Christian Building Patronage in the Cities of Late Antique and Merovingian Gaul, c. 300–751

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Short abstract

This is the first systematic investigation of the explosion in Christian building projects that transformed the cities of Gaul between the fourth and eighth centuries CE. Despite the disruption and simplification of society that accompanied the dissolution of Roman rule in this period, in many cases the extent and variety of such activity far surpassed what would have been necessary to endow Gallic cities with the essential Christian amenities. This study approaches this phenomenon through the lens of patronage, and in doing so addresses current debates regarding late antique urbanism, the chronology and pace of Christianisation, elite behaviour, the extent of episcopal power, and the nature of 'barbarian' kingship. It begins by sketching the parameters of urban and suburban Christian building patronage, acknowledging that while they intersected at times, four broad building categories can be distinguished: episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monasticism, and pastoral care. Through a series of case studies that illuminate the results of a broader quantitative analysis, this framework is then used to explore the motivations of the different patron groups who sponsored this building. Chapter three considers Gaul's ecclesiastics and especially its bishops, chapter four the laity, and chapter five the region's ruling families. Chapter six then examines the practice in the round, highlighting a number of overarching patterns of patronage across time, space, and patron group. While recognising that the prospect of divine intercession attracted donors at all social levels, this study emphasizes how urban and suburban Christian building patronage was a central component of elite competition in this period. The apparent rise and fall in the practice's intensity thus reflects the response of the upper echelons of Gallic society to the evolving political and ideological significance of the region's cities during the transition from late antiquity to the middle ages.

Long abstract

This is the first systematic study of the explosion in Christian building activity that transformed the cities of Gaul between the fourth and eighth centuries CE. Despite the disruption and simplification of society that accompanied the dissolution of Roman rule in this period, in many cases the extent and variety of such monumental investment far surpassed what would have been necessary to endow Gallic cities with the essential Christian amenities. Until recently, investigating this phenomenon has been hindered by the heterogeneity and uneven distribution of the evidence, but the completion of the *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule*, a compilation of all the textual and archaeological data for Christian building in Gallic cities down to the eighth century, has made this detailed and synthetic study possible. The evidence is considered through the lens of patronage, adopting what Cyril Mango has termed the 'historical' approach to Christian building, which goes beyond simply asking questions about locations, functions, and architectural tastes, and instead uses churches as a means to investigate the society responsible for their construction. The Christian buildings of Gaul are thus conceived as the objects of lay and ecclesiastical benefaction, in order to examine the people who sponsored them, their motives for using their resources in this way, and what this says about the social, cultural, and economic context of late antique and Merovingian Gaul. Through a series of case studies that illuminate the results of a broader quantitative analysis, a number of intersecting historiographies are addressed along the way. These include debates regarding late antique urbanism, the chronology and pace of Christianisation, elite behaviour, the extent of episcopal power, the nature of 'barbarian' kingship, and the concept of patronage itself. A model of urban and suburban Christian building patronage is then proposed for Gaul that will potentially be useful for further investigation of patterns of church-building in other regions of the late antique and early medieval world.

The study begins by sketching the parameters of Christian building patronage, showing how four broad types of building can be distinguished, which, even if they sometimes overlapped, serve as useful analytical categories: episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monastic complexes, and buildings dedicated to pastoral care. The episcopal groups of Gaul emerged in the course of the fourth century and eventually came to comprise at least one church, a baptistery, residences for the bishop and clerics, and

sundry annexes. While these complexes focussed conceptions of civic space on the urban core of the city, their centripetal effect was offset by the ring of funerary basilicas erected in honour of the cult of saints in suburban cemeteries. It is noted, nevertheless, that buildings dedicated to the veneration of saints could also occasionally be found within city walls, most often in the form of domestic oratories, or, less commonly, cult sites detached from the episcopal group. Meanwhile, the emergence over the period of monastic complexes to facilitate acts of communal asceticism is visible in both urban and suburban contexts. The final focus of Christian building patronage on pastoral care is often slightly more nebulous, underpinned as it was by a general interest in the well-being of the local community. To this end, patrons can be seen to have financed the upkeep of the urban fabric and civil infrastructure, as well as funding charitable institutions that safeguarded the welfare of the poor and sick. This fourfold framework of building categories is utilised in subsequent chapters to determine how individuals from across the social spectrum operated within these parameters, and to consider what the sometimes differing motivations of patron groups reveal about them and their place in society.

Chapter three focuses on the ecclesiastics of Gaul, and especially the region's bishops, who are by far the most well-represented patrons in the data, recasting the urban and suburban topography of their cities along Christian lines. Acts of Christian building patronage were essential to facilitate the liturgical observances, collective worship, preaching, baptism, and community care required of bishops, not to mention their personal pursuit of salvation and need to honour the divine backing they received from on high. Consequently, episcopal building activity across our period was sustained and often unremitting. But while successive bishops were determined to leave a mark on their cities, it is argued that episcopal ambitions were often determined by their ability to coordinate donations from their support networks and local communities, which they sought to do so in the manner of an impresario. Over time, the significant wealth upon which some bishops could draw, and the resolutely urban nature of their office, meant that they emerged as the city's most recognizable resident patrons. Nevertheless, this study contends that the bishop was generally a rather more imperilled figure than has sometimes been envisaged by proponents of the *Bischofsherrschaft* model. His authority in his city was never totally secure nor unchallenged, especially during the upheavals of the fifth and sixth centuries, but also

during the relative political stability of the later Merovingian period. It is therefore argued that both lavish and pragmatic building projects were an essential component of episcopal efforts to convince local audiences of the legitimacy of their claims to leadership and pre-eminence.

Chapter four examines the laity, and teases out how Christian building patronage was something in which all sections of lay society appear to have participated, although the nature and extent of their engagement, as well as its underlying motivations, varied across the social spectrum, and between male and female patrons. The fact that sponsorship came from all levels of society marks a clear departure from the patronage of urban building documented in the classical world, which was generally the preserve of the most wealthy. Many Christian donors had to content themselves with sharing any worldly acclaim with the local bishop, and while the resources of the wealthiest layfolk may have enabled them to instigate projects on their own volition, episcopal endorsement nevertheless remained necessary for the consecration and staffing of buildings. Like the donor pool, the range of motives underpinning participation was also broader than in the past. The spiritual dimension of Christian building patronage extended the audience to God and the saints, and the prospect of divine intercession in this life and the next encouraged donors to lay up 'treasure in heaven' in this way. The practice certainly echoed its classical precursor in one respect, however, as the funding of building projects became a prominent feature of the jockeying for local primacy and influence that returned in earnest to the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul. To this end, church-building also served as a useful vehicle for legitimising claims to Gaul's bishoprics, which came to be regarded by leading local families as increasingly valuable levers of urban power. The ruralisation of aristocratic comportment in the later Merovingian period, however, appears to have had consequences for the rate of Christian building financed in Gaul's cities by lay elites. Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that the opportunities for status and heavenly support offered by the practice in an urban context remained particularly attractive for wealthy women.

Chapter five turns to the ruling imperial and 'barbarian' families of Gaul, a sufficiently important and distinctive subset of lay society to warrant its own treatment. While Christianity is often held up as a vehicle that was used by new rulers both to replicate imperial ideologies of power during the transition

from Roman to 'barbarian' rule, and subsequently to maintain their authority following the consolidation of their kingdoms, this study suggests that acts of Christian building patronage were not central to such strategies. Across the period, such activity on the part of rulers was most prevalent in the wider context of the renewal of the political and symbolic significance of the *civitas*-system during the sixth century. Much royal building patronage was undertaken in this period in close cooperation with local bishops who could prove useful allies on the ground in cities that lay away from the royal courts. The practice also met a number of other specifically royal needs, from acquiring spiritual ballast for oneself and one's kingdom to establishing a suitable focus of family burial. In this regard, it is acknowledged that when it came to choosing how to deploy royal resources, the distinction between the cult of saints and monasticism, otherwise drawn within this study for heuristic purposes, did not really exist in the minds of rulers, who increasingly conflated these building categories as the growing popularity of monasticism in court circles made it the favoured outlet for royal benefaction. It is further suggested that the progressive ruralisation of pious display by royals during the later Merovingian period is anticipated by the targeting of Christian largesse to projects in *civitas*-capitals increasingly located on peripheral sites at some remove from urban centres.

Finally, chapter six considers the practice of urban and suburban Christian building patronage in the round. It identifies a number of overarching patterns chronologically and geographically, and also across patron groups and building categories, in order to argue that, despite the limitations of our evidence, it is possible to observe a clear rise and fall of the habit in the course of the transition from late antique to Merovingian Gaul. This development is placed in the context of shifting relationships between power structures at the imperial and Frankish centre and those on the periphery, which impelled changes in behaviour among Gaul's elites that in turn had implications for their urban and suburban building activity. The topographical markers of a progressively Christian society were initially slow to materialise in Gaul's cities, but during the upheaval and uncertainty of the fifth and sixth centuries, when the central Roman administration disintegrated and political horizons narrowed, the patronage of Christian building was seized upon and exploited with greater vigour by individuals looking to press their claims of status and authority closer to home within the rejuvenated cities.

While recognising that the prospect of divine intercession attracted donors at all levels of society, it is argued that only by appreciating the practice's attractiveness for competing elites at a time when social hierarchies were in flux can we understand why it seemingly reached its peak by the end of the sixth century. After that, developments in the political culture of the later Merovingian kingdoms precipitated a decline in the significance of the *civitas*-system in the secular sphere, as increasingly coherent aristocracies crystallised around Frankish courts, meaning that cities were no longer particularly privileged arenas for the pursuit or display of power. The enduring link between bishops and urban centres ensured that civic investment did not simply dry up, but the rate of building certainly slowed in this period, as Christian patrons increasingly began to look to the countryside in their quest for self-legitimation and salvation.

This apparent trend must nevertheless be qualified in light of a number of other observable patterns. While the patronage of Christian buildings followed a broadly similar trajectory across Gaul, it is noted that the practice was particularly prevalent in the most important cities of ecclesiastical provinces and kingdoms, those from which social leaders asserted their regional authority. From the seventh century, however, Christian urban and suburban munificence was seemingly increasingly focussed in northern Gaul, where the royal capitals of the *tria regna* and the political powerbases of the Pippinids were found. Competition between and among secular and ecclesiastical leaders was a key driver in transforming the topography of Gaul's cities, but by way of reference to the concept of 'coopetition', which theorizes the capacity of actors to cooperate and compete simultaneously, it is also argued that many acts of building patronage would have been collective efforts. This is something our evidence tends only to hint at, but collaboration is evident both at a horizontal level across the increasingly intertwined upper echelons of society, and also vertically through the involvement in such practices of people outside the elite. In this way, the transition from *urbs romana* to *urbs christiana* detailed by this study can be seen as a process that was not only closely linked to a number of important social, cultural, and political developments, but one that also encompassed at some level a significant portion of the population of late antique and Merovingian Gaul.

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Abbreviations

AA SS	*Acta Sanctorum*
CC	*Corpus Christianorum*
CIL XII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* XII, ed. O. Hirschfeld (Berlin, 1888)
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
Fortunatus, *Carm.*	Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina,* ed. and tr. M. Roberts, *Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 2017)
Gregory, *GC*	Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum,* ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 284-370
Gregory, *GM*	Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum,* ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 34-111
Gregory, *Hist.*	Gregory of Tours, *Historiae,* ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 1.1 (Hanover, 1951)
Gregory, *VP*	Gregory of Tours, *Vitae Patrum,* ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 211-83
Gregory, *VSM*	Gregory of Tours, *Libri de virtutibus sancti Martini,* ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 134-211
Gregory, *VSJ*	Gregory of Tours, *Liber de virtutibus Sancti Juliani*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 112-34
Le Blant	E. Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIIIe siècle,* vol. 1 (Paris, 1856)
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
AA	*Auctores Antiquissimi*
Dipl. Franc. Mer.	*Diplomata regum Francorum e stirpe Merowingica*
LL nat. Germ.	*Leges nationum Germanicarum*
SRM	*Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*
SS	*Scriptores*
SS rer. Lang.	*Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*
PCBE 1	A. Mandouze (ed.), *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire: 1, l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)* (Paris, 1982)
PCBE 4	L. Pietri and M. Heijmans (eds), *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire: 4, La Gaule Chrétienne (314-614)* (2 vols, Paris, 2013)
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PLRE 2	J.R. Martindale (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire:* Vol. 2, *AD 395-527* (Cambridge, 1980)

RICG	*Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures à la Renaissance carolingienne*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
TCCG	N. Gauthier *et al*. (eds), *Topographie Chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle* (16 vols, Paris, 1986-2014)

1. Introduction

On Monday 15 April 2019, a typically cool spring evening in Paris was punctuated by a column of smoke rising above the capital's Île de la Cité. Shifting from white to grey and finally black, it alerted both resident and tourist alike to the flames that had engulfed the roof of the world-famous Notre-Dame Cathedral.[1] Soon thousands lined the banks of the Seine to witness the possible death throes of a building made famous by the coronation of Napoleon, the writing of Victor Hugo, and the funerals of several presidents of the republic. Within a few hours the blaze was under control, but it had become clear that the iconic symbol of Paris and France itself had suffered severe damage. Only about a third of the medieval roof had survived and the building's distinctive central spire had been completely destroyed. Almost immediately, donations to fund the rebuilding of the cathedral began to pour in from all across society.[2] Nearly one billion euros were raised in the first twenty-four hours, as some of France's wealthiest individuals and companies scrambled to show solidarity with this national tragedy, and associate themselves with the cathedral's reconstruction. The largest donations included €100 million pledged by François-Henri Pinault, owner of the fashion brands Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, and €200 million promised by his rival Bernard Arnault, controller of the luxury goods group behind Louis Vuitton and Dior.

In many ways, this apparent game of billionaire one-upmanship can be seen as a modern manifestation of the ancient phenomenon of euergetism; a concept derived from the Greek honorific title *euergetes*, which was bestowed on benefactors who converted their wealth into prestige through the performance of good deeds within their community.[3] *Évergétisme* features strongly in the work of twentieth-century French historians, with the title of Paul Veyne's *Le pain et le cirque* encapsulating the nature of the

[1] 'Fire Mauls Beloved Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris', *The New York Times* (15 April 2019) https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/15/world/europe/notre-dame-fire.html [accessed 10/10/2019].
[2] 'Pledges Reach Almost $1 Billion to Rebuild Paris' Notre-Dame Cathedral', *Time* (16 April 2019, updated 17 April 2019) https://time.com/5571518/notre-dame-donations/ [accessed 10/10/2019].
[3] M. Domingo Gygax, *Benefaction and Rewards in the Ancient Greek City: The Origins of Euergetism* (Cambridge, 2016).

gifts conferred by a generous patron in exchange for influence, status, and office.[4] In the Roman world, the practice was a vehicle for competition among social elites, who sought to outdo one another through the provision of public spectacles, monuments, and amenities. At the same time, its symbolic codes and ceremonies served to aestheticize the asymmetrical social relationships that existed between wealthy benefactors and citizen populations. During late antiquity, Christianity provided a novel context for these notions of gift and counter-gift, with the recipient pool expanded to include the poor, who had previously been overlooked by classical acts of euergetism. Similarly, encouragement for everyone to put their possessions at the service of God saw more modest donor communities join the patron ranks of the aristocracy, thereby anticipating the crowd-funded sums that accompanied the enormous pledges of the super-rich in twenty-first-century Paris.[5]

The prevalence of similar acts of munificence across Gaul between the fourth and eighth centuries transformed its cities, as all manner of Christian building patronage brought about a new urban and suburban topography.[6] Despite the upheaval and simplification of society that accompanied the disintegration of Roman administrative structures and the expansion of Frankish power during this period, Gaul witnessed a surge in the financing of Christian building projects. In many cities, moreover, the extent and variety of such monumental investment far surpassed what would have been necessary to endow them with the essential Christian amenities. This phenomenon is the subject of the present study. From cathedral complexes and funerary basilicas to monasteries and *xenodochia*, it is the first systematic investigation of this monumental investment in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul.

Evidence for the construction, enlargement, embellishment, and repair of Christian buildings in this period is extensive, but its heterogeneity and uneven distribution has, until recently, hindered attempts

[4] P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris, 1976); see also M. Christol and A. Masson (eds), *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Nîmes, 4-9 octobre 1992* (Paris, 1997).

[5] 'Small Donors are Rebuilding Notre-Dame as French Billionaires Delay', *France 24* (15 June 2019, updated 16 June 2019) https://www.france24.com/en/20190615-france-small-donor-rebuilding-notre-dame-cathedral-paris-fire-french-billionaire-charity-us [accessed 12/10/2019].

[6] For the purposes of this study, 'Gaul' corresponds with the late Roman notion of the territory and thus includes Germania and some Alpine provinces. The region is broadly defined by the area bordered by the Atlantic to the north and west, and the Rhine, Alps, Mediterranean coast, and Pyrenees to the east and south.

at a study of this kind. Although undeniably useful, Elsmarie Knögel-Anrich's compilation of sources on Merovingian art and buildings, including the churches of Gaul, was published nearly eighty years ago, and is concerned only with the written evidence.[7] In 2014, however, the completion of a forty-year survey of all the textual and archaeological data for Christian building in Gallic cities down to the eighth century, assembled under the banner of the *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule,* laid the foundations for a detailed and synthetic look at the region's churches.[8] A year later, the addition of two Gallic volumes to the *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire* series made it easier than ever before to investigate the patrons responsible for this building activity.[9] This study is not only timely, therefore, but, as a rigorous examination of one part of the late antique world through the compilation of a body of material hitherto sequestered beyond reach of most current debates, its value also lies in the benefits it will provide for scholars undertaking studies of Christian building in other regions of the late antique world.

Through a diachronic analysis, it will ultimately be assessed how far the growth in Christian building patronage in Gaul was conceptually anchored in the classical notion of euergetism, or whether the practice was in fact a specifically late antique phenomenon, which reflected new priorities shaped by emerging Christian discourses of social responsibility. Related to this question, this study will consider to what extent the funding model that had underpinned the euergetism of the ancient world was still relevant in this new Christian context, when the audience for civic munificence now extended beyond the purely temporal realm to incorporate communities of heavenly intercessors, whose support was available to all. Moreover, in light of the fifth-century dissolution of the imperial *cursus honorum* in the West, which had at one time provided a means for Gallo-Romans to assert and amplify their status and influence in society, it will be necessary to ask how far the embrace of Christian building in the cities of Gaul can be explained by elites refocussing their horizons on the local civic arenas of power. Finally, it will also be evaluated to what degree social, cultural, and political developments in the later

[7] E. Knögel-Anrich, *Schriftquellen zur Kunstgeschichte der Merowingerzeit* (Darmstadt, 1936).
[8] N. Gauthier *et al*. (eds), *Topographie Chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle* (16 vols, Paris, 1986-2014). Henceforth, *TCCG*.
[9] L. Pietri and M. Heijmans (eds), *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire: 4, La Gaule Chrétienne (314-614)* (2 vols, Paris, 2013). Henceforth, *PCBE* 4.

Merovingian polity may have affected the nature and extent of Christian building patronage undertaken in the cities.

This investigation will begin first with an appraisal of a number of intersecting historiographies within which Christian building patronage is a significant feature. It will be demonstrated that existing debates regarding late antique urbanism, the chronology and pace of Christianisation, the nature and arenas of elite behaviour, the extent of episcopal power, 'barbarian' kingship, and the concept of patronage itself will all benefit from a study of this kind. Attention will then turn to examining the relevant sources and their problems, chiefly the unavoidable lacunae in the textual and material data, and the idiosyncrasies of a diverse written record. In order to provide a historical context for the questions posed by the literature, chapter two will sketch the parameters of Christian building patronage in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul. Although a degree of overlap is unavoidable in places, four broad types of building will be distinguished here and delineated in turn so as to serve as useful analytical categories for heuristic purposes: episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monastic complexes, and buildings dedicated to pastoral care.

This framework will be utilised in subsequent chapters as a means to explore the individuals responsible for transforming Gaul's civic landscapes, and the evolving *mentalités* and motivations that underpinned their behaviour. Chapter three will consider the ecclesiastics of Gaul, and especially the bishops, who were arguably the most important Christian benefactors in the cities of this period. Chapters four and five will then examine respectively the other two major patron groups: the laity and the most-powerful sub-group within this category, Gaul's imperial and 'barbarian' ruling families. It will become apparent, however, that distinctions among the upper echelons of society are somewhat nebulous at times, and the financial provision for individual building projects was often drawn from mixed groups comprising clerics and lay persons during this period. Building categories themselves, moreover, could be similarly blurred as patrons sought to maximise the possible returns available in both this life and the next. In an attempt to address some of these issues, chapter six will pull back from this series of case studies to consider Christian building patronage in the round, by way of determining if any overarching patterns can be identified chronologically, geographically, and across patron groups.

Ultimately, this study will argue that far from following rapidly in the wake of Constantine's embrace of a new religion, the Christianisation of the urban landscape in Gaul was a delayed affair that did not get fully underway until the middle of the fifth century. The disruption and socio-economic insecurity that stemmed from the demise of Roman rule meant that this was a period of uncertainty for the Gallic elites, who had to reassess their position in a world increasingly characterised by a narrowing of their political horizons. At the same time, however, it was also a moment of opportunity. The breakdown of the old transregional hierarchies and administrative structures led to renewed jostling for social power and prestige at a local level, where power was once again meaningful. In a bid to protect their privileged position in a changing world – or to set about establishing it in the case of the newly arrived 'barbarian' aristocracies – the uppermost strata of Gallic society sought to insinuate themselves back into the reinvigorated civic arenas. To this end, nascent traditions of Christian building patronage, which had slowly been making a mark on the cities since the late fourth century, were seized upon and exploited with greater vigour by individuals looking to press their claims of authority and local leadership. On account of the relative insecurity of their position, and lack of recourse to more martial means of claiming status and authority in society, members of the episcopate were especially keen participants in this activity, but they were by no means its only practitioners. The product of this renewed local competition was thus a spike in urban and suburban Christian building in the course of the late fifth and sixth centuries.

This activity would have generally also had a devotional context, but recognition of its public character, and an understanding of the role that such patronage consequently played in Gaul's *civitas*-capitals during the post-imperial reorganisation of social relations, helps to explain why it seemingly peaked by the end of the sixth century. During the later Merovingian period, cities were no longer the principal *locus* for the exercise of power nor for its representation, as the relationship between the centre and the periphery had once again shifted back in favour of the former. The central direction of the Carolingian world was beginning to take shape, and the opportunities provided by the royal courts of Francia's increasingly stable *tria regna* now generally surpassed anything on offer at a local level. One apparent consequence of this development was a decline in competition for authority and status in the cities, and

thus a relative slowdown in the rate of the urban and suburban Christian building patronage that had previously helped to bolster the claims of those jostling for primacy. The practice would not completely go out of favour during this period, however, since the office of the bishop continued to be an attractive proposition, and his sphere of influence and corporate network remained resolutely urban. Moreover, the growing weight and institutionalisation of monasticism provided a new outlet for Christian benefaction. But while it is important not to overstate the fact, investment in this regard tended to be directed more towards the countryside. Here, fabulously wealthy monastic foundations established by royal and elite families provided a convenient vehicle for realizing landowning and dynastic strategies in the later Merovingian kingdoms, as well as increasingly fulfilling the need for self-legitimation and pious display that had once been sought in the cities.

1.1. Historiography and debates

In a paper analysing what he termed 'essentially contested concepts', the social and political theorist Walter Bryce Gallie argued that notions such as 'art' or 'duty' are impossible to define in a universally acknowledged manner.[10] Instead, he believed that we have to consider how individuals have prioritised one interpretation over another throughout history. The complex set of historical processes commonly labelled as 'the fall of Rome' certainly qualifies as an essentially contested concept. In the period between classical antiquity and the middle ages, the western Roman empire was replaced by a series of independent successor kingdoms during the course of the fifth and sixth centuries. Debate has long raged as to whether we should understand this phenomenon as the rapid and catastrophic end of a civilisation, or a more limited political transition which took place within a wider social and cultural milieu characterised by both change and continuity.

In 1964, A.H.M. Jones published his classic analysis of the later Roman empire, which portrayed the period as one of decline.[11] Just seven years later, however, Peter Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* reconceptualised the whole era by extending both its chronological and geographical boundaries, and denying the significance of Rome's fall altogether.[12] The new framework did not necessarily reject that change took place, but instead presented it in a longer time frame with the emphasis on dynamic processes of transformation rather than traditionally pejorative notions of decline. Although the underlying arguments of these competing paradigms are not entirely novel,[13] what has changed in more recent times is the evidence available. The near universal acceptance of Brown's thinking saw work rooted in ideas of 'continuity and change' increasingly prevail over accounts of 'decline and fall', but eventually this prompted a backlash. Alongside the barbarian-focussed narrative of Peter Heather,[14] Bryan Ward-Perkins exploited everything from potsherds to cattle sizes in order to make the case for a

[10] W.B. Gallie, *'Essentially Contested Concepts'*, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1956), pp. 167-98.
[11] A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (3 vols, Oxford, 1964). The title of the abridged version is more suggestive of Jones' thinking: *The Decline of the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1966).
[12] P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150 – 750* (London, 1971).
[13] See I.N. Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 19-36, 52-73, 174-98, 222-44; J. Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History* 25.3 (2002), pp. 358-79.
[14] P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford, 2006).

catastrophic decline in the West, with recent archaeological work used to demonstrate a real and measurable drop off in material culture from the fifth century onwards.[15]

In some ways, archaeology can be seen to have complicated the issue, because the picture it provides is far from monolithic. Degradation and simplification were accompanied by adaptation and novelty, sometimes even in adjacent city-streets.[16] This interplay, and which aspects of it one chooses to emphasise, is a key feature of the debate over contrasting conceptions of urbanism in this period. In the context of wider reassessments of late antiquity, this specific subject has also been re-evaluated in recent years.[17] Scholars have largely moved away from typical urban political and administrative histories, with cities no longer seen solely in terms of decline, or as pale imitations of their classical predecessors.[18] Instead, more nuanced readings have complemented this picture by lending equal weight to processes of transformation and renewal, with the topics of study expanded to encompass notions of urban space and subjective civic experiences related to religion, rituals, and ideology.[19] Arguments of all kinds, however, can sometimes be skewed by a privileging of one category of evidence over another, and this has direct consequences for our understanding of urbanism. Similarly, while historical studies of individual cities have their uses,[20] it is important to remember that changes happened at varying speeds and to different extents across the territories of the late antique and early

[15] B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilisation* (Oxford, 2005).
[16] For an important challenge to the view that urban space became increasingly functional or simplified in form everywhere, see I. Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance of Civic Space. The 'Classical' City from the 4th to the 7th c. AD* (Leuven, 2012).
[17] See the two recent historiographical syntheses: L. Lavan, 'The Late Antique City: A Bibliographic Essay', in L. Lavan and W. Bowden (eds), *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 2001), pp. 9-26; L. Grig, 'Cities in the 'Long' Late Antiquity, 2000-2012 – A Survey Essay', *Urban History* 40.3 (2013), pp. 554-66.
[18] For the traditional view, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001).
[19] See now L. Lavan, *Public Space in the Late Antique City* (2 vols, Leiden, 2020). Among a number of edited volumes published over the last three decades, see especially N. Christie and S.T. Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996); G.P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (eds), *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1999); T.S. Burns and J.W. Eadie (eds), *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity* (Michigan, 2001); J.-U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike – Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart, 2006); C. Goodson, A.E. Lester and C. Symes (eds), *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400–1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space* (Ashgate, 2010); D. Sami and G. Speed (eds), *Debating Urbanism Within and Beyond the Walls A.D. 200–700* (Leicester, 2010).
[20] See the work of Simon Loseby on Marseille: 'Marseille: A Late Antique Success Story?', *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), pp. 165-85; 'Marseille and the Pirenne Thesis, I: Gregory of Tours, the Merovingian Kings and "un grand port"', in R. Hodges and W.M. Bowden (eds), *The Sixth Century. Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 1998) p. 203-29; 'Marseille and the Pirenne Thesis, II: "Ville Morte"', in I.L. Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century. Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 167-94.

medieval world. The value of this study's regional analysis and integration of the documentary and archaeological record thus lies in its ability to survey all the evidence, and pull out overarching trends and highlight points of divergence at a broad geographic level.

One of the central features of evolving conceptions of late antique urbanism, both in current debates but also during the period itself, is the material and ideological impact that Christianity had on cities. Building on the earlier work of Élie Griffe and especially Jean Hubert, Christian topography emerged during the 1970s as an important area of research for archaeologists attempting to document the transition between the ancient city and its medieval successor.[21] The focus of large-scale archaeological interventions in the urban topography on classical Roman monuments during the nineteenth century often saw later and less monumental remains overlooked or damaged, principally in the case of domestic structures built in rubble masonry and poor-quality mortar. In contrast, churches were generally more solidly built, and it was possible to infer their location from existing places of worship. Moreover, these spaces sometimes had visible elements evoking much older phases of construction, and there were literary traditions to follow up and verify, particularly when it came to local saints.

This all served to make churches an attractive proposition for new avenues of research in the cities, especially once late antiquity had become established as both a distinct time period and discipline of study. Christian buildings thus became a prominent focus of the inner-city excavations and associated publications that grew in frequency across France and its immediate environs since the 1970s; a process facilitated by burgeoning urban redevelopment throughout the region, and the emergence of greater protections for archaeological sites and exploration. In 1986, a landmark conference was held in the field which served to consolidate much of this work,[22] and especially the efforts of the research team behind the *TCCG*, who had begun their comprehensive survey of the Christian landscapes of Gallic cities back in 1973.

[21] See especially P.-A. Février, 'Permanence et héritage de l'antiquité dans la topographie de l'Occident durant le Moyen Age', *in Topografia urbana e vita cittadina nell'alto medioevo in Occidente (XXI Settimana CISAM*) (Spoleto 1974), pp. 41-138; *idem, Histoire de la France urbaine I: la ville antique des origines au IXe siècle* (Paris, 1980).
[22] N. Duval *et al.* (eds), *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne: Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste (21-28 Septembre 1986)* (3 vols, Rome, 1989).

As for what we should do with this growing evidence base, Cyril Mango identified three possible approaches to early Christian buildings.[23] The first and most frequently employed is a typological one concerned with categorising the various buildings, their elements, and their locations. A second approach builds on this by determining the function of a particular building, often with an eye on how architecture and location might relate to liturgy and the practice of cult. These associated methodologies have given rise to a generally accepted model of Christian cities, which consists of the twin categories of a central (and usually intra-mural) episcopal complex, which acted as the seat of the bishop and arena for formal worship, instruction, and baptism, and a number of suburban (and usually extra-mural) basilicas on the periphery of the city, which generally had a funerary purpose and were the focus of the cult of saints.[24] The third approach, which Mango considered the most difficult, was characterised by him as the 'historical', and involves the use of churches as a means to investigate the society responsible for their construction in a way that goes beyond simply asking questions about architectural tastes and building locations and functions.

It is this third method that we are concerned with here. Although Christianity is an established feature in the work of cultural historians, there is something of a lacuna in assessments of the religion's socio-economic importance. While this historiographical trend stretches back to the influential German positivists of the nineteenth century, who saw a firm boundary between religion and society in late Roman and Merovingian Gaul, even today there remains a tendency for histories of the early middle ages to neglect Christianity in discussions of 'secular' developments.[25] The patronage of Christian building is a subject that cuts across this divide and allows the significance of changing patterns of moral and socio-economic behaviour to be considered together, thereby building on the recent work of Ian Wood and Peter Brown.[26] In approaching the churches of Gaul as the objects of lay and

[23] C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), pp. 9-11.
[24] G. Cantino Wataghin, 'Christian Topography in the Late Antique Town: Recent Results and Open Questions', in L. Lavan and W. Bowden (eds), *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology* (2003) pp. 224-56.
[25] Chris Wickham's important survey of the period is somewhat lacking in this regard: *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005).
[26] I.N. Wood, 'The Early Medieval West as a Temple Society', *Rivista storica dell'antichità* 49 (2019), pp. 117-44; *idem*, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400-750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), pp. 37-73; P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012).

ecclesiastical benefaction, we can examine the people who were responsible for them, the reasons they used their resources in this way, and what this says about the social, cultural, and economic context of late Roman and Merovingian France. This explicit focus on Gaul can then potentially provide a model for the comparative consideration of church-building in other parts of the late and post-imperial world.

This approach should also have important benefits for our understanding of late antique and early medieval urbanism. Writing in 2013, Lucy Grig outlined a number of challenges that still hinder attempts to progress the debate further, including the general focus on elite culture and its practitioners, and a neglect of the individuals who used and were responsible for the built environment.[27] The present investigation of Christian building patronage addresses these issues in a number of ways by reinserting the people and their behaviour back into the late antique city, examining whether underlying motives for Christian building patronage were consistent across social hierarchies, and also considering the audience of building patronage in order to establish why and how the provision of Christian spaces for the local community might translate into social authority.[28] Grig also noted the need for greater analysis of the symbolic aspects of urbanism.[29] Although Wolf Liebeschuetz saw Christianity as a major factor in the conceptual decline of the city,[30] across Gaul it can be seen to have reinvigorated the *civitas*-network, with episcopal groups and funerary basilicas increasingly emblematic of civic landscapes and society during late antiquity. But while we can see how the new religion may have helped to sustain the ideological importance of cities during the transition from imperial to royal rule, this study's diachronic nature also makes it possible to gauge how this situation evolved once the Frankish polity had fully established itself by the late sixth century. Work on the later Merovingian kingdoms, for example, often highlights the great rural monasteries of the middle ages, but can pay little attention to the impact the growth in monastic interest might have had on Gallic urbanism.[31] It is necessary to

[27] Grig, 'Cities in the 'Long' Late Antiquity', pp. 564-6.
[28] On the latter, see I.N. Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture in Post-Roman Gaul', in L.A.S. Butler (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor* (London, 1986), pp. 74-9.
[29] Grig, 'Cities', p. 566.
[30] Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*.
[31] See, for example, the recent monograph of Yaniv Fox: *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014).

investigate whether rural spending detracted from Christian building in the cities, therefore, and, if so, to what extent, and what the causes and consequences of this development were.

In addition to its role in debates about late antique urbanism, the impact of Christianity poses a number of other related questions. Foremost among these is the general issue of periodisation in regard to the chronology and pace of Christianisation. While pre-Nicene Christianity is generally characterised as 'private' and centred on nondescript meeting spaces provided or appropriated by a few members of the local community, the 150 years immediately after the conversion of Constantine are often viewed as instigating a new 'public' Christianity as part of the 'triumph' of the church. This private/public binary has thus shaped approaches to the study of the religion. 'Christianisation' narratives can sometimes frame the church as a wealthy institution from the outset, complete with domineering bishops and imposing churches that had been swiftly established throughout the empire by a new and enthusiastic Christian elite.[32] Richard Krautheimer in particular saw the advent of Constantine as having a transformative effect on Christianity's fortunes, which extended far beyond just the legal sphere or the topography of Rome.[33] All such thinking, however, can be infected at times by a more or less tacit teleology that projects the eventual Christianisation back in time, and gives the impression that important developments concerning the topographical landscape, material culture, and citizenry of the late antique world were inevitable. Kim Bowes has more recently challenged this thinking from a rural standpoint through an analysis of the estate Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries.[34] A complementary consideration of the nature and extent of ecclesiastical building patronage in an urban context in Gaul, therefore, offers a similar opportunity to interrogate many of the teleological assumptions inherent in discussions of the Christianisation of space and people.[35]

[32] F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic religion and Christianization, c. 370-529* (2 vols, Leiden, 1993-1994); J.-M. Speiser, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001); Robert Markus is usually more subtle, but see *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 125-55. Even the careful methodology of A.H.M. Jones was not immune to generalising pronouncements in this vein: *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2, p. 895.
[33] R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (4th edn. New Haven, 1986), pp. 40-92.
[34] K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008).
[35] For a similar approach to Rome in this period, see J. Hillner and K. Cooper (eds), *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome: 300-900* (Cambridge, 2007).

As noted, the subject of elite behaviour features heavily in these debates, and the Gallic aristocracy in particular has been the subject of several studies concerned with their motives, their means for maintaining a privileged position in society, and their favoured arenas of self-representation and legitimation. While John Matthews wished to see continuity in a corporate body of Gallic landowners across the first five centuries of the millennium,[36] John Drinkwater rejected the idea that there existed a self-conscious Gallic lobby of agrarian proprietors carefully moderating their collective behaviour, rather than simply reacting to events. Drinkwater instead argued for a number of important disruption points during this period, which altered the make-up and attitudes of this group.[37] Both Matthews and Drinkwater agreed, however, that one common theme was the determined preservation of self-interest among the Gallic elites, whether as urban patrons in the Augustan era pursuing local office through acts of civic munificence,[38] or as career bureaucrats active at the administrative centre whenever the proximity and make-up of the court was favourable to Gallic participation.[39]

Self-interest is also the defining feature of scholarship that has considered the Christianisation of these elites in the first half of our period. As noted above, conversion is often considered to be an early and speedy development. A 'swap sale' model of change has sometimes been proposed, which saw aristocrats supposedly building churches instead of theatres and baths, and episcopal office favoured over secular administration as a means for perpetuating local power.[40] This aristocratic shift from secular to clerical structures has then traditionally believed to have precipitated the beginnings of *Bischofsherrschaft* ('bishop's lordship'), a concept developed by, and especially popular among, German historians, which conceives of episcopal dominance in the cities of late antique and

[36] J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford, 1990).
[37] J.F. Drinkwater, 'Gallic Attitudes to the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century: Continuity or Change?', in H.E. Herzig and R. Frei-Stolba (eds), *Labor omnibus unus: Gerold Walser zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 136-53.
[38] J.F. Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul. The Three Provinces, 58 BC – AD 260* (London, 1983), pp. 141-211. See also G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 106-41.
[39] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*; cf. P. Wormald, 'The Decline of the Western Empire and the Survival of its Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 66 (1976), pp. 217-26.
[40] R. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin, 1993), pp. 89-104; B. Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation, or How the Gallo-Romans Ended the Roman Empire', in B. Jussen (ed.), *Ordering Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 147-99. For a critique of this model, see K. Bowes, ''Christianisation' and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15.2 (2007) p. 151.

Merovingian Gaul.[41] As we have seen, however, there are issues regarding the chronology and pace of these developments, and bishops have emerged in recent scholarship as rather more humble and 'imperilled' figures than previous 'imperial' characterisations have implied.[42] The image of an all-powerful bishop remains a hard one to shake though,[43] and so we have to consider whether episcopal building in Gaul was a claim to a potentially insecure authority, or a powerful assertion of an existing status, and how this relationship between building and power might have evolved over time.

At the top of Gallic society sat the ruling imperial and, latterly, Merovingian families. Christianity is often considered an important feature of royal efforts to replicate imperial ideologies of power during the transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule,[44] but it is unclear to what extent acts of Christian building patronage were employed by kings in Gaul for such purposes. Some scholars, moreover, have asserted that Christian themes dominated notions of kingship in the Merovingian era,[45] and so we must determine how far strategies for maintaining royal authority necessarily entailed programmes of church-building following the consolidation of the Frankish kingdoms. Fortunately, one of the benefits of the late antique paradigm has been the widening of chronological parameters in order to gain new insights into issues previously constrained by traditional historiographical boundaries. Approaching Christian building patronage in this manner will therefore refine our understanding of the concept by revealing

[41] F. Prinz, 'Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift* 217 (1974), pp. 1-35; M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien. Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7* (Munich, 1976); *idem*, 'Bischof und Herrschaft vom spätantiken Gallien bis zu den karolingischen Hausmeiern. Die institutionellen Grundlagen', in F. Prinz (ed.), *Herrschaft und Kirche: Beiträge zur Entstehung und Wirkungsweise episkopaler und monasticscher Organizationsformen* (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 23-82.

[42] S. Patzold, 'Die Bischöfe im Gallien der Transformationszeit: eine sozial homogene Gruppe von Amsträgern?', in S. Brather, H.U. Nuber, H. Steuer and T. Zotz (eds), *Antike im Mittelalter. Fortleben, Nachwirken, Wahrnehmung* (Ostfildern, 2014), pp. 179-93; *idem*, 'Bischöfe, soziale Herkunft und die Organisation lokaler Herrschaft um 500', in M. Meier and S. Patzold (eds), *Chlodwigs Welt. Organisation von Herrschaft um 500* (Stuttgart, 2014), pp. 523-43. See also É. Rebillard and C. Sotinel (eds), *L'évêque dans la cité du IVe au Ve siècle. Image et autorité* (Rome, 1998), and the earlier scepticism of Peter Brown on the thinking of Friedrich Prinz: P. Brown, *Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours* (Reading, 1977), pp. 19-20.

[43] C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, 2005).

[44] P. Heather, 'State, Lordship and Community in the West (c. A.D. 400-600)', in A. Cameron *et al.* (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. XIV* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 447-9.

[45] Y. Hen, 'The Christianisation of Kingship', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung*, (Münster, 2004), pp. 163-77.

whether the attitudes and justifications of lay, episcopal, and royal elites remained static, or evolved through periods of upheaval and stability within late antique and Merovingian Gaul.

Finally, this brings us onto the notion of patronage itself. Much has been written about the practice and its centrality to ancient and late antique societies, but its conceptual consistency across the period is not always clear, in part because of the range of terms employed to describe similar, but not necessarily always homogeneous, processes. It is for this reason that it is necessary to probe exactly what we mean by 'Christian building patronage', and how this question relates to debates concerned with 'patronage' more generally. In a narrower sense, this present study will also help to elucidate the common question of how far the actions and motivations of Gallic Christians diverged from earlier patrons operating within a classical context.[46] Patronage had a number of dimensions, but was present in nearly all levels of Greco-Roman society as a relationship of reciprocal exchange between individuals with unequal resources and status.[47] The practice also mediated relations between patrons and communities at large. In this respect, it is often referred to as 'civic patronage', 'civic munificence', or 'civic benefaction',[48] which are all terms intended to convey the sense of generosity extended by wealthy figures towards their favoured cities. But this provision of public monuments, amenities, or games was still a reciprocal transaction, and habitually entailed an institutionalised system of official titles and honours bestowed on important *patroni* seeking local authority and status.[49]

Civic patronage, especially in its more formal manifestations, is often also referred to as 'euergetism', a term coined by the twentieth-century French historians André Boulanger and Henri-Irénée Marrou to describe good deeds performed in Hellenistic or Roman cities by wealthy individuals.[50] The most famous treatment of the subject remains that of Paul Veyne, who defined the practice as 'private liberality for the public benefit', and detailed how its performance was both undertaken voluntarily, but

[46] See C. Lepelley, 'Le patronat épiscopal aux IVe et Ve siècles: continuités et ruptures avec le patronat classique', in Rebillard and Sotinel (eds), *L'évêque dans la cité,* pp. 17-33.
[47] P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (2nd edn., London, 2014), pp. 173-84.
[48] J. Nicols, *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2014).
[49] *Ibid.,* p. 8.
[50] A. Boulanger, *Aelius Aristide et la sophistique dans la province d'Asie au IIe siècle de notre ère* (Paris, 1923), p. 25; H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1948), p. 161.

at times also dictated by the public expectations of office-holders.[51] Veyne acknowledged this distinction as somewhat superficial, however, and noted that the practice was an essential feature of elite comportment in society. Indeed, Arjan Zuiderhoek has identified the compulsion for elites to justify and legitimise their oligarchic rule as the primary driver for such behaviour.[52] It is important, however, to acknowledge the parallel existence of a number of subsidiary motives for the publicising of wealth in this way, which included civic pride, local competition for primacy and influence, and a desire for public acclaim.[53]

The worldly nature of this thinking prompted Veyne to draw a distinction between 'euergetism' and what he termed 'Christian charity', arguing that while the former served the immediate pre-occupations of patrons, the latter was done for the sake of eternity.[54] A number of other studies have similarly asserted that Christianity provided a conceptual break, asserting that Christian donors were humble individuals, who were not really interested in returns in this life, and instead regarded munificence, of which public Christian building was an important component, as principally a tool in the economy of salvation.[55] In contrast, Ville Vuolanto argued in his analysis of the benefactors behind the church mosaics of late antique Italy for a much greater degree of continuity in civic patronage traditions.[56] Here, Vuolanto explicitly employed the term euergetism, and claimed that, in its Christian form, the practice was no less motivated by public recognition and the pursuit of status in local communities. The focus of similar treatments on the endowment of ecclesiastical building in Gaul can, however, isolate the socio-political benefits to the detriment of a more holistic appreciation that also accounts for its

[51] P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism,* trans. O. Murray (London, 1990), p. 10.
[52] A. Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire. Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge and New York, 2009).
[53] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 4-13.
[54] Veyne, *Bread and Circuses,* pp. 19-34.
[55] Y. Duval and L. Pietri, 'Évergétisme et épigraphie dans l'occident chrétien (IV-VI s.)', in Christol and Masson, *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine,* pp. 371-96; A. Giardina, 'Carità eversiva: Le donazioni di Melania la giovane e gli equilibri della società tardoromana', *Studi Storici* 29.1 (1988), pp. 127-8, 132.
[56] V. Vuolanto, 'Male and Female Euergetism in Late Antiquity. A Study on Italian and Adriatic Church Floor Mosaics', in P. Setälä (ed.), *Women, Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire* (Rome, 2002), pp. 245-302.

intrinsic devotional value.[57] Not only does this risk casting benefactors as mere cynics, but it can perpetuate anachronistic divisions between 'secular' and 'sacred' behaviour, which is something this study will seek to avoid.

Alongside motivations, funding is another issue central to discussions of patronage. As Yitzhak Hen has noted, however, the lack of epigraphic evidence by comparison with earlier centuries, or even other regions of the contemporary Mediterranean, makes determining the mechanisms of Christian patronage in late antique and Merovingian Gaul difficult.[58] In the classical world, copious inscriptions reveal that the greater part of urban building was privately financed by wealthy aristocrats, but that euergetism was also performed by representatives of the local or central administration, who exploited public money raised from taxes, fines, and government landholdings.[59] In either case, the individual responsible had deep pockets, and was clearly identifiable as the obvious focus of tribute. It is sometimes assumed that the disintegration of Roman government and the parallel rise of Christian institutions saw the episcopate simply step into this role. Writing in the 1970s, when ideas of an 'aristocratisation' of the church were especially prevalent, Peter Brown influentially conceived of members of the episcopate as seigneurial 'impresarios', acting with a high degree of personal agency in the manner of typical Roman patrons.[60] As a number of important critiques of Brown's work noted, however, this is perhaps an excessively top-down conception of Christian society, which over-emphasized a small group of church leaders and their ability to act unilaterally.[61] Indeed, the work of Patrick Geary on the central middle ages might suggest that bishops were simply one elite player among many in the religious competition of the post-Roman world.[62] Furthermore, Lisa Bailey and Allen Jones have also demonstrated that alongside high-status

[57] See G.I. Halfond, 'Review Article: *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (by Yaniv Fox) and *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom* (by Jamie Kreiner)', *The Medieval Journal* 6.1 (2016), pp. 125-32.
[58] Y. Hen, 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture in Merovingian Gaul', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 217-19.
[59] Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* pp. 10-11.
[60] P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981).
[61] C. Pietri, 'Les origines du culte des martyrs (d'après un ouvrage récent)', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 60 (1984), pp. 293-319; J. Fontaine, 'Le culte des saints et ses implications sociologiques: Réflexions sur un récent essai de Peter Brown', *Analecta bollandiana* 100 (1982), pp. 17-41.
[62] P.J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978).

individuals, important contributions were made by all levels of lay society in Gaul in shaping the contours of the new religion.[63]

It is worth considering, therefore, not only how far the funding model of Christian building patronage was consistent with its classical iteration, but also the extent to which it is possible to measure such a thing. Unlike earlier contexts, the practice of patronising pubic buildings was now complicated by the presence of the bishop, who, as the party claiming ultimate authority over these spaces, sought to concentrate attention on himself. It is not always apparent whether bishops were using private wealth to fund their building activities, like the senatorial aristocracy of yesteryear, or were instead relying on burgeoning church revenues, in the manner of Roman officials mobilising public money for infrastructure projects.[64] On account of the clerical bias of much of the literary record, it is also hard to gauge to what extent this capital was supplemented by financial support proffered by non-episcopal actors. It does seem that public building in the Christian world was a much more collective enterprise than before, but this then raises questions about the ability of high-status individuals to act independently of the episcopate, and claim credit accordingly. As the current re-building of Paris' Notre-Dame illustrates, it is also necessary to ask whether bankrolling acts of public construction was still a game played exclusively by late antique elites, or if it now encompassed a greater cross-section of society than was previously the case. With all these ambiguities in mind, the term 'Christian building patronage', which is considered here to mean the provision of financial support for acts of construction, enlargement, embellishment, and repair undertaken in a Christian context, will be used to discuss the issues at hand, rather than 'euergetism', because the latter term is arguably weighted with too many classical connotations to describe adequately processes that now involved more donors and audiences, both in this world and the next, than ever before.

[63] L. Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London, 2016); A.E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul: Strategies and Opportunities for the Non-Elite* (Cambridge, 2009).
[64] On the wealth of the church in this period, see Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400-750'.

1.2. The sources and their problems

Attempts to investigate systematically the practice of patronising Christian buildings in the cities of Gaul across four centuries are hampered by the disparate source base. There is considerable variation in the nature and extent of the available evidence, which differs wildly by type and volume both chronologically and geographically. In total, there were 135 agglomerations which attained the rank of episcopal see at some stage during the period under consideration.[65] A combination of the textual and material data suggests that 691 attested acts of Christian building patronage recast the urban and suburban topography of these built environments, although in the majority of cases we do not know the individual or groups responsible for them. 26 Gallic cities, or a fifth of the total, however, furnish no such evidence before 751.[66] A lack of evidence cannot necessarily mean an absence of patronage though, since a Christian community and its episcopal leader could surely not have existed without a place of worship. In contrast, the most important cities of Gaul – generally those favoured by the imperial authorities or the rulers of the successor kingdoms – are known to have been very well-endowed with Christian buildings: 21 at Lyon, 43 at Metz, 27 at Paris. The comparatively modest volume of patronage attested at Trier is thus surprising, therefore, but it is hard to tell if this is a reflection of reality or just of the limitations of the evidence that we possess.

The territory of Gaul was vast and wide-ranging, and our surviving written sources are distributed unevenly across time and place. Most of them are also of an anecdotal nature, and their coverage limited by the geographical horizons of the author. Gregory of Tours, for example, is one of our best sources for Christian building patronage, but he knows Tours and Clermont much better than the South. Another issue is the transmission of textual sources, which at times generates almost random results. The Testament of Bishop Bertram (616) is available to us thanks to the copyists behind the *Actus Pontificum Cenomannis*, and as a result we have evidence for 19 churches in the middling city of Le

[65] N. Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', in Gauthier *et al*. (eds), *Topographie Chrétienne*, vol. XVI, p. 363.
[66] Aime, Aire-sur-l'Adour, Apt, Bale, Belley, Béziers, Biganos, Carcassonne, Carpentras, Cavaillon, Eauze, Elne, Evreux, Exmes/Sees, Javols, Lectoure, Lescar, Lodève, Oloron-Sainte-Marie, Saint-Lezer/Tarbes, Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Senlis, Sisteron, Toulon, Vence, Worms. The *Topographie Chrétienne* concludes that 622 Christian edifices existed before 751: *TCCG* XVI, p. 363.

Mans as opposed to just the six that are known independently of it. Similarly, if the eighth-century stational list of Metz did not survive, then we would know of only twelve churches in the city by 751, rather than the unparalleled figure of 43. Indeed, the irregularity of the geographic spread of later Merovingian monasticism is perhaps explained at least in part by the disparate availability of the sources. Hagiographic and diplomatic texts abound in the north of Gaul, but virtually nothing in the written record has survived from the ecclesiastical provinces of Aix, Arles, and Embrun for the seventh and eighth centuries, in precisely the period when monasticism was really taking off.

The issue of textual transmission is compounded by the fact that those written sources that have survived defy systematic serialization on account of their diverse genres. While the textual record is broadly of an elite and often clerical disposition, how do we square the hyperbole and rhetorical classicizing of the letter collections with the dry enumerations of wills and testaments, or the emotion and zeal of the hagiography with the laconic remarks of the chronicles? The contrasting and partial nature of such texts means that they are resistant to coherent presentation, and yet, together with the similarly variegated poetry, epigraphic record, and historical writings, all combine to provide us with our evidence. Attempts to investigate and document acts of Christian building patronage, therefore, let alone to determine if any overarching conclusions can be drawn, have to take account of this heterogeneity, and of the respective character and idiosyncrasies of each source type.

For example, the abundance of evidence for churches and church-building provided by Gregory of Tours, which has been helpfully compiled and discussed by May Vieillard-Troiekouroff and Margarete Weidemann,[67] must be evaluated in light of the prejudices which sometimes shaped it. Indeed, no longer considered to be a naïve compilation of 'facts', more recent analyses of Gregory's *Histories* have variously interpreted the work as a satire on the futility of temporal pursuits,[68] a handbook for episcopal power,[69] and a treatise on good and bad models of kingship.[70] It is necessary to acknowledge, therefore,

[67] M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, *Les monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours* (Paris, 1976); M. Weidemann, *Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours* (2 vols, Mainz, 1982), vol. 1 pp. 346-8; vol. 2, pp. 31-41, 45-65, 130-56.
[68] W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 112-234.
[69] A.H.B. Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Göttingen, 1994).
[70] M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001).

that such potential literary strategies might have influenced which acts of building patronage the bishop of Tours chose to report, and how he then framed them.

Similarly, in composing poetry for royal, aristocratic, and episcopal patrons in the sixth century, the writer Venantius Fortunatus also provides us with an abundance of evidence for the building of churches and the benefactors responsible.[71] Judith George has argued that the poet held up a mirror to his subjects,[72] but it is important to acknowledge that, as in the case of the royal panegyrics he produced, Fortunatus had masterful control over his genre, and often played fast and loose with everyday reality.[73] Indeed, the authority of the bishop during this period was by no means as secure as Fortunatus often portrays it, and so the poems and performances he provided for his episcopal patrons, many of which concerned his subjects' monumental Christian patronage, served to bolster their position and create consensus within their cities.[74] His idealised portraits are nevertheless of considerable historical value, since they furnish us with an invaluable window onto the attitudes and values of the Christian builders of this time, and reveal how they hoped their actions would be received by their communities.

Finally, given that it is present right across our period, and from cities throughout Gaul, perhaps the most valuable source type for our study of Christian patronage is the extant hagiography. *Vitae* and *Passiones* include numerous references to the building of shrines and churches, but again such evidence is not easily exploited. The German empiricists who established the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tended to reduce the hagiographic texts they investigated to repositories of usable 'facts'. The linguistic turn, however, saw the techniques of literary criticism applied to hagiography with a new emphasis on understanding *mentalités*. Rather than as the subject of a selective analysis, a hagiographic text was considered in its entirety in order to investigate the mental frameworks of which it was an expression. Work specifically concerned with Gallic hagiography, for example, has argued that the genre should be understood collectively as a means for

[71] M. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Michigan, 2009), pp. 61-71.
[72] J.W. George, 'Portraits of Two Merovingian Bishops in the Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus', *Journal of Medieval History* 13.3 (1987), pp. 189-90.
[73] B. Brennan, 'The Image of the Frankish Kings in the Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus', *Journal of Medieval History* 10.1 (1984), pp. 1-11.
[74] S. Coates, 'Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late Antique and Early Merovingian Gaul', *The English Historical Review* 115 (2000), pp. 1109-37.

conditioning social behaviour within the later Merovingian kingdoms,[75] or, alternatively, as a series of products of particular local needs that was designed to encourage social consensus.[76] The conception of hagiography as very much a product of the time and place in which it was written is particularly important to bear in mind when considering *vitae* that purport to detail the people and events of earlier centuries. Much like episcopal *gesta*, these texts have to be viewed in light of recent work on transmission and the construction of historical memory,[77] all of which has consequences for how we treat the evidence for Christian building patronage that they provide.

It is for all these reasons that we must approach the textual sources with caution, but remember that a study of this nature is only possible for late antique and Merovingian Gaul because of the comparative density of the written record in relation to other contemporary regions of the Latin West. While we must acknowledge, for example, that there is no seventh- or eighth-century equivalent to Gregory of Tours and his friend Fortunatus, the later Merovingian hagiography is particularly rich and detailed. Similarly, although the important complement which material culture provides to the textual sources is still overlooked in some historical analyses of church patronage,[78] the contribution which archaeology can make is being increasingly recognised,[79] and nowhere is this more evident than in the territory of Gaul. Thanks to, or perhaps in spite of extensive building work in French cities since the 1970s, numerous rescue excavations conducted in recent decades have given us a much better picture of late antique Gallic urban landscapes, and, as noted already, these results have been helpfully collated in the sixteen comprehensive volumes of the *TCCG*.

While archaeology helps to rectify some of the omissions of the written record, the material evidence nevertheless presents its own challenges. Partial excavations constrained by the built environment, inadequate or ambiguous reporting by archaeologists working in previous eras, decontextualized finds,

[75] Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography.*
[76] P. Fouracre and R. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography,* 640-720 (Manchester, 1996).
[77] C.B. Bouchard, 'Episcopal "*gesta*" and the Creation of a Useful Past in Ninth-Century Auxerre', *Speculum* 84.1 (2009), pp. 1-35.
[78] S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006).
[79] J.C. Sánchez-Pardo and M.G. Shapland (eds), *Churches and Social Power in Early Medieval Europe: Integrating Archaeological and Historical Approaches* (Turnhout, 2015).

and the financial cost of absolute dating techniques all serve to hamper the detailed examination of sites. Once again the element of chance also plays a significant part, with the recovery of evidence dependent on the presence of archaeologists at major urban building projects. Even the municipal politics that underpins these programmes can be seen to shape our data for church patronage, with decisions to reintroduce trams in Grenoble, or provide underground parking in Marseille and Toulouse, facilitating the opportunity for fruitful excavations. Discoveries can help to qualify the more lavish claims of the texts, but it is also possible that much has disappeared from the archaeological record, such as the splendid church of the Daurade at Toulouse, of which nothing has survived aside from a few columns and capitals. Equally, the temptation to identify excavated buildings with those known from the documentary evidence has the potential to underplay the true number of churches in a city. Indeed, the enormous chancel arch almost 20m wide recently uncovered at Arles in the Enclos St-Césaire, for example, highlights how we are often left to rely on conjecture and deduction when it comes to piecing together acts Christian building patronage.[80] The discovery has been dated to the first half of the sixth century, during the episcopal tenure of Bishop Caesarius (502-42), and due to its exceptional size it is hard not to attribute it to the city's cathedral.[81] On this occasion, however, the disconnect between the texts and archaeological material is the reverse of that to which we are accustomed. Rather than having the grand claims of the written record undermined by the usually rather modest churches uncovered in the civic landscape, at Arles we have a building of unrivalled size and grandeur in which the authors of the day seemingly have little interest, and make no mention of the individual(s) responsible. The uneven distribution of the evidence both temporally and geographically means, therefore, that a careful and holistic consideration encompassing both the extant material culture and written documents is required to investigate the Christian building patronage of Gaul's cities between the fourth and eighth centuries.

[80] M. Heijmans, 'L'église paléochrétienne de l'enclos Saint-Césaire à Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône). Nouvelles fouilles, nouvelles questions', in D. Paris-Poulain *et al*. (eds), *Les premiers temps chrétiens dans le territoire de la France actuelle* (Rennes, 2009), pp. 85-98.
[81] Acts of Christian building patronage are compiled in the appendix at the end of this thesis: Arles 1a.

2. Parameters

By the middle of the eighth century, there were 135 settlements within Gaul that had sheltered a bishopric for at least some period of time. The region's ecclesiastical organisation had by and large been grafted onto the pre-existing secular administration of provinces and *civitates,* and so helped to ensure the survival of nearly all the cities compiled in the early fifth-century *Notitia Galliarum*.[1] Alongside the 113 *civitates* and handful of *castra* included in this official list, additional urban centres such as Tongeren, Liège, and Châteaudun came to possess bishops in this period following the relocation of *civitas*-capitals, the subdivision of city territories for political purposes, or even the preferences of the bishops themselves.[2] By the sixth century, the notion of a city had largely become synonymous with those places where a bishop resided,[3] however temporarily, and the evidence for acts of Christian building patronage provided by this network serves as the basis for the present study.[4]

Between the time that the *Notitia* was first drawn up in c. 400, and the Carolingian assumption of Frankish kingship in 751, the topography of Gaul's cities had changed beyond recognition, and the previous classical signifiers of urbanism had been superseded by new products of civic munificence that reflected contemporary social priorities. The fortification of the urban landscape was one major development,[5] but it is the embrace of Christianity by Gallic society, and its associated cathedrals, baptisteries, funerary basilicas, oratories, monastic complexes, and institutions of charity, that we are concerned with here.

There are perhaps three ways to approach the evidence for this Christian patronage: by city, by building type, or by patron. The former has only recently been comprehensively achieved by the sixteen volumes

[1] See J. Harries, 'Church and State in the *Notitia Galliarum*', *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978), pp. 26-43. For those *civitates* that did not survive, see S.T. Loseby, 'Urban Failures in Late Antique Gaul', in T.R. Slater (ed.), *Towns in Decline, AD 100–1600* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 72-95.
[2] Gregory of Tours, *Historiae,* VII.17, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH* SRM 1.1 (Hanover, 1937-1951).
[3] J. Harries, 'Christianity and the City in Late Roman Gaul', in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992), p. 79.
[4] Thus the *castrum* of Dijon is included but not that of Brioude. On the latter, see A. Dubreucq, C. Lauranson-Rosaz, and B. Sanial (eds), *Saint Julien et les Origines de Brioude* (Le Puy, 2007).
[5] For the example of Aquitaine, see P. Garmy and L. Maurin (eds), *Enceintes romaines d'Aquitaine. Bordeaux, Dax, Périgueux, Bazas* (Paris, 1996).

of the *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule*, which succinctly organised the available data by province and city. The second angle, meanwhile, was addressed by Nancy Gauthier, who synthesised the results of this research in an essay in the final volume of the series, which considered in turn the entirety of Gaul's Christian building as it related to episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monasticism, and pastoral care.[6] Further study in this vein would necessitate the technical skills of an archaeologist or architectural historian,[7] but there is as much, if not more, to be gained from the third approach, namely, an examination of the important question of patronage and patrons. Indeed, while undeniably useful, the maps included in the sixteenth volume of the *TCCG* that plot each city's churches ultimately serve to flatten the chronology of their development, giving the impression that these new landscapes emerged across Gaul fully formed. In reality, this was a long and not always coherent process, which was determined by a multitude of factors, but especially the resources and aspirations of patrons. These evolved over time, and so the value of a socio-political rather than material emphasis lies in its ability to reunite the extant evidence for Christian building with the groups and individuals who were responsible for reshaping their cities during late antiquity. As Cyril Mango suggested, this will consequently help to illuminate the social, cultural, and economic contours of the society in which this urban and suburban topographical transformation came about.[8]

Before engaging in this endeavour, however, it will prove useful to delineate briefly the building categories highlighted by Gauthier in order both to set out the parameters of Christian patronage in which these agents were operating, and contextualise some of the questions posed by the historiography. This will ensure that the detailed analysis of patrons and motivations that follows can best respond to the issues discussed earlier, with a number of the points raised here subsequently developed over the course of this study.

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[6] N. Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', in N. Gauthier *et al*. (eds), *Topographie Chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle*, vol. 16 (16 vols, Paris, 1986-2014), pp. 359-99.
[7] See now P. Chevalier, 'Merovingian Religious Architecture: Some New Reflections', in B. Effros and I. Moreira (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 657-92.
[8] C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), pp. 9-11.

2.1. Episcopal groups

The metamorphosis of Gaul's cities developed from humble origins. Although they were often claimed retrospectively by texts, there is no place of worship securely attested in Gaul before the Peace of the Church in 313. During this period the precursors of the great episcopal groups of subsequent centuries were probably small meeting rooms in houses, and occasionally non-domestic spaces such as shops and warehouses, where the nascent Christian community could gather.[9] Precisely how long these groups continued to assemble in private residences before a more bespoke space was acquired or adapted is unclear, but the presence of lay backers and a local representative of the episcopate seems to have been crucial. Our texts, for example, suggest that in some Gallic cities this process was facilitated by a local wealthy citizen, such as the senator Leocadius at Bourges, who, soon after embracing the new religion, put his house at the disposition of the local community so that it could be converted into a suitable place of worship.[10] By around the end of the fourth century, therefore, it seems likely that most communities would have possessed a space for formal worship, whether this was the converted house attested at Bourges, or the two purpose-built basilicas that comprised the episcopal group of Rouen.[11]

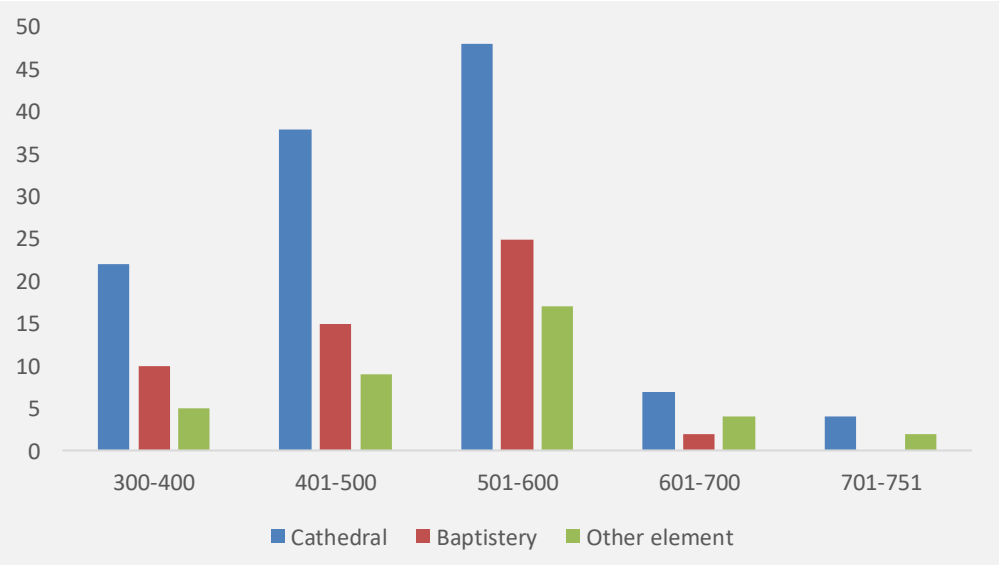


Fig. 1. The attested acts of episcopal group patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751.

[9] E. Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London, 2013).
[10] Bourges 1a; Gregory, *Hist.*, I.31.
[11] Rouen 1a, 1b.

The subsequent growth of Christianity during the fifth and sixth centuries encouraged bishops to establish new spaces, or rebuild existing ones, both to shelter growing congregations and to justify and perpetuate their burgeoning status. The development and location of these churches and their predecessors has proved contentious, however. The team behind the *TCCG* set out to challenge the traditional view that early buildings of worship would have been found at the periphery in the funerary zones, and only later transferred *intra muros.*[12] Their comprehensive survey has largely confirmed the rival argument that the first cathedrals would have overwhelmingly been established in the urban zone of habitation, and thus close to the faithful, from the outset.[13] A central location, within a city's walls if they existed, would probably have been desired by bishops on account of its prestige and enhanced security. Some present-day cathedrals still stand on the site, or at least in close vicinity, of their late fourth-century or early fifth-century predecessors, but it seems reasonable to accept that there could be an initial period of trial and error before a location was definitively settled on. This process would have been shaped by the available patronage networks and particular circumstances of a city. Indeed, the pre-existing topography would have especially constrained the positioning of an episcopal church, with the trace of a wall circuit, the current status of once privileged public places like the forum, and even the presence of a water source for the necessary baptismal installations among the potential factors in determining from where a cathedral complex might emerge.

Having found a suitable urban site, the bishops of Gaul, in association with their wealthy backers and the Christian community as a whole, began the almost perpetual process of expanding and embellishing the episcopal groups of their cities. As fig. 1 suggests, this activity appears to have been most prevalent in the sixth century. These building complexes could differ in their precise details, but they were broadly the same in character everywhere, and all grew from the initial element of a place of communal worship, commonly referred to as the cathedral (*ecclesia*). This core church borrowed its architectural schema from the Roman civil basilica, at least in part because, unlike a pagan temple, it had to be of a

[12] See, for example, É. Griffe, *La Gaule chrétienne à l'époque romaine*, vol. 2 (3 vols, Paris, 1947-1965), pp. 20-1.
[13] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', pp. 367-9.

sufficient size to accommodate all the faithful indoors.[14] While its precise size and the quality of its decor was dependent on the generosity and ambitions of any patrons, cathedrals generally measured 20-30m (with the more impressive specimens around 50m), included from one to three naves, and were terminated to the east by a semi-circular or polygonal apse, with the entrance usually found at the opposite end. Slightly in front of the apse would have been a barrier that separated the clergy from the laity. Later interventions were often aesthetic, and, as we will see, can generally be explained by ostentatious prelates determined to make a mark in their city. The extension of a cathedral's choir out into the nave by means of a narrow corridor, or *solea,* which led to an ambo from where bishops could preach to their congregations, however, does seem to have been prompted by liturgical developments. The decoration of episcopal churches might have included polychrome mosaics, and walls decorated with marble veneers, murals, and verse inscriptions. Unfortunately, archaeology can very rarely tell us anything about the elevation of a late antique cathedral, which survives only in exceptional cases, such as the Dom at Trier, but we do know that height carried both an aesthetic and symbolic value. The poems of Venantius Fortunatus, for example, often related the size of a church to the importance of its patron,[15] and, in Lyon, the height of the *ecclesia* ensured that it was visible from afar to boatman and highway traveller alike, who would know that 'this is the place where leads the road to salvation'.[16]

Alongside the *ecclesia*, the baptistery (*baptisterium, aula baptisterii*) was the other early and indispensable element of an episcopal group on account of its hosting of the ceremony welcoming catechumens into the Christian community proper.[17] Baptisteries were generally established in the immediate vicinity of the episcopal church and flanked by annexes with liturgical or utilitarian functions. In cases where contemporary evidence for a city's baptistery is absent, its location has often been inferred by the presence of medieval churches dedicated to John the Baptist.[18] There does not seem to have been any specific rule governing their location, but the building's commonly autonomous

[14] J.B. Ward-Perkins, 'Constantine and the Origins of the Christian Basilica', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 22 (1954), pp. 69-90.
[15] M. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009), pp. 63-4.
[16] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae,* II.10.4, ed. and tr. W.B. Anderson, *Poems and Letters* (2 vols, London and Cambridge, 1936-65).
[17] J. Guyon, *Les premiers baptistères des Gaules (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 2000).
[18] See, for example, Rodez: *TCCG* VI, p. 46.

nature may have been the result of concerns to ensure that the baptismal ceremony remained shrouded in reverential mystery.[19] Interestingly, there is no explicit mention of the presence of a baptistery next to the cathedrals of Tours, Clermont, and Auxerre, but a baptistery *is* attested in the suburbs of these cities, which perhaps raises questions about the location of their first episcopal groups.[20] Indeed, it remains unclear if the martyrial baptistery was the double of an episcopal equivalent, or its precursor, as seems likely in Clermont in particular, where intra-mural space was initially at a premium.[21]

There are several baptisteries which still substantially exist in elevation today, most obviously the remarkably homogeneous Provençal series implanted in the fifth century.[22] Like their accompanying cathedral(s), many baptisteries also underwent a number of revisions and grew in size and grandeur across the period. Indeed, the scope and monumentality of a baptistery was again a reflection of the ambitions of patrons, and more often than not the local bishop, as was likely to have been the case with the enormous baptismal construction of Marseille.[23] The essential element was the baptismal pool, and the 22 late antique *piscinae* that have been uncovered across Gaul to date also vary in size and shape. While they were often eventually topped with a canopy,[24] the pool itself tended to shrink over time to reflect the declining practice of baptism by immersion. Baptismal rites required running water in principle, but the hydraulic installations utilised for this purpose are generally poorly known outside a handful of cases.[25] Alternatively, domestic baths such as those that originally served *domus* at Cologne, Poitiers, Trier, and Martigny, or baths of a public nature such as at Reims, might be adapted by bishops as baptisteries. In comparison to Italy,[26] there is less evidence for episcopal baths in Gaul, but it would

[19] In 441, catechumens were forbidden to approach the baptismal room before the ceremony: Council of Orange (441), c. 18, ed. C. Munier and C. de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae* (2 vols, Turnhout, 1963).
[20] S.T. Loseby, 'Bishops and Cathedrals: Order and Diversity in the Fifth-Century Urban Landscape of Southern Gaul' in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 150-5.
[21] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.23.
[22] J. Guyon, 'Baptistères et groupes épiscopaux de Provence. Élaboration, diffusion et devenir d'un type architectural', *Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève, Aoste, 21-28 septembre 1986* (Rome, 1989), pp. 1427-49.
[23] S.T. Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), pp. 110-19.
[24] See Cimiez (*TCCG* XVI, p. 80), Cologne (*TCCG* XII, pp. 50-2), Geneva (*TCCG* III, p. 46; XVI, pp. 104-5), Grenoble (*TCCG* XVI, p. 111), Reims (*TCCG* XIV, pp. 36-8).
[25] See Geneva (*TCCG* III, p. 46; XVI, pp. 104-105), Grenoble (*TCCG* XVI, p. 111), Nevers (*TCCG* VIII, p. 148), Venasque (*TCCG* XVI, pp. 309-10).
[26] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 135-41.

be surprising if the bathing complexes of antiquity were not co-opted by bishops in a similar manner, particularly in Provence, where it even seems new baths were built in the episcopal group of Cimiez.[27]

The impact of the first Christian buildings on urban topography would have been modest, but over time, with the growing wealth of the church and interest of lay patrons, multiple elements were added to these core structures of *ecclesia* and baptistery. Often the first church of an episcopal group would be joined by a second or even a third, and in the exceptional case of the imperial residence of Trier, it seems that there were already four neighbouring basilicas by the middle of the fourth century. The function of these additional constructions has long been debated,[28] with complementary binaries proposed in which one church was for the faithful and the other for the catechumens, or one for everyday liturgy and the other for dominical worship, or one for the instruction of the community and the other reserved for the bishop or a favoured martyrial cult. The actual premise of 'double cathedrals', however, is somewhat misleading. While it is undeniable that there are a number of cities where there existed two churches in the episcopal group that had been built at a similar time, this pattern is by no means uniform. At Bordeaux, for example, the principal fourth-century *ecclesia* precedes a second church by at least 150 years, and the groups at Tours and Geneva came to host three episcopal churches over the course of several centuries.[29]

Instead of being the product of a coherent building programme from the outset, or a response to evolving liturgical needs, the presence of a second (or third) basilica is perhaps better interpreted in the wider context of the gradual accumulation of a myriad of buildings around the initial *ecclesia*, and the long-term repair and further embellishment of this assemblage.[30] While much of this work fulfilled practical needs, there was also an element of bishops looking to assert themselves, demonstrate their piety,

[27] D. Underwood, *(Re)using Ruins: Public Building in the Cities of the Late Antique West, A.D. 300-600* (Leiden, 2019), p. 50.
[28] J. Hubert, 'Les cathédrales doubles et l'histoire de la liturgie', in *Atti del primo Congresso Internazionale di Studi Longobardi* (Spoleto, 1952), pp. 167-176; R. Krautheimer, 'The Twin Cathedral at Pavia', in R. Solomon (ed.), *Opicinus de Canistris: Weltbild und Bekenntnisse eines avignonesischen Klerikers des 14. Jahrhunderts* (2 vols, London and Leipzig, 1936), pp. 325-337.
[29] For Bordeaux, see *TCCG* X, pp. 29-30; XVI, pp. 64-5; for Tours, see *TCCG* V, pp. 28-30; for Geneva, see C. Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève. Les édifices chrétiens et le groupe épiscopal* (Geneva, 2012).
[30] *TCCG* XVI, p. 372.

compete with other cities, and define their legacy through acts of prestige building. To this end, however, prelates often needed the support of patrons, and so the underlying motivations of all individuals involved in the expansion of episcopal groups needs to be better understood, with an acknowledgement that rationales were not necessarily consistent across time and place.

In addition to buildings of a purely cultic character, episcopal groups included a number of supplementary components (designated as 'other element' in fig. 1 above). The most important of these was the residence of the bishop (*domus ecclesiae, domus ecclesiastica*), which, in light of the occupant's emerging status as a prominent urban magnate during this period, came to be rather grand.[31] This was not necessarily the case from the outset, however. In the middle of the fifth century, for example, Bishop Eparchius was living in the sacristy of the cathedral of Clermont on account of the local church's lack of intra-mural property.[32] Over time, as the bishops of Gaul progressively assumed a number of administrative and judicial responsibilities, their exercise of such functions came to necessitate a suitable room known as a *salutatorium,* in which dignitaries and other visitors could be hosted. The mosaic décor of one such space that has likely been uncovered at Geneva indicates the splendour that characterised these reception rooms, and which would have been intended to impress those who came before the bishop.[33] Similarly, it has been well documented how episcopal residences became ever more complex and elegant in northern Italy in the course of the early middle ages, as bishops looked to perpetuate a public authority in their cities.[34] Further components of the episcopal group were the bishop's personal oratories, perhaps filled with various relics like the one established by Gregory at Tours,[35] and suitable accommodation for the wider clergy. These may have taken the form of separate lodgings from those of the bishop, as was perhaps the case in Cahors where Desiderius built two

[31] S. Balcon-Berry, J.-P. Caillet, F. Baratte, and D. Sandron (eds), *Des* domus ecclesiae *aux origines des palais épiscopaux. Actes de la table ronde Autun, 27-28 novembre 2009* (Turnhout, 2012).
[32] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.21.
[33] C. Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève,* vol. 2 (Geneva, 2012), pp. 54-8, 79-82, 114-15.
[34] Y.A. Murano, '"*Domus in qua manebat episcopus*: Episcopal Residences in Northern Italy During Late Antiquity (4th to 6th Centuries A.D)', in L. Lavan, L. Özgenel, and A. Sarantis (eds), *Housing in Late Antiquity. From Palaces to Shops* (Leiden and Boston 2007), pp. 97-129; M.C. Miller, *The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 16-85.
[35] K. Greschat, 'When the Saints Go Marching in: Gregory of Tours and his Domestic Oratory', *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 18-19.1 (2017), pp. 157-70. Note that Greschat confuses Tours' cathedral with the suburban basilica of Martin.

residences near the cathedral.[36] But given that a communal life was sometimes favoured by ascetically-minded bishops, the situation at Lisieux, where Bishop Aetherius appears to have shared his rooms with a number of clerics, was probably not uncommon.[37] From *atria* and refectories to perhaps even episcopal butchers and bakeries, sundry other annexes and structures would have also formed part of the episcopal group, but identifying them in the archaeological record is far from straightforward.[38] In any case, it is clear that the development of cathedral complexes was a multifaceted process, and offered a number of opportunities for individuals looking to patronage Christian buildings at the heart of Gaul's cities.

[36] Cahors 2a; *Vita Desiderii*, 16, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 547-602.
[37] Gregory, *Hist.*, VI. 36. See also W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 91-3.
[38] S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200-500. An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 155.

2.2. The cult of saints

Alongside the intra-mural transformation precipitated by the erection of episcopal groups at the heart of Gallic cities, a shift in attitudes towards the deceased during late antiquity had a similarly momentous impact on the extra-mural topography of Gaul's *civitates.* The taboos surrounding the strict separation between the living and the dead began to break down during this period, but of most significance was the Christian recognition of certain burial sites as places of considerable holiness and spiritual power; a phenomenon which was bound up with the rise of saints' cults both conceptually and numerically.[39] This process had a centrifugal effect on cities, with attention drawn to the suburban localities, where extra-mural cemeteries hosting the holy dead became increasingly monumentalised over time by patrons looking for rewards in this life and the next.[40]

Ever since the French sociologist Marcel Mauss published his hugely influential *Essai sur le Don,* anthropologists have considered property as a feature of ongoing reciprocal social relationships involving gift and counter-gift,[41] and the recent work of Peter Brown has helped to bring this aspect of the late antique Christian experience to the fore.[42] Brown argued for the growth during this period of the belief that since all wealth had come from God, it was to be used piously for religious purposes in order to restore it to its rightful place. In turn, this would bring profound and lasting benefits for the donor's *salus*.[43] In this light, the counter-gift on offer to a cleric or layperson who used their wealth to embellish a saint's burial came from beyond that tomb, an initiative described as fulfilling Christ's injunction to lay up treasure in heaven.[44] In celebrating saints through acts of building patronage, the temporal plane was joined to the spiritual one, and benefactors developed social relationships with God

[39] P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981); cf. R. van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), esp. pp. 11-14.
[40] J. Guyon, 'La topographie chrétienne des villes de la Gaule', in J.U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike - Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 121-2.
[41] M. Mauss, 'Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïquès', *L'Année sociologique* n.s., 1 (1925), pp. 30-186. C.M. Hann (ed.), *Property Relations. Renewing the Anthropological Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998).
[42] P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012); *idem*, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015). See also D. Caner, 'Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material "Blessings" in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006), pp. 329-77.
[43] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle,* p. 515.
[44] Matthew 19:21 and Luke 12:33.

and the saints on high, hoping they would act as divine intercessors in both this world and on Judgement Day.

The veneration of some Gallic martyrs whose names had been transmitted was already under way by the early fifth century, and precocious construction projects were taking place at the tombs of Genesius at Arles, Saturninus at Toulouse, Victor at Marseille, and a handful of other sites. Since Gaul had been spared the worst excesses of the Diocletianic persecution, however, a lack of local martyrs to commemorate led to devotion soon centring around the tombs of 'confessors', individuals who had failed to achieve death but who had suffered for their faith; a notion further relaxed to accommodate those whose merits had been so glaring that they would surely have faced suffering and martyrdom if only they had had the opportunity. Building patronage generally followed, and was indeed inspired by, an acceptance of an individual's holiness in the community, which manifested itself in the phenomenon of *ad sanctos* burial, whereby believers sought to be laid to rest as close to the holy dead as possible. As a result burials are often found inside and outside the walls of a basilica, sometimes even on several levels, as the rows of densely packed sarcophagi unearthed during the excavation of the rue Malaval basilica at Marseille illustrate.[45] It seems that such behaviour may have been underpinned by a desire to maximise the chance of heavenly intercession – despite Augustine's attempts to downplay the importance of being buried close to a holy tomb – but the social status that an individual and their family probably accrued on account of proximity to a special burial cannot be ignored either. In this vein, Marios Costambeys has even suggested that association with a particular church in late antique Rome, rather than necessarily any relics that were present, was in itself enough of a draw for wealthy Christians to seek a nearby burial for themselves.[46]

[45] M. Moliner, 'Note sur les fouilles de la rue Malaval à Marseille', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 154.3 (2010), pp. 1247-64.
[46] M. Costambeys, 'Burial Topography and the Power of the Church in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Rome', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 69 (2001), p. 180.

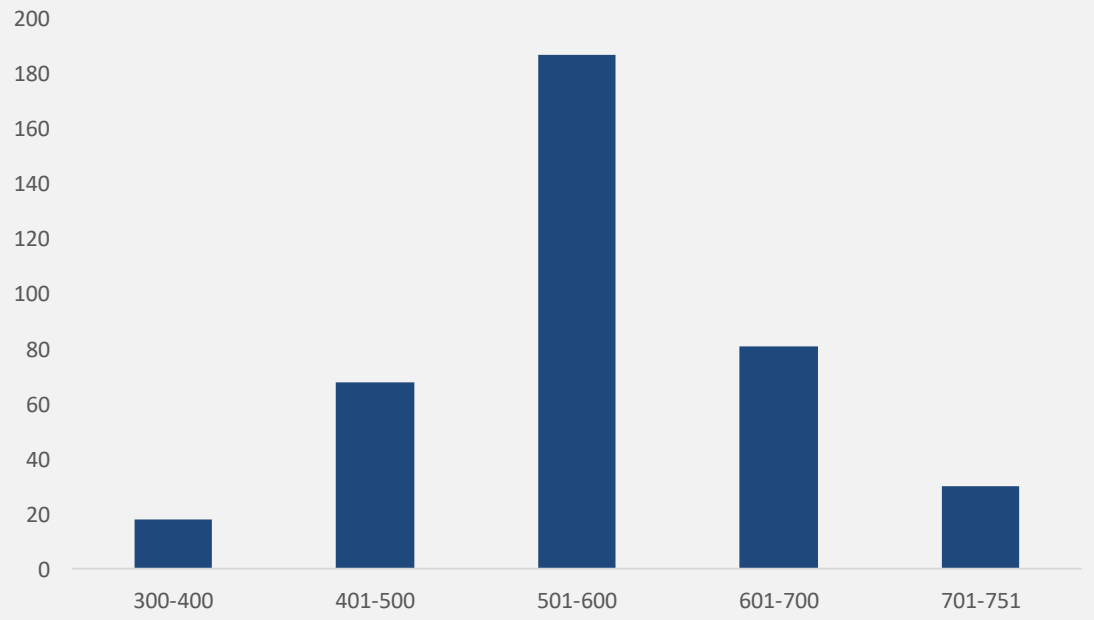


Fig. 2. The attested acts of building patronage celebrating the cult of saints in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751.

By the sixth century, a combination of bishops celebrating predecessors who in many cases were also family members, and communities 'discovering' the body of a venerable local individual to serve as a divine patron during a period of social tumult, had given rise to a veritable menagerie of revered tombs and cults. Fig. 2 suggests that the growing numbers of the 'very special dead' saw a corresponding acceleration in the rate of accompanying building patronage.[47] A burial deemed worthy of veneration might in the first instance receive a covering and become a simple *memoria* or *oratorium*, where one could come and pray. This would perhaps then develop into a rather modest church, sometimes referred to as a *cella* or *cellula.* These humble, and often wooden, constructions usually appear in sources as a contrast to the sumptuous stone basilicas that generally succeeded them, but while they may have therefore served as a literary vehicle for authors at times, it is worth acknowledging that a great deal more probably went unrecorded given their impermanent nature. Depending on the profile of the individual honoured, however, or the wealth and ambitions of sponsors, a site might be progressively upgraded over time, and attain the status of somewhere like St Martin's at Tours.[48] By the end of the fifth century, the church marking the burial of Martin measured 53m x 20m and possessed no fewer

[47] For the 'very special dead', see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 69-86.
[48] M. Weidemann, *Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours* (2 vols, Mainz, 1982), pp. 145-51.

than 120 columns, 52 windows, 8 doors, and two *atria.* In Gregory of Tours' day, it also sheltered a number of ancillary buildings, including a baptistery, oratories, clerical lodgings, and two female monastic communities.[49] Mirroring the episcopal groups of Gaul in their monumentality and range of buildings, these grandiose funerary basilicas came to integrate the suburban environs into the urban Christian core. Their important role during feast days and processions, for example, was instrumental in transforming civic conceptions of time and space.[50]

While the cult of saints principally inspired acts of building patronage in the suburbs of Gaul's cities, the practice also had an intra-mural presence that seems to have similarly expanded over time. The commemoration of the dead beyond the city walls during late antiquity was rooted in Roman taboos regarding the presence of the deceased within residential and public space. Although there is some evidence, largely from Italian towns, of urban burials between the fourth and seventh centuries,[51] inhumation generally remained an extra-mural affair in Gaul. The boundaries between the living and dead were blurred slightly by relics which began to appear within episcopal groups from the fourth century, but these were *brandea,* items that had belonged to a saint or had been in contact with one. The relics that Bishop Victricius (…386-404…) received from Ambrose of Milan and placed in the cathedral he had built in Rouen, for example, were a little dust impregnated with the blood of some Italian martyrs.[52]

Similar relics proliferated throughout the fifth century and increasingly found their way into private episcopal oratories and the domestic urban sanctuaries of the laity.[53] These spaces would have generally contained little more than an altar and a simple reliquary, and probably had much in common with the

[49] L. Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 372-405.
[50] Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, AD 481-751* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 82-120.
[51] G. Cantino Wataghin, 'The Ideology of Urban Burial', in G.P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (eds), *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 147-80.
[52] G. Clarke, 'Translating Relics: Victricius of Rouen and Fourth-Century Debate', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001), pp. 161-76.
[53] Gregory, *Hist.,* VII.31.

oratories built to honour saints at city gates,[54] which provided a symbolic representation of the belief that a holy warrior stood guard at the service of the Christian community sheltered within the walls.[55]

Outside of these humble urban affairs, intra-mural cult sites distinct from episcopal groups were generally rare, but there are some examples from the late sixth century of basilicas erected within the city walls in honour of local and universal saints' cults. At Toulouse, for example, a church was established in the middle of the sixth century on the city's Capitol, the apparent site of the martyrdom of Saturninus.[56] While at Arles, the intra-mural convent founded by Bishop Caesarius was developed by the addition of two churches in honour of the Holy Cross and the archangel Michael in around 600 CE.[57] On the whole, however, the limited evidence for patrons mobilising their resources to celebrate the cult of saints through acts of building patronage in this way suggests the practice was very much a suburban enterprise in the cities of Gaul.

[54] Martin and the archangel Michael were particularly popular in this regard. See Amiens (*TCCG* XIV, pp. 151-2), Metz (*TCCG* I, p. 46), Paris (*TCCG* VIII, p. 114), Rouen (*TCCG* IX, p. 33), Le Mans (*TCCG* V, p. 50; XVI, p. 131), Reims (*TCCG* XVI, p. 40) and Poitiers (*TCCG* X, p. 88; XVI, p. 223).
[55] Gregory of Tours, *Vitae Patrum*, XVII.4, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 211-94.
[56] Toulouse 6a; Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, II.8, ed. and tr. M. Roberts, *Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 2017).
[57] See, for example, Arles 8a, 8b.

2.3. Monasticism

The forms of monastic living in late antiquity were variable, and encompassed the eremitism of recluses, the communal life of clerics around the bishop, and the institutional coenobitism of followers of a rule. Aside from perhaps the archetypal hermit in a cave, all would have entailed some degree of Christian building patronage, but the emergence of monasticism in Gaul was relatively slow. One of the region's first practitioners, Saint Martin, learnt his trade in Italy, before establishing himself near Poitiers and then famously at Marmoutier, just across the Loire, while bishop of Tours in the later fourth century.[58] Like Martin's foundation, the famous island community of Lérins, established off Fréjus in c. 410 by the aristocrat Honoratus, was probably not an echo of the wild, desolate, and isolated places inhabited by the pioneering desert-dwellers of Egypt either.[59] A number of Lérinian alumni entered the Gallic episcopate, but notwithstanding the foundations at Arles and Marseille of Caesarius and John Cassian, who was a friend of the community, the sometimes oblique descriptions of the monastic activities of the island's former residents mean that it is unclear to what extent their literary self-propagation was necessarily reflected in the topography of Gaul's *civitas*-capitals.[60] There were also a number of important monastic centers which emerged across Burgundy during this period,[61] but we have to wait until the sixth and seventh centuries for a real flowering of urban and suburban monasticism in Gaul (fig. 3).[62]

[58] Tours 14a.
[59] M.C. Figuinha, '*Pro qualitate loci et instantia laboris*: Monasteries and their Human and Natural Environments in Late Antique Gaul', *Medieval Worlds* 9 (2019), pp. 82-111; S. Pricoco, *L'isola dei santi: il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico* (Rome, 1978).
[60] Arles 6a, 15a; Marseille 8a, 9a.
[61] I.N. Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories', in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan (eds), *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 3-32.
[62] M. Gaillard and C. Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain au haut Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 124.1 (2012), pp. 27-37; H. Atsma, 'Les monastères urbains du nord de la Gaule', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 62 (1976), p. 168.

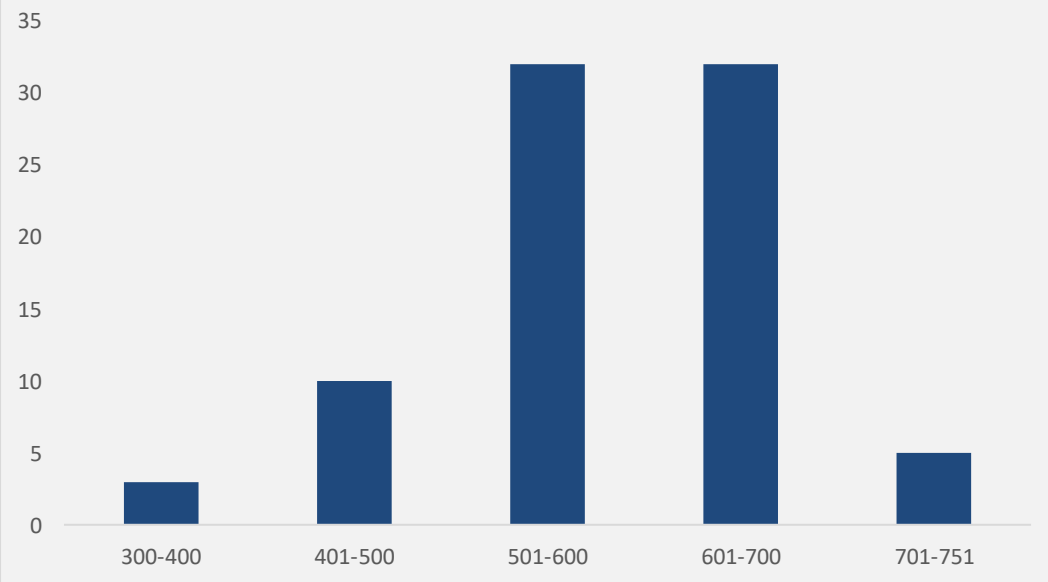


Fig. 3. The attested acts of monastic patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751.

The documented origins of early monastic communities generally concern an ascetic who retires to a humble residence (*cella*) and subsequently attracts a number of disciples, whose sober existence they oversee as *abbas* or *abbatissa*. In many cases these modest communities did not survive the death of their founder, and disappeared without leaving any trace in the urban or suburban topography. Depending on the perceived holiness of the individual concerned, however, sometimes the small hermitage and any eager proteges received lay and/or episcopal backing, and become a veritable monastery. Alternatively, as lay interest in monasticism grew in earnest from the sixth century, monasteries were increasingly established from the outset by powerful secular magnates and well-heeled bishops as institutions of spiritual importance and vehicles to benefit family members and the management of patrimonial estates. This was especially the case in the seventh century, but the growing influence of what is often referred to as 'Columbanian' monasticism on the mentality of the Christian elites in the later Merovingian period was not exactly a city-friendly development.[63] Studies have regularly demonstrated how monasteries were increasingly found in the surrounding countryside during this period, with individuals seeking greater control over their sanctity and resources away from the urban strongholds of the bishops. Consequently, the monastic patronage of the later Merovingian

[63] S. Bully *et al.* (eds), *Colomban et son influence: moines et monastères du haut Moyen Âge en Europe* (Rennes, 2018).

kingdoms is usually considered from a rural perspective, with particular focus on the fantastically wealthy foundations of Luxeuil, Nivelles, Remiremont, Echternach, *et cetera*.[64] In contrast, the prevalence of monasticism in the cities during this period, and the motivations of its practitioners and patrons, has been comparatively overlooked, with the impetus, extent, and consequences of any possible decline in urban and suburban investment rarely given due attention.

In reality, the monastic patronage of the seventh century was by no means exclusively a rural affair, as fig. 3 makes clear. Although perhaps not on the same scale as before, the upper echelons of Frankish society, and particularly the bishops, who remained resolutely urban figures, continued to engage with the cities as arenas for pious display, and monasticism was an important outlet for benefaction in this regard. The opportunities that urban monasticism afforded to patrons were especially embraced by noblewomen, for example, who were often looking to demonstrate their piety and status following the death of their husband. Another development in this period was the increasingly common practice of monastic communities being established at or near to existing funerary basilicas.[65] In this way, the maintenance and material protection of suburban sanctuaries and tombs would be assured, and prayers of intercession for the deceased guaranteed. Alternatively, the foundation of both might have been contemporaneous. Bishop Desiderius (636-655), for example, founded a monastery in honour of Amantius of Rodez to the west of Cahors, and built a neighboring church in which he prepared his tomb.[66] One of the most interesting monastic phenomena evident during the seventh century, not least for its apparent regional specificity, was the enthusiasm shown by some Merovingian elites for installing monasteries in disused Roman edifices, both inside and outside a city's walls, as was the case at Trier, Metz and Cologne.[67]

[64] Y. Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014).
[65] Queen Balthild intervened in a number of such communities in the early seventh century, see P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 109-10.
[66] Cahors 11a, 11b; *Vita Desiderii*, 20, 31.
[67] Trier 4a; Cologne 6a.

While the geographic spread of monastic communities as a whole tended to skew towards northern Gaul,[68] this distribution is less pronounced for urban and suburban monasticism specifically, with the initial multiplication of communities in the south of Gaul later balanced out by the Merovingian embrace of the practice in their northern heartlands. There is, however, a greater disparity within provinces. This may be the result of our surviving source base, but it does appear that institutions tended to proliferate in cities with a monastic tradition. By the eighth century, nearly twenty communities are attested in Viennensis, for example, but these are split between Arles, Marseille, and Vienne only. The location of foundations within cities does seem to have been more consistent, and generally gender-based.[69] Male monasteries were far more likely to be a suburban entity, often grafted onto a pre-existing funerary basilica, than to be found *intra muros*. In contrast, the security provided by a city's enclosure was probably a major factor in the general siting of female monasteries inside walls. Of those convents found outside the *enceinte*, most were either very close to the ramparts, or established within the relative security of the atrium of a nearby church, such as the two female foundations known at Saint Martin's of Tours.[70]

Although female monastic communities may have generally been intra-mural institutions, tradition dictated that their members continued to be buried beyond the city walls. To this end, monastic building often entailed the parallel establishment of an accompanying funerary basilica for the nuns, such as those built in the sixth century by Bishop Caesarius and Queen Radegund at Arles and Poitiers respectively.[71] One solution to convent rules that required strict enclosure, however, is indicated at Metz, where a funerary church was erected in the seventh century outside the city's rampart but essentially contiguous with the monastery, which was accessible through a hole in the wall.[72] Monastic ventures were thus often closely aligned with the veneration of the cult of saints, and this blurring of building categories will become more evident over the course of this study.

[68] See the maps in F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung* (Munich, 1988), pp. 665-83.
[69] *TCCG* XVI, pp. 386-91.
[70] Tours 7a, 11a; Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.33, X.12; *VP*, XIX.2.
[71] Poitiers 7a; Arles 10a.
[72] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', pp. 389-91.

2.4. Pastoral care

The extant conciliar legislation suggests that the wellbeing of the local Christian community, and especially the poor and infirm, was one of the great preoccupations of the late antique church.[73] An argument can thus be made that nearly all construction undertaken in the cities of Gaul throughout this period by members of the episcopate was of a Christian nature, given that it was underpinned by a concern for the welfare of the civic *populus*. This was especially the case during the upheaval of the fifth and sixth centuries, when recurrent warfare and political breakdown hastened the emergence of the bishop as a major civic patron, a role which seems to have extended to the maintenance of the urban fabric. Later Merovingian bishops also often had backgrounds at the royal courts as government administrators, and this experience was undoubtedly utilised in the running of their cities and the completion of civil infrastructure projects, as episcopal involvement in the restoration of the water supply of Cahors,[74] or the rebuilding of city walls and houses at Autun attests.[75] The limited prestige when compared to cathedrals and funerary basilicas, however, coupled with the probably routine nature of this facet of the bishop's role, means that this aspect of building patronage may have been underreported by our sources. Nevertheless, as the next chapter on clerical patrons will contend, since care for one's community was central to the Christian message, financing civil construction work to achieve this endeavour should be included under the banner of Christian building patronage.

[73] P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, N.H. and London, 2002), pp. 45-73. See also V. Neri, *I marginali nell'Occidente tardoantico: poveri, "infames" e criminali nella nascente società cristiana* (Bari, 1998), pp. 83-132.
[74] Desiderius of Cahors, *Epistulae,* 1.13, ed. D. Norberg, *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensia* 6 (Stockholm, 1961), with J. Durliat, 'Les attributions civiles des évêques Mérovingiens: L'exemple de Didier, Évêque de Cahors (630-655)', *Annales du Midi* 91 (1979), pp. 237-54.
[75] *Passio Leudegarii I,* 2, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 282-322.

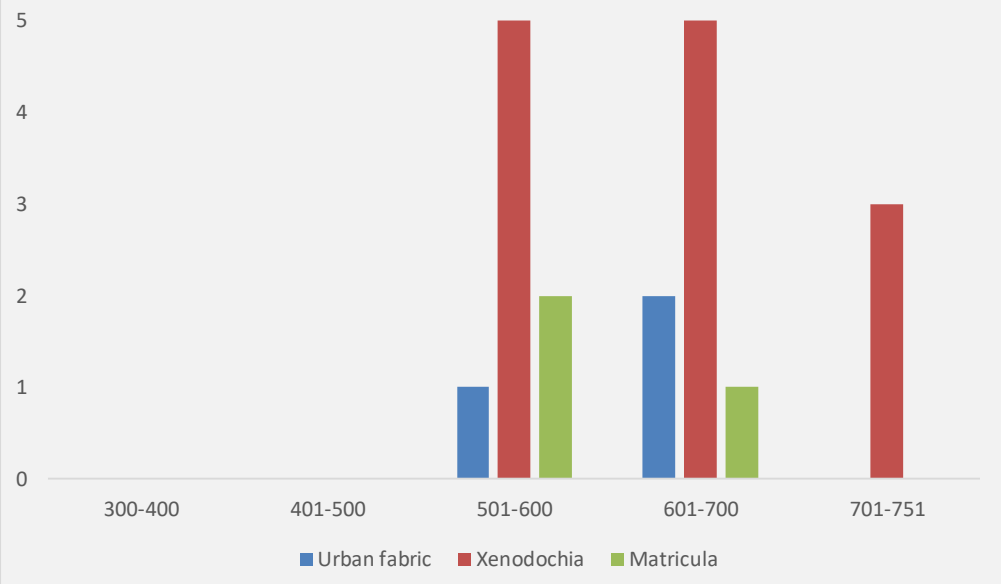


Fig. 4. The attested acts of building patronage facilitating the provision of pastoral care in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751.

Alongside this more general building activity, ecclesiastical leaders also financed specific institutions of charity to assist in the provision of pastoral care.[76] The less glamourous nature of this building patronage again perhaps explains the relatively minimal interest shown by the written record, and why, outside of one or two high-profile examples, lay actors appear to have only rarely deployed their resources in this way in the public arena.[77] These institutions of assistance are attested in the written record under the titles of *xenodochium, matricula*, and sometimes *hospitium*, but except perhaps at Autun,[78] no such establishments have been identified in the material record; a task which is admittedly complicated by their lack of identifiable archaeological features. The most commonly mentioned are the *xenodochia,* which appear in Gallic sources from the middle of the sixth century, rather later than in the East.[79] Around a dozen such establishments are securely attested in cities, under various guises: *xenodochium, sinodochium, sinodoxium, exinodochium, senodociolum*.[80] In the etymological sense of the word, a city's *xenodochium* would have provided lodgings for strangers, but, in reality, the formula

[76] P. Horden, 'Public Health, Hospitals, and Charity', in Effros and Moreira (eds), *Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, pp. 299-319.
[77] Autun 7a; Lyon 10a; and perhaps Reims 22a.
[78] *TCCG* XVI, p. 50.
[79] T.S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore, 1985).
[80] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', p. 391.

was rather flexible. Like in Lombard Italy,[81] the prevailing character seems to be of a small institution with a limited number of beds for hosting the sick, poor, or pilgrims. References to these establishments suggest that they were generally dependent on a church or monastery, and so were probably overseen by Gaul's clerics.

In contrast to these proto-hospitals, we are on less sure ground when assessing the level of building patronage presupposed by textual references to the *matriculae* of Gaul, which similarly first appear in the course of the sixth century. Although always of an ecclesiastical nature, the notion of the term *matricula* or *matricola* seems to have evolved over the course of the sixth century to refer to the register of those individuals who were permitted to receive daily relief from the local church. Indeed, in 567, the Council of Tours made it clear that each city was responsible for supporting its own poor,[82] with these *matricularii* distinguished from the 'other poor' (*reliqui pauperes*), who had presumably arrived from out of town, perhaps as pilgrims in the pursuit of spiritual healing.[83] This relief was delivered by both the faithful, who donated alms in silver or in kind, and also the local church, which utilised the revenue of its often extensive landholdings to provide succour to its most vulnerable members. It seems reasonable to imagine that this process required premises to store donations and act as a base from which individuals could oversee eligibility for alms and the receipt and distribution thereof. The term may have thus applied both to the official register and to an accompanying building constructed to facilitate charitable provision. Our sources are generally ambiguous in this regard, however, and the archaeology is of little further help. Nevertheless, the ensuing analysis of Gaul's ecclesiastics, who largely seem to have been responsible for such institutions, will argue that we probably should consider the financing of a *matricula* to have also entailed an act of building patronage.

[81] Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, pp. 56-8.
[82] Council of Tours (567), c. 5.
[83] Gregory, *Hist.*, VII.29.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is possible to distinguish between four major categories of Christian buildings patronised by Gallic society during late antiquity and the early middle ages. The first of these was the episcopal groups of Gaul, which emerged in the course of the fourth century and came to comprise at least one church, a baptistery, residences for the bishop and clerics, and sundry annexes. While these complexes focussed conceptions of civic space on the urban core of the city, their centripetal effect was offset by the ring of funerary basilicas erected in honour of the cult of saints in suburban cemeteries located beyond the city walls. This veneration also had an urban presence, most often in the form of domestic oratories, or, less commonly, intra-mural cult sites detached from the episcopal group. The third category of building gave rise to the monasteries that facilitated acts of communal asceticism in both urban and suburban zones. The final focus of building patronage was slightly more nebulous, underpinned as it was by a general interest in the pastoral care of the civic community. To this end, patrons financed the upkeep of the urban fabric and civil infrastructure, as well as charitable institutions that safeguarded the welfare of the poor and sick.

It is important to note, however, that these building categories were not necessarily discrete. To achieve their aims in this world and the next, benefactors had to decide how best to mobilise their resources in the cities, and so sometimes blurred the parameters of patronage delineated above accordingly. Depending on the ascetic leanings of a city's bishop, for example, the clergy might follow the *vita communis* within the episcopal group. It was not uncommon, moreover, to find relics deposited in the cathedral or the bishop's private chapel. Episcopal groups also played host to *xenodochia* and *matriculae*, both of which might equally have been found connected to a monastery or funerary basilica. Meanwhile, churches and oratories celebrating favoured saints were often present within monastic complexes, and communities of ascetics were semi-regularly founded at existing suburban churches. We must be mindful not to overlook these occasional points of intersection, but the four categories distinguished here will nevertheless serve as a useful framework for organising our evidence for the patron groups who remodelled Gaul's urban and suburban topography along Christian lines, and the underlying motivations that drove this transformation. The next three chapters will therefore consider

the professional Christians, laity, and imperial and royal rulers of Gaul in turn, and determine how such individuals and groups from across the social spectrum worked within these parameters, and what this says about the society of the time.

3. Ecclesiastical patrons

The most active patrons to appear in our sources are Gaul's religious specialists, including the region's holders of clerical office and fulltime ascetics, but especially the bishops. In total, members of the episcopate were involved in 198 of the 220 attested acts of building, enlargement, embellishment, and repair undertaken by churchmen and women. These projects were carried out in Gaul against the backdrop of a disintegrating western Roman Empire and the emergence of new polities in the form of 'barbarian' kingdoms. Notwithstanding occasional vacancies and periods of exile, the Gallic bishops were present throughout this transition, benefitting from the durability of an administrative hierarchy that outlived the imperial superstructure upon which it was modelled. In fact, the bishop has often been considered to have emerged from the turmoil as one of the most powerful figures within the Merovingian kingdoms. Their rise to prominence has been traced back to the conversion of Constantine, and features as an integral part of 'Christianization' narratives. These assessments portray an inevitable march of Christian progress during late antiquity, and consider the church's predominance in public life during this period to be the logical outcome of its enormous wealth, and the relatively rapid and seamless absorption of the Roman senatorial aristocracy within ecclesiastical structures.

As well as ensuring the 'triumph' of Christianity, it has been argued that the merging of Roman and Christian elites in Gaul was hugely beneficial for the aristocrats themselves because, by monopolising the bishoprics, they could perpetuate their elite status and even enhance their authority through the medium of episcopal office.[1] While by no means a new idea,[2] the belief that bishops were able to operate in their local communities as quasi-monarchs is one that still holds considerable sway.[3] This viewpoint is particularly associated with the notion of *Bischofsherrschaft*, an idea developed in German scholarship by historians who have argued that bishops were not only concerned with the spiritual

[1] R. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin, 1993), pp. 90-103.
[2] C. Pfister, 'Gaul Under the Merovingian Franks', in H.M. Gwatkin and J.P. Whitney (eds), *The Cambridge Medieval History* vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1913), p. 144; S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London, 1926), p. 359.
[3] Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats,* pp. 93-4; R. Lizzi Testa, 'The Late Antique Bishop: Image and Reality', in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), p. 527. On the 'épiscopat monarchique', see J. Gaudemet, *L'église dans l'Empire Romain* (Paris, 1958), pp. 322-68.

welfare of their communities, but also heavily involved in a range of ostensibly secular activities, and thus able to lord it over civil society. Although such work is generally focussed on the high middle ages, it has been argued that this state of affairs was present in Gaul from the fifth century.[4]

In addition to ideas of senatorial aristocrats, in their new role as bishops, enjoying unchecked secular rule within the civic vacuum of the local arena, it has been assumed at times that a bishop's power during this period was rooted in the considerable authority that his holiness and office afforded him, and, by extension, the deference with which he was regarded by the rest of society. Indeed, Peter Brown once remarked that 'senatorial blood, episcopal office and sanctity presented a formidable united front'.[5] Such interpretations tend to conceive of bishops as powerful by virtue of their position, with sanctity and spiritual authority inherently bound up in episcopal office to such an extent that bishops automatically commanded the respect of secular leaders. In the most recent wide-ranging analysis in this mould, Claudia Rapp made extensive use of patristic works, hagiography, and epitaphs in order to construct her tripartite model of episcopal authority: pragmatic, spiritual, and ascetic.[6]

These arguments have become increasingly contested, however. Indeed, it seems possible that when combined with the prescriptive nature of the legal texts that delineated episcopal responsibilities, the common portrayal in the written record of a holy and noble bishop endowed with considerable authority has shaped our perception of the episcopate to such an extent that it has distorted our understanding of contemporary realities. It is obviously useful for our purposes to identify model conduct and appreciate how bishops wished their actions and status to be received, but we must not let the exceptional supplant the average, and the reality of episcopal actions and authority be overshadowed by normative ideals or

[4] F. Prinz, 'Die Bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert' *Historische Zeitschrift* 217 (1974), pp. 1-35; M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien. Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7* (Munich, 1976); *idem*, 'Bischof und Herrschaft vom spätantiken Gallien bis zu den karolingischen Hausmeiern. Die institutionellen Grundlagen', in F. Prinz (ed.), *Herrschaft und Kirche: Beiträge zur Entstehung und Wirkungsweise episkopaler und monasticscher Organizationsformen* (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 23-82; *idem, Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), p. 190.

[5] P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London, 1972), p. 131. This is a view that Brown later revised: *Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours* (Reading, 1977), pp. 19-20; *idem, Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012), p. 506.

[6] C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2005).

aggrandising. One way to address this issue is to try and discern, wherever possible, concrete examples of episcopal behaviour, and consider why bishops chose to act in such a way. In this regard, the textual and material evidence we have for the episcopate devoting time, energy, and resources to both monumental and utilitarian Christian building projects offers a useful window into not only episcopal comportment and its underlying motivations, but also the role and status of bishops within Gallic society. Such an approach will thus build on the recent work of Steffen Patzold and others in re-evaluating some of the assumptions inherent in arguments that a climate of *Bischofsherrschaft* soon followed in the wake of an early aristocratic monopolisation of Gaul's bishoprics.[7]

It is with this aim in mind that this chapter will examine what bishops were building, how it was being financed, and what impetus drove the urban and suburban topographical transformation that they spearheaded. This will enable an analysis of the role that building patronage played in the relationship between the bishop and his local community, and help us to understand whether these acts functioned as means for expressing an assured and domineering status, or were in fact an attempt to claim a social authority that was often contested. In order to address these issues, the involvement of bishops and their fellow clerics in Christian building patronage dedicated to episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monasticism, and pastoral care will be considered in turn.

It will ultimately be argued that the bishop was the civic patron par excellence. Acts of building patronage were essential to facilitate the liturgy, collective worship, preaching, baptism, and community care demanded by his role, not to mention his own pursuit of *salus* and need to honour the divine backing that he received from God and the assorted saints on high. Over time, the significant wealth that the bishop could call upon to bring about such projects, and the resolutely urban nature of his

[7] S. Patzold, 'Zur Sozialstruktur des Episkopats und zur Ausbildung bischöflicher Herrschaft in Gallien zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter', in M. Becker and S. Dick (eds), *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2010), pp. 121-40; *idem*, 'Die Bischöfe im Gallien der Transformationszeit: eine sozial homogene Gruppe von Amsträgern?', in S. Brather, H.U. Nuber, H. Steuer and T. Zotz (eds), *Antike im Mittelalter. Fortleben, Nachwirken, Wahrnehmung* (Ostfildern, 2014), pp. 179-93; *idem*, 'Bischöfe, soziale Herkunft und die Organisation lokaler Herrschaft um 500', in M. Meier and S. Patzold (eds), *Chlodwigs Welt. Organisation von Herrschaft um 500* (Stuttgart, 2014), pp. 523-43; S. Diefenbach, '"Bischofsherrschaft". Zur Transformation der politischen Kultur im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Gallien', in S. Diefenbach and G.M. Müller (eds), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Kulturgeschichte einer Region* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 91-152.

position, meant that he emerged as the city's most recognizable resident potentate. In demonstrating this, it will be acknowledged, however, that episcopal authority was never totally secure nor unchallenged during this period, and this was especially so during the upheaval of the fifth and sixth centuries. Both lavish and pragmatic building projects were thus an important tool for an individual who claimed leadership of the local community by seeking to guarantee its spiritual and physical health.

3.1. Episcopal groups

The physical heart of a Christian community in the city was its episcopal group, which functioned as the seat of the presiding bishop. This section will consider how this product of both monumental and pragmatic patronage developed in Gaul from an initial core of a nondescript private meeting space to become an extensive complex, which often dominated the surrounding urban area, and generally comprised at least one church, a baptistery, episcopal and clerical residences, reception rooms, private oratories, and numerous additional annexes. This transformation and its associated financing is perhaps the easiest of all Christian building to pin down thanks to the nature of the extant sources, which often closely associated bishops with cathedrals and served to promote the actions of the episcopate. Nevertheless, there are important questions to address regarding the scale and cost of this building across Gaul, its chronology, and whether it was undertaken independently by bishops, or came about through the co-ordination of donations furnished by lay backers. It is also valuable to consider how far the incessant Christian patronage underway at the heart of the urban area from the middle of the fifth century was a necessary component of episcopal behaviour expected by local communities, or one bishops undertook in order to assert their claimed authority and leave a lasting mark on their cities. The two are by no means mutually exclusive, and so to put it another way, what drove bishops to endow cathedral complexes with a monumentality that in many cases far surpassed what would have probably been sufficient to fulfil their fundamental duties?

A slow start

As fig. 5 reveals below, the patronage of Gaul's episcopal groups by identifiable clerics is continuous across the period, but there is nevertheless an observable peak during the sixth century, and a relative decline during the later Merovingian era. While the late sixth-century work of Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus may distort this index of frequency due to its relative abundance, it is worth noting that the later Merovingian kingdoms do benefit from a hagiographic corpus unrivalled in the West, and the material record remains a useful corrective across late and post-imperial Gaul. Moreover, the

qualitative analysis of the written and material evidence that follows will show that the graph's overall trend mirrors the level of ambition shown by ecclesiastical patrons, with the most extensive projects undertaken during the fifth and sixth centuries.

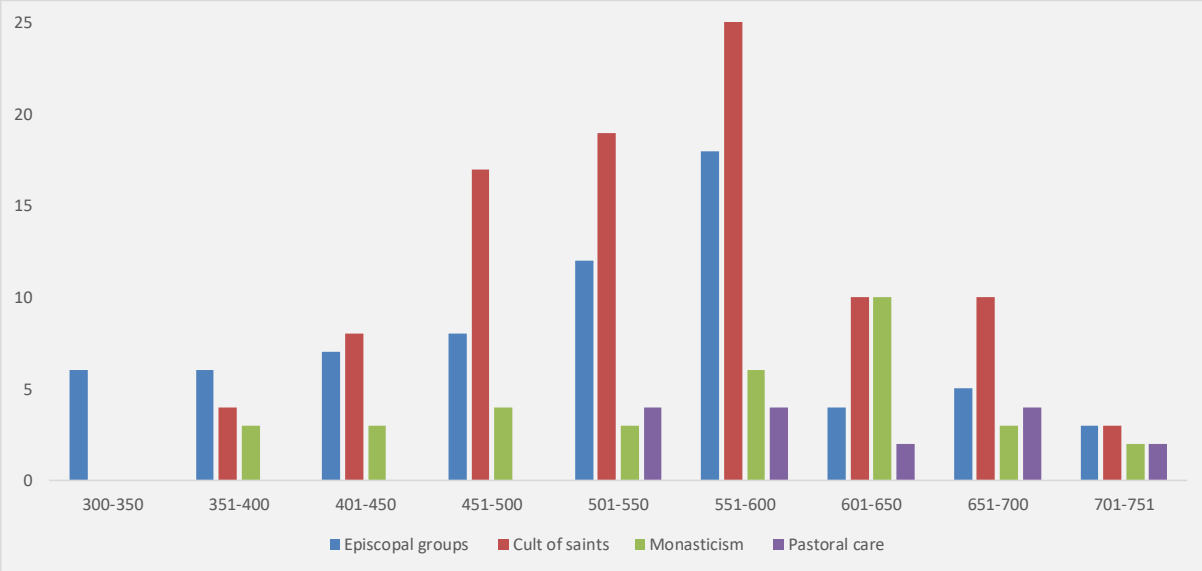


Fig. 5. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751 involving an ecclesiastical patron.

Contrary to the claims of some 'Christianisation' narratives, Christian building does not seem to have been carried out in the cities of Gaul on a large scale before this period, since the institutional church remained weak and starved of resources. The conversion of the aristocracy has long been a subject of debate, but it was only really in the course of the fourth century that a significant swathe of the upper echelons of society gradually became Christian.[8] As Frank Gilliard has demonstrated, however, this process by no means heralded the immediate embrace of episcopal office by the most influential in Gaul.[9] Many of those aristocrats who had adopted the new religion, moreover, did not covet the episcopal sees, or even support their local bishop financially, but seem to have instead preferred to funnel their money into domestic Christian building on their rural estates during this period.[10] Coupled

[8] M.R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy. Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2002); cf. R. Mathisen, 'The Christianization of the Late Roman Senatorial Order: Circumstances and Scholarship', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 9 (2002-2003), pp. 257-78.
[9] F.D. Gilliard, 'Senatorial Bishops of the Fourth Century', *The Harvard Theological Review* 77.2 (1984), pp. 153-75. For the slow Christianisation of Gaul, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 22-36.
[10] K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 129-58, 179-87.

with the additional problem of a lack of available urban space in some late Roman cities,[11] these financial constraints served to hinder the ability of the episcopate to develop Gaul's fledging cathedral complexes in the fourth and early fifth centuries.[12] This contrasts to some extent with the picture provided by Rita Lizzi Testa of northern Italy, and especially Aquileia, in this early period.[13] Here, the city's fourth-century bishops, beginning with Theodore (308-19) and culminating with Chromatius (388-408), who may have modelled his building activity on that of Bishop Ambrose of Milan, were able to get the local aristocracy on side, and, as a result, churches proliferated across the urban landscape and beyond.

Despite the paucity of similar evidence in Gaul, it seems reasonable to believe that by the start of the fifth century, most cities would have sheltered some kind of building from where the bishop could operate, as well as a space for baptism. There are, however, only hints in the material and written record of what such facilities might have comprised. A Christian community is attested at Rouen for the first time in 314, for example, when Bishop Avitianus and a deacon by the name of Nicetius attended the Council of Arles.[14] The archaeological evidence suggests that the first church of Rouen's episcopal group was also built around this time or soon after, on the site of a house bordering the city's *decumanus*, where a rectangular basilica (25m x 15m) appears to have been constructed at the start of the fourth century.[15] The baths of the former *domus* were apparently conserved and converted into a contemporaneous baptistery. Although attributing acts of building patronage to a see's well-known bishops is generally to be avoided, it is certainly tempting to associate this initial cathedral and baptistery ensemble with Avitianus, who, in his role as the city's first recognised member of the episcopate, would have wanted a suitable space for his congregation to gather. By the end of the fourth century, this initial act of urban patronage appears to have been mirrored to the south by Bishop

[11] S.T. Loseby, 'Bishops and Cathedrals: Order and Diversity in the Fifth-Century Urban Landscape of Southern Gaul' in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992) pp. 150-5.
[12] Only around fifteen sites to date have yielded archaeological evidence for episcopal groups in this period, see *TCCG* XVI, pp. 364-5.
[13] R. Lizzi Testa, *Vescovi e strutture ecclesiastiche nella città tardoantica: l'Italia Annonaria nel IV-V secolo d.C.* (Como, 1989), pp. 139-69.
[14] *PCBE* 4, Avitianvs 1, pp. 239-40; Nicetivs 1, p. 1367.
[15] Rouen 1a. Dating is courtesy of the numismatic and ceramic evidence: *TCCG,* XVI, pp. 246-7; J. Chameroy, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale de Rouen (1985-1993)*, vol. 1, *Le numéraire antique* (Rouen, 2013).

Victricius, who erected a basilica to house relics of Vitalis and Agricola he had received from Ambrose of Milan.[16] This second church was seemingly joined to its neighbour by an atrium, thereby forming a typical episcopal complex.[17]

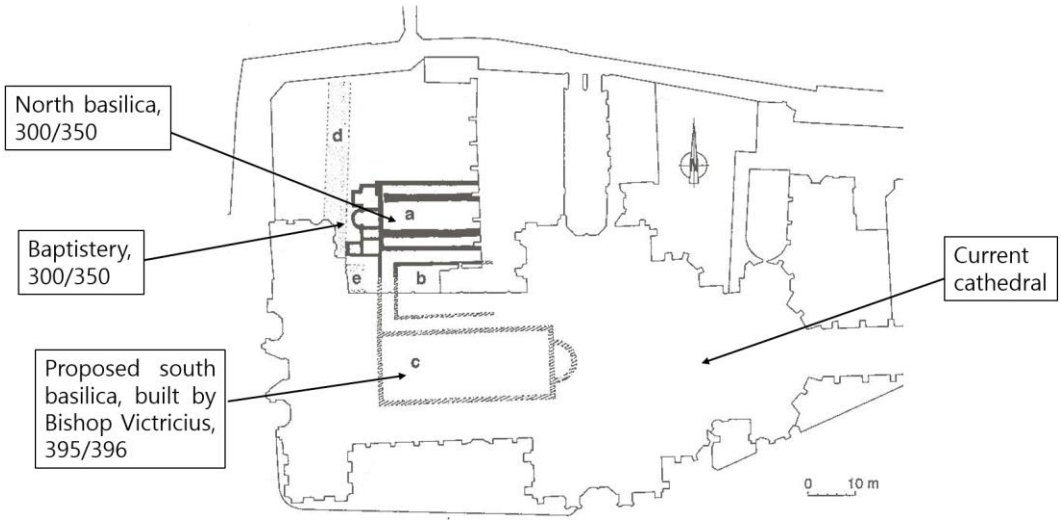


Fig. 6. The fourth-century episcopal group of Rouen (adapted from Le Maho, *Archéologie médiévale* 24 (1994), p. 10).

In addition to the complex at Rouen, and similar fourth-century examples from cities such as Geneva and Lyon,[18] the written record also contains a few incidental references to early elements of episcopal groups. An inscription commemorating the restoration of the cathedral of Narbonne in the middle of the fifth century mentions that a preceding church had been destroyed by fire,[19] and at Orléans, Bishop Anianus (…451-454) apparently enlarged a cathedral that was probably built several decades earlier, during the fourth century.[20] We also possess some more detailed – but less contemporary – accounts outlining episcopal involvement in the house conversions that were perhaps characteristic of Gaul's early cathedral complexes.[21] It seems from these sources that bishops initially had little choice but to

[16] Rouen 1b; Victricius of Rouen, *De Laude Sanctorum,* 2, 12, ed. J. Mulders and R. Demeulenaere, *Corpus Christianorum* 64 (1984), pp. 53-93.
[17] J. Le Maho, 'Les fouilles de la cathédrale de Rouen de 1985 à 1993. Esquisse d'un premier bilan', *Archéologie médiévale* 24 (1994), pp. 1-49.
[18] C. Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève,* vol. 2. *Les édifices chrétiens et le groupe épiscopal* (Geneva, 2012), pp. 19-61; J.-F. Reynaud and F. Richard, 'Le groupe épiscopal de Lyon, IVe-XVe siècles', in P. Barbarin (ed.), *La grâce d'une cathédrale. Lyon primatiale des Gaules* (Strasbourg, 2011), pp. 24-41.
[19] *CIL* XII, 5336.
[20] Orléans 1a.
[21] Gregory, *Hist.,* I.31; Stephanus Africanus, *Vita S. Amatoris,* 18-21, ed. *AA SS,* Mai. I (1860). See p. 134.

rely on the generosity of any available local backers who could be persuaded to put their resources at the service of the church. This lay patronage will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, but we must acknowledge that for much of the fourth century a narrow pool of willing benefactors, and an as yet under-resourced episcopate meant that, in Gaul at least, the rapid topographical transformation sometimes envisaged as following in the wake of Constantine's conversion seems unlikely.

Revamps and rebuilds

It is not until the fifth and especially the sixth century that we begin to see a real transformation in the financial fortunes of the church,[22] and a consequent upgrade and expansion of Gaul's cathedral complexes. The first part of this period saw both the disintegration of imperial rule in the region and the advent of the church as a growing institutional force. These developments are arguably connected, as the power of the church was to some extent underpinned by an increasing embrace of episcopal office by the upper strata of society.[23] An end to opportunities for advancement in the bureaucratic structures of the Roman empire meant that those elites who had previously operated at a supra-regional level, or even just a regional one, were again eager to try and insinuate themselves back into the newly reinvigorated local arenas. Alongside staffing the emerging 'barbarian' administrations, their enthusiasm often manifested itself in the form of fierce competition for bishoprics from the late fifth century onwards, which hints at the growing local influence on offer to the holders of Gaul's sees.[24] This is a trend famously encapsulated in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris, which details his involvement in an episcopal election at Bourges, where 'there was such a crowd of competitors that two whole rows of seats could not have accommodated those numerous candidates for one throne'.[25] Indeed, Sidonius'

[22] E. Lesne, *Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France*, vol. 1 (6 vols, Lille, 1910-43), p. 143; J. Gaudemet, *L'Église dans l'empire romain (IVe-Ve siècles)* (Paris, 1958), p. 296.
[23] R. Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 115-76, 203-12, 228-9.
[24] See I.N. Wood, 'The Ecclesiastical Politics of Merovingian Clermont' in P. Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 34-57. For how the episcopate was moulded by the aristocracy into a vehicle for their own interests, see B. Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation, or How the Gallo-Romans Ended the Roman Empire', in B. Jussen (ed.), *Ordering Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 147-99. While useful, Jussen's arguments tend to accelerate developments that occur only from the late fifth century at the earliest
[25] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, VII.9, ed. and tr. W.B. Anderson, *Poems and Letters* (2 vols, London and Cambridge, 1936-65).

own move from high Roman office to the bishopric of Clermont in 470 marks him out as an early and particularly distinguished example of the embrace of the episcopate by aristocrats denied other outlets for the pursuit of prestige and influence.[26] Meanwhile, Ian Wood has demonstrated that it was also during this period that the church began to emerge in Gaul as a major landowner,[27] and the resource base that soon accompanied many sees again served to make them an attractive prospect for families looking to perpetuate their wealth and status.

As increasingly ascendant urban potentates, members of the episcopate sought to establish a base to legitimise and reflect their budding status. In southern Italy, for example, at Canosa, the prolific builder Bishop Sabinus (514-566), who acted as an emissary to the East and once hosted the Ostrogothic king Totila, used bricks stamped with his personal monogram in several churches he financed, including the city's episcopal group.[28] In Gaul, however, any nascent pre-eminence should not be overstated, and nor should the privileged episcopal status that might have been apparent in certain southern enclaves of the region be considered universal.[29] Steffen Patzold, for example, has argued that the oft-asserted domination of the Gallic church by the aristocracy during this period cannot be confirmed beyond a few well-documented examples.[30] Throughout the *civitas* network, moreover, episcopal claims to local authority were by no means uncontested. Both formal and informal lay power structures remained present within many cities,[31] and even supposed clerical allies could prove obstructive on occasion.[32]

[26] *PCBE* 4, Sidonivs 1, pp. 1750-1800. The novelty suggests this switch was potentially an unwilling one, undertaken in a context of disgrace, see J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485* (Oxford, 1994), p. 172. On Sidonius, see now G. Kelly and J. van Waarden (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris* (Edinburgh, 2020).
[27] I.N Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400-750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), pp. 37-73.
[28] G. Volpe, 'Architecture and Church Power in Late Antiquity: Canosa and San Giusto (Apulia)', in L. Lavan, L. Özgenel, A. Sarantis (eds), *Housing in Late Antiquity. From Palaces to Shops* (Leiden and Boston 2007), pp. 134-54.
[29] G.I. Halfond, *Bishops and the Politics of Patronage in Merovingian Gaul* (Ithaca, 2019), pp. 7-8; Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, p. 494, 506.
[30] S. Patzold, 'Zur Sozialstruktur des Episkopats und zur Ausbildung bischöflicher Herrschaft in Gallien zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter', in M. Becker and S. Dick (eds), *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2010), pp. 121-40.
[31] S.T. Loseby, 'Decline and Change in the Cities of Late Antique Gaul', in J.U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike - Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 90-2; G.A. Cecconi, 'Crisi e trasformazioni del governo municipale in Occidente fra IV e VI secolo', in Krause and Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt*, pp. 285-318.
[32] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.23; VI.36.

Peter Brown's conception of regional 'micro-Christendoms' continues to remain, therefore, a useful framework to acknowledge disparities in episcopal wealth and influence within and between dioceses.[33]

In this context of political upheaval and competition, the solidity and monumentality of an imposing episcopal group was one vehicle through which bishops could lay claim to social authority, especially during the prevailing uncertainty of the fifth and sixth centuries. An association between claiming or expressing social power, and the act of raising prestige buildings, however, is sometimes taken for granted as a feature of both past and present-day societies. In order to appreciate fully the nature of the relationship between the two, it is useful to look to the work of anthropologists. Bruce Trigger, for example, has demonstrated that in addition to its material permanence, the key characteristic of monumental architecture is a scale and elaboration that exceeds the practical requirements of the building's function.[34] As a product of 'the ability to plan on a large scale, a high degree of engineering skill, the recruitment and direction of substantial labour forces, and a well-developed artistic standard', the episcopal groups of late antiquity would certainly qualify as some of the period's defining monumental architectural projects.[35] The construction of these complexes in Gaul reflected the ability of bishops to employ their energy and economic surplus for non-utilitarian purposes, and thus conveyed to their communities the conspicuous consumption synonymous throughout history with the ruling classes.[36] To this end, bishops hoped that the extensive episcopal groups their patronage brought about would help to convince a local audience of the reality of the power that lay behind them, and the legitimacy of their claims to pre-eminence.

[33] P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* (2nd edn., Oxford, 2003). See also J. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History, 500-1000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 223-4.
[34] B.G. Trigger, 'Monumental Architecture: A Thermodynamic Explanation of Symbolic Behaviour', *World Archaeology* 22.2 (1990), pp. 119-32.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 121. The other major example would be city walls, see now E. Intagliata *et al.* (eds), *City Walls in Late Antiquity: An Empire-Wide Perspective* (Oxford, 2020).
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 124-127. The economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen used the term 'conspicuous consumption' to describe the practice of individuals publicising their income through the consumption of goods for reasons beyond their inherent utility: T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York, 1899).

The impresario model

Lay support, however, remained a necessary component of such endeavours, and while its underlying motivations will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the partnership between bishops and their financial backers is worth briefly considering here in the context of the rebuilding of Narbonne's cathedral between 441 and 445, in order to highlight the funding model that made much of the transformation of Gaul's urban landscapes along Christian lines possible.[37] Following a fire, Bishop Rusticus of Narbonne (427-461) set about restoring the central element of the city's episcopal group, and commemorated the process on the church's exceptional lintel inscription.[38] The text naturally places the background and achievements of Narbonne's bishop at the forefront, but it also acknowledges a multitude of lay and ecclesiastical benefactors – both local and from further afield – who made this work possible, even recording in *solidi* their personal contributions to the reconstruction efforts. Among this group was the Praetorian Prefect Marcellus,[39] whose sizeable donation indicates how the extent of a rebuild or restoration project would have been contingent on the ready availability of additional funds and patrons:

> By the mercy of God and Christ, this lintel was put in place on the fourth year [of reconstruction], when Valentinian [III] was consul for the sixth time, on the third day before the Kalends of December [29 November 445], in the nineteenth year of the episcopacy of Rusticus. In the fifteenth year of his episcopacy, on the fifth day of that year, on the third day before the Ides of October [13 October 441], Bishop Rusticus, son of Bishop Bonosus and the nephew of Bishop Arator through his sister, companion of bishop Venerius in the monastery and co-presbyter in the church of Marseille, with the undertaking of Ursus the presbyter, Hermes the deacon, and their followers, began to get rid of the walls of the church which had previously been consumed by fire. On the thirty-seventh day the squared stones began to be placed in foundation. In the second year, on the seventh day before the Ides of October, the sub deacon Montanus completed the apse. Marcellus the prefect of the Gauls, and worshipper of God, entreated the bishop to undertake this burden, guaranteeing the necessary expenditure throughout two years of his administration: a payment of 600 *solidi* for the artisans and 1500 *solidi* for the works and other costs. Other offerings [from] the holy bishop Venerius: 100 *solidi,* the bishop Dynamius: 50, Oresi: 200, Agroecius […] and Deconia […] Salutius […].[40]

[37] *CIL* XII, 5336.
[38] *PCBE* 4, Rvsticvs 3, pp. 1657-63.
[39] *PCBE* 4, Marcellvs 3, p. 1241.
[40] For the latin, see Narbonne 1a. H.I. Marrou, 'Le dossier épigraphique de l'évêque Rusticus de Narbonne', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 46 (1970), pp. 331-49; M. Chalon, 'À propos des inscriptions dédicatoires de l'évêque Rusticus', in *Narbonne, archéologie et histoire,* vol. I (3 vols, Montpellier, 1973), pp. 223-32; D.E.

As the situation at Narbonne suggests, in expanding and upgrading their episcopal groups, the bishops of Gaul pursued a form of consensual politics that cast them as 'episcopal impresarios'. This is not quite the top-heavy, domineering impresario model once envisaged by Peter Brown,[41] however, but one that conceives of bishops as somewhat more dependent figures, reliant on soft power and cultural influence for rallying financial support from donors. From this perspective, bishops had little choice but to try and harness the generosity of their supporters if they wanted to fulfil their building ambitions, and thereby assert their claimed authority at a local and regional level. Unfortunately, the detail provided by Narbonne's epigraphic record is unparalleled in Gaul,[42] and so we can only speculate about these partnerships and processes in the development of episcopal groups in other cities. Nevertheless, donor mosaics from church floors in northern Italy illustrate how this funding model also manifested elsewhere in the late antique West,[43] and the evidence for church-building in the eastern Mediterranean reveals the contributions of a similarly diverse cross-section of society.[44]

Unlike the traditional euergetism of yore and its reliance on an individual's resources, it seems that acts of Christian building in this period were often collective endeavours, which saw prelates supplement any personal wealth with the resources of their see, social network, and local Christian community.[45] It was ultimately the bishop who marshalled these resources, however, and it was he who sought to claim the lion's share of the credit. During the dedication ceremony of a cathedral at Nantes two centuries later, for example, the poet Venantius Fortunatus described how the city's bishop Felix (549-582) stood centre stage following the church's completion, basking in the collective joy of his community, and flanked by his episcopal colleagues and clergy, who led the assembled laity in song and prayer praising

Trout, 'Inscribing Identity: The Latin Epigraphic Habit in Late Antiquity, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 170-86.

[41] See P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), with the important critiques of C. Pietri, 'Les origines du culte des martyrs (d'après un ouvrage récent)', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 60 (1984), pp. 293-319, and J. Fontaine, 'Le culte des saints et ses implications sociologiques: Réflexions sur un récent essai de Peter Brown', *Analecta Bollandiana* 100 (1982), pp. 17-41.

[42] See also *CIL* XII, 5335, 5336; *L'Année Epigraphique* (1928), n. 85, p. 25.

[43] J.-P. Caillet, *L'évergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe-VIIe s.)* (Rome, 1993).

[44] W. Bowden, 'A New Urban Elite? Church Builders and Church Building in Late-Antique Epirus', in L. Lavan and W. Bowden (eds), *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, R.I., 2001), pp. 57-68.

[45] In theory, the principle of the *quadripartum* guaranteed a portion of ecclesiastical wealth for building projects. On the *quadripartum*, see I.N Wood, 'The Early Medieval West as a Temple Society', *Rivista storica dell'antichità* 49 (2019), pp. 130-43.

his achievements and exalting his contributions to civic life.[46] As a celebration of unity and consensus that foregrounded his claims to local leadership, Rusticus' inscription over the entrance of his rebuilt cathedral served a similar and enduringly visible purpose. The bishop's coordination of his financial backers was not only fundamental for the success of Christian building projects, therefore, but also an attempt to promote a cohesive consciousness among the lay and ecclesiastical elites of his city and beyond, in which he sought to position himself firmly at the centre.[47]

A never-ending endeavour

The revenue streams outlined above allowed the episcopate to address some of the practical concerns that undoubtedly underpinned a proportion of the building patronage devoted to Gaul's expanding episcopal groups during the fifth and sixth century. Spaces were needed in the city to educate and baptise catechumens, and accommodate congregations bolstered by these new converts. Moreover, the bishop required living quarters commensurate with his claimed status, as well as lodgings for the burgeoning ranks of clerics. These developments are particularly well-illustrated by the extensive excavations undertaken in and around the current cathedral of Geneva by Charles Bonnet, who has uncovered a considerable late antique episcopal group on the site, complete with a myriad of ancillary buildings.[48] Alongside these practical concerns, however, what is also evident at Geneva, and probably reflective of episcopal groups across Gaul, is a concern for monumentalism indicative of the claims to symbolic power discussed by Bruce Trigger. Unfortunately, a paucity of relevant written sources renders us incapable of identifying those responsible for specific patronage acts with any certainty. Nevertheless, Geneva offers a useful case study for the near-continuous tinkering inherent in the

[46] Fortunatus, *Carm*, III.6. See also I.N. Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture in Post-Roman Gaul', in L.A.S. Butler (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor* (London, 1986), pp. 74-9.
[47] R.W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul,* (Washington, 1989), pp. 117-54.
[48] C. Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève,* vol. 1. *Le centre urbain de la protohistoire jusqu'au début de la christianisation* (Geneva, 2009); *idem, Les fouilles,* vol. 2.

development of Gaul's episcopal groups, in which bishops took the leading role, but were almost certainly supported by wealthy lay backers and the local Christian community at large.

Bonnet and his team determined that while Geneva's sprawling episcopal complex would eventually extend to three churches, Christian activity on the site is first manifested by a basic oratory, built sometime in the fourth century. This was located at the eastern end of the walled city in a vast heated residence containing at least two privileged burials.[49] For Bonnet, this edifice was perhaps a *memoria* dating back to the time of the first Christians in the city. It would remain an important point of reference, with the chancel screen of the first cathedral's *presbyterium* established directly above one of the tombs conserved there. The walls of this first church, built here between c. 370 and 380 and initially measuring 30m x 13m, were constructed in *opus africanum*, a form of ashlar masonry most common in north Africa but also found in southern Italy and Sicily, which suggests that the workmen may not have hailed from Gaul. Five heated cells abutting its north wall were identified as the likely lodgings of priests and deacons, while the first baptistery was built at around the same time to the south. By c. 420 CE, an episcopal residence and oratory, a possible martyrium to the east, and a number of annexes – some of which may have had liturgical functions but others likely more utilitarian purposes – had all been added to this flourishing episcopal group.

[49] Bonnet, *Les fouilles,* vol. 2, pp. 15-16.

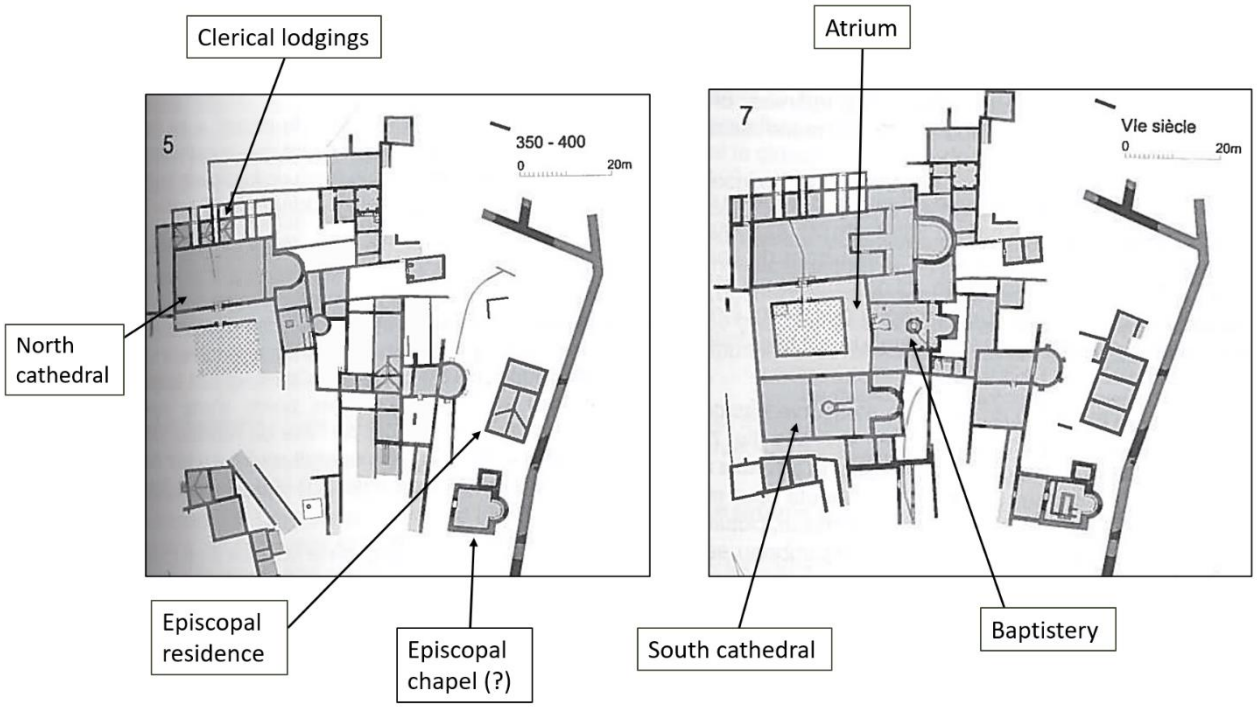


Fig. 7. The development of the episcopal group of Geneva between 350 and 600 (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, pp. 103-4).

The earliest known bishop of Geneva is Isaac, who is attested around 400.[50] Isaac's probable episcopal tenure suggests that it was either him or his predecessor who were behind the patronage that established the fundamental elements of the city's episcopal group. But whoever was bishop, their close cooperation with Geneva's aristocracy would have been vital, not least for being able to secure such a prime intra-mural site in the first place. The city's elevation to *civitas*-status under the Tetrarchy, after having previously fallen within the territory of Vienne, suggests the presence of a class of rich and powerful notables, whose existence is perhaps confirmed by the grand residences found both inside and outside the walls of Geneva. Indeed, contrary to the view of Louis Blondel that Geneva was in decline during the Burgundian period,[51] the city's economic buoyancy appears to have continued throughout late antiquity. Recent archaeological data and a reinterpretation of written sources has argued that the

[50] *PCBE* 4, Isaac, p. 1072.
[51] L. Blondel, 'Le prieuré Saint-Victor, les débuts du christianisme et la royauté burgonde à Genève', *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève* 11 (1958), pp. 211-58.

city was booming in this period thanks to its economic role in the region and political importance under the Burgundian kings.[52]

It was presumably this affluent class of local notables who supported Geneva's bishops with the further expansion and embellishment of their episcopal group in the fifth century. During this period, the baptistery was relocated to a more appropriate central position, between the north cathedral and a southern counterpart with the same proportions as its neighbour that had been built at the start of the fifth century. In the course of the following decades, a number of annexes were added to this southern church, including a heated room (9.4m x 5.5m) constructed along the southern wall of the nave and chancel of the south cathedral. The quality of this extension and its fine polychrome mosaic pavement of geometric motifs – which were quite rare north of the Alps – as well as its location right alongside the presbyterium, suggests that it probably served as a reception room, or *salutatorium*, for the bishop. Bonnet has further argued that in addition to the liturgical arrangements in the southern cathedral, which included a *solea* and a polygonal ambo, the presence of this lavish *salutatorium* indicates the contrasting functions of the two main churches in Geneva's fifth-century complex.[53] He believes that while the northern cathedral and its adjoining clerical habitations may have been reserved for celebrating the holy offices with the faithful, its southern equivalent was perhaps intended for educating the catechumens and receiving important visitors.

The previous chapter argued, however, that there are a number of limitations to explaining the additional churches built within episcopal groups in terms of liturgical innovation.[54] Such construction might alternatively be seen simply in light of the determination of successive bishops and lay backers to assert themselves at the heart of their city, and enjoy the accompanying social and spiritual capital. Rebecca Sweetman has similarly argued that the multiplication of churches across the Peloponnese in this period cannot easily be understood by way of reference to their possible independent liturgical functions.[55]

[52] C. Bonnet and J.-F. Reynaud, 'Genève et Lyon, capitales burgondes', in G. Ripoll and J.M. Gurt (eds), *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)* (Barcelona, 2000), pp. 241-66.
[53] Bonnet, *Les fouilles,* vol. 2, pp. 61-70.
[54] See pp. 30-1.
[55] R. Sweetman, 'The Christianization of the Peloponnese: The Topography and Function of Late Antique Churches', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3.2 (2010), pp. 222-3.

Instead, she points to the healthy economic situation of certain towns, or the presence of bishops and donors eager to make their mark and secure their route to heaven, as important factors in the topographical development of southern Greece, and in this regard parallels can certainly be drawn with the situation at Geneva.

In any case, the *salutatorium* would certainly have been useful for entertaining the local and regional elites whose patronage the bishops of Geneva would have relied upon to fulfil their building aspirations. A look at the backgrounds of some of the bishops likely to have been responsible for these architectural developments suggests they were more than comfortable in such company, and perhaps considered a fancy reception room necessary in light of the domestic environments to which they were probably accustomed. Salonius (…441-451…) was the son of Bishop Eucherius of Lyon and brother of Bishop Veranus of Vence, and therefore a member of the senatorial order through his blood relative Priscus Valerianus, Praetorian Prefect of Gaul around the same time.[56] Similarly, Salonius's probable successor Theoplastus (…470-477) was a friend of the distinguished Roman office-holder and bishop Sidonius Apollinaris,[57] and Bishop Domitianus (c. 480) may have assisted Theodolinda, wife of the Burgundian king Godigisel, in her translation of the relics of Victor of Solothurn to a church in Geneva that she had constructed in the martyr's honour.[58]

This relationship between the bishops of Geneva and the Burgundian royal household was potentially an important one. At the start of the sixth century, an important intervention in the city's episcopal group saw the north cathedral remodelled on a cruciform plan, and endowed with an apsidal arch over 8m wide.[59] The baptistery was also enlarged, and embellished with a series of arcades supported by double columns, a piscina faced with marble slabs, and mosaics around the perimeter of what seems to have been a presbyterium.[60] In the course of the sixth century, the episcopal residence, which comprised private and reception spaces, an oratory, and intermediary courtyards and passageways, was

[56] *PCBE* 4, Salonivs, pp. 1684-8.
[57] Sidonius, *Ep.*, VI.5; *PCBE* 4, Theoplastvs, p. 1884.
[58] *PCBE* 4, Domitianvs 2, pp. 580-1; Geneva 8a.
[59] Bonnet, *Les fouilles*, vol. 2 (Geneva, 2012), pp. 19-61. By 600 CE, the church had reached a length of 43m, and its chancel arch was 11m wide.
[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-112.

reorganised.[61] It is tempting to see some of these projects as the work of Bishop Maximus (508-523…), who held the city's see in this period and has a record as a builder.[62] Maximus also enjoyed a close relationship with the Burgundian king Sigismund,[63] whose father Gundobad had taken control of Geneva after defeating his brother Godigisel in a conflict that may have had consequences for the city's urban fabric.[64] It is possible, therefore, that Gundobad and Sigismund helped to finance Maximus' building patronage in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with Geneva's citizens by reversing any wartime damage.[65]

It is worth bearing in mind that on account of the city's possibly buoyant economy, wealthy class of locals, and sometimes resident royals, Geneva's sprawling episcopal group may not necessarily be representative of all Gallic bishoprics. What does seem consistent with other cities, however, is the almost incessant nature of the building patronage that drove the development of its main religious complex, which is paralleled across Gaul in rebuilds, upgrades, and expansions undertaken between the middle of the fifth and the end of the sixth century.[66] But while the development of episcopal groups was more or less constant, it is important to note that it was not necessarily coherent, and rarely carried out to a long-term plan. Driven by both practical concerns, including the need to address disrepair caused by fire or warfare,[67] and a desire to make a mark at the heart of the urban arena, the success of projects would have ultimately been governed by the availability of manpower, will, and resources, not to mention feasibility.

The best example is arguably at Tours, where the episcopal portraits provided by the city's famous bishop Gregory (573-594) reveal how he and his predecessors seemingly built with abandon, starting

[61] C. Bonnet, 'Les résidences épiscopales de Genève aux premiers temps chrétiens', in Balcon-Berry *et al.* (eds), *Des* domus ecclesiae *aux origines des palais épiscopaux,* pp. 115-8.
[62] Geneva 7a; *PCBE* 4, Maximvs 8, pp. 1305-7.
[63] *Vita abbatum Acaunensium,* 3, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison *MGH SRM* 7 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1920), pp. 321-36.
[64] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.32-33.
[65] For a discussion of the evidence, see Bonnet and Reynaud, 'Geneve et Lyon, Capitales Burgondes', pp. 245-6. See also B. Boissavit-Camus, 'Des rois bâtisseurs d'église: l'investissement royal en Gaule du Ve au VIIe siècle', in S. Destephen, B. Dumézil, and H. Inglebert (eds), *Le prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IVe-VIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 2018), pp. 525-6.
[66] See, for example, Orléans 1a, 1b; Nantes 1a, 1b.
[67] See also Trier 1/2c, 3b; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, III.11; *TCCG* XVI, pp. 292-5.

new projects, completing existing ones, and pursuing repairs and embellishments at every turn.[68] A chain of consecutive acts of patronage saw the city's first cathedral established by Litorius (337-371) and rebuilt by Gregory two centuries later.[69] Meanwhile, Eustochius (442-459) built a second cathedral dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius, which was later enlarged by Ommatius (522-526), and restored by Eufronius (556-573) following a fire during his episcopal tenure.[70] Finally, Ommatius also started construction on a third cathedral dedicated to Mary and John the Baptist, but this had to be completed by Injuriosus (529-546), and was similarly restored by Eufronius.[71] Unfortunately, Tours lacks the archaeological material uncovered at Geneva to illustrate the hive of episcopal building activity described by Gregory at the heart of his city, but the combined evidence furnished by the two cities nevertheless highlights the insatiable urge of Gaul's bishops to build during this period.

Claims to authority

Basic necessity – both at the outset when establishing the fundamental elements of an episcopal group and later in redressing any significant damage – together with the presence of willing financial backers, were certainly important factors underpinning the incessant building work undertaken by Gaul's bishops in their cities, but they do not fully explain the phenomenon. For this, it is necessary to consider the role that church-building played in episcopal claims to local and regional pre-eminence, and the parallels with antiquity, when competition similarly manifested itself in acts of urban munificence. In the sixth century, Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux emerges as one of the most prominent patrons of south-west Gaul, erecting or refurbishing several churches in both his own city and that of Saintes with the help of his even more distinguished wife Placidina.[72] Leontius' patronage of the episcopal group at

[68] Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31 with M. Weidemann, *Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours* (2 vols, Mainz, 1982), pp. 346-7. See L. Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 351-67; C. Lelong, 'Evolution de la topographie religieuse de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle', *Société archéologique de Touraine* 34 (1965), pp. 169-85.
[69] Tours 1a, 1b.
[70] Tours 2a, 2b, 2c.
[71] Tours 3a, 3b, 3c.
[72] *PCBE* 4, Leontivs 16, pp. 1145-9; Placidina 2, p. 1489. The couple also built and restored a number of rural churches: Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.6, 8-10.

Bordeaux was celebrated in a poem by Fortunatus, and included the restoration of the baptistery, the building of a church in honour of Mary, and the enhancement of the cathedral.[73] A bad fire had apparently caused significant damage in the city, and Fortunatus conjures up an allusion to the phoenix to highlight how the episcopal group had risen from the ashes. Although Leontius was the thirteenth bishop to hold the see of Bordeaux, the poet asserts that he should be considered *primus* following his efforts.[74]

Despite his nobility and accompanying wealth, Leontius found his position in Bordeaux threatened by significant local opposition, which made his relationship with Fortunatus an important one.[75] A rousing victory chant the poet wrote for the bishop, for example, describes an attempted coup by some dissatisfied clerics, followed by Leontius' triumphant return to the city.[76] In light of this challenge to his authority, the patronage of Bordeaux's episcopal group, and its accompanying commemoration by Fortunatus, provided Leontius with an opportunity to establish consensus in the city around himself and his office. Indeed, Fortunatus comments that through his building projects, Leontius drew the whole of the city to his doors by making himself the path to salvation.[77] This was a common trope in the poems that Fortunatus wrote in honour of Gaul's bishops, as he sought to project the image of an ordered community reliant on the compassionate protection of its episcopal leader.[78] In restoring and enhancing his city's episcopal group, Leontius generated a space for regular communal liturgy and worship that placed him at the centre, thereby constantly renewing the harmony present at the moment of the cathedral's initial dedication ceremony.

Developing an imposing cathedral complex was an important claim to authority not only in the local community, but also for the status of a city within secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies. In some ways,

[73] Bordeaux 1a, 2a, 4a; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.15.53-69.
[74] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, 1.15.39-52.
[75] J.W. George, 'Portraits of Two Merovingian Bishops in the Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus', *Journal of Medieval History* (1987), pp. 190-4, 196-200.
[76] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.16.
[77] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.15.61-62, 65-66: *Qui loca das populis, ubi Christum iugiter orent, unde salus veniat te facis esse viam…Fecisti ut libeat cunctos huc currere cives et domus una vocet quicquid in urbe manet.*
[78] M.J. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009), pp. 38-52, 103-64; S. Coates, 'Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late And Early Merovingian Gaul', *English Historical Review* 115 (2000), pp. 1109-37.

this combination echoed the intra- and inter-city manoeuvring that was inherent in the republic and early empire, when euergetism was exploited by local notables competing among themselves, but also looking to glorify their *patria* and eclipse their neighbouring rivals. The latter competition is particularly evident among the episcopal sees of Provence between the fourth and sixth centuries.

Simon Loseby has demonstrated, for example, how Christian cult offered Marseille a means to rediscover some of the regional pre-eminence it had lost during the early imperial ascendancy of Arles.[79] Vital to the city's re-emergence as a major player in southern Gaul was Bishop Proculus (…381-428…), who had a Mediterranean-wide reputation as a holy man, and by the end of the fourth century was exercising extra-judicial metropolitan authority over the neighbouring province of Narbonensis Secunda.[80] Proculus would spend his later years on the back foot, however, fiercely resisting the claims of Patroclus of Arles to regional primacy, and this opposition was continued by his successor Venerius (…430-452…).[81] The episcopal tenures of both bishops, and their aspirations and single-mindedness, suggest they would have been responsible for Marseille's late antique episcopal group, which was located on the north-western periphery of the ancient urban zone, and has been dated to the late fourth or early fifth century. Although a tentative reconstruction of the cathedral suggests a relatively substantial building (60m x 25m), it nevertheless lacked the extraordinary dimensions of the nearby baptistery, which had a surface-area of over 600m², dwarfing its Provençal counterparts.[82] Together, the cathedral and baptistery comprised an episcopal group of a stature that surpassed Marseille's ordinary secular and ecclesiastical standing as a city, and served as a tangible symbol of its bishops' pretensions to regional authority.[83]

[79] S.T. Loseby, 'Marseille: A Late Antique Success Story?', *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), pp. 165-85, at pp. 179-80.
[80] *PCBE* 4, Procvlvs 1, pp. 1541-4.
[81] *PCBE* 4, Venerivs 1, pp. 1923-5. Venerius contributed to Rusticus' rebuilding of the cathedral of Narbonne, see *CIL* XII, 5336.
[82] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.43; VI.11; J. Guyon, 'Marseille, baptistère Saint-Jean', in N. Duval (ed.), *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France, 1: Sud-est et Corse* (Paris, 1995), pp. 142-6; cf. J. Guyon, 'Baptistères et groupes épiscopaux de Provence. Élaboration, diffusion et devenir d'un type architectural', *Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève, Aoste, 21-28 septembre 1986* (Rome, 1989), pp. 1427-49.
[83] S.T. Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), pp. 117-19.

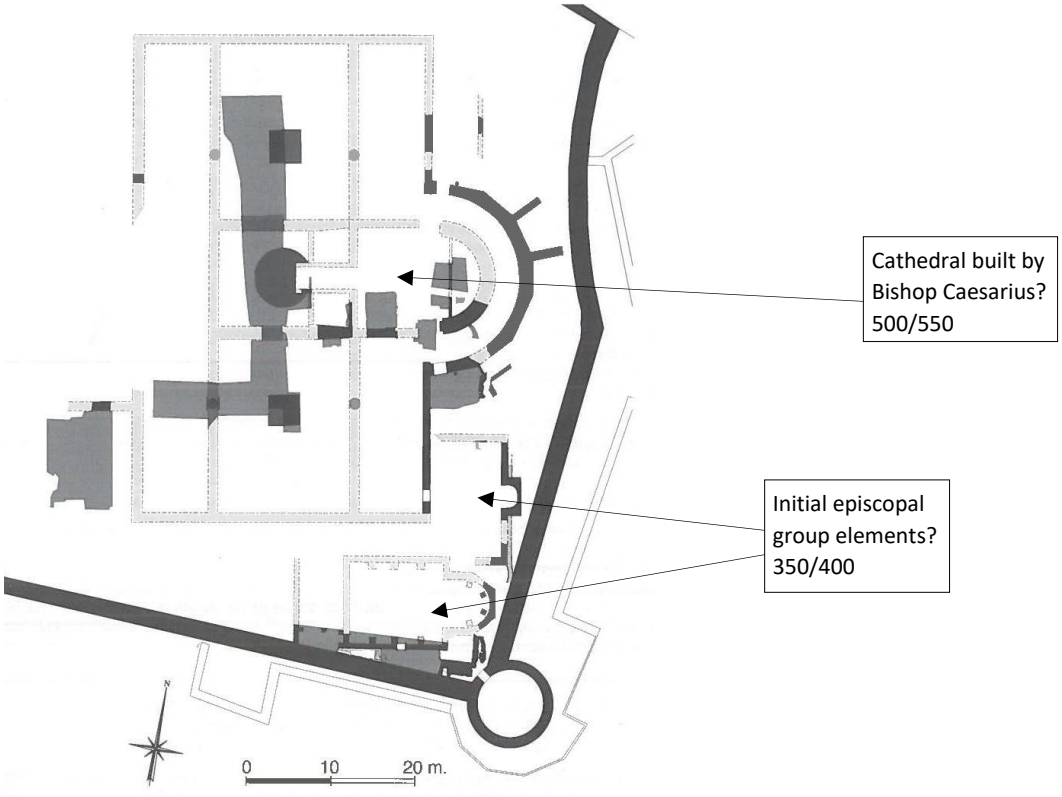


Fig. 8. Excavations in Arles' Enclos St-Césaire (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, p. 41).

Establishing sizeable cathedral complexes to support such claims seems to have been a popular strategy in southern Gaul. At Arles, a vast apse with a chancel arch almost 20m wide has been uncovered in the Enclos St-Césaire, in the south-eastern corner of the walled city, suggesting a church with an unparalleled width of 60m once stood on the site.[84] The archaeological evidence indicates this building would probably have been completed during the episcopate of Caesarius of Arles (502-42),[85] and on account of its exceptional size, it is hard not to attribute these remains to the city's cathedral, which would push forward the transfer of the see to the site of St-Trophime to a later date. There is no explicit attribution for this mammoth act of episcopal group building patronage to Caesarius, but the presence of a prominent *ambo* is certainly in keeping with his commitment to edification through preaching, and the sheer size of the building matches the ambitions of a member of the episcopate who claimed a

[84] Arles 1a; M. Heijmans, 'L'église paléochrétienne de l'enclos Saint-Césaire à Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône). Nouvelles fouilles, nouvelles questions', in D. Paris-Poulain *et al*. (eds), *Les premiers temps chrétiens dans le territoire de la France actuelle* (Rennes, 2009), pp. 85-98.
[85] *PCBE* 4, Caesarivs 1, pp. 386-410.

privileged status over not just Provence, but all the churches of Gaul and Hispania.[86] The jostling for authority evident in Provence during the fifth and sixth centuries was indicative of the episcopal competition within the church as a whole, at a time when the principles for determining primacy across dioceses and whole regions was still seemingly in the balance. Much like monumental buildings throughout history, therefore, an imposing episcopal group provided the bishops of late antiquity with a useful vehicle for legitimising the pre-eminence they asserted at not only a local level but also a regional one.

A seventh-century slowdown?

We must be cautious because of the limited sample size, but the rate of episcopal group patronage undertaken by ecclesiastics seems to have slowed after the sixth century (fig. 5). The addition of a third church to the cathedral complex at Geneva, however, demonstrates that prestige building projects did not completely dry up in Gaul in the seventh and early eighth centuries.[87] Similarly, parts of the Johanniskirche at Mainz have been re-dated to the seventh century,[88] and archaeological plans of the episcopal residence of Poitiers suggest it was enlarged throughout the later Merovingian period.[89] Nevertheless, the relatively modest size of the third church at Geneva (22m x 19.5m) may point to a shift in episcopal behaviour and purpose in this period. The written and material evidence suggests that, on the whole, the scale of ambition behind many of those acts which did take place in the seventh and early eighth century was significantly reduced. It seems patronage was now generally limited to the modification or embellishment of existing buildings. For example, arcades and new capitals were added to the baptistery of Poitiers in second half of the seventh century, a small annexe was erected at Vienne's cathedral by Bishop Eoldus (…700…), and two chancels at Metz were remodelled by Bishop

[86] W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 146-70.
[87] Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève*, vol. 2, pp. 131-44.
[88] M. Kleiner and M. Untermann, 'Der Alte Dom von Mainz. Bauuntersuchungen in der St. Johanniskirche 2013–2016', *InSitu* (2017), pp. 153-62.
[89] B. Boissavit-Camus, 'La *domus ecclesiae* de Poitiers', in Balcon-Berry *et al.*, *Des* domus ecclesiae *aux origines des palais épiscopaux*, pp. 73-87.

Chrodegang (742-766).[90] The maintenance and repair of episcopal groups would have also remained a necessity, prompting other acts of patronage, such as the restoration of the cathedral floor at Autun by Bishop Leudegar (…660-676).[91] Of course, by the later Merovingian kingdoms, the essential elements of a city's episcopal group had already been established and exhaustively developed over two hundred years, potentially negating the need for new construction.

Alongside a possible surfeit of elements, however, the observable decline in both the rate and scope of episcopal group patronage is perhaps also explained by the relative consolidation of the bishop's authority in this period. During the seventh and early eighth centuries, episcopal status was comparatively more secure and the bishop was generally *the* important urban magnate – or at least the most visible one – on account of his role's enduring link to the city. The political culture of the later Merovingian kingdoms largely transcended the level of the *civitas,* at least in the secular sphere, and lay rivals who had previously contested the bishop's claims of local leadership were often now more interested in the power on offer at the Frankish courts.[92]

Nevertheless, as Paul Fouracre has demonstrated, a bishop's position in his community was never totally assured,[93] which suggests that building patronage would have remained an important vehicle for claiming authority, not to mention for also cultivating divine favour. Possible supplementary explanations for a decline in episcopal group patronage are thus needed. The secularisation of church land, for example, which was apparently already underway by the beginning of the eighth century, would have had consequences for episcopal revenue streams, and thereby perhaps inhibited the ability of bishops to build to some degree.[94] It is also important to note that the growing significance of

[90] Poitiers 2b; Vienne 1a; Metz 3a, 6a. See also Auxerre 2b.
[91] Autun 1a. On the episcopal group of Autun, see S. Balcon-Berry and W. Berry, 'Le groupe épiscopal d'Autun au haut Moyen Âge', in M. Gaillard (ed.), *L'empreinte chrétienne en Gaule, du IVe au IXe siècle* (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 173-200.
[92] S.T. Loseby, 'Lost Cities. The End of the *Civitas*-System in Frankish Gaul', in S. Diefenbach and G.M. Müller (eds), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Kulturgeschichte einer Region* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 223-52.
[93] P. Fouracre, 'Why Were So Many Bishops Killed in Merovingian Francia?', in N. Fryde and D. Reitz (eds), *Bischofsmord in Mittelalter* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 13-35.
[94] E. Lesne, *Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France,* vol. 2, *La propriété ecclesiastique, et les droits régaliens à l'époque carolingienne* (6 vols, Lille, 1910–43); Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church', pp. 52-3, 60-2.

monasticism provided alternative means of demonstrating holiness and claiming authority during this period, as we shall see. A move away from significant patronage of their episcopal groups may have been a reality for the bishops, therefore, but equally it was perhaps something in which the hagiographers of the later Merovingian kingdoms took less interest than the sixth-century authors. In any case, the available evidence certainly suggests a material departure in the patronage of episcopal groups when compared to some of the more ambitious projects of previous centuries.

Conclusion

It has been argued that major cathedral patronage by the bishops of Gaul only really got underway in the course of the fifth century. While the fundamental elements of episcopal groups likely existed in some guise by around 400 CE, the church remained relatively weak during this period, and attempts by bishops to develop fledgling complexes would have been constrained by their lack of an independent resource base, the numbers of willing lay backers, and the restricted availability of intra-mural space in some late Roman *civitates* with recently-built defences. Regional disparities must be acknowledged, but it was only in subsequent centuries that the church became more of an institutional force, with growing revenue streams and a clergy increasingly drawn from the upper strata of society. In their quest to establish themselves as respected local leaders in their cities, the bishops set about manifesting their claims to authority and status in stone. On a fundamental level, these building projects were underpinned by practical considerations, with bishops requiring suitable spaces in the city to accommodate growing congregations, and carry out their duties of overseeing entry to the Christian community and facilitating regular worship and liturgy. During the later fifth and sixth centuries especially, the development of episcopal groups was constant. It was not always coherent though, with long-term projects contingent on the availability of the necessary manpower, resources, and will. Moreover, while complexes were often remodelled in response to problems such as fire or warfare, their extent and ambition, as with all attempts to overhaul an episcopal group, were generally determined by the availability of funds and patrons. Indeed, lay support was essential, and members of the episcopate

looked to coordinate willing donors, who probably expected some kind of public acknowledgement for their generosity, in the manner of the impresario model evident at Narbonne.

As the documented developments at Geneva suggest, however, practical concerns and necessity alone cannot explain the incessant nature of the patronage which gave rise to groups of a complexity and monumentality likely in excess of anything required by the bishops to fulfil their core responsibilities. Whether through embarking on a new project, completing an existing one, or engaging in acts of repair or embellishment, it is clear that successive bishops were determined to leave their individual mark on a city's episcopal group, and thus the city itself. Indeed, as we have seen at Marseille, Bordeaux, and elsewhere, establishing an imposing episcopal group could serve as an important claim to local authority during a time of uncertainty, as well as an assertion of a city's standing within secular and Christian frameworks. In this regard, the work of Bruce Trigger helps us to understand how by endowing their places of work with a character and monumentality that surpassed the practical requirements for their role, the bishops of Gaul sought to convince local and regional audiences of the reality of their claims to power. Building patronage was thus an especially useful tool for a group of individuals whose vocation effectively precluded them from other methods of expressing authority in an increasingly martial society.

Although episcopal status was never completely secure, the bishop's resolutely urban nature facilitated his emergence by the seventh century as the city's most enduring and recognizable resident potentate. Consequently, the local pre-eminence afforded to a wealthy episcopate during a period when lay rivals were increasingly seeking power and influence at the regional level of the royal courts may have made material claims to authority in the cities less pressing. We must acknowledge, however, that notwithstanding changing liturgical fashions, such as the later suppression of independent baptismal buildings, by this point episcopal groups possessed all the amenities they could possibly need, and had benefitted from over two centuries of near-constant growth. Further expansion was perhaps not strictly necessary, therefore, but, equally, it may have been hindered by the growing practice of land secularisation. In any case, it appears major Christian building projects centred on episcopal groups did tail off during the seventh and early eighth centuries, and bishops seemed content for the most part

with more modest interventions. Cathedral complexes were not the only beneficiaries of episcopal largesse, however, and, as we will see next, this building at the heart of the urban zone was complimented in the suburbs by the celebration of the cult of saints.

3.2. The cult of saints

The expansion of the cult of saints in Gaul from the fourth century offered bishops another vehicle through which they could build harmonious communities regulated by Christian ideals, and strengthen their claims to leadership by affirming their spiritual authority as guardians of these cults. Within his wider reconceptualization of the period between the classical and medieval worlds, Peter Brown's socio-anthropological approach was particularly influential in fostering an appreciation of the function and significance of saints in late antique society.[95] Brown's model of cult practice was very much a top-down one, dominated by bishops who sought to control access to the 'very special dead' and their tombs, in order to exploit these sites of holy power in their ongoing competition for social authority with the laity. Raymond Van Dam developed the subject further through a focus on the saints and their episcopal cheerleaders in Gaul, viewed primarily through the prism of Gregory of Tours.[96] In doing so, Van Dam offered an important critique of Brown's characterisation of a singular 'cult' of saints.[97] He argued that in order to account for the distinctive local development and diverse nature of cult practice across time and place, we should be thinking in terms of 'cults' of the saints. An acceptance of a heterogeneity in traditions, however, does not preclude an acknowledgement that near universal features of the veneration of these holy figures were accompanying acts of building patronage. This most commonly manifested as the *memoriae* and basilicas found in Gaul's suburban necropolises, which offered an extra-mural complement to the centripetal conceptions of urban space engendered by episcopal groups, but, as we will see, the cult of saints also had an intra-mural dimension.

As Brown has demonstrated, the bishops of Gaul would have been important players in this commemoration, capitalising on the opportunities that saints' cults afforded them in their attempts to manage the moral behaviour of their congregations and bolster their personal authority in society.

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[95] See especially P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981); P. Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982); B. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule. Les premiers temps. D'Hilaire de Poitiers à la fin du VIe siècle* (Paris, 2000); J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West c.300-c.1200* (Oxford, 2000); J.M.H. Smith, 'Saints and their Cults' in T.F.X. Noble and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity Volume 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c.600–c.1100* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 581-605.
[96] R. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993).
[97] Van Dam, *Saints,* pp. 11-14.

Through a number of case studies, the following section will use the lens of building patronage as a means to examine the ways in which cults were promoted, and how this might have related to efforts by members of the episcopate to elevate themselves and their families. Indeed, the important role that cultivating shrines could play in enhancing one's own status is often noted in the scholarship, but studies can sometimes take it as read that individuals were able to claim authority simply through their association with sacred spaces, without fully investigating how the former could arise out of the latter.[98] This issue will be addressed in what follows by considering the intersection between building patronage and developing Christian discourses of social responsibility during late antiquity. Such an approach will also help us to assess whether the building activity that underpinned saints' cults was necessarily always a top-down initiative, or if bishops were also responding to expectations within the community about their role as pastoral leaders.

Intra-mural commemoration

Before investigating the most notable acts of building patronage undertaken by bishops and their clergy in honour of the cult of saints, namely the suburban funerary basilicas that memorialised the burials of holy individuals, it is worth briefly exploring the intra-mural context of the practice. Although the strict taboos of the Roman period between the living and the dead began to break down during this period, the continuing aversion to burial within city-walls for the most part consigned the celebration of the saints to the suburbs.[99] There are a handful of exceptions across the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul, but the penetration of the dead into zones of habitation only really began to gain momentum during the Carolingian period with the emergence of a formal parochial system.[100] The

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-49.
[99] On the Christian care of the dead in this period, see E. Rebillard, *In hora mortis: Evolution de la pastorale chrétienne de la mort aux IVe et Ve siècles dans l'occident latin* (Paris, 1994); B. Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, Pa., 2002).
[100] J.-F. Reynaud, 'Les morts dans les cités épiscopales de Gaule du IVe au XIe siècle', in H. Galinié and E. Zadora-Rio (eds), *Archéologie du cimetière chrétien* (Tours, 1996), pp. 23-30; C. Treffort, 'Du *cimiterium christianorum* au cimetière paraoissial: évolution des espaces funéraires en Gaule du VIe au Xe siècle', in *ibid.*, pp. 55-63.

situation in Gaul thus appears to contrast with other regions of the post-Roman and Byzantine world.[101] Some English cities, for example, furnish evidence for burial around cathedrals in the course of the seventh century,[102] while well-organised cemeteries emerge at Carthage within the city-wall from the end of the sixth century.[103] The apparent unwillingness of the inhabitants of Gaul's urban spaces to tolerate similar activity in this period is underlined by the decisions of Bishop Caesarius (502-542) and Queen Radegund to build extra-mural funerary basilicas for the nuns of their intra-mural convents at Arles and Poitiers respectively in the sixth century.[104]

The relegation of the dead beyond city-walls, however, did not preclude the veneration of the cult of saints by Gaul's ecclesiastics within their cities. As the previous chapter noted briefly, relics appear within episcopal groups very early on, albeit not necessarily the remains of holy individuals.[105] Bishop Victricius (…386-404…), for example, added a southern basilica to Rouen's episcopal group at the end of the fourth century in order to house relics of Gervasius and Protasius that he had received from Ambrose of Milan.[106] The bishop commemorated the translation with a short but important sermon, in which he thanked Ambrose and revealed that his building activity was motivated by a desire to attract the spiritual patronage of apostles and martyrs, who might in turn intercede on his and his community's behalf with other sainted individuals.[107] We also have evidence of private episcopal oratories, which were instituted by bishops as part of their residences in honour of a favoured saint or saints, and often endowed with relics in the pursuit of personal intercession.[108] Away from Gaul's episcopal groups, however, it was rare to find cult foci established by ecclesiastics within a city's urban zone in this

[101] G. Cantino Wataghin, 'The Ideology of Urban Burial', in G.P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (eds), *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 147-80.
[102] H. Galinié, 'Le passage de la nécropole au cimetière: les habitants des villes et leurs morts, du début de la christianisation à l'an Mil', in Galinié and Zadora-Rio (eds), *Archéologie du cimetière chrétien*, p. 20.
[103] A. Leone, 'L'inumazione in 'spazio urbano' a Cartagine tra V e VII secolo D.C.', *Antiquité Tardive* 10 (2003), pp. 233-48.
[104] Arles 10a; Poitiers 7a.
[105] See pp. 36-7.
[106] Rouen 1b. *PCBE* 4, Victricivs, pp. 1960-4.
[107] Victricius of Rouen, *De Laude Sanctorum,* ed. J. Mulders and R. Demeulenaere, *CC* 64 (1984), pp. 53-93. See G. Clark, 'Victricius of Rouen: Praising the Saints', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.3 (1999), pp. 365-99; D. Natal, 'Putting the Roman Periphery on the Map: The Geography of Romanness, Orthodoxy, and Legitimacy in Victricius of Rouen's *De Laude sanctorum*', *Early Medieval Europe* 26.3 (2018), pp. 304-26.
[108] Le Mans 2a; Tours 4a; Reims 8a; Cambrai 2a.

period.[109] A common exception, however, were the churches dedicated to particular holy individuals sited in intra-mural monastic enclosures. Around the end of the sixth or the start of the seventh century, for example, Rusticula, abbess at the convent founded at Arles by Bishop Caesarius, was apparently inspired by the holy spirit to erect a church in order to provide a more fitting place of prayer 'for the virgins of Christ'.[110] While she was in the process of building this initial basilica, however, the abbess had a vision that compelled her to establish an additional church.[111] To this edifice she transferred the relic of the cross that had initially been deposed in the first church, which was henceforth dedicated to Saint Michael, and also added seven altars for the holy cross, the archangels Gabriel and Raphael, and saints Thomas, Maurice, Sebastian, and Pontius. It seems, therefore, that rather than giving rise to new sites of cult practice, acts of building patronage undertaken by ecclesiastics to venerate saints within the walls of Gaul's cities were generally focussed on pre-existing Christian spaces, such as episcopal groups or monasteries, which served to pull relics into the urban zone. As we will see next, this was the reverse of the situation in the suburbs, where the tombs of the holy attracted the resources of clerical patrons to them, and in so doing brought about a new suburban landscape of Christian mausolea and basilicas.

A new suburban landscape

Alongside occasional acts of intra-mural veneration, the celebration of the cult of saints had a radical impact on notions of civic space by aligning the urban realm of the bishop and his cathedral with the suburban necropolises of Gaul, where the burials of holy individuals were progressively monumentalised. A particularly early example of this development is evident at Toulouse, and concerned the tomb of the city's first bishop Saturninus, who was remembered as having come to Gaul during the time of Emperor Decius (249-251).[112] To the north of the city, where Saturninus had been

[109] A possible example is attested at Auxerre at the end of the ninth century: Auxerre 9a, with I.N. Wood, 'Germanus, Alban and Auxerre', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre* 13 (2009), pp. 123-9.
[110] Arles 8a. *Vita S. Rusticulae*, 8, ed B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1902), pp. 339-57; see P. Riché, 'Note d'hagiographie mérovingienne. La vita Rusticulae', *Analecta Bollandiana* 72 (1954), pp. 369-72.
[111] Arles 9a.
[112] Gregory, *Hist.*, I.30.

laid to rest after being tied to a bull and dragged from the Capitol following his refusal to partake in pagan ceremonies, a church was developed over the course of the late fourth and early fifth centuries by several bishops of Toulouse. The monumental patronage concentrated around the supposed resting place of Saturninus is described in some detail by the early fifth-century *Passio Saturnini*, and offers a good example of how the burial of a worthy individual could be transformed over time.[113] At some point in the late fourth century, Bishop Hilarius (…400) apparently built a vault of many bricks over Saturninus' remains, and added a small basilica of ordinary timber (*vilibus lignis*) nearby.[114] Later, Bishop Silvius (c. 400) noticed that burials seeking proximity to the martyr had multiplied at the site, and so endeavoured to build a more fitting home for Saturninus.[115] These efforts were interrupted by his death, however, and so a new church was completed by Bishop Exsuperius (…402-412…), who translated the martyr's remains within.[116]

In many ways, the transformation of a site from a simple tomb or *memoria* to a sumptuous funerary basilica by members of the episcopate across Gaul mirrored their incessant development of the episcopal groups at the heart of the region's cities. One obvious similarity was the way that the underlying 'impresario' funding model was also seemingly replicated in the suburbs. While the increase in building patronage focussed on the cult of saints from the second half of the fifth century would have been driven in part by the growing wealth of the church, additional donors were again probably an important factor in making more ambitious projects financially viable. Alongside the lintel inscription for Narbonne's cathedral, another inscribed donor list from the city reveals that a church built by Bishop Rusticus in honour of Felix of Girona in the middle of the fifth century was made possible thanks to the contributions of his wealthy lay backers, clerical supporters, and the Christian community as a whole.[117] Nevertheless, as with Gaul's cathedral complexes, the financing of most

[113] On the dating, see P. Cabau, 'Opusculum de passione ac translatione sancti Saturnini, episcopi Tolosanae ciuitatis et martyris. Édition et traduction provisoires', *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de Midi de la France* 61 (2001), pp. 59-77; cf. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints* (Paris, 2000), p. 214.
[114] Toulouse 5a; *Passio Saturnini,* 5-6; *PCBE* 4, Hilarivs 2, p. 997.
[115] Toulouse 5b; *PCBE* 4, Silvivs 1, p. 1812
[116] Toulouse 5c; *PCBE* 4, Exsvperivs 2, pp. 727-9. J. Rocacher, 'Toulouse. Le *martyrium* de Saint Saturnin à Saint-Sernin' in N. Duval (ed.), *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France 2 Sud-Ouest et Centre* (Paris, 1996), pp. 190-6.
[117] Narbonne 5a. *L'année épigraphique* (1928), n. 85, p. 25.

funerary basilicas was coordinated by the bishop, and once again he would have sought to maximise the spiritual and cultural capital on offer.

The bishop's role as episcopal impresario also manifested in other ways. The effusive praise bestowed on Exsuperius by the *Passio Saturnini,* for example, suggests that he was responsible for its commissioning as part of his wider efforts to promote the martyr's cult in Toulouse. The actions of Exsuperius seem particularly pointed when considered in the context of the debate prompted by the writings of Vigilantius (…394-406…), a priest from a nearby parish who famously objected to the cult of saints and especially the veneration of relics.[118] Vigilantius' contemporaneous complaints highlight just how early the evidence from Toulouse is, and the fact that the behaviour of its bishops was not yet the norm. By the sixth century, the practice of bishops advancing the cult of a predecessor through the sponsorship of church-building and *vitae* had become widespread, with members of the episcopate hoping to enjoy the spiritual patronage of a sainted forerunner, and the prestige associated with occupying a distinguished see.[119] Such an endeavour took on an extra dimension when a previous holder of the bishopric was a relative, as was often the case at a time when competing families looked to monopolise one of the key organs of local leadership and its economic and spiritual resource-base. In Dijon, for example, where the family of Gregory of Tours had landed interests, Bishop Tetricus of Langres enlarged the church in which his father and episcopal predecessor – and Gregory's great-grandfather – had been buried, having witnessed numerous miracles taking place at his tomb.[120] Alternatively, in order to place their city on a similar footing to neighbours who could claim a more established link to illustrious episcopal founders, bishops might 'discover' the body of a suitably historic predecessor, before erecting a funerary basilica at the site, as Bishop Theodorus (…549-551…) did at Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans in honour of the otherwise unattested Valerius.[121]

[118] *PCBE* 4, Vigilantivs pp. 1968-1972; Exuperius was held in very high regard by Vigilantius' fiercest critic, Jerome: *Epistulae,* 123.15; 125.20, ed. I. Hilberg, *CSEL* 56 (Vienna, 1918).
[119] Van Dam, *Saints*, pp. 59-73.
[120] See, for example, Dijon 3a.
[121] Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans 1a; Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, 83, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 744-820. The late fourth-century 'discovery' of Gervasius and Protasius at Milan by Bishop Ambrose is perhaps the most famous example of this general enterprise: N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (London, 1994), pp. 176-82.

Although located outside of the urban zone, these products of episcopal building patronage were integrated into the city by the Christian liturgy and calendar. On feast days, the whole of the city, including those aristocrats who might have preferred to celebrate at their private estate-churches, were expected to attend the suburban basilicas for the performance of Christian rites led by the bishop.[122] These churches were also an integral part of Rogation ceremonies, which spread across Gaul during the tumult and instability of the later fifth century. They were first introduced by Bishop Mamertus at Vienne (451-474), and, in an attempt to mitigate the consequences of everything from natural disasters and warfare to disease and roaming wild animals, incorporated three days of fasting, psalm-singing, and processions in the run up to the Ascension.[123] Much like feast-day celebrations, these practices were ultimately ritualised representations of authority and consensus that positioned the bishop at the centre of his community. The processional element of the Rogation ceremonies, in particular, helped to ensure that churches celebrating both local and non-native cults were an integral feature of conceptions of civic space. In a physical expression of the bishop's role as guide for his flock on the path to salvation, the entire local *populus* was led from the episcopal church, before passing through the city gates, and ultimately arriving at the nearby funerary basilicas for prayer.[124] In this way, bishops were able to press their claims to local leadership as the managers of the links between the temporal and the spiritual worlds.[125]

When the welfare of individuals or the entire city was under threat, therefore, members of the episcopate sought to concentrate appeals for help on the holy dead, and on themselves as the guardians of their cults, rather than on any potential alternatives, such as living holy men who operated outside of their control.[126] It was hoped that through such efforts, the Christians of Gaul would come to recognise that

[122] P. Brown 'Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity' *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp. 1-24; J. Harries, 'Christianity and the City in Late Roman Gaul', in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992), pp. 91-3.
[123] Avitus, *Homily* 6, see D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool, 2002), pp. 381-8; see also Sidonius, *Ep.*, V.14, VII.1. G. Nathan, 'The Rogation Ceremonies of Late Antique Gaul', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 49 (1998), pp. 275-303.
[124] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.5.
[125] Nathan, 'The Rogation Ceremonies', pp. 289-92; Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation', esp. pp. 170-9. On the liturgical processions of Anglo-Saxon England, see H. Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 104-45.
[126] J.M. Petersen, 'Dead or Alive? The Holy Man as Healer in East and West in the Late Sixth Century', *Journal of Medieval History* 9.2 (1983), pp. 91-8. See also pp. 97-100.

the practical defence provided by wall circuits was reinforced by the spiritual ballast of the bishop and the saints and their churches, with the three working in concert to safeguard the community at large.[127] Gregory of Tours, for example, asserts that when the plague was assailing the population of Trier, it was the protection of Saint Eucherius at the south gate and Saint Maximinus at the north gate that ensured the city avoided widespread fatalities.[128] Patronising the burials of holy individuals was a crucial component in this endeavour, and demonstrated to the community that the local prelate was best able to safeguard their interests. These processes are also evident in Italy, where, under the shadow of the 'barbarian' invasions at the start of the fifth century, Bishop Gaudentius of Brescia (387-410) sought to launch the cult of his predecessor Philastrius and erect a basilica filled with relics, in order to protect his city from any external threats and thus secure his own position therein.[129]

Episcopal efforts to popularise the idea of warrior-like saints who defended the interests of their clients on earth also enabled bishops to deploy these figures in local competition for status and authority. Indeed, divine protection was a valuable commodity for individuals whose vocation technically denied them recourse to more militant means of asserting their position in society. Developing the cult of a saint through acts of building patronage was thus an important and multi-faceted component of episcopal attempts to define and stabilise their status vis-à-vis the local community.

How to win friends and influence people

In their pursuit of spiritual intercessors, bishops had to decide whether to focus their patronage on existing cults or seek to launch a new one. Of course, members of the episcopate would often do both during their tenure, but on each occasion a number of factors would have determined how they chose to mobilise their resources in shaping the topography of their cities. Acts of building patronage dedicated to the further promotion of established local cults, for example, were often a way of claiming

[127] S.T. Loseby, 'Gregory's Cities: Urban Functions in Sixth-Century Gaul', in I.N. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 254-6.
[128] Gregory, *VP,* XVII.4. For the churches, see *TCCG* I, pp. 27-30, XVI, pp. 295-9.
[129] Lizzi Testa, *Vescovi,* pp. 132-7.

legitimacy in the community by association with its spiritual patron. Such behaviour is well-attested at Tours, where Bishop Gregory (573-594) relaunched the cult of his famous predecessor Martin, who had held the see in the final quarter of the fourth century, soon after his arrival in the city.[130] The first edifice to mark the burial of Martin had been built by his immediate successor Bishop Bricius (397-442), who established a modest church in the early fifth century.[131] In similar fashion to the gradual upgrade of the tomb of Saturninus by the bishops of Toulouse, this apparent *cellulam parvulam* was replaced with a more fitting basilica by Bishop Perpetuus (458-489) in the 470s.[132] Perpetuus' church was substantial: it stood fifteen meters high, measured 53m x 20m, and apparently also possessed 52 windows, 120 columns, eight doorways, and was decorated with a number of verse inscriptions.[133] As became common in episcopal efforts to exalt the memory of a predecessor, Perpetuus' building patronage was also accompanied by a literary commission.[134] The bishop asked his friend Paulinus of Périgueux to versify and update Sulpicius Severus' life and miracles of Saint Martin, which now included an additional anthology of miracle stories he himself had collected.[135]

A century later, Perpetuus seems to have served as something of a model for Bishop Gregory, who not only collected his own miracle stories of Martin, but shared a similarly close relationship with a poet, Venantius Fortunatus, who would transpose the life of the saint into verse.[136] Gregory also left his mark at the site of Martin's burial by restoring the murals on the church's walls following a fire in the 550s, and, in the atrium of the church, he built a baptistery and converted the previous one into an oratory.[137] Gregory's behaviour was driven by the hope that, in return, Martin would absolve his temporal

[130] On the cult of Martin in Tours, see C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983); S. Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca, 1991); A.S. McKinley, 'The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours', *Early Medieval Europe* 14.2 (2006), pp. 173-200.
[131] Tours 6a. Sidonius, *Ep.*, IV.18.5; see also Paulinus of Périgueux, *De Vita Martini*, VI.218-264, ed. M. Petschenig, *CSEL* 16 (Vienna, 1888), pp. 4-159; Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
[132] Tours 6b. The vaulting of the original chapel (*camera cellulae*) was reused it in the neighbouring basilica dedicated to Peter and Paul: Gregory, *Hist.*, II.14.
[133] Sidonius, *Ep.*, IV.18; Le Blant, n. 170-81, pp. 231-46; Van Dam, *Saints and Miracles*, pp. 255-62. H. Galinié, *Tours antique et médiéval: lieux de vie, temps de la ville: 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine* (2007), pp. 91-103; L. Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 372-90.
[134] See also Angers 5a, with Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Albini*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH AA* 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), pp. 27-33.
[135] Paulinus, *De Vita Martini*, VI.
[136] Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Martini*, ed. S. Quesnel, *Venance Fortunat, Œuvres IV. La Vie de Saint Martin.* (Paris, 1996).
[137] Tours 6d, 7d, 7e; Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.

transgressions, and intercede on his behalf to ensure his entry into the kingdom of God when Judgement Day finally came around:

> [W]hen I am to be placed on the left side at the Judgment, he [Martin] will deign to separate me from the middle of the goats with his sacred right hand, protect me behind his back, and await the judge's verdict. And when in accordance with the judge's decision I am to be condemned to the infernal flames, he will protect me with the sacred shroud that shields him from boasting and reprieve me from this punishment. The angels will say to the King […]: "This is the man for whom Martin petitions".[138]

At the same time, however, Gregory had faced a number of difficulties as a relative outsider to the city on his accession to the see of Tours, and he also later endured stiff challenges to his authority from secular leaders such as Count Leudast, and even his own clergy.[139] Raymond Van Dam has thus demonstrated how the cult of Martin provided the bishop with a means to align himself with the city during these moments of insecurity, and promote harmony and continuity within his new community.[140]

Although the support of Martin ultimately proved to be the bedrock of Gregory's episcopal identity,[141] the bishop's first major spiritual patron was the martyr Julian, with whom his family shared a close relationship at Clermont.[142] Gregory set about demonstrating how Martin had invited Julian to Tours to be his ally, revealing that a possessed man had said as much shortly after Gregory's arrival in the city.[143] Another man, meanwhile, had seen a bright flash of light fall from heaven when the new bishop brought relics of Julian to Martin's basilica.[144] The relaying of these miracles was intended to make it clear that if an individual as distinguished as Saint Martin welcomed Julian's presence in Tours, the local Christian community should similarly accept his 'foster-son' Gregory as their bishop.[145] Gregory

[138] Gregory of Tours, *Libri de virtutibus sancti Martini*, II.60, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 584-660; tr. Van Dam, *Saints*, p. 259. See also the Will of Bishop Bertram of Le Mans (586-623), which expresses similar sentiments: Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum, 27 March 616*, ed. M. Weidemann, *Das Testament des Bischofs Berthramn von Le Mans* (Mainz, 1986), with Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle*, p. 515.
[139] Gregory, *Hist*., V.14, 48-49.
[140] Van Dam, *Saints*, pp. 50-81; Van Dam, *Leadership*, pp. 212-15, 235-6.
[141] B. Brennan, ''Being Martin': Saint and Successor in Sixth-Century Tours', *Journal of Religious History* 21.2 (1997), pp. 121-35.
[142] Van Dam, *Saints*, pp. 53-5.
[143] Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Virtutibus Sancti Juliani*, 35, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885) pp. 562-583; cf. Fortunatus, *Carm*., V.3.11-12.
[144] Gregory, *VJ*, 34.
[145] Van Dam, *Saints*, pp. 65-8.

later placed relics of both saints in an oratory he had established in the city's episcopal group,[146] and a poem by Fortunatus, which celebrated his renovation of the cathedral in 589/590, confirmed that the alliance between Martin and Julian also extended to Tours' bishop.[147] Fortunatus explains that Gregory had been helped in his rebuilding efforts by Martin himself, whose greatness was in turn restored by the bishop's actions.[148] Gregory's experience as an outsider at Tours was hardly unique, given the number of similar 'parachute appointments' signed off by the Merovingian royals across Gaul during this and subsequent centuries. Financing acts of building patronage, therefore, in the hope of developing a symbiotic relationship with a city's local saint similar to that Gregory shared with Martin at Tours, would have been an important way for bishops to ingratiate themselves within their new communities and establish their authority.

Cults, building, and the public good

The building patronage of Bishop Gregory in Tours reveals how members of the episcopate utilised the practice not only as a means to cultivate relationships with saints for the sake of their *salus*, but also to publicise these relationships to their local and regional audiences. The opportunity for association with a city's spiritual patron, however, does not fully explain how promoting the shrine or legacy of a saint provided a vehicle for claiming authority. Indeed, in order to understand how building patronage focussed on holy sites could confer legitimacy on a benefactor, we must acknowledge the important role that the practice played in fulfilling contemporary Christian conceptions of social responsibility. The development of these ideas in the written record has been detailed extensively by Peter Brown, and will be returned to below when the episcopal provision of pastoral care and its related building programmes are considered.[149] But with regards to their relationship to the cult of saints, Jamie Kreiner

[146] Tours 4a; Gregory of Tours, *GC,* 18, 20; *VP,* II.3; *Liber in gloria martyrum,* 5, 33, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 484-561; Fortunatus, *Carm.,* II.3.
[147] Tours 1b; Fortunatus, *Carm.,* X.6; George, 'Portraits', pp. 194-6, 200-3.
[148] Fortunatus, *Carm.,* X.6.17-18.
[149] See pp. 109-21. P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH and London, 2002) and *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Maddison, Wis., 1992), pp. 71-117.

has argued that holy places were powerful by virtue of the benefits they brought to a community, and this provided opportunities for those looking to press their claims to leadership of society.[150]

For Kreiner, social authority could be claimed by those who did not merely use their wealth to enhance their own spiritual wellbeing, but who also occupied themselves with that of the general public at large and directed their religious giving accordingly. Sponsoring churches, therefore, in which divine intercession could be obtained by all members of the local community, allowed patrons to convert their wealth into social capital through the democratisation of the *loca sanctorum.* As part of her wider arguments about the individuality of the hagiography of the seventh and eighth centuries, Kreiner believed that this concern with the public good, and its manifestation in the provision of Christian spaces, was a development of the later Merovingian kingdoms. The rise in building patronage venerating the cult of saints from the fifth century onwards (fig. 5), however, suggests that such ideas had already been embraced by Gaul's bishops.[151] In this regard, members of the episcopate may have been responding to the expectations of their communities, which in turn shaped how those seeking the region's sees presented themselves to the local *populus*. Indeed, the race for a city's bishopric reveals how Kreiner's thinking equally applies to earlier centuries, when hopefuls looked to accrue social capital and legitimise their case for office by patronising saints' cults through acts of building.

This seems to have been the strategy adopted in North Africa by the deacon Eraclius, for example, following the arrival of relics of Saint Stephen in Hippo.[152] Conrad Leyser believes that the launch of the proto-martyr's cult in the city should be seen in the context of Bishop Augustine's (395-430) retirement from his juridical responsibilities, which came in September 426, and his attempts to secure the episcopal succession to his liking.[153] A sermon Augustine had given eight months earlier suggests that he had already identified a suitable heir in the form of Eraclius, who is presented as the model cleric: selfless and generous, responsible for establishing the city's *memoria* to Stephen, and even

[150] J. Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 189-229.
[151] See also K. Mitchell, 'Saints and Public Christianity in the *Historiae* of Gregory of Tours', in T.F.X. Noble and J.J. Contreni (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1987), pp. 77-94.
[152] *PCBE* 1, Eraclivs, pp. 356-8.
[153] C. Leyser, '*Homo pauper, de pauperibus natum*: Augustine, Church Property, and the Cult of Stephen', *Augustinian Studies* 36.1 (2005), pp. 229-37.

willing to use his fortune to buy a piece of land for the church.[154] Of most interest here is Eraclius' act of Christian building patronage, which is framed by Augustine as something done for the public good of Hippo: 'his works are brilliantly evident to the eyes of us all. It is thanks to his work and the money he has spent that we have the *memoria* of the holy martyr'.[155] A short while later Eraclius joined the priesthood, and soon became responsible for the day to day administration of the church of Hippo as coadjutor.[156] While his ascension to the city's see following Augustine's death in 430 may have been complicated by the Vandal invasion of North Africa, Eraclius' church-building, and particularly his apparent awareness that his actions would be witnessed by a local audience, nevertheless suggests that the practice provided an effective way to legitimise claims to leadership of the Christian community.

That the public reception of church-building similarly featured in the thinking of donors in Gaul is confirmed at Bourges, when, shortly after ascending to the episcopate himself, Bishop Sidonius of Clermont (470-483…) was tasked with managing an appointment to the city's vacant see.[157] Competition for the position was apparently fierce, but after deftly discounting possible alternatives by way of reference to their social category, Sidonius detailed the merits of the nobleman Simplicius.[158] Among other things, he noted at some length an act of Christian building patronage previously undertaken by Simplicius, highlighting that it was on behalf of the Christian community of Bourges that Simplicius had financed a church (*hic vobis ecclesiam… extruxit*).[159] The characterisation of the project as something undertaken for the benefit of the local *populus* is in keeping with the rest of the address, which portrayed the bishop-elect as a suitable protector of the public good.

[154] Augustine, *Sermones,* 356.7, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 39 (Paris, 1865), col. 1574-81.
[155] *[O]pera eius lucent coram oculis nostris. De opere eius expensa pecunia eius memoriam sancti martyris habemus.*
[156] Augustine, *Epistulae,* 213, ed. A. Goldbacher**,** *CSEL* 57 (Vienna, 1911), pp. 372-9.
[157] Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture', p. 77; J.A. van Waarden, 'Episcopal Self-Presentation: Sidonius Apollinaris and the Episcopal Election in Bourges AD 470', in J. Leemans *et al.*, (eds), *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity* (Berlin, 2011), pp. 555-62.
[158] Sidonius, *Ep.*, VII.9.5-25.
[159] Sidonius, *Ep.*, VII.9.21. It is unclear where Simplicius' church was located.

It is in this light, therefore, that we should arguably view the basilica built in Autun a generation earlier by the priest Eufronius at the site of the burial of Symphorian, the city's famous martyr.[160] Making the holy power of the saint accessible to the local community would have been a clear demonstration of Eufronius' concern for the interests of Autun's citizens, and presumably served as a useful display of his leadership credentials during his successful bid for the city's bishopric in c. 450. Eufronius' decision to patronise the local cult of Symphorian while a priest at Autun is thus suggestive of how converting wealth into social capital through church-building may have been an effective way of successfully navigating intra-city competition, which intensified in Gaul from the second half of the fifth century in a context of political upheaval. Indeed, acts of building patronage celebrating the cult of saints appear to have similarly increased in this period (fig. 5), indicating that clerics, and especially bishops, may have seen facilitating access to the tombs of the holy as a powerful way to demonstrate their concern for the general welfare of their local communities, and claim authority accordingly.

Conclusion

The growth in the popularity of the cult of saints across Gaul from the late fourth century onwards saw ecclesiastics increasingly employ building as means of venerating their favoured spiritual patrons in the hope of enjoying their intercession both on earth and in their quest for salvation. While this behaviour did on occasion find an outlet in the oratories of episcopal residences or the cloisters of intra-mural monastic complexes, for the most part it was concentrated in the suburban necropolises, where successive acts of building patronage gave rise to funerary basilicas memorialising the burials of holy individuals. Some of this activity was no doubt driven by practical concerns, including attempts to rectify damage and disrepair.[161] The work of Jamie Kreiner, however, helps us to understand how this construction activity also functioned as an important vehicle for claiming authority in cities. The

[160] Autun 11a; *PCBE* 4, Evfronivs 1, pp. 669-672. Y. Labaune, 'La topographie funéraire antique d'Autun. Bilan et nouvelles propositions à la lumière des découvertes récentes', *Bulletin archéologique: Antiquité Archéologie classique* 35 (2009), pp. 113-16.
[161] Vienne 15a; Gregory of Tours, *VJ*, 2, with J.-F. Reynaud, 'À la recherche des martyrs de Lyon et de Vienne', in Gaillard (ed.), *L'empreinte chrétienne en Gaule*, p. 251-3.

provision of a dedicated space for cult worship, where the local *populus* could come and seek spiritual patronage and redemption for their souls, was a very public demonstration of a bishop's interest in the welfare of his community. In addition to these concerns for the public good, there was also a more calculated desire on the part of bishops to regulate the behaviour of their congregations, and ensure that in times of need they turned to episcopally sponsored shrines and basilicas, rather than individuals and places outside their control. This aspiration reflected both the sincere belief of the bishops in the efficacy of the former, but also their fear of the competition posed by rival spiritual attractions such as soothsayers and alternative foci of devotion. In this regard, the saints and their funerary basilicas served as venues where, particularly during feast days and rogation ceremonies, the bishop could be foregrounded in a ritualised expression of civic consensus, with the whole community present to witness his moral authority and leadership.

To facilitate these aims, building patronage sometimes focussed on existing local cults, especially when bishops were seeking legitimacy in a community by associating themselves with its most important spiritual patrons. Alternatively, bishops might seek to establish a new cult, by honouring an historic predecessor or even a relative. In both cases, alongside benefits in the hereafter, the cultivation of a saint's legacy was also a vehicle for bishops looking to promote themselves and often their family. While there may have been an element of expectation within the community that the bishop should nurture a city's saints to help safeguard the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the local *populus*, it seems probable that the episcopate would have engaged in such behaviour regardless. Indeed, as the piling up of miracle stories by Gregory of Tours makes clear, bishops had little choice but to fall back on the heavenly power of the saints on account of their lack of recourse to other, more martial means of consolidating their status and authority in society. Members of the episcopate were in principle precluded from the hunting, feasting, and fighting in which lay magnates often engaged in the pursuit of honour and influence.[162] Instead, through writing, preaching, and building, bishops sought to convince their communities and secular rivals of the reality of the divine and potentially vengeful power

[162] See E.J. Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2020), pp. 44-69.

of the holy, and their association therewith. This was especially the case during the late fifth and sixth centuries, when meaningful local power returned to the cities. At the same time, however, it is necessary to acknowledge the parallel surge in interest in the monastic experience that took hold among the upper echelons of Merovingian society shortly after, from which bishops were probably not immune in determining their ecclesiastical benefactions. This emerging outlet for building patronage would have provided an alternative focus for the financial outlay that had hitherto underpinned the monumental expression of the cult of saints, and so must now be considered.

3.3. Monasticism

The pursuit of a monastic life during this period was distinguished by acts of asceticism, abstinence, and humility performed in a communal setting with fellow devotees.[163] Alongside the considerable financial outlay that accompanied the development of episcopal groups and the veneration of the cult of saints, the ecclesiastics of Gaul also used their resources to establish monastic communities in the cities and their suburban environs. Until relatively recently, treatments of Gallic monasticism were generally framed by a narrative that began with a wave of regional activity in the late fourth and fifth centuries, centred on vibrant hubs in western and south-eastern Gaul – sometimes simplistically categorised as 'Martinian' and 'Lérinian' monasticism – and driven by a multitude of enthusiastic and ascetically-minded bishops. At some point, however, this initial vigour and dynamism was supposed to have turned sour, and the sixth-century Merovingian church, and its associated monastic practices, considered to have been badly in need of reform. The catalyst for this change was often deemed to be the outsider Columbanus, who apparently brought to Gaul the decentralised traditions of Ireland, and sparked a growth in rural monastic foundations, away from the urban purview and episcopal jurisdiction of the diocesan bishops. The rural nature of 'Columbanian' or 'Hiberno-Frankish' monasticism was then taken as one harbinger of a world that revolved increasingly around personal lordship and landholding.

While the latter idea is a particularly compelling one, there were obviously issues with this approach, from the moralising judgements inherent in conceptions of a 'staid' and 'corrupt' church waiting to be rescued by external forces, to the use of language that masks the diversity and development of seventh-century monastic practice.[164] The role of Columbanus in these processes is something that has been especially re-evaluated in recent years.[165] It is necessary, therefore, to establish how the evidence for

[163] P. Rousseau, 'Monasticism', in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 745-80.
[164] On the multiplicity of the latter, see I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994), pp. 189-192; C. Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions* (New York, 2006), pp. 45-64.
[165] I.N. Wood, 'Columbanian Monasticism: A Contested Concept', in R. Flechner and S. Meeder (eds), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture and Religion* (London, 2016), pp. 86-100; *idem*, 'Columbanus, the Columbanian Tradition and Caesarius', in D. Tor (ed.), *The Abbasid and Carolingian Empires: Comparative Studies in Civilizational Formation* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 153-68.

urban and suburban monastic building patronage compiled by this study can contribute to these debates. In ascertaining what prompted ecclesiastics to establish monastic communities in late and post imperial Gaul, and the nature of the patronage that underpinned these communities, what follows will question how far the impression provided by the writings of the fifth-century episcopate and its aristocrats-cum-ascetics was reflected in the Christian topography of the cities. Moreover, it will also be assessed to what extent the monastic growth of the later Merovingian period really was an exclusively rural phenomenon.

The scene that celebrates itself

The first major monastic foundations attested in Gaul were those established in the Poitou and Touraine regions before the end of the fourth century by Martin, the famous monk-bishop of Tours (371-397). These were followed soon after by the celebrated island monastery of Lérins, which helped to train several generations of bishops and, as part of a regional network also encompassing Marseille and Arles, generated a significant literary corpus that combined monastic ideals with aristocratic rhetoric and careerism.[166] Alongside these institutions, it is necessary to add a number of monastic centres across Burgundy by the end of the fifth century, including at Lyon, Vienne, the Jura mountains and probably also Agaune.[167] To argue that bishops were early adopters of monasticism in Gaul seems uncontroversial. What is perhaps surprising, however, and often insufficiently acknowledged in discussions of Gallic monasticism,[168] is that despite the ascetic backgrounds of a not insignificant proportion of the fifth-century episcopate, and the claims made in the written record, the evidence for early products of monastic building patronage in the cities of Gaul that can be attributed to such bishops

[166] C. Leyser, ‘"This Sainted Isle": Panegyric, Nostalgia, and the Invention of Lerinian Monasticism’, in W. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (eds), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus* (Ann Arbor, 1999), pp. 188-206.
[167] I.N. Wood, ‘A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories’, in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan (eds), *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 3-32; B.H. Rosenwein, ‘One Site, Many Meanings: Saint-Maurice d'Agaune as a Place of Power in the Early Middle Ages’, in F. Theuws and M. De Jong (eds), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 274-80.
[168] See, for example, Rousseau, ‘Monasticism’, pp. 763-72.

is rather thin on the ground. Sources pertaining to Eucherius of Lyon,[169] Hilary of Arles,[170] and Maximus and Faustus of Riez,[171] for example, give the impression that it was common for former residents of Lérins to establish monastic communities in their dioceses on assuming episcopal office. But confirming an association between a famous bishop and a documented foundation can be difficult, and it is often unclear, moreover, whether such foundations had an urban or suburban character, or were in fact genuine monasteries in some cases, rather than simply references to the *vita communis* that a number of bishops instituted for their local clergy.

A provisional synthesis of the evidence for urban monasticism in Gaul that we can be confident about suggests that while 104 identifiable monasteries are known to have been established both inside and outside the city walls during the later Merovingian era, only 24 can be dated before the start of the sixth century.[172] This disparity can be partly explained by the lay and royal embrace of monastic benefaction from c. 500 onwards, which expanded the pool of interested actors who possessed the necessary financial means to found and support a community of ascetics. Nevertheless, as fig. 5 indicates, of those monasteries which we can confidently attribute to a clerical patron, only ten appeared before 500, while another twenty-four were established in the subsequent 250 years. The bishops of late and post-imperial Gaul may certainly have been among the first to display a real interest in the ascetic movement that had originated in the East, therefore, but the available evidence suggest that we should perhaps be careful not to overstate the initial material impact of this engagement in the cities.

Whether established by a monk, a member of the episcopate, or a combination thereof, the early monastic foundations that we do have evidence for in the urban landscape ultimately provided the

[169] *Epistola dicta S. Eucherii Lugdunensis episcopi ad Philonem presbyterium suum,* ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 50 (Paris, 1865), col. 1213.
[170] Arles 15a. Honoratus of Marseilles, *Vita Sancti Hilarii Episcopi Arelatensis,* 11, ed. S. Cavallin and P.-A. Jacob, *La vie d'Hilaire d'Arles, SC* 404 (Paris, 1995).
[171] Faustus of Riez, *Epistula,* VI.9.12, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH AA* 8 (Berlin, 1887), pp. 265-98; see S. Pricoco, *L'isola dei santi: il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico* (Rome, 1978), p. 56; Sidonius, *Ep.*, IX.3.4.
[172] M. Gaillard and C. Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain au haut Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 124.1 (2012), pp. 27-37. Hartmut Atsma suggested that there were a total of 220 monasteries in Gaul at the end of the sixth century, but by the early eighth century this figure rose to around 550: H. Atsma, 'Les monastères urbains du nord de la Gaule', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 62 (1976), pp. 163-87, at p. 168.

founder with an opportunity to practise their faith and support others wishing to do the same, thereby helping them in their pursuit of divine intercession and salvation.[173] According to the testimony of Sulpicius Severus, for example, Martin began his episcopate by living in a cell adjacent to Tours' cathedral, but, perhaps in order to attain a greater measure of solitude, he soon installed himself on a site about three kilometres outside the walls of the city, on the right bank of the Loire.[174] Here he built a church in honour of Peter and Paul, and by the end of the fourth century had assembled some eighty monks in a community that came to be known as Marmoutier.[175] The abstinence and isolation practised here was probably intended to recall the lives of the famous eastern hermits, who fashioned homes for themselves out of rocks in the deserts of Egypt and Syria.[176] In reality, however, Martin seems to have re-used a suburban villa which was still standing on the site, and the location was probably rather more accessible than Sulpicius would lead us to believe.[177]

In the first quarter of the fifth century, male and female monastic communities were established in Marseille by the famous ascetic and moral teacher John Cassian, who brought his first-hand experience of the desert monks to a receptive Gallic audience.[178] Sadly, their precise locations are unknown, since the male one is certainly not identifiable with the medieval monastery of St-Victor – found today on the southern side of Marseille's Vieux Port – as long asserted in the historiographic tradition.[179] Establishing his own communities offered Cassian a means to put the thinking detailed in his *Institutes* and *Conferences* into practice, but it is interesting that rather than follow the rural examples of the desert

[173] See P. Dilley, *Monasteries and the Care of Souls in Late Antique Christianity: Cognition and Discipline* (Cambridge, 2017).
[174] Tours 14a. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 10, ed. J. Fontaine, *SC* 133-135 (Paris, 1967-69); see Pietri, *La ville de Tours*, pp. 421-30.
[175] Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31. For general overviews of monastic space in this period, see J. Biarne, 'L'espace du monachisme gaulois au temps de Grégoire de Tours', in N. Gauthier and H. Galinié (eds), *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois* (Tours, 1997), pp. 115-38; F. Cardot, *L'espace et le pouvoir: étude sur l'Austrasie mérovingienne* (Paris, 1987), pp. 213-32.
[176] Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 10. See P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1985).
[177] E. Lorans, 'Marmoutier (Tours), a Late Roman and Early Medieval Monastery in the Loire Valley (4th-11th Centuries)', in G. Thomas and A. Knox (eds), *Early Medieval Monasticism in the North Sea Zone* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 55-66. The exaggeration of a monastic community's remoteness by written sources is not uncommon, see S. Bully *et al.*, 'Les origines du monastère de Luxeuil (Haute-Saône) d'après les récentes recherches archéologiques', in Gaillard (ed.), *L'empreinte chrétienne en Gaule*, pp. 311-55.
[178] Marseille 8a, 9a. The monasteries are never mentioned by Cassian himself, but known from Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, 61, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 63 (Paris, 1847), col. 1059-1120.
[179] For a discussion of the evidence, see Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity', pp. 132-63.

fathers he encountered in the East, Cassian seemingly chose to pursue a form of urban monasticism instead. This may have been because he lacked faith in the ascetic credentials of Gaul's practitioners,[180] but his decision can perhaps also be understood by analogy with the actions of his contemporary to the north, Bishop Germanus of Auxerre (418-448). In the first half of the fifth century, Germanus founded a monastery in his city as a place of retreat from the world that nevertheless stood in full view of the local community.[181] This was apparently a deliberate choice intended to ensure that both his own piety and that of his monastic brethren could serve as a public example to the citizens of Auxerre.[182] A similar motivation is also identified by William Klingshirn behind the siting of the female monastery later founded by Caesarius in Arles,[183] and may have thus likewise featured in the thinking of Cassian. Despite Cassian's historical standing as a patristic heavyweight, however, his Massilian establishments made little clear impression on the sources of subsequent centuries.[184] This underlines the often transient nature of monastic communities, which could soon disperse in this period following the loss of a regular income or charismatic leader, especially if a lasting material presence had not been established through significant acts of building patronage.[185] This naturally has implications for any attempt to follow up claims made in the sources about the monastic building activities of potential patrons.

Rules for living

Further motives for episcopal involvement in monasticism come to the fore during the sixth century. In highlighting the impact of Columbanus' arrival in Francia towards the end of this period, Edward

[180] R.J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 32-64.
[181] Auxerre 9a. For the monastic evidence of Auxerre in this period, see H. Atsma, 'Kloster und Mönchtum im Bistum Auxerre', *Francia* 11 (1983), pp. 1-96.
[182] *Vita S. Germani*, 6-9, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 7 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1920), pp. 225-83: *Qui duplicem viam Christo ad profectum religionis instituens, in conspectu oppidi, interposito Icauna flumine, monasterium conlocavit, ut ad fidem catholicam populi et congregationibus monachorum et ecclesiastica gratia raperentur.*
[183] Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, p. 117, 122.
[184] Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity', pp. 139-41.
[185] See Clermont 11a.

James contrasted the Gallic monastic tradition with the rural and decentralised practices of Ireland.[186] In Gaul, he argued, monasteries, and especially urban or suburban institutions, were often under the thumb of the local bishop, who acted as spiritual guide to subservient abbots or abbesses and their communities. Although this relationship would later be complicated by the growth of monastic exemptions and privileges,[187] it was initially reinforced by the church councils of the sixth century, at which bishops legislated to ensure that monastic leaders remained accountable to the prelate in whose territory they resided.[188] This episcopal desire for oversight was generally rooted in a concern that monasteries should remain a space where those who sought a holy life could receive correct instruction and maintain their discipline. Indeed, the potential impact of unregulated asceticism and teaching had been readily apparent to the bishops of the late antique West since the Priscillianist controversy of the fourth century, which brought about the so-called 'Felician controversy', and split the Gallic church for twenty years.[189]

The ongoing desire of the episcopate to avoid the possibility of similar episodes is particularly apparent in the writing of Gregory of Tours. Although Gregory did not treat the subject of monasticism extensively, his attitude to its practitioners was characterised by a wish for conformity under strong episcopal leadership. He believed that even if an individual might display all the outward signifiers of holiness – abstinence, perpetual prayer, wearing animal skins, even wonder-working – without the guidance of a bishop they nevertheless remained susceptible to temptation, or committing the sins of pride and vainglory. This explains the preference visible in Gregory's work for coenobitic practices overseen by the local prelate, rather than acts of individual self-mortification performed outside ecclesiastical structures by an archetypal 'holy man'.[190] The abbot Senoch, for example, was ostensibly

[186] E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), p. 129.
[187] K.R. Rennie, *Freedom and Protection: Monastic Exemption in France, c. 590-c. 1100* (Manchester, 2018), pp. 27-50. For a general discussion of immunities and their historiography, see A.C. Murray, 'Merovingian Immunity Revisited', *History Compass* 8.8 (2010), pp. 913-28.
[188] Council of Agde (506), c. 27, 38, 58; Council of Orléans (511), c. 7, 19, 22; Council of Epaone (517), c. 8, 10; Council of Orléans (533), c. 21; Council of Orléans (538), c. 21, 26; Council of Arles (554), c. 2, 3, 5, ed. C. Munier and C. de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae* (2 vols, Turnhout, 1963).
[189] M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities* (Baltimore, 2004), pp. 243-50. For the Gallic fallout, see Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, pp. 11-18.
[190] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.32, cf. *VP*., X.2; *Hist.*, VIII.34. For holy men, see P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), pp. 80-101.

a very holy individual who lived the life of an abstinent recluse with some brothers in Tours.[191] After choosing to leave his monastery, however, he apparently soon fell victim to a vanity that only dissipated once he had returned and placed himself once more under Gregory's direction as bishop.[192] For the bishops of Gaul, therefore, patronising monasteries in an urban or suburban context facilitated a degree of episcopal oversight designed to ensure that holy men and women maintained their humility and discipline, and did not fall prey to worldly temptations, vainglory, or heresy.

While the supervision of rigorous standards of belief and behaviour could be facilitated through monastic benefaction, it was strengthened further by the provision of a 'Rule'. This combination of building patronage and codified guidance is exemplified by Bishop Caesarius of Arles (502-542),[193] who founded a convent on becoming a bishop that would prove hugely influential upon future monastic patrons. Caesarius' female monastery, which was entrusted to his sister Caesaria as abbess, was built shortly after his ascension to the episcopal throne of Arles originally as an extra-mural foundation.[194] Following the convent's destruction during a siege of Arles by the Franks and Burgundians, however, Caesarius re-established the community in c. 512 inside the south-east corner of the walled enclosure, next to the cathedral,[195] which, as speculated above, may have been another major recipient of his building patronage. The bishop of Arles then complemented this monastery with a funerary basilica dedicated to Mary in which the nuns, and eventually Caesarius himself, were to be buried.[196] Contrary to the tradition that credits Caesarius as a pioneer of intra-mural burial,[197] it is more likely that convention combined with spatial constraints to dictate that the nuns left the cloister at death to be

[191] Gregory, *VP,* XV.2.
[192] See also *VP,* XX.3.
[193] Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles,* pp. 104-10, 117-24, 250-5; W.E. Klingshirn, 'Caesarius's Monastery for Women in Arles and the Composition and Function of the 'Vita Caesarii'', *Revue Bénédictine* 100.4 (1990), pp. 441-81.
[194] For female asceticism and its early monastic context, see P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), pp. 263-7.
[195] *Vita Caesarii,* I. 35.
[196] Arles 10a.
[197] *TCCG* III, p. 81; Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles,* p. 118.

buried outside the walls of the city, with this funerary basilica perhaps lying close to the entrance of the Alyscamps.[198]

It has been suggested that the *regula virginum* that Caesarius wrote for his new community was the first surviving Rule to concern itself solely with the female monastic experience anywhere across the Mediterranean.[199] While drawing on an array of ascetic thought encompassing Cassian, Pachomius, and especially Augustine, its prescriptive nature went further than existing male monastic rules by circumscribing the freedom of the nuns with a strict policy of enclosure.[200] At the same time, Caesarius' rule advocated a communal life, characterised by charity and abstinence, with the foundation as a whole intended to ensure that women had the same opportunities as their male counterparts to pursue monastic piety. In addition to its role as a symbol of prosperity and status, and as a 'powerhouse of prayer' that afforded the citizens of Arles divine protection,[201] William Klingshirn has argued that Caesarius' convent was also the product of a desire on his part to act as a patron to the often wealthy families of the daughters whose livelihoods he now helped to guarantee.[202] In this light we can see how Caesarius' monastic patronage might in part have functioned as a means to build relationships with influential individuals, who could be expected to provide support and loyalty when the bishop found his authority in Arles threatened, as was not infrequently the case.[203]

It has been suggested that it was only once the political significance of Arles began to diminish in the course of the sixth century that the Christianisation of the city's urban zone was able to get fully underway, as bishops capitalised on the reduced competition for urban space.[204] Aurelianus (...546-

[198] A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau, *Césaire d'Arles. Œuvres monastiques,* I, *Œuvres pour les moniales* (Paris, 1988), pp. 106-114; S.T. Loseby, 'Arles in Late Antiquity: *Gallula Roma Arelas* and *urbs Genesii'*, in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 62-3; M. Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité tardive. De la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii* (Rome, 2004), pp. 265-368.
[199] de Vogüé and Courreau, *Césaire d'Arles*, pp. 68-9.
[200] Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 118-22; C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 81-100. For the practice of enclosure in this period, see E.T. Dailey, 'Confinement and Exclusion in the Monasteries of Sixth-Century Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe* 22.3 (2014), pp. 304-35.
[201] For the conception of monasteries as 'powerhouses of prayer', see Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 219-231.
[202] Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 104-6, 123.
[203] *Ibid.*, pp. 84-7, 107-10.
[204] Loseby, 'Arles in Late Antiquity', p. 63.

551), for example, founded an intra-mural female monastic community in honour of Mary, as well as a male monastery in the city; for both he wrote rules that drew heavily on the work of Caesarius, who seems to have served as a model for his own episcopal tenure.[205] In building his new male monastery, Aurelianus benefited from the financial backing of the Merovingian monarch Childebert I (511-558), just as Caesarius had received pecuniary support for his episcopal activities from the Ostrogothic king Theoderic following his annexation of Provence. It is possible that Aurelianus and his Merovingian connections were looking to exploit the civic vacuum precipitated by Caesarius' death and the end of his family's local pre-eminence in Arles; a possibility of which Caesarius seems to have been acutely aware.[206] That the new bishop opted for an act of monastic building patronage might suggest there was excess ascetic demand in the city, and thus plenty more social capital to be claimed.[207] Indeed, in those fifth- and sixth-century cities where we have evidence for monasteries, communities seem to have multiplied. This was not just the case at Arles, but also at Vienne and especially Marseille.[208] These southern cities were something of an exception prior to the seventh century, however, and so it is possible that the level of monastic activity in this period was determined by existing bonds between bishops and ascetics in cities where a monastic culture had already taken root.

'Come down off your column…'

Alongside the holy example it provided to the local community, and concern for ascetics potentially susceptible to heresy or vainglory, a preference for well-regulated coenobitic monasticism within the city may have also reflected a more calculated desire on the part of the episcopate to monitor individuals whose holiness potentially posed a challenge to their spiritual authority. Bishops often sought to absorb

[205] Arles 11a, 12a. On their siting, see Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité tardive*, pp. 124-6. *PCBE* 4, Avrelianvs 5, pp. 282-5. Aurelianus, *Regula ad monachos*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 68 (Paris, 1866), col. 385-398; Aurelianus, *Regula ad virgines*, *PL* 68, col. 399-406, with A. Diem, '*...ut si professus fuerit se omnia impleturum, tunc excipiatur*. Observations on the Rules for Monks and Nuns of Caesarius and Aurelianus of Arles', in V. Zimmerl-Panagl *et al.* (eds), *Edition und Erforschung lateinischer patristischer Texte* (Berlin and Boston, 2014), pp. 191-224.
[206] Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, pp. 84-91; Klingshirn, 'Caesarius' Monastery for Women'.
[207] Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', pp. 10-11.
[208] See *TCCG* III, pp. 121-33.

such figures into ecclesiastical structures, and acts of monastic building patronage could prove useful in this regard. It was argued in the previous section that saints' cults helped the bishop to define relationships of authority and dependence between himself, in his role as the guardian of the local cult, and the wider Christian community. Successful 'holy men' operated outside these arrangements, and their apparent ability to perform miracles attracted sizeable crowds and subverted episcopal preaching on the locations of confirmed sanctity and genuine holiness. In the *civitas* of Trier, for example, Vulfolaic (…573-585…) drew a great number of followers for a feat of abstinence reminiscent of those performed by the stylites of the East.[209] His popularity seems to have unnerved the local bishops, however, who encouraged him to come down from his column and live a life of communal asceticism, presumably under episcopal guidance. Vulfolaic's ultimate acquiescence in this regard is probably why he appears in the pages of Gregory of Tours' *Histories* as a devout and holy friend of Saint Martin, rather than a charlatan in the mould of the 'Bogus Christ of Bourges'.[210]

In reference to Bourges' infamous false prophet, it is perhaps revealing that episcopal anxieties about rival sources of spiritual authority appear especially pronounced in the city. Gregory of Tours recounts a tale about an ascetic called Agustus, for example, which illustrates how such concerns could help to stimulate acts of building patronage, both as a means to claim authority and to neutralise any challenges to its exercise.[211] Agustus was a member of the household (*domus*) of Bishop Desideratus of Bourges (…549…),[212] but he had been crippled by paralysis and so was only able to move himself on his elbows and knees. Following instruction from God, however, he built an oratory with the alms of the pious at a crossroads just to the east of the city, in the neighbouring *vicus* of Brives, and after installing relics of Saint Martin within it, he was immediately cured and able to move freely. Agustus then gathered a number of monks there and spent his time in prayer.[213]

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[209] Gregory, *Hist.*, VIII.15. *PCBE* 4, Vvlfilaicvs, pp. 2020-2.
[210] Gregory, *Hist.*, VIII.16; X.25. A. Diem, 'Merovingian Monasticism: Voices of Dissent', in B. Effros and I. Moreira (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 330-2. See also C. Leyser, ''Divine Power Flowed from this Book': Ascetic Language and Episcopal Authority in Gregory of Tours' *Life of the Fathers'*, in K. Mitchell and I.N. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 281-94.
[211] Gregory, *GC*, 79. *PCBE* 4, Agvstvs 1, p. 97.
[212] *PCBE* 4, Desideratvs 3, pp. 557-8.
[213] Cf. the holy man and abbot Domitianus, who, near the site of his monastery (the abbey of Saint-Rambert-en-Bugy), apparently established an oratory in the fifth century next to a road so that was in full view of all those

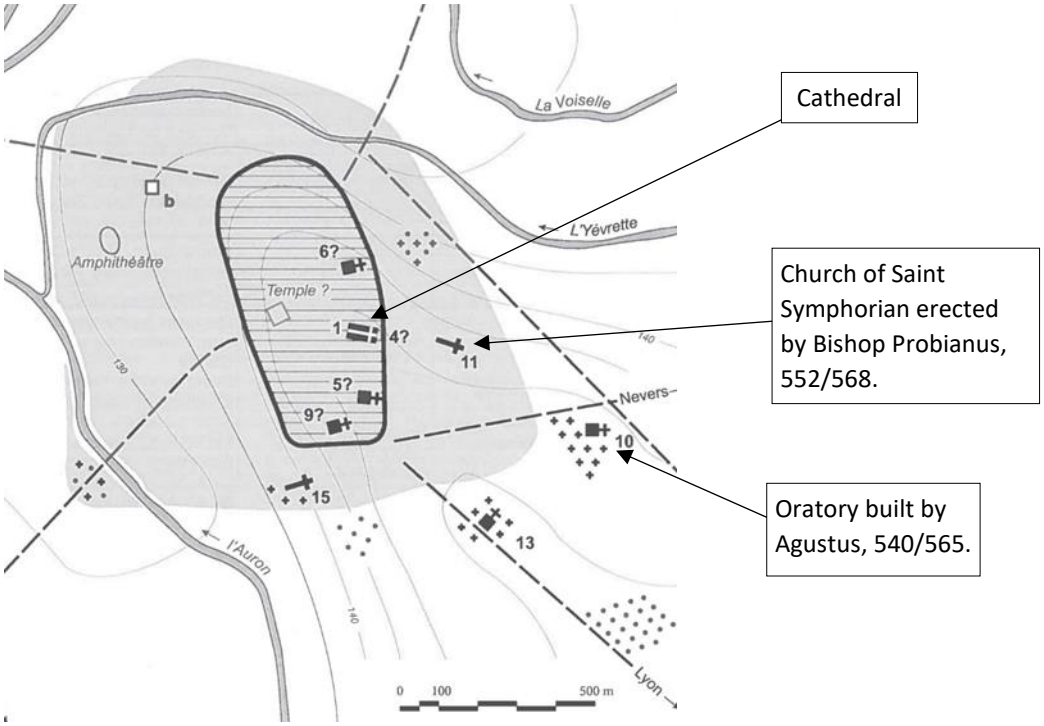


Fig. 9. The late antique and Merovingian churches of Bourges (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, p. 470).

On the surface this appears to be a rather typical and innocuous story of Gregory's, demonstrating the power and benevolence of his patron, Martin of Tours. From the perspective of Desideratus' successor Bishop Probianus (…552-568…), however, we can paint a rather different picture, one that would have probably resonated with those prelates who had urged Vulfolaic to submit himself to their authority.[214] As a protégé of the previous bishop, it is not hard to imagine that Agustus may have rivalled Probianus in the race for the city's episcopal throne following Desideratus' death. Potentially losing out on the bishopric, however, would not have limited Agustus' ability to play a prominent role in the spiritual life of Bourges: he was responsible for an oratory at an important thoroughfare on the edge of the city, possessed relics of Martin, and had very publicly benefitted from God's divine favour through the miraculous cure of his paralysis. Perhaps in acknowledgment of the potential challenge that Agustus' lay and heavenly support might have posed to his episcopal leadership, Probianus ordained the ascetic and brought him within the formal structures of the church, making him directly subordinate to his

passing by: *Vita Domitiani,* ed. *AA SS*, Jul. I (Paris and Rome 1867), pp. 44-50 with M. Rubellin, *Église et société chrétienne d'Agobard à Valdès* (Lyon, 2003), pp. 327-54.
[214] *PCBE* 4, Probianvs, pp. 1533-5.

authority as the abbot of a community founded in honour of Saint Symphorian. This community was attached to a church that Probianus himself had built – perhaps deliberately – within sight of Bourges' cathedral (see fig. 9). To borrow a quote from the American president Lyndon B. Johnson, therefore, Probianus may have considered it preferable to have Agustus inside the episcopal tent pissing out, rather than outside pissing in. Indeed, while Probianus' authority was fundamentally territorial and institutional, dependent as it was on the structural legacy of the Roman empire, the influence and status of ascetics was increasingly derived from the personal and familial structures of aristocratic patronage. This distinction would become more significant from the seventh century with the growth in rural monasteries supported by the Frankish elites, but already here in Bourges we can see that Agustus was able to act independently by personally generating financial backing.

If Probianus thought that episcopal oversight would curtail Agustus' pretensions, he was mistaken. Gregory comments that the ascetic did not abandon his former monks at Brives, but instead appointed a prior (*praepositus*) so that he could govern both communities. Moreover, while resident at his new church, Agustus had a vision of a certain Ursinus, who revealed himself to the abbot as the first bishop of the city before leading him to the site where his body lay. Learning the identity of local saints through divine intervention was a privilege more commonly experienced by the current occupier of the *cathedra,* especially if the saint was a predecessor, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that Probianus ignored Agustus' claims when he tried to tell him of his vision. A short while later, however, Agustus received a second visit from Ursinus, and Bishop Germanus of Paris, who was at that moment present in Bourges, also had a similar vision. The two men conferred and retrieved the body of the saint, at which point Probianus realised he had been out-manoeuvred and relented, interring the remains of Ursinus in a nearby church.[215] Gregory recounted these events to commemorate Ursinus, one of the early Christian missionaries to Gaul, but the possible rivalry between Bishop Probianus and the charismatic ascetic Agustus is lurking throughout, underlining how challenges to episcopal authority were by no means limited to royal or lay actors, and could also include rival spiritual attractions able to generate

[215] It is not made explicit, but this was probably the church he had built and dedicated to Symphorian, see *TCCG* VI, p. 23.

independent financial backing and monumentalise their presence in a city. Members of the episcopate sought to contain the influence of these figures by institutionalising them within monastic structures subservient to their guidance, but while the case of Vulfolaic serves as a successful example of such efforts, that of Probianus shows how the use of building patronage to this end might not necessarily have always proven effective.

The Irishman

Towards the end of the sixth century an Irishman by the name of Columbanus arrived in Gaul.[216] After settling in Burgundy he soon founded a number of important monastic communities and inspired a good deal more.[217] Many of these new institutions were rural and located in the north, where the bucolic Irish tradition of Columbanus, which had been developed in a society devoid of the urban structures that underpinned the authority of the Gallic bishop, has been seen as ideally suited to the Frankish aristocracy, and its pursuit of a more autonomous form of monasticism outside episcopal jurisdiction.[218] Columbanus has consequently often been considered responsible for revolutionising the relationship between monasteries and bishops.[219] But although this narrative is to some extent supported by both increased evidence of rural monastic benefaction during the seventh and eighth centuries and the growth in privileges and immunities circumscribing episcopal rights vis-à-vis certain foundations,[220] the part that the *Vita Columbani* has played in shaping our understanding of these trends has been increasingly

[216] *PCBE* 4, Colvmbanvs 1, pp. 497-508.
[217] Y. Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 19-136. Atsma, 'Les monastères', p. 168; C. Higounet, 'Le problème économique: l'église et la vie rurale pendant le très haut moyen âge', in *Le chiese nei regni dell'Europa occidentale e i loro rapporti con Roma sino all'800* (Spoleto, 1960), p. 775.
[218] James, *The Franks*, pp. 130-1; F. Prinz, 'Columbanus, the Frankish Nobility and the Territories East of the Rhine', in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan (eds), *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 73-87.
[219] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 65-6.
[220] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 193-202; Rennie, *Freedom and Protection*, pp. 32-40.

recognised,[221] and the notion that Columbanus rejuvenated a moribund monastic tradition criticized.[222] Columbanus may have had a lasting impression on the monastic organisation of Gaul, but, as Kriston Rennie has argued, this should be considered a nuanced one, rather than a transformation that heralded the decline of the diocesan system across the region.[223]

Another consequence of the tendency to discuss later Merovingian monasticism through the lens of Columbanus is the decidedly rural emphasis.[224] Meanwhile, the contemporary state of monasticism in the cities is frequently overlooked, and we are left to wonder if urban investment simply dried up. In reality, although there was clearly a growing relocation of monastic patronage to rural foundations,[225] and unchallenged episcopal control in the monastic sphere may have been on the wane, urban institutions continued to be established, not least because of the enduring role they played in the pursuit of self-legitimation and salvation.[226] Indeed, even if the power bases of the laity may have shifted to the country during this period, the bishops remained resolutely urban figures, and, if anything, were more eager than ever before to finance monastic building patronage. This development highlights another lingering problem in the treatment of late Merovingian monasticism. Framing monastic-episcopal relations as a struggle between the Frankish monarchy and aristocratic laity on the one hand, and diocesan bishops on the other, ignores the fact that these groups often mixed in the same elevated circles.[227] The attitudes of many of the courtier-cum-bishops who held episcopal office in the seventh century were likely shaped by the formative experiences they shared with their secular peers, with all concerned party to the growing interest in monasticism prevalent at the royal palaces.

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[221] A. Diem, 'Monks, Kings, and the Transformation of Sanctity: Jonas of Bobbio and the End of the Holy Man', *Speculum* 82 (2007) pp. 521-59; A. O'Hara, 'The *Vita Columbani* in Merovingian Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), pp. 126-53; I.N. Wood, 'Reform and the Merovingian Church', in R. Meens *et al.* (eds), *Religious Franks: Religion and Power in the Frankish Kingdoms: Studies in Honour of Mayke de Jong* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 95-111.
[222] Wood, 'Columbanian Monasticism: A Contested Concept'; *idem*, 'Columbanus, the Columbanian Tradition and Caesarius'.
[223] Rennie, *Freedom and Protection*, p. 40.
[224] Fox, *Power and* Religion; S. Bully *et al.* (eds), *Colomban et son influence: moines et monastères du haut Moyen Âge en Europe* (Rennes, 2018).
[225] For the picture in Austrasia, for example, see Cardot, *L'espace et le pouvoir*, pp. 205-12.
[226] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', p. 242.
[227] As Ralph Mathisen has demonstrated: 'Desiderius of Cahors: Last of the Romans', in S. Diefenbach and G. M. Müller (eds), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter: Kulturgeschichte einer Region* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), pp. 455-69.

While it may have played out on a smaller scale, the growth in rural monastic benefaction was certainly mirrored in the cities, as Michèle Gaillard and Christian Sapin have shown.[228] Indeed, among those acts of monastic building with an identifiable patron, it is the seventh century when the bishops were seemingly most active (fig. 5). Many of these benefactors had spent time at the Merovingian courts before taking the opportunity to pursue their faith at the level of the *civitas.* The particularly illustrious group of aristocratic scions who gathered around Chlothar II (597-629) and Dagobert I (629-639), included, for example, the future bishops Paulus (Verdun), Sulpicius (Bourges), Audoin (Rouen), Ansbert (Rouen), Eligius (Noyon), Arnulfus (Metz), Rusticus (Cahors), and Desiderius (Cahors).[229] Audoin in particular was a key figure in the spread of 'Columbanian' monasticism, alongside his friend Eligius, whose *Vita* he wrote.[230] As was becoming *de rigueur* among the Christian intelligentsia of his day, Eligius used a royal endowment of land to establish a rural monastery at Solignac in the Limousin.[231] In addition to his work in the countryside, however, he also founded a female community in Paris, and, on becoming bishop of Noyon in c. 640, he did the same in his new city.[232] His friends and contemporaries Sulpicius and Desiderius established similar urban foundations in their respective sees of Bourges (626-646) and Cahors (636-655).[233] This behaviour was effectively an urban manifestation of the increasingly widespread way of expressing one's piety and status in the later Merovingian period.

Next to the monastery he founded in Cahors, Bishop Desiderius also built a church to house his burial, which brings us onto another development in the later Merovingian period, namely the 'monasticisation' of funerary basilicas. Bishops and their clergy had already been living in common in some episcopal groups, but such arrangements depended on the ascetic inclinations of the holder of a city's see, and it is unclear how widespread a practice this was.[234] The new blending of monastic and

[228] Gaillard and Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain'.
[229] Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 94-123.
[230] *Vita Eligii*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 634-741. The long debate over the authenticity of the *Vita Eligii* has recently been settled, see C. Mériaux, 'Du nouveau sur la Vie de saint Eloi', *Mélanges de science religieuse* 67.3 (2010), pp. 71-85.
[231] *Vita Eligii*, I.15.
[232] Paris 8a; Noyon 2a.
[233] Bourges 6a; Cahors 11a.
[234] See Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 91-3; Gregory, *Hist.*, VI. 36.

funerary practices served a different but complementary purpose. Peter Brown has highlighted at length the significance of Christian benefaction for obtaining intercession, but, as he also notes, intercession required intercessors.[235] The gradual 'othering' of monastic practitioners through the expectations placed on their standards of dress and behaviour meant that they came to be considered best able to fulfil this function.[236] As members of a 'professional society of prayer', the abstinence and devotion of monks and nuns saw their intercessory efforts particularly prized for the rewards it was hoped they would bring in both this life and the next.[237] This helped in part to drive the monastic growth of the seventh century and beyond, some of which may have come at the expense of spending on saints' cults.

This development also helps us to understand why new suburban funerary basilicas that were built in this period, as well as those that already existed, were increasingly joined by a community of ascetics who could be expected to pray for the soul of their benefactor. Bishop Palladius (...627-659), for example, built a church in honour of Eusebius of Vercelli just to the south-west of the city of Auxerre, where he installed a male monastic community; he was subsequently buried there along with several of his successors.[238] The monks for whom he provided would thus have watched over these burials in both a literal and a spiritual sense. The same concern also saw bishops take an interest in existing monastic institutions as places of burial. In the first half of the eighth century, Bishop Aldobertus and later Bishop Bobinus, both previously monks of Saint-Pierre in Troyes, showered the monastery with goods in order to enlarge its buildings before being laid to rest there.[239] Ultimately, it bears repeating that unlike their lay and royal counterparts, bishops continued to operate primarily out of cities in the later Merovingian kingdoms. Alongside any additional rural interests they might have cultivated, members of the episcopate maintained the civic investment of their predecessors, reminding us that the urban and suburban dimension of the surge in monastic interest in this period should not be ignored.

[235] Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 219-31.
[236] Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle*, pp. 516-22.
[237] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 58.
[238] Auxerre 26a.
[239] Troyes 7c, 7d.

Conclusion

The familiar narrative of Gallic monasticism sketched out at the start of this section should perhaps be reconfigured to acknowledge that the ascetic enthusiasm of the fourth- and fifth-century episcopate, so evident in the written record, was seemingly not widely matched by its urban and suburban topographical legacy. Of course, on account of the modest and likely ephemeral nature of some communities, we may remain ignorant of a number of acts of monastic building patronage. Even so, it does seem that monasticism only really took off in Gaul from the sixth and especially the seventh century, for the variety of reasons outlined above. The opportunity that it provided for episcopal patrons to practise their faith was a universal feature, but the public nature of monasteries sited in and around the cities also served as a useful means for providing an immediate example of holy living to the local community. From an episcopal perspective, coenobitism helped to ensure that the ascetic experience of its practitioners was marked by discipline and humility, rather than vainglory and heresy. The establishment of communities in an urban context had the additional benefit for bishops of permitting them to monitor potential rival claimants to local spiritual status and authority. This assumes, however, that such individuals were amenable to being institutionalised within monastic structures; co-operation in this endeavour may have done much to distinguish legitimate holy men from bogus hustlers in the eyes of the bishops.

Episcopal oversight was hampered in the later Merovingian period by lay and royal efforts to acquire privileges for their foundations, but, as has been increasingly argued in recent years, we should be careful not to overstate the impact of 'Columbanian' monasticism. Rural spending did not necessarily preclude simultaneous urban investment, especially by those individuals who had experienced the growing enthusiasm for monasticism at court and later assumed episcopal office. While for lay magnates power and its display was increasingly found at court and in the countryside respectively, the enduring urban role of the bishop ensured that civic benefaction retained a degree of cultural cachet. Moreover, although the political power-struggles of the later Merovingian period may for the most part have transcended the level of the *civitas*, the status of the bishop nevertheless retained a degree of peril. On the one hand, episcopal patronage of a monastic community was thus consistent with the means for

exhibiting status and piety currently in vogue in Frankish society, but, equally, the role of a monastery as a 'powerhouse of prayer' that could deliver divine protection for the city as a whole also provided the bishop with a way to claim authority in his local community, by demonstrating his concern for the welfare of his people. Such thinking reached its logical conclusion when bishops also began attaching monastic communities to funerary basilicas. Intercessory prayer was now to be employed for the pursuit of both spiritual fortification in this life, and salvation in the next. However, monasteries were not the only way that the clerical class of late antique and Merovingian Gaul could demonstrate their benevolence towards their local communities, as we will see now.

3.4. Pastoral care

The writings of the church fathers, episcopal epitaphs and panegyrics, and extant conciliar legislation all provide blueprints for how bishops were expected to behave in relation to their city and local community. In Gaul, the work of the priest and rhetorician Julianus Pomerius, who fled Vandal North Africa in the course of the fifth century and settled in Arles, provides a model for the ideal bishop.[240] For Pomerius, members of the episcopate were expected to follow an ascetic lifestyle free from cupidity, but combine this temperance with an active programme of pastoral outreach that made full use of the wealth of the church to protect and care for the local *populus*. God's love for all of humankind was thus to be reflected at the level of the *civitas* by the bishop's love for his local community. At the end of the sixth century, the episcopal subjects of the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus were often honoured for such behaviour as *Tutor Patriae* ('Guardian of the Homeland') or *Urbis Amator* ('Lover of the City').[241] This was by no means a new notion, but rather recalled the Roman virtue of demonstrating devotion to one's *patria* and its people through acts of public generosity.[242] In line with the Gospels, however, the conception had evolved during late antiquity through a greater acknowledgement that in order to attain this status, a bishop was to ensure that his affection extended to the poorest members of society, and the wealth at his disposal was mobilised accordingly. Indeed, Gaul's sixth- and seventh-century conciliar legislation made clear that any dereliction of duty in this regard marked the offender out as a *necator pauperum*.[243]

Peter Brown has argued that in light of the residual presence of town councils and other less informal bodies of lay power in cities, the bishops of late antiquity had to rely on the exercise of soft power when looking to legitimise the privileged position they claimed in their communities and society at large.[244] This was a soft power that grew out of the bishop's pastoral duties, as the episcopate pressed their local

[240] *PCBE* 4, Iulianus Pomerivs, pp. 1497-1500; Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism,* pp. 65-80. Pomerius was a particular influence on his pupil Caesarius of Arles: Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 75-82.
[241] Fortunatus, *Carm.ina* 3.5.9 and 3.8.17, Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow*, pp. 24-7, 85, 108.
[242] A. Giardina, '*Amor civicus*: Formule e immagini dell'evergetismo romano nella tradizione epigrafica', in A. Donati (ed.), *La terza età dell'epigrafia* (Faenza, 1988), pp. 67-87.
[243] Council of Orléans (549), c. 13, 16; Council of Arles (554), c. 6; Council of Paris (556-73), c. 1; Council of Mâcon I (581/85), c. 4; Council of Paris (614), c. 9.
[244] Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle,* pp. 506-7.

leadership credentials by seeking to guarantee the welfare of the city and its inhabitants. We have already seen how this manifested itself through the establishment of spaces where citizens could seek divine intercession and the expiation of sin, but bishops also used their resources to establish and administer charitable institutions such as *xenodochia* or *matriculae*, both of which directly fulfilled their pastoral obligations to the vulnerable. Before examining the material structures which underpinned these outreach projects in more detail, however, it is worth considering whether all episcopal building patronage undertaken in the cities was in a sense 'Christian', because it was rooted in a general concern for community welfare and manifested a bishop's love for his people.

The urban fabric

The building patronage associated with the pastoral aspects of episcopal behaviour may be underreported by our sources because of its probable routine nature. This was perhaps especially the case for the everyday maintenance of a city's urban fabric. Such projects were unlikely to have seemed worthy of record in the minds of Christian authors, since they did not carry the prestige of an imposing cathedral or a lavish funerary basilica. Nevertheless, taking responsibility for the urban landscape at large was another obvious opportunity for the bishops of Gaul to press their leadership claims, especially during the social upheaval of the late fifth and sixth centuries. The role of the bishop as a civic patron can largely be seen to have grown out of the 'barbarian' invasions of this period, when warfare compelled some members of the episcopate to take charge of the defence of their city, or engage in activities that guaranteed the welfare of the local *populus*, such as organizing famine relief and securing the release of prisoners.[245] It was in this context of uncertainty and concern for the wellbeing of their local communities that bishops may have also embraced more utilitarian acts of episcopal building patronage.

[245] For bishops and the defence of the city, see Sidonius, *Ep.*, III.3-4, VII.1 with Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris*, p. 227. For bishops and famine relief, see Sidonius, *Ep.*, VI.12.5-8. For bishops ransoming prisoners, see W.E. Klingshirn, 'Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in Sub-Roman Gaul', *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985), pp. 183-203.

The possible epitaph of Bishop Venantius of Viviers (…517-535…) appears to detail his restoration of city walls (*[m]oenia Urbis*) and houses (*domos*).[246] The mutilated nature of the inscription means that the attribution to Venantius cannot be confirmed, but its subject matter overlaps to a considerable extent with a later *Vita*, which suggests the author of the latter may have had access to an undamaged epitaph from the bishop's tomb.[247] Venantius' behaviour seems eminently plausible in a context of post-imperial successor-states violently contesting control of individual *civitates*. Viviers was a strategic site overlooking the middle Rhône valley, and passed under Visigothic, Burgundian, and finally Merovingian control in little over half a century. Indeed, its political significance and defensible location perhaps explain the transfer of the see to Viviers from the comparative backwater of Alba in the later fifth century.[248] Considering the likely consequences a sustained period of regional upheaval had on the urban fabric of Viviers, Venantius' building activity would have been a powerful claim to local authority as an expression of episcopal soft power. It is worth noting, however, that the bishop's involvement in the city walls may have been rather superficial, since it seems unlikely that the various kingdoms fighting over Viviers and its strategic potential had not refortified the circuit themselves. Nevertheless, Venantius probably benefitted by association with this restoration project, and the framing of his possible epitaph suggests that building activity in this mould, and its manifest demonstration for the welfare of the local community, would have been an important facet of the authority and self-image of certain bishops during the transition from Roman to Frankish rule.

Several later Merovingian bishops had backgrounds at the royal courts as government administrators, and this experience no doubt came in useful in the running of their cities and fulfilment of their pastoral obligations. The actions of Bishop Desiderius of Cahors (636-655) are particularly well-documented for us through his extant letter-collection and a later life seemingly assembled with the aid of contemporary documents.[249] These show how alongside his building of churches and monasteries, Desiderius was involved in a host of infrastructure projects during his episcopal tenure, including the

[246] *CIL* XII, 2705. See also Viviers 1a, 4a, 6a; *PCBE* 4, Venantivs 4, pp. 1920-1.
[247] *Vita Venantii, AA SS Aug.* II (1735), pp. 107-10.
[248] S.T. Loseby, 'Urban Failures in Late Antique Gaul', in T.R. Slater, *Towns in Decline AD 100-600* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 84-5, 89-90.
[249] Mathisen, 'Desiderius of Cahors', pp. 455-69.

restoration of the city's wall circuit and water supply, which would have served to demonstrate his love for the Christian community.[250] Desiderius had succeeded his brother Rusticus to Cahors' see following the latter's murder by local opponents, and so his actions may have carried additional significance as a vehicle for endearing himself to the city, and asserting his leadership credentials and authority there. A similarly volatile situation is also evident at Autun a generation later. Here, following nearly two years of factional in-fighting over the episcopal throne, Leudegar was appointed as bishop, perhaps in an attempt by the royal court of Neustria to exert some control in the region.[251] Leudegar faced considerable hostility during his tenure (…660-676), however, both in Autun and at the palace. His efforts to restore Autun's urban fabric, including its city walls and houses, were thus perhaps an attempt to mitigate any local opposition and establish his authority in the city, in much the same way Desiderius had.[252] In this regard, Leudegar proved less successful than the bishop of Cahors, instead suffering the same fate as Desiderius' brother and predecessor Rusticus. These episodes reinforce for us the fact that regardless of the relative stability of the later Merovingian kingdoms, episcopal status was never totally secure.[253] While building patronage in the civil sphere functioned as an extension of the bishop's pastoral responsibilities and a reflection of his Christian love for the community, therefore, it also remained an important way of staking claim to local authority. Indeed, this was perhaps especially true for those members of the episcopate who were viewed locally as outsiders, having been parachuted into a see from a background at the royal courts.

For Jean Durliat, preserving Gaul's urban infrastructure was a duty undertaken by bishops on behalf of central government, with the Merovingian kings delegating municipal authority to their local episcopal agents on the ground.[254] This is a view that has been re-expressed more recently for the episcopate of southern Gaul by Isabelle Réal, who similarly conceived of bishops as part of a network of public

[250] J. Durliat, 'Les attributions civiles des évêques Mérovingiens: L'exemple de Didier, Évêque de Cahors (630-655)', *Annales du Midi* 91 (1979), pp. 237-54. See also Cahors 2a, 3a, 8a, 10a, 11a, 12a.
[251] P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France History and Hagiography 640–720* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 193-253.
[252] *Passio s. Leudegarii*, 2, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* V (Hanover, 1910), pp. 282-322.
[253] Fouracre, 'Why Were So Many Bishops Killed'.
[254] Durliat, 'Les attributions civiles des évêques Mérovingiens'.

servants granted extensive civil responsibilities by the Merovingian sovereigns.[255] It is not necessary, however, to project back into late antiquity a system of territorial lordship more applicable to the middle ages to understand such activity. Rather than cast bishops as royal agents, tasked with maintaining the urban fabric of their cities by kings, their behaviour is perhaps instead better viewed in light of the expanded state of pastoral care members of the episcopate offered to their local communities in response to the political crises of the fifth and sixth centuries. In 585, for example, when Guntram mobilised an army to reaffirm his authority over Poitiers, it was Bishop Maroveus (…569-590…) who apparently met the king's envoys, before later using a church chalice to ransom himself and his city.[256] This was both a pragmatic act of local leadership by Maroveus, and an expression of the care for the local *populus* advocated by Julianus Pomerius. It is no great leap to imagine that, across Gaul, episcopal responses to similar episodes of political instability also included the rebuilding of city walls or the repair of civil infrastructure, and that such behaviour soon became routine for bishops. These acts would have served as a demonstration of their commitment to the welfare of their communities, and their respect for the doctrine of social responsibility seen to be integral to their office.[257] It is for this reason, therefore, that the episcopal maintenance of Gaul's urban fabric has been included in a discussion of Christian building patronage.

Xenodochia

In addition to a general concern with the fabric of their cities, the bishops of Gaul and Francia also channelled their pastoral energies into establishing charitable ventures that directly met the welfare needs of their communities and in particular their most vulnerable members. The most obvious product of this type of episcopal building patronage was the proto-hospital, or *xenodochium*, which Peregrine

[255] I. Réal, 'Les évêques des cités du midi de la Gaule: entre tradition antique et Moyen Âge', in P. Nélidoff (ed.), *Les cités épiscopales du Midi* (Albi, 2006), pp. 21-44.
[256] Gregory, *Hist.*, VII.24.
[257] C. Mohrmann, 'Episkopos-Speculator', in C. Mohrmann, *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens*, vol. 4 (4 vols, Rome, 1977), pp. 231-52.

Horden defines as an institution dedicated to the overnight care of the sick.[258] *Xenodochia* can be traced back to the eastern empire of the fourth century, but they were slow to make their way to the West.[259] Although not exclusively the preserve of Gaul's bishops,[260] the greatest interest in *xenodochia* was certainly shown by members of the episcopate. Caesarius of Arles, for example, was responsible for the first establishment in this mould attested in Gaul when he filled a house with a number of beds to care for the sick and impoverished members of his community in the early sixth century.[261] As a keen follower of Pomerius' teachings, Caesarius took his pastoral obligations seriously, and went out of his way to provide a holistic form of welfare that encompassed body and soul. While the physical health of the infirm members of his flock was taken care of by an official charged with their recovery, their spiritual health benefited from proximity to a nearby church – perhaps the cathedral – which ensured they could listen undisturbed to the liturgy.[262]

If Caesarius' quasi-hospital was possibly the first of its kind in Gaul, our sources suggest that it did not precipitate the erection of *xenodochia* across the territory in any great numbers. It has been estimated that there were somewhere between 20 and 40 Gallic hospitals established during our period,[263] around twelve of which would have been located in the cities.[264] This is significantly fewer attestations than contemporary Italy, for example, where the local aristocracy of Lucca appear to have financed a number of small churches with accompanying *xenodochia* in their city, especially from the seventh century.[265] We must acknowledge, however, that while the reliability of certain sources necessitates caution on account of their lateness, it is highly possible that a great many *xenodochia* also went unrecorded. Indeed, even if the demands on ecclesiastical resources were many, it seems probable that each city

[258] P. Horden, 'Public Health, Hospitals, and Charity', in Effros and Moreira (eds), *Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, pp. 303-4.
[259] T.S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore, 1985); Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, pp. 33-8.
[260] See Lyon 10a.
[261] *Vita Caesarii* 1.20; Arles 4a; Horden, 'Public Health', pp. 304-6.
[262] *Infirmis vero adprime consuluit subvenitque, eis et spatiosissimam deputavit domum, in qua sine strepitu aliquo basilicae opus sanctum possint audire; lectos, lectuaria, sumptos cum persona, quae obsequi et mederi possit, instituit.*
[263] T. Sternberg, *Orientalium more secutus: Räume und Institutionen der Caritas des 5 bis 7. Jahrhunderts in Gallien* (Münster, 1991), pp. 287-90.
[264] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', p. 391.
[265] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 56-7.

would have been home to some such institution. The growing wealth of the episcopate certainly made their foundation possible, and we know from the conciliar legislation that bishops were expected to provide for the sick and impoverished of their communities, as well as for any pilgrims visiting from elsewhere.[266] As a 'poorhouse-cum-hospital', the *xenodochium* was perfectly suited to such requirements.[267] Moreover, much like the maintenance of a city's urban fabric, the foundation of a *xenodochium* for the welfare of a city's *populus* could serve as a useful statement of local leadership and a public expression of the bishop's soft power. In fact, given the evidence we have for the impoverished and their carers sometimes constituting a key component of a bishop's retinue, this form of pastoral outreach may have also acted as a more direct means for asserting episcopal authority in the city. The infamous *parabalani* of the late antique East, for example, were ostensibly a group of minor *clerici* recruited to care for the sick, but they also apparently acted as an informal militia on behalf of Cyril of Alexandria when the patriarch found his position under threat from secular magistrates.[268]

Rather than seeing *xenodochia* as merely a straight-forward extension of Judaeo-Christian charity, or a direct response to epidemic sickness and poverty, Peter Brown has speculated that they originated in the East in the middle of the fourth century as a conspicuous justification for the Constantinian immunities and tax exemptions that benefitted the church's bottom line.[269] It has been argued here thus far that the charitable building of the episcopate was for the most part a top-down affair, driven by prelates who took their pastoral duties seriously and increasingly had the financial wherewithal to realise them effectively, but who no doubt also saw the practice as a useful vehicle for claiming local authority. It is clear, however, that not all bishops were models of Christian *caritas*,[270] and some even went to the extent of employing dogs to deter the poor and needy of their cities.[271] We should perhaps

[266] Council of Orléans (511), c. 5; Council of Orléans (549), c. 10; Lyon 10a; Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity,* pp. 216-17.
[267] Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, p. 34.
[268] G.W. Bowersock, '*Parabalani*: A Terrorist Charity in Late Antiquity', *Anabases* 12 (2010), pp. 45-54. See also Brown, *Poverty and Power,* pp. 97-103.
[269] Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, pp. 29-32; *Through the Eye of the Needle,* pp. 43-4. This view has been endorsed by Horden: 'Poverty, Charity, and the Invention of the Hospital', in S. F. Johnson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 732-3.
[270] See, for example, the notorious brothers Salonius of Embrun and Sagittarius of Gap: Gregory, *Hist.*, IV. 42, V.20, VII.37.
[271] Council of Mâcon (585), c. 13; see J. Kreiner, 'About the Bishop: The Episcopal Entourage and the Economy of Government in Post-Roman Gaul', *Speculum* 86.2 (2011), p. 348.

acknowledge, therefore, that the pastoral undertakings of the episcopate may to some degree have also been a response to societal pressure from below to legitimise the vast wealth it was steadily accruing. The financial capacity of the church of Rome during this period, for example, had apparently led to an expectation that it would take charge of the city's *annona* system of food distribution.[272] Again, *pace* Durliat, this was likely to have been a *de facto* responsibility carried out on a smaller scale than the formalised role of the imperial *praefectus annonae*,[273] and it is possible that similar expectations fell upon the bishops of Gaul to perform acts of community care as justification for their own privileged circumstances.

Evidence in support of such thinking can be found in the conciliar legislation of the sixth century, which likely augmented pre-existing episcopal motivations for pastoral outreach. Although the subscription lists do not always make it clear, lay attendance would have been common at church councils – especially those convoked by a king – with civil leaders helping to shape the agenda of their episcopal counterparts.[274] The presence of representatives from lay society, therefore, may have helped bring about church canons which codified the expectation that bishops would take responsibility for the poor and needy of their cities.[275] Indeed, it was perhaps legislation in this vein that encouraged Bishop Agricola of Chalon-sur-Saône (532-580) to establish a *exsinodochium leprosorum* on the edge of his city, the first attested example of a Gallic leper hospital.[276] Agricola was present at the council of Orléans in 549, which had formally praised a hospital founded by King Childebert I and his wife Ultragotha at Lyons, and in its canons urged bishops to provide for the needs of lepers out of the resources of their own household.[277] This acknowledgement that bishops should be using the wealth of their sees to establish charitable institutions supports Brown's view that the late antique episcopate may have felt the need to justify their growing status in society. Indeed, if we accept that ecclesiastical revenue did not start to become truly significant in Gaul until the late fifth century at the earliest,

[272] Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, V.36, ed. D. Norberg, *Registrum epistularum* (2 vols, Turnhout, 1982).
[273] J. Durliat, *De la ville antique à la ville byzantine: Le problème des subsistences* (Rome, 1990), pp. 134-7, with the important qualifications of Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle*, pp. 463, 468.
[274] G. Halfond, *The Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, AD 511-768* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 77-8.
[275] Council of Tours (567), c. 5. Council of Orléans (549), c. 21.
[276] Chalon-sur-Saône 4a. Gregory of Tours, *GC*, 85; T.S. Miller and J.W. Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses: Leprosy in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Ithaca and London, 2014), pp. 121-3.
[277] Lyon 10a. Council of Orléans (549), c. 15 and 21.

Brown's argument might help us to understand why hospitals only began to emerge in the region's cities soon after.

While some *xenodochia*, including in all likelihood that of Caesarius, would have been sited within a city's walls as an enduring display of episcopal charity, many, like that of Agricola, may have been located on the urban margins, not least for public health reasons. Here, these centres of assistance and charity were often attached to suburban monasteries, with the resident monks providing a useful staffing resource.[278] In either instance, the presence of these products of building patronage is hard to detect in the material record given their lack of clear archaeological markers and often modest size.[279] We are thus left reliant on an uneven documentary coverage which, as already noted, pays more attention to the prestigious cathedrals and basilicas of this period. It is hard to be sure, therefore, whether the apparent growth in hospital foundations in the sixth century, and subsequent decline in the eighth century, implied by our sources is any reflection of reality, especially given the small sample size.[280]

If the decline was real, then the urban nature of *xenodochia* suggests they may have been a casualty of an increasing interest in the countryside at the expense of the cities in the later Merovingian period. Equally, the concurrent secularizing of church property perhaps also undercut the ability of the episcopate to bankroll further foundations, with the maintenance of existing institutions prioritised instead. Another possible explanation perhaps lies in the view that the class of 'others' in society who came to be deemed most worthy of receiving ecclesiastical benefaction were monastic practitioners, rather than the poor and sick; a development which Peter Brown has considered to signal the end of an 'ancient Christianity'.[281] The growing interest in monasticism in later Merovingian society, therefore, and the belief that financing 'powerhouses of prayer' may have provided more bang for the bucks of those seeking intercession, perhaps precipitated a decline in the practice of establishing institutions of charity. This trend was potentially encapsulated in the early seventh century by a member of the court

[278] Autun 7a; Le Mans 18a, 20a; Angers 8a; see H.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.
[279] The twenty beds available at the institution of Bishop Praeiectus of Clermont (…662-676) seems to have been the upper limit: Clermont 21a.
[280] Horden, 'Public Health', pp. 309-11.
[281] Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle,* p. 517; *The Rise of Western Christendom* pp. 217-382.

of Dagobert I, who apparently considered building a *xenodochium* at Paris, but was instead inspired by God to establish a monastery.[282]

Matriculae

In addition to detailing episcopal obligations towards local lepers, the Council of Orléans in 549 also expressed a more general desire that bishops would look after the poor.[283] This was a common theme in conciliar legislation, where it was coupled with a concern for the inalienability of church property so as to safeguard ecclesiastical revenues for the most needy in society.[284] The council of Tours in 567, for example, made it clear to the bishops that Christian charity extended to organising nourishment and care for the poor.[285] This was an enterprise generally facilitated in the cities of Gaul by a *matricula*,[286] as was the case at Tours, where the one established in the atrium of Saint Martin's may have been the work of Bishop Eufronius, who presided over the 567 council.[287] A second *matricula* is attested at Tours at the church of Saint Julian,[288] while two are known at Le Mans,[289] one at Bourges,[290] and another at Autun.[291] Although sometimes associated with the monastic traditions of Egypt and Italy, it has generally been assumed that *matriculae*, unlike *xenodochia*, lacked any material realisation. Instead, the prevailing view of this institution conceives of them as simply a list of those impoverished individuals eligible to receive church-sponsored support, whether in cash or kind, and accompanied by a table from which distributions were made.[292] The envisaging of the Gallic *matriculae* as small-scale

[282] Paris 5a. *Vita Eligii*, I.17.
[283] Council of Orléans (549), c. 21.
[284] Halfond, *Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils*, pp. 108-130; Kreiner, 'About the Bishop', pp. 344-348.
[285] Council of Tours (567), c. 5.
[286] V. Neri, *I marginali nell'Occidente tardoantico: poveri, "infames" e criminali nella nascente società cristiana* (Bari, 1998), pp. 97-101.
[287] Tours 7b.
[288] *TCCG* V, p. 37.
[289] Le Mans 3b, 16a.
[290] *TCCG* VI, p. 24.
[291] Autun 3a.
[292] Horden, 'Public Health', p. 313. See also M. Rouche, 'La matricule des pauvres. Evolution d'une institution de charité du Bas Empire jusqu'à la fin du Haut Moyen Âge', in M. Mollat (ed.), *Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté (Moyen âge-XVIe siècle)* (2 vols, Paris, 1974), pp. 83-110; Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, p. 65; Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 98; Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 197 n. 21, p. 218 n. 93.

versions of the regulated 'outdoor relief' characteristic of Byzantine cities does not, however, necessarily preclude the possibility of associated acts of building patronage. For, as well as a list of a city's registered poor, the word may have conveyed the notion of a physical space of some kind that made the endeavour itself possible.

It is possible that *matriculae* were connected to the poorhouses that sometimes feature in both the eastern and western sources.[293] An institution of this nature, however, is perhaps better categorised alongside the multifaceted *xenodochia* discussed above, which provided for the overnight care of the poor, sick, and pilgrims.[294] Instead, if the *matriculae* of Gaul did possess a physical form, it likely served a narrower purpose. In North Africa, the written and material record reveals that the episcopal distribution of food was made possible by the building of storehouses for grain next to churches.[295] It is thus not unreasonable to imagine that corresponding structures of some kind could have existed in the cities of Gaul in order to store the alms donated by the local community or allotted from ecclesiastical landholdings. Indeed, we know of the urban storehouses used by a number of Gallic aristocrats to hold their landed produce and other property in such a manner.[296] At Tours, moreover, the task of receiving and distributing alms was apparently overseen by a custodian, who would also have been responsible for checking the eligibility of those seeking sustenance by ascertaining whether they were in fact *matricularii* or merely the unregistered 'other poor' (*reliqui pauperes*).[297] This process of allocation, therefore, and the storing of goods which it presupposes, implies the existence of a structure more substantial than a mere table from which donations were administered.

Evidence for such a supposition is furnished by written sources from Le Mans and Autun, which indicate that some form of building activity was indeed undertaken for this purpose in the course of the seventh century. The Testament of Bertram of Le Mans reveals that in order to support the clerics and

[293] Brown, *Power and Persuasion,* pp. 98-9.
[294] Brown, *Poverty and Leadership,* pp. 34-8, 50.
[295] A. Leone, 'Clero, proprietà, cristianizzazione delle campagne nel Nord Africa tardoantica: Status quaestionis', *Antiquité tardive* 14 (2006), pp. 103-4. On one occasion these storehouses seem to have been of insufficient size and so the bishop's church itself was used, see Optatus of Milevis, *Against the Donatists* 3.4, tr. M. Edwards (Liverpool, 1997), p. 70, with Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle,* p. 334.
[296] Gregory, *Hist.,* VII. 21-22, 37.
[297] Gregory, *VSM,* I.31; *Hist.,* VII.29.

registered poor of his city, the bishop erected (*erexi*) a *matricola*.[298] Similarly, the *Passio Leudegarii* informs us that its protagonist had established a *matricola* in Autun that was still standing near to the doors of the cathedral as witness to the bishop's charitable endeavours (*matricola quae ab eodem instituta eodem instituta residet ad ecclesiae ianuam*).[299] Even if the Testament of Leudegar is perhaps a later fabrication,[300] this does not necessarily detract from the sense that it likewise conveys of the city's *matricula* possessing a substantive nature (*matricula nostra, quam ad ostium ecclesiae sancti Nazarii fabricavimus*).[301] Their probable lack of distinguishing features means *matriculae* are hard to identify with certainty in the material record, but archaeological evidence for Leudegar's foundation at Autun may have been uncovered in 1991 during excavations under the current cathedral of Saint-Lazare.[302] When the incidental textual references and possible remains at Autun are considered together, therefore, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the *matriculae* of Gaul had a material character that extended beyond merely a list of names and a table.

Conclusion

It should be acknowledged that the distinctions drawn here between the building patronage dedicated to the urban fabric, *xenodochia,* and *matriculae* of Gallic cities are to some extent superficial, and the nature and purpose of such projects features a degree of overlap. Although analysing them as discrete categories has its uses for the purposes of a historical study, it is hard to gauge how far they may have existed as such in the minds of the bishops. Instead, this building activity was in all cases fundamentally underpinned by the episcopate's pastoral concern for the wellbeing of the communities over which they

[298] Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum, 27 March 616,* ed. M. Weidemann, *Das Testament des Bischofs Berthramn von Le Mans* (2 vols, Mainz, 1986): *pistrinus aecclesiae ante ipso domo constructa est; propterea in his locis stipendia et matricola quam ego inibi erexi.*
[299] *Passio Leudegarii*, 2, cf. the translation of Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding, who render *matricola* as 'table': Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France,* p. 197 n. 21, p. 218 n. 93.
[300] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France,* p. 197.
[301] *Testamentum Leodegari,* ed. J. Pardessus, *Diplomata, Chartae, Epistolae, Leges, Aliaque Instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia*, vol. 2 (2 vols, Paris, 1843-1849), pp. 173-4.
[302] S. Balcon-Berry, 'La ville haute d'Autun dans l'Antiquité', *Bulletin archeologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* 35 (2009), p. 28; *TCCG* XVI, p. 50. See also S. Balcon-Berry and W. Berry, 'Autun: de la *domus ecclesiae* au palais épiscopal', in Balcon-Berry *et al.*, *Des* domus ecclesiae *aux origines des palais épiscopaux,* pp. 43-62.

claimed leadership. As a physical manifestation of the Christian virtues of generosity and hospitality, building was thus an important component of the economy of care offered by the church in this period. While this role grew out of the tumult of the late fifth and sixth centuries, when bishops sought to establish themselves as recognisable civic patrons with a remit that encompassed all aspects of community life, it certainly had its roots in the classical tradition of expressing love for one's *patria* through public acts of munificence. As Peter Brown has made clear, however, in late antiquity this practice had significantly shifted in focus to incorporate the poorest members of society. To this end, the representation of the bishop as the embodiment of Christian *caritas* features extensively in texts emphasizing the responsibility of church leaders to fulfil their pastoral obligations to their local communities.

As the resources of the church of the church grew, this discourse may have also been supplemented by pressure from lay society for bishops to justify their expanding revenue streams. In any case, from repairing city walls to founding leper hospitals, the building patronage that underpinned episcopal efforts to deliver effective pastoral outreach was undoubtedly made possible by a burgeoning financial and administrative capacity, which, on occasion, may have been further bolstered by the personal wealth of certain bishops. As with church-building, the practice also functioned as a means for the bishop both to lay up 'treasure in heaven', and claim authority in a civic arena still contested by a number of formal and informal lay leaders, and even by other churchmen. This competition was a consequence of the socio-economic upheaval that followed the dissolution of the western Roman empire, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that such behaviour is attested in Gaul for the first time in the course of the sixth century. It is clear that it persisted in subsequent centuries too, reminding us that episcopal status remained far from totally secure, and building in a pastoral context continued to be an important expression of soft power. As the murder of Bishop Leudegar of Autun makes clear, however, lay actors had recourse to strategies that fell outside the correct moral behaviour expected of the episcopate. It is necessary to note, therefore, that mobilising church resources for the patronage of pastoral building as a means for claiming authority did not carry a guarantee of success for bishops in their local community.

3.5. Synthesis

It has been demonstrated throughout this chapter that during the transition between Roman and Merovingian Gaul, the bishop was the pre-eminent civic patron, recasting the urban and suburban topography of his city along Christian lines. Of those acts of building patronage undertaken in the *civitas*-capitals that can be attributed to an identifiable benefactor, or group of benefactors, members of the episcopate were involved in nearly eighty percent of the total. Clearly these numbers are at least in part a reflection of a written record shaped by ecclesiastics, and especially episcopal authors determined to promote themselves and the reputation of the institution to which they belonged. A more comprehensive picture is provided by the exceptional epigraphic evidence of fifth-century Narbonne, which reveals that in completing his intra- and extra-mural building projects, Bishop Rusticus benefited from the financial support of his clerical staff, the local Christian community, and episcopal colleagues from other dioceses. This suggests that the ambitions of bishops were to some extent contingent on a generous support network, and, in this regard at least, a clear conceptual break from the euergetism of classical antiquity is evident. While the personal wealth of some members of the episcopate meant they were in a position to finance their own building projects like the independent urban patrons of yore, in general it seems that bishops operated as episcopal impresarios, marshalling donors from all levels of society in order to develop the cathedral complexes, funerary basilicas, monastic cloisters, and charitable establishments that increasingly characterised their cities.

Significant financial support for episcopal endeavours was only really forthcoming from the fifth century onwards, as the social and spiritual returns that religious giving could bring were increasingly recognised throughout lay society. It is important to acknowledge the chronology of these developments, and accept that the emergence of a wealthy and institutional church did not immediately follow in the wake of Constantine's adoption of Christianity. Consequently, we must recognise that there was a disjuncture between the classical munificence of the first and second centuries, and the widespread development of Christian benefaction during late antiquity. While it seems reasonable to believe that most Christian communities possessed a place of worship by the end of the fourth century, the growing financial muscle of bishops arguably only began to have a noteworthy impact on the

topography of the civic landscapes of Gaul in the course of the fifth century. Over the next 250 years, growing donations from the faithful helped turn cathedral-baptistery composites into commanding episcopal groups, comprised of a myriad of holy and functional spaces that met the needs of the community and its bishop. The suburban environs were likewise transformed by the erection of basilicas dedicated to the cult of saints, which over time grew in both number and size. This building patronage was often unremitting, with successive bishops determined to leave a mark on their cities, and conciliar legislation requiring that a portion of church revenues was dedicated to construction and repair. It is important to remember, however, that the scale and extent of Christian building would have varied considerably across the *civitas*-network in accordance with the landed wealth of a diocese, the background, ambitions, and influence of its bishops, and the availability of additional well-heeled patrons willing to underwrite prestige projects.

While the evangelising component of episcopal responsibilities and its associated church-building saw bishops venture out into the surrounding countryside on occasion,[303] they were for the most part resolutely urban figures and their role made Christian building patronage a necessary endeavour. As the local representatives of the Gallic church, bishops required spaces at the heart of their cities to oversee entry to the Christian community, coordinate worship, and delineate the moral behaviour expected of their communities. The bishop's pastoral function was also a clearly defined one, with members of the episcopate expected to ensure the health and wellbeing of their flock in both a physical and spiritual sense. In regard to the former, bishops engaged in maintaining their city's infrastructure and urban fabric, as well as establishing institutions that supported the poor, sick, and any visiting pilgrims. As for the latter, the holy power of the *loca sanctorum* was made available to all through the provision of funerary basilicas beyond the city walls at which intercession and burial could be sought. Finally, bishops oversaw the communal forms of asceticism that defined the Christian experience of the most ardent of believers, and engaged in monastic building accordingly.

[303] See the example of Tours: C. Stancliffe, 'From Town to Country: The Christianization of the Touraine, 370-600', *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), pp. 43-59.

On one level, the construction projects of the episcopate were a response to expectations placed on them by their local communities and the weight of conciliar legislation that had gone before. At the same time, however, the extent and monumentality of their building programmes was often determined by the personal motivations of the bishops themselves at both a local and regional level. Moreover, prelates were engaged in their own quest for spiritual patronage and future salvation, and employed acts of building patronage as a means to secure divine support in both this life and the next. The claims of the episcopate to an unrivalled leadership role in the *civitates*, complete with a commensurate degree of influence and clout, were contested by lay figures who drew authority from both formal and informal power structures. Unlike their local rivals, however, the religious vocation of the bishops denied them recourse to the full range of tools that might be needed to engage effectively in this civic competition in an increasingly martial society. As a result, we must acknowledge that far from being the domineering rulers of episcopal lordships sometimes envisaged by proponents of the *Bischofsherrschaft* model, bishops were often rather more imperilled figures. It was for this reason, therefore, that building patronage served as such a valuable resource in their pursuit of local authority and status.

These concerns were particularly pronounced during the upheaval of the late fifth and sixth centuries, when the return of meaningful local power was swiftly accompanied by a renewed vigour in the jockeying for position at city level. It is unsurprising, therefore, that this period witnessed an surge in building by the bishops. Ever-expanding episcopal groups were endowed with a scope and monumentality often in excess of what would have been strictly necessary to fulfil their core functions, but which might help to convince local lay rivals of the bishops' claimed standing in society. At the same time, building work undertaken to safeguard the physical and spiritual health of a bishop's flock enabled prelates to assert their urban leadership credentials by demonstrating a concern for the welfare and interests of their communities. But building could also have a wider provincial audience. Grand construction projects sought to project the ambitions of a bishop on the regional stage, with an imposing episcopal group or successful local cult an important way to define and express a city's status within overarching ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies. Ultimately, the Christian building patronage of the episcopate was a product of both bottom-up public expectations regarding the civic responsibilities of

the bishop, and top-down initiatives driven by the prelates themselves. The practice was crucial, therefore, in shaping the relationship a bishop had at the local level with his community, and at the regional level with his episcopal colleagues, who might be invited to attend the consecration of a newly-built church.

Intra-civic competition seems to have peaked by the seventh century, and with it the rate of urban and suburban Christian building patronage (fig. 5). Developments in the later Merovingian polity hastened the ruralisation of aristocratic power, with influence and self-legitimation increasingly sought through a career at court, and acts of monumental representation directed to estates. Nevertheless, bishops continued to operate predominantly as urban magnates, and since episcopal status was never completely secure, and salvation remained a pressing concern, they maintained their engagement with the practice of converting the wealth of the church into social and spiritual capital through building programmes in their cities. However, whether as a result of the diminished intensity of civic competition, or the effect of the escalating secularisation of church lands on ecclesiastical revenue streams, the construction efforts of Gaul's bishops seemingly manifested on a reduced scale in this period.

4. Lay patrons

Defining the laity of our period is not an easy task, and it is complicated further by the existence of a 'grey zone' occupied by persons whose lives straddled the holy and profane.[1] For the purposes of this study, the laity are considered to be those individuals who, prior to their Christian building patronage, held no clerical rank and were not already pursuing the religious life as full-time ascetics.[2] While bishops were at the forefront of the Christian building projects that helped to define the transition from Roman to Merovingian rule, this topographical transformation was made possible to a great extent by the financial backing of the laity. We must distinguish, however, between the innumerable small donations of the spiritual economy, which flowed into episcopal coffers throughout this period,[3] and the pecuniary support earmarked specifically for building projects. The amorphous sums raised through alms-giving no doubt contributed significantly to the construction activity of the bishops, but these were ultimately general – and untraceable – oblations, and so would stretch the definition of lay building patronage beyond usefulness.

A further distinction is also necessary to acknowledge the bankrolling of a number of Christian building projects by the wealthiest and most influential members of Gaul's social hierarchy. The resources of this group enabled them to undertake initiatives with a degree of independence that was seemingly beyond those who participated in crowd-funded efforts ultimately directed by the local bishop. Allen Jones has recently sought to challenge the idea that there was a clear distinction between opposing tiers of the 'elite' and the 'popular' in late antique Gaul.[4] Jones' work is admirable and necessary, but in an analysis of Christian building patronage such distinctions can sometimes be important. Not everyone could raise a church or monastery on their own financial initiative, and so such behaviour would have surely commanded a commensurate level of approbation and respect in the local community. It is worth

[1] L. Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London, 2016), pp. 21-51.
[2] The ruling imperial and 'barbarian' families of Gaul are a sufficiently important subset of lay society to warrant their own treatment, and so will be considered in the next chapter.
[3] P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012).
[4] A.E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul: Strategies and Opportunities for the Non-Elite* (Cambridge, 2009).

briefly exploring the identity and character of the select group who were able to mobilise sufficient capital to this end, in order to determine exactly who is meant when we talk of the lay 'elites' of late antique and Merovingian Gaul.

The late Roman Empire saw the aristocratic classes largely in a state of flux. Distinctions between *nobiles*, whose privileged position in society was hereditary and rooted in the vast wealth derived from their extensive land holdings, and *novi homines*, whose social climbing and newfound pre-eminence was made possible by the administrative reforms of the Tetrarchy, became ever more blurred during this period.[5] In a world where the city-based politics of the early empire was increasingly redundant, and the real opportunities were to be found through the embrace of public service at the imperial centre, these *novi homines* had recognised that the game had changed. John Weisweiler, in particular, has demonstrated how the significance attached to office-holding in this period consequently instigated an enlarged senatorial aristocracy, more dependent on the institutions of central government than ever before, with social standing and property rights guaranteed by imperial favour.[6] It was this newly minted bureaucratic elite that formed the nucleus of the late Roman Gallic aristocracy, for whom attempting to scale the central *cursus honorum* was almost an obligation.[7]

These imperial administrative structures and their associated gradations in rank began to disintegrate during the second half of the fifth century. The ensuing political transition brought about changes to the composition, character, and self-identity of Gaul's post-imperial social elites,[8] as a growing number of Gallo-Romans began to look to the *de facto* 'barbarian' powers for advancement, and the established native nobility merged with these recently arrived warrior aristocracies.[9] At the same time, Christianity

[5] M.T.W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972), p. 19.
[6] J. Weisweiler, 'The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West: Divine Monarchy, State-Building and the Transformation of the Roman Senatorial Order (c. 25 BCE – 425 CE)', in T. Minamikawa (ed.), *New Approaches to the Later Roman Empire* (Kyoto, 2015), pp. 31-51; J. Weisweiler, 'The Price of Integration. State and Elite in Symmachus' Correspondence', in P. Eich *et al.* (eds), *Der wiederkehrende Leviathan* (Heidelberg, 2011), pp. 343-74.
[7] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, VIII.2.2, ed. and tr. W.B. Anderson, *Poems and Letters* (2 vols, London and Cambridge, 1936-65); see J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485* (Oxford, 1994), p. 16.
[8] See now H. Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity, and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850* (Cambridge, 2015).
[9] P. Heather, 'The Emergence of the Visigothic Kingdom', in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 84-94; R. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin, 1993), pp. 67-85.

also provided new ways to express status that were embraced by both groups. Empire had previously presented the Gallo-Romans with a point of reference for the justification of social standing and authority, but now the church offered an alternative framework for legitimising and perpetuating elite power.[10] Notions of *nobilitas* were fused with Christian piety,[11] and episcopal office became an ambition for those seeking influence and honour, and consequently developed into a reflection thereof. As the landed wealth of Gaul's churches grew, moreover, sees emerged as potential banking instruments for local families, despite the concerted efforts of church councils to prevent the alienation of church property by bishops.[12] While these re-emergent urban elites and their limited political horizons resembled the magnates of the early imperial period, whose pursuit of local interests had done much to create the civic landscapes of Roman Gaul, the adoption of Christianity also brought novelties. Jane Schulenburg, for example, has demonstrated the new opportunities that the religion afforded women looking to acquire status in society.[13]

Some regional diversity is also observable. Although aristocratic continuity in southern Gaul, as represented by villa life, had been disrupted by the demise of transregional patterns of landholding, Roman cultural mores did apparently persist to some degree here until at least the late sixth century.[14] In the north, meanwhile, an increasingly stable and coherent elite centred on the courts of the *tria regna* of Francia had emerged by the later Merovingian period.[15] This group was defined by its possession of rural estates, the pursuit of royal favour and office, and a collective consciousness attested by the surviving *placita*.[16] A shared identity of horizontal exclusivity was further fostered by an embrace of monasticism, especially, but not exclusively, in the countryside, where family foundations established on patrimonial estates enabled the northern Gallic aristocracy to exercise a greater control over their

[10] B. Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation, or How the Gallo-Romans Ended the Roman Empire', in B. Jussen (ed.), *Ordering Medieval Society: Perspectives on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 147-99.
[11] M.R. Salzman, 'Competing Claims to "Nobilitas" in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9.3 (2001), pp. 359-85.
[12] G.I. Halfond, *Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, AD 511-768* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 108-30.
[13] J.T. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity & Society, 500-1100* (Chicago, 1998).
[14] Gregory, *Hist.*, VI.9.
[15] G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 262-70.
[16] P. Fouracre, 'Placita and the Settlement of Disputes in Later Merovingian Francia', in P. Fouracre and W. Davies (eds), *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 23-43.

land and sanctity.[17] Although rather basic, Chris Wickham's definition of a member of the elite being an individual who could wield some form of power simply because of who they were, does, therefore, capture the essence of a group of individuals whose modes of self-legitimation evolved throughout late antique and Merovingian Gaul.[18]

There is a tendency for scholarship sometimes to concentrate on the behaviour and *mentalités* of these elite actors, not least because of their visibility in the sources. In analysing the practice of Christian building patronage, however, we must also acknowledge the more inconspicuous contributions of less privileged members of the laity. Despite the evidential difficulties associated with such an endeavour, which have sometimes led to pessimism on the part of scholars,[19] this chapter will consider as far as possible the laity as a whole in examining their contributions to buildings associated with episcopal groups, the cult of saints, and monasticism. In doing so, it will seek to determine the key stimuli for acts of lay Christian building, how far it was conceptually anchored in the patronage traditions characteristic of early imperial acts of euergetism, the extent to which patrons were working independently or with bishops, and the role that lay women played in shaping the practice.

In the analysis that follows, it will be demonstrated that while the Christian building patronage of this group did bear a number of similarities to the civic munificence of the early Roman empire, it also differed in several respects. Unlike acts of classical euergetism, which were generally the work of clearly identifiable individual benefactors who consequently claimed all the credit for their actions, Christian building in the cities was often a collective endeavour, and reception was complicated by the presence of the bishop. Sponsorship came from all levels of society, but it seems modest contributions may have not always been individually recognised, and even those lay elites whose donations warranted commemoration had to content themselves with sharing the ultimate acclaim with the local prelate. The resources of the wealthiest layfolk suggest they were able to instigate projects on their own volition, but episcopal endorsement nevertheless remained necessary for the consecration and staffing of

[17] R. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the* Liber Historiae Francorum (Oxford, 1987), pp. 96-105.
[18] C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), p. 153.
[19] See A. Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. D. Bornstein, trans. M.J. Schneider (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1993), p. 28.

buildings. Like the donor pool, the range of motives underpinning participation was also broader than in the past. Not only did the spiritual dimension of Christian patronage now extend the audience to God and the saints on high, but intentions also varied across time and place, the gender or social standing of a donor, and the chosen category of building. Nevertheless, the practice was a prominent feature of the jockeying for local primacy and honour that returned in earnest to the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul, and, in this regard at least, Christian building certainly echoed its classical precursor.

Acknowledging the role that the practice played in this revitalised local competition for power between lay elites and the bishop, but also among the laity themselves, helps us to understand its chronology. Lay interest in urban and suburban Christian building seemingly became most pronounced from the second half of the fifth century onwards, when the demise of the western Roman empire meant local power was once again meaningful and up for grabs, and elites required new modes of legitimation. The practice subsequently peaked in the course of the sixth century, in line with the post-imperial reinvigoration of the *civitas*-system, but the available evidence suggests it declined soon after, as the political focus of the secular magnates in the later Merovingian kingdoms largely transcended the civic arenas, and the countryside increasingly became the favoured location for pious display instead. The growing popularity of monasticism, however, ensured that Christian building in the cities did not completely lose its significance for the laity, as women in particular mobilised the practice in pursuit of status and salvation.

4.1. Episcopal groups

The previous chapter argued, *inter alia*, that the cathedral complexes developed at the heart of Gallic cities during the transition from Roman to Merovingian rule were an integral feature of episcopal claims to local authority. In much the same way that the civil basilicas of the Roman period hosted the local magistrate, episcopal groups acted as the seat of the bishop, and their scope and monumentality was intended to convince audiences of the reality of the power that had brought them into existence. In this regard, it is perhaps unsurprising that the literary presentation of building projects sought to foreground the efforts of the bishop at the expense of a more comprehensive picture of all the patrons involved. We know from epigraphic evidence, however, and from the occasional reference to external supporters in the written record, that bishops did not act alone in their endeavours. But it remains unclear just how routinely involved the laity were in helping prelates to fulfil their building ambitions in the urban centres of Gaul. The following section will attempt to address this issue by using the impresario model established earlier to consider the extent to which lay efforts might have been downplayed by the clerical bias of the sources. At the same time, however, it is also necessary to ask whether individuals may have been more interested in other forms of Christian building patronage, where there was greater scope for acting independently of the local bishop.

I need to see a man about a church

As we saw in the previous chapter, the ability of bishops to undertake acts of building patronage in the aftermath of Constantine's adoption of Christianity was initially constrained by the drawn-out process of conversion, and the consequent bearing this had on ecclesiastical revenues. Our limited anecdotal evidence for the establishment in this period of the first Gallic cathedrals thus paints a picture of nascent Christian communities having to rely on the individual generosity of benefactors who *had* embraced the new religion of the empire. As Kim Bowes has demonstrated, however, this was an endeavour complicated by the apparent reluctance of converts to spend their money in the cities for Christian

purposes.[20] This was not necessarily for want of resources on their part, because the fourth century was a relatively prosperous time for the empire. The reforms instigated by Diocletian, and continued by his successor Constantine, significantly expanded the imperial bureaucracy and tightened the grip of the centre over its many provinces. This helped to curtail the instability and fragmentation of the preceding decades, with state-driven enterprises also bolstering local markets and industries.[21] Perhaps of greater significance was the way in which a beefed-up bureaucracy created a new and increasingly attractive *cursus honorum*, and instituted a wealthy class of *novi homines*, whose horizons transcended the level of the *civitas.*[22] While prestige and office were now increasingly sought at the centre of the Roman polity, the countryside became an important location for the expression of elite identity, with aristocrats investing heavily in their rural estates.[23] It is important to note, however, that although Aquitaine is a particularly good example of the latter development,[24] the turmoil of the third century had hit the territory of Gaul as a whole particularly hard, especially in the northern provinces,[25] and so this recovery may have been experienced to varying degrees across the region. Nevertheless, as fig. 10 illustrates, one consistency in the fourth and early fifth centuries appears to have been a lack of ecclesiastical spending in the cities everywhere. Instead, for the laity at least, it is possible that Christianity in Gaul in this period was a more private and domestic affair than some previous narratives of the church's 'public triumph' following the conversion of Constantine have necessarily acknowledged.

[20] K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 129-58, 179-87.
[21] M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 64-119.
[22] A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire* (London, 1993), pp. 99-132.
[23] S. Scott, 'Elites, Exhibitionism and the Society of the Late Roman Villa', in N. Christie (ed.), *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 39-65.
[24] See C. Balmelle, *Les demeures aristocratiques d'Aquitaine. Société et culture de l'Antiquité tardive dans le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule* (Bordeaux-Paris, 2001).
[25] S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200–500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 60-89.

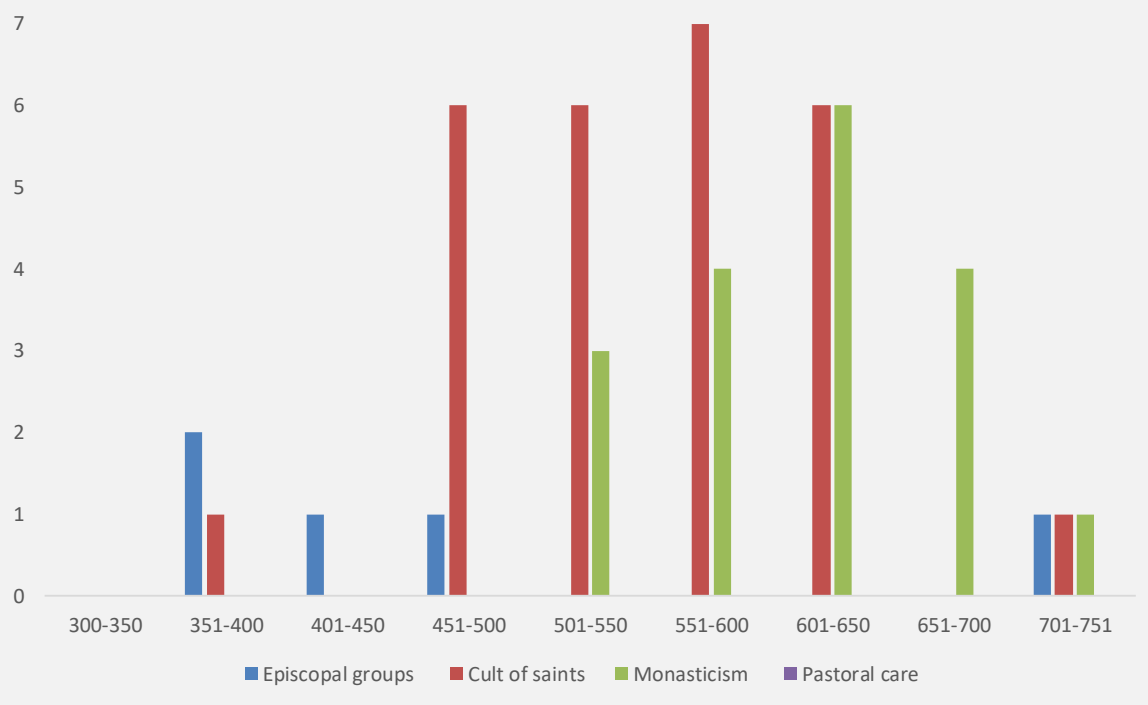


Fig. 10. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751 involving a lay patron.

The anaemic position of the episcopate meant that early acts of public Christian building patronage that did take place in the urban centres of Gaul in this period were heavily dependent on those lay individuals who *were* willing to advertise their precocious adherence to the new faith in the public arena. According to Gregory of Tours, for example, the aristocrat Leocadius, apparently a leading senator of Gaul and relative of the Lyonnais martyr Vettius Epagatus, was responsible for Bourges' first cathedral.[26] The local Christian community here had recognised that they were not in a position to build a church for themselves and so had sought the patronage of the leading men of the city. These local senators had not yet converted to the new religion, however, and so refused to help. But when the people of Bourges turned to Leocadius, we are told he embraced Christianity and offered them his house, accepting only a token payment in return.[27] Clearly the historical value of such a story has to be treated with scepticism, since Gregory was recounting events that supposedly took place several centuries earlier. It is also the case that while the bishop of Tours is surprisingly coy about his direct links to Vettius Epagatus, and thus to Leocadius, it is possible from his other works to piece together a family tree that includes both

[26] Gregory, *Hist.*, I.31.
[27] Bourges 1a.

of them in the upper branches of his father's side of the family.[28] On the one hand, such connections perhaps lend the origin story of Bourges' cathedral greater verisimilitude, since Gregory's sources were likely personal, but equally we have to be wary of the bishop's desire to enhance his family's reputation.

As part of his wider agenda to promote all things episcopal, Gregory's framing of Christian building patronage for the most part relegated the laity to little more than a walk-on role, but in this case the opportunity to spotlight a relative was seemingly too good to miss. Rather than view Leocadius's support as an exception, therefore, we should probably consider the provision of prime urban space, buildings, and funds by wealthy individuals to have been a regular feature in the initial establishment of episcopal groups. Evidence to support this supposition is admittedly limited, but another example possibly derives from Auxerre, where, according to the author of his late sixth-century *Vita*, a new cathedral was sought by Bishop Amator (…388-418) in order to accommodate a growing number of converts.[29] The prelate turned to Ruptilius, a Christian citizen of Auxerre who had just been left a large residence within the walls of the city by his father, and the layman allowed Amator to use the site to establish a church there.[30] Again, the temporal distance between the source and the events it describes necessitates caution, but it seems clear that in Gregory's day, at least, there was a tradition in Gaul that wealthy lay benefactors had come to the aid of under-resourced bishops in establishing the first Gallic cathedrals. The example of Auxerre shows how practical concerns, such as a growing congregation, might have made this outreach a necessity, but wealthy lay patrons would have been equally important if communities were seeking prestigious sites in urban centres where intra-mural space was likely at a premium, as was possibly also the case here.[31]

[28] M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century,* trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), p. 8; H. Hummer, *Visions of Kinship in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 175-6.
[29] Stephanus Africanus, *Vita S. Amatoris,* 18-21, ed. *AA SS,* Mai. I (1860); see L. Duru, *Bibliotheque historique de l'Yonne* I (Auxerre, 1850), pp. 136-158. *PCBE* 4, Amator 2, pp. 125-7.
[30] Auxerre 2a. Remains under the current cathedral include sections of a structure that has been dated from the fourth to the fifth centuries: *TCCG* XVI, p. 54. *PCBE* 4, Rvptilivs, p. 1634.
[31] S.T. Loseby, 'Bishops and Cathedrals: Order and Diversity in the Fifth-Century Urban Landscape of Southern Gaul' in Drinkwater and Elton (eds), *Fifth-Century Gaul,* p. 151.

Hand in glove

The rebuilding and upgrading of episcopal groups that was widely under way from the middle of the fifth century suggest a more confident episcopate, but bishops nevertheless remained reliant on the contributions of their lay supporters in order to fulfil their building ambitions. For the most part, this consisted of regular oblations and bequests of land from the community at large, but, presumably in the hope of sharing in the spiritual and social capital afforded to those who raised Christian buildings in the city, it appears that some members were also interested in providing more targeted financial support for construction projects. As we have already seen, the model of lay and episcopal actors working in tandem is indicated by the inscription that celebrated the consecration of the rebuilt cathedral of Narbonne in 445.[32] It shows how Bishop Rusticus coordinated donations from all sectors of society, but the most generous benefactor was the Praetorian Prefect Marcellus, who contributed 2100 *solidi* to the cathedral, a donation that, given the *per bienn(ium) adminis(trationis)* with which the sum is qualified, was presumably drawn from state revenues.[33] On the one hand, we can see that by acting in his official capacity as a representative of the imperial administration, Marcellus conveyed the image of a benevolent and caring government, which was fully committed to both the new state religion and to the refurbishment of a city troubled by the Visigoths. Much like the Roman governors of the East during this period, however, whose own state-funded building projects were also commemorated with inscriptions bearing their name,[34] Marcellus would have been looking to claim a good deal of individual credit for his actions. Indeed, the lintel inscription states that the Praetorian Prefect personally encouraged (*exegit*) the bishop to undertake the work, highlighting how additional underlying intentions may have been at play.

[32] Narbonne 1a; *CIL* XII, 5336.
[33] Of this, 600 *solidi* was apparently for the artisans, and 1500 *solidi* for the works and other costs. On the practical aspects of church-building, see A. Chavarría Arnau, 'Costi, tempi e processi produttivi di una chiesa tardoantica', in G.P. Broglio *et al.* (eds), *Archeologia dell'Architettura*. *Costi, tempi e metri cubi* (Florence, 2017), pp. 55-62.
[34] I. Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance of Civic Space. The 'Classical' City from the 4th to the 7thc. AD* (Leuven, 2013), p. 484-5.



Fig. 11. The fifth-century lintel inscription of the cathedral of Narbonne.

Given that Marcellus' predecessors as praetorian prefect had traditionally enjoyed very close relationships with the bishops of Arles, whose city had become the seat of the Gallic prefecture at the end of the fourth century, his decision very publicly to finance the cathedral of an ecclesiastical rival has sometimes been interpreted within a framework of factional church politics.[35] Alongside functioning as a possible demonstration of support for Bishop Rusticus, however, it is worth considering a parallel motive for this act of Christian patronage that may have also resonated with some of the other secular donors mentioned on the lintel, including the *vir inlustris* Salutius, who seems to have contributed to the building of both the city's cathedral and the suburban basilica raised by Rusticus in honour of Felix.[36] Faced with the immediate threat of Visigothic expansion, and concerned about their position in a society where the traditional means for justifying and perpetuating their social status – the imperial structures of the Roman state – were beginning to crumble, the fifth century was an increasingly perilous time for the Narbonese elites. As with all political crises, however, it was equally a period full of opportunity. It is worth considering, therefore, whether Marcellus was a more independently minded individual than his imperial position would ostensibly suggest. His decision to patronise Rusticus' building-projects in Narbonne, a city to which he may have had family ties,[37]

[35] R. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul*, (Washington, 1989), pp. 120-122; M. Heinzelmann, 'The "Affair" of Hilary Of Arles (445) and Gallo-Roman Identity in the Fifth Century', in Drinkwater and Elton, *Fifth-Century Gaul*, pp. 249-51.
[36] *PCBE 4*, Salvtivs, p. 1700.
[37] J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1990), pp. 340-341; R. Mathisen, 'Resistance and Reconciliation: Majorian and the Gallic Aristocracy After the Fall of Avitus', *Francia* 7 (1979), pp. 599-603.

perhaps reflected a desire to insinuate himself back into the local arena of power as an insurance against the increasing hazards of the wider imperial stage.

Apart from the distinguished nobleman Sidonius Apollinaris and his brother-in-law Ecdicius, the only Gaul known to have served the empire outside his homeland after 456 was Magnus Felix of Narbonne, who was Majorian's western consul in 460.[38] Arguments from silence are always dangerous, especially considering the mutilated nature of the relevant inscriptions, but it appears that Magnus was not among the Narbonese elite who patronised the cathedral or funerary basilica erected by Rusticus.[39] Although undoubtedly novel in some respects, the financial underwriting of Christian monuments certainly echoed the classical euergetism of the republic and early empire, when local elites would compete for prestige and status in their cities through the provision of amenities and entertainments. This practice had declined, however, during the later empire, as Roman aristocrats increasingly looked beyond their local communities to the *cursus honorum* of the imperial centre in seeking to enhance their social standing. Could it be that Magnus had more faith in these structures than his compatriots, and so was not yet as attuned to the evolving strategies of expressing status that would come to the fore in the increasingly Christianised Gallic cities of subsequent centuries? Within a couple of decades, even the blue-blooded Sidonius had accepted the former system of imperial office-holding was a relic of a bygone age. In his new life as Bishop of Clermont (470-483…), he had updated his points of reference for evaluating social distinction accordingly, noting in a letter that the rich nobleman Elaphius stood out as an individual worthy of acclaim for building new church roofs in a period when some were even reluctant to repair old ones.[40]

[38] *PLRE* 2, pp. 700-1; R.W. Mathisen, 'Fifth-Century Visitors to Italy: Business or Pleasure?' in Drinkwater and Elton (eds), *Fifth-Century Gaul*, pp. 228-38.
[39] The *-nus* in the inscription at Saint Felix is from a fragment which Henri-Irénée Marrou has suggested refers to later donations, see H.I. Marrou, 'Le dossier épigraphique de l'évêque Rusticus de Narbonne', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 46 (1970), p. 343.
[40] Sidonius, *Ep.*, IV.15. It is unclear if the baptistery built by Elaphius in 476-7 was located in the *civitas*-capital of Rodez, or at his nearby *castellum*. Cf. J.-L. Boudartchouk, 'La lettre IV, 15 de Sidoine Apollinaire et la dédicace du baptistère d'Elaphius à castellum (novembre-décembre 476 ou 477?): l'évêque de Clermont s'est-il rendu à Chastel-sur-Murat?', *Revue de la Haute-Auvergne* 68 (2006), pp. 547-67.

Conclusion

Apart from the above cases, evidence of the laity patronising Gallic episcopal groups is very thin on the ground, and we must wait until the middle of the eighth century for the next possible example.[41] The picture provided by the limited data is thus one of lay involvement in the development of cathedral complexes being an early phenomenon that soon tailed off. On the one hand, this interpretation perhaps has some basis in reality, since the bishops of the fourth and fifth century often lacked an independent resource base, and so during this period had little choice but to rely on the generosity of wealthy patrons willing to help underwrite Christian building projects. From the perspective of the bishops, the situation improved in subsequent centuries, as the landed wealth of the church began to grow, and episcopal coffers were supplemented by oblations and bequests from the faithful.[42] The paucity of further references to lay involvement in the expanding cathedral complexes of the late fifth and sixth centuries may suggest, therefore, that bishops were increasingly able to act independently, and could exploit the burgeoning episcopal funds at their disposal rather than having to seek external support.

We must acknowledge, however, that this apparent decline was probably also a reflection of our sources and the strategies of their authors. Bishops would have considered the episcopal groups of Gaul their personal domain, and building patronage, and its literary representation, was a useful strategy for individuals who were challenged on all sides during this period and looking for ways to buttress their position. As such, many of our sources likely downplayed the contributions of the laity in order to foreground their episcopal subjects. On the rare occasions when we have contemporary evidence for building patronage, rather than reports by others after the fact, this bishop-centric narrative is undermined, and our impresario model emerges. As we have seen, the surviving epigraphic record of Narbonne reveals the important financial backing given to the city's bishop by the laity in the middle of the fifth century. A parallel is found in Ravenna around fifty years earlier, where a number of inscriptions similarly commemorated lay patrons who had assisted Bishop Ursus in the construction

[41] Metz 3a.
[42] Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church'.

and embellishment of a cathedral in the city.[43] Further comparable evidence attesting lay involvement in cathedral complexes elsewhere in Gaul is lacking, but this is perhaps to be expected since attributions were increasingly done in mosaic or fresco in the late antique and early medieval period.[44] As a result, many have long since disappeared, and those that are known to us, such as at Rome and Ravenna, have been transmitted by transcription.[45] It seems probable, therefore, that the Gallic episcopate remained reliant on a degree of support in subsequent centuries for their building efforts that went beyond general Christian giving, and the proof of this sponsorship has just not survived. Indeed, as episcopal sees became increasingly valuable political and economic vehicles for rival families competing in the local arena, it is not hard to imagine that groups looked to cement control of bishoprics by backing allies in this manner.

In contrast to the urban munificence of the classical period, therefore, there seems to have been two key departures observable in the patronage of episcopal groups in late antique Gaul. The first was the collaborative nature of its funding model, while the second concerned the consequent framing and reception of this generosity, with clerical authors emphasizing the contribution of the bishop at the expense of a comprehensive overview of all those involved. But this potentially misleading apportioning of credit was not necessarily an *ex post facto* phenomenon. Despite the significant financial support provided to the reconstruction of Narbonne's cathedral by Marcellus, for example, he and his fellow laymen appear as secondary players on the lintel inscription, very much in the shadow of Bishop Rusticus and his achievements. It seems, moreover, that unlike the independent financing of civic amenities in the classical era, and its accompanying system of formal honours that made it abundantly clear to the local community who was responsible for these acts, the presence of the bishop as the subsequent authority over and user of Christian spaces may have allowed him to absorb much of the acclaim for what were more than likely collective efforts. This seems to have been especially true for episcopal groups, which the sources closely associate with the bishops who resided there. As such,

[43] Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 23, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis (Turnhout, 2006).
[44] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 73-4.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 236-44.

it is worth asking whether the perception of cathedrals and baptisteries as the realm of the local prelate was also increasingly shared by the laity. If this was the case, benefactors might have seen more social and spiritual mileage in financing a favoured saint's cult or monastic community, because of the greater degree of autonomy and scope for shaping the reception of their actions that such pursuits may have offered. This would have been an important consideration for those elites jockeying for local status and authority, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that it was during the re-emergence of civic competition from the second half of the fifth century that building patronage honouring the cult of saints really got underway. To this we now turn.

4.2. The cult of saints

In the previous chapter we saw how during a time of reinvigorated local competition, bishops utilised building programmes venerating the cult of saints as a vehicle to assert their position in the cities of Gaul. Although clearly useful in some respects, a bishop-centric paradigm, as was famously posited by Peter Brown, does not necessarily capture all the nuances of the building patronage underwritten in this period to celebrate saints.[46] Indeed, Brown's interpretation of the practice contrasted with that of Patrick Geary, who had earlier conceived of religious competition, and the role of saints' cults therein, as all-encompassing, with bishops simply individual players alongside a number of lay, royal, and monastic actors who all attempted to profit from this form of holy power.[47] Geary was concerned with a slightly later period than is in question here, but his wider lens and conception of competition as something framed by both inter- *and* intra-group rivalries, is nevertheless useful for our purposes, not least for underlining that bishops did not exist in isolation, but were instead often drawn from local aristocratic families vying for primacy in their cities. A holistic view of social competition, therefore, which acknowledges those individuals often obscured by the dominance of clerical authors among our sources, helps us to understand how rivalries between the lay elites of our period shaped the development of the cult of saints just as much as the manoeuvring of local bishops.

As we will see, some individuals and groups possessed the means to celebrate saints through acts of building patronage with a degree of independence that limited episcopal involvement as far as possible to the consecration and staffing of any churches they erected. This would have been useful for lay actors looking to distinguish themselves by claiming the lion's share of the credit for the provision of a public space where the community could seek divine assistance. It seems many members of the laity, however, had to content themselves with working alongside their local bishop to this end, in the manner of the impresario model discussed earlier. The involvement of individuals who knew that any worldly acclaim might be soaked up by the bishop reminds us that the audience for such works now extended

[46] See C. Pietri, 'Les origines du culte des martyrs (d'après un ouvrage récent)', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 60 (1984), pp. 293-319; J. Fontaine, 'Le culte des saints et ses implications sociologiques: Réflexions sur un récent essai de Peter Brown', *Analecta bollandiana* 100 (1982), pp. 17-41.
[47] P.J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978).

beyond the temporal world to the heavenly kingdom. While it will be argued in what follows that mobilising saints' cults through acts of building patronage was a regular and important feature of the local competition that played out across Gaul's cities in this period, we must also acknowledge, therefore, that, like the donor pool, the rationale for Christian building in the late antique world was broader than for its classical precursor, and social capital may not necessarily have always been the primary motivation for patrons. Indeed, the following will seek to demonstrate how the practice of patronising Christian buildings in honour of the cult of saints was embraced by Gallic society as a whole, functioning as both a claim to worldly power, and a means for obtaining spiritual intercession in this life and the next.

Intra-mural commemoration

Before considering the suburban basilicas that were erected in the necropolises of Gaul to venerate the cult of saints, it is necessary to note that, like bishops, members of the laity also engaged in acts of building that facilitated cult worship within the urban zone of the region's cities. The previous chapter showed that such work was commonly undertaken in a domestic context, with the region's episcopal groups hosting oratories founded by bishops in their private residences. We know of a number of lay persons who equipped their homes in a similar manner during this period. The lack of conclusive archaeological evidence from Gaul leaves us in the dark about the form taken by these family chapels, but they were most likely urban versions of the villa-based projects that typified the estate Christianity of late antiquity.[48] At the very least, these inner-city shrines would have housed an altar, a space for prayer, and often a reliquary, but, as examples from *civitates* across the Mediterranean attest, they may in some cases have even resembled miniature basilicas, complete with all the characteristic accoutrements of the funerary churches that ringed the cities of Gaul.[49] Kim Bowes has argued that the language of holiness conveyed by such liturgical furniture was often in itself sufficient to justify its

[48] Bowes, *Private Worship*.
[49] K. Bowes, 'Personal Devotions and Private Chapels', in V. Burrus (ed.), *Late Ancient Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2005), pp. 200-1.

presence in urban chapels and oratories, with spatial constraints ultimately rendering anything more than private worship difficult.[50]

Domestic chapels were seemingly common in the East,[51] but their apparently private nature, and a paucity of material data concerning urban residences in this period, makes it difficult to determine how prevalent their presence was in the homes of Gaul's laity outside of a handful of textual references. Gregory of Tours, for example, recalls being invited to the home of 'Chardegysil, whose family name was Gyso' at Saintes, where the layman's unnamed mother had built an oratory in honour of Saint Martin and placed some of his relics at an altar.[52] Similarly, Gregory recounts a rather farcical episode in which Bishop Bertram, the Merovingian pretender Gundovald, and his supporter Mummolus attempted to seize relics of Sergius from a certain Eufronius, a Syrian merchant who had established a shrine to the saint at his house in Bordeaux.[53] While the basilicas erected in the suburbs in honour of local, transregional, and universal cults were visible to, and used by, the community at large, the domestic context of these examples of Christian building patronage suggests they would have served a more limited audience, comprising those members of the heavenly kingdom whose divine assistance was sought by patrons. In the case of Eufronius, for example, his veneration of relics of Sergius brought him reward by ensuring that that when a great fire consumed much of Bordeaux, his house was spared.[54]

Outside of the domestic sphere, it was unusual to find cult foci within city walls but detached from episcopal groups, especially established by members of the laity. In contrast, small churches were financed fairly frequently by members of the Lombard aristocracy within the urban zone of Italian towns during the seventh and eighth centuries.[55] A contemporary parallel in Gaul is perhaps found in seventh-century Bourges, where, in addition to founding an urban monastery for herself and her maids, the wealthy widow Eustadiola converted two of her houses in the city into basilicas in honour of Mary and the martyr Eugenia.[56] The use of the term *basilica* in the text suggests something public and open

[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 200.
[52] Saintes 8a. Gregory, *VSM,* III.51.
[53] Bordeaux 5a. Gregory, *Hist.*, VII.31.
[54] *Ibid*.
[55] Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, pp. 54-7, 246-9.
[56] Bourges 7a, 8a; *Vita Eustadiolae,* 3, ed. *AA SS*, Jun. II (Antwerp, 1698).

to communal worship, but it seems more likely that these churches were reserved for acts of prayer and devotion by Eustadiola and her nuns, like those erected by Abbess Rusticula for the community she governed at Arles.[57] Another example of intra-mural church-building is found at Toulouse, where the Merovingian *dux* Launebodus and his wife Berethruda built a church in honour of the city's famous martyr Saturninus in c. 570.[58] This *templum* was celebrated in two poems composed by Venantius Fortunatus in honour of Saturninus.[59] The first of these outlined the life and death of Saturninus, and so was perhaps read aloud during the dedication of the church, but the second celebrated the couple themselves, and so might have been heard at a banquet held in their honour following the ceremony.[60] As we saw in the previous chapter, the bishops of Toulouse had already erected a basilica at the site of Saturninus' burial outside the walls. Fortunately, the duke seems to have had sufficient clout to claim the central and prestigious site of the city's former Capitol for his church, where Saturninus' *Passio* located the scene of his martyrdom (fig. 12).[61]

[57] Arles 8a, 8b. See p. 78.
[58] Toulouse 6a; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.8.
[59] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II. 7-8.
[60] M.J. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009), pp. 53-71. For the evidence of these banquets, see Sidonius, *Ep.*, IV.15.1.
[61] The location of the Capitol, and thus the church, was confirmed following excavations in Toulouse's place Esquirol in the early 1990s, see J.-M. Pailler (ed.), *Tolosa. Nouvelles recherches sur Toulouse et son territoire dans l'Antiquité* (Rome, 2002), pp. 220-9; J.-L. Boudartchouk, 'Le capitolium de Toulouse, l'église saint-Pierre-et-saint-Géraud et le martyre de l'évêque Saturnin: nouvelles données', *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France* 65 (2005), pp. 16-33. On the *Passio*, see P. Cabau, 'Opusculum de passione ac translatione sancti Saturnini, episcopi Tolosanae ciuitatis et martyris. Édition et traduction provisoires', *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de Midi de la France* 61 (2001), pp. 59-77.

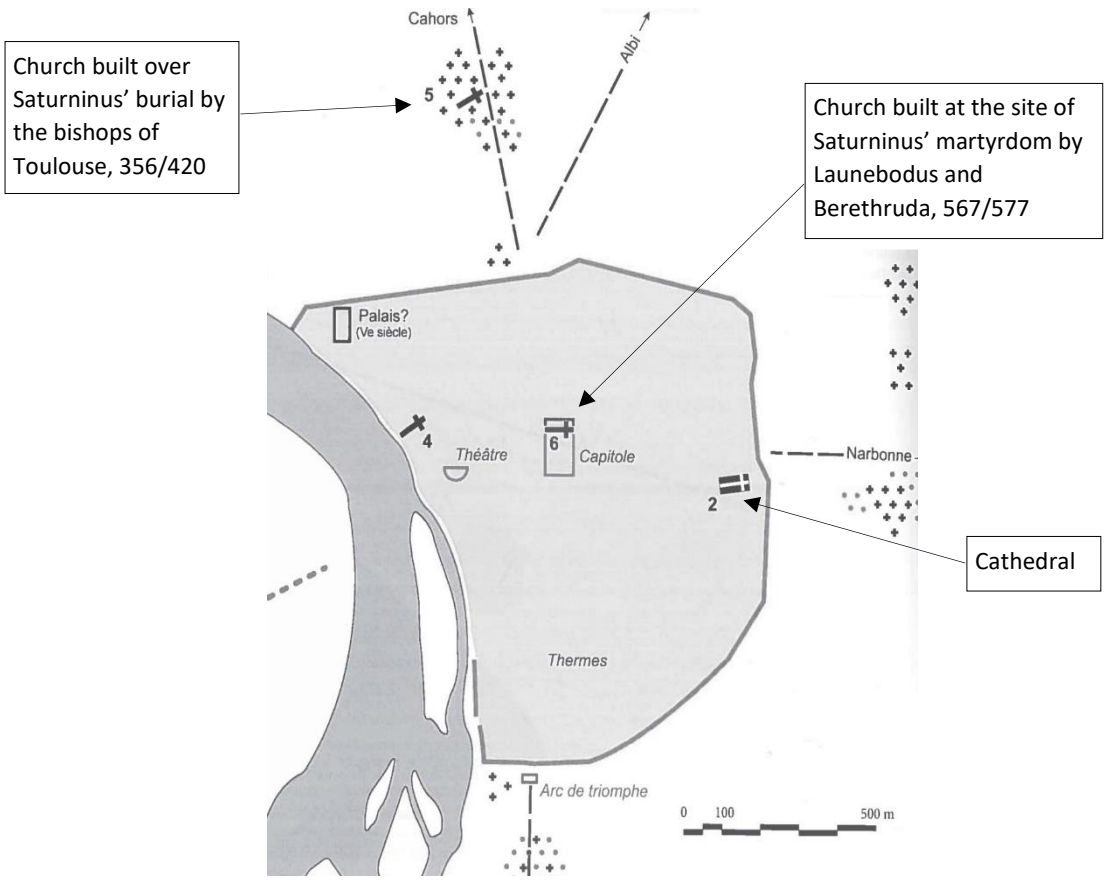


Fig. 12. The churches erected in honour of Saturninus at Toulouse (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, p. 666).

Saturninus was considered Toulouse's first bishop and a *martyr venerabilis orbi*, and so he was a powerful patron with whom to be associated, particularly for the duke, whose regional command presumably encompassed the city.[62] Although the archaeological evidence suggests that the site of his martyrdom may already have been an earlier focus of cult,[63] Fortunatus assures his audience that Launebodus and his wife were the first to construct a church there.[64] Clearly the couple were looking for an opportunity to emphasize their personal connection to the local saint, and through their provision of a space where others could seek Saturninus' holy power, enjoy the spiritual and social capital that came from such a relationship. It was speculated in the previous chapter that while the discovery of the tombs of the holy in Gaul's suburban necropolises often gave rise to new places of cult worship, which in turn attracted donors eager to monumentalise these sites and benefit accordingly, the building patronage that facilitated the intra-mural veneration of the saints was generally focussed on pre-existing

[62] Gregory, *Hist.*, I.30; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.8.9-10.
[63] Boudartchouk, 'Le *capitolium'*, pp. 31-3.
[64] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.8.19-24.

Christian spaces, such as episcopal groups or monastic complexes. The evidence pertaining to Toulouse's Capitol, however, provides an important exception to this rule, revealing that processes more commonly observed in the suburbs could also manifest within city walls. Nevertheless, the veneration of Saturninus in this manner by Launebodus and his wife highlights just how rare such behaviour was in an urban context in this period, with strikingly few similar examples attested elsewhere in Gaul.[65] Instead, the Christian building patronage of the laity that celebrated the cult of saints was for the most part an extra-mural phenomenon, as we will see now.

Competition and cults

While the veneration of cults in the cities by the laity could sometimes be a domestic affair, or very occasionally give rise to churches within wall circuits, it was for the most part characterised by the erection of funerary basilicas in the suburbs. Here, individuals and groups sought to capitalise on a city's cults and turn the opportunities they provided to their advantage through competing acts of Christian building patronage. The use of resources in this way intensified from the late fifth century (fig. 10), as meaningful power returned to the local arenas following the dissolution of transregional imperial political structures. In Marcel Mauss' famous *Essai sur le don*, the French sociologist discussed competitive gift-exchange and the importance of the practice in claiming authority, affirming social relations, honouring ancestors, and maintaining connections with the spiritual world.[66] This culture of 'potlatch' saw individuals and groups seek to out-give opposing factions by making progressively larger gestures in the hope of securing important positions in the community at the expense of their rivals. Mauss was writing about archaic societies, but his work is a useful way of understanding the similarly competitive nature of Christian patronage. In the American television series *The Wire,* for example, an ongoing feud between a police commander and a prominent union leader in Baltimore is conducted through competing gifts of stained glass windows to a local church. This game of one-upmanship took place in a city of rival social networks perpetuated by family memory, with both

[65] See also Paris 28a.
[66] M. Mauss, 'Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïquès', *L'Année sociologique* n.s., 1 (1925), pp. 30-186. See M. Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 147-61.

parties employing Christian benefaction in their pursuit of status in the public arena. A similar scenario appears to have played out over a number of centuries in and around the *civitas*-capital of Clermont, where local potentates and their kin vied for prestige and influence by endowing the territory with numerous Christian buildings in honour of its saints.[67]

Despite his high regard for Sidonius Apollinaris, Gregory of Tours had little time for his son Apollinaris; an antipathy which may have stemmed from the nobleman's links to the Arian Visigoths, but was also the result of his attempts to undermine an episcopal election in Clermont in 515 by invoking royal support for his own candidacy.[68] During the upheaval of the late fifth and sixth centuries, when previous hierarchies and markers of status were thrown up in the air, and the power available at the level of the *civitas* took on a new significance, episcopal office was seized upon by Gallic elites as a new framework for legitimising their status and authority.[69] As potential urban levers of power, bishoprics could become hotly contested by elite families, and Apollinaris did not act alone in Clermont. The nobleman was supported by his sister Alcima and wife Placidina, who tried to convince Quintianus – the people's choice and one of Gregory of Tours' heroes – to give up the bishopric, before sending their man to King Theuderic I with plenty of gifts so he could claim the see for himself. It appears from the *Histories* that, in Gregory's mind at least, this unscrupulous manoeuvring for local primacy received the divine judgement it deserved, as Apollinaris' apparent act of simony was followed shortly after by his death, and Quintianus assumed the city's bishopric once more.[70]

This story is of interest to us in this case because of the jockeying for civic influence in Clermont it portrays, and the context this consequently provided for a contemporaneous act of building patronage venerating the cult of saints by Alcima and Placidina, who raised a basilica in the city in honour of the local martyr Antolianus.[71] The church-building of the sisters-in-law was perhaps part of their attempts

[67] The tensions in Clermont have been well documented by Ian Wood: 'The Ecclesiastical Politics of Merovingian Clermont' in P. Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 34-57.
[68] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.37; III.2. *PLRE* 2, pp. 114, 131-2.
[69] Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation'.
[70] Cf. Gregory, *VP*, IV.1.
[71] Clermont 6a; Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, 64, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 34-111; Gregory, *Hist.*, I.33. M. Weidemann, *Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours* (2 vols, Mainz, 1982), pp. 153-4.

to obtain Clermont's see for their family, or it may have taken place during Apollinaris' brief episcopal tenure as a means to secure a lasting status for the Aviti-Apolinarii in the Christian life of the city.[72] In any case, Gregory describes the church's splendour in glowing terms, but also mentions that, in constructing it, Alcima and Placidina had not been sufficiently deferential to a number of the tombs they discovered.[73] This apparently prompted Antolianus to lament in heaven that he was responsible for his brothers' mistreatment, and to vow that the basilica would not be completed. Sure enough, Gregory details how the fragility of the church ultimately led to its partial collapse sixty years later during the attempts of Bishop Avitus (571-592...) to remedy its structural issues. The basilica's impermanence seems symbolic of the fate Alcima and Placidina, who were forced into exile after the latter's son, Arcadius, brought devastation to Clermont in c. 525 having provoking the wrath of King Theuderic.[74] The likely remains of the church of Antolianus were uncovered during excavations in 2005-6, which suggested that the place of worship was only completely abandoned at the end of the Carolingian period.[75] As such, Bishop Avitus, who was surely related to Alcima and Placidina,[76] may have succeeded in restoring the basilica, and thereby ensured his family's connection to the cult of Antolianus endured.

As Ian Wood has shown, patronage of churches and later monasteries, both within the city of Clermont and more widely within the *civitas* – particularly at Brioude and Issoire – was a recurring tool employed by competing factions seeking to establish control of local cults, and thus assert their claims to spiritual authority over the Auvergne as a whole.[77] In this regard, the Aviti-Apolinarii appear to have been particularly intent on regulating association with Antolianus. In 676, for example, Bishop Praejectus was killed after antagonising some of Clermont's local aristocracy; a provocation that may have included his attempts to unearth relics of the martyrs Cassius, Victorinus, and Antolianus and establish

[72] M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, *Les monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours* (Paris, 1976), pp. 94-5.
[73] Gregory, *GM*, 64.
[74] Gregory, *Hist.*, III. 9-13.
[75] *TCCG* XVI, pp. 84-5.
[76] Wood, 'Ecclesiastical Politics', p. 37-9.
[77] I.N. Wood, 'Constructing Cults in Early Medieval France: Local Saints and Churches in Burgundy and the Auvergne 400-1000', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 155-87.

a monastery in their honour.[78] Praejectus' biographer rather obliquely notes, however, that his subject's building activities were 'prevented by obstacles on this earth, so he began the work but it was left unfinished'.[79] As we have just seen, the latter saint was the dedicatee of the church built 150 years earlier by Alcima and Placidina, and so it is not hard to surmise that these 'obstacles' might have been descendants of theirs reluctant to have their relationship with Antolianus diluted.[80] Indeed, it was a second Bishop Avitus (676-691), again a probable member of the Aviti-Apolinarii clan, who, having succeeded Praejectus, apparently completed the task started by his predecessor.[81]

In this long-running context of competitive emulation and jockeying for civic ascendancy in Clermont, which was surely reminiscent of the local rivalries considered by Marcel Mauss, acts of Christian building patronage undertaken in honour of Antolianus would have served both to affirm the position of the saint in the local community, as well as the status of his guardians, the Aviti-Apolinarii. Likewise, limiting the ability of others, such as Bishop Praejectus, to claim a share in the cult of Antolianus would have helped to nullify potential challenges to the authority of such families. As the fate of Alcima and Placidina in the early sixth century attests, however, such strategies were by no means infallible when it came to guaranteeing local ascendancy. Nevertheless, no other family dynasty in the Auvergne appear to have been as successful as dominating the see of Clermont in this period,[82] and the ability of the Aviti-Apolinarii to sustain their position in the city was probably in no small part due to the relationship they had cultivated with the region's premier saints over the years.

Collaboration and cults

Lay peers in a comparable socio-economic position to Alcima and Placidina – such as the aforementioned Launebodus and Berethruda at Toulouse, but also others across Gaul – appear to have

[78] *Passio Praeiecti*, 17, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 212-48.
[79] *Ibid.*: *Inibi etiam coenobium construi voverat, sed humanis prepeditus obstaculis, coeptum opus inperfectum reliquit.*
[80] P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester, 1986), p. 263.
[81] *Passio Praeiecti*, 17. See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 263; Wood, 'Ecclesiastical Politics', p. 39.
[82] Wood, 'Ecclesiastical Politics', p. 39.

been able to engage in the practice of celebrating the cult of saints through acts of building patronage in such a way that episcopal involvement would have been largely limited to the ecclesiastical necessities of consecration and staffing.[83] This would have allowed them to claim much of the credit for their actions, but not all of the laity were able to mobilise sufficient resources to undertake an act of Christian building patronage in this manner. Instead, donors often had to content themselves with working collectively, either through personal contributions to projects coordinated by the local bishop and framed accordingly, or through the apparently anonymous group enterprises that are indicated by occasional allusions in the sources to building projects involving the 'Christian community'. As with episcopal groups, this crowdfunded patronage was a significant departure from the funding model that had underpinned classical urban munificence, when the wealthiest acted alone in the public sphere, and consequently received all the acclamation for the conversion of their resources into social capital.[84]

Donations made by individuals to help underwrite collective building projects differed in nature from the general oblations of the community, and so likely carried context-specific motivations. The anonymous nature of the sums that might be raised for this purpose, however, suggests that, unlike in the Republic and early Roman Empire, the political dimension of building patronage was not always the principal impetus for patrons acting in a Christian context. In the middle of the sixth century, for example, an anonymous group of *christiani* established a *fabrica* over the tomb of Bishop Melanius of Rennes.[85] Similarly, Gregory of Tours tells us that before Bishop Monulf erected a basilica in honour of Servatius at Maastricht in c. 575, the faithful of the city had apparently built a number of wooden churches on the site to venerate the saint.[86] It is possible that such evocations of collective lay patronage functioned merely as literary constructs for episcopal authors, intended to communicate a popular acceptance of an individual's holiness, or to contrast the often modest nature of this building with the more impressive and permanent enterprises of bishops. Equally, acts of church-building are often reported sometime after the fact, and so while writers may have been unaware of those who contributed,

[83] See, for example, Arles 16a; Orange 3a; Reims 14a.
[84] R. Haensch, 'Le financement de la construction des églises pendant l'antiquité tardive et l'évergétisme antique', *Antiquité Tardive* 14 (2006), pp. 57-8.
[85] Rennes 1a. Gregory, *GC*, 54.
[86] Maastricht 1a. See also Liège 1a.

it does not necessarily follow that donations were not recorded. Indeed, William Caraher has demonstrated that alongside ecclesiastical, imperial, and elite lay patrons, more humble members of the local community also helped to finance the churches of late antique Greece, with some inscriptions recording very modest donations of even half a *solidus*.[87] Nevertheless, anonymous collective donations are epigraphically attested in Gaul, such as at Narbonne, where the commemoration of Bishop Rusticus' erection of the church of Saint Felix in the middle of the fifth century is accompanied by a donor list mentioning a contribution from what was likely the city's Christian community (*sacro s[an]c[t]a eccl[esia]*).[88]

The example of Narbonne highlights that while these efforts were characterised by their anonymity, someone was likely needed to coordinate the project. In most cases this would have been the bishop, in accordance with the impresario model highlighted throughout this study. At Hippo, for example, in North Africa, Bishop Augustine (395-430) describes how he oversaw the erection of the basilica of the Eight Martyrs in conjunction with the priest Leporius.[89] This church was financed in part by a sum of surplus money that had been donated by the Christian community for another episcopal building venture in the city, and once construction had got underway, the new project attracted additional contributions from locals 'to the extent each wished'.[90] Much like those members of the general public who have donated to help in the rebuilding of Paris' Notre-Dame cathedral, however, nearly all individuals involved in these acts must have been well aware that they would not receive the public recognition on offer to benefactors with greater means. Motives for this behaviour are thus perhaps more likely to have centred on the opportunity to practise one's faith and build relationships with saints in the hope of attaining intercession and the expiation of sin. Indeed, Augustine comments that for the basilica of the Eight Martyrs, the involvement of devout lay donors was driven by the desire to have their works recorded in heaven.[91] Alongside these personal reasons, there was perhaps also a communal element

[87] W.R. Caraher, 'Patronage and Reception in the Monumental Architecture of Early Christian Greece' in J.F. Osborne (ed.), *Approaching Monumentality in Archaeology* (Albany, NY, 2014), pp. 46-9.
[88] Narbonne 5a; Marrou, 'Le dossier', pp. 331-49.
[89] Augustine, *Sermones*, 356.10, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 39 (Paris, 1865), col. 1574-1581.
[90] *Ibid.*: *quomodo meo iussu etiam basilicam ad Octo Martyres fabricauit […] Coepit enim de pecunia quae data erat ecclesiae propter xenodochium, et cum coepisset aedificare, ut sunt religiosi desiderantes opera sua in caelo scribi, adiuuerunt prout quisque uoluit, et fabricauit*.
[91] *Ibid.*

to this giving. Ine Jacobs has demonstrated how collective civic pride could underpin the provision of financial support for building projects.[92] Christian patrons might have been motivated by a desire to glorify their home town through the promotion of a local cult, therefore, or garner heavenly assistance for the community as a whole.

The church of Saint Felix at Narbonne also reveals that greater recognition was available to those members of the lay elite, such as the *vir inlustris* Salutius or the *vir clarissimus* Lympidius, who made sufficient contributions to warrant inclusion on an inscribed donor list, which would have probably sat above the entrance to the church in full view of the community.[93] We have evidence for the recording of similar piecework contributions to church-building elsewhere, including the donor mosaics found in the floors of contemporary churches in Italy and the Adriatic.[94] In both cases, these individuals and groups perhaps lacked the agency, or inclination, to finance a church in their city entirely on their own initiative, and so accepted the role of secondary players in building projects directed by members of the episcopate. While the same motives may have lain behind their involvement as dictated that of more modest donors, a desire for personal credit is probably indicated by the provision of larger sums in exchange for public commemoration alongside the bishop. This suggests that their financial support also served as an attempt to gain admiration and a reputation for personal piety, and thus fulfil personal ambition in the civic sphere.[95] It is precisely the financial involvement of such figures that was likely overlooked in the recording of Christian building patronage by clerical authors, who naturally sought to foreground the bishop's role in these projects. We can probably assume that lay patronage venerating the saints in Gaul was more widespread than the extant source base suggests, therefore, especially during the disruption of the late fifth and sixth centuries when civic competition re-emerged in earnest.

[92] Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance of Civic Space,* pp. 563-80.
[93] Narbonne 5a. *PCBE* 4, Salvtivs, p. 1700; *PCBE* 4, Lympidivs, p. 1217.
[94] J.-P. Caillet, *L'évergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe-VIIe s.)* (Rome, 1993); V. Vuolanto, 'Male and Female Euergetism in Late Antiquity. A Study on Italian and Adriatic Church Floor Mosaics', in P. Setälä *et al.* (eds), *Women, Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire* (Rome, 2002), pp. 245-302.
[95] Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* pp. 78-84.

Conclusion

Alongside the bishops of late antique and Merovingian Gaul, the laity played a major role in the transformation of the urban and suburban topography driven by the cult of saints. As in the case of episcopal patrons, lay veneration sometimes possessed a domestic character, with residential spaces in the city converted into oratories for personal devotion and the pursuit of heavenly intercession. It was generally in the surrounding necropolises, however, where the material impact of the cult of saints was most evident. Here, the tombs of the 'very special dead' were progressively endowed, and churches raised in honour of favoured cults. The financial provision for this building could take a number of forms: crowdfunding characterised by modest donations from the community at large, more significant donations made by individuals seeking public recognition, and initiatives by those with the most agency hoping to operate independently by limiting episcopal involvement as far as possible to the ecclesiastical necessities.

In the first two instances, the generosity of the laity was often co-opted by the local prelate, who set himself up as an episcopal impresario coordinating projects and looking to claim the lion's share of the credit. In this respect, the communality of most acts of lay Christian building patronage in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul differed from the funding model that had underpinned the urban munificence of the classical age. Another departure from antiquity concerns the issue of motivation, since it seems that the public acclaim once sought in the local arena by civic patrons was not always the key driver for the religious benefactions of the laity in late antiquity and beyond.[96] Instead, financially underwriting the construction of a church in honour of a favoured cult, whether individually or as part of a collective, was governed by a combination of both present and future thinking, the precise character and make-up of which would have differed across the social spectrum. For all patrons, it was an opportunity to practise their faith, and seek the spiritual protection on offer to those who chose to deposit 'treasure in heaven'. To this end, benefactors likely hoped for a return in both this life and the next, regardless of their status in society. Additional worldly benefits were also available to those with

[96] Y. Duval and L. Pietri, 'Évergétisme et épigraphie dans l'occident chrétien (IV-VI s)', in M. Christol and A. Masson (eds), *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Nîmes, 4-9 octobre 1992* (Paris, 1997), pp. 377, 390-2.

sufficient means to have their involvement in the practice of making the holy power of the *loca sanctorum* available to all recognised. In this regard, celebrating the cult of saints through an act of church-building in the public arena provided individuals with a vehicle to claim legitimacy and status within their community.

The practice appears to have been most popular during the sixth century (fig. 10). As always, however, any conclusions must be accompanied by the caveat that the source coverage from which we are extrapolating is heterogeneous, uneven across time and place, and often shaped by the literary strategies of authors. Nevertheless, it is probably no coincidence that this period coincided with the re-emergence of meaningful local power in the civic arenas of Gaul following the dissolution of the western empire. Display and social distinction was sought by many through involvement in the raising of churches in the cities, and those who could act with a greater degree of independence were in a position to claim full ownership of how their work was received in the local community. However, when the cities began to forfeit their significance as the principal *locus* for the distribution and representation of power, as they did during the later Merovingian kingdoms, behaviour of this kind seems to have tailed off. The decline in urban and suburban spending on the cult of saints was balanced by a growing interest in monasticism on the part of lay elites. The latter offered new avenues for exhibitions of piety and status, and was most obviously pursued in the countryside, away from the urban strongholds of the bishops, where patrons could wield greater control over their resources and sanctity. But, although it has sometimes been framed as such, lay patronage of monasticism was by no means exclusively a rural phenomenon, and so it is to its practice in the cities of Gaul that our attention will now turn.

4.3. Monasticism

The previous chapter built on recent challenges to a narrative of monastic patronage across this period that saw the initial ascetic enthusiasm of some fifth- and sixth-century bishops turn stale, only for the arrival of Columbanus to rescue the practice and inspire the Frankish elites, who relocated their spiritual investments to the countryside and away from the cities. While this account certainly has some merits, not least in its acknowledgement of the growing ruralisation of elite comportment in the later Merovingian period, it is not entirely unproblematic. As we have already seen, the monasteries established by the bishops in the cities of Gaul into the seventh century and beyond suggest that the monastic expansion of this period was by no means exclusively a rural affair. Monastic building patronage will now be considered from the perspective of the laity, in order to provide a different angle on some of these issues. It is essential to explore how far this category of lay Christian benefaction might differ from other types, and especially why patrons might have chosen to use their resources to this end given the other options available to them. Through this, it will also become apparent that monasticism afforded particular opportunities to women, whose ability to act independently was often restricted in a world shaped by men. Finally, by considering the chronology of monastic patronage, we will be able to determine whether the ongoing investment of the episcopate in urban and suburban monasteries was mirrored by that of lay elites, or whether the latter really did begin to concentrate their efforts exclusively in the countryside.

Monastic living from afar

Unlike the bishops of Gaul, the laity do not appear to have been early founders of urban monastic institutions. Instead, communities of ascetics gathered around a notable holy individual seem to have emerged organically and attracted lay backers after the fact, rather than developing on the basis of this support from the outset. When we do have references in the written record to ascetics in the fifth and sixth centuries inspiring the support of local lay individuals and groups, it is often unclear if this financial assistance was characterised by acts of building patronage, or took the form of more general

donations, which were then used by individual holy persons in their attempts to establish around themselves what might become a lasting institution. We have already seen how in mid-sixth-century Bourges, for example, the ascetic Agustus gathered a community, and, with the alms of the pious, built an oratory in honour of Saint Martin.[97] Similarly, a century earlier in Clermont, the itinerant hermit Abraham,[98] who had arrived from Egypt, installed himself in a basic hut around half a kilometre northwest of the city-walls, where he drew a number of monks and apparently built a church in honour of Cyricus, probably the martyr of Antioch.[99] Abraham seems to have enjoyed a close relationship with some of the leading men of Clermont, including the count Victorius and the local aristocrat Volusianus,[100] and the apparent durability of his community suggests that the availability of lay backing was a key factor in institutionalising the legacy of an ascetic.[101] For these members of the lay elite, association with an individual whose sanctity was respected by the local community allowed them to demonstrate their own faith.[102] As in most of these early cases, however, it is hard to be sure from the available evidence whether this backing extended to the direct sponsorship of building projects or not, but it certainly seems possible.

Vienne and the Ansemundi

Over time, a clearer picture begins to emerge from the sources. The upper echelons of secular society progressively took a more direct interest in monasticism, and started to establish their own institutions instead of simply supporting those emerging organically around a recognised holy figure. This development would especially take off in the countryside, where the seventh century saw a veritable surge in monastic foundations patronised by wealthy families in pursuit of intercessory prayer and

[97] Bourges 10a.
[98] *PCBE* 4, Abraham 1, pp. 46-7.
[99] Clermont 12a.
[100] Sidonius, *Ep.*, VII.17; *PCBE* 4, Volvsianvs 1, pp. 2001-3.
[101] An archaeological survey has dated a series of burials associated with the church of Saint-Cirgues in Clermont, which is still partially preserved in elevation nearby, to the fifth and sixth century, see *TCCG* XVI, p. 85.
[102] Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle,* pp. 405-6.

greater control over their landed resource base.[103] These increasingly popular status symbols were also primed for the preservation of cultural memory, and came to function as key components in the pious display that characterised the court culture of Frankish aristocratic circles.[104] Although it may not have taken place on the same scale, this practice certainly had parallels in the cities. Indeed, it is possible that family building in this mould perhaps had sixth-century antecedents, growing out of the earlier lay interest in monasticism detailed above.[105] In Vienne, for example, where there was a thriving local elite not shy of commemorating themselves and their families,[106] monasticism offered a new outlet for Christian benefaction and public display.

A prime example in this regard is Ansemundus,[107] a probable correspondent of Vienne's famous bishop Avitus,[108] and a lofty dignitary in the Burgundian kingdom who may have held military office but was perhaps more likely to have been the city's *comes.*[109] Acting in conjunction with his wife Ansleubana,[110] Ansemundus wrote a will in the ninth year of the reign of Chlothar I in Burgundy, which is traditionally taken as 543, of which only a codicil known as the *Donatio Ansemundi* survives today.[111] The text, which exists in copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is corrupted, notoriously hard to parse, and the subject of several differing interpretations.[112] Despite these problems, it is generally agreed to have an authentic core, and is of interest to us primarily because of the familial network of patronage and piety revealed therein. While the document's ambiguities necessitate caution, it can be used to argue that the Ansemundi financed two or maybe three coexistent monasteries in Vienne,

[103] For the relationship between monasticism and land management, albeit in a later period, see especially B.H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbour of Saint Peter. The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, 1989).
[104] Y. Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014).
[105] In addition to what follows, see also Metz 15a and Le Mans 9a.
[106] Y. Fox, 'New *honores* for a Region Transformed: The Patriciate in Post-Roman Gaul', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 93.2 (2015), pp. 258-9.
[107] *PCBE* 4, Ansemvndvs, pp. 144-6.
[108] Three of Avitus' letters are addressed '*viro illustrissimo Ansemundo*': Avitus of Vienne, *Epistulae*, 55, 80, 81, ed. R. Peiper, *MGH AA* 6.2 (Berlin, 1883). See D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool, 2002), pp. 291-2; P. Amory, 'Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Burgundy', *Viator* 25 (1994), p. 16.
[109] Ado of Vienne, *Chronicon,* col, 75-138, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 2 (Hanover, 1829), pp. 315-23, cf. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne,* pp. 291-2.
[110] *PCBE* 4, Anslevbana, p. 147.
[111] See P. Amory, 'The Textual Transmission of the *Donatio Ansemundi*', *Francia* 20.1 (1993), pp. 163-83.
[112] For texts of the different versions, see Amory, 'The Textual Transmission'. For a summary of the historiography, see *TCCG* III, pp. 26-7.

working in conjunction with the ascetic and abbot Leonianus, who apparently came to Gaul as a captive from Pannonia, and spent time in Autun before arriving in Vienne c. 500.[113] The confused nature of the evidence precludes the possibility of a definitive account of the Christian building patronage of the Ansemundi in Vienne, however, and so what follows is principally an attempt to understand the source material we have available to us, and to propose a possible interpretation that reflects the wider context of lay monastic patronage as it developed between the fifth and eighth centuries.[114]

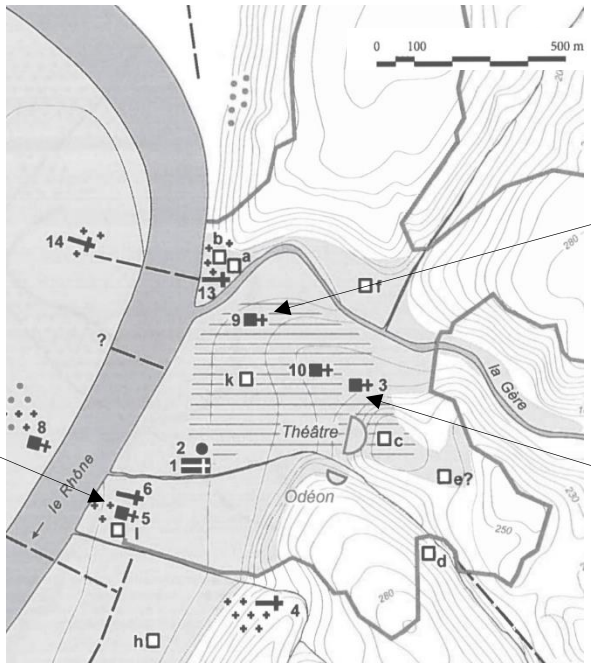


Fig. 13. The possible monastic patronage of the Ansemundi in Vienne (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, p. 696).

The *Donatio* indicates that Remila,[115] daughter of Ansemundus and Ansleubana, was to use a legacy to build a monastery in Vienne dedicated to Saint Andrew, where the bodies of her parents could be laid to rest.[116] The document then notes a bequest to a community that the family had seemingly already established in the city in honour of Saint Peter.[117] A third foundation is then cited when the text specifies that Remila's future community must follow the kind of life that the abbot Leonianus had instituted for

[113] *PCBE* 4, Leonianvs 1, p. 1130.
[114] For an alternative interpretation, see N. Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence. La province ecclésiastique de Vienne au haut Moyen Âge (Ve–XIe siècle)* (Rennes, 2014), pp. 240-2.
[115] *PCBE* 4, Remila, p. 1605.
[116] *Donatio*, lines 9-10, ed. Amory, 'The Textual Transmission', p. 180.
[117] *Ibid.*, lines 5 and 15. I.N. Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture in Post-Roman Gaul', in L.A.S. Butler (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr H.M. Taylor* (London, 1986), pp. 77-8.

a female monastery in the city.[118] This was where Remila herself had been instructed, apparently under the guidance of her aunt Eubona who is characterised by the *Donatio* as '*soror nostra*'. Writing in the second half of the ninth century, Bishop Ado of Vienne asserts that the foundation governed by Eubona was the *monasterium superius sancti Andreae,* or today's church of Saint-André-le-Haut, and that it had been established on a hill in Vienne by Ansemundus, in conjunction with Leonianus, when Avitus was bishop of the city (…494-518).[119] According to Ado, it was then under Bishop Philippus (…566-573…) that Remila established a second monastery dedicated to Andrew over which she herself presided, the *monasterium sancti Andreae subterioris,* where the current church and cloister of Saint-André-le-Bas stands today.[120] It is worth noting that these institutions also feature slightly earlier in the ninth-century record of Vienne. In 815, an act of Louis the Pious had conceded Saint-André-le-Haut to Vienne's Bishop Bernard.[121] The king likewise restored Saint-André-le-Bas in 831, invoking the *Donatio Ansemundi,* which had ultimately made the see of Vienne Ansemundus' chief heir.[122]

There is doubt among some scholars about the integrity of the *Donatio* and the ninth-century sources, and also the idea that Ansemundus and his family were involved in co-existing foundations dedicated to Andrew in the city of Vienne.[123] Beate Schilling, for example, has used the diplomas of Louis the Pious to suggest that the *Donatio* is actually a ninth-century forgery, created in order to make a case for episcopal authority over Saint-André-le-Bas, the monastery that was allegedly founded by Remila in the second half of the sixth century, but which Schilling believes only came into existence much later.[124] Patrick Amory, however, has argued that while the *Donatio* will certainly have assisted the Carolingian bishops of Vienne in attempting to assert their rights over the monasteries in their city, this in itself does not mean the document was a forgery.[125] Amory suggests that the garbled and confused nature of the

[118] *Donatio,* lines 3-4, ed. Amory, 'The Textual Transmission', p. 180.
[119] Ado, *Chronicon,* col. 75-138.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Diploma of Louis the Pious (19 January 815), ed. E. Baluze, *Capitularia regum Francorum* II (Paris, 1677), col. 1404-1405.
[122] Diploma of Louis the Pious (3 March 831), ed. Baluze, *Capitularia* II, col. 1432.
[123] A. Baud, N. Nimmegeers, and A. Flammin, 'L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut à Vienne. Origine et développement d'un monastère de moniales', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre* 10 (2016), pp. 1-15.
[124] B. Schilling, '*Ansemundus dux*, das Ende des Burgunderreichs und der Senat von Vienna', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 46 (2000), pp. 1-45.
[125] P. Amory, 'The Textual Transmission', pp. 163-6.

text in fact lends it a degree of legitimacy, because its incoherence almost serves to undermine the principle of episcopal guardianship for which it was used in the ninth century, and subsequently conserved.[126] Moreover, *pace* Schilling, it seems that the monastery of Saint-André-le-Bas must have at least appeared old enough in 831 for Louis the Pious' invocation of a document suggesting a sixth-century foundation date to be plausible.[127] Indeed, an analysis of existing elevations at the current site has highlighted several construction campaigns, and the lower part of the north wall and the foundations of the south wall may well go back to the sixth century.[128] Unfortunately, the ambiguous nature of our sources for Ansemundus' benefactions means that definitive proof either way is probably beyond our grasp. Nevertheless, an attempt to reconstruct the possible motivations behind these monastic institutions may provide a framework in which to set this evidence, and offer an explanation for how a single family might have been associated with several contemporaneous foundations in the same city.

According to the *Vita Eugendi*, which has been dated to around 520 by its most recent editor, Leonianus was responsible for male and female communities in the city of Vienne in the early sixth century.[129] The latter was probably the female monastery mentioned in the *Donatio,* where Eubona was abbess and Remila resided, later referred to by Ado as Saint-André-le-Haut.[130] Given these family links, the admiration for Leonianus evident in the *Donatio,* and Leonianus' probable need for financial support as an itinerant holy man, it is not unreasonable to imagine that Ansemundus was involved in the establishment of Saint-André-le-Haut, as Ado claims. Indeed, the nobleman may have been seeking to provide pious opportunities for the women of his household, in much the same way that Bishop Caesarius had done by founding a convent in Arles under his sister around the same time.[131] Ansemundus' relationship with Leonianus, moreover, may have been akin to that which existed a few decades earlier between the local leading men of Clermont and the ascetic Abraham. In Vienne,

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[127] See *TCCG* XVI, pp. 315, 320-1.
[128] J.-F. Reynaud, 'Saint-Andre-le-Bas', in N. Duval (ed.), *Les Premiers monuments chretiens de la France,* 1, *Sud-Est et Corse* (Paris, 1995), pp. 251-3.
[129] *Vita S. Eugendi abbatis,* 128, ed. F. Martine, *Vie des pères du Jura* (Paris, 1968), pp. 364-434.
[130] The site of Saint-André-le-Haut is currently the subject of excavations that have helped to uncover a probable chapel within the nave that dates back to the sixth or seventh century, and can most likely be associated with the first monastery: Baud *et al.,* 'L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut'.
[131] W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 104-10.

however, what perhaps started out as a connection characteristic of this early informal lay interest in monasticism was transformed by a conscious decision on the part of the Ansemundi to cement their admiration through a programme of building patronage. In this light, it is possible to conceive of the male community of Leonianus as also being a beneficiary of Ansemundus' financial support, and perhaps one and the same with the monastery of Saint Peter, which is provided for by the *Donatio* and has consequently been associated with the family.[132]

The cult of the apostles was of special importance to the city of Vienne and its bishop in the early sixth century,[133] particularly in the context of its regional rivalry with Arles, and so the decision of the Ansemundi to ally themselves with Saint Peter would have been a shrewd one. The dedication of a female monastery to Saint Andrew, Peter's brother, is perhaps further evidence that the two communities were related and shared a patron, in a similar manner to the contemporary male and female foundations of John Cassian at Marseille a century earlier, and Bishop Aurelian in Arles a generation or so later.[134] Ansemundus' status and personal relationship with Bishop Avitus has already been highlighted, and his links to Vienne, one of the capitals of the Burgundian kingdom, would have been strengthened if he was indeed the city's *comes.* Like the Frankish couple Launebodus and Berethruda at Toulouse,[135] the actions of the Ansemundi highlight how it was not just the Roman elites of the *ancien régime* who sought to associate themselves with important local cults through acts of Christian building patronage in their cities during this period. Indeed, the probable involvement of Ansemundus and Ansleubana in these two monasteries would have provided them with a means to develop their relationship with Bishop Avitus, glorify their *patria*, and present themselves as elite patrons, providing the scions of their noble peers with opportunities to enter institutions of pious learning.

If the male and female foundations of Peter and Andrew were established by the Ansemundi in the early sixth century, when Ansemundus' secular career was well underway and their thinking was likely

[132] *TCCG* III, p. 28; *PCBE* 4, pp. 145-6. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, pp. 291-292. Leonianus' supposed sarcophagus is on display in the church of Saint Peter at Vienne, which is now the city's lapidary museum but dates back to the late fifth century, see Vienne 5a.
[133] Avitus, *Ep.*, 50. Avitus was buried in Vienne's funerary basilica of Peter and Paul, see Vienne 5a; *TCCG* XVI, p. 318; Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture', pp. 77-8.
[134] Marseille 8a and 9a; Arles 11a and 12a.
[135] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.8.37-40.

guided by a desire for local prestige in the present, the decision in 543 to bequeath the necessary funds for a further monastery that would shelter their burials should be considered in light of the couple's advancing age.[136] The thoughts of the Ansemundi had presumably turned to the hereafter, and their actions were now driven by a concern for their souls, a lasting legacy on earth, and the fate of their daughter. In the case of the former, arguably the most effective way to achieve the spiritual intervention considered necessary for salvation was by building a monastery and filling it with a sacral class of devotees who would offer continuous intercessory prayer on your behalf,[137] a phenomenon that was particularly popular in the Burgundian kingdom.[138] To ensure the efficacy of this venture, Ansemundus and Ansleubana stipulated that the nuns watching over their tombs should follow the kind of life which Leonianus, a man whose sanctity they clearly respected, had instituted for their probable first female foundation. This monastic discipline was to be upheld by Remila, who had spent time training under her aunt, and would now be a suitable guardian for the tombs of her parents.[139] From the perspective of Ansemundus and Ansleubana, this was an arrangement that had the additional benefit of securing a privileged position for their daughter without having to worry about the line of succession at their first female monastery.[140] Indeed, given the competing interests both inside and outside the cloister, this was not something that could be taken for granted, even at a family foundation, and especially if there was no convenient vacancy.[141]

[136] On Ansemundus' age, see Amory, 'Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community', p. 16, n. 105. There is no contradiction in the *Donatio* being dated to 543 and Remila's foundation to the episcopate of Bishop Philippus (…566-573…) because the monastery was only to be founded after Ansemundus' death, see Amory, 'The Textual Transmission', p. 164, n. 3.
[137] Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle,* pp. 517-22.
[138] B.H. Rosenwein, 'Perennial Prayer at Agaune', in S. Farmer and B.H. Rosenwein (eds), *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 37-56.
[139] A sixteenth-century epitaph for Ansemundus is conserved at Saint-André-le-Bas, see A. de Terrebasse, *Inscriptions du Moyen-Age,* (2 vols, Paris, 1875), p. 109.
[140] In a similar move, Caesarius recalled his sister from the Massilian monastery where she had been sent for her training and subsequently appointed her abbess of the female community he had established at Arles: *Vita Caesari,* 35. See J.A. McNamara, G. Whatley, and J.E. Halborg (eds), *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham and London, 1992), p. 112.
[141] S.W. Wade, 'Spiritual Motherhood and Monastic *Familia*: Defining the Boundaries Between Blood Kin and Monastic *Familia* in the Early to Central Middle Ages', in R.G. Sullivan and M. Pagès (eds), *Imagining the Self, Constructing the Past* (Newcastle, 2016), pp. 8-10.

The picture of Ansemundus in the extant sources, however blurred, is thus a multifaceted one. He was clearly a leading Burgundian nobleman and servant of his king,[142] but his decision to publicise his wealth in the urban arena of Vienne through a number of acts of Christian building patronage also reveals a devotion to his religion and *civitas* that was reminiscent of an archetypal Gallo-Roman aristocrat.[143] Ansemundus is thus a prime example of the reconfiguration of social relations and emergence of new ideologies of leadership that followed the dissolution of the western empire, when Christianity, and especially the opportunities that the religion provided for cultural legitimation, played an important role in hastening the integration of the Germanic warrior-aristocracies and the resident Gallo-Roman elites. Ansemundus' position as a local leader in southern Gaul suggests that he recognised the political expediency in embracing a strategy for claiming legitimacy that was typical of, and immediately recognisable to, the Gallo-Roman population he oversaw.

Interestingly, however, and in contrast to the *dux* Launebodus and his wife Berethruda who adopted a similar approach at Toulouse, the Ansemundi chose to build cloisters rather than churches. Both building types would have satisfied the desire for pious display and association with local cults sought by patrons at a time when cities still retained their political and symbolic significance, but the Ansemundi seemingly recognised the additional opportunities that monasteries could provide for those looking to achieve subsidiary aristocratic ends. In addition to seeking to guarantee a greater control over one's resources away from the local bishop, a concern for safeguarding family interests – as seems to have been the case in Vienne – would do much to drive the wave of monastic building witnessed in the countryside in subsequent centuries. Fashioning narratives from abstruse sources is an admittedly perilous game, but the actions of the Ansemundi nevertheless offer a bridge between the rather *ad hoc* lay support of monasticism evident in the cities of the fifth and early sixth centuries, and the more systematic financing of personal foundations witnessed in the later Merovingian period, when aristocratic families particularly embraced the practice on their estates.

[142] Ansemundus' ethnicity is inferred from his Germanic name, but a later source refers to an 'Ansemundus Burgundio' from this period who may be the same person, see *Passio sancti Sigismundi regis,* 10, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 329-40.
[143] Amory, 'Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community', pp. 16-19; Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture', p. 76.

To the country?

The laity were the main instigators of the phenomenon that saw monumental expressions of wealth and piety increasingly relocated to the countryside during the seventh and eighth centuries.[144] Simon Loseby has demonstrated how in the generations that followed the Treaty of Andelot in 587, developments in the Merovingian polity meant that the city-based display of earlier centuries carried diminishing returns for Gaul's secular magnates.[145] Access to power was now mediated through personal relationships at court, with the significance of the *civitates* undercut by the proliferation of judicial immunities that restricted the ability of the civil authorities to act.[146] In the hope of acquiring the royal favour that might allow them to benefit from these policies of privatisation in their localities, ambitious magnates pursued administrative careers in the service of their king. This regular participation at the royal courts came at the expense of the previous levels of engagement in the civic arenas, and fostered the rise of a stable court aristocracy determined by landholding and the acquisition of central office.[147] Concurrently, a new elite identity emerged, which was increasingly conceived within broader regional frames of reference, defined by the larger territorial units of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy, and shared by those who had spent time at the palace together.[148] Urban expressions of status were no longer as essential for this group, therefore, and so they increasingly based themselves on their rural estates, which benefitted from a corresponding flow of pious capital.[149] Through monastic ventures pursued beyond the reach of the local bishop, lay aristocrats sought a greater degree of control over sanctity and resources in the countryside, where spiritual investment that did not necessarily entail

[144] This seems to have been especially pronounced in north-eastern Gaul, see A. Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres entre Sambre et Meuse (VIIe- XIe siècles)* (Sigmaringen, 1985); A.-M. Helvétius, *Abbayes, Evêques et Laïques. Une politique du pouvoir en Hainaut au Moyen Âge (VIIe -XIe siècle)* (Brussels, 1994).
[145] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', pp. 223-52.
[146] A.C. Murray, 'Immunity, Nobility, and the Edict of Paris', *Speculum* 69.1 (1994), pp. 18-39; B. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 75-96.
[147] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', pp. 236-41; Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, pp. 262-70; P. Fouracre, **'**The Nature of Frankish Political Institutions in the Seventh Century', in I.N. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (San Marino, 1988), pp. 285-316.
[148] P. Fouracre, 'Francia in the Seventh Century', in P. Fouracre (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 371-96.
[149] J.T. Schulenburg 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline', *Signs* 14.2 (1989), p. 267.

the permanent alienation of one's patrimonial wealth – the fundamental basis of elite status – was possible.[150]

Arguments for the redundancy of cities as venues for lay patronage in this period, however, should not be overstated. Despite a decline in their ideological and administrative significance, the *civitates* of late Merovingian Gaul nevertheless retained their functions in the public arena of exchange and service provision.[151] Moreover, although discussions of monasticism that focus on the period following Columbanus' arrival in Gaul can often make it appear so, an increased interest in rural benefaction did not necessarily coincide with a drying up of urban investment. Indeed, Michèle Gaillard and Christian Sapin have shown that the monastic 'boom' of the later Merovingian kingdoms certainly had an urban presence.[152] Fifty-six communities are known to have been established in the cities in this period, compared to forty-eight in the sixth century, and only twenty-four prior to the year 500. While a number of these were the products of episcopal patronage, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is clear that the laity also retained some degree of interest in the civic arena, not least because of the enduring social, political, and economic value in controlling a city's bishopric, as the rivalries evident in the seventh-century hagiography attest.[153]

Within intra-kingdom hierarchies, however, some cities were clearly more important than others in this regard, especially in light of the emergence of an increasingly centralised polity in the seventh century. Consequently, it is perhaps unsurprising that we see a number of royal capitals endowed with monastic communities by Merovingian courtiers seeking legitimation in this period. In Soissons, for example, a female monastery was established within the walls of the city by Ebroin, the Neustrian mayor of the palace, in the second half of the seventh century.[154] A generation earlier, the palace goldsmith and counsellor Eligius had initially considered setting up a *xenodochium* in Paris, but he instead chose to

[150] This would prove an enduring development: K. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), pp. 63-73.
[151] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', pp. 241-3.
[152] M. Gaillard and C. Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain au haut Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 124.1 (2012), pp. 27-37.
[153] *Passio Leudegarii I*, 2, ed. B. Krusch *MGH SRM* 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 282-322; *Passio Praeiecti*, 12-14; See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*; Loseby, 'Lost Cities', p. 241.
[154] Soissons 1a. Charter of Bishop Drauscius, 666/667, ed. J-M Pardessus, *Diplomata Chartae, Epistolae, Leges Aliaque Instrumenta Ad Res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia*, vol. 2 (2 vols, Paris, 1843-1849), n. 355, pp. 138-41.

found a convent in the city, in a house that he had received as a gift from Dagobert I.[155] This case serves as a useful reminder that benefactors had choices as to the type of urban religious building that they chose to patronise. But despite Eligius' initial intention, and in contrast to their ecclesiastical – and even royal – counterparts, there are no securely documented examples of institutions of charity established by the laity.[156] Instead, lay elites seem to have felt that building churches, and increasingly during the later Merovingian period monasteries (fig. 14), was a more effective use of their wealth when it came to seeking social capital and salvation.

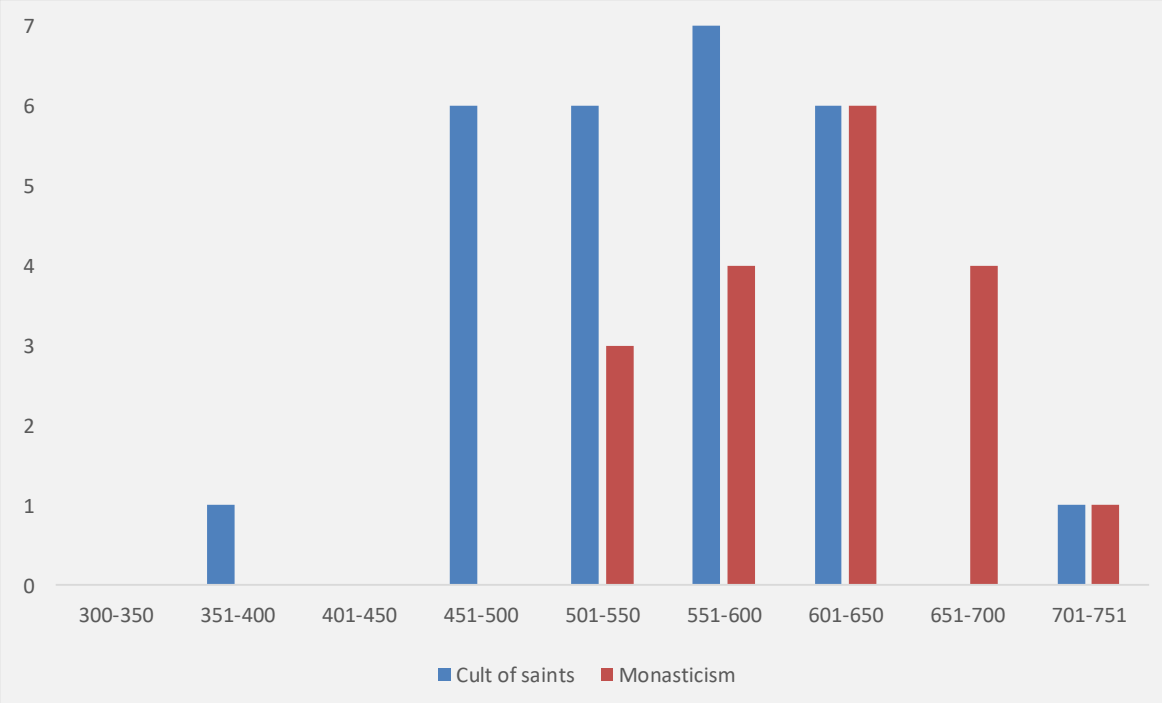


Fig. 14. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul involving an identifiable lay patron between 300 and 751 concerning the cult of saints and monasticism.

Indeed, even if local competition was perhaps less intense than before, the growth in lay interest of monastic patronage provided a new outlet for elites jockeying for honour and influence in their cities. As fig. 14 indicates, the available evidence suggests the practice may have surpassed church construction celebrating the cult of saints in the course of the seventh century as the favoured mode of pious display in the public arena. Alongside the efforts of magnates like Ebroin and Eligius, this seems

[155] Paris 5a. *Vita Eligii*, I.17, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1902), pp. 663-741.
[156] It is unclear if Atolus, who founded a *xenodochium* in Reims and is described as a disciple of Bishop Remigius on his epitaph, was a cleric or layman: Reims 22a.

to have also been the result of the opportunities that urban monastic benefaction provided for pious women, who appear to have embraced the practice in even greater numbers than their male counterparts (fig. 15). Late sixth-century antecedents are detectable in this regard, and perhaps the most successful female patron of this period was Queen Radegund, who left her husband Chlothar I and founded a convent in honour of the Holy Cross at Poitiers in c. 557, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.[157] It is worth noting here, however, that while the abundance of studies concerning Radegund and her monastic patronage can give the impression that her actions were exceptional,[158] a survey of the extant evidence for female benefaction reveals that she was far from unique, both in her own time and subsequent centuries.[159] It is certainly possible that Radegund provided a model for high-status female piety that became an inspiration to others. At the same time, however, we should ask whether the extent of the surviving source coverage of Radegund and her convent may in fact be more exceptional than her act of building patronage itself. What follows will thus examine the monastic benefaction of lay women in the cities of Gaul as a whole, in order to consider why it may have been particularly prevalent during the later Merovingian period.

[157] See pp. 218-9

[158] *Inter alia*, see B. Brennan, 'St Radegund and the Early Development of her Cult at Poitiers', *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1985), pp. 340-54; J.M. Petersen, 'The Spirituality and Miracles of St Radegunde', in J. Loades (ed.), *Monastic Studies: The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp. 34-47; S. Coates, 'Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul', *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998), pp. 37-50; J.M.H. Smith, 'Radegund *peccatrix*: Authorizations of Virginity in Late Antique Gaul', in P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis (eds), *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 303-26.

[159] See, for example, the communities founded in Tours by the noblewomen Ingitrude and Monegundis: Tours 7a, 11a.

	Male	Female	Couple
300-350	0	0	0
351-400	0	0	0
401-450	0	0	0
451-500	0	0	0
501-550	0	0	3
551-600	1	3	1
601-650	2	4	1
651-700	2	2	0
701-751	0	1	0
Total	5	10	5

Fig. 15. Attested acts of monastic building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751 with an identifiable lay patron and their gender.

Women as monastic patrons

'Gender' provides a useful angle for the study of people, beliefs, and motives in this period,[160] but as a category of analysis it is important that it is not reduced to considering women in isolation, or as a lens simply to draw attention to them in the sources.[161] Instead, as a number of scholars have noted, its value lies in explorations of complementarity, which consider the social roles of both men and women alongside one another, so that this holistic approach can better illuminate aspects of power or agency which might otherwise remain obscured.[162] As in most of their appearances in the documentary record of this period,[163] women generally feature in acts of Christian building patronage alongside men, which can hinder attempts to determine who is really driving such behaviour.[164] Nevertheless, the ability of these elite lay women to act, whether independently or in partnership with their husbands, was

[160] See the contributions to P. Stafford and A.B. Mulder-Bakker (eds), *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2001).
[161] See J.W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review* 91.5 (1986), pp. 1053-75.
[162] J.M.H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History, 500-1000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 115-47.
[163] J.L. Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82-3.
[164] Yitzhak Hen has demonstrated this is true for all forms of cultural patronage: 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture in Merovingian Gaul', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 217-33.

determined by their access to resources. Noblewomen could generally acquire property in three ways: in the form of an inheritance from their parents, as gifts from their husband and parents on their wedding day, or following the death of their spouse.[165] In a patriarchal world replete with a myriad of competing interests, women often found it far from straightforward to realise their claims to property due to them in widowhood. It does seem, however, that aristocratic widows could exercise a relatively high degree of agency compared with other members of their sex, which allowed them to operate successfully as patrons.[166] Elizabeth Clark has argued that during late antiquity, Christian patronage offered opportunities to women to gain distinction and status, not only in the religious sphere but also in society at large.[167] Nevertheless, Clark believed that to achieve this end individuals needed to have access to family wealth, take a vow of celibacy, and enjoy a degree of independence from constraints imposed on them by both blood and marital kin.[168] All this applies equally well to women operating in the later Merovingian period, when monastic building patronage in the cities became a favoured vehicle for wealthy widows looking to cement, and even enhance, their existing position in society.[169]

When female patronage of monasteries in the later Merovingian period is discussed, the focus of such analyses remains decidedly rural.[170] There were certainly some commonalities between the sponsorship of rural and urban female monasticism, most obviously in the opportunity that it provided women for displays of status and devotion. The social potency of female actors was ultimately rooted in their nobility and resources, but there was generally little prospect of translating this into institutionalised authority in a society where most civil and religious offices were denied to them.[171] Monasticism, however, provided women an outlet for their wealth and Christian devotion. Following the death of her

[165] Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', pp. 85-90.
[166] On widowhood, see B. Jussen, 'On Church Organisation and Definition of a State. The Idea of Widowhood in Late Antique and Early Medieval Christianity', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 22 (1993), pp. 25-42; E.T. Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 16-45.
[167] E.A. Clark, 'Patrons, Not Priests: Women and Power in Late Ancient Christianity,' *Gender and History* 2 (1990), pp. 253-73.
[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 260-4.
[169] For the historical context from which this Merovingian female asceticism emerged, see P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988).
[170] Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100', pp. 270-4.
[171] Smith, *Europe after Rome*, p. 146.

husband, the wealthy widow Eustadiola, whom we met earlier,[172] established an intra-mural convent for herself and her maids in Bourges, which she entered as abbess, as well as funding an accompanying funerary basilica outside the city in honour of Peter.[173] The tensions between secular and religious conceptions of women and their role in society appear particularly acute at the moment of widowhood. While there would have been lay pressure for women to remarry – and in this way continue to play their part in the elite social networks maintained through matrimony – sexual continence was an important Christian virtue and signifier of status.[174] But, as we saw in the previous chapter, the church encouraged those women interested in such a life to enter an existing monastery rather than to take the veil independently, and so submit to an abbess under the authority of the local bishop.[175] In reality, however, it appears that there were a considerable number of pious and resourceful women, like Eustadiola, who possessed the motive and means to carve out their own prestigious positions within Christian society, through an act of monastic building patronage in their city. This phenomenon has been likened to a 'religious free-enterprise system', of which the true extent was probably under-recorded.[176]

It is not always clear just how much independence these urban ventures had vis-à-vis the local bishop, particularly when it came to their property rights, even if this may have been another feature of monastic patronage that made it particularly appealing to wealthy female patrons. As the previous chapter argued, episcopal oversight of monastic initiatives was by no means entirely self-seeking, but it would not be surprising if bishops encouraged rich widows to enter existing convents at least in part because they had one eye on the accompanying endowment. To supplement her *Morgengabe*, and other possible inheritances or gifts she had received from her family, spouse, and friends, Frankish law allowed a woman to claim a *tertia* of all property acquired in conjunction with her husband during marriage.[177] Widowhood could leave women vulnerable, however, and so if a new husband was not desired, or forced upon them by their families, one way for widows to try and secure their financial independence was to pursue a religious life through the foundation of a monastery endowed with all their landed

[172] See pp. 143-4.
[173] Bourges 9a; Bourges 15a.
[174] Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', p. 84.
[175] See pp. 95-99.
[176] McNamara *et al.*, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, p. 107.
[177] *Lex Ribuaria*, 41.2, ed. F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, *MGH LL nat. Germ.* 3.2 (Hanover, 1954), p. 95.

wealth.[178] As was the case in early Christian Ireland, many of these female institutions may have lasted only for the founder's lifetime.[179] Nevertheless, women were better-placed in this way to live out their days somewhat on their own terms, exercising a degree of control over their property alongside relatives and friends in a climate of companionship and protection.[180] After the death of her husband in the middle of the seventh century, for example, Irmina, the mother-in-law of Pepin II,[181] established a monastery near Trier at Oeren, where, when she ultimately retired, she assumed the position of abbess.[182] It seems a reasonable assumption that this community would have benefitted from her financial generosity on a scale comparable to that enjoyed by her rural foundation at Echternach, but sadly the records have not survived.[183]

Yitzhak Hen has suggested that once free from the patriarchal control of her husband, a well-heeled Merovingian widow could do what she liked with her resources.[184] We should be careful, however, not to overestimate the ability of such women to act. A woman's access to property was never as secure as that of a man,[185] and at the moment of widowhood she might often find that her previous support networks, whether familial, lay, or ecclesiastical, now sought to make their own claims on her newly-acquired resource base.[186] Moreover, a husband might have attempted to exert some control over his wife's activities even from beyond the grave by placing stipulations on bequeathed property.[187] It seems that founding a monastic community to manage one's own landed wealth was not necessarily a guaranteed vehicle for unrestrained independence either, as an example from the sixth century suggests. Ingitrude,[188] the sister-in-law of Chlothar I, established a female monastery in the atrium of St Martin's

[178] Such a move has even been interpreted as 'legal subterfuge' on the part of widows, but this perhaps goes too far in negating pious motivations. See J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 256; Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100', p. 272.
[179] K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland* (London, 1972), pp. 234-235. This again would have consequences for our knowledge of their existence.
[180] Smith, *Europe after Rome,* p. 118.
[181] On the Pippinids, see I.N. Wood, 'Genealogy Defined by Women: The Case of the Pippinids', in Brubaker and Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World,* pp. 234-56.
[182] Trier 4a.
[183] N. Gauthier, *L'Évangélisation des pays de la Moselle: la province romaine de Première Belgique entre Antiquité et Moyen âge: IIIe-VIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1980), pp. 291-5.
[184] Hen, 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture', p. 229.
[185] Smith, *Europe after Rome,* p. 138, pp. 142-3.
[186] Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', p. 88.
[187] This was certainly the case in later centuries, see Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, pp. 72-3.
[188] *PCBE* 4, Ingitrvdis, pp. 1043-6.

at Tours,[189] and encouraged her daughter Berthegund to leave her husband and join her there. According to Gregory of Tours, Berthegund spent time in and out of the monastery, but ultimately fell out with her mother over the inheritance of patrimonial estates, which she felt had unfairly favoured Ingitrude.[190] Both parties petitioned civil and ecclesiastical authorities in an attempt to resolve the quarrel in their favour. The decision of Childebert II to grant Berthegund a quarter of her father's property satisfied neither woman, however, and Ingitrude banned her daughter from entering the monastery as a result. Following Ingitrude's death, Berthegund successfully petitioned the king again for all her parents' inheritance, including Ingitrude's bequests to her nunnery, which she stripped of all its movables before retiring to Poitiers.[191] Establishing oneself as head of a monastic community may have provided an opportunity for women to retire with a degree of status and financial independence, therefore, but, *pace* Hen, a religious life by no means guaranteed untrammelled autonomy from external interests of a lay or clerical nature.

The final feature of monastic building patronage in the cities of the later Merovingian periods which may have underpinned its popularity among female donors free from marital bonds was the physical security such endeavours could offer, especially if the *civitas*-capital possessed a wall circuit or some natural fortification. The protection offered by an intra-mural site likely explains why over half of all female foundations attested in Gaul's cities had an urban character, while, in contrast, only a quarter of their male counterparts were similarly sited.[192] One of these female communities was founded by a noblewoman called Sadalberga at Laon in the second half of the seventh century.[193] After providing her husband with a male heir, Sadalberga took the religious habit as she had long desired.[194] She was then encouraged by Waldebert, the abbot of Luxeuil, to found a monastery in the suburbs of Langres, and to this end he provided her with labourers and artisans. Before the monastery was completed,

[189] Tours 7a; L. Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 390-405.
[190] Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.33, X.12.
[191] Attempts to link Ingitrude's foundation with the *beate Mariae ad scriniolum,* which was attested in the Carolingian period, have been dismissed by May Vieillard-Troiekouroff in *Les monuments religieux,* p. 328.
[192] *TCCG* XVI, pp. pp. 386-91; Gaillard and Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain'.
[193] Laon 1a.
[194] *Vita Sadalbergae,* 12-14, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 40-66.

however, Sadalberga apparently became concerned about the vulnerability of such a location, and instead sought out the safety provided by Laon for her foundation:

> But when the greater part of the monastery's fabric had been erected, the handmaid of Christ began to have forebodings, she began to weigh with her husband whether the place was safe for a convent of maidens since it had neither stability not protection… [and so] with a stipend for life, as many supplies as possible, and the souls God had committed to her, she set out for the city of Laon. That town could be walled from a siege by the enemy and it has a strong natural defence, sitting on a rocky height […] Finally, having observed the layout of the place and discerned the most agreeable and suitable site within the fortifications, they began to lay the foundations of the churches and houses.[195]

As we have seen so far, the establishment of a female monastic community was a convenient means of retirement for pious elite women, but it also seems that safety concerns may have featured in their thinking.[196] A desire to ensure the security of female monastic communities was nothing new in Gaul, and was a theme from Bishop Caesarius' refoundation of his convent within the walls of Arles in c. 512, right the way through to Sadalberga's establishment at Laon. Such thinking may have also shaped the apparent withdrawal from public life of Plectrude, wife of Pepin II, in the early eighth century. Following the death of her husband in 714, and her subsequent retreat to Cologne during her troubles with the Neustrian nobility,[197] Plectrude apparently installed herself in a monastery that she had founded in the south-east corner of the city's enclosure, at the location of the current St. Maria im Kapitol.[198] This community is first attributed to Plectrude only in the twelfth century,[199] but the archaeological evidence reveals that while the site once housed a Roman temple, it was reused for Christian purposes during the eighth and ninth centuries, as shown by a number of trapezoidal sarcophagi and other remains.[200] If this community at Cologne was indeed a product of Plectrude's Christian benefaction, it

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[195] *Vita Sadalbergae,* 13-14, 17: *Sed cum iam pars maxima fabricae monasterii instructa esset, coepit famula Christi praesaga* […] *sagaci cum viro trutinare animo, non esse in loco eodem puellarum coenobium tutum nihilque stabilitatis atque munitionis habere* [...] *cum vitae stipendio ad urbem Luduni cum maximo apparatu et cum animabus a Deo sibi commissis proficiscitur. Quae urbs licet obsidione vallari ab hostibus possit, tamen natura loci et in cacumine saxi sita munitionem robustam obtinuit* […] *Denique, contemplata conditione loci, cernentesque idoneum ac gratissimum et absque discrimine munitionis locum, coeperunt fundamenta ecclesiarum atque domorum iacere.*

[196] Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100', p. 270; S.F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 158-65.

[197] *Liber historiae Francorum,* 51-53, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 241-328.

[198] Cologne 6a.

[199] *Historiae Francorum Steinveldenses* 2, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS* 13 (Hanover, 1881), pp. 726-9.

[200] *TCCG* XII, pp. 65-6.

would add further weight to the idea that monastic enterprises were viewed by pious women as a possible way to retire in relative security.

Conclusion

Until the sixth century, financing acts of construction in order to establish an urban monastic community appears to have been largely the preserve of the episcopate in Gaul. In the sources at least, early lay interest seemingly extended only as far as general support for existing communities led by individual holy persons deemed worthy of local respect. The Christian building patronage of the laity in the fifth century and into the sixth century appears instead to have been focussed on the cult of saints, and its associated urban and suburban oratories and churches, rather than on conscious efforts to found monasteries. Discussions of the ruralisation of aristocratic power and display can sometimes give the impression that, when it did arrive, the monastic surge of the seventh and eighth centuries was very much a bucolic affair. Alongside their episcopal counterparts, however, we have seen that some local magnates also chose to endow cities with monastic communities during the later Merovingian era. Although female patrons may have been especially active in this regard, it seems, even so, that the scale of such benefactions nevertheless did fall short of what was witnessed in the countryside, where the aristocracy increasingly pursued self-legitimation and salvation on their estates.

Columbanus is often posited as a key figure in this development, but it is possible that the latent potential of the practice for meeting the needs of Gaul's social elites was first recognised in urban monastic ventures instigated sometime before his arrival. The actions of the Ansemundi in the first half of the sixth century, for example, provide a link between the inchoate personal relationships shared by donors and ascetics during the initial lay interest in urban and suburban monasticism, and the family foundations scattered across the aristocratic estates of the later Merovingian kingdoms. As with the churches raised in honour of saints' cults across this period, these institutions of pious display also played a role in inter- and intra-civic competition, and provided a vehicle for the pursuit of heavenly intercession. Unlike the cult of saints and its capacity for crowd-funded enterprises, however, monastic

patronage was seemingly the exclusive preserve of the well-heeled. Indeed, its growing popularity and, by the end of the seventh century, its apparent eclipse of church-building in spending terms, is perhaps explained by the additional returns it provided for lay elites. Bankrolling monastic communities could provide opportunities as a potential power-base for family members, allowing resources to be placed at the service of God without the need to relinquish complete control over them and securing positions of influence for heirs. In subsequent centuries, however, these processes were most evident in the countryside, which took on a new significance as the favoured arena for spiritual displays of wealth and devotion, perhaps in part because of the greater scope for freedom from episcopal control. Nevertheless, while church-building in the cities slowed with the decline in intensity of local competition, monastic benefaction in urban environments endured, seemingly underpinned in particular by the attractions it held for wealthy – and often widowed – women, who embraced the practice as an outlet for displays of status and piety that were not readily available to them in other contexts.

4.4. Synthesis

It is important not to treat the laity of late antique and Merovingian Gaul as a homogeneous group. While Christian building patronage was something in which all sections of lay society appear to have participated, it is clear that the extent and the nature of their engagement, as well as its underlying motivations, varied across the social spectrum, and between male and female patrons. Our ability to establish a comprehensive picture, however, is hindered by a number of problems with the extant evidence, including its uneven coverage across time and place, and general focus on ecclesiastical benefactors. This in turn makes it difficult to draw general conclusions about the practice. One obvious point to make, however, is that the existence of a significantly broader donor pool marks a key departure from the funding model that had underpinned the building patronage of the classical world. In a Christian context, building projects were often collective and overseen by local bishops, who coordinated donations for this purpose from a cross-section of the community. In addition to these modest contributions, greater financial support was provided by those further up Gaul's social hierarchy. But often such individuals had to settle for their actions being co-opted and overshadowed by bishops engaged in their own manoeuvring for local authority.

The expanded audience for building patronage of a Christian character in late antiquity perhaps helps to explain why civic patrons were willing to share acclaim with the local bishop. Through their involvement, the laity were able to demonstrate their faith, and seek the support of heavenly intercessors available to all those who deposited 'treasure in heaven', regardless of their means. This spiritual dimension was a common feature of all acts of Christian building, and the pursuit of returns in both this world and the next is another important distinction from classical civic munificence. Nevertheless, the way the practice was mobilised by the lay elites of late antique and Merovingian Gaul as a vehicle for self-legitimation certainly echoed the behaviour of the urban patrons of the early empire, who, in their competition for local status and influence, financed the monuments and buildings characteristic of the Roman city. The closest successors to this group in late antiquity were those secular magnates with sufficient private resources to finance church-building on their own initiative. Although complete independence from the local bishop was not possible when it came to the ecclesiastical matters of

consecration and staffing, these individuals had more flexibility in deciding how to deploy their resources in the city to best advantage.

Choices about whether to finance a cathedral, church, or a monastery, and the apparent reluctance to underwrite institutions of charity, give us an indication of the values, motives, and assumptions of lay donors at various points in time. In the initial aftermath of the conversion of Constantine, for example, there appears to have been a general unwillingness among secular elites to patronise Christian buildings in the cities of Gaul. In addition to the growing burden of local office during this period, the expansion of the imperial centre had largely undermined the attractiveness of public display in the civic arena. However, those that did see some value in supporting the building efforts of their local bishops – often through the provision of prime real estate in urban centres – would have been vital in helping to establish early episcopal groups in the fourth and fifth centuries. Lay interest in the cathedrals of Gaul appears to wane soon afterwards, but this may well be a reflection of our surviving literary sources and their focus on bishops in such contexts. It is not hard to imagine that the rebuilds and upgrades of subsequent decades did in fact necessitate a degree of financial support from the laity that went beyond the usual oblations and bequests. Indeed, the availability of willing patrons to support the bishop in this regard presumably determined the ambition and success of these projects.

In light of the evolving socio-political context, however, it is also worth considering whether those Christian benefactors who could afford it would have been more interested in alternative building projects that may have provided them with an opportunity to claim a greater share of credit for their munificence. The dissolution of the transregional structures of empire saw meaningful power return to the cities for the first time since the second century, and elites were left scrambling to insinuate themselves back into their local arenas. Recognising the latent potential in the forms of Christian building patronage that had been gently bubbling away there, the aristocracy sought to exploit the practice as a means for justifying their social standing and laying claim to authority – and office – within the new ecclesiastical structures of power. From the late fifth century, these efforts were increasingly focussed on the cult of saints, where there was likely more scope for autonomy on the part of donors, and consequently greater social and spiritual capital to be acquired through the provision of spaces

where the community could share in the holy power of the *loca sanctorum* made accessible by these acts of building. These processes seemingly peaked in the second half of the sixth century, after which the declining spend on the cult of saints is paralleled by a growing interest in monasticism, which suggests another shift in how the lay elites of Gaul conceived their self-legitimation and salvation.

Monastic patronage was moulded by secular magnates into a vehicle that fulfilled many of the functions of church-building, but was perhaps better adapted to aristocratic needs of safeguarding family interests. To a large extent this should be seen within the context of the ruralisation of elite comportment in the later Merovingian kingdoms. Access to power generally transcended the level of the *civitas* during this period, with the opportunities at court superseding the status and authority on offer to lay magnates in the cities. Their need for public display in urban environments was therefore less pressing, and the upper echelons of Frankish society duly chose to pursue their faith increasingly on their rural estates, where they could exercise greater control over their resource base and access to sanctity by means of family foundations beyond the reach of the bishop. This did not mean, however, that investment in the cities completely dried up. Churches were still erected by lay elites celebrating the cult of saints for all the same reasons as before, and monasticism also provided patrons with new avenues for demonstrating piety and status in an urban context. In the latter case, the practice seemingly proved particularly popular among women, who took advantage of the opportunities it afforded for the conversion of their wealth and piety into institutionalised status and authority, and a greater degree of independence than was otherwise available to them in society.

5. Imperial and royal patrons

The final group to be considered in this study of the documented Christian building patronage in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul is that specific subset of the laity who were both especially powerful and immensely rich: the Roman and 'barbarian' rulers. One of the defining features of this period is the transition from imperial power to a series of new polities overseen by monarchs who had recently arrived from across the Rhine. The Tetrarchic reforms implemented from the late third century saw the Rhineland *civitas* of Trier elevated to the rank of imperial capital, as a result of which it benefitted enormously from the largesse of itinerant emperors who periodically resided in the city. Growing political uncertainty, however, triggered in part by the breakdown of the Rhine frontier after 406, accelerated the retreat of the imperial presence from Gaul over the course of the fifth century. Although neither group was among the initial invaders, the Visigoths were settled in Aquitaine in 418 and the Burgundians in Savoy in 443, and their royal courts soon provided an alternative focus for ambitious Gallic elites looking to preserve their interests.[1] As the structures of empire began to disintegrate, Rome's erstwhile federate allies set about expanding their territory, and successor states that combined 'barbarian' military prowess with Gallo-Roman administrative nous emerged.[2] During the early sixth century, however, both the Visigothic and Burgundian kingdoms in Gaul were in turn overrun by the Merovingian Franks, who then also took advantage of Justinian's reconquest of the Italian peninsula to acquire territory formerly held by the Ostrogoths in Provence, and thus claim dominion over nearly the whole of Gaul (excluding Visigothic Septimania) for the next two hundred years.

Much has been written about the nature of kingship in this period, and, in particular, the strategies for legitimation employed by the post-imperial rulers who had inherited the provinces of the western empire from Rome. It is often argued, for example, that the practice of early medieval monarchy was heavily

[1] R. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin, 1993), pp. 67-86.
[2] See, for example, P. Heather, 'The Emergence of the Visigothic Kingdom', in H. Elton and J. Drinkwater, *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 84-94.

reliant on imperial models,[3] as exemplified in particular by the regime of Theoderic the Ostrogoth in Italy.[4] Alongside the formulation of legal codes, which are generally considered to have been a useful tool for 'barbarian' kings looking to convey the order, consensus, and rationality of Roman administration,[5] Christianity – even allowing for initial doctrinal differences – is also held up as a vehicle through which new rulers replicated imperial ideologies of culture and governance within their kingdoms.[6] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill famously considered the Frankish kings to have been the masters and patrons of the church,[7] and Yitzhak Hen has argued that Christian themes dominated notions of kingship in the Merovingian era, as rulers increasingly conceived their responsibilities and self-representation in religious terms.[8]

As Edward James has noted, however, the centuries of cultural mixing that preceded the ultimate dissolution of the western empire makes it far from straightforward to determine where 'Roman' elements ended and 'barbarian' ones began when it came to ritualised notions of rulership.[9] Attempts to characterise 'barbarian' kingship, moreover, are complicated by the lack of sources not shaped by Roman or Christian viewpoints, since much of the extant evidence simply projects the prejudices of its authors onto the institution. The writings of Gregory of Tours, for example, place kingship squarely within a Christian framework, holding secular rulers to the standards of episcopal leadership.[10] This has implications for our study because the balance of our sources can sometimes give the impression that church-building was an essential feature of royal comportment, when in reality it is unclear how

[3] P. Wormald, 'Kings and Kingship', in P. Fouracre (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 571-604.
[4] See J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge, 2014); P. Heather, 'Theoderic, King of the Goths', *Early Medieval Europe* 4.2 (1995), pp. 145-73.
[5] P. Heather, 'State, Lordship and Community in the West (c. A.D. 400-600)', in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. XIV* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 450-2; P. Wormald, '*Lex scripta* and *verbum regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship from Euric to Cnut', in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp. 105-38.
[6] Heather, 'State, Lordship and Community', pp. 447-9.
[7] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 42-3.
[8] Y. Hen, 'The Christianisation of Kingship', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 163-77; Y. Hen, 'The Uses of the Bible and the Perception of Kingship in Merovingian Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.3 (1998), pp. 277-89. See also M. de Jong, 'Ecclesia and the Frankish Polity', in W. Pohl, S. Airlie, and H. Reimitz (eds), *Staat im frühen Mittelalter, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2006), pp. 113-32.
[9] E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), p. 163. See also *idem*, *Europe's Barbarians AD 200-600* (London, 2009).
[10] See Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.20, 21, with M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 51-75.

important acts of Christian building patronage really were to rulers,[11] not least because of the myriad other means they had at their disposal for reinforcing their exceptional standing in society.

The benefits of political consensus and stability meant that it was in the best interests of the Gallic elites to have a recognised system of monarchy, and so the fundamental legitimacy of the Merovingian family as a ruling house was not seriously challenged until the middle of the eighth century.[12] Instead, prospective sovereigns presented themselves within this family framework.[13] Even so, this was not always straightforward,[14] and Ian Wood has argued that the Merovingian family was as much a political construct as a biological one.[15] Strategies of legitimation were therefore useful in buttressing a king's position in the eyes of his followers, and, having ascended to the thrones of the Frankish kingdoms, monarchs looked to exploit the carefully cultivated charisma that served as an essential feature of Merovingian kingship. While this seems to have encompassed their famous long hair,[16] and perhaps to a lesser extent their mythical origins,[17] we should nevertheless be careful when it comes to the contentious question of 'sacral kingship'.[18] Fredegar's account of how the Merovingians were descended from a sea monster has sometimes been held up as evidence of a belief among contemporaries that kings were of a divine or supernatural disposition,[19] and that this in turn helps to explain the Merovingians' lasting grip on royal power.[20] The existence of any such convictions prior

[11] B. Boissavit-Camus, 'Des rois bâtisseurs d'église: l'investissement royal en Gaule du Ve au VIIe siècle', in S. Destephen, B. Dumézil, and H. Inglebert (eds), *Le prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IVe-VIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 2018), pp. 517-43.
[12] In general, see P. Fouracre, 'The Incidence of Rebellion in the Early Medieval West', in K. Cooper and C. Leyser (eds), *Making Early Medieval Societies* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 104-24.
[13] See, for example, Gregory, *Hist.*, VI.24.
[14] See E.T. Dailey, 'Gregory of Tours and the Paternity of Chlothar II: Strategies of Legitimation in the Merovingian Kingdoms', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7.1 (2014), pp. 3-27.
[15] I.N. Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian Family', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger, and H. Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), p. 171.
[16] A. Cameron, 'How Did the Merovingian Kings Wear their Hair?', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 43.4 (1965), pp. 1203-16; M. Diesenberger, 'Hair, Sacrality and Symbolic Capital in the Frankish Kingdoms', in Corradini *et al., The Construction of Communities,* pp. 173-212; E. Goosmann, 'The Long-Haired Kings of the Franks: 'Like So Many Samsons?'', *Early Medieval Europe* 20 (2012), pp. 233-59.
[17] J. Barlow, 'Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), pp. 86-95.
[18] On the debate, see Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian Family'; A.C. Murray, '*Post vocantur Merohingii*: Fredegar, Merovech, and 'Sacral Kingship'', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays Presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 121-52.
[19] Fredegar, *Chronicae*, III. 9, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1-193.
[20] D.H. Miller, 'Sacral Kingship, Biblical Kingship, and the Elevation of Pippin the Short', in T.F.X. Noble and J.J. Contreni (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1987) pp. 137-9; R. Le Jan, 'La sacralité de la royauté mérovingienne', *Annales* 58 (2003), pp. 1217-41.

to the sixth century is far from certain, however, and it seems more likely that in this period Frankish kings, like their counterparts in other successor states, sought primarily to project a worldly magnetism, fostered through military reputations built around successful conquest and regular gift-giving to reward followers for their loyalty. Over time, however, the ideology of martial kingship evolved to the extent that Merovingian kings were no longer required to fight in battle themselves, but instead were able simply to surround themselves with military imagery and symbolism through acts such as hunting and feasting, which helped to make the increasing prevalence of minority rule viable.[21]

It is against this background that this chapter will seek to determine to what extent acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul were also strategies for maintaining royal authority, and how far the practice was employed by members of the post-imperial ruling families who were looking for a means to reify their piety. It will also examine how far kings can be thought to have been replicating imperial traditions in this regard – and indeed to what extent Roman emperors resident in Gaul had in fact demonstrated their largesse in this way in the religious sphere – or whether they were in fact primarily following patterns of self-display set by the lay and clerical elites of their kingdoms. It is important to remember, however, that royal families were more than just the kings; in what follows the participation of queens, princes, and princesses in building patronage will also be investigated in order to ascertain how underwriting church-building may have fulfilled their particular needs.

Ultimately, it will be argued that, aside for one or two prominent royal donors, the example of Christian building patronage initially set by the imperial household at Trier in the early fourth century was not followed up in the cities to any great extent by the ruling 'barbarian' families who succeeded them. Across the period, such activity was most prevalent in the course of the sixth century, in the wider context of the renewal of the political and symbolic significance of the *civitas*-system in the post-imperial kingdoms. Unlike the imperial model of a benevolent emperor acting alone, however, it will become apparent that much royal building patronage was undertaken in close cooperation with local bishops who could prove useful allies on the ground in cities at some remove from the royal court.

[21] See now E.J. Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2020), pp. 44-69.

When it came to choosing how to deploy such royal resources, we will see that the distinction between the cult of saints and monasticism that has been drawn in this study for heuristic purposes (but equally acknowledged to be somewhat artificial at times) did not really exist in the minds of rulers, as becomes especially apparent in the course of the seventh century during the increasing 'monasticisation' of funerary basilicas. Finally, it will be shown that the progressive ruralisation of pious display by royals during the later Merovingian period is anticipated by the targeting of Christian largesse to projects in *civitas*-capitals that on a number of occasions were located at some distance from urban centres.

5.1. Episcopal groups

The picture of the patronage of episcopal groups established thus far has put bishops firmly at its centre. Prelates exploited the resources of their sees and any private wealth they might possess in order to fulfil their building ambitions, and also looked to mobilise additional funding from a supporting cast of lay backers, coordinating these revenue streams in the manner of an impresario. Determining the extent of this outside sponsorship, however, is complicated by a literary record that almost invariably celebrates the bishop at the expense of any other donors who may have contributed to a cathedral rebuild or upgrade. We need to bear this in mind when attempting to establish the specific role the ruling authorities of Gaul may have played in providing such support, and to what extent their behaviour mirrored that of lay magnates. In contrast to much of the episcopate and laity, however, the remit of the rulers of Gaul evidently extended beyond the cities in which they resided to incorporate whole provinces or kingdoms, and this wider geographical focus of their civic investment also requires consideration. Ultimately, it will be shown that the evidence for imperial and royal involvement in episcopal groups is rather meagre, and that the enthusiasm for such projects initially displayed by the Constantinian household was seemingly not replicated by the 'barbarian' rulers of the successor kingdoms. Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid the fact that the priorities of our sources may simply leave us in ignorance of much of the routine support provided by imperial or royal sponsors.

Roman Trier

In total, only six acts of episcopal group patronage involving the Roman and 'barbarian' rulers of Gaul between c. 300 and 751 can be identified with any degree of confidence (fig. 16).[22] On two of these occasions a royal patron is explicitly attested, while the other four concern the sometime imperial capital of Trier, the location of one of the most substantial Christian building projects of our period, notable not least for its early dating. As the capital of the province of Belgica, Trier had already been an important centre in the Roman empire on account of its strategic location on the Moselle and near to

[22] Trier 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a; Paris 1a; Mainz 2a.

the Rhine, which ensured that it played an important role in the military economy of the frontier.[23] The Tetrarchic reforms implemented from the late third century elevated the city further. In addition to becoming the seat of the Gallic prefecture, Trier was now a major residence for itinerant emperors who took a direct interest in the *limes* of their empire.[24] A building programme commensurate with the city's enhanced status, sponsored by the Constantinian household, accompanied these developments, and the growth of Trier's episcopal group in the course of the early fourth century has generally been understood within this context as another facet of this burst of imperial patronage.[25] Indeed, the cathedral complex's ambitious quadripartite layout and privileged urban location was surely only made possible by the involvement and generosity of resident emperors. However, although several campaigns of excavations have taken place in the last thirty years, a detailed understanding of the chronological and architectural development of this complex remains somewhat elusive.[26]

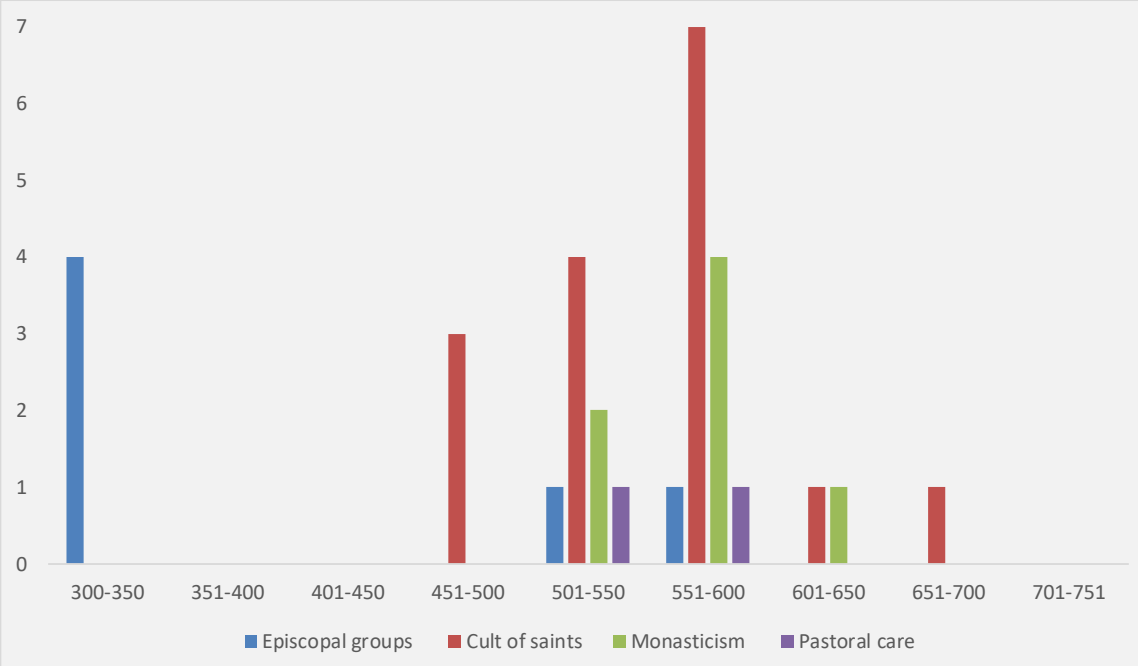


Fig. 16. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751 involving an imperial or royal patron.

As was generally the case with Gaul's cathedral complexes, the episcopal group at Trier was built in several stages. The construction of a basilica (27.5m x 24.6m) with three aisles, in what had been a

[23] E.M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (London, 1970), pp. 71-97.
[24] S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200–500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 204.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 201-9.
[26] H. Merten, *Die Trierer Domgrabung* (5 vols, Trier, 2001-).

residential zone near the site of Trier's current cathedral, has been dated by coin finds to between 316 and 320, around the time when Agricius is attested as bishop (…314…).[27] While there is no explicit confirmation of the Christian function of this building, it seems highly likely in light of its date, layout, and location, and the subsequent development of the area.[28] It was generally assumed that soon afterwards this basilica was joined by another to the north, forming the not uncommon 'double cathedral' configuration still reflected in the layout of the site today.[29] More recent work, however, has suggested that as many as three additional basilicas, two to the north and one to the east, were added to this initial construction during a second phase of development under Bishop Maximinus, at some date between 330 and 340 (fig. 17).[30] These four churches surrounded a substantial square-plan baptistery (8m x 8m), which was seemingly established around the same time,[31] such that by the middle of the fourth century the site cumulatively encompassed an area of nearly 10,000 m². The religious vocation of the ensemble is confirmed at this stage by the presence of graffiti of clearly Christian character discovered between the nave and chancel of the south-eastern basilica.[32] Before the end of the fourth century, the north-eastern basilica was remodelled to create a square space that still largely exists today, which enclosed a raised podium and a possible *memoria* or mausoleum.[33]

[27] Trier 1a. W. Weber, 'Neue Forschungen zur Trierer Domgrabung: Die archäologischen Ausgrabungen im Garten der Kurie von der Leyen', in S. Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums im Rheinland* (Münster, 2004), pp. 225-7.
[28] A civil function cannot be entirely excluded: S. Ristow, *Frühes Christentum im Rheinland: Die Zeugnisse der archäologischen und historischen Quellen an Rhein, Maas und Mosel* (Cologne, 2007), p. 196.
[29] *TCCG* I, pp. 21-5.
[30] Trier 1b, 2a, 2b; Dated by the numismatic evidence: Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 229. *PCBE* 4, Maximinvs 1, pp. 1291-2.
[31] Trier 3a. Cf. Ristow, *Frühes Christentum im Rheinland,* p. 197, 202-3.
[32] A. Binsfeld, *Die Trierer Domgrabung,* 5: *Vivas in Deo: Die Graffiti der Frühchristlichen Kirchenanlage in Trier* (Trier, 2006).
[33] Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 230. For the dating: Ristow, *Frühes Christentum im Rheinland*, p. 199; Athanasius of Alexandria claims to have witnessed the first phase of this remodelling: *Apologia ad Constantium*, 15, ed. and trans., P. Schaff, H. Wace, M. Atkinson and A. Robertson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II Vol. 4 (Buffalo, NY, 1892), pp. 659-99.

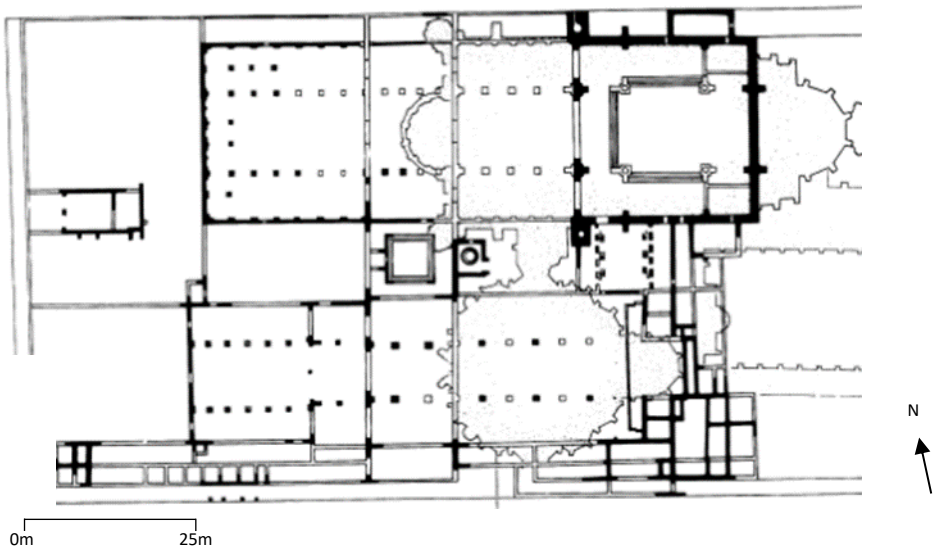


Fig. 17. Plan of excavations showing the episcopal group of Trier in the middle of the fourth century (adapted from Weber, 2004, p. 232).

In assigning responsibility for the expansion of the episcopal group on a scale well beyond that of the relatively modest first basilica, it is hard to look past the Constantinian household. Firstly, the magnitude of the complex and its elaborate decoration indicates a patron, or patrons, with serious financial muscle and the ability to procure the necessary resources. The interior of the episcopal group, was embellished with lavish marble and mosaic decoration, uncovered during excavations in the nineteenth century.[34] In addition to its size and refinement, the location of the episcopal group also suggests the involvement of the Constantinian household in some capacity. The siting of the south-eastern basilica over the former *cardo* was an intervention in the topography of an imperial city that can surely only have been possible with the express approval of Trier's most eminent residents.[35] Indeed, the cathedral complex as a whole was situated at the northern end of Trier's complex of imperial buildings, and there is even a tradition that the empress Helena donated her own residence in order to facilitate its development.[36] While Helena's supposed involvement in the project is spurious,[37] the

[34] Rheinisches Landmuseum Trier, *Trier, Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz: die Stadt in spätantiker undfrühchristlicher Zeit* (Mainz, 1984), no. 62, pp. 163-4.
[35] C. Witschel, 'Trier und das spätantike Städtewesen im Westen des römischen Reiches', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 67.8 (2004-5), p. 265.
[36] Altmann of Hautvillers, *Vitae Helenae*, 9, ed. *AA SS* Aug. III (1867). On Helena's influence on subsequent patronage acts, see L. Brubaker, 'Memories of Helena: Patterns in Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', in L. James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 52-75.
[37] *TCCG* I, p. 24.

famous Trier ceiling painting discovered here during the post-war excavations of Theodor Kempf, with its possible portrayal of several women from the Constantinian household, suggests that elements of the city's palace complex may well have been reconfigured in order to accommodate the expansion of Trier's Christian centre.[38] Finally, in this case it is also reasonable to infer imperial involvement from the wider historical and religious context. Trier was a self-conscious centre of empire in this period, and so following the adoption of Christianity as the new imperial cult and the call for bishops to build churches with the support of the Roman state,[39] it would only be natural for the city to have benefitted in this way from its privileged imperial status.[40] Financing a prominent and imposing cathedral complex in Trier's palace quarter thus provided the rulers of Gaul with a concrete assertion of their new identity and authority, and appropriately reflected the city's status within both secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

'Barbarian' capitals: No new Triers

The patronage of Christian building projects at the heart of urban landscapes provided imperial households with new vehicles for self-representation, particularly in the cities in which they resided, where their standing and authority had long been asserted through acts of monumental symbolism. The dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West precipitated a number of profound socio-political changes, but, as previously discussed, the *civitas*-network of Gaul retained its significance during this transformation, and in some respects the role of the cities was even enhanced, as they became the building blocks of the new successor states. The ruling 'barbarian' royal families generally established themselves in a particular *sedes regiae,* and, as under the empire, the presence of a court imbued those urban centres with a special status. But while their imperial predecessors had endowed Trier with an episcopal group befitting their presence, there is limited evidence to suggest that the new rulers of Gaul

[38] T. Kempf, 'Die Konstantinischen Deckenmalereien aus dem Trierer Dom', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 7 (1977), pp. 153-5. For an alternative interpretation of the ceiling, see M.E. Rose, 'The Trier Ceiling: Power and Status on Display in Late Antiquity', *Greece and Rome* 53.1 (2006), pp. 92-109.
[39] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine,* II.46, trans. A. Cameron and S.G. Hall (Oxford, 1999).
[40] L. Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London, 2016), pp. 91-5.

financed the development of the Christian core of their own favoured cities to any similar degree. This contrasts with Italy, for example, where the extensive building programme of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic probably included the sponsorship of an Arian cathedral complex at his capital of Ravenna.[41] Indeed, Theoderic seems to have made a particularly conscious effort to imitate the cultural mores of the emperors, and reproduce ideologies of rule familiar to the local population.[42]

Potential Gallic parallels to Theoderic's actions were postulated in chapter three, which highlighted the possible involvement of the Burgundian royal household in developing the episcopal group of Geneva.[43] Theoderic himself might have been involved in the erection of the enormous cathedral that appears to have been established at Arles around the time of Bishop Caesarius.[44] The king focussed much of his construction energies on his capital at Ravenna, but his interest in projecting an image of renewal in Provence, and particularly in Arles after his takeover of the region in 508, is evident in the sources.[45] It is not hard to imagine that the *solidi* apparently showered on Caesarius by Theoderic and his notables may have helped facilitate the bishop's building projects.[46] At neither Geneva nor Arles, however, can any provision of direct financial support for episcopal groups from the royal *fiscus* be confirmed. Similarly, at Toulouse, the favoured residence of the fifth-century Visigothic kings, the discovery of golden mosaic *tesserae* in the vicinity of the current cathedral suggests that its late antique precursor might likewise have benefited from the support of particularly wealthy patrons,[47] but any involvement of the Visigothic royal family in the building of its late antique episcopal group is again entirely hypothetical.[48] As for the favoured cities of the Merovingians, the sources mention only episcopal

[41] I.N. Wood, 'Theoderic's Monuments in Ravenna', in S. Barnish and F. Marazzi (eds), *The Ostrogoths from the Migration Period to the Sixth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 251-2; cf. B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), p. 241.
[42] C. La Rocca, *'Mores tuos fabricae loquuntur*: Building Activity and the Rhetoric of Power in Ostrogothic Italy', *The Haskins Society Journal* 26 (2014), pp. 1-30; M.J. Johnson, 'Toward a History of Theoderic's Building Program', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988), pp. 73-96; Arnold, *Theoderic*, pp. 175-229.
[43] C. Bonnet and J.-F. Reynaud, 'Genève et Lyon, capitales burgondes', in G. Ripoll and J.M. Gurt (eds), *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)* (Barcelona, 2000), pp. 245-56.
[44] See pp. 69-70.
[45] Arnold, *Theoderic*, pp. 262-94.
[46] *Vita Caesarii*, I. 36-37, 43. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 124-7.
[47] Q. Cazes, *Le quartier canonial de la cathédrale Saint-Etienne de Toulouse* (Carcasonne, 1998), pp. 20-3; *idem*, 'Le groupe épiscopal', in J.-M. Pailler (ed.), *Tolosa. Nouvelles recherches sur Toulouse et son territoire dans l'Antiquité* (Rome, 2002), pp. 480-2.
[48] The enigmatic Notre-Dame de la Daurade has been proposed as a possible alternative Arian cathedral: F. Reiss, *Narbonne and Its Territory in Late Antiquity. From the Visigoths to the Arabs* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 121-

patrons in connection with the early cathedrals of Orléans and Reims,[49] while next to nothing is known about the sponsorship of episcopal groups at Soissons and Metz in this period.[50] In Paris, however, we do learn that Childebert I (511-558), who, as we will see in the course of this chapter, was arguably the most prolific Merovingian practitioner of Christian building patronage, was involved in the development of the city's episcopal group in the sixth century.[51]

Paris was the seat of Clovis' kingdom before it passed to his son Childebert in 511,[52] and the attempts of later generations of Frankish monarchs to prevent any one king claiming it for themselves are suggestive of the ideological importance assumed by the city.[53] A number of churches were consequently financed in Paris by sovereigns looking to establish their authority within the Merovingian polity, but only Childebert is recorded to have taken an interest in the city's episcopal group. In a poem celebrating the extension or embellishment of the cathedral, Venantius Fortunatus characterises the king as a pre-eminent glory, and even a model for the episcopate.[54] The poet describes the church's nave raised up on columns of marble, windows that allowed light to pour in, and a panelled ceiling, noting that in return for bestowing these gifts on his people, 'pious king Childebert' achieved eternal life in heaven and eternal fame on earth.[55] It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that, with such rewards on offer, further evidence for 'barbarian' royal families patronising the episcopal groups of their capitals is in such short supply, particularly in light of the apparent enthusiasm displayed by both their imperial predecessors and contemporary rulers outside Gaul.

2; cf. J. Guyon, 'Toulouse. La premiere capitale du Royaume Wisigoth', in Ripoll and Gurt (eds), *Sedes Regiae,* pp. 236-8.

[49] Orléans 1a, 1b; Reims 1a.

[50] On the episcopal group of Metz, see P. Piva, 'Metz: un gruppo episcopale alla svolta dei tempi (secoli IV-IX)', *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2001), pp. 237-64.

[51] Paris 1a. The remains under the parvis of the present-day cathedral have only been dated between the late fourth century and the twelfth century, but they suggest an imposing church measuring around 65m x 36m: D. Busson, *Paris (Carte archéologique de la Gaule 75)* (Paris, 1998), pp. 465-71; *TCCG* VIII, p. 110-11.

[52] A. Dierkins and P. Perin, 'Les *sedes regiae* mérovingiennes entre Seine et Rhin,' in Ripoll and Gurt (eds), *Sedes Regiae*, pp. 270-7.

[53] Gregory, *Hist.*, VI.27.

[54] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.10.23-24: *unica pontificum gloria norma fuit*, ed. and tr. M. Roberts, *Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 2017).

[55] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.10.13-18, 25: *Splendida marmoreis attollitur aula columnis… prima capit radios vitreis oculata fenestris… cursibus Aurorae vaga lux laquearia complet atque suis radiis et sine sole micat. Haec pius rex Childeberthus amore dona suo populo non moritura dedit… Hinc abiens illic meritorum vivit honore; hic quoque gestorum laude perennis erit.*

Levelling up?

Outside their principal cities of residence, meanwhile, evidence for the patronage of episcopal groups by members of royal families is even more limited. The only attested example comes from Mainz, where the city's baptistery was built by Bishop Sidonius (…565…) with financial support from Berthoara, the daughter of the Austrasian king Theudebert I (533-548).[56] As with their lay counterparts, funding Christian buildings provided royal women with a rare opportunity to distinguish themselves through public professions of their faith and status, and, to this end, a number of them worked with Gallic bishops to leave their mark on the civic landscapes of Gaul.[57] Like her uncle, Childebert I, Berthoara employed the skills of Fortunatus to celebrate her actions, and, in typically fulsome fashion, the poet emphasized the sanctity of his subject, who was apparently a prolific patron of churches, generous to the poor, and someone who could expect to enjoy eternal rewards following the conversion of her wealth into everlasting spiritual capital.[58]

Another more circumstantial indication of potential royal sponsorship derives from Nevers, which only became the seat of a bishop around the end of the fifth century, but may have benefitted from the building patronage of the Gibichungs.[59] The cathedral of Nevers is not textually attested until 817,[60] but a survey in 1990 revealed masonry under the current church dated to the late fifth or early sixth century, and contemporary with the city's probable first baptistery, which had been fortuitously discovered some fifty years earlier.[61] Cumulatively, these finds are suggestive of a late antique episcopal group.[62] Additions to Gaul's existing episcopal network were rare, but the creation of a see

[56] Mainz 2a.
[57] See also, Autun 6a, 7a, 13a; Poitiers 5a.
[58] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.11.9-14: *Seminat unde metat fruges, spargendo recondens; terrensis opibus non moritura parat.*
[59] Nevers 1a, 2a. The first historically-attested bishop of Nevers is Tauricianus (…517…), who appears at the Council of Epaone in 517, see *PCBE* 4, Tavricianvs, pp. 1857-8.
[60] Donation of 13 October 817, ed. R. de Lespinasse, *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyr de Nevers* (Nevers and Paris, 1916), n. 28, pp. 58-9.
[61] C. Bonnet, B. Oudet, J.-C. Picard and C. Sapin (eds), *La cathédrale de Nevers: du baptistère paléochrétien au chevet roman* (Paris, 1995).
[62] *TCCG* VIII, p. 146.

at Nevers should probably be understood in its geopolitical context.[63] In 486, the Merovingian king Clovis had extended his authority as far as Auxerre, which lay 100 kilometres to the north of Nevers and until that point had been responsible for administering the town as the region's *civitas*-capital. Nevers remained part of the Burgundian kingdom, however, and consequently seems to have become a city in its own right. During the transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule, cities functioned as the building-blocks of kingdoms,[64] and urban identity in this period was increasingly characterised by the presence of a prelate and the central core of Christian buildings from which he operated.[65] Elevating Nevers to the status of a bishopric, therefore, and equipping it with an episcopal group, may well have been part of Burgundian efforts to assert their authority in the region in the face of Clovis' expansionist Franks. A comparable development might also be seen in 567, when the Merovingian king Sigibert inherited only part of the *civitas* of Chartres following the death of his brother Charibert. The *urbs* itself had fallen to Guntram, and seemingly in an attempt to consolidate his share of the city-territory, Sigibert controversially created a see at Châteaudun and installed a bishop there.[66] But while Nevers has retained its bishop to the present day, Châteaudun promptly reverted to its previous status as a parish of Chartres soon after Sigibert's death. Although an act of building patronage involving sovereigns is certainly plausible in Nevers and perhaps Châteaudun, there is no direct evidence for the royal sponsorship of cathedrals or baptisteries in either city.

Conclusion

Overall, evidence for the rulers of Gaul providing financial support for the development of episcopal groups is extremely scarce. Only a handful of examples are explicitly attested or can be inferred with

[63] On new sees, including Nevers, see R. Kaiser, 'Bistumsgründungen im Merowingerreich im 6. Jahrhundert', in R. Schieffer (ed.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Regnum Francorum. Referate beim Wissenschaftlichen Colloquium zum 75. Geburtstag von Eugen Ewig am 28. Mai 1988* (Sigmaringen, 1990), pp. 9-35.
[64] S.T. Loseby, 'Gregory's Cities: Urban Functions in Sixth-Century Gaul', in I.N. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period. An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 239-70.
[65] P. Février, '*Vetera et nova*: le poids du passé, les germes de l'avenir, IIIe-VIe siècle', in G. Duby (ed.), *Histoire de la France urbaine, I: La ville antique des origines au IXe siècle* (Paris, 1980), pp. 393-493.
[66] Gregory, *Hist.*, VII.17, with G.I. Halfond, 'Negotiating Episcopal Support in the Merovingian Kingdom of Reims (AD 561–75)', *Early Medieval Europe* 22.1 (2014), p. 17.

any degree of confidence, and the exceptional imperial sponsorship of the cathedral complex at Trier, which derived from its importance as a centre of the newly-Christian empire, does not seem to have served as a model for the royal families of Gaul's successor-states. Childebert I is the best illustration of a Gallic ruler who did pursue these imperial models of patronage. His investment in the episcopal group of Paris, the ideological capital of the sixth-century Frankish kingdoms, is consistent with his general enthusiasm for sponsoring Christian buildings, but similar interventions by other royal households in the most important cities of their kingdoms cannot be confirmed. Elsewhere, the provision of financial support to bishops developing the Christian cores of their cities may have reflected the political concerns of leaders to affirm their presence across their territories, but, again, the available evidence is negligible. Indeed, it is perhaps surprising that a figure like Chilperic, whose well-known pretensions to *imitatio imperii* included building circuses in Paris and Soissons,[67] apparently chose not to extend his enthusiasm for models of imperial patronage to the episcopal groups of his capitals.

One possible explanation is that the evidence for such sponsorship has not survived, and we simply lack an adequate source-base to evaluate fully the nature and extent of royal investment in cathedral complexes. The written record, for example, often references what appears to have been routine financial support provided by the post-imperial rulers to the church, but specific examples of sponsorship for building projects are lacking. As we have just seen, this was especially the case for episcopal groups, perhaps because authors liked to tie cathedrals to bishops, rather than other notional patrons. It is possible, however, that the rulers of Gaul's successor kingdoms may have largely preferred to channel their resources to other Christian building projects, whether in the cities or the countryside. In this regard, they were perhaps not unlike their lay counterparts, who, as argued in the previous chapter, appear increasingly over time to have favoured alternative opportunities for displays of piety and status. In order to investigate this hypothesis, the contribution of the imperial and royal households

[67] Gregory, *Hist.*, V.17, 44; S.T. Loseby, 'Gregory of Tours, Italy, and the Empire', in A. C. Murray (ed.), *A Companion to Gregory of Tours* (Boston, 2015), pp. 483-5.

to the transformation of the Gallic suburbs through the veneration of their preferred saints' cults will be considered next.

5.2. The cult of saints

The cult of saints emerged into the mainstream of Gallic society in the course of the fifth century, just as the region's imperial presence went into retreat in the face of increasing instability and growing numbers of new arrivals from beyond the imperial frontiers. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that we have no evidence for imperial funding for the veneration of the saints in Gaul's cities, and that documented state backing for such projects begins only with 'barbarian' rulers. In Raymond Van Dam's study of the late antique saints of Gaul, which draws heavily on the work of Gregory of Tours, he focussed in particular on the royal sponsorship of cults in relation to Saint Martin.[68] Van Dam argued that the Frankish sovereigns were intimidated by Martin, and it was for this reason that they not only kept their distance from his city, but even developed a 'buffer' of their own saints, through whom they could mediate their relationship with God. It has been noted, however, that such an interpretation is too reliant on the perspective of Gregory, and ignores the bishop's tendency to reinforce and propagate his own assumptions through his writings.[69] Another problem with Van Dam's chosen framework is that it is rather Merovingian-centric. While the territory held by the descendants of the semi-legendary Merovech did become broadly coterminous with late antique Gaul, this was by no means the case for the entirety of the period.

Our dependence on Gregory of Tours for understanding the Christian building patronage of many of the post-imperial rulers of Gaul is to some extent unavoidable. Nevertheless, we must strive to look at the behaviour of these monarchs, and their preferences for certain saints and cities, on their own terms, rather than through the prism of Martin and Tours created by Gregory. Indeed, as Van Dam himself was careful to argue, religious experience and tradition were very much products of local circumstance.[70] Meanwhile, in addition to the evidence we have for the veneration by Frankish rulers of their preferred cults, this section will also need to examine the building patronage financed by the

[68] R. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 13-28.
[69] See S.T. Loseby, 'Review: *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* by W. E. Klingshirn; *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* by Raymond Van Dam', *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), p. 337.
[70] Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, pp. 3-7.

royal families who presided over Gaul's other kingdoms. It will begin by considering the general support royals provided to the church, before establishing how acts of Christian building patronage in celebration of the saints fitted into such practices, and examining the distribution of such investment within kingdoms and across time. It also needs to be assessed whether and to what extent royals, like bishops, financed building projects as a means to establish cults devoted to their own family members, which is something we might expect if some form of 'sacral kingship' was a feature of post-imperial society in Gaul. But it should be acknowledged at the outset that, overall, the evidence for the rulers of the post-imperial kingdoms sponsoring church-building in honour of the cult of saints is once again surprisingly meagre. This is perhaps in part a product of our uneven source coverage, but, as will become clear over the course of this section, and especially the next, the apparently limited use of royal capital in this way may also reflect how, for royal patrons in particular, the veneration of the cult of saints became increasingly entwined over the period with support for monastic enterprises.

'Erat enim regnum cum iustitia regens, sacerdotes venerans, eclesias munerans'

The scarcity of direct testimony from the post-imperial rulers of Gaul means that we are reliant on the writings of contemporaries for assessing royal comportment in this period. The dominant picture of the Merovingian king Theudebert I (533-548) in the sources, for example, is of a shrewd and capable military leader, most visible in defeating Danish naval forces, subduing neighbouring kingdoms, and plundering distant lands.[71] But Gregory of Tours also notes that the king ruled his kingdom with justice, showing respect to the bishops and generosity to the churches.[72] Gregory's comments underline how, alongside martial expressions of authority, giving to the church was probably a routine element of royal comportment across this period. Theudebert, for example, once loaned money to Bishop Desideratus

[71] Gregory, *Hist.*, III.3, 7, 21, 23, 32. R. Collins, 'Theudebert I, "Rex Magnus Francorum"', in P. Wormald *et al.* (eds), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 7-33; A. Gillett, 'Telling Off Justinian: Theudebert I, the Epistolae Austrasicae, and Communication Strategies in Sixth-Century Merovingian–Byzantine Relations', *Early Medieval Europe* 27.2 (2019), pp. 161-94.
[72] Gregory, *Hist.*, III.25.

of Verdun (…535-549…), and subsequently refused the prelate's offer to pay him back,[73] while on another occasion the king returned all the taxes paid to the royal treasury by the churches of Clermont.[74]

Peter Brown has argued that such behaviour was driven by a desire to ensure the salvation of one's soul.[75] Brown's emphasis of salvific concerns, however, should not detract from the fact that royal donors probably hoped to see some temporal dividend for their acts of benefaction as well. This combination of both present and future thinking is perhaps best summed up by the infamous *Sopranos* character Paulie Gualtieri, a devout catholic and ruthless gangster. In the second-season episode *From Where to Eternity*, Paulie indignantly reveals to his priest that having paid his dues to the big boss on high through copious church donations, he felt that he was owed a degree of protection, and an eventual guarantee of 'immunity' for the various sins he had committed. The relationship that Paulie believed he had with God was probably not dissimilar to the attitudes held by the post-imperial rulers of Gaul, and helps us to understand why they used their resources to patronise the Gallic church.

In light of Theudebert's documented Christian munificence and his reputation as a generous king, the lack of evidence for him mobilising his resources to erect churches in his kingdom is perhaps surprising, but he is not alone among his royal peers in not visibly demonstrating his faith through building projects. Indeed, Brigitte Boissavit-Camus has noted that – famous exceptions aside – the Merovingian sovereigns do not appear in the sources as significant patrons of church building, but instead seem to have engaged in myriad forms of Christian activity, frequently in conjunction with their legislative and administrative duties.[76] It seems that much of the ecclesiastical patronage of the post-imperial rulers may have been of a general nature, therefore, characterised by the granting of privileges, or the donation of land and money to bishops to administer as they saw fit, rather than the direct funding of church-building. It is possible, however, that unless financial support was directed at a particularly well-documented building, such as the basilica of Saint Martin at Tours, the roof of which King Chlothar

[73] Gregory, *Hist.*, III.34.
[74] Gregory, *Hist.*, III.25.
[75] P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012).
[76] Boissavit-Camus, 'Des rois bâtisseurs d'église', pp. 517-8.

restored in c. 560,[77] royal sponsorship for specific projects may have gone unreported, or was instead framed in general terms.

But even when we do have more details of targeted patronage, this did not necessarily always involve urban or suburban church-building. The growing number of monastic intercessors charged with engaging in perpetual prayer on behalf of their king from the sixth century, for example, is a concrete indication of what royals wanted from their ecclesiastical spending, and the practice of *laus perennis* will be examined in more detail in the next section. Meanwhile, when it came to celebrating the cult of saints, if sovereigns were not willing to erect a new basilica themselves, they did still have the option of facilitating the building projects of others through the provision of land and property from the royal fisc,[78] or, as the *Vita Eligii* in particular attests, paying for lavish fixtures and fittings in important churches and cities.[79] Much like their aristocratic subjects, kings and queens could also venerate their favourite saints in domestic contexts by collecting relics for a palace oratory or chapel located within their palace complex, like the one Guntram apparently had at Chalon-sur-Saône.[80] We should not assume, therefore, that acts of church-building sponsored by royals in honour of particular saints were inevitable throughout the cities of Gaul. Indeed, notwithstanding the usual caveats about evidential deficiencies, most sovereigns appear not to have engaged in the practice at all. There are, however, a handful of interesting exceptions to this apparent indifference, which will be considered now.

Burgundian beginnings

The earliest evidence we have for acts of Christian building patronage being financed by Gaul's post-imperial rulers concerns the Burgundian kingdom of the late fifth century, when a number of queens glorified their cities of residence through acts of pious display in honour of their favoured spiritual intercessors. In Geneva, there is a tradition that the suburban basilica of Saint Victor, a soldier of the

[77] Tours 6c; Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.20; X.31.
[78] Bayeux 1a; Paris 5a.
[79] *Vita Eligii*, I.32, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 634-741.
[80] Chalon-sur-Saône 2a. See J. Barbier, 'Le sacré dans le palais franc', in M. Kaplan (ed.), *Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident* (Paris, 2001), pp. 25-41.

Theban legion martyred at Solothurn (in present-day Switzerland), was founded by a female member of the Burgundian royal family.[81] The sources disagree, however, as to whether this was Sedeleube, the sister of Clotild who may have fled to Geneva following the murder of their father Chilperic II,[82] or Queen Theodolinda, the wife of Godigisel who resided in the city with her husband.[83] Of course, it is possible that both women established independent institutions at Geneva. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the kingdom, Queen Caretena, wife of the Arian king Gundobad, is said by her epitaph to have built a church dedicated to Saint Michael in her husband's capital at Lyon.[84]

The late fifth-century building patronage of these sovereigns marks them out as innovators among their royal peers in Gaul, particularly in the way they are presented as having acted independently of their husbands, thereby highlighting the apparent indifference of kings towards the practice of Christian building patronage in the initial period of transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule.[85] In her epitaph, Caretena is depicted as her husband's religious conscience and counsel, which resonates with a tale from Gregory of Tours, who reports how the queen once encouraged Gundobad to return booty stolen from the basilica of Saint Julian in Brioude so as not to lose the martyr's grace.[86] This model of Burgundian female piety more famously recurs in Gregory's portrayal of the aforementioned princess Clotild, who apparently played an important role in the conversion of her husband, the Merovingian king Clovis, to Catholicism,[87] and, as we will see shortly, was herself a patron of Christian building in Paris.[88]

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[81] Geneva 8a.
[82] Fredegar, *Chronicae*, III.17, IV.22. *TCCG* III, p. 47; XVI, p. 105. Gregory of Tours asserts the sister of Clotild was called Crona: *Hist.*, II.28; see D. Van Berchem, *Le martyre de la légion thébaine. Essai sur la formation d'une légende* (Basel, 1956), p. 44.
[83] J. Favrod, *Histoire politique du royaume burgonde (443-534)* (Lausanne, 1997), pp. 295-6.
[84] Lyon 9a. *CIL* XIII, 2372; *Vita Marcelli*, 9, ed. F. Dolbeau, 'La Vie en prose de saint Marcel, évêque de Die. Histoire du texte et édition critique', *Francia* 11 (1983), pp. 97-130. This church may have been the subject of Avitus of Vienne's Homily 17, *in dedicatione ecclesiae archangelis Michahelis*, see *TCCG* XVI, p. 153.
[85] Women generally only appear as independent patrons in this period as widows or nuns: Y. Hen, 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture in Merovingian Gaul', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 229.
[86] Gregory, *VSJ*, 8. Ian Wood notes a pattern of Catholic wives and Arian husbands in Burgundy: I.N. Wood, 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 63 (1985), p. 267.
[87] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.28. See J.L. Nelson, 'Queens as Converters of Kings in the Earlier Middle Ages', in C. La Rocca (ed.), *Agire da donna: modelli e pratiche di rappresentazione* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 95-107; K. Cooper, 'Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), pp. 150-64.
[88] Paris 8a.

As for the actions of Sedeleube and/or Theodolinda, they helped to shape the Christian landscape of Burgundy and patterns of royal worship for centuries to come. The martyrs of the Theban legion became an important cult for the rulers and bishops of the region, most notably the Burgundian king Sigismund, who reorganised the ascetic community at Agaune to celebrate the group's leader Maurice, and latterly the Merovingian monarch Guntram, whose own Christian patronage built on Burgundy's traditions of holiness.[89] These kings would come to the forefront of ecclesiastical benefaction in the course of the sixth century, but while there is perhaps some evidence to suggest that the Arian king Gundobad was not averse to bestowing gifts on the Catholic churches of his kingdom,[90] it seems that it was the female members of the Burgundian royal households who were the first to recognise the potential of church-building as a vehicle for pious display, which reflects their wider embrace of religious ideologies of leadership following the dissolution of the western empire.

Paris is always a good idea

By the middle of the sixth century, the bulk of Gaul had been consolidated under the Catholic rule of the Franks, who also funded their own building projects as a way of celebrating favoured cults. Again, royals had choices to make in regards to where to focus their investment, and whether to venerate an existing cult or launch a new one. Like their counterparts in the Burgundian kingdom, rulers seemed to have preferred to mobilise their resources in the cities in which they principally resided, or those which carried political or ideological significance. The importance of Paris within the Merovingian kingdoms in this regard was noted above, and although the city never assumed the same status that Toledo held for the Visigoths or Pavia for the Lombards, it was nevertheless *the* major beneficiary of Frankish royal largesse, and hosted several churches raised in honour of local, universal, and imported cults in this period.

[89] B.H. Rosenwein, 'One Site, Many Meanings: Saint-Maurice d'Agaune as a Place of Power in the Early Middle Ages', in F. Theuws and M. De Jong (eds), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 274-81.
[90] C. Perrat and A. Audin, '*Alcimi ecdicii aviti viennensis episcopi homilia dicta in dedicatione superioris basilicae*', in *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni*, vol 2 (3 vols, Milan 1956-57), pp. 433-51; J. Favrod, *Histoire politique du royaume burgonde (443-534)* (Lausanne, 1997), pp. 371-2.

The first of these basilicas was established at the start of the sixth century in honour of Geneviève, or Genovefa,[91] a female ascetic who had apparently helped to save Paris from Attila's Huns in 451, and a few years later acted as an intermediary between the local population and the Frankish king Childeric I.[92] Genovefa was buried in a church in the city in a necropolis installed on the left bank of the Seine, on the low hill to which she would ultimately give her name, Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, where the Panthéon stands today.[93] The identity of the patron who drove this act of construction is slightly ambiguous, however, as is the extent to which Genovefa was necessarily its sole focus. The author of her *Vita*, who was writing in c. 520,[94] around twenty years after Genovefa's death, tells us that her tomb was initially located in a wooden oratory, but that Clovis I, who held Paris as his capital and apparently knew the saint personally, soon started building a basilica in her honour, which was completed by his wife Clotild after his death in 511.[95] This spotlight on Genovefa is dimmed somewhat by Gregory of Tours, however, who informs us that the saint was buried in Paris in a church dedicated to the apostles,[96] which he sometimes attributes to Peter alone.[97] Gregory tells us that Clovis was also interred in this basilica, and, like the *Vita*, reveals that the king had built it with Clotild.[98] Elsewhere, however, when describing how Clotild was subsequently laid to rest there, the bishop notes only the queen's involvement in the church's construction.[99]

It has been suggested that it was Clotild who commissioned the *Life of Genovefa* as part of her wider promotion of the saint's cult in Paris.[100] Genovefa's important role in safeguarding her city has already

[91] Paris 8a. K.H. Krüger, *Königsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden bis zur Mitte der 8. Jahrhunderts: ein historischer Katalog* (Munich, 1971), pp. 40-54.
[92] M. Heinzelmann and J.-C. Poulin, *Les vies anciennes de sainte Geneviève de Paris: études critiques* (Paris, 1986); J.A. McNamara, G. Whatley, and J. E. Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham and London, 1992), pp. 17-37; K. Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1-6.
[93] A number of burials from the Merovingian period have been discovered in the vicinity, but nothing of the early sixth-century church itself: *TCCG* VIII, pp. 116-19.
[94] *Vita S. Genovefae*, 51, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp. 215-38. The historical value of the *Vita* has long been debated, but most scholars now generally accept its authenticity.
[95] *Vita S. Genovefae*, 55-56, p. 237-8. It has been suggested by Heinzelmann and Poulin that this wooden oratory was a temporary shelter employed during the construction of the basilica: *Les vies anciennes*, p. 102. For a possible parallel at Tours, see H. Galinié, *Tours antique et médiéval: lieux de vie, temps de la ville: 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine* (Tours, 2007), pp. 91-103.
[96] Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Confessorum*, 89, ed. B. Krusch *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 294-370.
[97] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.1; The *Liber historiae Francorum* (17), which borrows heavily from Gregory of Tours, in turn makes no mention of Genovefa at all; see Heinzelmann and Poulin, *Les vies anciennes*, p. 36.
[98] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.43.
[99] Gregory, *Hist*., IV.1.
[100] Heinzelmann and Poulin, *Les vies anciennes*, p. 53.

been noted, and so while the royal couple may have considered her spiritual patronage to be a useful personal support, the church could also have functioned as a demonstration of their concern for the welfare of their capital and kingdom at large.[101] Clotild's apparent decision to patronise a new cult marks something of a departure from her Burgundian kin, who, as discussed above, largely sought to attach themselves to figures whose sanctity was already established. Nevertheless, her behaviour would certainly have been in keeping with the general picture we have of devout Burgundian women of the queen's generation demonstrating their piety through acts of Christian building patronage. They seem generally to have pursued these construction projects independently of their husbands, and so it is interesting that the *Vita* has Clovis as the instigator of the church built in Genovefa's honour, especially when Clovis' theological commitment to Catholicism has long been suspected to be neither total nor entirely pious in its motives.[102] Indeed, there has been much written about the chronology of Clovis' conversion,[103] but if we follow the arguments of Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood for a late baptism,[104] it is possible to conceive of the funerary church as primarily an ambition of Clotild's, in which her husband only became involved at some later date, reflecting the priority given to Clotild in Gregory's references to the church.

[101] On royal concern for the public good, see J. Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 140-88.
[102] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Long-Haired Kings', in *The Long-Haired Kings and other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962), p. 169; J. Moorhead, 'Clovis's Motives for Becoming a Catholic Christian', *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1985), pp. 329-39.
[103] See M. Spencer, 'Dating the Baptism of Clovis, 1886-1993', *Early Medieval Europe* 3.2 (1994), pp. 97-116.
[104] D. Shanzer, 'Dating the Baptism of Clovis: The Bishop of Vienne vs. the Bishop of Tours', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.1 (1998), pp. 29-57; Wood, 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis', pp. 249-72.

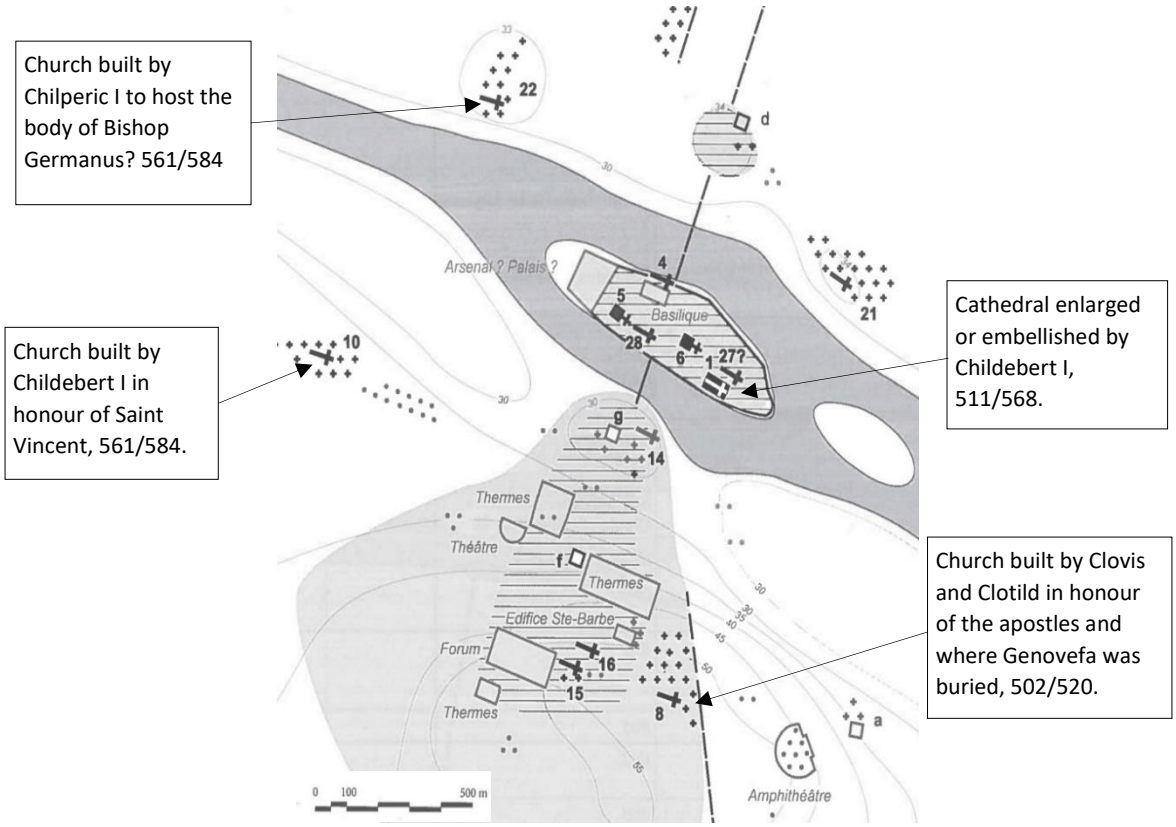


Fig. 18. The late antique and Merovingian churches of Paris (adapted from *TCCG* XVI, p. 604).

In any case, Clovis' public embrace of Catholicism through his association with the project would have been a useful adjunct to his wider attempts to present himself to the native population of Gaul as a ruler in the Roman tradition, marked most visibly by his receipt of an honorary consulship in a ceremony that borrowed heavily from imperial custom.[105] This context perhaps explains why Genovefa was said by sources other than her *Vita* to have been buried in a basilica erected in honour of the holy apostles. The apostolic cult was intimately tied to Rome, and such a dedication again gave Clovis the opportunity to demonstrate his alignment with the imperial ideal,[106] especially since the basilica built by Constantine for his own burial at Constantinople in the early fourth century was likewise dedicated to the apostles. This message, however, was appropriately adapted to local circumstances by the apparent interest also shown in Genovefa, whose family seems to have comprised members of the Roman curial class on one

[105] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.38; M. McCormick, 'Clovis at Tours: Byzantine Public Ritual and the Origins of Medieval Ruler Symbolism', in E.K. Chrysos and A. Schwarcz (eds), *Das Reich und die Barbaren* (Vienna, 1989), pp. 155-80.
[106] Krüger, *Königsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden,* pp. 469-73

side, and the Frankish warrior-aristocracy on the other.[107] The saint was thus a useful additional focus for an act of Christian patronage financed by a ruler seeking to forge a new polity through the harmonious cooperation of Romans and Franks. In this regard, the basilica may have functioned in a similar manner to the 'pro-Merovingian propaganda' discussed by Yitzhak Hen, which he argues was intended to ingratiate the new rulers with the native Gallo-Roman population.[108] This could in turn explain the *Vita Genovefae's* characterisation of Clovis as the project's architect, when context and precedent might lead us to conclude that Clotild was in fact the original driving force behind it.

Clovis was the first 'barbarian' king known to have been buried in a church,[109] but the practice soon caught on and the basilica of the apostles served as a resting-place for a number of Merovingians up to the middle of the sixth century,[110] when its favoured status was usurped by a new funerary church built in Paris by Childebert I, in honour of Saint Vincent of Saragossa.[111] Like their episcopal and lay counterparts, the rulers of Gaul endeavoured to furnish themselves and their families with a suitable place of burial.[112] Ideally, this would be something that reflected their status and provided an enduring legacy on earth, while also honouring a heavenly intercessor who might assist them in their pursuit of future salvation. It is perhaps curious, nevertheless, that Childebert I chose to import an existing cult from the Visigothic kingdom into his capital at Paris. Vincent's fame may have reached south-east Gaul prior to the Frankish conquest of the region,[113] but Childebert's admiration for the saint should probably be seen in the context of his military expedition to Spain in 541, when the king's attempts to take the city of Saragossa were apparently thwarted by the miraculous power of Vincent's tunic, held aloft by the besieged inhabitants while they processed around the city walls.[114] This seems to have

[107] Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household,* p. 4.
[108] Y. Hen, 'Clovis, Gregory of Tours, and Pro-Merovingian Propaganda', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 71.2 (1993), pp. 271-6.
[109] P. Périn, 'The Undiscovered Grave of King Clovis', in M.O.H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in North-Western Europe* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 255-64.
[110] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.43; III.10, 18; IV.1.
[111] Paris 10a. Gregory, *Hist.*, VI.34; VI.46; VIII.10; *Liber Historiae Francorum,* 37.
[112] E. James, 'Royal Burials among the Franks', in Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, pp. 243-54; Krüger, *Königsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden*, pp. 29-250, 469-84.
[113] B. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule. Les premiers temps. D'Hilaire de Poitiers à la fin du VIe siècle* (Paris, 2000), p. 253. Relics of Vincent seem to have become fairly prevalent across Gaul in the course of the sixth century, and a number of churches were erected in his honour: Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Martyrum*, 30, 88, 89, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 1.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 34-111
[114] Gregory, *Hist.*, III.29.

made quite an impression on Childebert, who, according to the anonymous author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum,* asked the bishop of Saragossa for relics of Vincent.[115] Although a saint from a rival kingdom might seem an unexpected choice for the focus of his funerary basilica, therefore, Childebert clearly deemed Vincent a worthy spiritual patron to trust with his welfare in both this world and the next.

Chilperic was one of a number of Merovingians to be buried in the church of Saint Vincent at Paris following his death in 584,[116] but it is possible that, like Clovis and Childebert before him, he had intended to be laid to rest in the city in a basilica of his own construction. The image of Chilperic in the writing of Gregory of Tours is of a king who had little time for the Gallic church or its bishops,[117] but Chilperic's reputation has been somewhat restored in recent years,[118] and he is now generally recognised as behaving in a manner akin to his royal peers when it came to patronising ecclesiastical institutions and personnel.[119] It is only in Paris, however, that we have any evidence of the king channelling his resources into Christian building projects. The ideological importance of Paris within the Frankish polity has already been noted, and while Soissons was nominally Chilperic's capital, the king appears to have been particularly keen to establish himself in a city that had been neutralised after Charibert's death in 567.[120] His efforts included establishing a circus in Paris, as he had done at Soissons,[121] and, according to the Testament of Bishop Bertram of Le Mans, which was dictated in 616, ordering the construction of a church in honour of Germanus, the city's late and much-respected bishop, who had been laid to rest at Saint Vincent's after his death in 576.[122] Chilperic probably intended to

[115] *Liber Historiae Francorum,* 26, ed. B. Krusch *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 241-328: *Childebertus quoque postolans ut ei reliquias beati Vincenti daret. At ille dedit ei stolam eius … Childebertus vero Parisius veniens, ecclesiam in honore beati Vincenti martyris edificavit.*
[116] Gregory, *Hist.,* VI.46.
[117] *Ibid*. See I.N. Wood, 'The Secret Histories of Gregory of Tours', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 71 (1993), pp. 254-9.
[118] On the possibility that Gregory's portrayal of Chilperic was motivated by political expediency, see G. Halsall, 'Nero and Herod? The Death of Chilperic and Gregory's Writing of History,' in K. Mitchell and I. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 337-50.
[119] G.I. Halfond, '*Sis quoque catholicis religionis apex*: The Ecclesiastical Patronage of Chilperic I and Fredegund', *Church History* 81.1 (2012), pp. 48-76; Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours,* p. 184.
[120] Gregory, *Hist.,* VII.6.
[121] Gregory, *Hist.,* V. 17.
[122] Paris 22a; Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum, 27 March 616,* ed. M. Weidemann, *Das Testament des Bischofs Berthramn von Le Mans* (Mainz, 1986): *Iubeo ea conditione ut si sanctum corpus eius in basilica quam inclytus Chilpericus quondam rex construxit, si convenerit ut inibi transferatur, villam ipsam, ubi eius sanctum corpus fuerit semper ibidem desserviat.*

move Germanus' body to his new church but this translation does not seem to have taken place, perhaps because of the king's untimely death. Even so, a *basilica domne Germanae* (the current Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois) is attested in 691, and the presence of a Merovingian necropolis around it supports the general assumption that this was the church built by Chilperic.[123]

Financing the veneration of a local figure was a familiar strategy for members of the elite looking to ingratiate themselves with a civic community,[124] as has already been noted in Paris in regard to the cult of Genovefa. But while Chilperic's willingness to build in Paris was certainly symptomatic of his wider attempts to assert himself in the city, Gregory Halfond has speculated that the king's admiration for Germanus should perhaps also be seen in the context of the bishop's reported efforts to dissuade his brother Sigibert from escalating their fraternal dispute.[125] As Germanus' counselling of Sigibert attests, the relationship between Merovingian rulers and the Gallic episcopate was a defining feature of post-imperial government in Gaul. While bishops considered royal support necessary to help them fulfil their ecclesiastical objectives, and perhaps even to realise their vision for a truly Christian society,[126] kings recognised that prelates could prove useful local allies, particularly in *civitates* some distance removed from their places of residence.[127] It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that monarchs soon began to look upon some members of the episcopate as suitable candidates for posthumous veneration too.

In this regard, they followed the bishops themselves, who, from the fifth century, had increasingly begun to elevate their episcopal predecessors as a way to bolster their own position and the status of their see through the acquisition of a heavenly advocate, who, in many cases, was also a family member. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the efforts of Frankish sovereigns to launch new cults do not seem to have extended in like fashion to members of their own kin, which may support the scepticism of some

[123] *TCCG* VIII, p. 126.
[124] See, for example, pp. 81-4; pp. 141-3.
[125] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.51; *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 9, ed. W. Gundlach, *MGH Epistolae* 3 (Berlin, 1892). Halfond, '*Sis quoque catholicis religionis apex*', pp. 72-3.
[126] M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2001).
[127] G. Halfond, 'All the King's Men: Episcopal Political Loyalties in the Merovingian Kingdoms', *Medieval Prosopography* 27 (2012), pp. 76-96.

scholars that Merovingian kingship was ever conceived of in supernatural or 'sacral' terms.[128] Indeed, the apparent lack of Merovingian interest in asserting a divine right to rule perhaps explains why there was seemingly no attempt to establish a consistent dynastic mausoleum. Royal saints are generally rather scarce in the successor states of the western empire, but certainly not unprecedented. Cults soon developed around the Burgundian king Sigismund (516-524) and the Anglo-Saxon king Oswald (634-642) after their deaths,[129] for example, while Queens Radegund (536-542) and Balthild (648-665) – neither of whom, it is worth noting, were born in Gaul – were likewise venerated as saints. However, rather than cultivating a royal shine as a vehicle for self-display, and more broadly as a means to elevate their family name, the Merovingians seem instead to have been content to venerate the sanctity of local, imported, and universal figures, as the variety of saints honoured by their building patronage at Paris makes clear.

Capital comparisons

Away from Geneva, Lyon, and Paris, the evidence for the rulers of Gaul's post-imperial successor states patronising saints and funerary churches in their royal capitals is surprisingly meagre, and only Frankish Soissons provides any definitive data. While Childebert, and perhaps also Chilperic, endeavoured to build their own place of burial in Paris rather than be interred alongside Clovis, Chlothar I was laid to rest in 561 in his long-term capital at Soissons. The king was buried in a basilica that he had started to build over the tomb of Medard, the famous bishop of Noyon-Tournai, which lay almost 1500 metres to the east of the city's urban area.[130] He died before the church was complete, however, and so its construction was finished by his son Sigibert, who was also subsequently buried there.[131] Chlothar's particular admiration for Medard seems to have stemmed from the relationship he shared with the

[128] Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian Family'; Murray, '*Post vocantur Merohingii*'.
[129] On Sigismund, see Gregory, *GM*, 74; F.S. Paxton, 'Power and the Power to Heal: The Cult of St Sigismund of Burgundy', *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993), pp. 95-110. On Oswald, see Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III. 9-12, IV.14, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae*, vol. 1 (2 vols, Oxford, 1896), pp. 9-361; C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (eds), *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, 1995).
[130] Soissons 3a, 3b. Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.19. Elsewhere, Gregory informs us that before a basilica was built over the tomb of Medard, there existed a small wooden chapel: *GC*, 93. See also Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.16.
[131] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV. 19, IV.21, and IV.51.

bishop during his lifetime,[132] and his pursuit of Medard's heavenly support in Soissons serves as a reminder that, *pace* Van Dam, kings had their own favoured saints in their favoured cities for precisely the same reasons that Gregory of Tours clung so dearly to Martin and Julian: these figures of spiritual authority acted as powerful, locally-identifiable allies in times of need, and helped rulers to define their self-image and mediate relationships with their *civitates* and communities. Sigibert's involvement in the project, however, is more surprising. It was his brother Chilperic who had inherited the kingdom of Soissons as a result of the partition of 561,[133] and clearly he also held Medard in high regard, to the extent of even composing a hymn in honour of the saint.[134] Sigibert and Chilperic spent much of their reigns locked in a bitter internecine struggle over territory and honour,[135] which endured beyond their respective deaths,[136] and so Sigibert's completion of their father's church at Soissons might be regarded as an attempt to undermine his brother in his own capital.

Sigibert's veneration of Medard in Soissons encourages speculation that he may well have been responsible for erecting the church dedicated to the saint in Metz, one of the capitals of his own kingdom.[137] This hypothesis, however, is the closest we can come to identifying possible further acts of Christian building patronage financed by Merovingian monarchs that exclusively celebrated the cult of saints in their principal cities of residence, since the evidence from Reims, Metz, Orléans, Trier, and Cologne is otherwise negligible in the extreme. It is possible, however, that this may simply reflect the limitations of our sources. Our knowledge of seven of Reims' thirteen funerary basilicas in this period, for example, comes directly from episcopal wills preserved by the tenth-century historian Flodoard, and

[132] It was Medard who consecrated Chlothar's wife Radegund as a deaconess: Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, 12, ed. B. Krusch *MGH AA* 4.2 (Berlin, 1885).
[133] Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.22.
[134] Gregory, *Hist.*, V.3, 34, 44, with Halfond, '*Sis quoque catholicis religionis apex*', pp. 74-5. For the hymn, see K. Strecker (ed.), *MGH Poetae Latini* 4.2 (Berlin, 1923), pp. 455-9.
[135] Chilperic had his erstwhile bride, and the sister of Sigibert's wife Brunhild, Galswintha murdered: Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.28. For the civil war between the brothers and their regular exchanges of territory, see *Hist.*, IV.45, 47-51.
[136] P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation & Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York and Oxford, 1988), pp. 120-1.
[137] Metz 30a. See J-B. Pelt, *Etudes sur la cathédrale de Metz. La Liturgie I (Ve–XIIIe siècle)* (Metz, 1937), pp. 29-32.

so the focus is naturally on the bequests these churches received from the city's bishops rather than the individuals who founded them.[138]

Within the other successor-states established in Gaul before the triumph of the Franks, the archaeological record of Toulouse suggests that there is good reason to believe it benefited from royal largesse between c. 418 and 507, when it served as the Visigothic capital.[139] Surviving fragments and plans of the elaborate layout and spectacular décor of the enigmatic Notre-Dame de la Daurade, which was destroyed in 1761, have long encouraged scholars to connect it to the Visigothic presence in the city.[140] This association was strengthened following the discovery of a probable fifth-century palace complex on the nearby Hôpital Larrey site in 1988 (fig. 19), which has also helped to contextualise a number of other finds along the Garonne.[141] A few years earlier, in the same quarter of the city, but 100 metres beyond the city wall, the funerary church of Saint-Pierre-des-Cuisines, located within a cemetery in use since the third century, had already been uncovered. Meanwhile, twenty metres further north, another substantial structure (measuring at least 40m x 50m) has lately been dated to the second half of the fifth century, and its size, location, and alignment with the nearby church has led to it being interpreted as a possible royal mausoleum, built at the same time as the palace.[142] Sadly, however, given our incomplete knowledge of this structure and the absence of any textual references, the existence of this notional palace quarter remains hypothetical, as does the royal sponsorship of the Christian buildings within it.

[138] Testaments of Bishop Sonnatius (d. 627) and Lando (d. 656), Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, II.5-6, ed. M. Stratmann, *MGH SS* 36 (Hanover, 1998), pp. 145-8. *TCCG* XIV, pp. 21-45.
[139] Guyon, 'Toulouse', pp. 219-40.
[140] Q. Cazes and M. Scellès, 'La basilique Sainte-Marie: Notre-Dame-la-Daurade', in Pailler (ed.), *Tolosa*, pp. 483-90; C. Falluomini, 'Traces of Wulfila's Bible Translation in Visigothic Gaul', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 80 (2020), pp. 5-24.
[141] R. De Filippo, 'Le grand bâtiment du site de Larrey: la «question palatiale»', in Pailler (ed.), *Tolosa*, pp. 445-50.
[142] J. Catalo *et al.*, 'Le monument d'époque wisigothique du site École d'économie à Toulouse, première interprétation', in E. Boube, A. Corrochano, and J. Fernandez (eds), *Du royaume goth au Midi mérovingien* (Bordeaux, 2019), pp. 83-97.

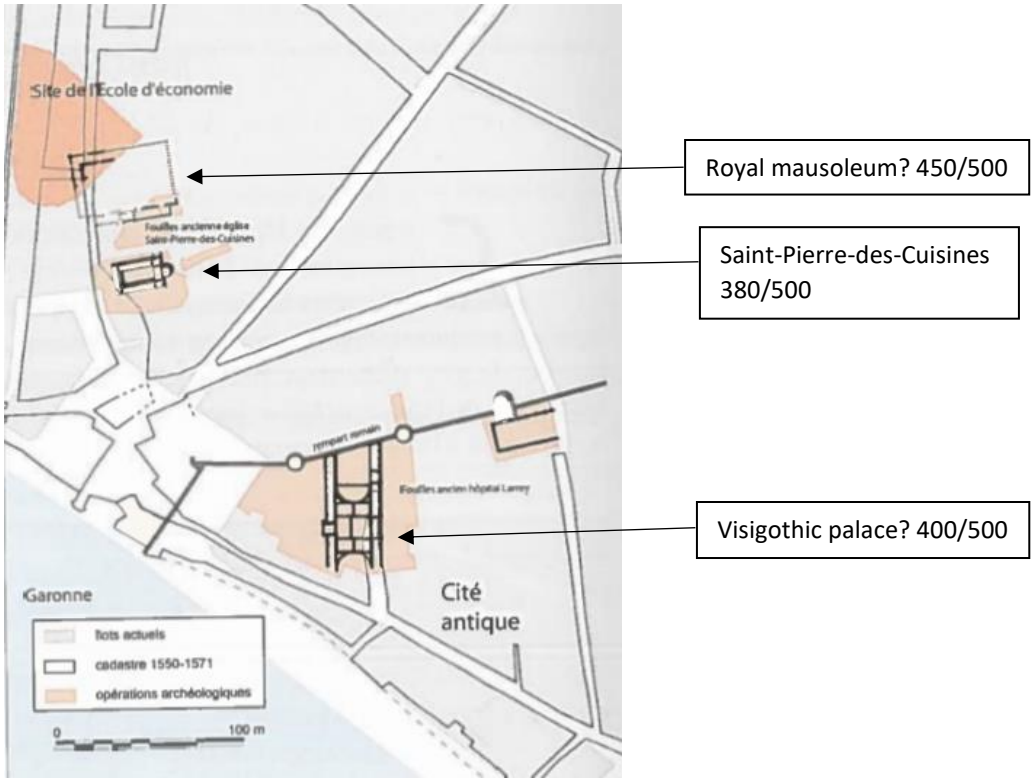


Fig. 19. Possible Visigothic building programme in Toulouse (adapted from Catalo *et al*., 2019, p. 84).

To sum up, Geneva, Lyon, Paris, and Soissons are the only capitals to furnish explicit evidence of royals sponsoring the erection of funerary basilicas in this period. To this meagre list of acts of Christian building patronage we can also add Guntram's financing of a *ciborium* for the church of Saint Marcellus at Chalon-sur-Saône, which served as the *de facto* seat of the king's realm.[143] Royally backed projects are also attested outside of Gaul's capitals at Tours and Autun, but only in the latter city was a new church financed, when Brunhild erected a basilica in honour of Martin in partnership with the local bishop Syagrius (556-…602).[144] The lack of further Merovingian sponsorship of church-building in honour of the cult of saints is perhaps surprising, but the absence of evidence is, of course, not evidence of absence, and, as we saw earlier, church patronage could take many forms. But while the royal sponsorship of Christian building projects may well be underreported, it is also possible that not all sovereigns saw financing ecclesiastical construction in the cities as a priority, and instead channelled

[143] Chalon-sur-Saône 3a; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, III.34, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, *MGH SS rer. Lang*. (Hanover, 1878), pp. 12-188.
[144] Autun 13a. Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum*, XIII.7; XIII.13, ed. P. Ewald and L. Hartmann, *MGH Ep*. 2 (Berlin, 1899). Chlothar I re-roofed the church of Saint Martin at Tours in c. 560: Tours 6c; Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.20; X.31.

their efforts into alternative strategies of legitimation. Indeed, it may be telling that the panegyric written by Venantius Fortunatus in honour of Chilperic, and recited at a church-council held at Berny-Rivière in 580, recalls at length the king's mastery of warfare and commitment to learning, but makes no mention of any religious building activity.[145]

In the later Merovingian kingdoms, the practice seemingly became rarer still. Only two acts of building patronage concerned with funerary basilicas are attested in the cities of Gaul in this period, and both involved the embellishment or remodelling of existing churches, rather than the construction of new ones. At Tours, the tomb of Martin received a covering of gold and jewels financed by King Dagobert (629-39),[146] while Queen Balthild added a vault above the altar of a church in Noyon in order to provide a more appropriate setting for the tomb of Bishop Eligius, who had died in 660.[147] Erecting funerary basilicas in the cities of Gaul was never a central element of royal efforts to legitimise their privileged status in society in this period, but in the later Merovingian period its importance seems to have diminished further.

This development was arguably for several reasons. By the seventh century, structural developments in the Merovingian polity had undermined the reinvigorated status of the *civitas*-network that followed the dissolution of Roman rule.[148] This helped to encourage the relocation of self-representation away from urban centres, which saw rulers follow their lay elites and increasingly base themselves in the countryside. At the same time, the growing popularity of monasticism in court circles provided an alternative outlet for spiritual enthusiasm and funding on the part of the Merovingian family. These developments had interesting consequences for the royal patronage of the cult of saints in the cities, and reveal how the Christian building categories delineated by this study for heuristic purposes were by no means discrete ones in the minds of royal donors. The monasticisation of suburban cult sites in the later Merovingian period by clerical patrons has already been highlighted,[149] but the blurring of monasticism

[145] Fortunatus, *Carm.*, IX.1.
[146] Tours 6e; *Vita Eligii*, I.31.
[147] Noyon 3a; *Vita Eligii*, II.37-38, 48.
[148] S.T. Loseby, 'Lost Cities. The End of the *Civitas*-System in Frankish Gaul', in S. Diefenbach and G.M. Müller (eds), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Kulturgeschichte einer Region* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 223-52.
[149] See p. 106.

and the veneration of holy figures proved especially popular among sovereigns, whose acts of building patronage, moreover, were now also increasingly sited in the countryside, or on the urban fringes of cities. As we will see in the next section, these twin phenomena first emerge in the course of the sixth century, but become most apparent in the seventh century, particularly in the royal support shown for the abbey of Saint-Denis outside Paris.

Conclusion

To conclude, the building of suburban funerary basilicas was one of a number of options available to post-imperial rulers of Gaul looking to celebrate the cult of saints in the cities, but the extant evidence suggests that expending resources in this way was not necessarily a royal priority. Nevertheless, on occasions when we do have some data, engagement with the practice by monarchs bore a number of similarities to the behaviour of their lay and ecclesiastical peers. From the cultural cachet available to those who used their wealth to make the *loca sanctorum* available to all, to the spiritual protection and future salvation that could be acquired through honouring a holy individual, royals celebrated saints for the benefits they hoped to acquire in this world and the next. Unlike the vast majority of the laity, however, who often had to settle for the co-financing of collective enterprises in partnership with their local bishop, the 'barbarian' rulers of Gaul had ample resources to build as they pleased. Their use of tax revenues, landed income, and plundered booty to finance their building projects thus recalls the mechanisms of civic munificence practised by the leaders of the classical world. Indeed, in this regard the practice may have carried extra significance for families who, at times, looked to replicate imperial ideologies of rule in order to legitimise their position as suitable heirs to the Roman emperors in Gaul. It is unclear, however, how important a motivation this really was, given the relative scarcity of evidence for such behaviour in the period of the transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule. In fact, female members of the Burgundian household are the only attested royal building patrons from the period when 'barbarian' powers were beginning to establish themselves, although the material record of Toulouse is certainly suggestive of significant investment from the resident Visigothic monarchs.

In the next century, the practice of expending royal wealth on suburban Christian building projects did become marginally more popular, as the *civitas*-system proved a central component of post-imperial political culture. Alongside their contributions to established cults such as that of Saint Martin in Tours, a number of Merovingian monarchs invested in their capitals, taking the opportunity to glorify their favoured cities of residence through the erection of funerary basilicas. To this end, monarchs commemorated local figures with whom they shared a personal relationship during their lives, as well as universal and imported saints, as the situation at Paris highlights. Interestingly, however, while certain basilicas appear to have been adopted as privileged burial sites for the Merovingians, there seems to have been little attempt on the part of the royal household either to elevate the sanctity of any of its members, or to establish a consistent dynastic mausoleum. By the second half of the sixth century, the practice of monarchs erecting funerary churches in their cities appears already to have peaked (fig. 16). This was probably a reflection of both the diminishing status of the *civitas*-system for secular leaders in the Frankish polity of the later Merovingian kingdoms, and the growing interest in monasticism as an alternative outlet for royal benefaction, which were two trends that combined vividly in the flourishing monastic networks of the seventh- and eighth-century countryside. As we will see in the next section, however, these developments also had a more subtle impact on the royal sponsorship of the cult of saints in the cities.

5.3. Monasticism

The previous two chapters have demonstrated how traditional conceptions of monastic building patronage, and the assumptions that go with them in regard to the focus of monumental investment across our period, do not sufficiently account for the situation in the cities. The ecclesiastics of Gaul were the most consistent funders of monastic enterprises, but the laity were also prepared to invest in urban monasteries, even as elite devotion came increasingly to be expressed in the countryside in the later Merovingian period. In what follows, we will examine what role the royal families of the barbarian successor states played in these processes. First, we will consider how, in the sixth century, the sponsorship of monastic communities seems to have functioned for some sovereigns as another vehicle for expressing faith and authority in the cities of their kingdom in a similar manner to the funerary basilicas discussed in the previous section. During this period, however, we also begin to see the emergence of a number of trends that had implications for royal expenditure and Christian building patronage in the Frankish kingdoms of subsequent centuries. One such development was the increasing tendency for sovereigns to blend the veneration of the cult of saints with their support for monasticism, while a second saw acts of pious display by kings and queens become ever more removed from the urban centres of cities, in line with their own relocation to rural palaces. These trends crystallised in the seventh century, most obviously in the growing network of rural monastic foundations in which the Merovingians played a central role. In the cities, meanwhile, a decline in the significance of the urban landscape as the premier arena for royal self-legitimation saw peripheral sites such as the church and abbey of Saint-Denis favoured instead, and the provision of support for existing institutions preferred over the foundation of new monasteries.

Making a mark

Like the lay elites of their kingdoms, the 'barbarian' rulers of post-imperial Gaul were not early adopters of urban monastic patronage, and it was only with the Merovingians that royally-backed monasteries began to appear in the urban and suburban landscape. The first of these was at Arles, as already

discussed briefly earlier.[150] At the instigation of Childebert I and his wife Ultrogotha, Bishop Aurelianus (...546-551) founded a male community in the city,[151] which, on the evidence of the epitaph of its probable first abbot, Florentinus, probably occurred in around 547.[152] The funerary basilica that accompanied it was dedicated to the apostles, and apparently possessed relics of the Cross, John the Baptist, the proto-martyr Stephen, and a variety of local and other Gallic saints. The eighth-century manuscript that preserves the Rule of the monastery also contains a copy of a diptych that names several abbots as well as Childebert I and Ultrogotha, and notes that all of them would benefit from the intercession of the saints whose relics are found in the basilica.[153] This expectation of heavenly support gives an explicit indication of one of the motivations that will have underpinned the couple's building patronage, and illustrates how financing the cult of saints and monasticism often went hand in hand for royals, as we shall soon see. Childebert's decision to bankroll a monastery so far to the south of the traditional Frankish heartlands of northern Gaul, however, is worth considering here for a moment in light of his wider building activities, since it appears that, for this sovereign at least, the practice was employed as a means for claiming authority in the cities of his kingdom.

Childebert's religious investment in Paris has been discussed above,[154] and, along with the monastery at Arles, he and his wife also established a *xenodochium* at Lyon,[155] thereby completing the full set of building categories delineated at the start of this study. Among all the post-imperial rulers of Gaul, Childebert I stands out as the most enthusiastic proponent of urban Christian building patronage. As well as demonstrating the extent of his devotion, the multiple locations in which the king chose to focus his resources are also suggestive of how he may have seen acts of civic munificence as a means to assert his rule throughout his kingdom, and build relationships with local representatives of the Gallic episcopate who could serve as allies on the ground. His decision to build in Lyon and Arles – both

[150] Pp. 95-6.
[151] Arles 11a; Aurelianus, *Regula ad monachos*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 68 (Paris, 1866), col. 395-396.
[152] *CIL* XII, 944. *PCBE* 4, Florentinvs 2, p. 785. See C. Pietri and L. Pietri, 'Un abbé arlésien promu à la sainteté: Florentinus', in L. Holtz and J.-C. Fredouille (eds), *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes: mélanges offerts à Jacques Fontaine*, vol. 1 (3 vols, Paris, 1992), pp. 45-57.
[153] Aurelianus, *Regula*, col. 395-398, with P. Bernard, 'Les diptyques du monastère des Saints-Apôtres d'Arles au VIIe siècle. Edition critique. Commentaire historique et liturgique', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 89.1 (2003), pp. 5-21.
[154] See pp. 190, 204-5.
[155] Lyon 10a; Council of Orléans (549), c. 15 and 21.

cities that were not originally his, but acquired in the course of his reign – may have formed part of strategies to consolidate his rule over newly-acquired territories, especially given the importance these *civitates* had enjoyed within the Burgundian and Ostrogothic kingdoms respectively. Indeed, the residents of these cities may have anticipated some mobilisation of royal wealth in support of their local churches; the patronage of Lyon by members of the Burgundian royal family, for example, has already been highlighted,[156] while the financial support that the Ostrogothic king Theoderic provided Caesarius of Arles following his annexation of the region is well-known.[157] Although Provence was ceded to the Merovingians in around 536, Childebert appears to have waited for the death of Caesarius to make his move in Arles,[158] cementing a Frankish presence by fostering a relationship with Bishop Aurelianus through the medium of monasticism, a form of building patronage to which the city's residents may have been particularly receptive after Caesarius' forty years as their bishop.[159]

Queen Brunhild, wife of Sigibert I (561-575), seems to have conceived of monastic patronage in similar terms to Childebert I. Her interest in financing Christian spaces certainly reflected the desire for distinction and pious self-representation commonly held by high-status female patrons, but, unlike the noble widows discussed in the previous chapter, Brunhild had no interest in retiring from public life and taking up residence in the convent she had founded in Autun in the late sixth century.[160] This female community is mentioned in 602 in two letters of Gregory the Great, one to the queen herself and the other to the monastery's abbess, Talasia, from which we learn that the convent was dedicated to Mary.[161] The latter is one of a series of letters sent by Gregory to the religious leaders of Autun responsible for the Christian buildings established in the city by Brunhild and Bishop Syagrius (556-

[156] See pp. 198-200.
[157] W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 124-7; Arnold, *Theoderic*, pp. 175-229.
[158] C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 84-91.
[159] Ian Wood has shown monastic patronage was a popular way of claiming authority in south-east Gaul: I.N. Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories', in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan (eds), *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 3-32.
[160] Autun 6a.
[161] Gregory the Great, *Reg. Ep.,* XIII.7, 12.

…602), which, alongside the convent, included a *xenodochium* and the aforementioned funerary basilica dedicated to Saint Martin.[162]

The rationale for the queen's interest in Autun is not immediately obvious, since it had formed part of her brother-in-law Guntram's kingdom, which was centred on Burgundy, rather than the territory of Austrasia ruled in turn by her husband, son, and grandson. Brunhild's ecclesiastical largesse in Autun should probably be seen in the political context of Guntram's adoption of her son, Childebert II, as his heir following the death of his own children in 585.[163] It is possible that after Guntram's death in 592, Brunhild saw in the urban topography of Autun an opportunity to assert and legitimise her and her son's authority in a region now ruled over by the latter. By backing a series of building projects, the queen reconfigured Autun's pre-existing patronage networks and traditions of holiness to her advantage, perhaps in conscious rivalry to Guntram's own displays of piety nearby at Chalon-sur-Saône.[164] In doing so, she also forged a close alliance with Bishop Syagrius, who served as her closest episcopal confidant and for whom she even sought the *pallium,* which would have elevated the bishop's standing in the Gallic church significantly.[165]

Brunhild's actions at the end of the sixth century offer, therefore, perhaps the final glimpses of a royal policy most obviously pursued in the cities of Gaul by Childebert I, that of using urban and suburban Christian building patronage to project a regional authority and cultivate relationships with episcopal allies on the ground. During the later Merovingian kingdoms, however, the monastic patronage of sovereigns was moulded to meet different needs: the practice became essentially indistinguishable from their veneration of the cult of saints, and resources were progressively focussed on the periphery of Gaul's urban centres and beyond. Both of these themes had begun to emerge in the course of the sixth century. The blurring of patronage categories by rulers is evident at both Arles and Autun, but perhaps

[162] Gregory the Great, *Reg. Ep*., XIII.11, 13. Autun 7a, 13a. On the authenticity of these letters, see J.R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great,* vol. 3 (3 vols, Toronto, 2004), p. 830, n. 34.
[163] Gregory, *Hist.*, V.17. This arrangement was formalised by the Treaty of Andelot two years later: Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.20. See B. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 49-52.
[164] Gregory, *Hist.*, VIII.30.
[165] *PCBE* 4, Syagrivs, pp. 1847-53.

one of the best early urban examples is the famous convent of the Holy Cross, which was founded in Poitiers in c. 556 by the Thuringian princess and Frankish queen Radegund.[166]

Blurred lines

Radegund had been claimed by Chlothar I (511-561) as his wife following the Frankish conquest of Thuringia, which took place towards the end of Theuderic I's reign (511-533). After the king had her brother murdered, however, she fled to a villa at Saix in pursuit of a life of piety. When she heard Chlothar was making overtures to get her back, Radegund later made her way to Poitiers, whereupon the king ultimately relented, and, perhaps mindful of the fate of his soul as he neared the end of his life,[167] he decided to finance his wife's monastic vocation.[168] Thanks to two well-informed *Vitae* of Radegund, composed by her friend the poet Venantius Fortunatus and Baudonivia, a nun at the convent, as well as the detailed account of the monastery's foundation and early history relayed by Gregory of Tours, we possess a significant degree of information about Radegund's monastic building activities in Poitiers.[169] The convent was founded on an intra-mural site, and, mirroring the set-up of Caesarius' foundation at Arles, it was accompanied by the erection of a basilica just outside the city's walls for the burial of the nuns, which was dedicated to Mary.[170]

That Radegund closely modelled her building programme on that of Caesarius is unsurprising given she also adopted his monastic guidelines. Caesarius' *Rule* was very much concerned with the self-sufficient status of a monastery, and envisaged the community functioning free from outside interference.[171] In light of her experiences with Chlothar, it is perhaps easy to see why this proved attractive to Radegund, and her decision reflects the attitudes of those noblewomen discussed in the

[166] Poitiers 5a.
[167] J.A. McNamara, G. Whatley, and J.E. Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham and London, 1992), p. 62.
[168] Chlothar was probably also vital in ensuring that Radegund received the assistance of his regional supporters Duke Austrapius and Bishop Pientius of Poitiers: Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.42.
[169] Fortunatus, *Vita s. Radegundis,* ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 364-77; Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 377-95. Gregory, *Hist.*, III.7, IX.39-44, X.15-17.
[170] Poitiers 7a. See Arles 6a, 10a.
[171] Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles,* pp. 120, 250-5.

previous chapter, who may have seen monastic patronage as a vehicle for greater agency over their lives.[172]

Rather than appointing herself as abbess, however, Radegund chose to submit to the authority of Agnes, but her correspondence with Fortunatus – not to mention her wealth and status – suggests she remained the leading light of the convent.[173] Indeed, Radegund's cultivation of ecclesiastical and political power through the procurement of relics, and maintenance of relationships with important individuals both near and far, culminated in her acquisition of a piece of the Holy Cross from the Byzantine court, in which she was greatly aided by the backing of King Sigibert.[174] Such notable relics granted Radegund and her convent a valuable form of spiritual legitimacy and power,[175] which, during her lifetime at least, may even have challenged the local authority of Poitiers' bishops and the episcopal cult of Saint Hilary.[176] While the popularity of monasticism grew over time to rival the cult of saints as a focus for royal spending, Radegund's pursuit of relics for her convent, and the support she received from Sigibert, highlights how the two categories were becoming conflated by royal backers of urban building projects. An increasingly prevalent example of this phenomenon in the later Merovingian period was the monasticisation of suburban cult sites, but the community founded in Chalon-sur-Saône by King Guntram (561-592) at the basilica of Marcellus reveals how this practice likewise had sixth-century antecedents. Guntram's actions, moreover, highlight another trend that would only accelerate over time: the increasing relocation of royal display away from urban centres.

[172] See pp. 168-72.
[173] M. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009), pp. 244-319.
[174] Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.40. I. Moreira, '*Provisatrix optima*: St. Radegund of Poitiers' Relic Petitions to the East', *Journal of Medieval History* 19.4 (1993), pp. 285-305; J.C. Edwards, *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 61-74.
[175] See S.B. Gajano, 'Reliques et pouvoirs', in E. Bozóky and A.-M. Helvétius (eds), *Les reliques: objets, cultes, symboles* (Turnhout, 1999), pp. 255-70.
[176] Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, pp. 30-40.

Life on the edge

Among the generation of Merovingians who followed the prolific builder Childebert I, Guntram is the most visible patron of Christian building, although the scope of the monarch's patronage was far less extensive than that of his uncle. Rather than invest widely across the cities he controlled, Guntram channelled his pious largesse into Chalon-sur-Saône, which, probably on account of its greater centrality to a realm centred on the former Burgundian kingdom, served as his favoured royal residence over Orléans, the nominal capital of his realm. Unlike the urban and suburban character of Childebert's investment, Guntram targeted his spending at the peri-urban basilica of Saint Marcellus, which housed the tomb of the local martyr. Fredegar asserts that Guntram himself had built this church in 584,[177] but it surely existed in some form before that date, since the notorious episcopal brothers Salonius and Sagittarius were imprisoned there following their condemnation for *lèse-majesté* and treason at a trial held in Chalon in 579.[178] It is not unusual for sources to credit a patron with an act of building when their contribution was in reality limited to extending or embellishing an existing monument, and this was probably the case here, particularly as we learn elsewhere how Guntram provided the basilica with a *ciborium* fashioned from gold that he had apparently discovered while out hunting.[179] The accompanying monastery does seem to have been the work of Guntram,[180] however, which perhaps also helps to explain the confusion.[181] Indeed, Guntram held a church-council to confirm the establishment of the male community he had founded at the site in honour of Marcellus.[182] As Fredegar notes, this was in conscious imitation of the similar episcopal confirmation sought by the Burgundian king

[177] Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.1: *Anno xxiiii regni sui deuino amore eclesiam beati Marcelli, ubi ipsi praeciosus requiescit in corpore, suborbanum Cabilonninsim, sed quidem tamen Sequanum est territurium, merefice et sollerter aedificare iussit*.
[178] Gregory, *Hist.,* V.27.
[179] Chalon-sur-Saône 3a; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum,* III.34.
[180] Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.1, 14.
[181] Guntram was also regarded as the basilica's founder by the charters that survive within the abbey cartulary: *Privilegium Sancti Marcelli*, 872, ed. P. Canat de Chizy, *Le Cartulaire du prieuré de Saint-Marcel-lès-Chalon* (Chalon-sur-Saône, 1894), n. 1, p. 2; *TCCG* IV, p. 72.
[182] Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.1.

Sigismund, who, in 515, had reorganised the community of ascetics gathered at Agaune in honour of Saint Maurice, the leader of the famous Theban legion martyred in the late third century.[183]

Sigismund's involvement in Agaune set a precedent for the blurring of the cult of saints and monastic patronage that was followed by generations of Gaul's post-imperial rulers, and it appears to have served as a model for Guntram's personal sanctity and royal display in particular. Guntram obtained relics from the community at Saint-Maurice,[184] which perhaps ended up in his own foundation,[185] and he may have similarly imported the intercessory psalm-singing that Sigismund had instituted at Agaune.[186] Originating in the East, the so-called *laus perennis* was practised at all hours of the day as a means to safeguard the wellbeing of a king and his realm.[187] Albrecht Diem has argued that Sigismund's foundation was consequently central to creating a Burgundian kingdom that transcended Roman and 'barbarian' identities.[188] Alongside Guntram's evident Burgundian self-consciousness, however, his decision to venerate a martyr closely associated with his favoured city of Chalon suggests an attempt to carve out his own royal identity in the region, and establish a religious centre at his Frankish *sedes* to rival those associated with earlier Burgundian monarchs.

The location of Guntram's building programme within Chalon is also interesting. Although not quite as removed from Gaul's urban locales as Agaune, the church and monastery of Marcellus did lie very much on the fringes of Chalon-sur-Saône, some three kilometres east of its centre. As such, it continued a pattern of increasingly peri-urban acts of Christian patronage begun in Soissons by his father Chlothar I and brother Sigibert I, whose church in honour of Medard stood around 1500 metres outside the city.[189]

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[183] See Rosenwein, 'One Site, Many Meanings'; A.-M. Helvétius, 'L'abbaye de Saint-Maurice d'Agaune dans le haut Moyen Âge', in N. Brocard, *et al.* (eds), *Autour de saint Maurice. Actes du colloque Politique, société et construction identitaire: autour de saint Maurice* (Besançon-Saint-Maurice, 2012), pp. 113-31.
[184] Gregory, *GM,* 75.
[185] *TCCG* IV, p. 72.
[186] Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.1. Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', pp. 16-17; cf. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule,* p. 407. Like Sigismund, Guntram was also buried at his foundation.
[187] B.H. Rosenwein, 'Perennial Prayer at Agaune', in S. Farmer and B.H. Rosenwein (eds), *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 37-56. The *laus perennis* may have been instigated at the encouragement of local bishops, see I.N. Wood, 'Liturgy in the Rhône Valley and the Bobbio Missal' in Y. Hen and R. Meens (eds), *The Bobbio Missal: Liturgy and Religious Culture in Merovingian Gaul* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 208.
[188] A. Diem, 'Who Is Allowed to Pray for the King? Saint-Maurice d'Agaune and the Creation of a Burgundian Identity', in G. Heydemann and W. Pohl (eds), *Post-Roman Transitions. Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 47-88.
[189] Soissons 3a, 3b. See pp. 207-8.

The siting of these royally-sponsored building projects can be seen to have anticipated the increasing ruralisation of political practice and self-display that characterised the later Merovingian kingdoms, as the significance of the *civitas*-network began to wane. Although cities were never central to the exercise of Merovingian kingship, and the data for rulers sponsoring churches in the civic landscape is limited, Childebert I and Brunhild's acts of Christian building patronage in major or recently-acquired *civitas*-capitals, not to mention Chilperic's circus-building in Paris and Soissons, are certainly suggestive of some commitment to urban ideologies of rule among sixth-century sovereigns. But after having largely established themselves in their favoured cities or on nearby estates in this period,[190] and in marked contrast to their peers in Spain and Italy, the Frankish kings of the later kingdoms instead preferred to base their royal courts at rural palaces, such as Clichy and Compiègne, which were usually located around a day's ride from their kingdom's *sedes*.[191] Unsurprisingly, this development had consequences for their religious spending. Over time there was a move towards support for progressively more rural sites, which became particularly pronounced in royal patronage of the monastic networks flourishing across the Gallic countryside. While the surge in monastic interest in Gaul's rural environs did not see rulers turn their backs on cities entirely, it certainly seems to have shaped their involvement in the urban and suburban topography of their kingdoms. As we will see next, royal funding for monasticism was targeted at ever more peripheral locations, such as Saint-Denis outside Paris, or was restricted to support for communities in cities that already existed.

A royal shift

Coupled with developments in legal, fiscal, and administrative policy, the emergence of a more settled and territorially-coherent *tria regna* in the seventh century meant that cities were increasingly no longer the primary medium through which the Frankish polity was organised.[192] Since access to power generally transcended the *civitas*-network in this period, its representation was also often found

[190] Loseby, 'Gregory's Cities', pp. 262-3.
[191] J. Barbier, 'Le système palatial franc: genèse et fonctionnement dans le nord-ouest du *regnum*', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 148.2 (1990), pp. 245-99.
[192] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', pp. 235-41.

elsewhere, and as a result rulers and their lay supporters became less concerned with asserting their status in the civic arena through acts of Christian building patronage (fig. 16). This was especially true of the Frankish monarchs, who did not share the interest that powerful lay aristocrats might have retained in the acquisition of episcopal authority. Instead, royal attention was for the most part focussed in the countryside, where the Merovingians were at the forefront of the explosion in rural monasticism that had begun to get underway at the end of the sixth century.[193] Dagobert I (623-39) and Balthild (657-65) were particularly prolific patrons in this regard, helping to establish several famous communities including Chelles, Corbie, Solignac, Rebais and Jumièges.[194] But the cities of the later Merovingian kingdoms were not entirely neglected, and there we see the crystallisation of a number of themes that had been taking shape over the course of the sixth century: the refocussing of spending on peri-urban sites, and the blending of royal support for the cult of saints and monasticism, most obviously through the monasticisation of existing funerary basilicas.

In contrast with the Parisian investments of previous generations of Frankish monarchs, who, as we have seen, directed their largesse towards funerary basilicas in the city's immediate suburbs (fig. 18), the seventh century saw successive rulers take a growing interest in Saint-Denis as a Merovingian burial church and abbey. Their interest in this site, around eleven kilometres from Paris on the road leading north from the city to the village of Catuliacum,[195] consolidated the trend of royal cult foci being increasingly removed from urban centres. The tomb of Saint Denis, or Dionysius, a martyr and the supposed first bishop of Paris (d. 249/251),[196] was initially patronised in the middle of the fifth century by the aforementioned Genovefa, who erected what was probably a rather modest church over the burial.[197] Royal interest in the cult first becomes apparent with the burial of Prince Dagobert, the son of Chilperic I and Fredegund, at the church in 580,[198] but it was only under Chlothar II (597-629) and

[193] Y. Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 27-49.
[194] I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994), pp. 183-4, 192-4.
[195] S. Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: From its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475-1151* (New Haven, 1987), p. 5.
[196] Gregory, *Hist.*, I.30.
[197] *Vita Genovefae*, 18-20; Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, pp. 65-73.
[198] Gregory, *Hist.*, V.40.

especially Dagobert I (629-639), whose favoured palace of Clichy was located nearby,[199] that the shrine really began to benefit from its association with the Merovingians.[200] Both kings lavished property from the royal fisc upon the church, and Dagobert enlarged and embellished the building, commissioning the famous goldsmith Eligius to fashion an elaborate mausoleum over Denis' burial, complete with a marble *ciborium* decorated with gold and gems.[201] Following the example of Sigismund at Agaune, and perhaps also Guntram at Chalon, the king also instituted the so-called *laus perennis* for the community at Saint-Denis,[202] in another indication of how royal donors increasingly combined their patronage of the cult of saints with monasticism. Dagobert's sponsorship of the liturgy was an attempt to secure the divine support of Denis, and so it was unsurprising he was interred in the saint's church following his death in 638, thereby confirming the growing royal preference for increasingly peripheral burial sites, which was first evident at Soissons and Chalon-sur-Saône in the previous century.

In addition to the various monastic communities they founded in the countryside, Dagobert's son Clovis II (639-657) and his wife Balthild continued the family's association with the cult and abbey of Saint-Denis, endowing the institution with further lands, privileges, and immunities.[203] Legal instruments such as these became a key element of the ecclesiastical policy of later Merovingian sovereigns.[204] They were generally concentrated in the Gallic countryside, where they underpinned not only royal foundations but also those of their supporters, by restricting the ability of local bishops to exercise oversight of these communities and exempting them from other fiscal obligations and judicial control.[205] The *Klosterpolitik* of Balthild, however, also had a suburban dimension, which saw the promotion of a number of 'senior basilicas' across northern and central Gaul and the institution of monastic rules for

[199] Barbier, 'Le sacré dans le palais franc', pp. 35-6.
[200] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church,* pp. 123-42.
[201] *Vita Eligii,* I.32; Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.79. The church's annual fair was also established and granted toll privileges by Dagobert, see Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 232-3.
[202] Fredegar, *Chronicae,* IV.79; Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 111-16.
[203] Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space,* pp. 74-89; Hen, *Roman Barbarians,* pp. 119-20.
[204] A.C. Murray, 'Immunity, Nobility, and the Edict of Paris', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp. 18-39; *idem,* 'Merovingian Immunity Revisited', *History Compass* 8.8 (2010), pp. 913-28.
[205] Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul,* pp. 50-136.

the communities of ascetics that were attached to them.[206] Alongside Saint-Denis, the queen confirmed privileges and immunities for the churches of Germanus, Medard, Peter, Anianus, and Martin at Paris, Soissons, Sens, Orléans, and Tours respectively.[207] Her *Vita* notes that she hoped her generosity and a stricter monastic regimen would encourage the resident monks to seek intercession on behalf of herself, the king, and the whole kingdom.[208] Balthild's decision to found new monastic communities in the countryside, such as Chelles where she was buried, but focus her attention in the cities on the reform of existing institutions, underline's how Gaul's *civitas*-capitals had largely lost their status as the favoured backdrop for symbolic representations of royal authority in the later Merovingian kingdoms. Limited though they were, the Christian building programmes undertaken by Frankish rulers in the cities of the sixth century do reveal their interest in urban strategies of legitimation. In the later kingdoms, however, the structural evolution of the Merovingian polity, the rise of monasticism, and a growing preference for rural residences had all combined to bring about a shift in royal priorities, which saw religious investments redirected accordingly.

Conclusion

Although a royal interest in acts of monastic patronage in the cities of Gaul emerges slightly later than for erecting funerary basilicas in honour of saints (fig. 16), it similarly peaks in the second half of the sixth century before subsequently falling away. This is perhaps unsurprising, since, for some sovereigns, including both Childebert I and Brunhild, monastic patronage seemingly served as another vehicle for them to express their faith and assert their authority across their territory – particularly in newly-acquired cities – during a period of renewal for Gaul's *civitas*-network. At the same time, however, a number of trends emerged in the course of the sixth century that would go on to define the royal monastic building patronage of the later Merovingian kingdoms. The close relationship in the

[206] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 197-202; J.L. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women* (Oxford, 1978), p. 70; P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 109-10.
[207] *Vita Balthildis*, 9, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 475-508.
[208] *Ibid.*

minds of a number of royals between the provision of support for monasticism and the cult of saints is evident, for example, in the foundations of Childebert, Radegund, Guntram, and Brunhild. Alongside the necessary acquisition of relics for monasteries and the erection of funerary churches for monks and nuns, this blurring of patronage categories also entailed founding monastic communities at the sites of existing basilicas, as Guntram did in Chalon-sur-Saône. The location of this monastery also highlights the progressive drift out of urban centres of elite comportment, evident in the increasing preference for cult sites on the fringes of cities.

This predilection was confirmed in the seventh century by the royal favour shown towards the site of Saint-Denis, eleven kilometres outside Paris, which again entailed the veneration of a holy figure in a monastic context. This was a practice first seen in Gaul when Sigismund provided royal backing for the community of Agaune that had gathered in honour of Saint Maurice, and the *laus perennis* instituted at the site by the Burgundian king in pursuit of heavenly intercession for himself and his kingdom was similarly copied by Dagobert. Despite the interest taken by Balthild in Saint-Denis and a number of other suburban institutions, the queen's patronage, like that of her contemporaries, was otherwise largely focussed on rural foundations. It seems clear, therefore, that the character of monastic building patronage had evolved in the later Merovingian kingdoms in conjunction with the relationship between the royals and their cities. A more territorially-coherent and stable Frankish polity had reduced the need for claiming status in civic arenas now they had lost much of their political significance as the building blocks of kingdoms. Instead, kings and queens mirrored their secular magnates by increasingly basing their displays of piety and authority, and indeed themselves, out in the countryside, where monastic networks flourished, particularly across northern Gaul. In contrast, while royals had once been eager to finance new monastic building projects in the cities, they now seemed content merely to provide support for existing institutions through privileges and immunities, as attested by Balthild's *Klosterpolitik*. For the sovereigns of the later Merovingian kingdoms, therefore, the idea that the monastic 'boom' of this period was largely a rural affair does not seem too wide of the mark.

5.4. Synthesis

In concluding this chapter on the Christian building patronage of Gaul's imperial and post-imperial ruling families, it is necessary to return to some of the questions raised at the start, namely, how important the practice was to this group in the context of their general strategies of asserting and perpetuating their authority, how their attitudes compared to those of the clerical class and laity, and what this says about their conception of the significance of the cities of their kingdoms. In light of their resources and ability to requisition public space unilaterally in the urban and suburban landscape, Gaul's rulers were evidently the Christian patrons with the most agency, and were only really limited by their own willingness to build. During the Roman era, it appears that financing Christian construction projects was an essential element of wider programmes of imperial patronage in important cities, as the exceptional episcopal group of Trier attests. Although its association with the Constantinian household cannot be confirmed, the ambition demonstrated by this extensive complex suggests imperial backing would have been a prerequisite for its completion. Such an intervention in Trier's topography offered a template for how Christian building patronage could function for Gaul's rulers as a manifest demonstration of their authority, and particularly as a vehicle of self-display in their cities of residence. It is unclear, nevertheless, to what extent this remained a central strategy of rulership following the dissolution of the western Roman empire.

It is often posited that the leaders of Rome's successor states embraced imperial ideologies of power when consolidating their kingdoms. While this seems to have been the case in many respects, it is important not to overstate the degree of such *imitatio imperii*, nor to assume that Theoderic's Romanising rule in Italy was echoed by his peers in Gaul to the same extent. The authority of the royal families of the post-imperial world did not depend on Roman titles or symbolism, and nor was it reliant on religion. Even within the sphere of ecclesiastical spending, sponsoring church-building was simply one option among many for sovereigns, as their apparent unwillingness to bankroll the development of the episcopal groups of their kingdoms on the scale evident at fourth-century Trier suggests. Nevertheless, even if the opportunities for self-representation that Christian building patronage provided were not essential for rulers, they would certainly have been useful for helping to win the

favour of the native Gallo-Roman population, whose own enthusiasm for such projects was becoming increasingly widespread in the course of the fifth century. Rather than cathedrals, however, the extant evidence suggests that royal families generally engaged with the practice through the erection of funerary churches dedicated to saints, and latterly through monastic foundations, which increasingly also served as a vehicle for the veneration of favoured cults. This interest peaked in the cities in the second half of the sixth century, with a sharper decline in such royal patronage in the later Merovingian kingdoms than we have seen in the cases of either clerical or other lay patrons.

Within this general trend, it seems clear that the practice of Christian building patronage was more important for some royals than others. During the late fifth century, for example, it was the women of the Burgundian household who appear to have been at the forefront of glorifying their cities of residence with basilicas celebrating favoured cults, while their male counterparts seemingly displayed little interest in the practice. The influence of one of these Burgundian princesses, Clotild, was then probably integral to the first recorded act of urban church-building by a Frankish monarch, but the example that Clovis and his wife set at Paris was only followed inconsistently by their Merovingian descendants. A number of kings apparently made no topographical impact on the Christian landscape of the *civitas*-capitals of their kingdoms, perhaps because they preferred instead to channel their energies into more martial representations of power, characterised by conquest and the distribution of plundered booty.

Of course, the two were not mutually exclusive. Childebert I combined campaigns in Burgundian and Ostrogothic territory, as well as an excursion into Visigothic Spain, with an extensive and diverse Christian building programme, which marks him out as the royal civic patron *par excellence* of the earlier Merovingian kings. Indeed, while visible royal investment in this period was largely concentrated in rulers' cities of residence, Childebert appears to have deliberately followed his annexation of other key cities with displays of ecclesiastical largesse as a means of asserting his authority over newly-acquired regions of Gaul. To this end, the king's building projects, like many of those of his royal peers, were often undertaken in conjunction with the local bishop, illustrating how classical models of patronage, typified by munificent emperors acting alone, had necessarily adapted to a Christian context. Such partnerships may have run counter to the thinking of their most well-heeled

lay supporters, who often seem to have sought opportunities to sponsor church-building in a way that limited the absorption of their patronage into an episcopal orbit. For the royal families of Gaul, however, Christian patronage offered a way to cement relationships with bishops who could prove useful allies on the ground, as Brunhild's sustained collaboration with Syagrius at Autun attests.

In addition to meeting a number of other specifically royal needs, from acquiring spiritual ballast for oneself and one's kingdom to establishing a suitable burial place, the pious investment of Gaul's post-imperial sovereigns also reflected the reinvigorated political and symbolic status of cities in the Frankish polity of the sixth century. Already in this period, however, a growing preference for the sponsorship of cult sites on the urban fringes and in the countryside was becoming apparent. Several acts of building patronage by Merovingian kings were increasingly located at some remove from Gaul's urban centres. Guntram's monastic intervention, and later burial, at the site of Saint Marcellus' tomb outside Chalon-sur-Saône, for example, anticipated the support shown by subsequent generations towards the even more peripheral abbey and funerary basilica of Saint-Denis, sited some eleven kilometres north of Paris.

As monasticism became the favoured outlet for displays of spiritual devotion and political favour, this trend was consolidated by the proliferation of foundations directly sponsored by royal patrons on their own rural estates, and by the granting of privileges and immunities to those of their secular magnates. The context for this development was the emergence of the stable *tria regna* of Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy in the seventh century, a political structure that was less susceptible to the frequent territorial shakeups of the sixth century, and was no longer grounded in the *civitas*-framework. The decline in the political significance of Gaul's cities in the secular sphere saw them lose what symbolic resonance they had as privileged foci of royal sponsorship, and the seventh-century sovereigns relocated their courts to favoured rural palaces. The urban and suburban Christian building patronage of Gaul's sixth-century sovereigns was already patchy, but the interest in such projects among their later Merovingian counterparts now declined still further, to the extent that their documented involvement in the civic arena was now largely confined to Balthild's interventions in long-established institutions. But then, on the balance of the available evidence, building patronage had never been a major strategy of rulership for the Merovingians.

6. Patterns

In an attempt to investigate the extant evidence for Christian building patronage in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul in a systematic manner, it has been necessary to impose a framework on the material that, in reality, is somewhat artificial. While dividing the individuals responsible for the practice by social category has proved useful to assess how different actors engaged with this new means for asserting belief and claiming authority, such a methodology has perhaps at the same time obscured some aspects that are best examined holistically. Acts of Christian building patronage were generally a collective exercise, for example, which not only integrated the elites of lay and religious society in networks of shared rule and social practice, but also drew together donors from across the socio-economic spectrum in a way that classical euergetism generally did not. As we saw in the previous chapter especially, moreover, a fourfold classification of discrete building categories does not necessarily account for how the funding of episcopal groups, the cult of saints, monastic ventures, and pastoral care could at times be blurred by benefactors, whose evolving needs helped to shape the civic landscapes of Gaul in novel and interesting ways. It is for these reasons that this chapter will pull back from the series of case studies pursued thus far, and assess the practice of patronising Christian building in the round. In doing so, it will be possible to determine patterns across time, space, and patron groups that can add to our understanding of a period that witnessed some profound socio-political changes.

Attempts to schematise the Christianisation of the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul must be accompanied by a renewed acknowledgement of the uneven nature of our source base, which varies significantly across both time and space. Even the evidence that we do have is highly heterogeneous and partial, and it is not always easy to reconcile the written texts with the archaeological record, since descriptions of lavish churches often prove upon excavation to be at odds with their rather modest material remains. It is also questionable how accurate our sources are when it comes to identifying the individuals responsible for these acts of patronage and the underlying funding models. Much of the surviving written record is the work of clerical or monastic authors, who generally shared an interest in promoting ecclesiastical structures and personnel. This naturally has implications not only for the forms

of Christian building patronage that are reported – and are not – but also for how this behaviour is presented, with episcopal actors foregrounded and the contributions of the laity generally downplayed. Drawing broad conclusions from the available material is consequently fraught with hazards, and these should be remembered as we go about attempting to construct a hypothetical model.

While we must remain guarded, therefore, and qualify any apparent patterns in the evidence with due consideration for its inherent limitations, this chapter will argue that the surviving source record does suggest a number of general trends that are indicative of how the practice of Christian building patronage may have played out across late antique and Merovingian Gaul. Indeed, the evidence will first be assessed chronologically, exploiting a framework proposed by Simon Loseby to understand the first eight centuries of Gallic urbanism. This will demonstrate how the development of the Christian topography of Gaul's cities was in large part shaped by the evolution of political structures at the centre and periphery, and the behaviour of elites who adjusted their pursuit and display of power accordingly. Within this broad chronological outline, however, it is important to note that the practice played out to different extents and speeds across Gaul, as well as within smaller territorial units, from kingdoms and ecclesiastical provinces to individual cities. This geographical dimension of Gallic Christian building patronage will therefore be considered next, and its embrace by secular and clerical leaders seeking to project their authority at a regional and local level highlighted.

Finally, attention will turn to evaluating in the round the individuals and groups responsible for transforming Gaul's cities, in order to acknowledge that distinctions drawn thus far among different actors in the upper echelons of society, and between the categories of Christian building they sponsored, were often less sharply defined in reality. Indeed, it has been argued throughout that it was the intra-city competition within the local arenas of late antique and Merovingian Gaul that underpinned the topographical transformation of the period. Nevertheless, the nature and extent of the jockeying for ascendancy between ecclesiastical, lay, and ruling patrons needs to be qualified slightly, and the collaboration across social categories that made many Christian building projects possible also recognized. A holistic view of the practice and its proponents will thus enable us to understand the

interplay between these seemingly opposing forces of competition and cooperation, and the consequences this had for Gaul's urban and suburban landscapes.

6.1. Across time

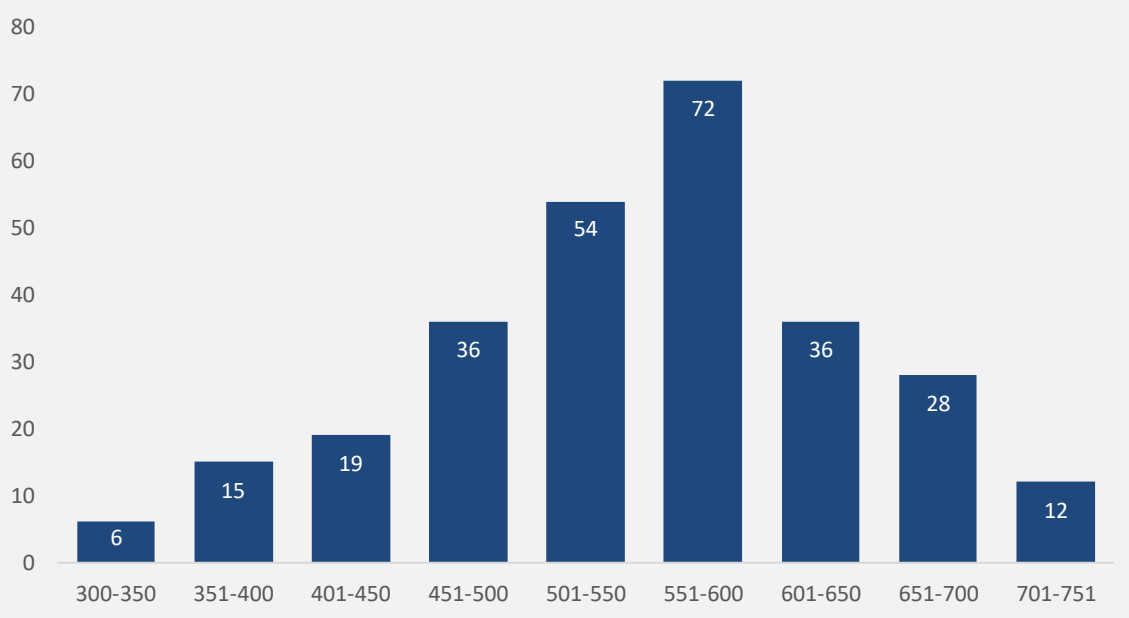


Fig. 20. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul with an identifiable patron between 300 and 751.

When considered as a whole across late antique and Merovingian Gaul, the acts of Christian building patronage for which the persons responsible are explicitly attested, or can be inferred from context with a high degree of confidence, reveal a clear trend (fig. 20). While such pious munificence was initially slow to make a mark on the urban and suburban topography of Gaul's cities, the rate of building began to accelerate in the course of the fifth century, before peaking in the second half of the sixth century. The later Merovingian kingdoms subsequently observed an apparent slowdown in the practice as it reverted to the levels of the fifth century. Even so, it is essential to admit that this superficially coherent distribution may simply be a reflection of the data we have available to us, rather than an accurate portrayal of reality. Indeed, an analysis of the Christian building patronage of Gaul across four centuries is very much at the mercy of a disparate written record that varies wildly by type and volume both chronologically and geographically, and this obviously has implications for the conclusions that can be drawn from it. It is hard to ignore, for example, that the apparent spike in the second half of the sixth century coincides with when Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus were active. To some extent, the significant evidence both writers provide is balanced out by the rich hagiography of the later Merovingian kingdoms, and the data provided by the material record is a useful corrective across the

whole period. As we saw at Geneva, for example, archaeology provides evidence for significant programmes of Christian building patronage that went otherwise unrecorded by any textual sources.[1] It is for these reasons that the textual and material evidence for such acts of construction, regardless of whether a patron is known or not, has also been compiled, and this distribution is illustrated below.

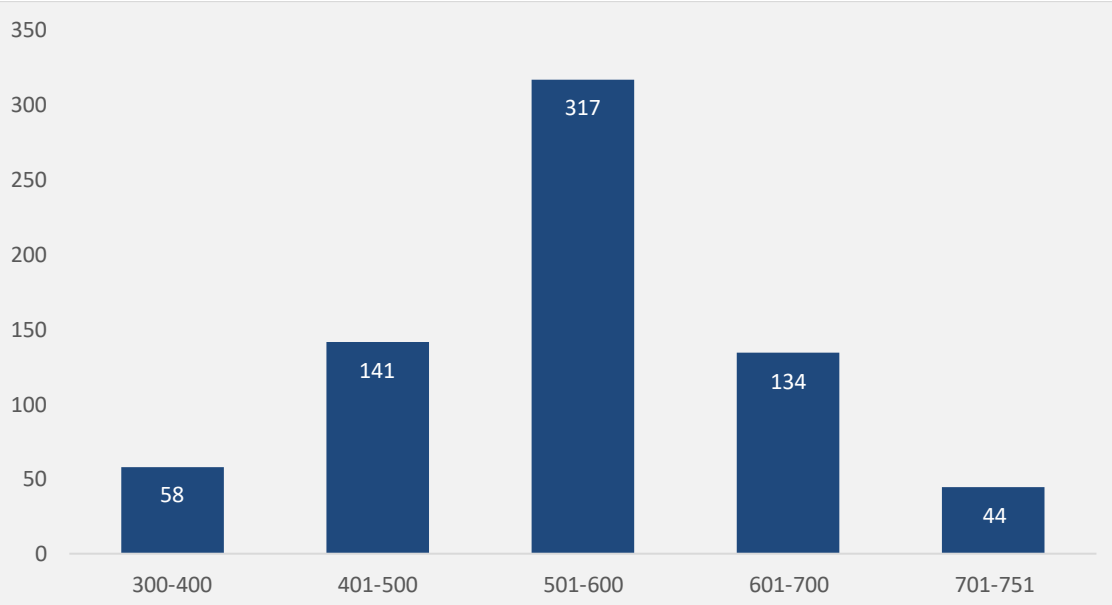


Fig. 21. All textually- and archaeologically-attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751.

We cannot always be precise when it comes to dating acts of building patronage for which we are ignorant of the persons responsible, and so the chronological boundaries adopted in fig. 21 are slightly broader than fig. 20. Nevertheless, the distribution, and particularly its sixth-century spike, clearly mirrors that of the evidence we have for patronage acts with a known sponsor, which suggests that we can have some degree of confidence in the symptomatic quality of this data. Even when we remove those acts of Christian building patronage attested solely in the work of Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus, in order to address head-on the possibility that our evidence is skewed by the literary output of both writers, the general pattern remains, albeit with a slightly less pronounced peak in the sixth century (fig. 22).

[1] See pp. 60-5.

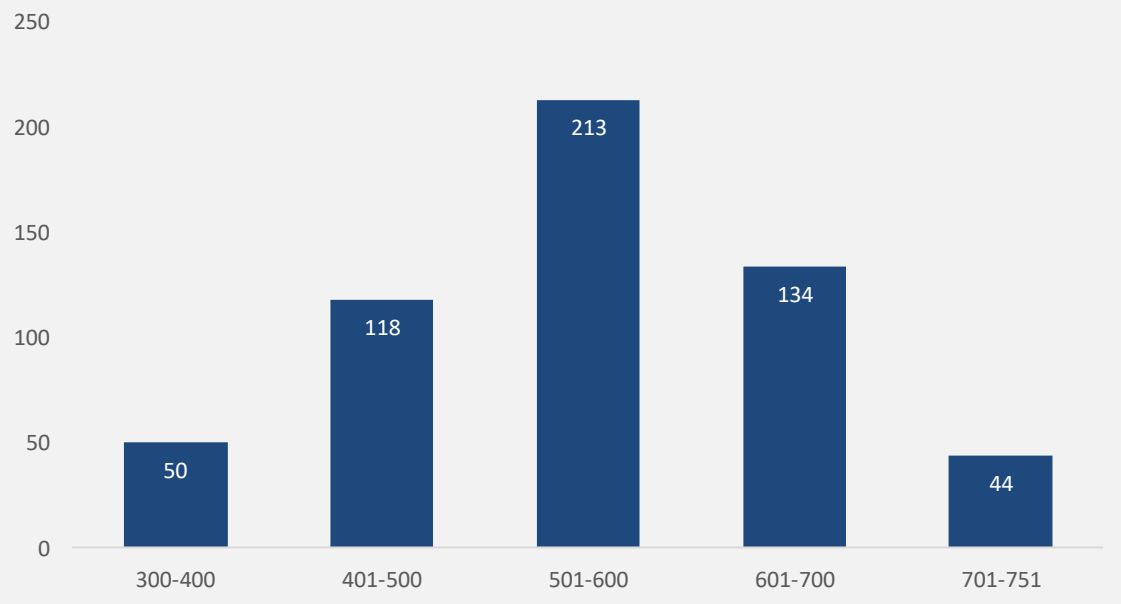


Fig. 22. All attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751, excluding those mentioned solely by Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus.

Of course, a great deal of both textual and material evidence for Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul has undoubtedly been lost, or is yet to be discovered. For example, we can safely assume that every city would have possessed an episcopal group in this period, but around half of them furnish no evidence for such complexes before 751. Even so, another reason to consider the available data as reasonably indicative of society's engagement with the practice is that it closely correlates with the evidence we have for the epigraphic habit across the same time period. The inscriptions of late antique and early medieval Gaul have been collated by Mark Handley, and since very few survive from buildings, they serve as a largely independent data-set, displaying only minimal overlap with the evidence compiled by this study.[2] And yet, the chronological distribution of the extant epigraphy follows an almost identical trajectory to that of the known acts of Christian building patronage, with a gradual increase and observable peak in the sixth century, followed by a sharp drop-off during the later Merovingian kingdoms (fig. 23 and 24).

[2] M.A. Handley, *Death, Society and Culture: Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Gaul and Spain, AD 300-750* (Oxford, 2003). See now *idem*, 'Merovingian Epigraphy, Frankish Epigraphy, and the Epigraphy of the Merovingian World', in B. Effros and I. Moreira (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 556-79.

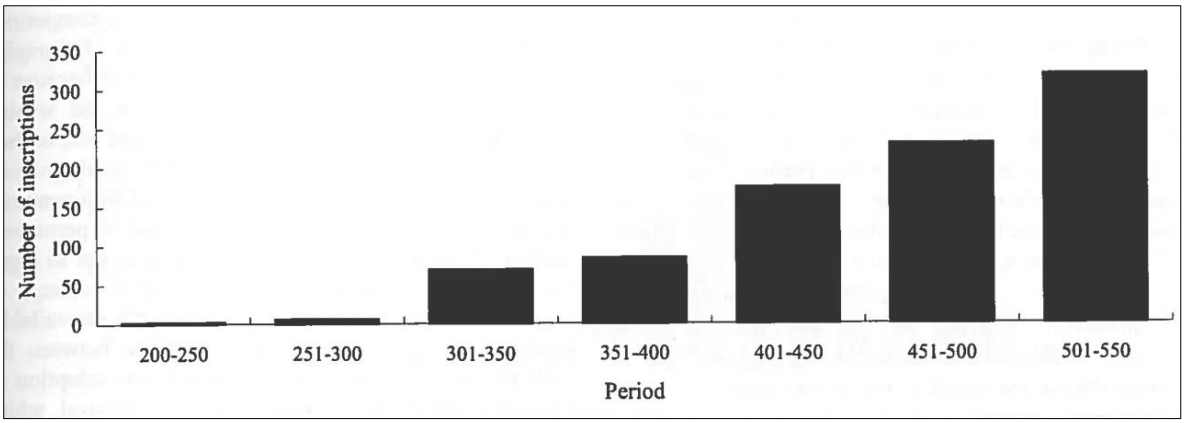


Fig. 23. The rising epigraphic habit in late antique Gaul (Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, p. 13).

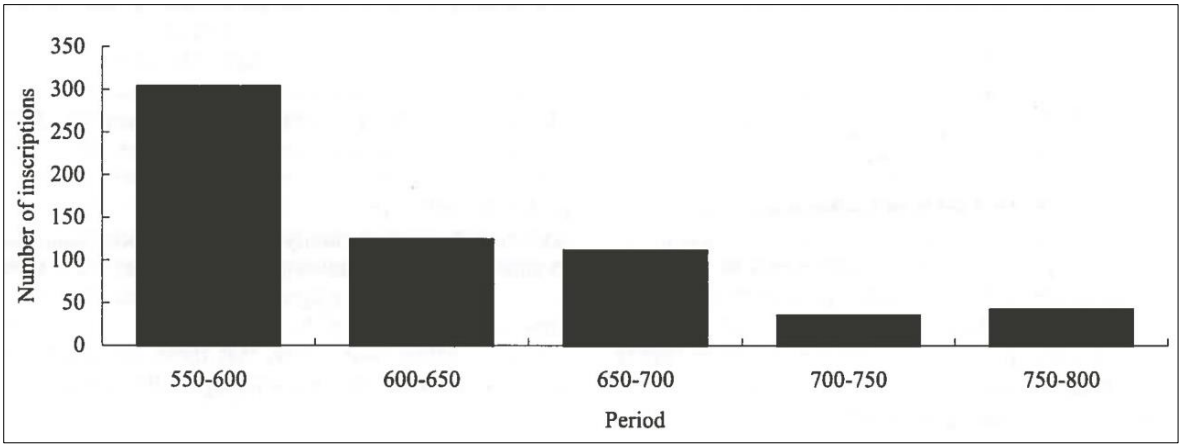


Fig. 24. The declining epigraphic habit in early medieval Gaul (Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, p. 181).

Handley believed that the waxing and waning of the epigraphic habit across Gaul reflected the fact that during a period of insecurity and renewed competition, when the make-up of the region's social elites was in flux, a funerary inscription served as a popular and effective claim to status on account of its perceived longevity, whereas in times of greater stability and social continuity, such concerns were less pressing and so the practice fell out of favour.[3] It has been argued throughout this study that erecting a church played a similar role in fulfilling a desire for self-legitimation among those looking to justify or perpetuate their standing at a time of upheaval. Indeed, in order to understand the available evidence for urban and suburban Christian building patronage in the region, it is necessary to situate the practice within the *longue durée* of the first eight centuries of Gallic urbanism, and the wider context of elite responses to the shifting relationship between central and local authority during a period of socio-

[3] Handley, *Death, Society and Culture,* p. 183.

political transformation. Simon Loseby has sketched four phases in the life cycle of the ancient Gallic and Merovingian city which serve as a useful heuristic device for framing the evidence compiled here.[4] While the first two phases offer some conceptual parallels and context for the actions of lay and ecclesiastical elites between the fourth and eighth centuries, the latter two are most relevant for helping to explain paradigms of Christian building patronage in this period.

The life cycle of a Gallic city

Loseby's first phase is usually seen as the heyday of Gallic urbanism. In the Augustan era, the establishment of a network of around 100 *civitates* across the region was made possible by the devolution of municipal authority down to the elites of each *civitas*-capital, who took responsibility for administering the territory and collecting the requisite taxes. Demand for local office and pre-eminence drove the development of the civic landscape during this period, and gave rise to the public buildings and amenities typical of the classical Roman city.[5] Both inter- and intra-city competition saw local leaders operate within formalised systems of patronage to fund, *inter alia*, baths, temples, and theatres as a means to glorify themselves and their municipality, and assert and legitimise their authority in respect to the civic communities who benefited from these acts of urban munificence. On the whole, surplus wealth was concentrated and expended in the city rather than the countryside, and most Gallo-Romans had little interest in leaving their *civitas*-capital to pursue careers elsewhere. But already by around 200 CE, the archaeological evidence indicates that civic spending had begun to slow, and the ability to maintain these well-developed – and in some cases over-developed – built environments was coming under strain.[6]

[4] S.T. Loseby, 'Decline and Change in the Cities of Late Antique Gaul', in J.-U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt in der Spatantike – Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 67-104; *idem*, 'Lost Cities. The End of the *Civitas*-System in Frankish Gaul', in S. Diefenbach and G.M. Müller (eds), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Kulturgeschichte einer Region* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 223-52. See also *idem*, 'The Role of the City in Merovingian Francia', in Effros and Moreira (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, pp. 583-610.
[5] J.F. Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul. The Three Provinces, 58 BC – AD 260* (London, 1983), pp. 141-211; G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 106-41.
[6] S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 97-149.

A retrenchment in urban settlement and material culture characterises Loseby's second phase of Gallic urbanism, in which the euergetism that had underpinned the civic landscapes of early imperial Gaul was largely rejected – or, at least, not maintained on the same scale – by its practitioners, seemingly on the grounds of mounting costs and a refocussing of social and cultural priorities. Progressively utilitarian expressions of urbanism began to proliferate in this period, typified by the degeneration of zones of occupation, and the adaptation and decay of public spaces.[7] This trajectory was already evident from the late second century but was exacerbated by the administrative reforms of Diocletian (284-305), who overhauled the political apparatus of the later Roman Empire.[8] The newly established Tetrarchy oversaw a significant expansion of the state bureaucracy from the late third century, which further undermined the attraction of local office and the acts of public munificence previously required in order to attain and justify it.[9] Status and authority was increasingly pursued by the more ambitious at the imperial centre in this period, and perpetuated by the accumulation of offices and honours that one acquired in ascending through the *cursus honorum*.[10] Although evident across the empire,[11] this trend was particularly acute in Gaul because Trier was host to an imperial court and prefecture for much of the period, and so the city provided a focus for ambitious elites looking to make a name for themselves. Significant social power was no longer embedded primarily in the civic level, therefore, but instead largely regulated by association with, and advancement through, the imperial administrative superstructure.

This refocussing of Gallic aspirations meant that the wealthy and their resources were less visible in the cities, as their attention was turned more towards the bureaucratic centre of the Roman state, and, albeit to varying extents, its rural environs, which, in the Aquitanian provinces especially, were home to the

[7] Loseby, 'Decline and Change', pp. 79-83.
[8] A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (3 vols, Oxford, 1964), pp. 712-66; C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), pp. 107-231.
[9] B. Ward-Perkins, 'The Cities', in A. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds), *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 13. *The Late Empire, AD 337-425* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 371-410; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001).
[10] J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 56-86.
[11] J. Weisweiler, 'The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West: Divine Monarchy, State-Building and the Transformation of the Roman Senatorial Order (c. 25 BCE – 425 CE)', in T. Minamikawa (ed.), *New Approaches to the Later Roman Empire: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Kyoto University on 8 March 2014* (Kyoto, 2015), pp. 31-51.

villas of the social elite.[12] Some *civitas*-capitals, however, were fortunate to benefit from a new-found status dependent on an imperial, and latterly royal, presence, and thus continued to enjoy more lavish urban benefaction. The episcopal group of Trier, for example, was probably a precocious and major beneficiary of imperial munificence.[13] In general, however, it seems that there was only a modest degree of religious investment in the cities of Gaul in this period (fig. 21), and Kim Bowes has suggested that pious capital was instead focussed in the domestic spheres of the countryside.[14]

Nevertheless, while regional disparities should not be overlooked, it does seem plausible that embryonic episcopal groups were beginning to materialize in some form in most cities by the end of the fourth century in order to play host to a new form of urban potentate: the bishop. The extent of these complexes would have been diverse, however, ranging from modest house conversions to the probable double cathedral and baptistery that stood in Rouen already by the year 400.[15] The Christian monumental development of some privileged burials within the suburban necropolises started to manifest itself soon after, as the cult of saints spread across Gaul.[16] This is especially well documented at Toulouse, where the tomb of Saturninus was upgraded by consecutive bishops between 350 and 420.[17] For the most part these twin processes took place within and beyond city walls respectively, and helped to offset some of the material decline that was otherwise unfolding across the civic landscape.

This brings us onto Loseby's third phase of urbanism. This was generally a time of renewal for Gaul's cities, but there was some overlap with the retrenchment of the second phase, which had become increasingly evident since the third century, and was further compounded by political and economic crises in the fifth century. Indeed, as a response to growing insecurity on the ground, many of those cities that were not already fortified in this period, and even some of those that were, received wall-circuits that drastically redefined conceptions of urban space by often enclosing only a limited zone of

[12] C. Balmelle, *Les demeures aristocratiques d'Aquitaine. Société et culture de l'Antiquité tardive dans le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule* (Bordeaux and Paris, 2001).
[13] Trier 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a. See pp. 184-8.
[14] K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008); *Idem,* '"Christianization" and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007), pp. 143-70.
[15] Rouen 1a, 1b. See pp. 53-5.
[16] B. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule: Les premiers temps. D'Hilaire de Poitiers à la fin du VI e siècle* (Paris, 2000).
[17] Toulouse 5a, 5b, 5c. See pp. 78-80.

settlement.[18] At the same time, however, the ideological significance of Gaul's wall-circuits as markers of urban status reflected a wider reinvigoration of the *civitas*-system. The other major topographical development to indicate this civic revival concerned the Christianisation of urban and suburban space. As we have seen throughout this study, this was a multifaceted process, which, while underway from the fourth century, only really picked up steam in the course of the fifth and especially the sixth century in a context of marked social upheaval. Concerned about the 'barbarian' threat and the disintegrating structures of the Roman state, which had previously served to legitimise and maintain its rule in society, the fifth century was a precarious time for the Gallic aristocracy. It was also a period of opportunity, however, as the withering and eventual disappearance of the imperial *cursus honorum* refocussed political horizons on Gaul's barbarian courts and *civitas*-capitals. In a situation reminiscent of the first century, local power was once again meaningful and up for grabs, and modes of legitimation previously exploited at the municipal level, including public building programmes, were given a renewed impetus in light of this reinvigorated civic competition. The Christian patronage bubbling away in the cities of Gaul was consequently seized upon with growing enthusiasm by pious elites looking to insinuate themselves back into their local political arenas in order to perpetuate their authority and social standing.

As fig. 20 illustrates, this investment appears to have gathered pace throughout the fifth century and further accelerated during the period of the Merovingian conquest of Gaul, when the rejuvenated status of the cities was consolidated through the administration of the post-imperial successor-states. As the basic unit through which taxation, military service, justice, and loyalty to the king was organised, the *civitas*-framework, at least initially, proved an integral component of the 'barbarian' polities that had expanded in the wake of the dissolution of the western Roman empire.[19] A parallel development in this period saw the church emerge as a guarantor of pastoral wellbeing within civic communities, and a progressively influential organising principle within society at large, in which the bishop came to be established as an important local leader. It was during this period, therefore, and certainly not any

[18] For the example of Tours, see H. Galinié, *Tours antique et médiéval, lieux de vie, temps de la ville, 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine* (Tours, 2007), pp. 355-61.
[19] S.T. Loseby, 'Gregory's Cities: Urban Functions in Sixth-century Gaul', in I.N. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period. An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 239-70; A.C. Murray, 'The Merovingian State and Administration in the Times of Gregory of Tours', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *A Companion to Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 191-231.

earlier, that episcopal office started to become a genuine ambition for elites seeking social status and legitimation in Gaul.[20] Indeed, competition between prominent families jockeying for control of an increasingly influential lever of local power contributed to the growth in church-building evident during the consolidation of Frankish rule and beyond.

The agency and dominion of bishops should not be overstated, however. In addition to having to contend with the institutionalised authority of counts, local representatives of the episcopate also operated alongside and in partnership with looser and more informal collectives of urban potentates, which had emerged in this period to fill the vacuum precipitated by the decline of the city-councils.[21] This was not always a harmonious co-existence, and so for bishops, whose recourse to more martial ways of expressing status was technically precluded by their vocation, Christian building patronage provided an important vehicle for asserting their position in society. A need to convince the local community of their declared pre-eminence consequently helped to drive the significant upgrade of both episcopal groups and the shrines of the holy over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries.[22] For both local and regional leaders interested in acts of public display in Gaul's revived civic arenas in this period, assertions of authority expressed through the medium of Christian patronage were rooted in ideas about social responsibility and the correct use of wealth.[23] Bishops, lay elites, and royals were able to legitimise their rule and position in society – and enhance their own prospects of securing divine backing – by financing spaces where the whole community could seek heavenly intercession for this life and the next.[24]

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[20] Sidonius Apollinaris was perhaps an early forerunner at Clermont, see J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 169-222. In general, however, see S. Patzold, 'Zur Sozialstruktur des Episkopats und zur Ausbildung bischöflicher Herrschaft in Gallien zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter', in M. Becker and S. Dick (eds), *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2010), pp. 121-40. On elite methods of social legitimation, see B. Jussen, 'Liturgy and Legitimation, or How the Gallo-Romans Ended the Roman Empire', in B. Jussen (ed.), *Ordering Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 147-99.

[21] Loseby, 'Decline and Change', pp. 90-3; J. Durliat, '*Episcopus*, *civis* et *populus* dans les *Historiarum Libri* de Grégoire', in N. Gauthier and H. Galinié (eds), *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois* (Tours, 1997), pp. 185-93.

[22] For Gregory of Tours' use of saints' cults to this end, see R. Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 50-81.

[23] P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012), pp. 53-92, 208-23, 291-307, 481-526.

[24] See J. Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 189-229.

Nevertheless, the distribution of acts of Christian patronage (fig. 20) suggests that the pursuit of social and spiritual capital in this way peaked in the second half of the sixth century, which is precisely when the post-imperial reorganisation of society at the level of the *civitas*, and Loseby's third phase of urbanism, could be said to have matured. The integrity and utility of the *civitas*-system was subsequently undermined, most obviously by the abandonment of attempts to reform the land tax – which had previously served as an important motive for rulers to organise their polities through Gaul's cities – and the proliferation of judicial immunities that progressively encroached on comital authority.[25] Together, these developments hastened the supersession of a framework of social organisation by city-territories by one built around lordship and enhanced personal jurisdiction over patrimonial lands.

As a result, in the course of the seventh century, neither the exercise of secular power nor its representation was principally mediated through the cities, as the relationship between the centre and the civic localities appears to have once again shifted back in favour of the former.[26] During a period of relative internal peace, the consolidation of larger territorial units and stable aristocracies meant that the political culture of the later Merovingian kingdoms came to revolve around the royal courts and Frankish elite of the increasingly settled *tria regna* of Austrasia, Burgundy, and Neustria.[27] Just as the administrative and symbolic significance of the *civitates* of the Augustan era had gradually diminished in the face of greater prospects for advancement at the imperial centre, now the upper echelons of Frankish society similarly turned away from their local arenas to pursue royal favour at the palace, and the opportunities for office and landholding that it brought.

These developments appear to have had implications for urban and suburban Christian building. Since the need for lay magnates to assert themselves at the level of the *civitas* had been undercut by the hollowing out of secular jurisdiction, cities lost much of their ideological significance as privileged arenas of display, and the rate of Christian building patronage consequently slowed. Royal authority

[25] W. Goffart, 'Old and New in Merovingian Taxation', *Past and Present* 96 (1982), pp. 3-21; A.C. Murray, 'Merovingian Immunity Revisited', *History Compass* 8 (2010), pp. 913-28.
[26] Loseby, 'Lost Cities'; *idem,* 'The Role of the City'.
[27] G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organisation. The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 262-70; *idem,* 'Social Change around 600: An Austrasian Perspective', in M. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in North-West Europe* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 265-77.

had always been less reliant on civic expressions of status anyway, but, in line with their own relocation to rural palaces, monarchs now seem to have redirected much of their religious investment to the countryside or to peri-urban sites such as Saint-Denis outside Paris. One clear symptom of these changes is the way in which monastic foundations multiplied across the rural estates of Gaul's social elite in this period. As both vehicles for pious display and a useful way of safeguarding family interests,[28] these institutions reflected the changing priorities of the aristocracy, who, through the acquisition of royal privileges and immunities, sought greater control over their sanctity and landed resources away from the urban stronghold of the bishop.[29]

As fig. 21 makes clear, however, the financial provision for Christian building patronage in the cities did not simply dry up in this period. The urban and suburban landscape retained some degree of desirability for patrons seeking self-legitimation and salvation, most obviously the bishops, whose authority continued to be determined by and exercised at the level of their *civitas.* Indeed, the later Merovingian period saw some particularly powerful bishops who were even able to exercise episcopal jurisdiction over a number of *civitates*, including Savaric of Auxerre and Milo of Trier.[30] This structural link to Gaul's cities arguably explains the enduring willingness of bishops to finance prestige building projects in their episcopal groups in the seventh century, as the evidence from Geneva, Mainz, and Poitiers attests.[31] Episcopal office and its accompanying resource-base also remained an attractive proposition for members of the magnate class, who often returned to their cities following careers at court, and this helped to ensure families maintained an interest in the competition of their urban locales. The monastic surge of the seventh century, moreover, was by no means an exclusively rural affair.[32]

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[28] Y. Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge, 2014). For how monasteries could facilitate aristocratic estate-management, see B.H. Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbor of Saint Peter. The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property. 909-1049* (Ithaca, 1989).
[29] E. Ewig, 'Beobachtungen zu den Klosterprivilegien des 7. und frühen 8. Jahrhunderts', in E. Ewig, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952–1973)*, Vol. 2 (Munich, 1979), pp. 411-26.
[30] E. Ewig, 'Milo et eiusmodi similes', in *Sankt Bonifatius: Gedenkgabe zum zwölfhundertsten Todestag* (Fulda, 1954), pp. 412-40. I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994), pp. 255-92.
[31] C. Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève,* vol. 2 (Geneva, 2012), pp. 131-44; M. Kleiner and M. Untermann, 'Der Alte Dom von Mainz. Bauuntersuchungen in der St. Johanniskirche 2013–2016', *InSitu* (2017), pp. 153-62; B. Boissavit-Camus, 'La *domus ecclesiae* de Poitiers', in S. Balcon-Berry, J.-P. Caillet, F. Baratte, and D. Sandron (eds), *Des* domus ecclesiae *aux origines des palais épiscopaux. Actes de la table ronde Autun, 27-28 novembre 2009* (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 73-87.
[32] See M. Gaillard and C. Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain au haut Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 124.1 (2012), pp. 27-37.

As well as providing an impetus for the adaptation of existing funerary basilicas to accommodate accompanying communities of holy men and women, monasticism proved a particularly popular outlet of benefaction for high-status widows seeking a life of piety within the relative security of the urban enclosure.[33] Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that the scale of Christian building patronage in the cities of the later Merovingian kingdoms was not comparable to that witnessed in the sixth century, when jockeying for local primacy had assumed greater intensity.

A useful way to test the argument made here that socio-political factors are fundamental for understanding the chronological pattern of Christian building patronage in the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul is to consider how religious spending played out in the East across the same period. In the case of late antique Epirus, for example, William Bowden has identified a peak in urban church-building during the first half of the sixth century – slightly earlier than the evidence suggests for Gaul (fig. 20) – followed by a gradual decline.[34] For Bowden, this trend was evident across the eastern empire, and reflected the failure of local economies to support further building activity and the maintenance of additional clergy from the second half of the sixth century onwards.[35] He believes that while the practice of sponsoring churches in the East was not necessarily the product of a city's economic vitality, the fall in the construction rate stemmed from the growing inability of urban elites to marshal surplus resources, which was a problem exacerbated throughout the 540s by the Gothic war and Justinianic Plague.

Church-building in the cities of Gaul seemingly peaked later than in the urban centres of the eastern empire, but it is possible that economic factors similarly contributed to the decline evident in the seventh and early eighth century. As noted in chapter three, for example, the secularisation of church property that began in the later Merovingian kingdoms may have undercut the ability of bishops to maintain the urban spending of previous centuries.[36] Nevertheless, an argument that the elites of Gaul no longer had the means to finance church-building in the cities after the sixth century, nor to sustain a further

[33] See pp. 168-174.
[34] W. Bowden, 'A New Urban Elite? Church Builders and Church Building in Late-Antique Epirus', in L. Lavan and W. Bowden (eds), *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, R.I., 2001), pp. 57-68.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-6.
[36] See pp. 71-2.

expansion in clerical ranks, is not really supported by the available evidence. Indeed, fabulously wealthy monasteries sheltering communities of professional intercessors proliferated throughout the Gallic countryside during this period,[37] suggesting that rather than a lack of surplus resources, what had changed for Gaul's erstwhile urban patrons was the location of where they deemed their pious capital best spent. It seems clear, therefore, that unlike the situation that potentially unfolded in the East, economic shortcomings cannot be considered the primary factor underpinning the decline of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul. Instead, in order to explain the chronological pattern of the practice, it is necessary to recognise how the favoured mode of self-display for patrons in this period seems to have been intimately linked to where power lay in the Gallo-Roman and Frankish polities, and to acknowledge that this oscillation in the relationship between local and central authority helped to drive the rate of religious investment in the cities.

Conclusion

To conclude, the practice of financing Christian building programmes in the cities of Gaul was slow to get underway, and its initial focus was on the implantation of episcopal groups and the monumental development of one or two local cults in the suburbs. But on account of attentions generally being directed towards pursuing opportunities in the central bureaucracy, Christian spending in the civic arena was rather modest in this period. The breakdown of the supra-regional order of the Roman empire, however, and the consequent re-emergence of cities as important arenas for the distribution and representation of power, ensured that urban and suburban church-building would prove a valuable means of claiming authority and status during the subsequent period of socio-political insecurity. A need to fulfil their episcopal responsibilities and bolster their position in the face of reinvigorated local competition meant that bishops in particular established themselves as important patrons of Christian building projects in the course of the fifth century and beyond.

[37] I.N Wood, *The Transformation of the Roman West* (Leeds, 2018), pp. 70-2.

The practice of Christian building patronage as a whole accelerated in line with the renewal of the *civitas*-system as the major organising principle of post-imperial society, but, as a more territorially-coherent Frankish polity emerged, and an increasingly stable aristocracy cohered around the royal courts, so the need for public display in the cities became less pressing, and resources were instead progressively mobilised in the surrounding countryside during the later Merovingian kingdoms. Financing Christian building patronage in the *civitas*-capitals of Gaul never became redundant, however, because of the important role the practice played in the enduring quest for status and salvation. Nevertheless, while the monastic expansion of the seventh century provided a new focus for such pursuits, the overall rate of Christian interventions in the urban and suburban topography certainly seems to have slowed, as Gaul's social elite once again adjusted to the fluctuating relationship between the centre and the periphery.

6.2. Across space

The broad chronology of Gaul's Christian building patronage outlined above, and its explanation by way of reference to the shifting political horizons of local elites, now needs to be nuanced to a certain extent by detailing how these trends played out across the region as a whole, as well as within the smaller territorial units of kingdoms and ecclesiastical provinces, and finally in the cities themselves.

Within Gaul

Simon Esmonde Cleary has suggested that a general distinction can be drawn in late Roman Gaul between the 'fortress cities' of a militarised north, the functional hill-top settlements of the south-west, and the more refined *civitates* of the south-east, where he argues a degree of continuity with the public monumentality of the early empire is most apparent.[38] For Esmonde Cleary, the third-century crisis hit northern Gaul particularly hard, setting it on a materially different path to the rest of the region. He argues that it was only after 500 that society, and especially urban form and function, gradually became more homogeneous across the territory.[39] Similarly, Jill Harries has argued that the greater political and economic stability of the more Romanised South during the fourth and fifth centuries meant that, in comparison to northern Gaul, Christianity was able to take root earlier and quicker, and this gave rise to greater monastic, liturgical, and building activity.[40] In contrast, Nancy Gauthier and her colleagues responsible for the *Topographie chrétienne* series have contended that we should be careful not to overstate the scale of divergence between different regions, at least in regards to the nature and scope of the Christian building that characterised the initial renewal of Gaul's civic landscapes in the fourth and fifth centuries.[41] They argue that the contrast between Mediterranean regions, which were for a long time sheltered from the material consequences of new arrivals from beyond the Rhine, and central

[38] S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200–500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 142-50.
[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 395-441. Note that Esmonde Cleary's focus stops at 500.
[40] J. Harries, 'Christianity and the City in Late Roman Gaul', in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992), pp. 82-4.
[41] N. Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation et espace urbain', in N. Gauthier *et al*. (eds), *Topographie Chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle,* vol. 16 (16 vols, Paris, 1986-2014), pp. 366-7.

Gaul and the frontier zones, which were more exposed and from an earlier date, is less clear than might be expected.

The interest of the *Topographie chrétienne* team in establishing the Christian origins of modern-day France means that it is necessary to recognise how downplaying regional variation can support such narratives. Nevertheless, outside of a handful of pioneering patrons, and even acknowledging that conditions specific to certain cities are likely to have given rise to local differences,[42] the Christianisation of Gaul's cities does seem to have got off to a rather slow start everywhere, as Gauthier rightly emphasises.[43] The surviving fifth- and early sixth-century baptisteries of Fréjus, Riez, and Aix, for example, should not blind us to the fact that Provence as a whole provides little data from this period outside Arles and Marseille. Similarly, while northern and central Gaul may have suffered the brunt of the 'barbarian' incursions of the third and early fifth centuries, the extant evidence for acts of Christian building patronage across this region before 450 is not quantitatively very different from that of southern Gaul (fig. 25). In this regard at least, Esmonde Cleary's arguments are perhaps overstated. Even if Trier is something of an exceptional case because of its imperial role, elements of episcopal groups are also attested prior to the middle of the fifth century at Rouen,[44] Troyes,[45] Orléans,[46] Poitiers,[47] and Geneva,[48] while Christian sanctuaries, mausoleums, and funerary basilicas are known at Reims,[49] Cologne,[50] Autun,[51] and perhaps Auxerre.[52]

[42] Loseby, 'Decline and Change', pp. 67-8.
[43] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation', pp. 364-5.
[44] Victricius of Rouen, *De Laude Sanctorum,* ed. J. Mulders and R. Demeulenaere, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 64 (Turnhout, 1984), pp. 53-93; *TCCG*, XVI, pp. 246-7.
[45] *Epistula ad Thalassium,* ed. C Munier, *Concilia Galliae,* vol. II (2 vols, Turnhout, 1963), pp. 140-1.
[46] *Vita Aniani I,* 9, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp. 104-17.
[47] See B. Boissavit-Camus, 'Poitiers religieux et monumental entre le IVe et le XIIe siècle', in C. Sapin (ed.), *Stucs et décors de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge* (2006), pp. 69-83.
[48] Bonnet, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève,* vol. 2, pp. 19-75.
[49] Reims 14a. Epitaph of Jovinus, ed. E. Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule, antérieures au VIIIe siècle,* vol. 1 (Paris, 1856), pp. 443-5.
[50] *TCCG* XII, pp. 52-65.
[51] Autun 11a. Gregory, *Hist.,* II.15.
[52] Auxerre 7a. I.N. Wood, 'Germanus, Alban and Auxerre', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre* 13 (2009), pp. 123-9.

Region	Total acts by time period		
	c. 300 – 450	451 – 600	601 – 751
Northern Gaul	34	139	122
Central Gaul	31	159	42
Southern Gaul	36	112	17

Fig. 25. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul by region and year.

The sixth century also sees a fairly even geographical split in attested acts of Christian building patronage, apart from the most south-western and south-eastern cities of Gaul, where, as fig. 26 highlights, the dearth of evidence is rather striking. This is perhaps not unsurprising, however, given the limited size and economic opportunities of the *civitates* of Novempopulana and Alpes Maritimae. A regional disparity does become more marked in the later Merovingian kingdoms though, when the centre of gravity of documented Christian building patronage was decisively displaced towards the north. The apparently uneven distribution of pious investment in the cities of seventh- and eighth-century Gaul may again simply be a result of the evidence we have available to us, which is much more abundant for the North than for the Midi. While we cannot assemble complete episcopal lists for the ecclesiastical provinces of Arles, Aix, and Embrun in this period, for example, contemporary hagiographies abound in northern Gaul,[53] and the stational list of Metz provides us with an unparalleled insight into the number of churches a Merovingian city might have hosted.[54]

[53] P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester, 1996).
[54] J.-B. Pelt, *Etudes sur la cathédrale de Metz. La Liturgie I (Ve–XIIIe siècle)* (Metz, 1937), pp. 29-32.

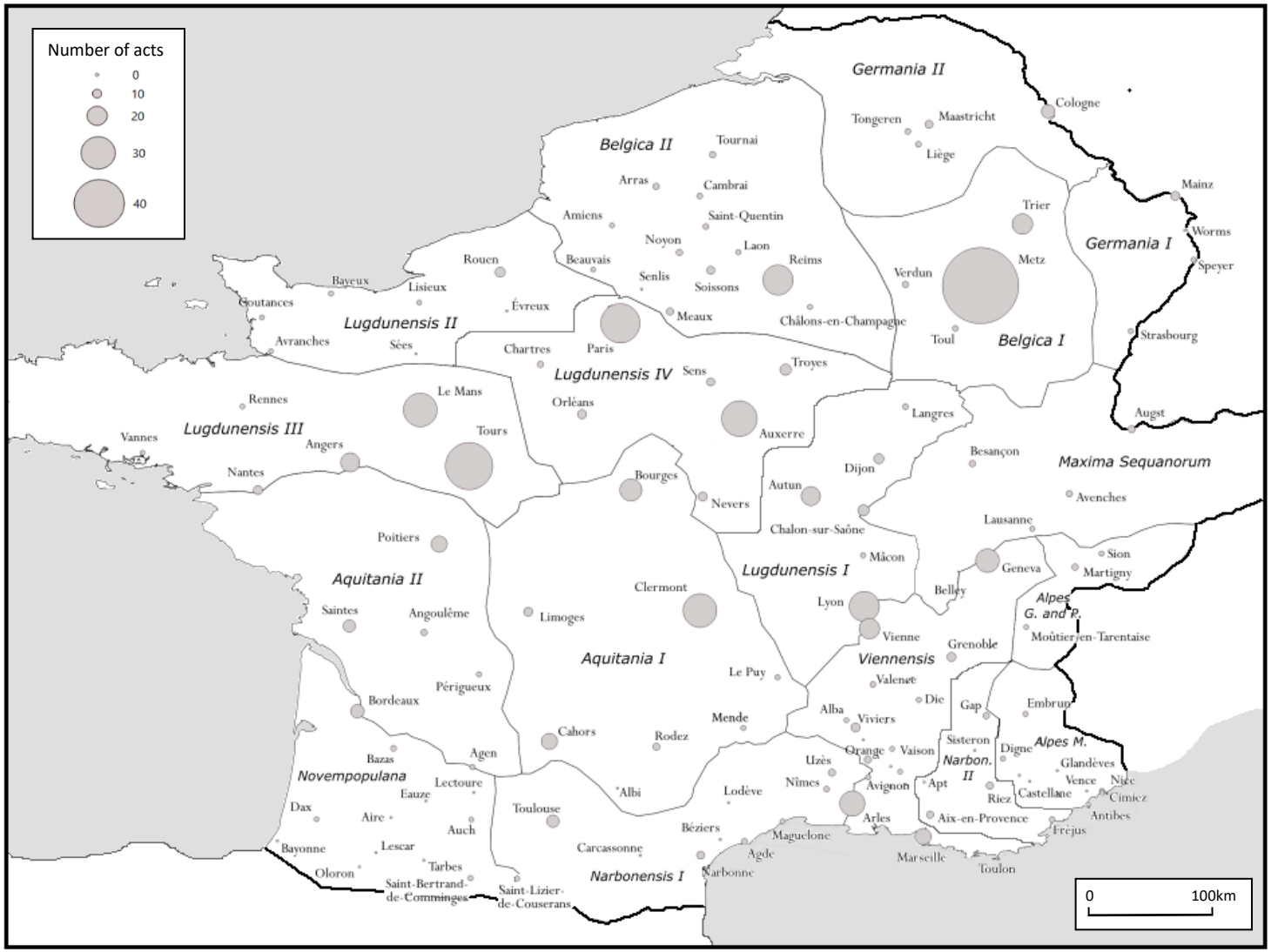


Fig. 26. Map of total attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul between 300 and 751 CE.

At the same time, however, the situation may also reflect a political culture increasingly concentrated on the northern Frankish heartlands, where enthusiasm for monasticism was very strong within palace circles. This development played out most visibly in the countryside, but many of the officials who served under Chlothar II (597-629) and Dagobert I (629-639) took this ethos of Christian benefaction with them to the cities when they later ascended to the episcopal sees of northern Gaul and elsewhere.[1] One of the most prolific of these Christian building patrons was Eligius, who, as goldsmith and counsellor at the Neustrian court, bankrolled a female monastery and two suburban basilicas in Paris, before undertaking a number of acts of building patronage in his own city and *civitas*-capitals across the region during his time as bishop of Noyon-Tournai.[2] The northward shift in the balance of attested acts of Christian building patronage also coincides with the rise of the Pippinids in the later seventh century. The family and associates of Pepin II, who established himself as *maior domus* of Francia's *tria regna* from 687, were, for example, closely involved in the church in both the countryside and cities. His mother-in-law and wife founded monastic communities at Trier and Cologne respectively,[3] while his ally Bishop Hubert – one of a number of prelates connected to Pepin through blood, marriage, or time spent at court – built churches at Liège.[4] Metz, moreover, proved to be one of the nerve centres of the future Carolingian dynasty,[5] which may in part explain the comparative density of documented acts of Christian building patronage in the city.

Within kingdoms and ecclesiastical provinces

Although variation at a regional level only seems to have become marked over time, it is possible to observe some general patterns within Gaul's smaller territorial units of kingdoms and ecclesiastical provinces throughout the period. The probable imperial investment in Trier's episcopal group in the

[1] Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 94-123.
[2] Paris 5a, 24a, 28a; Soissons 2a; Saint-Quentin 1a; Noyon 2a; Beauvais 1a. *Vita Eligii*, I.17, 18; II.5-7, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 663-742.
[3] Trier 4a; Cologne 6a.
[4] Liège 1a, 2a.
[5] D. Kempf, 'Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* and the Role of Metz in the Carolingian Realm', *Journal of Medieval History* 20.3 (2004), pp. 279-99.

early fourth century is the first example of Gaul's rulers glorifying their city of residence through an act of Christian building patronage.[6] The limited available evidence suggests that while this was not a model universally embraced during the transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule, similar behaviour is attested in the important Burgundian cities of Lyon and Geneva,[7] and perhaps also at Toulouse, where Visigothic largesse was probably responsible for the lavish Notre-Dame-de-la-Daurade and for what appears to be a Christian funerary complex near Saint-Pierre-des-Cuisines.[8] It is perhaps surprising, even so, that there is not more evidence for Christian building in the royal capitals of Gaul in this period, particularly when the situation is contrasted with Italy, where the Ostrogothic king Theoderic undertook an extensive church-building programme at Ravenna as part of his attempts to replicate imperial ideologies of rule.

Although it seems that not all Merovingian kings were similarly inclined, examples of analogous Frankish behaviour do increase in the course of the sixth century, when acts of patronage that unambiguously foregrounded royals were most common in their favoured cities of residence.[9] The suburbs of Paris, Soissons, Chalon-sur-Saône, and perhaps also Metz, for example, hosted churches built by Clovis, Childebert I, Chlothar I, Sigibert, Chilperic, and Guntram.[10] The decision of these kings to mobilise their resources for significant acts of Christian building patronage in important cities ultimately served as a public demonstration of their faith, a means to secure a suitable burial site for themselves and their family, and a physical testament to their claimed status and authority. Much of this patronage was focused in Paris, which appears to have served as the ideological capital of the Frankish realm, even if the city never achieved the status that Toledo did for the neighbouring Visigothic kingdom. Nevertheless, the importance of Paris appears to have stemmed from Clovis' interest in the city, which saw him erect a church there in partnership with his wife.[11] The king's example was followed by his son Childebert and grandson Chilperic, but while the seventh century saw subsequent

[6] Trier 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a.
[7] Lyon 9a; Geneva 8a.
[8] See pp. 209-10.
[9] Royals were also not averse to assisting the building projects of their episcopal supporters elsewhere in their kingdoms: Tours 6c; Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.20; X.31.
[10] Paris 8a, 10a, 22a; Soissons 3a, 3b; Metz 30a; Chalon-sur-Saône 3b.
[11] Paris 8a. See pp. 200-4.

generations renew the Merovingian association with Paris, their favoured mode of representation had shifted from erecting funerary basilicas in the city's immediate suburbs to patronising the peri-urban church and abbey of Saint-Denis, eleven kilometres north of the city.

Bishops built for similar purposes to sovereigns, especially metropolitans, who sought to project their command over both their *civitas* and their ecclesiastical province at large. While the available evidence allows us to calculate that there was an average of 6.8 acts of Christian building patronage in each of the 135 episcopal sees that existed before 751, the seventeen cities that hosted a metropolitan bishop in this period averaged 10.5.[12] The metropolitans were unlikely to have been exclusively responsible for all this construction, since church-building was often a collective exercise, but they would have been involved in some capacity in the vast majority of cases, capitalising on the generosity of lay donors to glorify the city that hosted their episcopal throne and affirm their status within provincial hierarchies.

This was particularly evident early on in south-eastern Gaul, when the principles for determining regional primacy were still seemingly in the balance. Inter-city competition was fierce as bishops looked to mould the nascent administrative structures of the Gallic church to their advantage at a time when the nature and extent of metropolitan authority was still being worked out. In the course of the late fourth and fifth century, for example, the bishops of Marseille, who were nominally suffragans within the ecclesiastical province of Viennensis, erected a cathedral and a baptistery of extraordinary dimensions in their city, which no doubt reflected their pretentions to exercise authority over neighbouring Narbonensis Secunda.[13] Similarly, the unparalleled size of the cathedral unearthed in the south-east corner of Arles' urban centre, which has been dated to the first half of the sixth century, is probably best understood in light of the contemporary claims of the city's bishops to hegemony over not only the *civitates* of Viennensis, but all the churches of Gaul and Hispania.[14] The cult of saints, moreover, and especially the cults of episcopal predecessors, were also exploited by metropolitans

[12] Aix, Arles, Besançon, Bordeaux, Bourges, Cologne, Eauze, Embrun, Lyon, Mainz, Narbonne, Reims, Rouen, Sens, Tours, Trier, Vienne.
[13] Marseille 1a, 2a.
[14] Arles 1a.

looking to demonstrate the Christian pedigree of their city in relation to their suffragans and regional competitors, as Jill Harries has demonstrated for Vienne, Lyon, and Arles.[15]

Within cities

A number of spatial patterns pertaining to Christian building patronage are also evident within cities themselves. Wherever cities had walls, episcopal groups were by and large found within them. Digne provides the only confirmed example in Gaul of where a city's cathedral was found in a necropolis in this period,[16] but it is nevertheless worth noting that there are a number of *civitas*-capitals where intra-mural spatial constraints may have made the situation more complicated at the outset than the authors of the *Topographie Chrétienne* series are perhaps willing to acknowledge.[17] At Clermont, not only did Bishop Eparchius (…451-470) apparently still have to sleep in the sacristy because the church possessed insufficient intra-mural property during his tenure, but local tradition places the city's first cathedral 600 metres outside the walls in the *vicus Christianorum,* where a baptistery attested during the time of Gregory of Tours may signal this earlier episcopal complex.[18] In Auxerre, meanwhile, during the time of Bishop Amator (…388-418), the city's episcopal church was apparently found at the 'gate of the baths', and looked towards the valley of the Yonne.[19] A growing congregation, however, prompted the bishop to turn to a certain Ruptilius, who offered the local Christian community his large townhouse inside the city's walls as a suitable alternative.[20] The description of Auxerre's first cathedral in the late sixth-century *Vita Amatoris* does not necessarily preclude an intra-mural location, but, as with Clermont, it is possible that the limited zone enclosed by both cities' wall-circuits rendered urban space

[15] Harries, 'Christianity and the City', pp. 87-89; *idem,* 'Bishops, Senators and their Cities in Southern and Central Gaul, A.D. 407 to 476' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1981), p. 167.
[16] G. Démians d'Archimbaud, 'Église Notre-Dame-du-Bourg, ancienne cathédrale', in N. Duval (ed.), *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France, Sud-Est et Corse* (Paris, 1995), pp. 69-80.
[17] Gauthier *et al*., 'Christianisation', pp. 367-9. See also J.-C. Picard, *Évêques, saints et cités en Italie et en Gaule* (Rome, 1998), pp. 265-74; C. Pietri, 'L'espace chrétien dans la cité. Le vicus christianorum et l'espace chrétien de la cité arverne (Clermont)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France Année* 177 (1980), pp. 187-91.
[18] Gregory, *Hist.*, II.21; V.11.
[19] Stephanus Africanus, *Vita S. Amatoris,* 18-21, ed. *AA SS,* Mai. I (1860).
[20] Auxerre 2a; see p. 134.

hard to come by, and left the local bishops with little choice but to wait for a willing benefactor for an appropriate intra-mural site to become available.[21]

Beyond the urban zone, the cult of saints recast conceptions of civic space, as the suburban periphery was monumentalised over time and became the regular focus of a liturgical calendar of feast days and rogations. Individuals and groups venerated the 'very special dead' by transforming tombs or mausoleums into sumptuous funerary basilicas. Alternatively, patrons erected shrines and funerary churches in honour of external cults and deposited relics of the saints concerned therein; the apostles were particularly common dedicatees of this type.[22] The available evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of these acts of patronage occurred within 500 metres of the urban zone (fig. 27), where many of Gaul's necropolises lay. There are, nevertheless, some examples of significant investment undertaken further afield, such as the burial church established for Bishop Medard well over a kilometre outside the walls of Soissons by Chlothar I and Sigibert, and Guntram's embellishment of the basilica of Marcellus, which was located around three kilometres south-west of Chalon-sur-Saône.[23] The decisions of these sixth-century royals to patronise Christian buildings at an increasing remove from Gaul's urban centres would seem to anticipate a preference among subsequent sovereigns for peri-urban sites of benefaction and monastic enterprises in the countryside.

[21] S.T. Loseby, 'Bishops and Cathedrals: Order and Diversity in the Fifth-Century Urban Landscape of Southern Gaul' in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992) pp. 150-1.
[22] Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule*, pp. 256-9.
[23] Chalon-sur-Saône 3a, 3b; Soissons 3a, 3b.

Distance (m)	Number of acts
0 – 100	42
101 – 200	38
201 – 300	27
301 – 400	31
401 – 500	34
501 – 1000	57
1001 – 3000	25

Fig. 27. Distance from Gaul's urban centres of acts of Christian building patronage celebrating the cult of saints.

Alongside the more common practice of extra-mural commemoration, around eleven percent of the attested acts of Christian building patronage celebrating the cult of saints occurred in an urban context. This quest for intercession most often inspired modest oratories, which were found at city gates or the residences of lay and clerical patrons,[24] and churches erected within monastic cloisters to facilitate the worship of the resident monks or nuns. At the convent of Saint John in Arles, for example, the abbess Rusticula built two basilicas in honour of Saint Michael and the Holy Cross during the late sixth and early seventh centuries,[25] while at Soissons the Neustrian mayor of the palace Ebroin established a female monastery in 667, which included churches dedicated to Mary, Peter, and Genovefa.[26] On occasion, the practice of venerating the cult of saints in cities also gave rise to intra-mural churches detached from a city's episcopal group or monastic complexes.[27] While the purpose of such churches is not always obvious since the parish system did not yet exist, they were most likely expressions of piety financed by rich devotees eager to associate themselves with saints. In Toulouse, for example, the Merovingian *Dux* Launebodus and his wife Berethruda erected a church at the city's Capitol on the site of Saint Saturninus' martyrdom.[28] Similar endeavours elsewhere in Gaul, however, are strikingly

[24] See, for example, Tours 4a; Le Mans 2a; Paris 4a; Saintes 8a; Bordeaux 5a.
[25] Arles 8a, 8b.
[26] Soissons 1a
[27] Auxerre 7a; Paris 28a.
[28] Toulouse 6a.

rare, and the building patronage that underpinned the cult of saints was for the most part a suburban phenomenon in this period.

The siting of institutions of charity was slightly more variable. *Matriculae* could be found attached to episcopal groups or funerary basilicas, as at Le Mans and Tours respectively.[29] Similarly, the proto-hospital founded by Caesarius at Arles was deliberately located within earshot of the cathedral,[30] but it seems that *xenodochia* were more regularly situated away from the urban *populus*, presumably on health grounds.[31] Monasteries were also found both within and beyond walls, but, as noted in chapter four, female foundations were more likely to have had an urban character than their male counterparts, perhaps on account of security concerns.[32] Meanwhile, male communities were increasingly established alongside suburban funerary basilicas, as for example at Angers and Cahors in the early seventh century, as the 'monasticisation' of cult sites got underway.[33]

Another interesting spatial trend in this period is the number of monastic communities that came to be installed in disused Roman edifices, in both urban and suburban contexts. This practice goes back to the hermitage Martin established for himself around three kilometres from Tours in what seems to have been an erstwhile Roman villa,[34] but became most prevalent in the later Merovingian kingdoms among lay and episcopal patrons connected to the royal courts. At Besançon, for example, Bishop Donatus, who was the son of Duke Waldalenus, a patron of Columbanus, founded a male monastery in c. 630 on the site of what may have been a former palace.[35] Before the end of the seventh century, moreover, Irmina, the mother-in-law of Pepin II, established a female community in the late antique *horrea* of Trier, while the foundation of her sister Adula occupied the site of the *Palatiolum* outside the same city, and the convent apparently founded by her daughter Plectrude, the wife of Pepin II, stood on the former

[29] Le Mans 3b; Tours 7b.
[30] Arles 4a.
[31] Chalon-sur-Saône 4a.
[32] See pp. 172-4. *TCCG* XVI, pp. 386-91; M. Gaillard and C. Sapin, 'Monastères et espace urbain au haut Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 124.1 (2012), pp. 27-37.
[33] Angers 8a; Cahors 11a.
[34] Tours 14a.
[35] Besançon 2a; Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, 14, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 61-152: *quem Palatium nuncupant ob veterum monimenta murorum.*

Temple of the Capitol at Cologne.[36] On a practical level, these existing structures would have likely occupied an attractive position within the natural landscape and offered a plentiful supply of building materials. Tyler Bell has argued, however, that for those churches associated with former Roman buildings in Anglo-Saxon England, it is necessary to consider how less tangible factors, such as the enduring and evocative presence that an ancient structure might have had in the landscape, also encouraged the re-use of historical sites.[37] These processes are hard to quantify, but it is certainly possible that in Gaul there was a similar reverence shown towards locations linked to the region's memories of antiquity. For those patrons looking to achieve status and legitimacy for their foundations, therefore, they may have seen an opportunity to capitalise on the symbolism of these sites and reorientate it along Christian lines.[38]

Conclusion

To conclude, although we must remain mindful of the limited and uneven nature of our sources, a number of geographic patterns are certainly apparent when considering urban and suburban Christian building patronage across Gaul as a whole, as well as within individual kingdoms, ecclesiastical provinces, and cities. Despite the common perception that political and economic instability brought on by 'barbarian' incursions hindered the initial spread of Christianity across northern Gaul, documented acts of Christian building patronage are in fact split fairly equally across the whole territory well into the sixth century. In the later Merovingian kingdoms, however, there is a significant disparity in the apparent rate of building between the *civitas*-capitals of the North and South. The implications of an uneven source record cannot be ignored, but this split may equally have reflected the emergence of a stable political culture centred on the royal courts of the northern Frankish heartlands, where an

[36] Trier 4a; Cologne 6a; *TCCG* XVI, pp. 186-7; Gauthier, *L'Évangélisation des pays de la Moselle,* pp. 291-3, 318-25.
[37] T. Bell, 'Churches on Roman Buildings: Christian Associations and Roman Masonry in Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology* 42.1 (1998), pp. 1-18.
[38] B. Effros, 'Monuments and Memory: Repossessing Ancient Remains in Early Medieval Gaul', in F. Theuws and M. De Jong (eds), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 93-118.

increasingly coherent aristocracy was inculcated with Christian values, and many secular officials went on to assume episcopal office across the region.

At the level of the kingdom or province, meanwhile, cities in which royals and metropolitan bishops resided were seemingly the biggest beneficiaries of patrons exploiting the practice of Christian building patronage as a vehicle to assert their status and position within secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Within the cities themselves, finally, the binary model of urban episcopal groups and suburban funerary basilicas celebrating the cult of saints generally prevailed across Gaul, but it is important to note that it was also undercut at times by oratories and churches venerating holy individuals within walls, though not to a quantitatively significant extent. Meanwhile, monasteries and institutions of charity were found at both the centre and periphery of civic landscapes that had changed markedly between the fourth and eighth centuries.

6.3. Across patrons

Differentiating the individuals responsible for reshaping the urban and suburban landscapes of Gaul's cities along Christian lines by their socio-cultural background has proved useful in assessing how different actors approached the practice. In order to appreciate fully all the nuances of Gaul's Christian building patronage, however, it is necessary also to consider the evidence in the round. Of the 272 examples of Christian building patronage from the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul for which it is possible to identify a patron – either explicitly or from the historical context – the evidence is dominated by ecclesiastics. 214 acts attest the involvement of an individual who served within clerical orders or lived the life of a fulltime ascetic, of which over ninety per cent involved a bishop. In contrast, only 81 examples indicate the involvement of the laity, including 31 which involved an individual from the most exclusive subset of lay society, Gaul's ruling imperial and royal households. To a certain degree, it is perhaps unsurprising that the region's professional Christians are so well represented in these figures, but the implications of a source record dominated by clerical authors cannot be discounted either. It is for this reason that the lintel inscriptions detailing the building programme undertaken by Bishop Rusticus in Narbonne in the middle of the fifth century are so valuable.[39] As perhaps our most comprehensive and contemporary accounts of acts of Christian building patronage, they reveal the extent to which these projects were collaborative efforts, drawing together both the local Christian community, and secular and ecclesiastical leaders from across southern Gaul. And yet, only 43 acts in total attest the involvement of two or more patrons in this manner, with the remainder ascribed to a single individual.

In seeking to explain this discrepancy, there are a number of things to note about the available evidence. While the civic munificence of the classical era is well documented by the copious epigraphic and statuary material commemorating patrons through a formal system of honours, our knowledge of Christian building patronage in late antique and Merovingian Gaul is for the most part reliant on individuals reporting acts that occurred at some time in the past. As such, writers may not have been

[39] Narbonne 1a, 5a.

aware of all those who had contributed financially to a particular project, or, given their often ecclesiastical background, they may have simply chosen to concentrate on the most important individual involved, which in their eyes was usually the local bishop. Indeed, even the inscription of Narbonne's new cathedral in the middle of the fifth century foregrounds Rusticus, despite the fact the building work was largely underwritten by the Praetorian Prefect Marcellus. Nevertheless, the collaboration between secular and religious patrons that is revealed on this occasion by a contemporary inscription that was effectively obliged to acknowledge an important benefactor suggests that the prevalence of lay donors is underreported by our extant evidence.

A comparable situation is evident in Italy in this period, where the involvement of the local Christian community in a number of churches between the fourth and seventh centuries is known to us only as a result of surviving donor mosaic pavements.[40] Similarly, the extent of the church-building partnerships between the layman Julianus 'Argentarius' and a number of bishops of Ravenna in the 540s would have been otherwise lost to posterity if it were not for the inscriptions diligently transcribed in the ninth century by the episcopal historian Agnellus.[41] While this study has stressed the role that intra-city competition among social groups played in driving the development of Gaul's urban and suburban landscapes, especially during the transition from Roman to 'barbarian' rule and the subsequent consolidation of post-imperial successor states, it is also important, therefore, to highlight the cooperation between the upper echelons of society that made this topographical transformation possible.

'Coopetition'

Between the fourth and eighth centuries in Gaul, secular and ecclesiastical elites became ever more intertwined as the church emerged as an institution of significant wealth and influence. Over time episcopal office became a genuine ambition for local families looking to affirm and perpetuate their

[40] J.-P. Caillet, *L'évergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe-VIIe s.)* (Rome, 1993).
[41] Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 57, 59, 61, 63, 77, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis (Turnhout, 2006).

authority in the urban arena. Consequently, a city's lay and Christian leaders were increasingly drawn from the same kin groups,[42] which gave rise to complex networks of local and regional rule. The familial dimension to intra-city competition was long-standing and deep-rooted, and the Christian building patronage that it helped to bring about is well-attested in Clermont,[43] but informal partnerships of convenience likewise underpinned acts of civic munificence in the religious sphere throughout this period. In the fourth and early fifth century, for example, leading laymen at Tours, Bourges, and Auxerre provided houses and plots of land to support the church-building of their local bishop.[44] Similarly, the consolidation and growth of the post-imperial kingdoms saw kings, queens, princesses, and royal officials working with bishops at Autun, Tours, Arles, Mainz, Poitiers, and potentially Orange to realise Christian building projects.[45] At Poitiers, for example, the three patron categories discussed by this study – ecclesiastical, lay, and royal – were all drawn together in the middle of the sixth century, as Bishop Pientius (…556-567), Duke Austrapius, Queen Radegund, and King Chlothar I worked in concert to establish the famous convent of the Holy Cross.

This study has demonstrated how these groups often found themselves locked in competition for hegemony and authority at both a local and regional level, and how Christian building patronage was accordingly exploited as a vehicle for asserting their position in society. At the same time, however, it is clear that the practice, and the pomp and circumstance often associated with it – including dedication ceremonies, church councils, and feasts celebrating the completion of projects and the generosity of patrons – could also bring the movers and shakers of Gallic society together, and thereby inculcate a common worldview among secular and ecclesiastical leaders.

The concept of 'coopetition', which theorizes the capacity of actors to cooperate and compete simultaneously,[46] is a useful tool to understand some of these processes, and to acknowledge how individuals and groups could collaborate with their ostensible rivals to undertake acts of Christian

[42] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 258.
[43] See pp. 146-9.
[44] Tours 5a
[45] Arles 11a; Orange 3a; Autun 6a, 7a, 13a; Tours 6c, 6e; Poitiers 5a; Mainz 2a.
[46] On coopetition in the early medieval world, see R. Le Jan, G. Bührer-Thierry, and S. Gasparri (eds), *Coopétition: Rivaliser, coopérer dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Âge (500-1100)* (Turnhout, 2018).

building patronage, with a view to mutual gain both in this world and the hereafter. In the case of elite lay patrons, contributing to a building project overseen by the bishop allowed them to legitimise their wealth and position in society. As with the famous philanthropists of the Victorian age, or the billionaire donors of today's society, mobilising one's resources for the public good ensured that the significant wealth of these individuals was never itself up for debate, but only how it was used. Financing a funerary basilica where the community could seek heavenly support and salvation, for example, or a monastery filled with a sacral class of intercessors praying for the health of the city and kingdom at large, underscored the moral authority of local and regional leaders, and helped to shape their reception in society. From an episcopal perspective, although the church accrued vast swathes of land during this period,[47] and individual prelates could possess significant personal wealth,[48] the picture was variable across Gaul and the resources of sees are unlikely to have been at all consistent. As such, many bishops needed lay backers to help them realise their ambitions of imposing cathedral complexes that reflected their claimed status, or to fulfil their pastoral duties of caring for the physical and spiritual health of their flocks. To these ends, local representatives of the episcopate looked to mobilise viable supporters along the lines of the impresario model discussed in chapter three.[49]

Damián Fernández has identified similar processes at play in the Iberian countryside of the sixth and seventh centuries, where wealthy lay patrons – overseen by members of the episcopate – sponsored and endowed rural basilicas in growing numbers.[50] Fernández notes the potential for opposition between bishops and donors over the management of these churches, but he argues that erecting them in partnership and maintaining a shared association ultimately served to meet the needs of both groups simultaneously. Pious landowners had the opportunity to legitimise their claimed status in their communities, while the church was able to extend its institutional reach into the countryside. It is not always easy to determine where power lay in this relationship, however, and the same is true for the cities of Gaul. Both lay and episcopal actors were reliant on one another to achieve their goals, and

[47] I.N Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400-750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), pp. 37-73.
[48] Wood, *The Transformation of the Roman West*, p. 98.
[49] See pp. 58-60.
[50] D. Fernandez, 'Property, Social Status, and Church Building in Visigothic Iberia', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9.2 (2016), pp. 512-41.

their mutual dependence was reinforced further through their shared pursuit of divine backing from God and the saints – a motive that also helps to explain the engagement of non-elites with the practice.[51] Although admittedly few and far between, examples of local communities participating in acts of church-building alongside their bishop and lay leaders demonstrate how Christian building patronage could break down societal hierarchies as much as it reinforced them, with all donors ultimately equal before God.

In Gaul, the cooperation that helped to transform the urban and suburban landscape of a city in this period may have been determined by the existing relationships that local and regional players had with the current occupier of a see. Ian Wood has highlighted how church-building was another opportunity for the social elites of Gaul to practise the gift exchange that underpinned their friendships and shared identity.[52] Gifts might include pecuniary support for a project, or even material contributions like the columns that Bishop Clarus of Eauze (…506-…511) sent to his colleague Ruricius of Limoges (…474-506…), which were presumably destined for a church.[53] In this light, it is possible that lay and clerical actors only chose to contribute to a project when it was an ally of theirs who sat on the episcopal throne. Equally, however, we must be careful not to conceive of collaborative patronage efforts totally through a prism of factional politics, because such analyses can at times make it hard to avoid imposing an inflexible framework on the Gallic church.[54] Certainly bishops would have had friends and partisans whom they could rely upon to help them fulfil their building ambitions, but, in many cases, patron collectives, such as those evident in the epigraphic record of Narbonne, would have also comprised a cross-section of the community, involving individuals who were in a position to contribute and who deemed such behaviour would be beneficial for them.

Acknowledging that acts of Christian building patronage might entail cooperation across social groups who would otherwise be in competition for local authority may help us to understand the possible

[51] Rennes 1a; Maastricht 1a. See pp. 150-3.
[52] I.N. Wood, 'The Audience of Architecture in Post-Roman Gaul', in L.A.S. Butler (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr H.M. Taylor* (London, 1986), p. 76.
[53] *Ibid.* Ruricius of Limoges, *Epistulae*, II.63, ed. C. Leutjohann, *MGH AA* 8 (Berlin 1887), pp. 299-350.
[54] See, for example, R.W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, DC, 1989).

building partnership between Caesarius, the bishop of Arles (502-542), and Petrus Marcellinus Felix Liberius, who was appointed to the newly re-established office of Praetorian Prefect in the city by the Ostrogoths in c. 511.[55] Caesarius does not seem to have been entirely happy about Theoderic's annexation of Arles,[56] and so it is not hard to imagine that the relationship that he shared with the king's representative in Provence may have been temperamental at times. Episcopal and secular authority was often in opposition in the cities of Gaul in this period, with bishops frequently clashing with counts, dukes, and governors as they jockeyed for local influence.[57] Nevertheless, Caesarius' nineteenth-century biographer Arthur Malnory credits the bishop's ability to hold five provincial councils between 524 and 533 to Liberius' work in maintaining peace in the region, which highlights how a productive working relationship could prove fruitful.[58] Indeed, Liberius was a fervent Catholic, and it is possible that he supported Caesarius' building ambitions in Arles, which may have included the enormous church located in the city's late antique episcopal group,[59] in a similar manner to how the Praetorian Prefect Marcellus bankrolled Bishop Rusticus' rebuilding of the cathedral of Narbonne in the middle of the fifth century.[60] This thinking is supported by Liberius' own record of church-building, which included a basilica in Orange that was built at some point between 523 and 529 and consecrated at a provincial council presided over by Caesarius shortly after.[61]

Liberius' church-building at Orange and its associated church council came in the wake of the Ostrogothic annexation of the city, and together they demonstrate how the interests of individuals who might otherwise have been competing for influence could converge on occasion, and manifest in acts of Christian building patronage. Liberius had taken advantage of the Frankish assault on the Burgundian kingdom in 523 to expand Ostrogothic territory north of the Durance to Orange. Alongside the obvious motive of his personal faith, he perhaps considered erecting a church in the recently-

[55] *PCBE* 4, Liberivs 1, pp. 1168-70.
[56] *Vita Caesarii*, 34-36, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp. 433-501. Perhaps in part because of their doctrinal differences.
[57] Gregory, *Hist.*, V. 47-49; VI.11.
[58] A. Malnory, *Saint Césaire, évêque d'Arles, 503-543* (Paris, 1894), p. 130; J.J. O'Donnell, 'Liberius the Patrician', *Traditio* 37 (1981), pp. 46-52.
[59] Arles 1a, see pp. 68-9.
[60] Narbonne 1a, see pp. 135-7.
[61] Orange 3a; Council of Orange (529), ed. C. de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae*, vol. 2 (2 vols, Turnhout, 1963). See J.J. O'Donnell, 'Liberius the Patrician', *Traditio* 37 (1981), pp. 31-72.

conquered city an opportunity to express his social authority, and demonstrate to the resident Gallo-Roman population that their new masters were benevolent guardians of their welfare, in accordance with the general tenor of Ostrogothic propaganda in southern Gaul.[62] To this end, Liberius may have hoped that the provincial council held by Caesarius to mark the consecration of his church would have helped to legitimise his authority, and that of the Ostrogoths at large, in the eyes of the Gallo-Roman Catholic population of the city.

From the perspective of Caesarius, meanwhile, his relationship with Liberius might usefully be seen in the context of the ongoing controversy between Arles and Vienne over metropolitan rights in the province of *Viennensis*, and the opportunities afforded him by the expansionist foreign policy of the Ostrogoths. Aside from its northernmost cities of Valence, Tarentaise, Geneva, and Grenoble, which were held by the bishop of Vienne, Caesarius was technically responsible for all the suffragans of *Viennensis*. In reality, however, he was rarely able to exercise authority over those bishops who resided in the Burgundian kingdom north of the river Durance. William Klingshirn has argued that the confirmation of Arles' metropolitan rights by Pope Symmachus in 513 was thus sought by Caesarius as a means to prevent Vienne's *de facto* control over the disputed dioceses of *Viennensis* transforming into some kind of *de jure* authority.[63] Liberius' northern advance in 523, however, incorporated some of these dioceses, including Orange, within Ostrogothic Provence, and Caesarius' nominal ecclesiastical sphere of influence likewise expanded accordingly. It is surely no coincidence, therefore, that Liberius' church-building and the associated council held by Caesarius took place in a city where both were hoping to assert their respective secular and ecclesiastical jurisdiction soon after the new territorial alignment of south-eastern Gaul. In this light, ideas of 'coopetition' allows us to acknowledge the collaborative aspect of Christian building patronage, and account for how acts could draw together Gallic society in novel ways, giving rise to partnerships between individuals and groups who might simultaneously be competing with each other in Gaul's cities.

[62] J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 262-94.
[63] W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 129.

Patrons and buildings

The motives of patrons may also help to explain a number of patterns in the data available to show how individuals and groups chose to deploy their wealth for Christian building purposes. As fig. 28 highlights, acts of building patronage focussed on the episcopal groups at the heart of Gaul's cities appear to have been almost exclusively the remit of bishops. Again, we have to acknowledge the nature of our source base, and the likelihood that clerical authors endeavoured to associate episcopal patrons with the development of Gaul's cathedrals and baptisteries, since these complexes served as a monumental representation of the status and authority of bishops in the urban arena. It seems probable that lay involvement was particularly underreported in these cases, therefore, but it is also worth considering whether the data is at least to some extent indicative of reality, in that lay patrons may have felt there was more spiritual and social capital to be gained from sponsoring a building associated with a saint's cult or a monastic foundation. While total independence from the bishop would not generally have been possible for donors given the need for episcopal oversight in matters of staffing and consecration, it seems there may have been greater scope for the laity to claim credit for their actions in these cases, as the erection of a church in honour of Saturninus at Toulouse by Launebodus and Berethruda,[64] or the male and female communities financed by the Ansemundi at Vienne suggest.[65]

Patron group	Total acts by building category			
	Episcopal Group	Cult of Saints	Monasticism	Pastoral Care
Clerical	69	97	38	16
Lay	5	27	18	0
Imperial and Royal	6	16	7	2

Fig. 28. Attested acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul by patron group and building category.

[64] Toulouse 6a.
[65] Vienne 3a, 5b, 9a.

It also appears that these avenues were more attractive for lay patrons than the use of their resources for charitable or pastoral institutions in their communities. The only securely attested examples of the laity building for such purposes concern the *xenodochia* established in Lyon and Autun by King Childebert and Queen Ultragotha and by Queen Brunhild respectively.[66] It is possible that such enterprises may have been deemed the responsibility of the bishop, therefore, or simply considered less prestigious than funding a lavish funerary basilica, and so of less interest to lay donors. Equally, however, since it seems that the local aristocracies of contemporary Italian cities were not averse to funding such establishments, this picture may once again be an artefact of our sources rather than a reflection of contemporary reality.[67]

It is important to note that this four-fold division of pious investment options does not really tell the whole story of how the practice of Christian building patronage developed in line with the motives of patrons. The fact that relics made their way into cathedrals, and institutions of charity were established in conjunction with funerary basilicas and monasteries, demonstrates that Christian benefactors would not necessarily have conceived of the building categories that have been distinguished by this study for heuristic purposes as discrete from one another. The most obvious example of this is the way that the monumental patronage of the cult of saints increasingly went hand in hand with the foundation of monastic communities in the post-imperial kingdoms. This was often manifested in the 'monasticisation' of existing cult sites or funerary churches, and the sources, although again limited, suggest that royal patrons played a key role in this process. Such developments can be traced back to 515, and the Burgundian king Sigismund's reorganisation of the community congregated at Agaune in honour of Maurice and the martyrs of the Theban Legion. Sigismund's actions were echoed in Burgundy in 584 by Guntram, who founded a male community at the basilica of Saint Marcellus outside Chalon-sur-Saône, but the royal policy of celebrating the cult of saints in a monastic context became most apparent during the seventh century. Queen Balthild promoted a number of 'senior basilicas'

[66] Lyon 10a; Autun 7a.
[67] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 56-7.

across Gaul through the granting of privileges and immunities and the institution of monastic rules for the communities of ascetics gathered there.

This blurring of patronage categories seems to have been largely spearheaded by royals looking to maximise the spiritual returns they could achieve for their religious spending, a pursuit which saw the spread of the *laus perennis* across a number of royal institutions. Perpetual prayer was first introduced into Gaul at Agaune, and may have also been practised at Guntram's foundation at Chalon-sur-Saône as well as at the famous abbey and church of Saint Denis. By bankrolling monastic regiments who would take it in turns to pray at all hours of the day, Merovingian sovereigns hoped to secure heavenly intercession for themselves and also their kingdoms. The location of royal cult sites is also interesting, particularly in the context of the growth in monastic interest among palace circles in the later Merovingian kingdoms, which saw pious capital increasingly targeted towards foundations in the countryside, where lay elites and their sovereigns now generally chose to base themselves.[68] In the 560s, Chlothar I and Sigibert erected a church over a kilometre outside Soissons in honour of Saint Medard where they were both buried, and this example was followed by Guntram, who patronised the tomb of Saint Marcellus, which lay around three kilometres from the centre of Chalon-sur-Saône, before being buried there.[69] An increasing preference for acts of Christian patronage on the periphery of *civitas*-capitals is then confirmed in the seventh century by the favour shown towards Saint-Denis, which stood eleven kilometres north of Paris, near Dagobert's favoured residence of Clichy. The interest shown in the cult of Denis by Dagobert in particular, could be seen as crystallising a number of parallel developments that had already been under way since the preceding century. Indeed, the relocation of political practice and self-display away from urban centres and their immediate suburban environs, and the growing popularity of monastic ventures, combined to bring about increasingly peri-urban and rural zones of Christian benefaction, which blurred the cult of saints and monasticism, as royal patrons sought to mould the practice of sponsoring Christian buildings to their temporal and spiritual needs.

[68] Loseby, 'Lost Cities', pp. 239-41.
[69] Soissons 3a, 3b.

Conclusion

To conclude, considering the evidence for acts of patronage as a whole allows us to note a number of trends across patron groups and the Christian buildings that they financed. The most obvious of these is the disproportionate presence of clerical patrons in the data, but clearly this has to be seen in the context of a source record dominated by writers with ecclesiastical backgrounds looking to promote church structures and personnel. Instead, the concept of 'coopetition' and the impresario model revealed by the contemporary epigraphic evidence of Narbonne allow us to account for how patrons who may have often found themselves in competition for local primacy also chose to work together at times to realise Christian building projects, in order to achieve their personal ambitions in both this life and the next. These objectives may, moreover, help to explain some of the apparent disparities in the popularity of certain avenues for investment. While all patron groups contributed to the cult of saints and monasticism, for example, the available evidence suggests that bishops, in their attempts to assert their status and moral authority as local leaders, were most interested in financing Gaul's episcopal groups and network of charitable institutions. Nevertheless, as the evidence for acts of royal patronage highlight, the various building categories that we have identified were far from discrete. Instead, they were liable to be manipulated as patrons saw fit, and so an appreciation of the underlying motives of donors remains vital for understanding the Christian topographical transformation of Gaul's cities.

6.4. Synthesis

In seeking to impose some kind of order on the evidence assembled in this study for acts of Christian building patronage in the cities of Gaul, it is hard to circumvent the various limitations of a source record that is both disparate across time, space, and type, and shaped by the prejudices of writers who were more interested in promoting their own agendas than providing comprehensive accounts of funding models and contributors. Any overarching conclusions that can be drawn about the practice, moreover, cannot be detached from an acknowledgement that the only real certainty is the diversity of contingencies that were at play across Gaul at any given moment, from the pre-existing topography and economic health of a city to the personalities and munificent inclinations of its bishop, secular leaders, and lay *populus*. To advance our understanding of this time period, however, and to provide a model which could be tested by scholars undertaking studies of Christian building in other regions of the late antique world, it has been necessary to try and draw out a number of patterns from the available evidence. While these observations can only ever be somewhat speculative because of the incomplete picture we possess, there are a few reasons to believe they may be broadly indicative of the reality of the situation in late antique Gaul. For all the faults of Gaul's documentary evidence, it is exceptionally dense by the standards of the contemporary West, and covers much of the period in question. Our understanding of the region's urban and suburban topographies, moreover, has improved significantly over the last four decades in line with the increasing rate of inner-city excavations and related publications. The archaeological data consequently serves as an important complement to the textual sources, compensating for some of its gaps and deficiencies, and sometimes qualifying the claims of authors. The integration of these two bodies of evidence into a systematic whole, therefore, means that we can perhaps have greater confidence in the symptomatic quality of its findings, even if certitude remains elusive.

The most obvious trend observable in the collated data is the apparent rise and fall of the urban and suburban Christian building habit in the course of the transition from late antique to Merovingian Gaul. It seems sensible to place these developments in their diachronic socio-political context. Simon Loseby's framework for understanding the first eight centuries of Gallic urbanism, for example, has

allowed us to see how the shifting relationship between power structures at the centre and periphery impelled changes in behaviour among Gaul's elites that had implications for the civic landscape. The topographical markers of a progressively Christian society were slow to materialise in Gaul's cities initially, but during the upheaval and uncertainty of the fifth and sixth centuries, when the central Roman administration was disintegrating, social hierarchies were in flux, and novel polities and figures of authority were emerging, the patronage of Christian building offered a means for actors seeking primacy within the rejuvenated *civitas*-capitals to lay claim to status and authority. As a result, cities came to be increasingly defined by the products of this munificence, as the proliferation of episcopal groups, funerary basilicas, monastic communities, and institutions of charity recast conceptions of urban and suburban space. However, developments in the political culture of the later Merovingian kingdoms subsequently precipitated a decline in the significance of the *civitas*-system, at least in the secular sphere. Increasingly coherent aristocracies crystallised around Frankish courts, and cities were no longer the privileged arenas for the pursuit or display of power that they had again become in the later fifth and sixth centuries. The enduring link between bishops and urban centres ensured that civic investment did not simply dry up, but the rate of building in Gaul's cities certainly seems to have slowed from the end of the sixth century, as patrons increasingly began to look elsewhere in their quest for self-legitimation and salvation.

The apparent chronological trend attested by the available evidence, however, must be qualified to a certain degree in light of a number of other observable patterns. Apart from the most south-western and south-eastern cities of Gaul, for which the evidence is negligible, it appears that the patronage of Christian buildings followed a broadly similar trajectory everywhere. The practice does seem to have been particularly prevalent in the most important cities of ecclesiastical provinces and kingdoms, from which social leaders asserted their regional authority. This general trend seems to have changed from the seventh century, however, when the bulk of documented urban and suburban Christian munificence is displaced to northern Gaul, where the royal capitals of the *tria regna* and political powerbases of the Pippinids were found. Within cities, the motives of patrons may have helped to determine how they mobilised their wealth for pious purposes, since, among the four categories of building delineated by

this study, some were clearly more popular than others. At the same time, however, the categories themselves were blurred on occasion by patrons looking for the best way to adapt the practice to their specific worldly and salvific needs. While competition between and among secular and ecclesiastical leaders was a key driver in this topographical transformation, it is important to note that many acts of building patronage would have been collective efforts. This is something our evidence tends only to hint at, however, leaving Gaul's bishops as by far the most well-represented Christian donors in the data. Nevertheless, collaboration is evident both at a horizontal level across the increasingly intertwined upper echelons of society, and also vertically through the participation of non-elites in the practice, with groups from across the social spectrum ultimately engaged in the shared pursuit of divine intercession in this life and the next. In this way, the Christianisation of the urban and suburban landscape detailed across four centuries by this study can be seen as a process that was not only closely intertwined with a number of important social, cultural, and political developments, but may have also encompassed at some level a significant portion of the population of late antique and Merovingian Gaul.

7. Conclusion

The wave of Christian building patronage documented in the cities of Gaul between the fourth and eighth centuries reconceptualised the region's urban and suburban landscapes in a way not seen since antiquity. Even so, it was not the only option for Christians determined to demonstrate their faith and achieve divine intercession in this period. Believers could make regular donations to their local church, bequeath land and property at the moment of their death, and sponsor increasingly elaborate liturgical arrangements. Meanwhile, those with the most agency in Frankish society also had an array of legal instruments at their disposal to show their devotion, including the remission of church taxes and the provision of immunities to enhance the self-determination of religious institutions. A surge in church-building was by no means inevitable, therefore, especially since it coincided with two centuries of tumult and upheaval, as Roman rule disintegrated and a number of independent 'barbarian' successor states emerged before the ultimate consolidation of Frankish hegemony across Gaul. To explain this somewhat paradoxical phenomenon, it has been necessary to place the cathedrals, funerary basilicas, monasteries, and institutions of charity that were erected during this period within their socio-political context, and foreground the patrons who made their existence possible. By approaching this building activity as the physical manifestation of the aspirations of individuals and groups grappling with a period of profound societal change, this study has sought to make an important contribution to the intersecting historiographical debates highlighted in its introduction, and to deepen our understanding of Gaul's transition from the classical world to that of the middle ages.

Perhaps the most revealing finding is that the rate of Christian building patronage across the region's cities follows an inverse trajectory to that of other markers of material culture that have traditionally been used by scholars to argue that the dissolution of Roman administrative structures in the West precipitated a catastrophic decline in civilisation. There were undoubtedly consequences to the narrowing of horizons that followed the 'fall of Rome', but, as we have seen, the consequent reinvigoration of the *civitas*-system across Gaul was accompanied by new Christian expressions of urbanism, which revitalised cities and demonstrated the enduring ability of local economies to finance

monumental architecture. Indeed, it is necessary to qualify the impression sometimes given by 'Christianisation' narratives that the erection of sprawling episcopal groups and suites of imposing funerary basilicas followed swiftly in the wake of Constantine's embrace of the new religion, and was more or less complete by the early fifth century. This study's focus on patrons rather than buildings has revealed how, in Gaul at least, the transition from *urbs romana* to *urbs christiana* was actually rather slow to get underway. Following the roll out of its core topographical elements, moreover, it was a process that was characterised by its interminability, as many of the region's cities witnessed a degree of building patronage that, despite the simplification of Gallic society, far surpassed what would have been necessary to endow them with the essential Christian amenities. This relentless activity reflected how the practice had been embraced as a new vehicle for claiming authority by successive generations of lay and ecclesiastical benefactors, but especially bishops, whose soft power was reliant on such strategies of legitimation in a period when episcopal agency was never as extensive as models of *Bischofsherrschaft* have suggested.

The public recognition sought by many of the donors who financed acts of Christian building patronage certainly echoed the euergetism of the ancient world. In this regard, there is a clear continuity in social behaviour that has perhaps been underacknowledged by scholarship that has considered 'Christian charity' to be a purely salvific pursuit, which was conceptually incomparable to the civic munificence of antiquity. Nevertheless, the practice did diverge in a number of important respects from its classical precursor, particularly in regard to its intended audience. In line with Christian teachings on compassion, patrons now mobilised their resources on behalf of the whole community, including its poorest members, and in doing so they hoped that their actions would be recognised by God and the saints on high. While the myriad factors at play in any given act of patronage – from the gender and status of a patron to the location and character of their building activities – mean motivations may have varied in their specifics, it is important to acknowledge that in contrast to their first- and second-century forebears, the Christian donors operating within the cities of late antique and Merovingian Gaul generally sought both socio-political and spiritual reward. Despite the tendency of some studies to isolate the former, therefore, neither concern can be readily extricated from an act of building patronage.

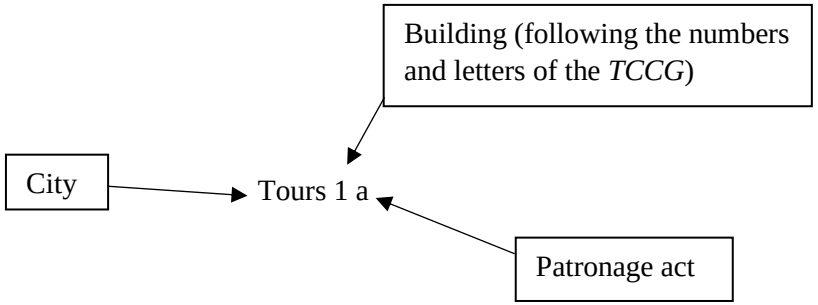
The way in which the practice of church-building consequently bridged the temporal and eternal worlds was, moreover, something in which all levels of Gallic society looked to engage, as far as their means allowed. The expanded donor pool for acts of building patronage in this period is thus another novelty, and the recognition of it in this study builds on recent scholarship on the laity that has challenged earlier conceptions of a religious society in Gaul shaped exclusively by its elite members.

This investigation has been fortunate to benefit from the invaluable *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule* and *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, which have greatly facilitated a detailed and diachronic look of an important region of the late and post-imperial world. Through a focus on Gaul, it has been possible to propose a model of urban and suburban Christian building patronage that will potentially be useful for further investigation of church-building across the Mediterranean during this period. Indeed, similar patron-driven analyses in the mould of the 'historical' approach outlined by Cyril Mango would establish whether and to what extent the conclusions drawn here apply elsewhere, and so help to determine how far the Christian topography of other regions reflected social, political, and cultural change in a manner akin to that observed in Gaul. That the historical processes tied up with the practice may well have been replicated in other regions of the late antique world is certainly plausible, especially since many of them remain relevant today. The financing of the restoration of Paris' Notre-Dame cathedral following a fire in 2019, for example, has revealed that prestige building projects continue to be an attractive vehicle for wealthy elites looking to legitimise their position in society. At the same time, the fundraising efforts for the new roof and spire have drawn together donors from across the social spectrum, each contributing according to their own means and motives. But while the renovation of Paris' cathedral offers some distant echoes of how the region's first churches came into existence, the explosion in Christian building patronage that took place throughout late antique Gaul was very much a product of its time, driven by individuals and groups who reimagined the social activity of the past in response to the changing world with which they were faced.

Appendix of patronage acts

The following is a compilation of all the acts of Christian building patronage undertaken in Gaul between c. 300 and 751 for which we can identify the individual(s) responsible, either explicitly or with a high degree of confidence from the available historical and archaeological data. The evidence is organised alphabetically by city. For detailed references or maps of cities, see the relevant volume of the *TCCG*.

Key:



Reference	Patron	Act of patronage	Date	Source
Agde (ecclesiastical province of Narbonne) – TCCG VII, pp. 45-9; XVI, pp. 17-18.				
Agde 4a	Rinilo/Ranilo	According to an inscription tentatively dated to the late sixth or early seventh century found in the rural chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Grau, Rinilo/Ranilo erected a church dedicated to Christ and Mary. Inscription: Fundabit hoc te[m]plu[m] Rinilo D[e]o dicat [a…] Virgo sacratum XPO Mar[ie…] Virginis alme condid[it] altar [e …] Petri apostoli confessor[…] oratoria titulabit sc […] Laboribus expiens hic […]	580/620	Inscription, see Février, 1960, pp. 323-8.

Aix-en-Provence (metropolitan see) – TCCG II, pp. 17-28; XVI, pp. 22-5.

Aix 1a	Basilius? (Bishop of Aix, …470-494…)	The remains of a cathedral have been dated c. 500, and thus during the probable tenure of Bishop Basilius. The width of the cathedral is unknown but its length would not have surpassed 30m. The episcopal group seems to have been established on the city's forum.	470/510	Late fifth-century or early sixth-century remains.
Aix 2a	Basilius? (Bishop of Aix, …470-494…)	The remains of a baptistery have been dated c. 500, and thus during the probable tenure of Bishop Basilius. The baptistery would have measured 14m on each side and possessed an octagonal pool 1.5m in diameter.	470/510	Late fifth-century or early sixth-century remains.
Aix 3a	Basilius? (Bishop of Aix, …470-494…)	The remains of a number of annexes at the eastern end of the city's episcopal group have been dated c. 500, and thus during the probable tenure of Bishop Basilius.	470/510	Late fifth-century or early sixth-century remains.

Angers (ecclesiastical province of Tours) – TCCG V, pp. 67-81; XVI, pp. 30-1.

Angers 1a	Audoveus (Bishop of Angers, …581-590…)	Audoveus built a *solarium* for himself on the city walls of Angers. The episcopal residence and its terrace was probably located near the cathedral, which is found right next to the wall at the eastern end of the city.	580/600	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.14.
Angers 4a	Maurilius (Bishop of Angers, 423-453)	Maurilius established a crypt where he was buried following his death in 453.	423/453	*Vita Maurilii I*, 29.
Angers 5a	Domitianus? (Bishop of Angers, ...562-567...)	Fortunatus' *Vita Albini* describes how the body of Bishop Albinus was transferred from its initial resting place to a *nova basilica.* This church may have been built by Domitianus, who succeeded Albinus to the see of Angers and commissioned Fortunatus to write the *Vita* of his predecessor.	550/576	Fortunatus, *Vita Albini*, 54-56.

Angers 6a	Licinius (Bishop of Angers, …601…)	Licinius built a basilica in honour of John the Baptist where he was later buried.	590/600	*Vita Licinii I,* 23, 29.
Angers 6b	Licinius (Bishop of Angers, …601…)	Licinius installed a monastic community at the basilica he had earlier built in honour of John the Baptist.	590/600	*Vita Licinii I,* 23, 29.
Angers 7a	Licinius (Bishop of Angers, …601…)	Licinius built a church to memorialise a miracle he had performed. He dedicated it to the Holy Cross.	590/600	*Vita Licinii I,* 23.
Angers 8a	Magnobodus? (Bishop of Angers, …609-627…)	The anonymous author of the ninth- or tenth-century *Vita Magnobodi* describes Magnobodus' construction of a basilica dedicated to Saturninus of Toulouse, an adjoining monastery, and some other annexes established for charitable purposes.	609/630	*Vita Magnobodi I,* 32.

Angoulême (ecclesiastical province of Bordeaux) – TCCG X, pp. 45-51.

Angoulême 2a	Eparchius (Ascetic, …542-581)	Eparchius founded a monastery just outside the walls of Angoulême. It has been associated with the abbey of Saint-Cybard, where there are remains of small rooms dating back to the second half of the sixth century.	550/581	Gregory, *Hist.*, VI.8.
Angoulême 2b	Alexander? (*vir clarissimus*)	A basilica was built over the burial of Eparchius, a local ascetic, following his death in 581. Eparchius' *Vita* mentions that Alexander designated where Eparchius should be buried, which may suggest he provided his own land.	581/585	*Vita et Virtutes s. Eparchii*, I.23.
Angoulême (N/A) a	Maracharius (Count and then Bishop of Angoulême, …555…)	Maracharius built a number of churches and church houses following his entry into the clerical ranks of Angoulême.	550/563	Gregory, *Hist.*, V.36.

Arles (metropolitan see) – TCCG III, pp. 73-84; XVI, pp. 37-45.

Arles 1a	Caesarius? (Bishop of Arles, 502-542); Theoderic? (King of the Ostrogoths, 493-526); Liberius? (Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, 510-536)	A vast apse with a chancel arch of 20 metres has been uncovered under the old convent of Caesarius and dated to the first half of the sixth century. The apse was supported by a pre-existing north-south wall, making the width of the church itself an unparalleled 60m. A presbyterial bench and polychrome mosaic were found, and the church's liturgical installations are also fairly well preserved, including the marble-paved *presbyterium* (100 m^2), and a large circular *ambo*, 7.6m in diameter, connected by a *solea*. On account of its considerable size, this was probably the city's cathedral, which may have been erected by Caesarius, with the support of the Ostrogothic King Theoderic, who took an interest in the city, or the resident Praetorian Prefect Liberius.	500/550	Sixth-century remains.
Arles 4a	Caesarius (Bishop of Arles, 502-542)	Caesarius established something akin to a hospital within Arles' episcopal group.	502/542	*Vita Caesarii*, I.20
Arles 6a	Caesarius (Bishop of Arles, 502-542)	The female monastery founded by Caesarius was originally extra-mural when established in c. 506, but it was destroyed soon after during a siege and re-established near the cathedral before 523.	506/523	*Vita Caesarii* I.35 and 57.
Arles 8a	Rusticula (Abbess, 568-627)	In the monastic cloister founded by Caesarius, Rusticula built a church dedicated to the holy cross. Rusticula built another church soon after, however, and so the first *ecclesia sanctae Crucis* was henceforth dedicated *in honore sancti archangeli Michaelis.*	568/627	*Vita S. Rusticulae*, 8.
Arles 8b	Rusticula (Abbess 568-627)	While she was in the process of building an initial basilica dedicated to the holy cross, Rusticula had a vision that compelled her to construct another church in which she transferred a relic of the cross initially deposed in the first church. To this church she also then added seven altars in honour of the holy cross, the archangels Gabriel and Raphael, and saints Thomas, Maurice, Sebastian, and Pontius.	568/627	*Vita S. Rusticulae*, 8.
Arles 10a	Caesarius (Bishop of Arles, 502-542)	Caesarius built an extra-mural funerary basilica dedicated to Mary for himself and the nuns of his convent.	524	Council of Arles (6 June 524).

Arles 11a	Aurelianus (Bishop of Arles, …546-551); Childebert I (King, 511-558); Ultragotha (Queen)	Aurelianus founded a male monastery and basilica in honour of the apostles at the instigation of Childebert I, perhaps at the site of the medieval parish church of Sainte-Croix, where the epitaph of the monastery's first abbot was conserved (*CIL* XII, 944).	c. 547	Aurelianus, *Regula ad monachos*.
Arles 12a	Aurelianus (Bishop of Arles, …546-551)	Aurelianus founded an intra-mural female monastery dedicated to Mary.	c. 547	Aurelianus, *Regula ad virgines*.
Arles 15a	Hilary? (Bishop of Arles, 430-449)	A monastery at Arles was founded on a suburban island (the Île de la Cappe) to the southwest of Arles a few kilometres down the Rhône. The patron is unknown but it may have been Hilary, who spent time at the island monastery of Lérins and, according to his *Vita*, established a number of monasteries himself.	Before 550	*Vita Caesarii*, I. 12, p. 460; *Vita Hilarii*, 11.
Arles 16a	Asclepius or Petrus (laymen)	A funerary inscription, dated January 530, was discovered in 1867 for Petrus, son of Asclepius, *qui fondebat hanc basilica sancti Petri et Pauli*. It is unclear, therefore, if the founder of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul-de-Mouleyrès was Petrus or his father.	470/530	*CIL* XII, 936.
Arras (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – TCCG XIV, pp. 85-96.				
Arras 1a	Vedastus? (Bishop of Arras, …535-before 575)	Vedastus rebuilt Arras' cathedral. Two fifteen-meter long walls underneath the Gothic cathedral have been dated between the fifth and ninth centuries.	530/575	*Vita I Vedasti*, 5-6.
Arras 3a	Vedastus? (Bishop of Arras, …535-before 575)	Vedastius built a wooden oratory outside of the walls of Arras (perhaps at the site of the Abbey of St Vaast) where he hoped to be buried. At the moment of his death, however, it was not ready and so he was buried in the cathedral.	530/575	*Vita I Vedasti*, 9.

Auch (ecclesiastical province of Éauze) – TCCG XIII, pp. 17-24; XVI, p. 46.

Auch 1a	Faustus? (Bishop of Auch …585)	Faustus built a church in honour of Martin.	550/585	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.4-5.

Autun (ecclesiastical province of Lyon) – TCCG IV, pp. 36-45; XVI, pp. 47-52.

Autun 1a	Syagrius (Bishop of Autun, 556-…602)	Syagrius decorated the walls of Autun's cathedral with gold mosaics.	580/600	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium*, 20.
Autun 1b	Leudegar (Bishop of Autun, …660-676)	Leudegar restored the floor of the cathedral of Autun and provided it with an atrium.	660/676	*Passio Leudegarii*, 2.
Autun 3a	Leudegar (Bishop of Autun, …660-676)	Leudegar established a *matricola* in the city in order to distribute alms to the poor.	660/676	*Testamentum S. Leudegarii*; *Passio Leudegarii*, 2.
Autun 6a	Brunhild (Queen, 561-613); Syagrius (Bishop of Autun, 556-…602)	Brunhild and Syagrius founded a female monastery dedicated to Mary which lay outside Autun's reduced wall-circuit.	561/600	Gregory the Great, *Ep.*, XIII.7; XIII.12.
Autun 7a	Brunhild (Queen, 561-	Brunhild and Syagrius established a *xenodochium* at a male monastery of an unknown location.	561/600	Gregory the Great, *Ep.*, XIII.7; XIII.11.

	613); Syagrius (Bishop of Autun, 556-…602)			
Autun 11a	Eufronius (Bishop of Autun, …452-471…)	Before he became bishop of Autun, the priest Eufronius built a funerary basilica dedicated to the local martyr Symphorian.	400/450	Gregory, *Hist*, II.15.
Autun 13a	Brunhild (Queen, 561-613); Syagrius (Bishop of Autun, 556-…602)	Brunhild and Syagrius built a suburban basilica dedicated to Martin.	561/600	Gregory the Great, *Ep.*, XIII.7; XIII.13.
Autun (N/A) a	Leudegar (Bishop of Autun, …660-676)	Leudegar restored the urban fabric of Autun, including its walls and houses.	662/676	*Passio s. Leudegarii*, 2.

Auxerre (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 47-65; XVI, pp. 53-6.

Auxerre 2a	Amator (Bishop of Auxerre, …388-418); Ruptilius (layman)	According to the *Vita Amatoris* (573-589), Ruptilius, a lay Christian, donated a house he had been left by his father to Bishop Amator, who was seeking a larger cathedral. Work underneath the crypts of the current cathedral has revealed sections of a structure dated by the numismatic and ceramic evidence to the fourth and fifth centuries.	380/420	*Vita Amatoris*, 18-21.
Auxerre 2b	Desiderius (Bishop of	Desiderius extended the cathedral of Auxerre to the east by constructing an apse decorated with gold and mosaics.	610/627	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium*, 20.

	Auxerre, …614-before 627)			
Auxerre 7a	Germanus? (Bishop of Auxerre, 418-448)	Writing in 873-6 about the miracles of Germanus of Auxerre, Heiric asserts that Germanus built a church inside the walls of Auxuerre in honour of the martyr Alban, whom Germanus had come across during his anti-Pelagian mission to Britain (c. 429).	429/448	Heiric of Auxerre, *Miracula S. Germani,* I.17.
Auxerre 9a	Germanus (Bishop of Auxerre, 418-448)	Germanus founded a male monastery across the Yonne opposite the cathedral.	418/448	Constantius of Lyon, *Vita S. Germani,* 6-9.
Auxerre 12a	Optatus (Bishop of Auxerre, ...533); Sanctinus and Memorius (Priests).	Optatus, with the help of the priests Sanctinus and Memorius, built a basilica in honour of the martyr Christopher.	500/550	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium,* 14.
Auxerre 20a	Marinus (Deacon at Auxerre); Desiderius (Bishop of Auxerre, …614-…627)	Marinus built a basilica dedicated to Gervasius, Nazarius, Protasius, and Celsius under the direction of Bishop Desiderius. It was located across the Yonne to the east of the city.	600/630	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium,* 20.
Auxerre 21a	Palladius (Bishop of Auxerre, ...627-659)	Palladius built a female monastery to the south of the city which apparently consisted of five sanctuaries including basilicas dedicated to Mary, Andrew and Julian, and oratories in honour of Ferreolus and Martin.	634/637	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium,* 21.

Auxerre 26a	Palladius (Bishop of Auxerre, ...627-659)	Palladius built a basilica in honour of Eusebius of Vercelli near to the walls of Auxerre to the southwest of the city, where he was later buried. He also installed a male monastery there.	626/659	*Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium,* 33.
Auxerre 28a	Vigilius (Bishop of Auxerre, ...687)	Vigilius built a church in honour of Mary in the suburbs of Auxerre for the monks who served there.	660/690	Testament of Vigilius.

Bayeux (ecclesiastical province of Rouen) – TCCG IX, pp. 37-48.

Bayeux 1a	Vigor? (Bishop of Bayeux, c. 520); Childebert I? (King, 511-538)	The late life of Vigor describes how Childebert I ceded a piece of land to the church of Bayeux, ordering the bishop to destroy the pagan shrine (*fanum*) that stood there and build a church in its place.	511/558	*Vita Vigoris*, 8, 11.

Beauvais (ecclesiastical province of Reims) –TCCG XIV, pp. 129-41.

Beauvais 1a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	Eligius established a *memoria* in honour of the martyr Lucianus in Beauvais.	640/660	*Vita Eligii,* II.7.

Besançon (metropolitan see) – TCCG XV, pp. 21-34.

Besançon 2a	Donatus (Bishop of Besançon, …626-658…)	Donatus founded a male monastery. Remains of the church have been uncovered.	626/636	Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani,* 14; seventh-century remains.

Besançon 3a	Flavia (noblewoman, …590-635…)	After the death of her husband Duke Waldalenus, Flavia founded a female monastery. Her son, Bishop Donatus, provided the *Regula Donati*, which combined elements from the Rules of Benedict, Caesarius and Columbanus.	600/635	Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, 14.

Bordeaux (metropolitan see) – TCCG X, pp. 19-33; XVI, pp. 62-7.

Bordeaux 1a	Leontius II (Bishop of Bordeaux, 552-568…)	Leontius enhances the cathedral of Bordeaux, perhaps following a fire at the episcopal group.	550/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.15.63.
Bordeaux 2a	Leontius II (Bishop of Bordeaux, 552-568…)	Leontius built a church dedicated to Mary as part of the episcopal group.	550/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.15.55-58.
Bordeaux 4a	Leontius II (Bishop of Bordeaux, 552-568…)	Leontius restored the baptistery of Bordeaux after an apparent fire.	550/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.15.53-54.
Bordeaux 5a	Euphronius (Syrian merchant)	Euphronius converted part of his house into a shrine and placed relics of Sergius in a reliquary above an altar.	550/580	Gregory, *Hist.*, VII.31.
Bordeaux 10a	Nicasius (Bishop of Angoulême, …579-585…)	Nicasius built a church in honour of saint Eparchius, a recluse who had spent his days in Angoulême.	581/600	*Vita et Virtutes Eparchii*, II.10.

Bourges (metropolitan see) – TCCG VI, pp. 15-26; XVI, pp. 68-9.

Bourges 1a	Leocadius (Senator)	Leocadius converted to Christianity and offered his house as a place of worship to the people of Bourges, accepting only a token payment in return. This church seems to have been the city's cathedral and soon after received relics of Saint Stephen.	300/400	Gregory, *Hist.*, I.31.
Bourges 4a	Austrigisilus (Bishop of Bourges, …614…); Sulpicius (Bishop of Bourges, 626-646)	Austrigisilus and the archdeacon (and later bishop) Sulpicius built a cell for the ascetic Amandus in the upper part of the city's rampart near the cathedral.	612/626	*Vita Amandi*, 5-6.
Bourges 5a	Bertoara (Noblewoman, …614…)	Bertoara established a female monastery that followed the rule of Columbanus.	600/626	Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, II.10.
Bourges 6a	Sulpicius (Bishop of Bourges, 626-646)	Sulpicius established a female monastery in the city.	626/646	*Vita II Sulpicii*, 23.
Bourges 7a	Eustadiola (Noblewoman)	Eustadiola converted one of the houses she owned inside Bourges into a church dedicated to Mary.	626/650	*Vita Eustadiolae*, 3.
Bourges 8a	Eustadiola (Noblewoman)	Eustadiola converted one of the houses she owned inside Bourges into a church dedicated to Eugenia.	626/650	*Vita Eustadiolae*, 3.
Bourges 9a	Eustadiola (Noblewoman)	Eustadiola built a monastery for herself and her maids, which she endowed with all her estates.	626/650	*Vita Eustadiolae*, 3-4.
Bourges 10a	Agustus (Abbot, …549-562…)	Agustus established an oratory in honour of St. Martin with the financial support of the local community where he gathered a community of monks.	540/565	Gregory, *GC*, 79.

Bourges 11a	Probianus (Bishop of Bourges, …552-568…)	Probianus built a basilica in honour of Saint Symphorian, which may have later hosted the body of Ursinus (allegedly the first bishop of Bourges) and took his name.	552/568	Gregory, *GC,* 79.
Bourges 13a	Austrigisilus? (Bishop of Bourges, …614…)	The church where Austrigisilus was buried took his name within a century. It is possible that, like his successor Sulpicius, Austrigisilus may have built his own burial church. The oldest archaeological remains found at Saint-Outrille-du-Château (Outrille being another name for Austrigisilus) are Merovingian burials. A *matricula* was also established here.	602/626	*Vita Austrigisili* , 7-10; *Miracula S Austrigisili*, 3, 6-8, 10-14.
Bourges 14a	Sulpicius (Bishop of Bourges, 626-646)	Sulpicius built a basilica for his burial to the west of Bourges.	626/646	*Vita Sulpicii I,* 1 and 8.
Bourges 15a	Eustadiola (Noblewoman)	Eustadiola built a basilica dedicated it to Saint Peter which was apparently located to the southwest near the walls of the city but outside the gate. It was here that she was buried.	626/650	*Vita Eustadiolae,* 5, 8-10.
Cahors (ecclesiastical province of Bourges) – TCCG VI, pp. 57-65; XVI, pp. 70-2.				
Cahors 2a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius built two residences (one for himself and one for his clerics?) near Cahors' cathedral.	636/655	*Vita Desiderii,* 16.
Cahors 3a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius established an oratory in honour of Saint Martin not far from the cathedral on the site of a former house.	636/655	*Vita Desiderii*, 16.

Cahors 8a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius built a basilica in honour of Mary inside the city walls.	636/655	*Vita Desiderii,* 16.
Cahors 10a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius built a basilica across the river where his brother and episcopal predecessor Rusticus was murdered. He dedicated it to Peter.	636/655	*Vita Desiderii,* 16.
Cahors 11a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius founded a monastery to the west of Cahors.	636/655	*Desiderius, Ep.*, I.2; *Vita Desiderii,* 20.
Cahors 11b	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Next to the monastery Desiderius founded, he built a church and prepared his own tomb in one of its annexes. The site was initially dedicated to Amantius of Rodez but soon took Desiderius' name	636/655	*Desiderius, Ep.*, I.2; *Vita Desiderii,* 20, 31.
Cahors 12a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius built a basilica outside the walls of the city in honour of Julian.	636/655	*Vita Desiderii,* 16.
Cahors (N/A) a	Desiderius (Bishop of Cahors, 636-655)	Desiderius undertook a number of civil works in his city, which included restoring the walls and water supply.	636/655	Desiderius, *Ep.*, I.13

Cambrai (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – TCCG XIV, pp. 97-105.

Cambrai 2a	Bertoaldus (Bishop of Cambrai, c. 650)	Bertoaldus converted part of the episcopal residence into an oratory.	c. 650	*Vita Gaugerici*, 14.
Cambrai 3a	Gaugericus (Bishop of Cambrai, 584-627)	Gaugericus built a church dedicated to Saint Medard where he was buried.	584/627	*Vita Gaugerici*, 13.

Chalon-sur-Saône (ecclesiastical province of Lyon) – TCCG IV, pp. 65-74; XVI, p. 76.

Chalon-sur-Saône 1a	Agricola (Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, 532-580)	The cathedral of Chalon-sur-Saône was built by Agricola during his episcopal tenure. It was apparently supported by columns, adorned with marble, and decorated with mosaics.	532/580	Gregory, *Hist.*, V.45.
Chalon-sur-Saône 2a	Guntram? (King, 561-592)	An oratory seems to have formed part of Guntram's royal residence at Chalon-sur-Saône.	561/592	Gregory, *Hist.*, VIII.44.
Chalon-sur-Saône 3a	Guntram (King, 561-592)	Guntram constructs a *ciborium* embellished with many gems and places it over the burial of Marcellus in the church which bore his name.	561/592	Paul the Deacon, *Historia Lang.*, III.34.
Chalon-sur-Saône 3b	Guntram (King, 561-592)	Guntram founded a monastery at the church of Marcellus.	584	Fredegar, *Chron.*, IV.1.
Chalon-sur-Saône 4a	Agricola (Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, 532-580)	Agricola built a hospital for lepers and buried the recluse Desideratus in the neighbouring church.	532/580	Gregory, *GC*, 85.

Clermont (ecclesiastical province of Bourges) – TCCG VI, pp. 27-40; XVI, pp. 81-6.

Clermont 1a	Namatius (Bishop of Clermont, c. 450)	Bishop Namatius financed an intra-mural cathedral that was apparently 150 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 50 feet high as far as the vaulting. It stood in a cross shape with a rounded apse, and possessed 42 windows, 70 columns, 8 doorways, and walls decorated with marble mosaics. Relics of the martyrs Agricola and Vitalis were placed within.	c. 450	Gregory, *Hist.*, II.16.
Clermont 3a	Avitus (Bishop of Clermont, 571-592…)	Avitus filled in the crypt where the body of the body of Bishop Illidius lay. He then built a basilica above ground, and placed Illidius' remains in a sarcophagus in the church's rounded apse.	571/600	Gregory, *VP*, II. 2, 4.
Clermont 6a	Alcima and Placidina (Noblewomen, …515-526…)	Alcima and Placidina, sister and wife of Bishop Apollinaris (515), built a basilica in Clermont in honour of the martyr Antolianus just before or during Apollinaris' brief episcopal tenure.	c. 515	Gregory, *GM*, 64.
Clermont 10a	Wife of Bishop Namatius	The wife of Bishop Namatius built a basilica dedicated to Saint Stephen in the suburbs of Clermont. She oversaw the decoration of the church herself.	c. 450	Gregory, *Hist.*, II.17.
Clermont 11a	Eparchius (Bishop of Clermont, …451-470)	Eparchius founded a monastery atop Puy de Chanturgue to which he would retreat during the holy days of Easter. Gregory comments that by his day it was just an oratory.	450/470	Gregory, *Hist.*, II.21.
Clermont 12a	Abraham (Ascetic, …451-477)	Abraham established a monastery for himself and a number of followers.	450/477	Gregory, *VP*, III.1.
Clermont 12b	Abraham (Ascetic, …451-477)	Abraham built a church in honour of Cyricus at his monastic community. An archaeological survey has dated a series of burials near Saint-Cirgues to the fifth and sixth centuries.	450/477	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, VII.17.
Clermont 13a	Martius (Ascetic, c. 450)	Martius founded a monastic community around himself. A number of sarcophagi dating to the Merovingian period have been discovered at the church of Saint-Mart, which is located in the village of Chamalières and first appears in tenth-century sources.	450/480	Gregory, *VP*, XIV.1-4.

Clermont 17a	Genesius (Bishop of Clermont, …650…)	Genesius built a church in which he was buried and later took his name. Merovingian burials have been discovered in the vicinity.	600/660	Epitaph of Genesius, *RICG* VIII, n. 25, pp. 138-144.
Clermont 20a	Genesius (Count of Clermont, 662-675)	Encouraged by Bishop Praeiectus, Genesius founded a female monastery in Clermont's suburbs.	662/675	*Passio Praeiecti*, 15; *Vita Boniti*, 16.
Clermont 21a	Praeiectus (Bishop of Clermont, …662-676)	Praeiectus founded a female monastery in Clermont's suburbs.	662/676	*Passio Praeiecti*, 16.
Clermont 22a	Praeiectus (Bishop of Clermont, …662-676)	Praeiectus established a *xenodochium*.	662/676	*Passio Praeiecti*, 16.
Clermont 24a	Nordebertus (Bishop of Clermont, …710…)	Nordebertus rebuilt the basilica of Saint-Maurice which had fallen into ruin.	711/715	*Vita Boniti*, 33.

Cologne (metropolitan see) – TCCG XII, pp. 25-69.

Cologne 1a	Carentius? (Bishop of Cologne, …565…)	Carentius embellished a church in Cologne, but it is unclear which church this was. It may have been the cathedral, which received an *ambo* and *solea* in the second half of the sixth century.	c. 565	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, III.14.21-24.

Cologne 4a	Clematius; (lay man) Diodora (lay woman)	Husband and wife Clematius and Diodora rebuilt/restored a *templum* at Cologne at the site of where the blood of the virgin martyrs was split. This was probably the Basilica of Saint Ursula, which appears to have received an *ambo* and *solea* during the second half of the sixth century.	c. 550	Inscription, see Gauthier (1973, pp. 108-111).
Cologne 6a	Plectrude? (wife of Pepin II, …714…)	In the twelfth century, the *Historiae Francorum Steinveldenses* attributes the foundation of a female monastery at the church of St. Maria im Kapitol to Plectrude, who apparently retired to Cologne after the death of her husband in 714. Excavations have revealed the remains of a Roman temple, and evidence that the site was reused during the eighth and ninth centuries.	700/720	*Historiae Francorum Steinveldenses*, 2.

Coutances (ecclesiastical province of Rouen) – TCCG IX, pp. 89-95.

Coutances 1a	Potentinus (Monk)	Potentinus, a monk at the monastery of Luxeuil and a companion of Columbanus in exile, founded a monastery in the suburbs of Coutances.	610/640	Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, 21.

Dax (ecclesiastical province of Éauze) – TCCG XIII, pp. 33-41.

Dax 1a	Gratianus? (Bishop of Dax, …506…)	According to the thirteenth-century Breviary of Dax, Gratianus built a church dedicated to Vincent. Remains of this church date c. 500 and surrounding burials have been dated to the late antique and Merovingian period.	c. 500	Breviary of Dax; late fifth-century or early sixth-century remains.

Die (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 63-7; XVI, pp. 87-8.

Die 1a	Marcellus (Bishop of Die, 463-510)	Marcellus erected a baptistery in Die.	463/510	*Vita S. Marcelli*, 3.3; 10.1-3.

Dijon (ecclesiastical province of Lyon) – TCCG IV, pp. 55-63.

Dijon 3a	Tetricus (Bishop of Langres, 539-568…)	Tetricus, son and successor of Bishop Gregory of Langres, enlarged the church of Saint John, in which his father had been buried, and provided it with a circular apse.	539/573	Gregory, *VP*, VII.3.
Dijon 6a	Gregory (Bishop of Langres, 506-540)	Gregory built a basilica over the apparent tomb of Saint Benignus.	506/540	Gregory, *GM*, 50.

Geneva (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 37-48; XVI, pp. 98-106.

Geneva 7a	Maximus (Bishop of Geneva, 508-523…)	Maximus established a church on the site of a destroyed religious building. It is unclear if this was a pagan temple or an Arian church.	513/520	Avitus, *Homily* 20.
Geneva (N/A) a	Maximus? (Bishop of Geneva, 508-523…)	Avitus' Homily 19 concerns the rebuilding of a basilica in Geneva which had been burned by 'the enemy'. Maximus would have been the bishop of the city at the time and so it is possible he carried out the restoration project.	513/520	Avitus, *Homily* 19.
Geneva 8a	Sedeleube? (Queen?) Theodolinda? (Queen)	A church founded in honour of Victor, a soldier of the Theban legion and the martyr of Solothurn, was built in the final decades of the fifth century, but there are conflicting accounts as to whether this was done by Sedeleube, daughter of Burgundian King Chilperic II (but characterised as '*regina*' by Fredegar), or Theodolinda, wife of the Burgundian king Godigisel. It is also possible that two independent churches were built.	470/500	Chronicle of Fredegar, IV.22; *Passio martyrum Victoris et Ursi.*

Laon (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – XIV, pp. 163-70.

Laon 1a	Sadalberga / Salaberge (noblewoman)	Sadalberga/Salaberge founded a monastery on the advice of Walbert, an abbot of Luxeuil. This community was initially established in the suburbs of Langres, but it was relocated on account of the better protection the city of Laon could provide.	c. 660	*Vita s. Sadalbergae*, 14.

Le Mans (ecclesiastical province of Tours) – TCCG V, pp. 41-56; XVI, pp. 129-33.

Le Mans 1a	Victorius? (Bishop of Le Mans, 449-490)	According to the ninth-century *Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* Victorius was involved in the development of Le Mans' cathedral, also translating there the relics of Gervasius and Protasius.	449/490	*Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* VIII.
Le Mans 1b	Innocentius? (Bishop of Le Mans, …533-559)	According to the ninth-century *Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* Innocentius raised the height of the cathedral of Le Mans and enlarged it to the east.	530/559	*Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* VIII.
Le Mans 2a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram built an oratory (*oratoriolus*) in honour of the archangel Michael as part of his place of residence in Le Mans' episcopal group.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 3a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram built a *domus* for himself, visiting bishops, and the ecclesiastics who served the nearby oratory.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 3b	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram erected some ancillary annexes near to his residence, which he refers to as *stipendia et matricola.*	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 5a	Eoladius (*vir illuster* and priest, …559-616…); Baudomalla (*Deo devota*)	Eoladius and (his wife?) Baudomalla founded an oratory (*oratorius*) inside the walls of Le Mans and endowed it with additional land they owned. Eoladius is apparently the priest and abbot of the establishment in 616.	550/596	Charter of Theudebert, 8 June 596; Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*

Le Mans 8a	Aiglibertus? (Bishop of Le Mans, 673-699)	According to the ninth-century *Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* Aiglibertus founded a monastery in honour of Albinus and Mary.	673/699	*Actus pontificum Cenomannis,* XIV.
Le Mans 9a	Haregarius and Truda?	Two acts dated 513 and 524 attest the existence of a monastery next to the river Sarthe, which was dedicated to Mary and the apostles, and established by Haregarius and Truda for their daughter Tenestina. The documents are certainly interpolated, however, and possibly just a means for claiming episcopal guardianship over the monastery.	513	Donation of Haregarius, 3 May 513(?); *Precaria* of Tenestina, 27 April 524(?).
Le Mans 10a	Innocentius? (Bishop of Le Mans, …533-559)	According to the ninth-century *Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* Innocentius provided the funerary church that hosted a number of the early bishops of Le Mans with a new apse, as well decorating it and raising it in height.	530/559	*Actus Pontificum Cenomannis,* VIII.
Le Mans 11a	Domnolus? (Bishop of Le Mans, 559-581)	According to two charters recopied in the ninth-century, Domnolus built a basilica to shelter the relics of Saint Vincent, where he and a number of his successors are buried. Later sources also mention a monastery.	559/581	Charters of Bishop Domnolus, 572 and 582, cited in *TCCG* V, p. 53.
Le Mans 15a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram added a *sinodochium* to a pre-existing church dedicated to Martin.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 16a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram built a basilica in honour of Peter and Paul, where he deposited some of their relics and established a *matricula*. Later sources mention the presence of a monastery.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 17a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram built a basilica in honour of the holy cross.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*
Le Mans 18a	Bertram (Bishop of Le Mans, 586-623)	Bertram built a basilica in honour of Bishop Germanus of Paris. It was accompanied by some lodgings for monks who seem to have ran a hospice for the poor and pilgrims.	586/616	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum.*

Le Mans 20a	Herlemundus (Bishop of Le Mans, 710-714)	Herlemundus established an oratory in honour of Audoin of Rouen (d. 684) just north-east of the city, where he assigned resources for the maintenance of some monks, as well as the poor and pilgrims.	710/714	Donation of Bishop Herlemundus, December 712.

Liège (ecclesiastical province of Cologne) – TCCG XII, 117-24; XVI, pp. 138-41.

Liège 1a	The people of Liège; Hubert? (Bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht-Liège, …727)	The 'people of Liège' built a basilica at the site of Bishop Lambert's murder (c. 705) and a number of subsequent miracles. The *Vita Hugberti* states that Bishop Hubert translated his predecessor's relics within the church.	705/727	*Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis vetustissima*, 22-23; *Vita Hugberti*, 2.
Liège 2a	Hubert (Bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht-Liège, …727)	Hubert built a basilica in honour of the apostles where he was buried.	700/727	*Vita Hugberti*, 10, 19.

Limoges (ecclesiastical province of Bourges) – TCCG VI, pp. 67-77; XVI, pp. 142-5.

Limoges 3a	Ruricius I (Bishop of Limoges, 485-506…)	Ruricius I founds a suburban church in honour of Peter.	485/506	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, IV.5
Limoges 4a	Ruricius II (Bishop of Limoges, …535-549…)	Ruricius II founds a suburban church in honour of Augustine.	530/550	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, IV.5

Lyon (metropolitan see) – TCCG IV, pp. 15-35; XVI, pp. 125-57.

Lyon 1a	Patiens (Bishop of Lyon, …469-480…)	Patiens built a cathedral in his city. Sidonius Apollinaris provided a verse inscription that would have been found on the walls near the altar.	449/470	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, II.10.
Lyon 4a	Priscus (Bishop of Lyon, 573-585…)	Priscus enlarged the episcopal residence of Lyon at the start of his tenure.	573/580	Gregory, *Hist*, IV.36.
Lyon 6a	Maximus? (Monk and disciple of Martin of Tours); Eucherius? (Bishop of Lyon, …441-before 451)	Gregory recalls a versified *Vita* of a certain Maximus, whom he describes as a student of Saint Martin (died in 397), which details how Maximus came to Lyon and established himself in a monastery on the Ile-Barbe in order to hide away as a recluse. It is unclear if this monastery existed prior to the arrival of Maximus or if he founded it. The foundation has also been associated with Eucherius of Lyon (*PL* 50, col. 1213).	c. 400	Gregory, *GC* 22.
Lyon 7a	Patiens? (Bishop of Lyon, …469-480…)	Archaeological evidence suggests that the first iteration of Saint-Irénée should be dated to the second half of the fifth century. It is possible that the project was initiated by Patiens, therefore, who is commemorated as responsible on a later inscription.	450/500	Fifth-century remains; see *TCCG* XVI, pp. 152-3 for inscription.
Lyon 9a	Caretena (Queen, 456-506)	According to an epitaph known only from a ninth-century copy, Caretena, the wife of the Burgundian king Gundobad, built a church where she was later buried.	456/506	*CIL* XIII, 2372.
Lyon 10a	Childebert I (King, 511-558); Ultragotha (Queen)	Childebert and his wife Ultragotha established a *xenodochium* in the city.	511/549	Council of Orléans (549), c. 10.
Lyon 17a	Aunemundus? (Bishop of	Aunemundus made a donation for the poor at a church dedicated to Peter, where he was subsequently buried. Church is later joined by a convent (Saint-Pierre-les-Nonnains)	600/664	*Acta Aunemundi*, 12.

	Lyon, …653-660/4)			

Maastricht *(ecclesiastical province of Cologne) – TCCG* XII, pp. 91-115; XVI, pp. 158-9.

Maastricht 1a	The people of Maastricht?	A number of wooden oratories were constructed at the site of the tomb of 'Bishop Aravatius' (this is presumably the fourth-century Bishop Servatius).	400/550	Gregory, *GC*, 71.
Maastricht 1b	Monulf (Bishop of Maastricht, c.575?)	Monulf built a church in which he translated the body of 'Aravatius'. Excavations within the Basilica of Saint Servatius have uncovered a number of foundations, walls, and burials dating between the fourth and seventh centuries.	550/600?	Gregory, *GC*, 71.

Mainz (metropolitan see) – TCCG XI, pp. 21-43.

Mainz 1a	Sidonius? (Bishop of Mainz, …565…)	Sidonius was celebrated by Fortunatus as a builder, and so he may have been responsible for the construction work observed on the site of Mainz's first cathedral (underneath the current church of Saint John) dated to the the sixth century.	c. 565	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.2.7-8; IX.9.25. Sixth-century remains.
Mainz 2a	Sidonius (Bishop of Mainz, …565…); Berthoara (Princess)	Sidonius built a baptistery with the financial support of Berthoara, daughter of the Austrasian king Theudebert I (533-547/8).	c. 565	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.11.
Mainz 7a	Sidonius (Bishop of Mainz, …565…)	Sidonius built a church in honour of Saint George.	c. 565	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.12.9-10.

Marseille (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 121-33; XVI, pp. 165-76.

Marseille 1a	Proculus? (Bishop of Marseille, …381-428…); Venerius? (Bishop of Marseille, …430-452…)	The late antique cathedral of Marseille stood on the site of its medieval and modern successors and has been dated to the early fifth century, when Bishops Proculus and Venerius held the city's see.	380/450	Early fifth-century remains.
Marseille 2a	Proculus? (Bishop of Marseille, …381-428…); Venerius? (Bishop of Marseille, …430-452…)	The baptistery of Marseille has been dated to the early fifth century, when Bishops Proculus and Venerius held the city's see.	380/450	Early fifth-century remains.
Marseille 8a	John Cassian (monk)	John Cassian founded a male monastery in the city at an unknown location.	416/435	Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, 61.
Marseille 9a	John Cassian (monk)	John Cassian founded a female monastery in the city at an unknown location.	416/435	Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, 61.
Marseille 10a	Proculus? (Bishop of Marseille, …381-428…)	A male monastery in Marseille under the guidance of Bishop Proculus is mentioned on the lintel inscription of Narbonne's mid-fifth-century cathedral.	380/430	*CIL* XII, 5336.

Meaux (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 131-9; XVI, pp. 177-80.

Meaux 3a	Faro? (Bishop of Meaux, c. 672)	According to his *Vita* (written c. 868-872), Faro built a basilica in honour of the holy cross, John the Baptist, and all the apostles in which he was later buried.	c. 672.	*Vita S. Faronis episcopi Meldensis*, 109.

Metz (ecclesiastical province of Trier) – TCCG I, pp. 33-53; XVI, pp. 181-9.

Metz 3a	Chrodegang (Bishop of Metz, 742-766); Pepin III (Mayor of the Palace, 741-751; King, 751-768)	Chrodegang embellished the cathedral of Metz with the support of Pepin III. It is unclear if this occurred while Pepin was mayor of the palace or after he had assumed the Frankish throne. Some fragments of the chancel have been dated to the eighth century and so may relate to this development.	742/766	Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*.
Metz 6a	Chrodegang (Bishop of Metz, 742-766)	A church dedicated to Saint Peter was located just to the south of Metz's cathedral. During the middle of the eighth century, Chrodegang remodelled the choir and inserted a throne.	742/766	Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*.
Metz 15a	Glodesind (Noblewoman); Wintrio (Duke); Godila (Noblewoman)	The intra-mural female monastery known as *subterius monasterium*, located at the current site of the chapel of Sainte-Glossinde, was established by Glodesind, probably around the end of the sixth century or the start of the seventh century with the support of her father Wintrio and mother Godila.	c. 600	*Vita Antiquior, De S. Glodesinde Virgine*, I.12-13.
Metz 17a	Anonymous nun	A nun at the monastery of Glodesind built an extra-mural funerary basilica contiguous with the city's rampart. It was dedicated to Mary, and Glodesind's body was translated there from its previous resting place at the church of the Apostles (Saint-Arnould). This basilica would become the burial church for the nuns and was directly accessible from the monastery through a gate cut in the city wall.	600/665	*Vita Antiquior, De S. Glodesinde Virgine*, II.14.
Metz 30a	Sigibert I? (King, 561-575)	A church dedicated to Medard is attested in Metz by the city's stational list. Sigibert I completed a church dedicated to Medard at Soissons, which had been started by his father Clothar I. Sigibert resided at Metz and his patronage of Medard suggests he may have been responsible for this church.	561/575	Stational List of Metz.

Aime/Moûtiers (Tarentaise) (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 141-4; XVI, pp. 19-20, 190.

Moûtiers 1a	Sanctus (Bishop of Tarentaise, …517…)	Sanctus built a basilica dedicated to Peter which was consecrated by Avitus.	500/518	Avitus, *Homily* 21.

Nantes (ecclesiastical province of Tours) – TCCG V, pp. 83-94; XVI, pp. 191-2.

Nantes 1a	Eumerius (Bishop of Nantes, …533-541…)	Eumerius began construction on a cathedral at Nantes but he was unable to finish it before his death.	533/548	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, IV.1; III.6-7.
Nantes 1b	Felix (Bishop of Nantes, 549-582)	Felix, Eumerius' successor, completed the cathedral of Nantes. Archaeological remains, including walls, burials, and elements from columns, can all be dated to the sixth century.	549/573	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, IV.1; III.6-7; sixth-century remains.

Narbonne (metropolitan see) – TCCG VII, pp. 15-23; XVI, pp. 193-7.

Narbonne 1a	Rusticus (Bishop of Narbonne, 427-461); Marcellus (Praetorian Prefect); Ursus (priest); Hermes (Deacon); Montanus (Subdeacon); Venerius	Rusticus coordinated an array of lay and clerical patrons who all contributed to the rebuilding of Narbonne's cathedral between 441 and 445 following a fire. An extant inscription outlines the construction process as well as providing a donor list and some amounts. The Praetorian Prefect Marcellus provided the biggest contribution in the form of 600 Solidi for the artisans' wages and 1500 for materials and other costs. Inscription: D(e)o et Chr(ist)o miserante lim(en) hoc c(ol)l(o)k(a)t(um) e(st) anno iiii c(on)s(ule) Valentiniano Aug(usto) vi, iii k(a)l(endas) d(ecembres), xviiii anno ep(iscopa)tus Rusti[ci…/Rusticus ep(iscopu)s, ep(iscop)i Bonosi filius, / ep(iscop)i Aratoris de sorore nepus, / ep(iscop)i Veneri soci(us) in monasterio, / conpr(es)b(yter) eccle(siae) Massiliens(is), / anno xv ep(iscopa)tus su(i), d(ie) ann(i) v, iii id(us) oct(o)b(res) / c(urantibus) Vrso pr(es)b(ytero), Hermete diaco(no) et eor(um)	441/445	*CIL* XII, 5336.

	(Bishop of Marseille, …430-452…); Dynamius (Bishop); Oresius (Layman?); Agroecius (Layman); Deconia[nus?] (Laywoman/ man); Salutius (*Vir Inlustris*)	seq(uen)tib(us). / Coep (it) depon(ere) pariet(es) eccl(esiae) dud(um) exustae; / xxxvii d(ie) quad(rata) in fundam(ento) poni coepi(t); / anno ii, vii id(us) oct(o)b(res) absid(em) p(er)f(ecit) Montanus subd(iaconus); / Marcellus Gall(iarum) pr(a)ef(ectus), D(e)I cultor, prece / exegit ep(iscopu)m hoc on(u)s suscip(ere), impendia / necessar(ia) repromittens, quae per / Bienn(ium) adminis(trationis) / suae pr(a)ebu(it) artifi(ci)b(us) / mercedem sol(idos) DC, / ad oper(a) et ceter(a) sol(idos) I[mille?]D, / hinc obla(tiones) s(an)c(t)i / (e) ep(iscop)i Veneri sol(idos) C […] / ep(iscop)i Dynami (solidos) L […] / Oresi CC […] / Agroeci […] / et Deconia [ni...] / Saluti […]		
Narbonne 2a	Rusticus? (Bishop of Narbonne, 427-461)	A church dedicated to Mary is first attested in Narbonne at the end of the seventh century. Excavations 200 metres east of the episcopal group at the medieval church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Major uncovered a wall from the fifth century and the base of a column with an inscription that mentions Rusticus dated 444.	444	*CIL* XII, 5335; Julien of Toledo, Historia Wambae, 12.
Narbonne 5a	Rusticus (Bishop of Narbonne, 427-461); Christian community of Narbonne; Proiectus (Priest); Venantius (Deacon); Avitianus (Deacon?); Senator (Deacon?);	Rusticus coordinated an array of lay and clerical patrons who all contributed to the extra-mural funerary basilica of Saint-Felix in 456. A mutilated inscription over two fragments records some of the patrons. Inscription: Ann(o) xxviiii ep(i)s(copa)tus Ruticu(s) ne longitudinis et al(titudinis) / sacro s(an)c(t)a eccl(esia) LVI Innocentius subdiaconus) / proiectus pr(es)b(yter) II vir in(lustris) Salutius/Venantius diac(onus) I vir c(larissimus) Lympidus/Avitiani […] / Senat {…} *Second stone:* Martis[…}/nnius I +Glismo(n)da Comitissa/nus/M/…/[…i]n ec(c)l(esia) […] s(an)c(tu)s e(piscopu)s…]	456	Inscription, see *L'année épigraphique*, (1928), n. 85.

	Innocentius (Subdeacon); Salutius (Vir Inlustris); Lympidius (Vir Clarissimus)			

Nevers (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 141-53.

Nevers 1a	Tauricianus? (Bishop of Nevers, …517…); Gundobad? (King, 473-516); Sigismund? (King, 516-523)	Masonry underneath the current cathedral of Nevers has been dated to the late fifth or early sixth century, which lines up with the first known bishop of Nevers, Tauricianus, whose see was probably created by Gundobad or Sigismund. They may have therefore also been responsible for the city's first cathedral.	480/520	Late fifth/early sixth-century remains.
Nevers 2a	Tauricianus? (Bishop of Nevers, …517…); Gundobad? (King, 473-516); Sigismund? (King, 516-523)	Nevers' baptistery has been dated to the late fifth or early sixth century, which lines up with the first known bishop of Nevers, Tauricianus, whose see was probably created by Gundobad or Sigismund. They may have therefore also been responsible for the city's first baptistery.	480/520	Late fifth/early sixth-century remains.
Nevers 3a	Theudulfus (Nobleman)	Theudulfus founded a female monastery near Nevers.	610/629	Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, II.10.

Noyon (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – TCCG XIV, pp. 77-84.

Noyon 2a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	While bishop, Eligius built a female monastery in the city of Noyon.	640/660	*Vita Eligii*, II.5.
Noyon 3a	Balthild (Queen)	Eligius' body was buried in a church in the city that was subsequently remodelled by Balthild, who added a vault above the altar.	c. 660	*Vita Eligii*, II.37-38, 48.
Orange (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 95-9; XVI, pp. 201-2.				
Orange 2a	Iustus? (Bishop of Orange, …441-452…)	The council of Orange (8 November 441) was held in the *ecclesia Iustinianensi* at a time when the bishop of the city was called Iustus. It is possible that this was a church that he had built, therefore, or it may simply be a reference to his position as the head of the church of Orange.	c. 441?	Council of Orange (8 November 441).
Orange 3a	Liberius (Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, 510-536)	Liberius built a basilica in the city at an unknown location.	523/529	Council of Orange (529).
Orange 4a	Eutropius (Bishop of Orange, …464-474…)	Eutropius built a basilica in honour of Julian of Antioch, in which he was later buried, on the summit of the hill that lay to the south of the forum.	460/474	Verus, *Vita S. Eutropii.*
Orléans (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 81-96.				
Orléans 1a	Evurtius (Bishop of Orléans, …451)	Evurtius built a cathedral at Orléans.	400/451	*Vita Aniani*, 2.

Orléans 1b	Anianus (Bishop of Orléans, …451-454)	Anianus raised the height of the cathedral of Orléans that had been built by Bishop Evurtius.	450/454	*Vita Aniani,* 2.
Orléans 4a	Sigobertus? (Bishop of Orléans, c. 670)	According to the ninth-century *Vita Maximi I,* Sigobertus translated the remains of Maximus, a priest and confessor from Orléans, across the city into a basilica he had built in his honour.	c. 670	*Vita Maximi,* 24.

Paris (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 97-129; XVI, pp. 203-15.

Paris 1a	King Childebert I (511/558)	Childebert enlarged/embellished the cathedral of Paris.	511/558	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.10.
Paris 4a	Anonymous layman	An anonymous layman builds an oratory next to the northern gate of Paris, on the spot of a miracle performed by Martin of Tours. It was made from wood and had a window.	Before 585	Gregory, *Hist.*, VIII. 33.
Paris 5a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	Eligius founded a female monastery in the walls of Paris in a house that he had received as a gift from Dagobert I. He had apparently considered building a xenodochium but was instead inspired by God to establish a monastery.	600/640	Jonas of Bobbio *Vita Columbani,* II.10; *Vita Eligii,* I.17.
Paris 8a	Clovis I (King, 481-511; Clotild (Queen).	Clovis I and his wife Clotild built a basilica over the tomb of Genovefa (d. 502), atop the current Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, which they dedicated to the apostles. Both Clovis and Clotild and a number of other royals were buried there.	502/520	*Vita Genovefae,* 55-56.
Paris 10a	Childebert I (511/558)	Childebert I built a basilica in honour of Saint Vincent where he and a number of other royals were buried.	541/558	Gregory, *Hist.*, III.29, IV.20.
Paris 13a	Anonymous employee of the royal mint	Following a vision, an anonymous employee of the royal mint built an oratory over the tomb of Criscentia in the large necropolis to the south east of Paris.	Before 590.	Gregory, *GC,* 103.

Paris 22a	Chilperic I? (King, 561-584)	Chilperic I built a church in which he intended to translate the body of Bishop Germanus from its resting place at Saint-Vincent, but he may have died before this was able to take place.	561/584	Bertram of Le Mans, *Testamentum*.
Paris 24a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	Eligius built a suburban basilica for the nuns of the monastery he had founded and dedicated it to Paul.	600/640	*Vita Eligii*, I.18.
Paris 28a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	Eligius either built or renovated a basilica dedicated to Saint Martial next to the convent he had founded within the walls of Paris, (*aedificavit etiam immoque renovavit basilicam in honore sancti Marcialis*).	600/640	*Vita Eligii*, I.18.

Poitiers (ecclesiastical province of Bordeaux) – TCCG X, pp. 65-92; XVI, pp. 218-24.

Poitiers 1a	Hillary? (Bishop of Poitiers, …355-368)	Poitiers' first cathedral seems to have been established at the eastern end of the city, and its initial state has been dated by the numismatic evidence.	350/380	Fourth-century remains and numismatic evidence.
Poitiers 2a	Hillary? (Bishop of Poitiers, …355-368)	The first iteration of Poitiers' baptistery was found in an antique *domus* to the east of the original cathedral, and has been dated in conjunction with the first cathedral.	350/380	Fourth-century remains and numismatic evidence.
Poitiers 2b	Dido? (Bishop of Poitiers, …629-669…); Ansoald? (Bishop of Poitiers, …677697…)	During the second half of the seventh century, Poitiers' baptistery – much of which is still standing today – was enlarged and embellished. The interior décor was also embellished with arcades, new capitals, and other carved elements. During this period Bishops Dido and Ansoald held the see of Poitiers.	650/700	Second half of the seventh-century remains.

Poitiers 4a	Ansoald (Bishop of Poitiers, …677697…)	Ansoald founded a hospice for the poor (*sinodoxium pauperum*) in which there was an oratory of Saint Luke.	670/700	Testament of Ansoald.
Poitiers 5a	Radegund (Queen); Chlothar I (King, 511-561); Pientius (Bishop of Poitiers, …556-567); Austrapius (Duke, …556-567)	Queen Radegund, wife of Chlothar I, founded the convent of the Holy Cross with the support of her husband, Bishop Pientius, and Duke Austrapius. Radegund adopted the rule of Caesarius of Arles and submitted herself to the authority of Agnes, the first abbess.	550/557	Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.42; Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, 5.
Poitiers 7a	Radegund (Queen)	Radegund built a burial church in honour of Mary for herself and her monastic community just outside the city wall next to the river Clain.	560/580	Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.42

Reims (metropolitan see) – TCCG XIV, pp. 21-45; XVI, p. 225.

Reims 1a	Nicasius? (Bishop of Reims, …407)	According to the tenth-century *Historia Remesis Ecclesiae*, Nicasius built a cathedral at Reims. Remains of a fourth- or fifth-century edifice have been uncovered at the site of the current cathedral.	Before 407	*Historia Remesis Ecclesiae*, I.6; fourth/fifth-century remains.
Reims 8a	Rigobertus (Bishop of Reims, 689-719)	According to his late ninth-century *Vita*, Rigobertus built an oratory next to a residence he occupied at the edge of Reims' urban zone.	689/719	*Vita s. Rigoberti*, 11-12.
Reims 14a	Jovinus (*magister militum*, consul in 367)	Jovinus built a church at Reims for his burial.	370/375	Epitaph of Jovinus, Le Blant, n. 335, pp. 443-5.

		Extract of inscription: *Conscius hic sancto manantis fonte salutis / sedem vivacem moribundis ponere membris / corporis hospitium laetus metato adornat / reddendos vitae salvari providet artus.*		
Reims 16a	Rigobertus? (Bishop of Reims 689-719)	According to the tenth-century *Historia Remesis Ecclesiae*, the church hosting the tomb of Remigius was accompanied by a *matricula* during the episcopate of Rigobertus.	689/719	Flodoard, *Historia Remesis Ecclesiae*, II.11.
Reims 18a	Anonymous man	An anonymous man built a church in the suburbs of Reims in honour of Julian of Brioude after he had acquired some relics of the saint.	Before 585	Gregory, *VJ* 32.
Reims 19a	Remigius (Bishop of Reims, …476-533…)	Remigius left a legacy of 12 *solidi* and a silver plate to refurbish the vault of the church dedicated to Timothy and Apollinaris, and to prepare a tomb for his burial there.	c. 530	*Testamentum s. Remigii Remensis episcopi*, 144-146, 162-165.
Reims 22a	Atolus (disciple of Remigius of Reims)	Atolus established a *xenodochium* at an unknown location.	c. 535	Epitaph of Atolus, Le Blant, n. 334, pp. 441-2.
Rennes (ecclesiastical province of Tours) – TCCG V, pp. 57-66.				
Rennes 1a	The *christiani* of Rennes	The '*christiani*' of Rennes constructed a *fabrica* over the tomb of their early sixth-century bishop Melanius.	500/550	Gregory, *GC*, 54.
Riez (ecclesiastical province of Aix) – TCCG II, pp. 35-42; XVI, pp. 234-42.				
Riez 4a	Maximus (Bishop of Riez, …433-452…)	Maximus built a basilica inside the *castellum* of Riez – on the summit of Saint-Maxime – in honour of Albanus and placed relics of the saint within.	430/460	Dynamius, *Vita Maximi*, 8.

Riez 5a	Maximus (Bishop of Riez, …433-452…)	Maximus built a basilica for his burial in honour of Peter down in the city's plains.	430/460	Dynamius, *Vita Maximi*, 19.

Rodez (ecclesiastical province of Bourges) – TCCG VI, pp. 41-9; XVI, pp. 243-5.

Rodez 1a	Dalmatius (Bishop of Rodez, 524-580)	Dalmatius began to build a cathedral in the city but he apparently pulled so much down that he died before he could complete the project.	524/580	Gregory, *Hist*., V.46.
Rodez 2a	Elaphius? (Nobleman, …476-486…)	Elaphius built a baptistery consecrated by Sidonius Apollinaris, but it is unclear if this was in the *civitas*-capital of Rodez or on his personal estate.	476/477	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, IV.15.
Rodez 3a	Quintianus (Bishop of Rodez, ...506-515)	Quintianus enlarged the church where the body of Bishop Amantius lay.	506/515	Gregory, *VP*, 4.

Rouen (metropolitan see) – TCCG IX, pp. 19-35; XVI, pp. 246-7.

Rouen 1a	Avitianus? (Bishop of Rouen, …314…)	The remains of the first cathedral of Rouen have been dated to the first half of the fourth century by the numismatic and ceramic evidence. Avitianus is attested as the first bishop of Rouen in 314 and so may have been responsible for its construction.	300/350	Early fourth-century remains.
Rouen 1b	Victricius (Bishop of Rouen, …386-404…)	Victricius built a cathedral to house relics of Vitalis and Agricola that he had received from Ambrose of Milan. This church would be found underneath the current cathedral, and would have been attached to the pre-existing northern basilica by an atrium.	395/6	Victricius of Rouen, *De Laude Sanctorum*, 2, 12.

Rouen 4a	Audoneus (Bishop of Rouen, 641-684)	Audoenus built a basilica dedicated to Peter where he was buried.	641/684	*Vita S. Audoeni*, 17-18.
Rouen 4b	Ansbertus (Bishop of Rouen, 685-690…)	Four years after the death of Audoenus, his successor Ansbertus transferred his body behind the altar of Saint Peter, and constructed a canopy decorated with gold, silver, and precious stones above his predecessor's new resting place.	688	*Vita S. Ansberti*, 20.
Sens (metropolitan see) – TCCG VIII, pp. 19-32.				
Sens 1a	Queen Theodechildis	Queen Thedoechildis built monastery in honour of Peter and Paul where she was later buried. The exact date of the foundation is uncertain since there exists three queens named Theodechildis: a daughter of Theuderic, a wife of Charibert, and a wife of Theudebert II. The former is perhaps most likely.	500/660	Privilege of immunity granted by Bishop Emmo in 660, cited in *TCCG* VIII, p. 28.
Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans (ecclesiastical province of Éauze) – XIII, pp. 83-93; XVI, pp. 249-50.				
Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans 1a	Theodorus (Bishop of Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans, …549-551…)	Theodorus built a basilica over the tomb of Valerius, the supposed first bishop of the city.	c. 550	Gregory, *GC*, 83.
Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans 2a	Anonymous woman and anonymous bishop of Toulouse.	During his exile in Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans (c. 476), Bishop Marcellus of Die miraculously cured the son of a pious widow via a dream. The woman later set off to Saint-Lizier-en-Couserans to give thanks to the bishop. Along the way she was accompanied by an anonymous bishop from Toulouse, who asked her to construct a basilica in honour of Marcellus.	476/510	*Vita s. Marcelli*, 8.

Vermand/Saint-Quentin (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – TCCG XIV, pp. 67-74; XVI, pp. 253-254.

Saint-Quentin 1a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	While bishop, Eligius found the body of Quintinus and embellished his tomb with gold and gems, before widening the church entrance.	c. 640	*Vita Eligii*, II.6.

Saintes (ecclesiastical province of Bordeaux) – TCCG X, pp. 53-63; XVI, pp. 255-7.

Saintes 1a	Palladius (Bishop of Saintes, …573-596…)	Palladius built an *ecclesia* in honour of the apostles Peter and Paul and the martyrs Laurentius and Pancratius. He received relics of these saints from Gregory the Great.	573/587	Gregory the Great, *Ep.*, VI.48.
Saintes 4a	Leontius II (Bishop of Bordeaux, 552-568…)	Leontius restored a church dedicated to Eutropius that had fallen into ruin. The ceiling was apparently carved in wood and the walls adorned with murals.	552/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.13.
Saintes 5a	Eusebius (Bishop of Saintes, …533-549…)	Eusebius began building a church over the tomb of Bibianus (bishop of Saintes during the middle of the fifth century) but died before he could complete it.	540/550	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.12.
Saintes 5b	Leontius II (Bishop of Bordeaux, 552-568…); Placidina (Noblewoman)	Leontius completed the church started by Bishop Eusebius over the tomb of Bibianus. His wife Placidina provided a silver covering for the tomb.	550/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, I.12.
Saintes 8a	Mother of Chardegysil	The mother of 'Chardegysil, whose family name was Gyso' built an oratory in honour of Saint Martin in their home at Saintes and placed some of his relics at an altar.	550/584	Gregory, *VM*, III.51.

Saintes 9a	Palladius (Bishop of Saintes, …573-596…)	Palladius built a basilica in honour of Martin of Tours.	570/589	Gregory, *VM*, IV.8.

Soissons (ecclesiastical province of Reims) – TCCG XIV, pp. 47-57.

Soissons 1a	Ebroin (Mayor of the Palace, 658-680)	Ebroin founded a female monastery inside the walls of Soissons that also included three basilicas dedicated to Mary, Peter, and Genovefa.	666/667	Charter of Bishop Drauscius, 666.
Soissons 2a	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660)	While bishop, Eligius embellished the tomb of Crispin and Crispinian.	641/660	*Vita Eligii,* II.7.
Soissons 3a	Chlothar I (King, 511-561)	Chlothar I had Bishop Medard of Noyon (d. 557/8) buried in Soissons and started to build a church over his tomb before being buried there himself.	557/561	Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.19, 21.
Soissons 3b	Sigibert (King, 561-575)	Sigibert completed the church started over Medard's tomb by his father Chlothar I, in which he was later also buried.	561/575	Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.19, 51.

Tongeren (ecclesiastical province of Cologne) – TCCG XII, pp. 75-89; XVI, pp. 263-9.

Tongeren 1a	Servatius? (Bishop …345-359…)	Excavations at the Basilica of Our Lady have revealed the remains of a large basilica dated by the numismatic and ceramic evidence to the fourth century, possibly when Servatius was bishop.	300/400	Fourth-century archaeological remains.

Toulouse (ecclesiastical province of Narbonne) – TCCG VII, pp. 25-32; XVI, pp. 272-8.

Toulouse 4a	Visigothic royal family?	Notre-Dame de la Daurade was destroyed in 1761 but we have a fairly good idea of its architecture and décor thanks to some conserved elements and plans and drawings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is generally attributed to the Visigothic royal family who held Toulouse as their fifth-century capital.	400/500	Fifth-century columns, capitals and mosaics.
Toulouse 6a	Launebodus (Duke, …567-589); Berethruda (Noblewoman)	Launebodus and his wife Berethruda built a church in honour of Saturninus on the site of his martyrdom at Toulouse's Capitol.	567/577	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.8.
Toulouse 5a	Hilarius (Bishop of Toulouse, …400)	Hilarius erected a vault over the burial of Saturninus and built a small wooden basilica nearby.	356/400	*Passio Saturnini*, 5-6.
Toulouse 5b	Silvius (Bishop of Toulouse, c. 400)	Silvius began to build a larger basilica over the burial of Saturninus but died before he was able to complete it.	390/420	*Passio Saturnini*, 5-6.
Toulouse 5c	Exsuperius (Bishop of Toulouse, …402-412…)	Exsuperius completed the basilica started by his predecessor over the burial of Saturninus and transferred the remains of Saturninus inside.	390/420	*Passio Saturnini*, 5-6.

Tours (metropolitan see) – TCCG V, pp. 19-39; XVI, pp. 282-8.

Tours 1a	Litorius (Bishop of Tours, 337-371)	Litorius built the first cathedral in Tours.	337/371	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 1b	Gregory (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	Gregory rebuilt the cathedral of Tours following a fire. The poet Fortunatus composed a number of verses to be placed on its walls praising the cathedral's height, stability, beauty, and broad windows.	589/590	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, X.6.

Tours 2a	Eustochius (Bishop of Tours, 442-459)	Eustochius built an *ecclesia* inside the walls of Tours dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius and filled it with their relics.	442/459	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 2b	Ommatius (Bishop of Tours, 522-526)	Ommatius enlarged the church of Gervasius and Protasius.	522/526	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 2c	Eufronius (Bishop of Tours, 556-573)	Eufronius restored the church of Gervasius and Protasius after it was damaged by a fire during his episcopal tenure.	558/573	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 3a	Ommatius (Bishop of Tours, 522-526)	Ommatius started the construction of a church dedicated to Mary and John the Baptist inside the walls of Tours but he was unable to complete it before he died.	522/526	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 3b	Injuriosus (Bishop of Tours, 529-546)	Injuriosus completed the church dedicated to Mary and John the Baptist.	529/546	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 3c	Eufronius (Bishop of Tours, 556-573)	Eufronius restored the church dedicated to Mary and John the Baptist after it was damaged by a fire during his episcopal tenure.	558/573	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 4a	Gregory (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	Gregory converted part of the episcopal residence that had previously been used as a store room into an oratory and placed a number of relics within it, including those of Martin, Julian, Saturninus, and Illidus.	573/574	Gregory, *GC*, 18, 20; *VP*, II.3; *GM*, 5, 33; Fortunatus, *Carm.*, II.3.
Tours 5a	Litorius (Bishop of Tours, 337-371); anonymous senator	Litorius converted a house that had previously belonged to a senator into Tours' first suburban basilica.	337/371	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.

Tours 6a	Bricius (Bishop of Tours, 397-442)	Bricius built the first church over the burial of Martin of Tours, which Sidonius Apollinaris describes as a modest chapel (*modicum sacellum*).	397/442	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, IV.18.
Tours 6b	Perpetuus (Bishop of Tours, 458-489)	Perpetuus built a new basilica over the tomb of Martin, which apparently measured 53m x 20m, stood 15 meters high, and possessed 52 windows, 120 columns, and 8 doorways. Paulinus of Périgueux and Sidonius Apollinaris provided inscriptions for the walls. Excavations have uncovered the remains of a mosaic workshop and a nearby building which, given its lack of any meaningful foundations, has been interpreted as a temporary edifice in which Perpetuus may have provisionally transferred Martin's body during construction.	470/1	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, IV.18; Gregory, *Hist.*, II.14; Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Martini*, VI.264-89.
Tours 6c	Eufronius (Bishop of Tours, 556-573); Chlothar I (King, 511-561)	Eufronius re-roofed the basilica of Martin with the financial support of Chlothar I following a fire.	558/561	Gregory, *Hist.*, IV.20; X.31.
Tours 6d	Gregory (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	Gregory restored the walls of the basilica of Martin following the fire that had also damaged the roof.	573/590	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 6e	Eligius (Courtier then Bishop of Noyon, 641-660); Dagobert (King, 623-639)	Eligius provided the tomb of Martin with a covering of gold and jewels which was funded by Dagobert.	620/640	*Vita Eligii,* I.31.
Tours 7a	Ingitrude (Noblewoman, 510-590)	Ingitrude, who was probably the sister-in-law of Chlothar I, founded a female monastery in the atrium of the basilica of Saint Martin.	550/590	Gregory, *Hist.*, IX.33, X.12; *Vita s. Lupicini*, 89.

Tours 7b	Eufronius? (Bishop of Tours, 556-573)	The *matricula* mentioned by Gregory at the church of Martin was perhaps established by Eufronius, since a council held at Tours during his tenure determined it was the responsibility of the clerics and faithful to organise nourishment and care for the poor in their cities.	556/573	Gregory, *VM*, I.31; *Hist.*, VII.29; Council of Tours (567), c. 5.
Tours 7c	Perpetuus? (Bishop of Tours, 458-489)	A *memoria* containing the relics of John the Baptist, Felix, Victor, Gervasius, and Prostasius was established in the *atrium* of Saint Martin's, perhaps by Perpetuus, since the final line of the verse that conserves its memory contains a pun on his name: *perpetuis dignisque deo quam floribus ornant.*	470/489	Le Blant, n. 182, pp. 242-3.
Tours 7d	Perpetuus? (Bishop of Tours, 458-489)	Perpetuus may have been responsible for a baptistery found at Tours in the atrium of Saint Martin's basilica that he had established, and which is mentioned for the first time in his liturgical calendar.	470/489	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 7e	Gregory (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	Gregory built a baptistery adjacent to Saint Martin's and placed the relics of John the Baptist and Saint Sergius within.	573/590	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 7f	Gregory (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	After building a new baptistery, Gregory converted the old baptistery in the atrium of St Martin's into an oratory for the relics of Benignus.	573/590	Gregory, *Hist.*, X.31.
Tours 7g	Gregory? (Bishop of Tours, 573-594)	An oratory in the atrium of St Martin's is cited for the first and only time by Gregory, who mentions that he deposited some relics of John the Baptist there.	573/590	Gregory, *GM*, 14.
Tours 8a	Perpetuus (Bishop of Tours, 458-489)	Perpetuus built a basilica dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul near to the church he had erected in honour of Martin, reusing the vaulting found in the church that had been built by Bricius over Martin's tomb.	470/490	Gregory, *Hist.*, II.14; X.31.
Tours 10a	Radegund? (Queen and nun, …530-587);	According to Baudonivia, a male monastery was founded at Tours and briefly hosted relics of the Holy Cross intended for Radegund's convent at Poitiers. Radegund herself is generally considered responsible for this act, but Baudonivia is not explicit and	556/561	Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, II.16.

	Sigibert? (King, 561-575)	Sigibert, who helped with the installation of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, may have instead been the patron.		
Tours 11a	Monegundis (Noblewoman and nun, …560-573)	Monegundis left her husband and sought a religious life in Tours where she established herself in a *cellula parva* near the basilica of Martin and gathered a community of nuns around her.	561/573	Gregory, *VP*, XIX.2.
Tours 14a	Martin (Monk and Bishop of Tours, 371-397)	Martin founded the monastery that would become known as Marmoutier about three kilometres outside the walls of Tours on the right bank of the Loire. Archaeological evidence suggests that the community reused a suburban villa.	372/397	Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 10.3.

Trier (metropolitan see) – TCCG I, pp. 13-32; XVI, pp. 289-99.

Trier 1a	Agricius? (Bishop of Trier, …314…)	Trier's probable first cathedral (27.5m x 24.6m) was built around the year 320, perhaps during the tenure of Bishop Agricius. It appears to have become the south-west basilica of a quadripartite episcopal group in the city soon after.	310/320	Early fourth-century remains.
Trier 1b	Maximinus? (Bishop of Trier, …335-347); Constantinian household?	A basilica was built to the east of Trier's initial cathedral. The numismatic evidence has dated this construction to the time of Bishop Maximinus, who may have received support from the resident Constantinian household.	330/340	Fourth-century remains.
Trier 2a	Maximinus? (Bishop of Trier, …335-347); Constantinian household?	An additional basilica was built to the north of Trier's initial cathedral. The numismatic evidence has dated this construction to the time of Bishop Maximinus, who may have received support from the resident Constantinian household.	330/340	Fourth-century remains.
Trier 2b	Maximinus? (Bishop of Trier, …335-347);	An additional basilica was built to the north-east of Trier's initial cathedral to complete a quadripartite group. The numismatic evidence has dated this construction to the time	330/340	Fourth-century remains.

	Constantinian household?	of Bishop Maximinus, who may have received support from the resident Constantinian household.		
Trier 1/2c	Nicetius (Bishop of Trier, 525-567…)	After a fire in the fifth century, three of Trier's cathedrals are partially restored by Nicetius. The south-western basilica was left unreconstructed.	525/570	Fortunatus, *Carm.*, III.11.
Trier 3a	Maximinus? (Bishop of Trier, …335-347); Constantinian household?	Trier's quadripartite episcopal group enclosed a substantial square baptistery (8m x 8m), which appears to have been established at the same time that the episcopal group was expanded during the tenure of Bishop Maximinus.	330/340	Fourth-century remains.
Trier 3b	Nicetius? (Bishop of Trier, 525-567…)	Following a fifth-century fire, the baptistery is partially reconstructed. At the same time, a new square space is built to the east and a circular pool 2m in diameter is installed. This work was perhaps undertaken by Nicetius, since it appears contemporary with his restoration of the rest of the episcopal group.	525/570	Sixth-century remains.
Trier 4a	Irmina (Noblewoman)	The female monastery of Oeren, installed in the late antique *horrea* of Trier, was attributed to its second abbess Irmina, mother-in-law of Pepin II.	645/659	Charter of 710, *Liber aureus Epternacensis.*
Trier 6a	Felix? (Bishop of Trier, …386-400…)	A number of tenth-century *Vitae* attribute a basilica dedicated to Paulinus, a bishop of Trier who died in exile in 358, to Felix, one of his fourth-century successors. A fourth-century tomb has been uncovered in a late antique crypt under the current church of St Paulinus.	380/400	*Vita Felicis,* 4.
Trier 7a	Cyrillus (Bishop of Trier, …450…)	A church in honour of Trier's first bishop Eucherius is known to have stood somewhere in the necropolis to the south of the city. The earliest mention comes from a lost fifth-century inscription, which celebrates the embellishment of the church and the erection of an altar by Cyrillus.	c. 450	*RICG* I, n. 19, pp. 146-9.

		Extract of inscription: *Eucharium loquitur Valeriumque simul* / *Sedem uicturis gaudens componere membris* / *Fratribus hoc sanctis ponens altare, Cyrillus* / *Corporis hospitium, sanctus metator, adornat*		

Troyes (ecclesiastical province of Sens) – TCCG VIII, pp. 67-80.

Troyes 5a	Gallomagus? (Bishop of Troyes, …573-583…)	Gallomagus went to Lyon to acquire relics of that city's former bishop Nicetius, which may have been placed in a church he built. A church dedicated to Nicetius is attested in the medieval sources, and a number of Carolingian burials have been found near to the present-day church of Saint-Nizier.	570/585	Gregory, *VP*, VIII.8.
Troyes 7a	Frodobertus (Monk); King Clovis II (639/657)	Frodobertus built a monastery and oratory in honour of Peter on land in the city's suburbs provided by Clovis II.	639/657	Diploma of Chlothar III, 657/8.
Troyes 7b	Frodobertus (Monk)	According to the tenth-century *Vita Frodoberti*, Frodobertus used donations from the community to build a larger church that replaced the initial oratory at his monastery.	650/673	Adso, *Vita Frodoberti*, 21.
Troyes 7c	Aldobertus (Bishop of Troyes, c.725)	Bishop Aldobertus enlarged the monastery founded by Frodobertus before being buried there.	700/750	Adso, *Vita Frodoberti*, 13.
Troyes 7d	Bobinus (Bishop of Troyes, c.725)	Bishop Bobinus enlarged the monastery founded by Frodobertus before being buried there.	700/750	Adso, *Vita Frodoberti*, 13.

Uzès (ecclesiastical province of Narbonne) – TCCG VII, pp. 69-72; XVI, pp. 300-1.

Uzès 5a	Ferreolus? (Bishop of Uzès, 553-581)	According to his *Vita*, which is generally considered to be Carolingian but has recently been argued to have a late antique tradition (Prévot and Gauge, 2008), Ferreolus built a church dedicated to Paul.	553/555	*Vita Ferreoli*, 3.

Vienne (metropolitan see) – TCCG III, pp. 17-35; XVI, pp. 314-23.

Vienne 1a	Eoldus (Bishop of Vienne, …700…)	Eoldus added a small crypt to the city's cathedral at the start of the eighth century, in which he placed the relics of the martyr Maurice and other members of the Theban legion.	700/720	Ado, *Chronicon, aetas sexta*, col. 75-138.
Vienne 2a	Avitus (Bishop of Vienne, …494-518)	Avitus rebuilt Vienne's old baptistry, which was located next to the cathedral.	c. 515	Avitus, *Homily* 18; *Vita Aviti*, VI.2.
Vienne 3a	Leonianus (Abbot, …450-490…); Ansemundus? (Nobleman and Duke, …507-543…); Ansleubana? (Noblewoman, …543…)	A monastery for women dedicated to Saint Andrew (Saint-André-le-Haut?) was founded on a hill in Vienne by the abbot Leonianus around the start of the sixth century. Leonianus may have been supported in this endeavour by the local nobleman and duke Ansemundus, and the latter's wife Ansleubana. A possible chapel has been uncovered in the current church of Saint-André-le-Haut and dated to the sixth century at the earliest.	490/520	*Vita Eugendi*, 127-128; Ado, *Chronicon, aetas sexta*, col. 111b and 111c; *Donatio Ansemundi*; sixth-century remains?
Vienne 5a	Mamertus? (Bishop of Vienne, 451-474); Avitus? (Bishop of Vienne, …494-518)	The surviving funerary basilica of Peter and Paul (Saint-Pierre) was the resting place for a number of Vienne's bishops. The church's dating, the presence of Bishop Mamertus within, and the mention by Bishop Avitus of a dedication he was performing on the feast of the apostles suggest that the basilica may have been a project began by Mamertus and completed by Avitus.	450/500	Avitus, *Homily* 6; *Ep.*, 50. Fifth-century remains.

Vienne 5b	Ansemundus (Nobleman and Duke, …507-543…); Ansleubana (Noblewoman, …543…)	Ansemundus and his wife Ansleubana founded a monastery in honour of Saint Peter. This may have been the male community in Vienne which, according to the *Vita Eugundi*, was governed by Leonianus.	500/520	*Donatio Ansemundi*.
Vienne 6a	Pantagathus? (Bishop of Vienne, …538…)	The funerary oratory of Saint George (a rectangular room with a semi-circular apse) was added to the north-east of Saint-Pierre during the episcopate of Pantagathus, and it is where the bishop's body was laid to rest.	c. 540	Sixth-century epitaphs and remains.
Vienne 9a	Ansemundus (Nobleman and Duke, …507-543…); Ansleubana (Noblewoman, …543…); Remila (Nun, …543…)	Remila, nun and daughter of Ansemundus and Ansleubana, was instructed by her parents to build a female monastery (Saint-André-le-Bas?) to shelter their burial. This apparently occurred during the episcopate of Bishop Philippus (…566-573…). Walls and foundations have been uncovered under the current church of Saint-André-le-Bas and dated to the sixth century at the earliest.	560/575	*Donatio Ansemundi*; Ado, *Chronicon, aetas sexta*, col. 75-138; sixth to ninth-century walls and foundations.
Vienne 11a	Theudarius? (sixth-century abbot)	According to his ninth-century *Vita*, Theudarius founded a monastery with a basilica dated to Symphorian.	500/600	*Vita Theudarii*, 9.
Vienne 15a	Mamertus (Bishop of Vienne, 451-474)	Mamertus built a church to shelter the relics of Ferreolus and Julian because a previous church had been damaged by the Rhône. This new church may be the current parish church of Saint-Romain-en-Gal.	470/473	Gregory, *De virtutibus sancti Juliani*, 2; fifth-century remains.

Vienne aa	Severus? (fifth-century priest)	According to his ninth-century *Vita*, Severus (*natione fuisse Indus dicitur*) built a basilica in honour of Stephen where he was buried.	400/500	*Vita Severi*, 10.
Vienne ca	Severus? (fifth-century priest)	According to his ninth-century *Vita*, Severus (*natione fuisse Indus dicitur*) built an oratory on the hill of Pipet dedicated to Laurentius.	400/500	*Vita Severi*, 5.
Vienne ja	Theudarius? (sixth-century abbot)	According to his ninth-century *Vita*, Theudarius built an oratory (*domuncula*) in honour of Eusebius of Vercelli not far from the city of Vienne.	500/600	*Vita Theudarii*, 8.
Vienne (N/A) a	Wilichar (Bishop of Vienne, 742-752)	Wilichar transferred the relics of Ferreolus and Julian inside the city, and deposited them in a modest church he had built.	742/752	Ado, *Chronicon aetas sexta*, col. 122.

Viviers (ecclesiastical province of Vienne/Arles) – TCCG III, pp. 55-61; XVI, pp. 26-9 and 324-8.

Viviers 1a	Venantius? (Bishop of Viviers, …517-535…)	The *Vita Venantii* (a late life but perhaps based on an episcopal epitaph) describes Venantius' enlargement and embellishment of the city's cathedral.	500/550	*Vita Venantii*, 4-7.
Viviers 4a	Venantius? (Bishop of Viviers, …517-535…)	A church dedicated to the martyr Julian, where there was also apparently a baptistery, is attributed to Venantius.	500/550	*Vita Venantii*, 4-7.
Viviers 6a	Venantius? (Bishop of Viviers, …517-535…)	Venantius apparently built a church dedicated to Saturninus and Mary, where he was later buried. This may be the funerary church uncovered in the city in 1987, which measured at least 26.4m x 11m and has been dated to the early sixth century.	500/550	*Vita Venantii*, 4-7; sixth-century remains.

Viviers (N/A) a	Venantius? (Bishop of Viviers, c …517-535…)	The *Vita Venantii* describes Venantius' involvement in restoring houses and the city walls.	500/550	*Vita Venantii*, 4-7.

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