ROME AND THE INVENTION OF THE PAPACY

The remarkable, and permanently influential, papal history known as the Liber pontificalis shaped perceptions and the memory of Rome, the popes, and the many-layered past of both city and papacy within western Europe. Rosamond McKitterick offers a new analysis of this extraordinary combination of historical reconstruction, deliberate selection, and political use of fiction, to illuminate the history of the early popes and their relationship with Rome. She examines the content, context, and transmission of the text, and the complex relationships between the reality, representation, and reception of authority that it reflects. The Liber pontificalis presented Rome as a holy city of Christian saints and martyrs, as the bishops of Rome established their visible power in buildings, and it articulated the popes' spiritual and ministerial role, accommodated within their Roman imperial inheritance. Drawing on wide-ranging and interdisciplinary international research, Rome and the Invention of the Papacy offers pioneering insights into the evolution of this extraordinary source, and its significance for the history of early medieval Europe.

Rosamond McKitterick is Professor Emerita of Medieval History at the University of Cambridge, a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, and Chair of the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters of the British School at Rome. She was awarded the Dr A. H. Heineken International Prize in History in 2010. Her previous publications include History and Memory in the Carolingian World (2004), Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages (2006), Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity (2008), and two co-edited volumes on medieval Rome, Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas (2011), and Old Saint Peter’s, Rome (2013).
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ROME AND THE INVENTION
OF THE PAPACY

The Liber pontificalis

Rosamond McKitterick
University of Cambridge
To my students in Part II of the Historical Tripos, Special Subject ‘B’, University of Cambridge, 2011–15
## Contents

*List of Maps*  
*Preface*  
*List of Abbreviations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 The <em>Liber pontificalis</em>: Text and Context</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome and the <em>Liber pontificalis</em> in Modern Scholarship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Text of the <em>Liber pontificalis</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Liber pontificalis</em>: Historical Context of Production</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome and Byzantium</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrinal Schism and Dispute</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arsenal of the Past: Dating the Sixth-Century <em>Liber pontificalis</em></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 The <em>Liber pontificalis</em> and the City of Rome</th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The People of Rome</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City of Rome</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Textualizing’ the City of Rome through Narrative</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Apostolic Succession</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and <em>natio</em> and Comparison with Jerome’s <em>De viris illustribus</em></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts by Peter</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter and Simon Magus</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

The Succession: Linus and Cletus 82
The Burial of St Peter 85
The Early Christian Community in Rome 87
Conclusion 95

4 Establishing Visible Power 97
Introduction 97
The Life of Pope Silvester in the Liber pontificalis and its Implications 97
The Emperor Constantine’s Churches in Papal Rome 101
The Constantinian Basilica 103
The Lateran Baptistry 107
St Peter’s Basilica 109
San Paolo fuori le mura 111
San Lorenzo fuori le mura 114
Sant’Agnese fuori le mura 115
Donor Portraits: Reaching to Heaven 116
The Cult of Mary the Virgin 120
The Communion of Saints 123
Imperial Emulation? 125
Conclusion 130

5 Bishop and Pope 132
Introduction 132
Liturgy in the Liber pontificalis 133
Doctrine and Law 145
Textual Authority 151
The Liturgical Past and Papal History 157
Conclusion 169

6 Transmission, Reception, and Audiences: the Early Medieval Manuscripts of the Liber pontificalis and their Implications 171
Introduction 171
A Roman Text 174
Roman Script? 175
Papyrus or Parchment? 176
The Liber pontificalis: Sequential Production and Distribution? 178
Distribution and Reception of the Liber pontificalis up to the Eighth Century 184
CONTENTS

Late Eighth- and Ninth-Century Manuscripts Containing the *Liber pontificalis* 189
The Epitomes and their Implications 1: the Felician Epitome 195
The Epitomes and their Implications 2: the Cononian Epitome 199
The Epitomes and their Implications 3: the Shorter Epitomes 201
Frankish Interpolations 206
The Frankish Interpolations and the Frankish Royal Court 210
The Contribution from the Abbey of St Denis? 216
Arn of St Amand and Salzburg 219
Conclusion 220

Conclusion: the Power of a Text 224

*Bibliography* 229
*Index of Manuscripts* 257
*General Index* 259
Maps

1 Rome in the early middle ages  page 55
2 The early medieval manuscript distribution of the *Liber pontificalis*  173
Preface

This book is a study of Rome and the popes in late antiquity and the early middle ages through the prism of the narrative known as the Liber pontificalis. A chronologically ordered serial biography of the bishops of Rome from St Peter to Pope Stephen V (†891), the Liber pontificalis was composed within the papal administration in Rome in the early sixth century, with continuations added in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. It was the act of writing the Liber pontificalis that was the invention of the papacy, with a construction of the papal and apostolic past in early Christian Rome that was of seminal importance in the history of Latin Christendom. The Liber pontificalis articulates papal ideology and the Petrine succession. This book, therefore, is about the power of a text that shaped perceptions and the memory of Rome, the popes, and the many-layered past of both city and papacy within western Europe in the early middle ages. I offer a new analysis of the content, context, and transmission of this text, its remarkable combination of historical reconstruction, deliberate selection and political use of fiction, and of the complex relationship between the reality, representation, and reception of authority. I examine the text’s construction of the Christian past of Rome as a holy city of Christian saints and martyrs, its representation of the way the bishops of Rome established their visible power within the city with the construction and embellishment of many churches and holy places, endeavoured in many respects to emulate the Roman emperors as rulers of the city, and defined their spiritual and ministerial role.

The book is based on the James C. Lydon Lectures in Medieval History and Culture delivered in Trinity College, Dublin in October
2018. It is a pleasure to record my thanks to TCD for the invitation and generous hospitality during a memorable week in Dublin, and especially to Seán Duffy and Immo Warnės of TCD, and my audiences there, not least my invited ‘respondents’ Claudia Bolgia, Marios Costambeys, and Mayke de Jong, and all the members of the postgraduate seminar, for their comments, suggestions, and questions. The Dublin lectures, as the culmination of the past decade’s work on this book, also emerged from the final-year undergraduate Special Subject ‘B’ on ‘Rome and its Rulers, 476–769’ that I taught in Cambridge to a succession of cohorts of wonderfully engaged, critically alert, and enthusiastic students. They accompanied me on unforgettable field trips to Rome and my gratitude to them is expressed in the dedication of this book. I should also like to thank Mike Styles and Keith Sykes for making these field trips possible, the former and current Directors of the British School at Rome, Christopher Smith and Stephen Milner, as well as the other members of staff, especially Stefania Peterlini for arranging special visits to sites, and Valerie Scott and Christine Martin for all their help. In the years working on Rome, the early popes, and the Liber pontificalis, I have benefitted from the collegiality and hospitality of a number of other institutions in addition to the BSR. My thanks therefore are due first of all to the American Academy in Rome, where I was the Lester K. Little Visiting Fellow in 2011, and to the successive Directors of the AAR, Carmela Vircillo Franklin, Christopher Celenza and Kimberly Bowes; to Rolf Große and the German Historical Institute in Paris, where I was a visiting scholar in 2016, as well as the Institut de recherche et d’histoire des textes in Paris, François Bougard, Michel Sot, Geneviève Bührer-Thierry and Regine Le Jan; and to Marco Stoffella and the University of Verona, where I was guest professor in 2019.

My understanding of the early medieval architecture, frescoes, and sculpture of Ravenna and Rome, and my examination across much of Western Europe of the extant early medieval manuscripts of the Liber pontificalis, were greatly facilitated by the award of a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship for 2018–19 and I should like to thank the Leverhulme Trust most warmly for this generous award and their support.

I should also like to thank the staff of the following libraries for their welcome, and for enabling me to examine the manuscripts of the Liber
PREFACE


dontificalis and of related texts in their collections: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek; Bern, Burgerbibliothek; Brussels, Bibliothèque royale; Cambridge, University Library; Cologne, Dombibliothek; The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum; Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana; Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Suzanne Martinet; Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek; Lucca, Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana; Modena, Biblioteca Capitolare; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France; Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek; Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek.

The Dublin lectures were accompanied by many images. Because websites are notoriously volatile and URLs no less so, readers are invited to go to the relevant official websites of the places mentioned in the text, and especially of the libraries (whose full names will be found in the Index of Manuscripts) to find colour pictures of the buildings, frescoes, inscriptions, mosaics, and codices discussed. In quoting from the Liber pontificalis, I have used the Latin edition by Louis Duchesne and the excellent English translation made by Raymond Davis, to which only very minor alterations have been made where appropriate.

I am especially grateful to the two anonymous assessors for Cambridge University Press for extremely constructive and helpful criticism, and to my many friends and colleagues who have assisted me, sometimes inadvertently, in the course of writing this book by listening, answering questions, sending me copies of articles, and generally cheering me on, namely, Massimiliano Bassetti, Ralf Behrwald, Christine Carpenter, Donnchadh Carroll, Carlo Cedro, Robert Coates-Stephens, Charlotte Denoël, Anna Dorofeeva, Robert Evans, Roy Flechner, Elizabeth Fowden, Federico Gallo, Clemens Gantner, Patrick Geary, the late Herman Geertman, András Handl, Olivier Hekster, Yitzhak Hen, Klaus Herbers, Matthew Hoskins, Caroline Humfress, Ketty Iannantuono, Carola Jäggi, Dennis Jussen, Ira Katzenelson, Ann Kelders, Bea Leal, Carlos Machado, Lucy McKitterick, John Mitchell, John Morrill, Rory Naismith, Tom Noble, John Osborne, Sam Ottewill-Soulsby, Renato Pasta, Charles Pierce, Walter Pohl, Richard Pollard, Alastair Reid, Helmut Reimitz,
PREFACE

Magnus Ryan, Christian Sahner, Michele Salzman, Matthias Simperl, Rick Sowerby, Jonathan Steinberg, Marco Stoffella, Jo Story, Michel Summer, Gaia Elizabeta Unfer-Verre, the late Steven Uran, Andrea Verardi, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Immo Warntjes, Chris Wickham, Rowan Williams, and Philipp Winterhager. My special thanks to Mayke de Jong, who has been a wonderful and constant (sometimes daily) sounding board throughout the years over which I have been working on this book and has also read draft versions of chapters and offered excellent advice as well as much appreciated encouragement. Extra thanks are due to the members of various seminar groups and participants in workshops where I presented aspects of this book, especially in Amsterdam, Cambridge (CLANS, GEMS, and the Confraternitas Historica in Sidney Sussex College), Frankfurt, Helsinki, Princeton, Rome, and Utrecht for lively discussion. I remain very grateful for the congenial working environment I enjoy among all my colleagues in Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

I should also like to thank Erik Goosman of Mappa Mundi Cartography for drawing the map of the manuscript transmission of the *Liber pontificalis* and Lacey Wallace for permission to use her map of Rome, first published in *Old Saint Peter’s Rome* (Cambridge, 2013), and Genevra Kornbluth for her permission to use her photograph of the Lateran Baptistery chapel of San Venanzio mosaic of Pope John IV on this book’s jacket. It has been a great pleasure to work with Cambridge University Press, and I am particularly indebted to Liz Friend-Smith, the Senior Commissioning Editor, and to the production team at the Press, especially Jane Burkowski, Amy Lee, and Natasha Whelan, for all their hard work in seeing this book though the press.

I cannot imagine how I could have completed this book without my husband David’s never-failing critical interest and encouragement; my final and most heartfelt thanks, as always, are for him.
Abbreviations

BEFAR Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome
BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BAV pal. lat. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, palatinus latinus
BAV reg. lat. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, codices reginenses latini
BAV Vat. lat. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticanus latinus
BM Bibliothèque municipale
BnF lat. Bibliothèque nationale de France manuscrit latin
BnF n.a.lat. Bibliothèque nationale de France nouvelles acquisitions latines
CC Codex epistolaris Carolinus, in the numbering sequence of the manuscript ÖNB 449, ed. W. Gundlach (with different numbering), Codex epistolaris Carolinus, MGH Epp 3, Epistolae merovingici et karolini aevi 1 (Berlin, 1892), pp. 269–653
CCCM Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis
CCSL Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Clm
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codices latini monacenses

Corpus

CSEL
Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum

csg
St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, codices sangallenses

Davis, Pontiffs

Davis, Eighth-Century Popes

Davis, Ninth-Century Popes

EME
Early Medieval Europe

JTS
Journal of Theological Studies

LP I, II

MEFRA
Mélanges de l’École française de Rome – Antiquité

MEFRM
Mélanges de l’École française de Rome – Moyen Âge

MGH
Monumenta germaniae historica

AA
Auctores Antiquissimi

Conc.
Concilia

Epp
Epistolae

SRG
Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi

SRL
Scriptores rerum langobardicarum et italicarum

SRM
Scriptores rerum merovingicarum

SS
Scriptores in folio

xvi
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mommsen, LP</td>
<td>Liber pontificalis, ed. T. Mommsen, Liber pontificalis (pars prior), MGH Gesta Pontificum Romanorum 1.1 (Berlin, 1898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>manuscript, manuscrit, manoscritto</td>
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<tr>
<td>ÖNB</td>
<td>Österreichische Nationalbibliothek</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBSR</td>
<td>Papers of the British School at Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Settimane</td>
<td>Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLQ</td>
<td>Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossiani latini quarto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>