscovered by present-day archaeology. The building is mentioned only by Agnellus, who describes the liturgical furnishings that were guarded inside and the building's magnificence<sup>70</sup>. With the construction of this church, it was as though the north-western sector of the city was invaded by religious buildings and this region became the area of maximum concentration of ecclesiastical constructions in the urban settlement. It is perhaps to the same bishop's patronage that we owe the construction of a church devoted to St John in Marmorato, possibly close to big marble warehouses, in the area of the Coriander Port outside the Gate of Anastasia<sup>71</sup>.

Attested in a papyrus from AD 564, but certainly older than this, is the basilica of S. Vittore (Fig. 4), which was probably commissioned by a secular aristocrat<sup>72</sup>. This same typology of private patronage is probably responsible for the church devoted to Sts John and Barbatianus: a small, aisled building with external portico built in the north sector of the city<sup>73</sup>. The last period of great church construction, however, occurred inside the city of Classe, which was threatened and later raided by the Lombards. Near the city walls on the same road leading to St Apollinaris in Classe, which had been consecrated by Bishop Maximian a few years earlier, the Basilica of St Severus was built – the swan song of Ravenna's episcopal patronage<sup>74</sup>. These excavations have brought to light the original shrine in which Bishop Severus was buried and the whole monastic complex that developed around the basilica from the second half of the 9th century<sup>75</sup>.



Fig. 10. End of the 6th c. marble ambo of Sts John and Paul at Ravenna

<sup>70</sup> M. MAZZOTTI, *Ferrettiana, notizie di storia e archeologia ravennate*, in *FR* III ser. 18, 1955, p. 36-48, part. 39; G. CORTESI, *I principali edifici sacri ravennati in funzione sepolcrale nei secc. V e VI*, in *CARB* 29, 1982, p. 63-107, part. 105.

<sup>71</sup> M. MAZZOTTI, *L'attività edilizia di Massimiano di Pola*, in *FR* 70-72, 1956, p. 5-30; P. NOVARA, *L'ubicazione di un gruppo di chiese ravennati in alcune mappe di età moderna*, in *Studi Romagnoli* 44, 1993, p. 61-81.

<sup>72</sup> M. G. BORGHI, *La basilica di S. Vittore in Ravenna prototipo delle costruzioni esarcali*, Milano, 1941; M. MAZZOTTI, *La basilica di S. Vittore in Ravenna*, in *CARB* 2, 1959, p. 175-190; T. KIROVA, *La distrutta chiesa di S. Vittore a Ravenna*, in *FR* 105-106, 1973, p. 65-106; N. LOMBARDINI, *I restauri della chiesa di San Vittore a Ravenna*, in *Ravenna Studi e Ricerche* 5, 1998, p. 75-106.

<sup>73</sup> L. M. HARTMANN, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Verwaltung in Italien*, Leipzig, 1889, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> A. AUGENTI, E. CIRELLI, *San Severo and religious life in Ravenna during the ninth and tenth centuries*, in J. Herrin, J. Nelson (eds.), *Ravenna, its role in early medieval change and exchange*, London, 2016, p. 297-334; A. AUGENTI *et al.* (eds.), *La Basilica di San Severo a Classe*, Bologna, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> D. FERRERI, *Spazi cimiteriali, pratiche funerarie e identità nella città di Classe*, in *Archeologia Medievale* 38, 2011, p. 59-74.

In the 7th century, the rush to erect ecclesiastical buildings that began in the previous century is exhausted. In fact, in this period there is a marked downturn in the construction of religious buildings and a general crisis in Ravenna's building of courtly houses, a situation that was probably determined by economic and political factors, such as the increase in pressure on the city by the Lombards and the antagonism with Rome over the administration of ecclesiastical properties. A second factor causing the deceleration in the construction of new cult buildings is the great number of pre-existing churches, which perhaps by now had outstripped the actual needs of Ravenna's citizenry. Among the constructions that are remembered only by Agnellus, we find a *monasterium* devoted to St Bartholomew, in which he had himself been abbot (642-648). Toward the end of the 7th century a small church was built and dedicated to St Theodore by the bishop of the same name, in the proximity of the imperial palace and probably in front of the monumental Gate, the Calchè, as suggested by the name of the building preserved in the medieval documentation (*monasterium S. Theodori ad Calchi, S. Theodori greco in palatio*).

Indeed, we owe a considerable number of buildings to Exarch Theodore's patronage in comparison to those realized in the previous decades of the same century. Of uncertain attribution is the church devoted to St Mary Ipapanti, possibly dated to the 7th century. This church was constructed inside the old city in the Ercolana region. More convincing is the chronology of St Maria ad Blachernas, a church that was found in the suburb of Caesarea, not too far from the Wandalaria Gate in the southeast wedge of the city<sup>76</sup>. Inside the church Exarch Theodore and his wife Agatha were buried in AD 687. In the same area another church was found that was also patronized by this exarch: St Paul. This small church was built on the ruins of a Jewish synagogue inside the city walls<sup>77</sup>. The only religious building erected in the second half of the 7th century by a bishop (probably Reparato, in AD 670/671), whose exact location is known, is Sant'Apollinare in Veclò, a small crossed-shaped shrine entirely restored in AD 1763.

Investment in ecclesiastical building was essentially suspended during the 7th century, and only actively begins again towards the end of that same century, even if we do not have any material testimony of this construction phase and it will be necessary to undertake new excavations to identify buildings from this period. From that moment on, throughout 8th and 9th c., smaller churches, mainly private buildings close to aristocratic houses and wider monastic complexes begin to transform Ravenna's urban landscape, as testified in other North-Italian cities in the Carolingian period<sup>78</sup>.

The tendency towards a steady diminution in the construction of churches between the 5th and the 7th century is quite marked by the archaeological evidence, both in the number of buildings produced and in the dimensions of the various buildings themselves. Construction during the 5th and the 6th century was promoted by the imperial court, the king's officers and the bishops, and was supported by a notable economic upswing, which left an indelible mark on the urban landscape. The downturn in construction of public and ecclesiastical buildings that occurred in the following centuries might have been caused by different factors, such as a demographic crisis combined with a lack of space for the foundation of new churches inside the city. It needs to be underlined that buildings attested for the first time in the 7th century have not yielded any material evidence. Consequently, we are not able to establish their dimensions or their design. According to Agnellus, some of them are to be found close to the Wandalaria Gate, such as the church of St Paul.

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<sup>76</sup> P. NOVARA, *Ad religionis claustrum construendum. Monasteri nel medioevo ravennate: storia e archeologia*, Ravenna, 2003, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> L. MASCANZONI, *Edilizia e urbanistica dopo il Mille: alcune linee di sviluppo*, in A. Vasina, *Op. cit.* (n. 61), p. 395-445, part. 402.

<sup>78</sup> A. CHAVARRÍA ARNAU, *Archeologia delle chiese*, Roma, 2018.

The city landscape in this period was a space where great public constructions, built by the preceding imperial administration, coexisted with great religious buildings, the residences of urban aristocrats and the bishop were surrounded by numerous small buildings, constructed in perishable material, and by cultivated fields, houses and structures situated inside the ruins and exposed monuments of the ancient and late antique city. The concentration of houses became sparser and different areas of the city began to be occupied by sporadic cemeteries, which at first only contained aristocratic burial plots and funerary zones that were organized around new religious buildings. The landscape changed and the city became more and more a place in which ecclesiastical structures came to represent in an unmistakable way the means by which the civil and religious aristocracies demonstrated political power, ideology and the maintenance of the memory of local communities.

### **Vladari i patronat u kasnoantičkoj Raveni**

Tijekom kasne antike i ranoga srednjeg vijeka, carica Galla Placidija, carski časnici i vladari, kralj Teodorik i kasnije kraljica Amalasunta, kao i egzarhi, biskupi i svećenstvo, služili su se patronatom nad raznim monumentalnim građevinama te time isticali svoje političke ambicije, društveni položaj i ugled, između ostalog i u Raveni, i to od vremena kada je grad postao novom carskom prijestolnicom. U ovom se radu pokušalo ocrtati taj fenomen te se time nastojalo ukazati na spomenute uloge društvenih elita kao na opći trend, i to počevši od 4., pa sve do kraja 8. stoljeća, dakle do u karolinško doba.

**Ključne riječi:** *Ravena, kasna antika, patronat, arheologija*

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