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The archaeological evidence for Mithraism in imperial Rome

Griffith, Alison Bond, Ph.D.
The University of Michigan, 1993

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THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR MITHRAISM IN IMPERIAL ROME

by

Alison Bond Griffith

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Classical Art and Archaeology) in The University of Michigan 1993

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For my parents and my husband
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Few scholars have invented a field of study, but Franz Cumont certainly founded Mithraic studies, the investigation of the worship of Mithras (or Mithra). Cumont published his Textes et monuments figures relatifs aux mystères de Mithra in two volumes in 1896 and 1899. It will not arrive at its centennial unscathed, but it is still a work which no student of Mithraism can overlook. The first volume, a synthetic and interpretative study, discussed the origins of Mithraism, its spread, cosmology, liturgy, and its iconographic symbolism. The second volume was a catalogue of every known monument, inscription, and literary passage relevant to Mithras or Mithraism.

Even before the first conference on Mithraism, held in Teheran, Iran in 1970, many scholars had highlighted basic flaws and contradictions in Cumont’s arguments. They have

1 Wikander, 1950, 5-46, points out the plethora of non-Iranian elements in Mithraism: the grades of initiation, the sanctuary architecture, the tauroctony (the representation of the moment when Mithras kills the bull), the use of Latin for names of cult artifacts, the lack of theophoric names except in Asia Minor, the secrecy of Mithraic worship, and the lack of any Mithraic evidence from Persia until after 150 CE. Gordon, 1975, 215-48, noted Cumont’s fatal error in using Zoroastrianism as his comparison. Hinnells, 1975, 290-312, revealed further anomalies in Cumont’s choice of Zoroastrianism: the lack of an Iranian text for the bull-slaying scene, the fact that Zoroastrian gods never lived on earth as Mithras did, and the fact that the Roman iconographic evidence does not always support Cumont’s theory of dualism. Finally, Beck, 1988, has profitably
particularly criticized Cumont’s theory of the oriental origin of Mithraism, his claim that Mithras was included in the Hindu and Persian pantheons, his attempt to link Mithras with Mazdaism, Chaldean astrology, and Zoroastrianism, and his interpretation of the symbolic meaning of Mithraic iconography.\textsuperscript{2} However, later generations of Mithraic scholars have also been able to support some of Cumont’s theories about the development of Mithraism all over the empire on the basis of Mithraic evidence recovered in this century.

This dissertation uses this new evidence, largely from Rome and Ostia, to investigate the development of Mithraism as an established cult in the capital city. This dissertation does not examine the controversial issue of the arrival and early roots of Mithraism in Rome, and it discards the use of provincial evidence to explain Mithraism in Rome. Instead, this dissertation focuses on two periods when the archaeological evidence shows that Mithraism was most popular in Rome, the Severan period and the fourth century. The remainder of this chapter will describe this "provincial model" of Mithraism (Mithraism as interpreted on the basis of provincial evidence) by examining Cumont’s provocative ideas about the diffusion of Mithraism

\textsuperscript{2} Cumont, by associating Mithras with Ahura-Mardra and the Zoroastrian movement, was able to postulate widespread development of the Mithraic cult in the East: see Ulansey, 1989, chapter one.

---

2discussed the evidence for the tutelary planets for each Mithraic grade and the implications of the order in which the planets are presented on Mithraic monuments.
throughout the Roman Empire and his observations about the spread of Mithraism to Italy, Rome, and Ostia. It will also discuss this model in light of major contributions by scholars who used Cumont’s work as a foundation in combination with new evidence. Finally, this chapter will specify which components of the model are inapplicable to Rome, and it will outline the approach adopted by the present study.

THE WORK OF CUMONT

The "provincial model" emanates from the work of Cumont, who contributed two major components to it, that Mithraism travelled from East to West, and that it travelled with the Roman army and with eastern merchants and slaves. Because Cumont viewed Mithraism as a religion with Iranian origins, he naturally assumed that it spread westward. Among its carriers were soldiers in the Roman army recruited from the eastern provinces: as they moved, Mithraism moved with them. In his analysis of the role of provincials from the East in the Roman army Cumont used epigraphic evidence from Carnuntum, a city on the Danube in the province of Pannonia Superior, where the Legio XV Apollinaris was stationed. The XV Apollinaris was dispatched to the

3 Cumont, 1913, 11-19, argued that this diffusion happened in two stages. The first occurred through maqi (priests in the Mardain religion) who travelled from Mesopotamia to Asia Minor and Armenia and spread Mazdaism as they went. In the second stage Mazdaism and local religions, including the worship of Cybele, became syncretized under the central authority of the Achaemenids. Cumont equated Mithraism with Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism). Thus he was able to propose that Mithraism had spread throughout the East and was well-developed there before it spread to the West.

4 Cumont, 1913, 39-40.
Euphrates as reinforcements for Corbulo's campaign against the Parthians in 63 CE, then to the revolt in Jerusalem in 69, and finally to Alexandria in Egypt. Cumont argued that recruits from Asia Minor, probably from the region of Cappadocia, would have replaced losses which the XV Apollinaris suffered in these campaigns. After its return to Carnuntum, the legion made the earliest datable Mithraic dedications, possibly as early as 71 or 72 CE.

Cumont also argued that "Syrian" traders and slaves brought Mithraism to regions of the empire without military garrisons by taking advantage of the relatively peaceful conditions and good roads. Cumont assumed that these merchants were from the eastern provinces and were less well-off and concluded that they, along with the slaves they were selling, built and used the original mithraea in the West. The large number of captives taken in the eastern campaigns would also have brought Mithraism to port cities in the West such as Aquilea and Ostia.

Cumont presented Mithraism as a "contagion" which legionaries, traders, and slaves introduced and spread.

5 Cumont, 1913, 40-41.

6 Cumont, 1913, 62-63, admitted that the adjective "Syrian" was a vague and often overused term referring to any individual from a Semitic population once subjugated by Nineveh. There "Syrian" is short for "Assyrian." According to Cumont, 1913, 76-78, the areas which did not get Mithraism from the army included Bithynia and Galatia in Asia Minor and central and western Gaul. Here Cumont contradicted his original argument that Mithraism developed in Asia Minor in Pontus and Cappadocia. Ulansey, 1989, has recently provided interesting evidence for the popularity of Mithraism at the city of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia in Asia Minor. Archaeological discoveries have also revealed significant evidence for Mithraism all over Gaul (Walters, 1974).

7 Cumont, 1913, 74, called this number "a second army."
through the European provinces. Cumont attributed the popularity of Mithraism to the hierarchical structure of its seven grades of initiation. According to him, Mithraism was attractive because it offered the opportunity of transcending the rigid social and military hierarchies to members of lower strata such as legionaries, freedmen, and slaves. From these groups, Mithraism "trickled up." Slaves in the imperial bureaucracy introduced the cult to their colleagues and superiors, as did legionaries. The children and later generations of these groups could "become citizens of wealth and influence" who then brought Mithraism to their social equals and superiors. Finally, Cumont measured the diffusion of Mithraism by interpreting each Mithraic dedication recovered as evidence for a Mithraic congregation. This reading of individual Mithraic monuments is misleading because the number of monuments does not actually reveal how many Mithraic initiates were in each congregation. And because these monuments are generally undatable, they do not illustrate the chronological diffusion of the cult.

Two implications of this model have remained influential: first, that Mithraism spread to the provinces (although its direction is now disputed), and second, that Mithraism was initially a religion of lower-status or

8 Cumont, 1911, 37-51 and 61-63.
9 Cumont, 1902, 82 from Cumont, 1902a, 68.
marginal social groups, such as soldiers, merchants, freedmen, and slaves, who spread it to the higher social orders. Using these hypotheses generated from the provincial evidence, Cumont observed that conditions in Rome were ideal for Mithraism because of the legionaries assigned to the Castra Peregrinorum and the Castra Praetoria, the presence of veterans, and the number of oriental slaves working for the local aristocracy and in the imperial administration.10 He conceded that the evidence from Rome was often undatable and too limited to reconstruct the history of Mithraism there, but he noted that slaves, freedmen, soldiers, and veterans made some of the earliest known dedications to Mithras.11 He proposed that mithraea were first located outside the pomerium (sacred boundary) and that they appeared in the heart of the city by 181 CE.12

CUMONT'S HEIR

Although Maarten Vermaseren, a student of Cumont, did not challenge many of his mentor's basic theories, he rightly recognized the importance of Mithraism in Rome and Ostia. In his dissertation, De Mithrasdienst in Rome (Nijmegen 1951), he presented all of the Mithraic evidence from Rome and placed cult practices there into the framework of the "provincial model" of Mithraism. His thesis formed

10 Cumont, 1913, 78-79.
11 Cumont, 1913, 80-81.
12 The date at which Commodus supposedly became an initiate in the cult of Mithras (SHA, Commodus 9). Chapter Four will examine the issue of imperial involvement.
the core of his monumental expansion and re-edition of
Cumont's catalogue, the two-volume *Corpus Inscriptionum et
Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* (Leiden 1956 and 1960)
and also of his analytical work, *Mithras, the Secret God*
(London 1963).\(^\text{13}\)

Vermaseren argued that Mithraism was practiced in the
western empire, particularly in Rome and Italy, as early as
the 1st century BCE.\(^\text{14}\) The archaeological evidence and the
literary sources do not substantiate such an early date, but
Vermaseren's tacit assumption that the Romans of the western
empire developed a homogeneous cult of Mithras inspired by
religious ideas they encountered in the East was a
compelling one.\(^\text{15}\) His use of Mithraic dedications by
military officers to trace the diffusion of Mithraism to

\(^{13}\) A translation of *Mithras de geheime God* (Amsterdam 1959) by T. and V. Hegaw.

\(^{14}\) On the basis of a passage from Plutarch (Perp. 24) which reports that Cilician
pirates introduced Mithraism to Italy in 67 BCE.

\(^{15}\) C. H. Daniels, Per Beskow, and Israel Roll investigated this premise that
Mithraism moved from west to east. Daniels, 1975, 249-272, focused on the role of eastern traders
and recruits in the Roman auxiliaries, and the earliest dissemination of the cult through the
empire. He observed that Mithraism took deepest root in the provinces along the Danube and in Italy,
and he explored the specific role of the legions and their commanders in the spread of Mithraism by
amplifying Vermaseren's work with more detailed examples. Daniels concluded that Mithraism spread
unevenly in the west, and that legionaries almost certainly introduced and disseminated the cult
there, but only where they were stationed. Finally, Daniels concluded that the Mithraic cult,
demonstrably popular in Italy, Britain and particularly in central and eastern Europe, was carried
to Dura Europos in Syria from the west.Beskow, 1971, 7-18, also agreed that Mithraism developed in
the west, but he argued that the problem of its origin could not be overlooked. He attempted to
demonstrate, with limited success, that Mithraism developed in the kingdoms around the Black Sea in the
late 2nd century BCE. Finally Roll, 1978, 53-68, investigated the mithraea, Mithraic
inscriptions, and Mithraic monuments from the East. He concluded that certain non-Eastern anomalies
and other variation, particularly in the representation of the Mithraic tauroctony scene, could not
be accounted for by local variation but only by influence from a non-Eastern source. Through a
detailed comparison of Mithraic iconography from Italian monuments he demonstrated the source of the
varied motives in the Eastern monuments.
specific parts of the empire successfully supported his assumption. 16

A NEW APPROACH TO MITRAISM IN ROME

Since Cumont, studies of the social implications of Mithraism have consistently treated the cult as a provincial phenomenon. Despite intensive investigation of the cult, the potential of the most concentrated body of evidence from Rome and Ostia has often been overlooked, and there has been little deviation from Cumont's "provincial model" of the social and geographical diffusion of Mithraism. The application of this model to Mithraism in Rome has resulted in a predictable outcome. The study of Mithraism in Rome has focused on the insoluble issues of the means and date of its arrival there, has assumed that Mithraism arose primarily among marginal social groups as it did elsewhere in the empire, and, with the exception of Vermaseren's work, has treated the known mithraea in Rome as a uniform and contemporary group.

This study will demonstrate that it is actually difficult to apply the "provincial model" to the Mithraic evidence from Rome because the model focuses on the diffusion of the cult and the means and date of its arrival

16 Vermaseren, 1963, 30-34, enlarged Cumont's study of the movements of the XV Apollinaris (see above) with further examples of commanders, centurions and legions. These include Valerius Maximianus, the commander of the VIII Gemina born at Poetovio in Dalmatia who consecrated altars to Mithras both in Apulum in Dacia and later as commander of the III Augusta at Lambaesis in Numidia; the II Herculis, stationed both at Troesmis in Moesia and Sitifis in Africa, both of which locations have revealed Mithraic dedications; H. Aurelius Sabinus, a centurion from Carnuntum who dedicated an altar in Lambaesis; and L. Servius Castus, a centurion who moved from N. Africa to Rudchester and made a Mithraic dedication there.
in specific areas of the empire. No archaeological, literary, or epigraphic evidence indicates exactly when and how Mithraism came to Rome. This study does not contradict the "provincial model" as much as it supplements it by focusing on the later development of the cult once it was already established in Rome.

The archaeological evidence for the established cult shows that Mithraism was practiced in Rome at least from the Trajanic period and that it experienced two peaks of popularity, one during the reign of the Severans, and another during the 4th century. The approach adopted by this study makes a logical assumption, also found in the "provincial model," that Mithraic initiates built sanctuaries near where they worked or lived. Yet, whereas the "provincial model" raises the expectation of finding evidence for Mithraism in the ports, in barracks, and in the sections of Rome where foreigners and less well-off freedmen lived, there is evidence for mithraea in only two of the three legionary barracks, the Castra Peregrinorum and the Castra Praetoria, and no evidence for Mithraism has been recovered from the ports or from the notoriously poor neighborhoods in situ.

As mentioned previously, the "provincial model" also assumes that the practice of Mithraism rose gradually through the social hierarchy. Thus this component of the model also tracks the development of Mithraism from its beginning in a given area. Whether Mithraism in Rome
originally developed in this fashion remains unknown because of the lack of evidence. It is worth noting, however, that the archaeological evidence for the first "resurgence" of the cult comes both from barracks and at domus (single-family dwellings) owned by wealthy individuals, and that for the second "resurgence" during the 4th century comes exclusively from dedications made by senators and from domus, some of which were owned by senators. The established cult of Mithraism clearly appealed to all levels of society simultaneously.

The present study takes its inspiration from Vermaseren's dissertation on Mithraism in Rome. It differs from this and other predecessors because it examines the archaeological and historical evidence for Mithraism in the capital outside the restrictive framework of the "provincial model." This study makes no assumptions about how, when, and with whom Mithraism came to Rome. Instead, it examines the cult by recreating its social, topographical, and chronological contexts over time. In doing so, this study demonstrates that the practice of Mithraism was variable and differed according to period, location, and social group. The method of this study is threefold: it re-examines the archaeological evidence, investigates the topographical and chronological contexts of the mithraea, and reviews the historical and political factors contributing to the development, popularity, and survival of Mithraism in Rome.
Chapter Two presents a series of bibliographic essays on the Mithraic evidence from Rome. The essays evaluate the evidence for forty mithraea identified by a recently published list and distinguish the mithraea as definite, possible or rejected. The essays highlight the disputed aspects of the evidence and relate it to larger issues in the study of Mithraism while avoiding unnecessary reduplication of information from the previous catalogues. Chapter Two determines that the archaeological evidence supports the existence of fewer mithraea than previously thought. In almost every case, single monuments found out of context or without architectural remains are dismissed as not representing mithraea. Of these rejections the dismissal of the so-called mithraea near the Piazza della Navicella on the Caelian hill and in the Castra Equitum Singularum on the Esquiline hill is unprecedented. Furthermore, certain mithraea previously discussed as definite sanctuaries are listed here only as possible mithraea, including the so-called mithraeum on the slope of the Capitoline hill, or the so-called the mithraeum near the Arco di S. Lazarro. Occasionally certain monuments are dismissed completely because they are not Mithraic dedications. Chapter Two also reveals certain patterns in the location of mithraea in Rome, namely that sanctuaries are most commonly found in domus, although they are also found in imperial baths and legionary barracks.
The topographical study in Chapter Three, which attempts the integration of mithraea into their surrounding topography, proves to be more successful in neighborhoods which retained the same composition and character throughout antiquity and which have been sufficiently excavated in modern times. Thus the neighborhood of the ancient Alta Semita on the Quirinal hill and the area around the Colosseum and the Baths of Titus at the foot of the Esquiline hill provide the most information in this survey. Investigation of areas of the city which are largely unexcavated or otherwise poorly understood, such as that in the Campus Martius around the mithraeum presently under the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, do not clarify present understanding of the Mithraic sanctuaries there. In better instances the conclusions of this investigation, which is largely dependent on the precise provenance of archaeological remains, contradict previous scholarly opinion about the ownership and clientele of certain mithraea.

Chapter Four investigates the chronological distribution of the Mithraic evidence from Rome. The study focuses closely on the mithraea from the two peaks in popularity during the Severan period and during the 4th century. The burst of activity in the Severan period is attributed to Septimius Severus' changes in the Praetorian Guard and its recruitment at the beginning of his reign. The 4th-century popularity of the cult, however, was a product
of the resurgence of paganism among senators and their desire to use Mithraism, and particularly private mithraea in their *domus*, for political ends. Chapter Four will also examine whether these findings agree with the predictions of the "provincial model." Chapter Four concludes with an investigation of the later 3rd century, a period for which Mithraic evidence is sparse. In all probability the cult did not decline entirely between the earlier renewal of the Severan period and the later 4th-century resurgence. Thus this investigation concludes that Mithraism was subsumed within the range of solar cults, particularly that of Sol Invictus, which were most popular with the later Roman emperors.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MITHRAIC EVIDENCE FROM ROME

This chapter contains a list of the mithraea in Rome arranged according to the strength of the archaeological evidence for each sanctuary. The discussion for each entry evaluates the initial discovery of the architectural remains, dedications, and other monuments and the subsequent publication of these remains, and it also examines the interpretations of other scholars. Four other publications list the mithraea in the city: the catalogues by Cumont and Vermaseren,¹ Vermaseren’s dissertation, which is a catalogue within a larger synthetic work,² and an article by Coarelli which also described each mithraeum succinctly.³ These catalogues share certain shortcomings. First, the authors did not assess the quality and quantity of the evidence for each mithraeum; thus each author has identified more definite mithraea than the evidence warrants. Second, each list has its own set of numbers so that three, and sometimes

¹ Cumont, 1896-1899 (abbreviated herein as TOW) and Vermaseren, 1956-1960 (abbreviated herein as CIHEM).

² Vermaseren, 1951.

³ Coarelli, 1979, 69-79 (abbreviated herein as Coarelli).
four, catalogue numbers exist for each Mithraic monument. Third, the way in which these catalogues have presented the architectural remains of mithraea and other Mithraic monuments has influenced the interpretation of Mithraism in Rome. Most obviously, by obscuring the dates of the mithraea the catalogues treat them as if they were all contemporary.

Cumont concentrated more on the individual monuments and their content than on the mithraea as assemblages. Hence his numbering system, in which texts and inscriptions have a different sequence of numbers from buildings and other monuments, is confusing. Cumont did not include the details of the excavations or of the construction and materials of the mithraea in his descriptions. Cumont’s pupil, Vermaseren, updated his mentor’s original catalogue, first in his dissertation of 1951 and then in his catalogue of all Mithraic monuments in the Roman empire. Vermaseren’s catalogue used only one sequence of numbers and amplified the information to include technical details about the mithraea. Vermaseren also grouped the evidence from mithraea by assigning one number to the building and succeeding numbers to the monuments it contained. Thus Vermaseren identified which monuments he thought were mithraea, but he did not discuss the reasons for his conclusions. This omission is never problematic except in cases where Vermaseren changed his opinion. For example, Vermaseren does not explain why he identified approximately forty-five definite mithraea in Rome in his dissertation of 1951, but
only sixteen definite mithraea and three other possible
mithraea in his catalogue of 1956.

The most recent catalogue is Coarelli’s list of
mithraea produced especially for a conference on Mithraism
in Rome and Ostia held in Rome in 1978.\(^4\) A large-scale map
accompanying the article indicated the provenances of
Mithraic monuments in Rome and distinguished mithraea from
Mithraic monuments with separate symbols. Coarelli
incorporated all of the sanctuaries then known and cross-
referenced Vermaseren’s numbers whenever possible. He also
corrected certain errors of provenance in Vermaseren’s
catalogue. Coarelli’s catalogue is helpful but insufficient
in certain respects. The brief information given for each
mithraeum varies in content among the sanctuaries. Further,
Coarelli did not assess the quality of the evidence or
consider when, how, and by whom it was originally recorded.
Finally, twenty-four monuments from Vermaseren’s catalogue
were omitted from Coarelli’s catalogue without explanation.\(^5\)

Coarelli wanted to determine the number of mithraea in
Rome and he arrived at three different estimates, one based
on archaeological evidence, one based on a figure which

\(^4\) The proceedings are published in Bianchi, 1979.

\(^5\) The following numbers for the missing monuments are from CINRM. Inscriptions
accidentally omitted by Coarelli: 409 (with 408) and 412 (with 411). Monuments of known provenance
in museums: 504, 505 and 507. Monuments not related to Mithraism or dedicated to Mithras: 369, 379,
410, 429, 432-33, 466, 503, 508-9. Finally, Vermaseren published CINRM 332-33, 334, 335 and 336 as a
group related to a possible mithraeum on the Caelian hill near the Piazza della Navicella in 1978.
Coarelli’s list, compiled in the same year, omits these monuments.
expressed the number of mithraea within the known area of the Aurelian wall (the density of mithraea in Rome), and one based on population figures. Coarelli used archaeological evidence to compile a list of forty provenances of Mithraic monuments. Although he stated that each monument does not necessarily represent a mithraeum, his estimate of the mithraea on the basis of the number and location of the monuments recovered assumed that each Mithraic monument does represent a sanctuary. Coarelli thought that forty, and also Vermaseren's earlier estimate of 100, mithraea did not represent the number of mithraea within a given area, or the density of the mithraea in Rome. To arrive at this figure he used the number of mithraea known from Ostia (18) and the known proportion of the excavated city to the whole city (33 ha. of a total of ca.70 ha.) to calculate the number of mithraea per hectare in Ostia (one for every two hectares). He then applied this proportion to the hectarage inside the Aurelian wall (1373 ha.) and arrived at a figure of 680-690 mithraea for Rome. By using population estimates Coarelli calculated that for Antonine Rome, with a population of more than 1 million, there were 2000 sanctuaries.

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6 Coarelli, 1979, 69.

7 Coarelli, 1979, 76, reasoned that the number was higher because most of the extant mithraea were originally in residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods occupied the largest amount of space in Rome. Vermaseren, 1951, 89-95 and 149.

8 Coarelli, 1979, 76-77.
The density and population estimates, both extremely large, are not reflected in the archaeological record in Rome or elsewhere in the empire. Coarelli’s method of calculating the potential number of mithraea does offer one solution to the problem. However, it is important to remember that this sort of equation disguises what is essentially an argument from silence by assuming that mithraea were evenly distributed throughout Rome and Ostia, and that since the cities were close together and closely connected through commerce, that Mithraism was equally popular in both places.

The discussion of mithraea in this chapter will examine, question and, at times, modify previous scholarly conclusions about the evidence for Mithraism in Rome. In the catalogue which follows, the entries for the mithraea are arranged according to the hill or area of Rome in which they were located, and they proceed in the order of the fourteen Augustan regiones. Within each topographical area the definite mithraea appear first, followed by the possible and finally the rejected mithraea. Each entry is identified by its usual title and also with a number and code letter identifying the status of the mithraeum, "D" for definite, "P" for possible, and "R" for rejected. There are also five other categories of information for each entry: the date (if
known), a cross-reference of catalogue numbers, a summary of the texts of all associated inscriptions, a description of the excavations and publications and technical information, and a discussion of significant issues. Certain issues pertaining to several mithraea are discussed later in this work. A list of the mithraea presented in the order of the regiones and by status precedes the catalogue.

The investigation in this chapter defines what constitutes evidence for a definite mithraeum, and it makes distinctions in the quality of evidence by designating a mithraeum as definite, possible or rejected. A definite mithraeum is a sanctuary for which there are physical remains or an inscription which clearly mentions a sanctuary by using a word for cave such as antrum or spelaeum. The list of definite mithraea includes those in the Castra Peregrinorum (1D), under Ospedale S. Giovanni (3D), under S. Clemente (5D), in the Baths of Titus (6D), under Via Giovanni Lanza (7D), on the Barberini palace grounds (12D), in the domus of the Nummii Albini (13D), in the Castra Praetoria (14D), under the modern Piazza S. Silvestro (22D), under S. Lorenzo in Damaso (23D), in the Forum Boarium (31D), under Sta. Prisca (32D), in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus (33D), under the Baths of Caracalla (34D), and in the imperial palace on the Palatine hill (40D).

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9 For easy reference, Coarelli's numbering will be used for mithraea, and Vermaseren's numbering will be used for specific monuments, but the numbers will not appear in their original order.
The identification of definite mithraea is important because it enables us to ask more detailed questions about the location and degree of popularity of Mithraism in Rome. Coarelli's estimate of approximately 700 mithraea in Rome, which attempted to reveal how many mithraea there were during the later empire, inflated limited archaeological evidence, for example a single Mithraic monument not found in situ, into an entire Mithraic sanctuary. A single Mithraic monument does indeed represent interest in Mithraism on the part of at least one individual, and possibly even a whole congregation. Inscribed monuments sometimes reveal the identity and social status of their dedicators, and even the date of dedication. This information is undeniably useful, but it has limited applications. So many of these Mithraic monuments lack a context. If they do represent a mithraeum, they do not indicate the size of the mithraeum, how it was decorated, where it was within the city of Rome, or when, how long, and by whom it was used. The investigation in this and the following chapters seeks to answer these questions by scrutinizing the evidence for each alleged mithraeum and determining whether it represents a definite mithraeum or only a possible mithraeum. This approach tends to diminish the absolute number of Mithraists in Rome, but at the same time it yields more information about certain cult members and the sanctuaries in which they worshipped.
As a result of application of strict criteria, several mithraea previously considered as "definite" are considered only as "possible" sanctuaries here. These possible mithraea include that in the Piazza della Navicella (2P), that near Piazza Dante (8P), the three associated with the church of S. Vitale, the temple of Serapis, and on Via Nazionale at Via Venezia (15-17P), those on Via Mazzarino (18P) and Via Sicilia (19P), that on the slopes of the Capitoline hill (24P), that near the Arco di S. Lazzaro on the Aventine hill (35P), and that in the sanctuary of the Phrygian gods in the Vatican (39P). The designation of the mithraeum near the modern Piazza della Navicella (2P) on the Caelian hill as only possible contradicts previous scholarship, as does the designation of the mithraeum within the Phrygianum in the Ager Vaticanus (39P).

The list of rejected mithraea is largely composed of single monuments not found in situ. This investigation demonstrates that only those single monuments which are inscriptions mentioning a sanctuary represent mithraea and that the remainder of these monuments do not. Two mithraea, that in the Castra Equitum Singularum (4R) and that under Sta. Saba (36R), have been previously accepted as definite mithraea but are rejected here. In the case of the Castra Equitum Singularum (4R), the lack of architectural evidence for a mithraeum in the barracks and the lack of dedications to Mithras among the many from the barracks has been the primary cause of the rejection of a mithraeum in this
location. The architectural remains from near the church of Sta. Saba (36R) have been improperly identified as a mithraeum, and the tauroctony relief found in the same excavations lacks a sufficiently defined context and does not substantiate the existence of a mithraeum.

Of the fourteen definite mithraeum identified below, only some are extant. When they are not under restoration, it is possible to visit briefly the mithraeum in the Barberini palace gardens (12D), under S. Clemente (5D), under Via Giovanni Lanza at number 128 (7D), in the Forum Boarium (31D) (under Palazzo dei Musei), under Sta. Prisca (32D), and under S. Stefano Rotondo (1D). Of this group only the mithraeum under S. Clemente (5D) is open to the public at all times. The mithraeum are in various states of repair, but with the exception of the Barberini mithraeum (12D) (which is heavily littered) and that under Sta. Prisca (32D) (which has been closed because of a collapsing wall), all are in moderately good states of preservation. Much of the sculpture has been removed to different museums, although some is still in place. In the case of most of these mithraeum, and particularly the mithraeum under S. Stefano (1D), S. Clemente (5D), Sta. Prisca (32D), and the Forum Boarium (31D), the information provided by the excavation reports is sufficient. Poor light impedes the study of these sanctuaries closely. Required are high-voltage flashlights for viewing and professional equipment for photographs which exceed in quality those in scholarly publications.
THE CAELIAN HILL

THE AREA AROUND THE CASTRA PEREGRINORUM

1D: Definite mithraeum
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.................................................................26

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THE ANCIENT ALTA SEMITA

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Definite mithraeum
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The Baths of Caracalla........................144

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THE CAELIAN HILL: THE AREA AROUND THE CASTRA PEREGRINORUM

ID: CASTRA PEREGRINORUM

DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (ca. 180 CE)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS\textsuperscript{11}

1) A statuette of Mithras Petrageneris dedicated by Aurelius Bassinus with A. Caedicius Priscianus, a Roman knight and a pater, as witness.

2) An altar dedicated to Cautes by Aurelius Sabinus, a pater, and Bebius Quintianus.

3) An altar dedicated to Cautopates by Aurelius Sabinus, a pater and Bebius Quintianus.

4-8) Five altars dedicated to the Genius of the Castra Peregrinorum by the frumentarii and inspectors.

9-10) Two altars dedicated to the standards of the legions of Severus, Antoninus and Geta by a centurion of the frumentarii.

\textsuperscript{10} Coarelli is Coarelli, 1979; CIMRM is Vermaseren, 1956; THMM is Cuzon, 1896 and 1899; and CIL is the Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum.

\textsuperscript{11} These inscriptions are published only in Panciera, 1979, 87-108.

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11) An altar dedicated to Apollo by a centurion of the frumentarii.

12) An altar commemorating the restoration of a statue of Silvanus by a princeps of the peregrini.

13) Two columns dedicated to an unidentified deity by a centurion of the frumentarii.

14-15) Two dedications to an unidentified deity by a centurion of the frumentarii.

16) A base of a small bust of Geta dedicated by a centurion of the frumentarii.

A stele dedicated to the "Eternal Master" by Cascelia Elegans on behalf of her child and her patrons, Primus and Celia was also recovered, but it is not Mithraic (see below).

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This mithraeum was discovered by Elisa Lissi Caronna during the excavation of the Castra Peregrinorum\textsuperscript{12} under the church of San Stefano Rotondo.\textsuperscript{13} The site lies on the western side of the Caelian hill, close to the modern Piazza della Navicella (see fig.1). The mithraeum was located in "edificio D," one of four structures recovered during the excavations (see figs.2a-b). Significantly, because the room which contains the mithraeum was sealed by 5th-century church pavement,\textsuperscript{14} any scattering of the contents of the mithraeum had to occur before the pavement was laid.

\textsuperscript{12} The Castra Peregrinorum was the barracks of the peregrini, a special detachment of troops stationed in Rome to help supply the legions. The full function of this detachment is incompletely understood.

\textsuperscript{13} The excavations took place from 1969-75 and are reported in several publications: Lissi Caronna 1979, 205-18; 1986; 1981, 987-91. Discussions of the epigraphic material can be found in Hussies, 1980, 156-67; and Panciera, 1979, 87-121.

\textsuperscript{14} Dating to the reign of Pope Simplicius, 468-83. See Lissi Caronna, 1986, 1.
The mithraeum had two distinct phases. In its first phase it measured 10 m. X 4.5 m. (see figs.3a-b). The entrance was on the short southern side. The side walls were stuccoed and painted with geometric images, and heads of Sol and Luna surrounded the cult niche in the wall opposite the entrance. This cult niche contained a stuccoed and painted relief of the tauroctony, and a small altar sat on the floor immediately in front of it. Podia 1.5 m. wide lined the long side walls. In the second phase the mithraeum was widened to 9.5 m. by removing the right (eastern) wall and podium (see figs.4a-b). The floor was repaved with bipedales, a larger, L-shaped altar with two steps was added, and a larger podium (9.10 m. X 1.4 m.) was built along the new eastern wall. The older podium along the western wall was enlarged to match the new one. Three rooms on the southern side of the mithraeum were related to the mithraeum but are not fully understood.\textsuperscript{15}

This mithraeum is the earliest extant Mithraic sanctuary in Rome. Lissi Caronna dated the first phase to the third quarter of the 2nd century and the second phase to the late 3rd century. She argued that the building which houses the mithraeum dates to 160 CE on the basis of its opus testaceum brickwork, and that the mithraeum was built

\textsuperscript{15} Lissi Caronna, 1986, 4-24, has an excellent description of the mithraeum with many useful drawings.
in 180 CE. Lissi Caronna dated the second phase of the mithraeum to the late 3rd century on the basis of the opus vittatum mixtum (tufa blocks with mortar) in the second eastern podium. This construction technique, in which brickwork alternates with tufa blocks, is dated to the later empire. Lissi Caronna's dating of the mithraeum is reasonable, and even though it is not presently possible to recheck her work due to restoration work at S. Stefano Rotondo, there seems to be no need to do so.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

This mithraeum is noteworthy for its date and also for its location. It is the earliest datable extant Mithraic sanctuary in Rome and one of the few sanctuaries continuously used for more than a century. More important, this mithraeum, the only sanctuary actually discovered in a barracks, offered support for the theory that legionary troops introduced Mithraism to Rome. The popularity of Mithraism among provincial legions and limited evidence for a mithraeum in the Castra Praetoria suggests that Mithraism had adherents wherever the legions were stationed. The mithraeum in the Castra Peregrinorum helps to substantiate

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16 Lissi Caronna, 1986, 2 n.6, used G. Lugli, La tecnica edilizia romana (Roma 1957) as her guide for dating the building. She was not explicit about how she determined a date for the mithraeum (1986, 4).


18 The evidence includes several inscriptions dedicated by urban praefects found all over Rome, and Mithraic monuments (but no architectural remains) from the Castra Praetoria itself. See discussion below in this chapter.
that claim. However, Lissi Caronna has further contended that the mithraeum in the Castra Peregrinorum strengthens the possibility of mithraea being found in the other barracks in the city, particularly in the neighboring Statio Cohors V Vigilum (under the church of Sta. Maria in Domnica, only a few yards away) and the Castra Equitum Singularium (under the church of S. Giovanni in Laterano). This is a reasonable expectation, but it cannot be accepted as fact merely on the basis of the mithraeum in the Castra Peregrinorum. Whether Mithras was worshipped in the other barracks is still unknown, largely because of the profound lack of architectural remains and dedications from the various barracks.

Two of the monuments from the mithraeum have raised new and controversial issues about Mithraism. The first is a dedication to "Deus Aeternus" by a woman named Cascelia Elegans. Both the epithet "Deus Aeternus" and the female dedicator are problematic. If Deus Aeternus can indeed be equated with Mithras, then this is the only dedication to him by a woman in Rome. Silvio Panciera tried to justify this unparalleled epithet for Mithras by comparing it to examples of "Jupiter Optimus Maximus Aeternus" from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. His argument is interesting, but it needs stronger proof that a connection existed between

19 Lissi Caronna, 1986, 45-47.

20 Panciera, 1979, 87-121. See also Hussies, 1982, 156-59 for brief speculation on the identity of Deus Aeternus, Cascelia, and her patron, Primus.
Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Mithras through the deities Baal and Sol. Moreover, this otherwise unparalleled reference to Mithras as Deus Aeternus deserves further study before it can be properly understood.\(^{21}\) Panciera’s suggestion that Cascelia Elegans made her dedication through a man in the congregation is a compelling explanation for the presence of a dedication by a woman in a mithraeum. Cascelia Elegans may have been the wife of the pater (of the camp or the mithraeum). On the whole, however, this dedication does not mention Mithras specifically and is therefore probably not Mithraic.

The second monument is a head from a statue of Isis recovered from the so-called antechamber of the mithraeum. Because this fragment did not come from inside the mithraeum, it is arguable that it should not be associated with the sanctuary. If it is to be associated with the mithraeum, then its presence there is difficult to explain. While statues of Venus have been recovered from the mithraeum in the Forum Boarium (31D), in the Baths of Caracalla (34D), and under Sta. Prisca (32D) (see discussions below), there are no other definite statues of Isis. It is possible that the Mithraists in this congregation permitted dedications to other deities, for example Isis and Serapis. However, the presence of Isis in this mithraeum has been and remains an understudied issue.

\(^{21}\) Panciera, 1979, 100-1.
2P: PIAZZA DELLA NAVICELLA

POSSIBLE MITHRAEUM (date unknown)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 329: A relief dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Caelus Aeternus, Juno, and Minerva by Marcus Modius Agatho on behalf of his patron, Faustus, and his wife, Helpidis.

CIMRM 331: A relief dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Caelestinus and Minerva by Titus Flavius Successus.

CIMRM 333: A relief dedicated to the holy master Invictus (unconquerable) Mithras and to Jupiter Optimus Maximus by Marcus Modius Agatho.

CIMRM 336: An inscription dedicated to Cautes by Flavius Antistianus, a pater.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This group of monuments is often associated with a mithraeum near the modern Piazza della Navicella on the western Caelian hill, even though no architectural remains for a mithraeum have ever been recovered. Furthermore, it is doubtful that all these monuments, which were recovered at different times, came from the same sanctuary. Some of them are not Mithraic dedications. There are different
interpretations about the monuments, about which monuments were part of the mithraeum, and about the number of mithraeum the monuments represent. Several monuments (CIMRM 328-333) are lost, but drawings made soon after their discovery still exist.22

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Whether these monuments represent a mithraeum in the Piazza della Navicella depends on several issues. First, although Cumont, Lanciani, and Vermaseren have argued for a definite mithraeum, the actual evidence for a sanctuary is inconclusive, as the following discussion will show. A second, and much disputed, issue is that of which monuments actually belonged to this possible mithraeum in the Piazza della Navicella. A final issue is whether all of the monuments are actually Mithraic.

The original idea for the existence of a mithraeum came from Cumont, who grouped the two inscribed reliefs dedicated by M. Modius Agatho (CIMRM 328/9 and 332/3). Neither monument represents Mithras, although one refers to Sol with the epithet "Mithras." The first monument (CIMRM 328-29) is a relief fragment in which the laps and legs of the Capitoline triad are clearly visible. Beneath the figures an inscription records that the relief was dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Caelus Aeternus, Juno Regina, and Minerva.

22 The drawings of Pighius, the first to be made, are preserved in the library of the Berlin Museum (Ms. lat. 461 f.9). The drawings of Giovantonio Dosio are in the Bibliotheca Harleiana in Florence (Ms. 100 fol.158a and 148), and there is a commentary by B. Aeolius in the Vatican Library (Ms. Vat. 5241, f.118).
The second monument (CIMRM 332-33) is a relief now in three fragments, each inscribed. The first fragment, dedicated to "the holy master Optimus Maximus", features a pedestalled, nude Jupiter, with an eagle to his immediate right and Ganymede to his lower right. The second fragment, dedicated to "the holy master the unconquerable Mithras," shows Sol in his chariot. The third fragment shows Luna in a chariot, and it is also dedicated to that goddess. Although the reference to Sol with the epithet "unconquerable Mithras" on the second fragment is difficult to interpret, the main subject of the surviving part of both reliefs seems to be Jupiter Optimus Maximus. There is a remote possibility that Ganymede should be understood as a reference to Mithras, but there is not sufficient reason to interpret this standard image in such a novel way. However, the fragmentary state of the monuments invites endless speculation. Despite the mention of Mithras on one fragment, these fragmentary monuments are inconclusive evidence for the existence of a mithraeum.

Roldolfo Lanciani argued that four other monuments belonged to this group.23 He reported that a man named Altieri originally recovered two other monuments with inscribed reliefs (CIMRM 328/29 and CIMRM 332/33):24 a dedication to Jupiter Redux made by Domitius Bassus, a centurion of the frumentarii, on behalf of the emperor

23 Lanciani, 1907-12. This work is a four-volume summary of reports of Papal excavations in the Renaissance.

24 Lanciani, 1912, 74-75.
Maximian,\textsuperscript{25} and a tauroctony relief fragment now known as the Ottaviano Zeno monument (CIMRM 335). Lanciani argued that a dedication to the Genius of the fifth cohort of vigiles and a base dedicated to Cautes by Flavius Antistianus (CIMRM 336), both found somewhere on the Caelian hill in 1731, could also be associated with a mithraeum in the area.\textsuperscript{26} Of the four additional monuments suggested by Lanciani, only two are actually Mithraic: the Ottaviano Zeno tauroctony relief (CIMRM 335) and the statue base dedicated to Cautes (CIMRM 336).

Vermaseren disagreed with the significance of Lanciani's additional monuments and returned to Cumont's original group. He added a third monument (CIMRM 330/1) and formally associated the new group of three with a mithraeum by assigning this supposed structure a number in his catalogue (CIMRM 327).\textsuperscript{27} He identified a mithraeum even though he knew that the two monuments which Cumont grouped had been discovered in the 16th century and removed from their original archaeological context. The third monument which he added is an inscribed relief representing Minerva and a reclining water-god, which had supported a statue of Jupiter. Although Cumont did not include this base in his group, he did identify it as Mithraic because of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{LII}, 6. 428.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Lanciani, 1907, 74.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Vermaseren, 1951, 56-60.
\end{itemize}
inscription dedicating it to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the celestial sources, and Minerva. Both the inscription and the subject matter are clearly not Mithraic. Thus, CIMRM 327-31, along with CIMRM 332-33, are mistakenly identified as a Mithraic group.

In a later publication on the Ottaviano Zeno monument, Vermaseren argued that Lanciani created a misleadingly large group by combining monuments from two different excavations.28 He also reconsidered the Mithraic monuments found on the Caelian hill and concluded that there had been a mithraeum in the vicinity of Piazza della Navicella containing monuments CIMRM 327-33, and a second mithraeum nearby which contained two tauroctony reliefs (CIMRM 334 and CIMRM 608) and a marble base (CIMRM 572).29 The original provenance of the tauroctony reliefs is uncertain, but Vermaseren associated them with the western Caelian hill because one (CIMRM 334) was kept nearby at the Villa Altieri and the other (CIMRM 608) was found out of context in the church of S. Marco at the western foot of the Caelian hill. The marble base (CIMRM 572), dedicated to Sol Invictus by an L. Arrius Rufinus, was also found out of context in the church of S. Tomaso on the Caelian hill. This dedication is not Mithraic. And even though the two reliefs are, they too

29 Vermaseren, 1978, 4-6.
cannot be associated with a mithraeum because they were not found in situ.

Coarelli agreed with Cumont and Vermaseren about the existence of a mithraeum near the Piazza della Navicella, but his description does not reflect how many monuments and mithraea Vermaseren thought there were. Coarelli listed only CIMRM 327-331 and omitted CIMRM 332/3. He also added a statue base dedicated to the family of the Agorii and to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus in 387 (CIMRM 420). Among other religious offices, the inscription indicates that Vettius Agorius Praetextatus was a pater of the "sacred rites." Coarelli (and Vermaseren) interpreted pater as meaning a father of the Mithraic mysteries. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus may have been a Mithraist, but CIMRM 420 is only a statue base dedicated to Praetextatus and his family, not a Mithraic monument.31

Incontrovertible proof of the existence of a mithraeum in or near the modern Piazza della Navicella is impossible without any architectural remains. There is a chance that there was a mithraeum containing two monuments reputedly found together (CIMRM 335 and 336), but it is remote.

30 CIL 6.1778, his titles are also listed on his epitaph, CIL 6.1779.

31 As Coarelli points out, Vermaseren misplaced this monument in his catalogue. He listed it among the monuments of Regio IX (the Campus Martius) despite its location at that time in the gardens of the Villa Matthei, in Regio I on the Caelian hill, directly behind Sta. Maria in Domnica and the Piazza della Navicella. It is now virtually impossible to discover where it was really found. Coarelli added the monument to the group from Piazza della Navicella in order to correct Vermaseren's error. Coarelli needed to consider that the original provenance of the monument is unknown, even if it is now located in Regio VI.
Because both monuments lack a context, the tauroctony relief (CIMRM 334) and the dedication to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (CIMRM 608) cannot be associated with this (possible) sanctuary.
THE CAELIAN HILL: THE AREA AROUND S. GIOVANNI IN LATERANO

3D: OSPEDALE S. GIOVANNI

DEFINITE MITRAEUM (after the later 3rd century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: none

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This mithraeum was discovered by Valnea Santa Maria Scrinari sometime between 1959 and 1969 during the excavation of foundations for the new Ospedale San Giovanni near the church of S. Giovanni in Laterano. Despite the lack of any epigraphic evidence, the room described is almost undeniably a mithraeum because its length is, characteristically, twice its width (7 m. X 3.7 m.) (figs. 5a-b). Santa Maria Scrinari claimed that the room had a vaulted ceiling, although very little evidence of it remained. Other evidence for a mithraeum was more conclusive. First, there were two podia along the northern and southern walls. Second, a faded painting in a lunette in the short wall opposite the entrance showed faint traces.

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32 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1979, is the only publication on this mithraeum. It is a short, succinct article, but it does not mention the exact year in which this mithraeum was recovered.

33 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1979, 222-23, reports that there is a small piece of the vault in the southeastern corner of the mithraeum near the lunette.

34 That on the right measures 1 m. wide and that on the left, 1.2 m.
of a tauroctony scene: the head of a youth with brown curly hair and a halo whose right arm was raised and whose left leg was bent and resting on a brown mass, probably a bull.\textsuperscript{35}

Santa Maria Scrinari did not discuss whether artifacts which could indicate the date of this mithraeum were recovered, and she did not include a plan of the mithraeum or a map which integrates this sanctuary with the extensive finds of domus (single-family dwellings) and other buildings located in the excavations in the same area. Santa Maria Scrinari suggested that the mithraeum was installed in a room of a building which had once been a granary on the property of the family of Marcus Aurelius. According to Santa Maria Scrinari, the mithraeum occupied a space originally used as a service corridor between two granaries and later converted to a place for water storage.\textsuperscript{36} On the basis of debris from a fallen soffit, Santa Maria Scrinari suggested that this change from "agricultural" (granary) to "industrial" (cistern) usage occurred in the second half of the 3rd century. Santa Maria Scrinari reasoned that the property would have remained under imperial control after the death of Commodus, and suggested that Severus might have allowed his freedmen use of it.\textsuperscript{37} She did not date the mithraeum, but the conversion from granary to cistern in the

\textsuperscript{35} Santa Maria Scrinari, 1979, 223.

\textsuperscript{36} Santa Maria Scrinari, 1979, 220, made her conclusion on the basis of traces of water-proof mortar found on the walls.

\textsuperscript{37} Santa Maria Scrinari, 1979, 221.
late 3rd century offers a reasonable *terminus post quem* for the sanctuary.
4B: THE CASTRA EQUITUM SINGULARUM

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

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<td>inscribed relief of Sol</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 373: A dedication to Sol Invictus by Marcus Ulpius Chresimius, a priest of Jupiter Dolichenus.

EXCAVATIONS, TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

This group of monuments, found in 1853 near the Scala Sancta, has been interpreted as evidence for a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum.\(^{38}\) The original group included a white marble tauroctony statue (CIMRM 370)\(^{39}\) and a head of Marcus Aurelius found with it (CIMRM 371). Coarelli added an inscribed marble relief dedicated to Sol Invictus (CIMRM 372-73).\(^{40}\) These monuments do not indicate the existence of a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum. First, the tauroctony statue is the only clearly

\(^{38}\) C.H. Visconti, Giornale di Roma, 14 November, 1853. The few subsequent publications which mention the discovery do little more than quote the original: Benndorf and Schoene, 1867, 117, no.199; Braun, 1854, 749, no.21; and Colini, 1944, 363 and n.97 for CIMRM 370 and 371.

\(^{39}\) Now in the Lateran collection of the Vatican Museum (Inv. no. 343).

\(^{40}\) Coarelli, 1979, 78.
Mithraic monument. Second, it was not recovered from the castra, but from an area near the Scala Sancta approximately 100 m. away. Finally, the relief of Sol Invictus was found not with CIMRM 370 and 371, but with another dedication to Jupiter Dolichenus in the remains of the Castra Equitum Singularum.\footnote{\textit{CIL} 6.31172. \textit{Vermaseren}, 1951, 61, discussed these excavations briefly. Colini, 1944, 344, reported that these two monuments were found sometime between 1934 and 1938. Both monuments can be found in the standard reference works on Jupiter Dolichenus. See Kan, 1943, 116, no.199, Taf. 13,20 (CIMRM 373) and 115, no.198 for the other inscription found with it; and especially \textit{Horlat}, 1951, 232-35, nos. 238 and 239 for full bibliographic references on these two monuments.}

\textbf{SIGNIFICANT ISSUES}

\textit{Vermaseren} originally suggested that CIMRM 370 and 371 might indicate the presence of a mithraeum in the castra.\footnote{\textit{Vermaseren}, 1951, 60-61.} He assumed, on the basis of the popularity of the cult among the provincial legions, that all barracks had mithraea. At that time, evidence for a mithraeum in a barracks had been recovered only from the Castra Praetoria (see discussion of 14D below). Architectural remains of a mithraeum had not been found during the excavation of the Castra Equitum Singularum, and of the many dedications found there none represented or was dedicated to Mithras. Lissi Caronna, and later Coarelli, argued that the mithraeum located in the Castra Pergrinorum and the older monuments from the Castra Praetoria strengthened the possibility of a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum (see discussion of the Castra Pergrinorum, 1D, above). Coarelli also assumed that any...
Mithraic monuments or dedications to solar deities found in the vicinity of that barracks could be attributed to this possible mithraeum.

There are no architectural remains of a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum, and no Mithraic monuments have been recovered from the site. In particular, the lack of Mithraic dedications in a large group of dedications to a wide range of deities indicates that Mithras was not worshipped in the castra. The topic deserves more attention in the broader context of Mithraism in Severan Rome and will be addressed again in Chapter Four.
THE ESQUILINE HILL: THE ENVIRONS OF S. CLEMENTE

5D: S. CLEMENTE

DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (late 2nd/ early 3rd century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 340: 43 An altar with a tauroctony relief dedicated by Gnaeus Arrius Claudianus.

CIMRM 341: 44 A stele dedicated to Cautes by an unidentified dedicatory.

CIMRM 347: A stele dedicated to Sol by Aelius Sabinus, a centurion, on behalf of the health of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus.

CIMRM 348: Two illegible fragments of a stele.

EXCAVATIONS, TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The discovery of a mithraeum under the church of S. Clemente during excavations for the 5th-century basilica

43 Cumont, 1915, 209.

44 First published in De Rossi, RAC (1870a) 126.
caused great excitement both in the Catholic community and in the international scholarly community, where it reawakened interest in Mithraic studies. This mithraeum, the first actually excavated according to a semblance of modern archaeological standards, was recovered through a series of excavations from the 1870s until the 1980s. The mithraeum is located in one of a group of rooms which are now thought to have belonged to a Roman domus.

The mithraeum is 9.6 m. x 6 m. (see fig.6). The vaulted ceiling is pierced by four rectangular and seven circular holes. Tufa and pottery sherds were embedded in the vault to imitate the rough, rocky surface of a natural cave. The podia along each of the long walls are approximately 1.6 m. wide and 0.8 m. high, and they are each accessed by two steps near the entrance of the sanctuary. Running the full length of the wall above each podium is a smooth rectangular strip originally intended for paintings or mosaics (no longer extant). The cult niche at the far end of the mithraeum opposite the entrance is now partially destroyed.

The mithraeum was one room in a group (fig.7, K). Across from the entrance to the sanctuary was an antechamber with an arced entrance, benches built along three walls, and a stuccoed, vaulted ceiling (fig.7, E).45 Down a short passageway another room, often called the "Mithraic school,"

45 Wadsworth, 1924, described the quality, number, layout and moldings of the square and hexagonal compartments of the stuccoed ceiling, as well as some of the motives represented. She included many useful photographs, but she did not discuss a date for the ceiling or describe a similar (and possibly contemporary) ceiling in the "Mithraic school."
also had benches along the walls, a similarly stuccoed and vaulted ceiling, and stuccoed walls with niches containing Mithraic wall paintings (fig.7, G).

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The issues about this mithraeum which have concerned each excavator have differed considerably, and they have affected the information reported about the mithraeum. For example, most of the early publications lack important technical details about the mithraeum, about the building in which it was located, and about individual finds. These early publications were more concerned with confirming St. Clement as the Christian owner of the imperial building and with establishing his possible connection to the imperial family of the Flavians. The first full technical description of the mithraeum did not appear until 1928. A short discussion of each set of excavations in chronological order will illustrate the changing scholarly viewpoints well. Such a review will also highlight the important and sometimes unresolved issues about this mithraeum: the date of the mithraeum and the length of its use, the owner of the property at various periods, the relationship between the mithraeum and the surrounding rooms, the relationship between the mithraeum and another nearby building, the significance (or insignificance) of the legend of St. Clement, and the date of Christian control of all the buildings underneath the 5th-century basilica.
The earliest excavations (1863-73):

The original excavations begun by Giovanni De Rossi in 1863 recovered the 5th-century basilica and also rooms of the "pagan era" beneath its apse. De Rossi assumed that the modern church of S. Clemente was named for a previous Christian inhabitant of the site, and his publications focused on this issue. In his first article about the excavations, De Rossi argued that St. Clement was the owner of the rooms discovered beneath the early basilica. In his second article De Rossi dated these rooms to the time of Domitian on the basis of brick stamps, and he identified St. Clement as T. Flavius Clemens, the cousin of Domitian and consul with him in 95 CE. De Rossi also argued that a slave's collar found in the garden of the church confirmed St. Clement's association with the site. The collar refers to a "Dominicus [sic] of Clement" which, De Rossi argued, was evidence for the existence of a substantial and well-
established Christian community at the time of Constantine. He interpreted *dominicus* as a *titulus* (a small church based on an original house-church called an *ecclesia* or *dominicus*) called S. Clemente.⁵¹ De Rossi’s interpretation was soon challenged by further excavation.

In 1867, Father Mullooly, the Irish prior of the church of S. Clemente, and his excavators discovered the mithraeum when they broke through a doorway bricked up in antiquity. De Rossi’s publication of the mithraeum and the summary report for the entire excavation contained almost no technical information about any of the structures.⁵² His discussion about the mithraeum focused on the broader context of the cult of Mithraism and the newly formed field of Mithraic studies.⁵³ De Rossi also briefly discussed the rooms associated with the mithraeum and dated them to the Antonine period on the basis of their stuccoed ceilings.⁵⁴ Finally, De Rossi described a building next to that containing the mithraeum and dated it to the Republican period on the basis of its tufa-block construction.⁵⁵ Only two more summary reports by a scholar named Theodore Roller

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⁵¹ De Rossi, *PAC* (1863b) 25-26, dated the collar by identifying a law passed during the reign of Constantine (CC 9.40.2). The law required that slave’s collars adhere to the formula exemplified by this collar.

⁵² De Rossi, *CB* (1870a) 125-28 and more extensively in the second part of the volume: *CB* (1870b) 129-68.

⁵³ De Rossi, *CB* (1870b) 155-168.

⁵⁴ De Rossi, *CB* (1870b) 154-55.

⁵⁵ De Rossi, *CB* (1870b) 133 and 151.

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appeared before excavation had to be stopped because of the rising water table.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{The excavations of 1914 and other studies:}

When excavation of the mithraeum was ready to resume in 1914, Franz Cumont was the obvious scholar to carry out new excavations.\textsuperscript{57} He had, by this time, published his immense catalogue and his theory of the origin of Mithraism and had also emerged as the foremost authority on this and other oriental religions. In his new study Cumont re-dated the building with the mithraeum to the Augustan period, but he did not discuss the evidence upon which he based his conclusions.\textsuperscript{58} He also discovered two layers of pavement at the imperial level of the excavations. When the later, 4th-century pavement was lifted, the remains of a fountain and fragments of an inscribed Mithraic altar were recovered.\textsuperscript{59}

This altar was dedicated by Cn. Arrius Claudianus, who, as Cumont pointed out, was a member of the \textit{gens} from which Antoninus Pius was descended on his mother's side.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{57} See Nolan, 1914 for a discussion of the archaeological discoveries made during the process of pumping almost two meters of water out of the imperial levels. A drain was built to alleviate permanently the problem of the high water-table.

\textsuperscript{58} Cumont, 1915, 203. Vermaseren, 1951, 71, agreed with his teacher. Luigi Cantarrelli, 1915, published the only Italian report about the new 1914 excavations. It was basically a summary of Cumont's 1915 report.

\textsuperscript{59} Cumont, 1915, 205-207. The dedicatory inscription was later recovered from the pavement of the 5th-century basilica.

\textsuperscript{60} Vermaseren, 1951, 70, proposed that this descendant could have been a member of the \textit{gens} or a freedman of it.
dated the inscription to the late 2nd century on the basis of the style of the characters.\textsuperscript{61} He then proposed that this residence belonged to the gens of the Arrii during the Antonine period and that these owners installed the mithraeum.\textsuperscript{62} It is impossible to prove that the dedicator of the inscription, Cn. Arrius Claudianus, was also the builder of the mithraeum or the owner of the residence in which it was located. Furthermore, Cumont did not demonstrate clearly enough the connections between the gens Arria, the owner of the residence, the builder of the mithraeum, and, finally, the current emperor, Antoninus Pius.

According to my reading of it, Cumont’s study has two flaws. First, Cumont made conclusions based on too little evidence. It is, and remains, impossible to identify the owner of this mithraeum. It is also impossible to connect the Antonine emperors to Mithraism on the basis of a dedication made by a descendent of the same gens. Second, Cumont did not recognize that this mithraeum differed significantly from provincial mithraea because it was located in a residence (not a barracks), and because its one dedication was made by a representative from a prominent Roman gens, rather than a slave or freedman of that gens.

\textsuperscript{61} Cumont, 1915, 209, n.3.

\textsuperscript{62} Cumont, 1915, 210. He did not give an exact date for the installation of the mithraeum.
The excavations of the 1930s:

Following new excavations, Eduard Junyent published three thorough works on the mithraeum under S. Clemente and the tufa-block building beside it. Junyent considered the complex relationship between the two imperial buildings at the lowest level and the 5th-century basilica above them. In his analysis of the construction and chronology of the walls of the imperial buildings, he also discussed how the 5th-century basilica incorporated parts of both buildings into its sub-structure and super-structure. He illustrated his work with new top plans and section drawings of the stratigraphy of both churches and the imperial buildings. 63 Finally, Junyent reviewed the prior publications about the mithraeum and commented on their inaccuracies. In particular, he cited De Rossi's unsuccessful attempt to prove that the Flavian house belonged to St. Clement, and the failure of both Cumont and De Rossi to discuss the number of buildings and different types of walls incorporated into the structure of the mithraeum. 64

The mithraeum and the surrounding rooms

In his first article Junyent described completely the plan of the rooms of the Flavian-period building with the mithraeum (fig.7). In his plan, room K is the actual mithraeum, but the arcuated entrance to E, directly facing

63 Junyent, PAC (1928), figs. 1, 3, 6 and 7-12. Only one section drawing and detailed top plans existed previously in De Rossi, 1870b, pls. 10-11 and Roller, 1872, pls.14, 16 and 17.

64 Junyent, PAC (1928) 235-37.
the entrance to the mithraeum, and the corridor linking these rooms with F and G (which had Mithraic paintings) indicated to Junyent that the mithraeum was one of several associated rooms. Junyent estimated that the total dimensions for this large building were 40 m. X 28 m. with a height of at least two stories. 65

Junyent also discussed the changes made to accommodate the mithraeum (fig. 7). These modifications included the addition of a fountain in B, the creation of the arcuated entrance to E, the paintings, mosaic paving and benches in G, and the benches, vaulted ceiling, cult niche, light holes and closing of five of the six entrances in K. Junyent proposed a late 2nd-century or early 3rd-century date for the addition of the mithraeum on the basis of the capitals on the pilasters added to the arcuated entrance to E. 66

Junyent argued that the mithraeum was located in a domus, and suggested that its owners were Rufinus and Lupercilla, known from an inscription recovered near the church in the 17th century. He proposed that this inscription sat in the peristyle of the house, directly above the mithraeum. 67

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65 Junyent, PAC (1928) 239-41.
66 Junyent, PAC (1928) 242-43.
67 Junyent, PAC (1928) 244. The inscription (Codex Barberini 30, 182, in Bibliotheca Vaticana, f.133) was dedicated to the health of Caracalla and his mother, Julia Domna. De Rossi, PCH (1870b) 134, mentioned the inscription, but he thought it impossible to prove that the inscription actually came from the domus.
The tufa-block building

In his second publication Junyent discussed the structure of dressed, rusticated tufa blocks which lay across a narrow alley from the Flavian domus containing the mithraeum (see fig. 8). De Rossi had noted that the tufa construction resembled that known from fragments of the Servian wall, but he knew that this tufa-block structure lay too far west of the known line of the Servian wall to be considered part of it. Moreover, excavation revealed that the building was rectangular and thus could not be part of the Servian wall. Junyent’s excavations established that small compartments with opus reticulatum (a cement facing of small squared stones laid diagonally) and brick walls subdivided the larger structure, and his report includes a complete description of the construction techniques and materials and a plan of the building. Junyent suggested that the building could be Republican because of its tufa construction, or early imperial because the rusticated blocks might be an example of the intentional rustication found in buildings built during the reigns of Augustus and Claudius.

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68 Junyent, 1932.
69 De Rossi, RQ (1870b) 133.
70 Junyent, 1938, 147-52.
71 Junyent, 1932, 36, and 1928, 254-59.
72 Junyent, 1932, 41-42, mentioned the fire wall built by Augustus to protect his forum and also the temple of the Sacred City under Ss. Cosma and Damiano. Junyent did not mention...
top of the tufa blocks to identify the use of the building. He suggested that the tufa wall enclosed a series of smaller interior rooms and thus formed magazines or shops on the first story of a structure which had at least one other story. Junyent noted that this upper story, built of both opus latericium (brickwork) and mixtum (brickwork and reticulate work), was still visible in the walls of the 5th-century basilica.

Junyent concluded that the Christians must have purchased both the Flavian domus and the tufa building in order to build the 5th-century basilica. He based his argument on the non-supportive (false) brick barrel vault which bridged the narrow alley between the two buildings and joined them for use as a foundation. He suggested that the Christians gained control of both buildings no earlier than 395, arguing that private cults did not necessarily cease when laws banning the public practice of pagan cults were passed by Theodosius I in 391. Junyent also contradicted De Rossi's interpretation of the slave's collar by arguing that the word dominicus referred to an ecclesia (house-church).

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73 Junyent, 1932, 43.

74 Junyent, 1932, 46, fig. 7 and 1928, 255, fig. 3. He made drawings of these side walls which demonstrate the alternating construction types clearly.

75 Junyent, RAC (1928) 245 and 251-53.
rather than to the more developed titular church.\textsuperscript{76} Junyent proposed that the Christian community was substantially smaller than De Rossi originally said it was. In Junyent’s view, a house-church, which became a titulus called S. Clemente in the early 4th century, could have co-existed with the mithraeum.

Junyent’s work was a turning point in the study of the mithraeum under S. Clemente. He published basic factual details about the construction and dating of the domus with the mithraeum and the tufa-block building next to it. More importantly, he began to ask questions of the evidence. His curiosity about the tufa-block building led him to excavate the interior of the building and, ultimately, to identify its original use. Finally, Junyent’s study of this building led him to discern its relationship to the domus and the 5th-century basilica.

Recent studies:

The work of Junyent led to new and significant avenues of inquiry about the mithraeum for other scholars, particularly for Frederico Guidobaldi. He has published the most thorough, detailed and innovative study of the imperial levels to date.\textsuperscript{77} Guidobaldi carried out new excavations, but his publication also included a full review of the published archaeological evidence and of previously

\textsuperscript{76} Junyent, RAS (1928) 266.

\textsuperscript{77} Guidobaldi, 1978.
unpublished information from the church archives about prior excavations and discoveries. Guidobaldi began his review of the excavations with the campaign of 1715 in the garden in front of the modern church.\(^7\) He reports, for the first time, that the earlier basilica was rediscovered in 1818.\(^7\) Guidobaldi also discussed the unpublished excavations in the convent garden in 1954 and in the rooms of the tufa building from 1963-71.\(^8\) A review of Guidobaldi’s work on both the domus and the tufa-block building is important for understanding his interpretation of the area and his innovative argument that both buildings, by virtue of their proximity to the Colosseum, were related to the functions of the amphitheater.

The Flavian building with the mithraeum

Guidobaldi analyzed the construction of the mithraeum and the surrounding rooms of the building closely. He noted that crucial information had been lost when several ancient walls were removed during the excavations of 1869-70.\(^9\) He also noted, for the first time, that the mithraeum was built into a cryptoporticus belonging to the original phase of the domus. He reported brickwork of the Flavian period, not only in the walls, but also in the pavement of sesquipedales in

\(^7\) Two inscribed bases, CIL 6.1145-46, were recovered.

\(^8\) A previously omitted fact which explains how Father Hulloooy knew to look for the basilica in the 1863-67 excavations.

\(^9\) Guidobaldi, 1978, 16.

\(^8\) Guidobaldi, 1978, 39.
the corridor outside the mithraeum and in the room across from it. On the basis of remains found in the construction of the drainage tunnel (see above), Guidobaldi confirmed Junyent's estimate that this building was wider than the tufa building.32 Following Junyent, Guidobaldi dated the construction of the mithraeum to the late 2nd or early 3rd century and its abandonment to the later 4th-century.33

In a forthcoming study on the mithraeum,34 Guidobaldi provides new evidence for interpreting the Flavian building with the mithraeum as a domus. The mithraeum, he argues, was built into a vaulted grotto under the peristyle of the domus. The vaulted ceiling of the mithraeum is original, and Guidobaldi has confirmed that such vaulted underground rooms were common in 1st- and 2nd-century domus.35 In his study Guidobaldi also cites new analyses by Irene Bragantini describing the changes made to install the mithraeum. All the doors of the room for the actual sanctuary were closed off leaving only the single entrance. The vault received a layer of tufa and ceramic sherds to create an imitation cave, and the podia and niches for mosaics were added along


33 Guidobaldi, 1978, 49-50, argued that the 4th-century pavement lifted by Cusmont (in which the fragments of the Mithraic altar were found) provided the only point of reference for a date. That 4th-century pavement lay under a structural element for the basilica but not under the two late-2nd/ early-3rd century pilasters at the entrance of the room across from the mithraeum.

34 The study is one chapter in a forthcoming publication about the basilica. Guidobaldi very kindly allowed me to read the proofs of this chapter and an appendix. The page numbers cited are those in the proofs.

35 Guidobaldi, forthcoming, 53-54.
the side walls. The original wall decorations in the room across from the mithraeum (the "antechamber", see fig.7, E) and in the "Mithraic school" (see fig.7, G) were destroyed when the mithraeum was built. The "antechamber" received an arcuated entrance supported by pilasters, and the "Mithraic school" received new paintings and a mosaic floor. All of the changes date to the Severan period in the late 2nd and early 3rd century.

The identification of the Flavian-period building

The identification and use of the Flavian domus has challenged every scholar who has studied it. Coarelli recently suggested that the domus with the mithraeum was the seat of a collegium (guild) which provided services for the amphitheater, or that it might have been the residence of the procurator Monetae et ludi gladiatorii (the procurator of the mint and gladiatorial games). He has further stated that the buildings of identifiable function which had mithraea were completely, or at least partly, public. In Coarelli's view, this building had to have a public function because of the presence of the Mithraic sanctuary. This

86 Guidobaldi, forthcoming, 58-61.

87 Coarelli, 1980, 195. Such services were extensive. Gladiators had to be trained and housed in the four ludi gladiatorii, the naval detachment which operated the giant awning over the amphitheater was housed in the Castra Hisenatium, weapons were stored in the arentarium, while in other buildings the wounded and dead were tended to and stripped of their arms, which were then stored.

88 CIL 6.1647.

89 Coarelli, 1979, 79.
identification, however, is difficult to reconcile with the evidence that this building is a domus, and Coarelli’s statement directly contradicts the archaeological evidence that mithraea in Rome were often located in private residences. Citing Coarelli’s interpretation, Guidobaldi speculated that this domus was originally the residence of an official of the ludi at the Colosseum or the moneta, and thus a public (i.e. state-owned) building which changed occupants each year. However, Guidobaldi argued against Coarelli by proposing that the domus fell into private hands in the late 2nd century before the mithraeum was added.90

The tufa block building

In an effort to identify the tufa-block building, Guidobaldi considered a topographical study of this area which showed that the land occupied by S. Clemente was originally part of the Domus Aurea.91 Guidobaldi noted, rightly, that the tufa building was incompletely excavated.92 After more excavation, cleaning, and study of that building, he concluded that the tufa blocks were intentionally rusticated, and that this tufa wall enclosed a series of small rooms of opus mixtum. The rooms did not interconnect with each other, he noted, but opened on to a

90 Guidobaldi, forthcoming, 59 and 64.
92 Guidobaldi, 1978, 18-21. The wall has only been excavated to a length of about 45 m. All previously published dimensions are estimates.
central courtyard. On the basis of these new discoveries, Guidobaldi argued that the building was not a domus, insula (apartment house) or any other private habitation. After careful study, he decided that the tufa wall predated the fire of 64 CE, and that its interior partition walls were built under Domitian. He considered that the rooms resembled barracks, but rejected the possibility that this building housed gladiators or staff for the Colosseum. He finally concluded, with Junyent, that this building was a horreum related to activities at the amphitheater. Guidobaldi astutely noted that new stratigraphic evidence from the interior courtyard would undoubtedly help to identify and to date the building.

Guidobaldi suggested that the tufa building was abandoned and partly destroyed after a rise in the street level. This destruction, he said, applied particularly to the second story. Later, the north and south faces of the

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94 Guidobaldi, 1978, 32-34.
95 Guidobaldi, 1978, 24-26, noted the uniform, small rooms, but argued that they would have had some decoration. He cited the wall paintings in the Castra Equitum Singularum (Colini, 1944, 240-45 and 253-59) and in the Castra Peregrinorum (Lissi Caronna, 1965, 114-15).
96 Guidobaldi, 1978, 27-28 n.80, noted the lack of comparative industrial sites which might change the interpretation of this building. He also suggested that this building could have been an industrial area related to the mint, citing a lost fragment of the Severan marble plan with "MON(ETA)". He also suggested that, assuming the tufa outer walls were older than the interior partition walls, this building could be the refurbished Trajanic moneta (1978, 29-30).
interior partition walls on the lower story were fortified with 30 cm.-thick walls (added to the original 60 cm.-wide walls) to provide a foundation for a new, haphazardly built upper story on top of the tufa block wall. Other evidence, along with this later construction, led Guidobaldi to propose a second phase for the building beginning in the late 3rd or early 4th century and lasting until the 5th century, when the first basilica was built. Guidobaldi did not speculate on the use of the building during this later phase.

In summary, then, the nithraeum under S. Clemente is a Severan period sanctuary with at least two associated rooms installed into the basement of a domus of the Flavian period. The nithraeum probably remained in use during the 3rd and 4th centuries until Christians, who gained control of the domus and the neighboring tufa-block structure, used both buildings for the foundations of the 5th-century basilica of S. Clemente.

99 Guidobaldi, 1978, 54-57. This new upper story is preserved in the walls of the 5th-century basilica.

100 Guidobaldi, 1978 (2nd ed.) 60-63. This additional evidence includes an amphora neck with a dipinto of a consular date of 216 recovered from one of the interior rooms. Found with it were other 3rd-century amphorae with a terminus post quem of 230-240.
DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (date unknown)

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 365: A fragmentary dedication to Sol Invictus by a dedicator named Tiberius

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The evidence for this sanctuary is a wall-painting (CIMRM 337) discovered in the 17th century among the ruins of a building which might have been the Baths of Titus. The painting no longer exists, but drawings of it made by Topham in the 18th century are preserved in several codices and collections (fig.9). This painting depicts an unusual tauroctony scene, which Vermaseren described briefly in his catalogue. In the center, Mithras, wearing a radiate crown

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101 Ricci, ETR (1891) 205.

102 The painting is published in Eton II, 19; Windsor Castle Library, vol.175 inv.11405 = Codex Pettuno, 156; Folkham Hall II, 36 and George Turnbull, A Treatise on Ancient Painting (London 1704) 175-76, pl.9). The Codex Pettuno described the painting as "del palazzo di Tito" ("from the palace of Titus"), while Turnbull described it as an "Ancient painting discovered on 22 January, 1668 near the Colosseum." (Ashby, 1914, 19). The painting has a colorful past. It was illustrated in manuscripts from the collections of Windsor castle, Eton, Folkham Hall and the Corsini Manuscript. These collections contain drawings of ancient paintings executed by several different hands, including those of the elder and younger Bartoli, Pietro Sante, and Francesco, among others. Lanciani, ETR (1895b), 178, discusses the results of his examination of the Windsor, Eton and Corsini manuscripts.
(rather than the Phrygian cap), stabs the bull, which is rearing up on its hind legs. Cautes stands to Mithras’ right, and of the other traditional characters, only the snake is present.103 On Mithras’ lower right a reclining nude male (possibly Oceanus) holds an oar on his left shoulder and tips a vessel of water with his right hand. Above him, in the upper right corner, is Sol in a quadriga and holding an orb in his left hand. A bird (possibly the raven) stands behind his back.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

The subject of this painting indicates that it belonged to a mithraeum. However, the identification of this mithraeum is problematic because no architectural remains are extant. Lanciani has summarized the best information about the context from the memoirs of Francesco Bartoli (an architect who drew the painting).104 Using as a guide Bartoli’s reference to excavations in the area near the baths of Titus and Trajan and also the Domus Aurea, Lanciani located the site of the mithraeum in a building discovered in 1668.105 He described the remains as a line of five rooms opening onto a narrow passage. Because a staircase descended into the passage, Lanciani decided that the rooms were part

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103 These characters usually include Cautopates, Sol, Luna, the raven, a scorpion and a dog. Sometimes the tail of the bull ends in wheat ears and sometimes a cup is represented.

104 Lanciani, *RCR* (1895b) 174-75 and 178-79.

105 Lanciani, *RCR* (1895b) 174-75.
of a cryptoporticus. The rooms had figural and geometric mosaics on the floor, and wall-paintings which depicted the labors of Hercules, Aeneas leaving Dido, and a Nilotic scene, as well as the Mithraic tauroctony scene. The vague marine theme of these wall-paintings and their location in a cryptoporticus suggested to Lanciani that the "casa di Tito," to which the rooms were attributed by Bartoli, was actually part of the Baths of Titus.

The uncertain identity of the building and its remains will be discussed at length in Chapter Three, but the existence of a mithraeum is certain.\footnote{Vermaseren, 1951, 69-70, agreed that the painting came from a mithraeum, but interpreted "Casa di Tito" as a private house near the baths of the same name.} The Mithraic elements in the painting, though few, are too distinct to be coincidental. Moreover, the architectural context, a cryptoporticus, was suitable for a Mithraic sanctuary because it provided a dark, private, vaulted, underground space for the cult.

Cumont and Vermaseren both included an inscribed fragment of the lower left corner of a tauroctony (CIMRM 364/365) in their catalogues, but it was Coarelli who first associated it with the mithraeum in the Baths of Titus.\footnote{Coarelli, 1979, 70-1. Vermaseren, 1951, 76, originally proposed that this fragment belonged to a separate mithraeum. He did not make the suggestion again in his catalogue.} This fragment was found near the church of S. Pietro in Vincoli, in the basement of a nearby school.\footnote{Ricci, ECR (1891) 205 and CIL 6.31050.}
fragment was not found in situ it cannot be associated with the mithraeum in the Baths of Titus.
7D: VIA GIOVANNI LANZA, 128

DEFINITE MITRAEUM (early 4th century)

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 360: The dedication of a (Mithraic) cave to Deus Sol Invictus Mithras by Flavius Zosimus, a priest of Brontons and Hecate.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Although little is known about this mithraeum, it is one of the more interesting sanctuaries in Rome. The report by Carlo Visconti, the main publication on this mithraeum, contains a reasonably thorough description of the site and its artifacts. Visconti devoted only two pages to a description of the mithraeum, but the drawings he included are detailed and helpful (see figs. 10-12). Visconti also briefly described the location and orientation of the mithraeum and its relationship to nearby buildings.

The site included a domus of the Constantinian period associated with an aedicular garden lararium and a mithraeum

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110 Visconti, R.R. (1885) tav. 3-5.
(figs.10 and 12). The lararium contained a life-size statue of Isis-Fortuna surrounded by 16 other figurines including Jupiter-Serapis (2), Jupiter in oak crown, Diana, Venus, Mars, Hercules (3), a bacchante, a seated female deity, an "acolyte", a cippus of Horus, and bases which once supported two lares and a genius.

The lararium stood beside the doorway of a brick and opus reticulatum structure. Through the doorway, two flights of nine and then seven stairs descended to a small mithraeum (see figs.11a-b and 13). Halfway down the stairs, niches in the walls on either side of the stairs held statuettes of Cautes and Cautopates. The small square mithraeum (3.7 m. X 2.43 m.) had no podia, but a tauroctony relief rested on two brackets sat on the left side wall. Below the relief were four niches in the wall, probably for lamps recovered during the excavation.111 On the floor was a column fragment on which rested an upturned Ionic capital.

Two scholars have tried to associate other monuments found in the vicinity with this mithraeum. Vermaseren first associated the inscription dedicated by Flavius Septimius Zosimus (CIMRM 360) with this mithraeum because it was found only a few yards away in the church of S. Martino ai Monti, and because it specifically mentions a cave (speleum).112 Few

111 Visconti, RCR (1885) 27-36.

112 Vermaseren, 1951, 75-76, did not directly associate the monuments in his catalogue. Coarelli, however, agreed with Vermaseren's implication and listed CIMRM 360 as belonging to the mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza.
Mithraic dedications from Rome actually refer to the dedication of a sanctuary, and none was found so close to an actual sanctuary. However, since this inscription was not recovered in situ, it cannot be associated securely with the mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza. Coarelli also tried to associate a tauroctony relief found in a nearby street with this mithraeum. Although its exact provenance is known, this relief was not found in the mithraeum and cannot, technically, be considered as part of the sanctuary.

**Significant Issues**

Dating the mithraeum is difficult. Visconti did not report a date for any of the sculpture from the lararium, and he did not include enough descriptive information about it for others to arrive at a date independently. The present whereabouts of the sculpture is unknown. Visconti dated the mithraeum by associating it with the Constantinian-period remains of the *domus*. He then used this date for the basis of his argument that the installation of mithraea in private homes reflected the popularity of Mithraism in the 4th century.114

Construction techniques are often used as an indication of the date of a structure. The problem with the present

113 *CIMEM* 368. Coarelli, 1979, 71. Vermaseren, 1951, 75-76, noted the proximity of this monument to the mithraeum but made no effort to associate them.

114 Visconti, *BFR* (1885) 38. He also argued that if 4th-century mithraea were installed in private homes, the number of them in Rome was almost infinite. His remarks are a precursor to Coarelli's estimate of 690 mithraea (based on hectarage) and 2000 mithraea (based on the estimated population of Antonine Rome).
example is that the walls of the *lararium* and the mithraeum are composed of different materials which do not necessarily date to the Constantinian period. The *lararium* is brickwork, while the entrance to the mithraeum is brickwork above *opus reticulatum*. The walls of the stairway are both brickwork and tufa blocks, and the walls of the mithraeum are stuccoed tufa blocks. Thus, the actual structures of the *lararium* and the mithraeum could belong to any period from the late Republic or the 1st century CE. Still, Visconti's assumption that the owners of the Constantinian *domus* used the *lararium* and mithraeum is convincing because of the vicinity of the two structures. Furthermore, clear evidence for the installation of mithraea in *domus* and for the practice not only of Mithraism but also of other foreign cults, reflected here in the range of images in the *lararium*, will be presented in the remainder of this chapter and discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

This example of a mithraeum located outside its *domus* is unique. In consideration of the small size of the mithraeum and its lack of podia, Russell Scott has suggested that the traditional cult meal associated with Mithraic worship may have taken place on a *triclinium* (a group of three dining couches) in the garden by the *lararium*. Scott compared the garden *lararium* and mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza to the garden of the 1st- and 2nd-century *Domus*.

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115 Personal communication, December, 1991.
Fulminata at Ostia. At some point the owners of that domus built a *biclinium* with a fountain in front of a *lararium* in the peristyle garden (see fig. 14). Although the Domus Fulminata is an earlier building and has no mithraeum, Scott's comparison is astute. The mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza is undeniably too small for most worship activities, and it is thus distinctly possible that some of them, particularly the cult meal, took place outside the mithraeum in the garden above.

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THE ESQUILINE HILL: THE STATIO CECERTIS II VIGILCH AND THE DOLICHÉUM

8P: PIAZZA DANTE

POSSIBLE MITRAEUM (date unknown)

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 351: A tauroctony relief dedicated to Cautopates by Prinus, a pater.

CIMRM 355: A relief of Sol dedicated to Cautopates by Prinus, a pater.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The archaeological evidence for this possible mithraeum includes incompletely understood building remains, three Mithraic reliefs, and one statue of Mithras Petrageneris found near the modern Piazza Dante on the Esquiline Hill. In the only extensive report of these finds, Visconti described architectural remains which resemble most mithraeae. He noted two walls of opus latericium approximately 20 m. long which form a room 6 m. wide. The room had a vaulted ceiling and a mosaic pavement of fine, white tesserae. The southwest side this room opened onto a corridor which had stone seats set into the walls. The reliefs and statue were found covered.
with tiles in the vaulted room.\textsuperscript{117} Visconti was unable to
date the architectural remains and was uncertain about
identifying this room as a mithraeum.\textsuperscript{118} He thus devoted most
of his report to a description and discussion of the
Mithraic monuments found in the room. The number of Mithraic
monuments found together and the resemblance of the room in
which they were discovered to a mithraeum (greater length
than width with a vaulted ceiling) possibly indicate a
sanctuary.

\textsuperscript{117} Visconti, 1874, 224-25.

\textsuperscript{118} Visconti, 1874, 225.
9R: PALAZZO DEL GRILLO

REJECTED MITRAEUM

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: none

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The original provenance of this single fragment of a tauroctony relief is unknown, and it cannot be associated with any architectural remains. The fragment was rediscovered in 1928 in a cellar containing debris which had come from the Palazzo del Grillo behind the forum of Augustus. Vermaseren said that the fragment was part of a garden wall when he saw it.\textsuperscript{119} Since the fragment does not have any unique qualities or an inscription which refers to a mithraeum, it cannot be used to imply the existence of a mithraeum.

\textsuperscript{119} Vermaseren, 1956.
10R: S. EUSEBIUS AND S. VITO

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 363: A candelabrum dedicated to Invictus Mithras by T. Aelius Iustus.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This monument is the shaft and base of a candlestick decorated with palmettes and acanthus leaves. The inscription on the plinth verifies that it was dedicated to Mithras. It was found between the modern churches of S. Eusebius and S. Vito, but not in the context of any architectural remains. As a single monument without any clear architectural context, it cannot be considered to represent a mithraeum.

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120 See CIL 6.3722 and 31037 and the original publication by Lanciani in EOR (1875) 248 no.34.
11R: SS. PIETRO AND MARCELLINO

REJECTED MITRAEUM

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 362: An altar dedicated to Sol Invictus Mithras by T. Flavius Hyginus Ephebianus, a freedman of an unidentified emperor. The inscription appears in Latin and Greek.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This altar is interesting for its bilingual inscriptions, but little has been written about it since the time of its discovery.121 It was recovered "at the church of SS. Peter and Marcellinus" on the Esquiline hill, but no other details of its provenance are available.122 As a single monument of uncertain provenance without associated architectural remains, this altar cannot be used to indicate the existence of a mithraeum.

121 See CIL 6.732, E64 (1988) 232, and Hulsean, 1988, 222. Hulsean has a theory that the inscription can be dated later than the Hadrianic period because of the use of the double cognomen.

122 According to the commentary of CIL 6.732.
THE QUIRINAL HILL: THE ANCIENT ALTA SEMITA

12D: PALAZZO BARBERINI

DEFINITELY MITHRAEUM (late 2nd or early 3rd century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<tr>
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<td>figure in a tunic</td>
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<td>graffito</td>
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</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 391: A dedication to the "Unconquerable One" by Yperanthes.

CIMRM 395: A graffito which says "Macarius."

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This mithraeum was discovered in 1936 in the process of digging foundations in the garden of the Barberini Palace.

It was one of three adjoining rooms: a large central room with pilasters, a smaller room converted to a cistern on one side, and the mithraeum on the other side.123 The single greatest contribution of this mithraeum to our general knowledge of Mithraism, its tauroctony painting with ten

123 Gatti and Annibaldi, ECR (1943-45) 98.
smaller side scenes in the cult niche, has been widely discussed, although the only publication on the mithraeum itself is the original excavation report.\textsuperscript{124}

The mithraeum measures 11.83 m. X 6.25 m., but its entire length has not been excavated. The original room into which the mithraeum was built had a vaulted ceiling with three lunette windows on the right side of the vault. When the mithraeum was installed, two of the lunette windows were blocked up, and two identically sized podia and the tauroctony painting were added. Later restorations included the addition of pilasters on the left side of the mithraeum and the enlargement of the left podium.\textsuperscript{125}

Annibaldi recognized four phases in the architecture of the building. The earliest phase, which dates to before the middle of the 1st century CE, consists of the remains of walls incorporated into the foundations for the second phase. The building into which the mithraeum was built represents the second phase, and it dates to the middle of the 1st century. The modifications which created the mithraeum date to the second half of the 2nd century and form the third phase. The four (or more) pilasters added to the left side of the mithraeum represent the final phase,


\textsuperscript{125} The right podium was 1.4 m. high, while that on the left was 2.45 m. high.
which dates to the Severan period.\textsuperscript{126} The two phases of the
mithraeum thus range from ca.150 CE to ca.225 CE.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

The tauroctony painting and its ten side scenes
depicting the various "miracles" of Mithras have usually
been studied for information about Mithraic mythology
(fig.15).\textsuperscript{127} Recently, however, the style of the painting has
been used to date the mithraeum. Annibaldi assumed that the
painting belonged to the earlier phase of the sanctuary, but
in new comparative studies of this painting and others like
it from mithraea in and near Rome, Vermaseren and his
student, Paul Meyboom, have assigned it a slightly later
date.\textsuperscript{128} Meyboom compared the Barberini tauroctony to the
tauroctony paintings in the mithraea at Sta. Maria Capua
Vetere and at Marino.\textsuperscript{129} He traced in detail the development
of the 2nd-century style of painting, which featured
compartments divided by red lines, and concluded that the
compartmentalizing style in the Barberini tauroctony dates

\textsuperscript{126} Annibaldi, ETR (1943-45) 108.

\textsuperscript{127} The scenes on the left from top to bottom depict 1) Jupiter brandishing a
thunderbolt at a giant, 2) Oceanus reclining, 3) the rock-birth of Mithras, 4) Mithras shooting an
arrow at a rock (a water miracle), and 5) Mithras dragging the bull. The scenes on the right from
top to bottom depict 1) Mithras crowning a kneeling Sol, 2) Mithras standing between two trees, 3)
Mithras and Sol standing on either side of an altar, 4) Sol in a quadriga which Mithras is entering,
and 5) Mithras and Sol having a banquet. The painting is extremely faded now, and necessary repairs
have been made only with white plaster.

\textsuperscript{128} See Vermaseren, 1982, 83-89.

\textsuperscript{129} Heyboom, 1982, 35-36 and nn.1-6.
to the second quarter of the 3rd century.\footnote{Heyboom, 1582, 45-46 and n. 40. Heyboom discussed the orderliness of the red-line composition, and also the impressionistic style of the figures, which he compared to the wall paintings in the villa below S. Sebastiano, in the Capella Grecia of the catacomb of Priscilla, and in the catacomb of Pietro and Marcello (the room with the seasons).} This date, slightly later than Annibaldi's estimate for the installation of the sanctuary, indicates that the painting was probably not part of the earliest phase of the mithraeum. However, the combined evidence from the architecture and the painting shows that the mithraeum was used slightly before and throughout the Severan period. None of the evidence recovered (or reported) indicates how long the mithraeum remained in use.

The immediate context of this mithraeum remains an unresolved issue. The architecture of the three rooms suggests that this mithraeum, like the one under S. Clemente, was part of a cryptoporticus of a domus. Since few traces of the upper story were recovered, the identity of this building is difficult to establish securely.\footnote{Gatti, KCR (1943-45) 100.} The identity of the owner is equally difficult to establish. None of the names found in the mithraeum, which include a Persian, Yperanthes, and a Greek, Macarius, is definitely that of the owner and/or builder.\footnote{Vermaseren, 1951, 65, argued that Yperanthes was a wealthy freedman who owned the mithraeum.} However, an investigation of the wider topographical context of the mithraeum, on a street called the Alta Semita lined with
wealthy residences (see below, Chapter Three), may prove to be more useful in determining an owner for this sanctuary.
DOMUS OF THE NUMMII ALBINI

DEFINITE MITRAEUM (4th century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<th>TMMM</th>
<th>CIL</th>
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<tr>
<td>black and white mosaic in a geometric pattern</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: none

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The history of the remains of this mithraeum, no longer extant, is complex. It began when Alessandro Capannari argued that a domus owned by the Nummii Albini, among other structures, could be identified among the remains exposed under the Ministero della Guerra (fig.16).133 In his argument Capannari cited several previously discovered inscriptions which mentioned various members of the gens of the Nummii Albini. The provenance of the inscriptions led him to conclude that the domus of the Nummii Albini was located close to the western corner of the perimeter wall of the Baths of Diocletian.134 After carrying out excavations at

133 Capannari, BCR (1885) 3-12.

134 See CIL 6.1748, a dedication to H. Nummius Albinus on a statue base discovered in the 17th century. The 19th-century discoveries included a dedication to H. Nummius Attidianus Tuscus, generally dated to the late 3rd century, published in BCR (1877) 168, n.145; fragments with
this site, Capannari was able to report the discovery of several basement rooms with reasonably well-preserved interiors, but he was not able to establish the entire plan of the house. 135

Capannari identified one of the rooms as a mithraeum on the basis of a partially obscured painting of the tauroctony on one of its walls. 136 Other details also indicated a sanctuary: the walls resembled a cave cut from tufa (although Capannari did not describe how this effect was achieved), and the black-and-white mosaic pavement stopped one meter from the longer walls (where there were once podia). The room with the mithraeum was one of a group of five rooms which were surrounded on three sides by a vaulted cryptoporticus lit by lunette windows. Capannari suggested that the other rooms related to the mithraeum, although no particular evidence substantiates this claim. 137 Finally, Capannari identified a structure with a drain located outside the mithraeum at a corner formed by two of the cryptoportici. He suggested that it was used to drain the

135 Capannari, ECR (1886), 17-29 and tav.4. Capannari’s report, the only one on this mithraeum, lacks a drawing of the painting, a detailed top plan of the mithraeum, and a map which clearly relates the plan of the building to the modern streets and buildings.

136 Capannari, ECR (1886) 19-20.

137 Capannari, ECR (1886) 24.
blood from the rite of the taurobolium or criobolium, but whether it was remains an unresolved issue.\textsuperscript{138}

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The identification of the Nummii Albini as the owners of this mithraeum make it one of the most important in Rome. This identification is significant because it is a rare occurrence, but also because the Nummii Albini were a prominent 4th-century aristocratic family. The discovery of a mithraeum in their home clarifies extensive epigraphical evidence indicating that their neighbors and social peers also worshipped Mithras. The subject warrants, and will receive, more attention in Chapter Four.

The subject of the doubtful role of the taurobolium and criobolium in the Mithraic liturgy will be addressed in more detail in reference to the mithraeum in the Baths of Caracalla (see 34D below).

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{138} Capannari, RCR (1886) 24-25.
\end{flushright}
14D: CASTRA PRAETORIA

DEFINITIVE MITHRAEUM (late 2nd century or later)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>torchbearer statue fragment</td>
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</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

*CIL* 6.780: A slightly damaged dedication to Deus Sol Invictus on behalf of the health and safe return of Septinius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, and on behalf of the urban praefect and the praetorian guard by A. Pompeius Primigenius, a *pater* and *sacerdos*, Hermes, Euphrata and others.

*AE* (1911) 220: The dedication of a cave to Deus Invictus by M. Aurelius Rufinus, Flavius Clarinus Aelius and Messius Aurelius Iulianus, soldiers of the praetorian guard, on behalf of the health of Septinius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The existence of this mithraeum is known from inscribed dedications to Mithras made by members of the praetorian guard and from Mithraic monuments found on the site of the Castra Praetoria. However, no architectural remains for a mithraeum in the castra have been recovered. Vermaseren discussed two monuments found near the castra. The first was a relief fragment (*CIMRM* 397) showing the tauroctony on one side, and Mithras' banquet with Sol on the other side. The second monument (*CIMRM* 398) is a statue fragment of one of the torchbearers. The monuments were recovered from the...
castra 20 years apart (1882 and 1902), and their exact provenances have never been discussed in publications.\textsuperscript{133}

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

To date no scholar has assessed the entire body of evidence for the existence of a mithraeum in the castra. Vermaseren decided that the two figural monuments did not represent a sanctuary, although he was aware of additional epigraphic evidence for a mithraeum in the castra.\textsuperscript{140} Ugo Antonielli used this epigraphic evidence and historical trends to demonstrate the popularity of Mithraism in the praetorian guard.\textsuperscript{141} However, he did not cite either of the figural monuments (CIMRM 397 or 398) although both were published before he wrote his article in 1912.

In his argument Antonielli focused on the two inscriptions summarized above. He dated the first dedication (CIL 6.780) to the period before Septimius Severus’ return from the East in 202 on the basis of the titles in Severus’ name,\textsuperscript{142} and observed that pater (father) and sacerdos (priest) are common terms in Mithraic dedications. But Antonielli also had to restore key portions of the

\textsuperscript{139} CIMRM 397 was published by Cumont in *Revue Archeologique* 41 (1902) 100 and was announced in *AJA* (1902) 48. CIMRM 398 was published in *BCh* (1882) 240-41.

\textsuperscript{140} Vermaseren, 1951, 66, originally thought that there was a mithraeum in the *Castra Praetoria*. He did not, however, create a classification for a mithraeum in the *castra* in his catalogue.

\textsuperscript{141} Antonielli, *BCh* (1912).

\textsuperscript{142} Antonielli, *BCh* (1912) 246-47. Severus called himself Septimius Severus Plus Pertinax Augustus, but not Parthicus Maximus.
inscription. For example, he suggested that "cohortium pr..." ought to be read as "cohortium pr[aetoriarum]" and that "deum..." ought to be read as "deum invictum solen."

Both restorations are plausible, but the further assumption that "Deus Sol Invictus" could be equated with Mithras lacks sufficient proof. The issue is one of distinguishing Sol Invictus as deity from "Sol" and "Invictus" as epithets for Mithras. Since the inscription contains no other reference to Mithras, and since it was not found within the architectural context of a mithraeum, it probably should not be considered as a Mithraic dedication, but only one to Sol Invictus.

The second inscription Antonielli cited was a dedication on the island of Andros.\textsuperscript{143} This dedication was made by M. Aurelius Rufinus also on behalf of Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, and it is also datable to the years before or during the campaign in the East in 197-98. M. Aurelius Rufinus has also been connected to the praetorian guard by another dedication found in the Castra Praetoria.\textsuperscript{144}

In this example it is more plausible to associate Mithras with "Deus Invictus" because the inscription commemorates the dedication of a cave (spelaeum), a word which usually refers to a Mithraic sanctuary.

\textsuperscript{143} AE (1911) 220.

\textsuperscript{144} CIL 6.32640 (Antonielli, ERE [1912] 247-50).
Antonielli argued that these two inscriptions proved the involvement of the praetorian cohorts in Mithraism. But the first inscription can only be used as evidence if "Deus Invictus Sol" is accepted as a correct restoration which then refers to Mithras. The reference to a cave, or mithraeum, in the second inscription, combined with the knowledge of M. Aurelius Rufinus' position in the praetorian guard, provides stronger evidence for the worship of Mithras by members of the guard. Why Antonielli did not use the two Mithraic monuments actually found in the Castra Praetoria (CIMRM 397-98) in his argument is unclear.

The most important aspect of Antonielli's argument is his use of historical evidence. He recalled that Septimius Severus fundamentally changed the nature of the Castra Praetoria by selecting the members of the guard from legions and auxiliaries which worshipped Mithras, and suggested that this change brought Mithraism to the Castra Praetoria in Rome. This argument has been largely overlooked. In light of the Severan date of many of the mithraea under present investigation, Antonielli's argument and the changes which Septimius Severus made in the praetorian guard will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

145 Antonielli, ECR (1912) 250.

146 Antonielli, ECR (1912) 246 and 252. He did not refer to a useful passage in Cassius Dio which discusses this issue (75.3-6).
THE QUIRINAL HILL: THE MODERN VIA NAZIONALE

15-17P: S. VITALE/ VIA NAZIONALE AT VIA VENEZIA/ TEMPLE OF SERAPIS

THREE POSSIBLE MITHREA

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>8/30</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: see below

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This list of monuments and mithraea is disputed. Scholars disagree on the number, location, and contents of the mithraea it represents. Vermaseren thought there were two mithraea, which he published as CIMRM 381-83 and CIMRM 384. He relied on information published by Lanciani in 1907, by Vignoli in 1705, and by Flaminio Vacca in the 16th century. Coarelli also argued that there were two mithraea, but he identified their contents incorrectly. Examining the conditions of the discovery of these monuments can resolve some of the problems surrounding their interpretation. This examination, which will investigate the original provenance of the monuments, will also require some discussion about
the disputed locations of the temple of Sol built by
Aurelian and the temple of Serapis.

The "mithraeum" at S. Vitale (15P)

In his catalogue Vermaseren identified a mithraeum
\( \text{CIMRM} \ 381 \) containing a statue of Aion \( \text{CIMRM} \ 382 \) and a
relief of Aion \( \text{CIMRM} \ 383 \).\(^{147}\) His identification relied on a
passage in the memoirs of Vacca which said that the two
monuments were discovered together in the 16th century on
the eastern slope of the Quirinal hill in the vineyard of
Orazio Muti, directly across from the church of S. Vitale.

Vacca described the monuments in detail, and he stated
specifically that they were found in a vaulted room.\(^{148}\) The
architectural remains are no longer extant. The figurine is
also lost, but Cumont published drawings of it by an
unidentified artist. The relief is walled into a flight of
stairs in the garden of the Palazzo Colonna, which occupies
the site of the ancient temple of Serapis.

None of the monuments recovered from the vaulted room
represents or specifically refers to Mithras.

Representations of Aion are certainly common in mithraea,
and especially in those outside Italy, but the role of Aion

\(^{147}\) These "Aion" figures are common in Mithraic sanctuaries and are consistently
represented as a nude male body with a lion's head encircled by a snake. Four wings emerge from the
upper back of the figure (two pointing up and two pointing down). The figure usually holds a key in
each hand and stands on a globe. In the Aion figure on the relief \( \text{CIMRM} \ 383 \), four snakes float
around and intertwine with its wings, its arms are outstretched and hold torches, it is half-clad
and does not stand on a globe, and there is a burning altar in front of the figure, at which it
blows air.

\(^{148}\) Vacca, 1594, \textit{Memorie} 116-17, described both the figurine and the relief in such
detail that they are easily identified as \( \text{CIMRM} \ 382-83 \).
in Mithraic worship is incompletely understood, and he was not necessarily a central deity in Mithraism. Thus despite the reported discovery of architectural remains fitting the description of a mithraeum, two Aion figurines within a vaulted room can, at best, only possibly indicate the existence of a mithraeum.

The "mithraeum" at Via Nazionale and Via Venezia (16P)

Vernaseren identified a second mithraeum (CIMRM 384) on the basis of information from Lanciani that a scholar named Merode had excavated a sanctuary in 1869.149 Lanciani reported that a room carved from tufa was discovered near the mithraeum on Muti’s property (see above). The room measured 2.65 m. X 3.18 m. and had a niche, an altar, and a small antechamber measuring 3.6 m. X 0.83 m. Lanciani included no other details in his report which could positively identify this room as a mithraeum.150

The "mithraeum" of the Temple of Serapis h(17P)

Lanciani also discussed a third possible mithraeum known from Vignoli, who stated in his dissertation that this mithraeum was found "...near the remains of the Turris Mesa, which is associated by some with the temple of Sol built by Aurelian."151 After investigating the sources closely,

149 Lanciani, 1907, 200.

150 The mithraeum is not published elsewhere.

151 J. Vignoli, De Columna Imperatoris Antonii Pii (Rome 1705) 174. His exact words: "...prope rudera Turris Mesae, quae a nonnullis ad Solis templum ab Aureliano extractum refertur." Cumont (1896, 195, no.8) included this quotation in his catalogue, but it is not clear whether he himself examined the dissertation or whether he found the quotation in 19th-century sources.
Lanciani could not decide whether a mithraeum had actually existed or whether it was an invention of the architect Ligorio.\textsuperscript{152} Until this century scholars, including Lanciani, understood that the ruins of a large building in the gardens of the Piazza Colonna on the southern slope of the Quirinal hill belonged to the temple of Sol. With that understanding, it was possible to concede to Vignoli and accept the existence of a mithraeum, a sanctuary for one solar deity, in or very close to the temple of another solar deity.

In 1941 Maria Santangelo published a brilliant study which clarified the previously misunderstood locations of Aurelian’s temple to Sol and the temple of Serapis. Santangelo traced the gradual misidentification of the two temples and sites through the medieval period, and then examined the history of the destruction of the building on the slope of the Quirinal hill, particularly during the 16th century, and all the archaeological remains since recovered from the area.\textsuperscript{153} Through this investigation Santangelo demonstrated conclusively that Vignoli’s term "Turris Mesa" referred to the ruins in the Palazzo Colonna gardens and that these ruins belonged to the temple of Serapis. Finally, Lanciani, 1907, 198, quoted the Vignoli’s dissertation at greater length, and seems to have examined the work himself.

\textsuperscript{152} Lanciani, 1907, 197-98.

\textsuperscript{153} Santangelo, 1941, 154-77. Santangelo has written the best description of how the location and identification of the two temples became so confused. Santangelo ultimately solved the problem of identifying the temples by proving that the "Turris Mesa" mentioned by Vignoli was the temple of Serapis and not the temple of Sol. Santangelo, 1941, 159, also referred to the quotation by Ligorio in which he alluded to a temple relating to Sol under the church S. Silvestro (see also Lanciani, 1907, 197-98).
Santangelo located Aurelian’s temple of Sol under what is now Piazza S. Silvestro in Regio VII in the Campus Martius by conducting a second survey of the history and archaeological remains for that site.

Santangelo’s study made it impossible to justify Vignoli's report of a mithraeum on the basis of its proximity to a large temple to Sol. Unfortunately, the present state of the evidence still does not indicate whether a mithraeum existed, and it remains only a possible mithraeum.

Scholars have thus identified three possible mithraea. The first, 15P (CIMRM 381), was in the vicinity of the church of S. Vitale (now on the modern Via Nazionale) and contained two representations of Aion (CIMRM 382-83). The second, 16P (CIMRM 384), was located near the first on the corner of what is now Via Nazionale and Via Venezia. The third mithraeum, 17P, was several hundred meters away from the first two sanctuaries, near the temple of Serapis on the slope of the Quirinal hill, and contained no artifacts. No architectural remains are extant for these mithraea; knowledge of each building comes through secondhand accounts by Lanciani about the observations of other scholars.

In his identification of the first mithraeum (Coarelli number 12) Coarelli separated the relief of Aion (CIMRM 383) from Vermaseren’s original group and recombined it with an inscribed tauroctony relief (CIMRM 408/9), continuing a chain of errors which began with Vermaseren and which is
difficult to follow. First, Vermaseren mistakenly attributed Vignoli’s reference to a mithraeum "near the Turris Mesa" to the inscribed tauroctony relief (CIMRM 408/9) rather than to an entirely separate mithraeum described by Vacca and Lanciani (see 17P above). Second, Vermaseren listed this tauroctony relief among the Mithraic monuments of Regio VII, the Campus Martius. In short, Vermaseren followed Vignoli’s information that the monument came from the "Turris Mesa" or Aurelian’s temple of Sol. However, Vermaseren followed only part of Santangelo’s argument: he rightly located the temple of Sol in the Campus Martius, but wrongly associated the temple of Sol with the "Turris Mesa." Santangelo had argued that the "Turris Mesa" was the temple of Serapis on the slope of the Quirinal hill.

Coarelli said that this new mithraeum (CIMRM 383 and 408/9) was found in one of the rooms of the stairs which ascend to the great temple in the gardens of the Palazzo Colonna, long identified as the temple of Sol built by Aurelian, but presently known as the temple of Serapis.\textsuperscript{154} He grouped the tauroctony relief (CIMRM 408/9) with the Aion relief (CIMRM 383) because he understood from Vermaseren’s catalogue that both monuments had been found in the vicinity of the temple of Serapis. Unlike Vermaseren, Coarelli understood that the "Turris Mesa" was the temple of Serapis and that it was located in Regio VI as demonstrated by

\textsuperscript{154} Coarelli, 1979, 71-72 (translation and paraphrase mine).
Santangelo (rather than that it was the temple of Sol in Regio VII). For reasons which are unclear, Coarelli left the lost Aion figurine (CIMRM 382) as part of the first mithraeum (CIMRM 381), to which he assigned a different number (Coarelli number 14, see above). He agreed with Vermaseren's identification of a mithraeum at the corner of the modern Via Nazionale and Via Venezia (CIMRM 384/Coarelli 15). Coarelli made three errors in identifying these mithraea. He did not examine all of Vermaseren's citations and thus did not know that Vermaseren had attributed Vignoli's reference to the wrong monument. He also did not examine Vacca's memoirs and did not know that the two representations of Aion (CIMRM 381-82) were found together. Finally, Coarelli did not include Vermaseren's catalogue number for the inscription (CIMRM 409) with the tauroctony relief (CIMRM 408).

In summation, three possible mithraea remain as identified above (15P:CIMRM 381-83; 16P:CIMRM 384 and the third mithraeum, 17P, near the "Turris Mesa" or temple of Serapis). The inscribed tauroctony relief (CIMRM 408/9) cannot be securely associated with any of the mithraea because too little is known about its provenance. For the same reason, this relief cannot be considered to represent a mithraeum by itself.
18P: VIA MAZZARINO

POSSIBLE MITRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 376: A fragmentary dedication which cannot be translated but which refers to both Ceres and Mithras.

CIMRM 377: A dedication to Invictus Mithras by T. Camurenus Philadelfus through a pater, No(nius?) Firmus.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

These two inscriptions are of uncertain provenance and cannot belong to the same mithraeum. The first inscription (CIMRM 376) is said to have been excavated on the Quirinal hill somewhere along the course of the modern Via Nazionale. The text is incomplete, but the dedication clearly refers to both Ceres and "Invictus" Mithras. The fragmentary nature of this text obscures the relationship between the two deities. The second inscription (CIMRM 377) is a complete dedication to Mithras. The only publication of this inscription reports that it was found on the Quirinal hill on Via Mazzarino in a small mithraeum. No

155 Ephemeris Epigraphica 4.866.
156 Ephemeris Epigraphica 4.762.
architectural remains of this mithraeum are extant, and no discussion of them has been published. While it is reasonable to admit the possible existence of a mithraeum, the evidence does not warrant Coarelli's assumption that these two inscriptions belonged to the same mithraeum.¹⁵⁷

Neither Vermaseren nor Cumont grouped these monuments together, although both scholars did accept the report that the inscription dedicated by T. Camurenus Philadelfus was found in a small mithraeum.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁷ Coarelli, 1977, 72.

¹⁵⁸ Vermaseren, 1951, 67, emphasized that it is impossible to prove that the inscription came from a row of shops associated with the baths of Constantine, as has been suggested (see also Santangelo, 1941, 145).
19P: VIA SICILIA

POSSIBLE MITHRAEUM OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE (late 2nd century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>407</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>fragments of two tauroctonies</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
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</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTION

CIMRM 407: The dedication of a cave to Deus Invictus on behalf of the health of Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta by Aurelius Zosimion and Aurelius Titus, freedmen of the emperors.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This inscription (CIMRM 407), found while digging foundations near the modern Via Sicilia, is important in two respects. First, antrum (cave) definitely refers to a mithraeum, although the inscription was not found in situ within a sanctuary. Second, the dedication can be closely dated on the basis of the titles in Septimius Severus' name: "L. Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus Arabicus Adzabenicus Parthicus Maximus." It dates either to 197-98, when Severus adopted the title Parthicus Maximus, or to 202-203, when he returned from the Parthian campaign. The inscription indicates the existence of a definite mithraeum, but one of unknown provenance, datable to the late 2nd century.
Coarelli argued that this inscription represented a mithraeum, but he assumed that the mithraeum would have been located near the original provenance of the inscription. He also suggested that two fragments of different tauroctonies (CIMRM 396) walled into steps at nearby Via Boncompagni, 101 could be associated with this inscription and with the mithraeum to which it referred.\(^{159}\) Coarelli's grouping is unacceptable because the three fragments were not discovered in situ and therefore cannot be securely associated with each other.

\(^{159}\) Coarelli, 1979, 73.


20R: VIA RASELLA

REJECTED MITRAEUM

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<td>385</td>
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EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This monument is a fragment of a tauroctony statue found near Via Rasella on the Quirinal hill. No architectural remains were associated with the find, and thus this monument cannot be considered to indicate the existence of a mithraeum.

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160 It was originally published in the "Elenco degli oggetti di arte antica," RCR (1881) 241, no.11.
21R: Sta. SUSANNA

REJECTED MITRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>none</td>
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<td>inscribed marble cippus</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6.728</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 379: The dedication of a shrine to Sol Invictus by Cornelius Maximus, a centurion of the Praetorian Guard.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This inscription does not refer to Mithras, as Vermaseren has suggested, but only to Sol Invictus. Moreover, as a single monument not found in situ and not otherwise associated with the architectural remains of a sanctuary, it cannot represent a mithraeum, as Coarelli has argued.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Vermaseren, 1951, 66-67, originally suggested that the monument should be grouped with the Mithraic monuments from the Castra Praetoria.
THE CAMPUS MARTIUS AND THE CAPITOLINE HILL:

22D: PIAZZA S. SILVESTRO

DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (second half of the 4th century)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>inscription</td>
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<td>inscription</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.754</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 400: A dedication made by Nonius Victor Olympius, a most distinguished man and pater patrum (father of fathers), and Aurelius Victor Augustius, a most distinguished man and pater, in honor of the promotion of initiates to the grade of leo on the fourth day before the Ides of August and the seventeenth day before the Kalends of October in the consulship of Constantius (eighth) and Julian (second) (357).

CIMRM 401: A dedication made by Nonius Victor Olympius, a most distinguished man and pater patrum, and Aurelius Victor Augustius, a most distinguished man and pater, in honor of the promotion of an initiate to the grade perses on the day before the Nones of April in the consulship of Datianus and Cerealis (358).

CIMRM 402: A dedication made by Nonius Victor Olympius, a most distinguished man and pater patrum, and Aurelius Victor Augustius, a most distinguished man, to honor the promotion of an initiate to pater on the thirteenth day before the Kalends of May, and also the promotion of two initiates to the rank of cryphios on the eighth and ninth days before the kalends of May in the consulship of Datianus and Cerealis (358).

CIMRM 403: A dedication made by Aurelius Victor Augustius, a most distinguished man and pater patrum, and his son Aemilianus Corfonius Olympius, a most distinguished youth of thirteen, in honor of the promotion of an initiate to
hieroceryx (herald) in the consulship of Valens (fifth) and Valentinian (first) (376).

CIMRM 404: A dedication made by Nonius Victor Olympus, a most distinguished man and pater patrum, and Aurelius Victor Augentius, a most distinguished man and pater, in honor of the promotion of initiates to the grade leo on the fifth day before the Ides of March in the consulship of Eusebius and Hypatius (359) and on the sixteenth day before the Kalends of April in the consulship of Datianus and Cerealis (358).

CIMRM 405: A dedication made by Nonius Victor Olympus, a most distinguished man and pater patrum (father of fathers), and Aurelius Victor Augentius, a most distinguished man and pater, in honor of the promotion of initiates to the grade leo on the Kalends of April and to the grades of Leo and cryphios on the sixth day before the Ides of April in the consulship of Mamertinus and Nebitta (362).

CIMRM 406: A dedication in honor of the nephew either of Nonius Victor Olympus or of Aurelius Victor Augentius (he is only referred to as "Victor"), who built "caves" (antra).

ECCAVATION AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Most of these inscriptions (CIMRM 400-405) were recovered together in the 15th century near the modern Piazza S. Silvestro.\(^\text{162}\) No detailed account of the discovery remains,\(^\text{163}\) and all of the inscriptions except CIMRM 406, rediscovered in 1867, are now lost.\(^\text{164}\) Nonius Victor Olympus and Aurelius Victor Augentius, who were respectively pater patrum (father of fathers) and pater (father) of the mithraeum, dedicated the lost inscriptions in the years 357, 358, 359, 362 and 376. The nephew, either of Nonius Victor Olympus or Aurelius Victor Augentius, dedicated the surviving inscription, and in it he refers specifically to

\(^{162}\) CIMRM 405 was found in the 17th century in the same area.

\(^{163}\) Lanciani, 1888, 166. Lanciani mentioned that Fra Giovanni Giocondo and Pietro Sabino witnessed the discovery of the inscriptions and the building in which they were located.

\(^{164}\) Henzen, PVI (1868) 90-98.
temples of Apollo (*Phoebelia templae*) built by his uncle, and caves (*antra*) built by himself. Because so many related inscriptions were found together, their provenance (near the former church of S. Silvestro) has been interpreted as the site of the mithraeum to which *CIMRM* 406 refers. No architectural remains have ever been recovered.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

These inscriptions are important because they reveal the exact date and specific builders of a mithraeum. They also demonstrate that three generations of a single family of senatorial rank worshipped Mithras together. It has even been argued that Jerome specifically referred to this sanctuary in a letter.165 Until recently the applicability of Jerome’s reference and the exact location of the mithraeum have remained unresolved issues.

Daniela Gallo has argued persuasively that this mithraeum was located in the temple of Sol built by Aurelian in the Campus Martius. Her argument was based on Santangelo’s location of the temple of Sol in the Campus Martius and also on the knowledge that the church of S. Silvestro occupied the site of this ancient temple.166 In her discussion Gallo traced the history of the site presently occupied by the post office in Piazza S. Silvestro, and she demonstrated convincingly that the former church of S.

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165 *EP*, 107.2.

166 Santangelo, 1944, 154-77 and Gallo, 1979, 232.
Silvestro, its monastery, and the former chapel of S. Giovannino were all formerly located on that site. Gallo argued that ancient travertine foundation blocks of a 6 m. X 10 m. building with porticoes found during excavations in 1886, which lay under the former chapel of S. Giovannino, belonged to the temple of Sol. Finally, Gallo linked the 19th-century rediscovery of inscription CIMRM 406, originally found in 1648, with this room, and thus with the temple of Sol.¹⁶⁷ Gallo’s analysis is thoughtful and persuasive, but perhaps her conclusion should be modified slightly. There was certainly a mithraeum, but the present evidence does not indicate whether it was inside the temple of Sol or merely near that sanctuary.

The CIL entry for the inscription CIMRM 406 suggests that the passage from Jerome’s letter may refer to this particular mithraeum.¹⁶³ Jerome mentions the destruction of pagan temples, including a mithraeum, by the urban praefect Gracchus¹⁶⁹ in 377, but his words "in a cave of Mithras" (in specu Mithrae) do not refer to a specific mithraeum. Since Jerome did not discuss the location of the mithraeum, there is no reason to believe that he was referring to this particular sanctuary in the temple of Sol. Gallo admitted

¹⁶⁷ Gallo, 1979, 232. Gatti, KR (1886) 358, reported the excavations which took place in the Via del Moretto.

¹⁶⁸ CIL 6.754 and Jerome, Ep., 107.2.

¹⁶⁹ This Gracchus may be identified with Furius Maecius Gracchus, a corrector of Picenum-Flaminia around 350. See Chastagnol, 1962, 198-200, no.79 and PLRE I, 399-400.
that Jerome did not specify a particular mithraeum, but she argued that the sanctuary must have been important and lavishly decorated if Jerome wrote about it. Gallo reasoned that Jerome was thinking of the S. Silvestro mithraeum because it was the temple of two senators and would therefore have been a well-appointed sanctuary.¹⁷⁰ Neither the archaeological evidence nor the information from Jerome warrants this conclusion.

¹⁷⁰ Gallo, 1979, 235-37.
23D: S. LORENZO IN DAMASO

DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (mid-3rd century or 4th century)

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<td>inscription fragment</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>tauroctony relief fragment</td>
<td>426</td>
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<td>427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Petrageneris</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 422: The dedication of an altar by Aebutius Restitutianus Quietus and Proficentius, a high-priest of Deus Sol Invictus Mithras.

CIMRM 423: A dedication which marks the building of a mithraeum by Proficentius, a pater.

CIMRM 424: A dedication too fragmentary to be understood.

CIMRM 425: A dedication too fragmentary to be understood.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This mithraeum was discovered in 1938 during restorations of the Palazzo della Cancelleria in the basement of the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso near the Chapel of the Sacrament. In the second of two publications of the excavations Bartolomeo Nogara reported that little remained of the walls of the mithraeum, but that the podia along the side walls and a mosaic floor with rough tesserae

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were still extant. Part of one wall was painted red and had additional traces of a painted moon and stars. The finds from the mithraeum included two complete inscriptions (CIMRM 422 and 423), two fragments of inscriptions (CIMRM 424 and 425), a fragment of a tauroctony relief (CIMRM 426), a statue of Cautopates (CIMRM 427) and a statue of Mithras Petrageneris (CIMRM 429).

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

As with the mithraeum in the Piazza S. Silvestro (see 22D above), the inscriptions from this sanctuary refer to the sanctuary in which they were dedicated and identify the builder and leaders. Aebutius Restitutianus Quietus and Proficentius, mentioned in CIMRM 422, are clearly the leaders of this mithraeum and its congregation, and Proficentius seems to have been the patron as well (CIMRM 423). Unfortunately, nothing is known about either individual.

While architectural remains have been recovered for this mithraeum, the construction of the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso and also of the Palazzo della Cancelleria in the 15th century has completely destroyed the stratigraphy of the mithraeum. This loss alone makes dating the mithraeum and understanding its topographical context extremely

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171 Nogara and Magi, 1949, 229-44. Nogara, 1944, is the original announcement.
172 Nogara and Magi, 1949, 229-31.
173 Aebutius Restitutianus Quietus is also known from ILS 6049. Neither inscription reveals anything else about him.
difficult. The absence in the excavation report of important descriptions of the wall construction and associated small finds such as pottery and coins further hinders the dating of the sanctuary, but the construction of the original basilica by Pope Damasus (367-384) provides a terminus ante quem for it.\textsuperscript{174} Nogara and Magi have argued that the date of the mithraeum depends on when the Christians first gained control of the site, and they have suggested that the sanctuary might be attributed to the 4th-century resurgence of pagan cults, but also that it might have been built as early as the middle of the 3rd century.\textsuperscript{175} Neither date is secure.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{174} Nogara and Magi, 1949, 242. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Nogara and Magi, 1949, 244.
\end{flushright}
24P: THE SLOPES OF THE CAPITOLINE HILL

ONE POSSIBLE MITRAEUM (date unknown)

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 416: The dedication of a tauroctony to Deus Sol Invictus Mithras with inscriptions in different places on the relief including "Nama Sebesius", a reference either to the deity Sabazeus or to an initiate Sabazius; the dedication to Deus Sol Invictus Mithras on the abdomen of the bull; and the name C. C. Aufidius, presumably the dedicator, on the base.\(^{176}\)

CIMRM 418: The dedication of a shrine to Sol by C. Ducenius Phoebus, a freedman.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The evidence for the existence of this possible mithraeum comes from 16th-century accounts of a cave in the western slope of the Capitoline hill near the Piazza Campidoglio, and two tauroctony reliefs and an inscription found in the vicinity. Eyewitness accounts of the cave substantiate its existence but leave doubts about whether the cave was actually a mithraeum. A 16th-century topographer named Smetius (whose first name is uncertain)\(^{176}\)

\(^{176}\) The restoration of Aufidius' nome is uncertain.
described a cave, traditionally called "lo Perso" (the Persian), carved into the side of the Capitoline hill. Flaminio Vacca saw the cave as a child, and reported that it contained a relief with the representation of a bull and a sculptural group of Europa and the bull. The cave was no longer there when another topographer, Bernard de Montfauçon, visited Rome in 1594.

No cave or remains of any other structure has ever been recovered from the Capitoline hill or its slopes, but Mithraic monuments have been recovered from the general area. An inscribed tauroctony relief (CIMRM 415/16), which had presumably been found in the vicinity, was displayed in the Piazza Campidoglio in the 17th century. A second relief (CIMRM 417) was discovered in 1873 walled into a set of stairs (called "Salita delle Tre Pile") leading up to the top of the hill. In his excavation report on this monument Visconti described what he thought might have been the remains of a natural cave nearby, and he suggested that this cave might have been a mithraeum and original provenance of

177 Suetius, Inscriptiones, (1588) 21, n.15.
178 Vacca, Memorie 19.
179 Cumont reported that it was taken first to the Villa Borghese and then to its present location in the Louvre in Paris, no.1023. Cumont also gave the best list of 19th-century references to this monument.
the relief. Visconti alluded to the cave mentioned by Vacca, but he did not equate the two.  

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

Two issues have been raised about these descriptions and monuments: the number of mithraea and the monuments the mithraea contained. In a brief article published in 1938, Antonio Colini discussed each of the 16th-century accounts and also the monuments recovered. He concluded that the two tauroctony reliefs found on the Capitoline hill could be attributed to the mithraeum described by Smetius and Vacca. Vermaseren argued that there were two mithraea, the one described by Smetius near the modern church of Sta. Maria d’Aracoeli containing the inscribed tauroctony relief (CIMRM 415/6) and a second sanctuary near the stairs leading to the Piazza del Campidoglio represented by the second tauroctony relief (CIMRM 417). Coarelli added to this Mithraic group a relief of the torchbearer, Cautes (CIMRM 413b), found at the foot of the opposite side of the Capitoline hill in the forum of Caesar (see discussion of 28R below). Because this monument was discovered in an entirely different provenance, it definitely cannot be associated with this possible mithraeum.

---

180 Visconti, *BCH* (1872-73a) 111-122. Lanciani, *BCH* (1873) 146-47, commented that it was difficult to identify the mithraeum because of the number of small caves in the side of the Capitoline.

181 Colini, *BCH* 1938 [1939], 258-59.

182 Vermaseren, 1956 and 1951, 38-41.
Taken as a whole these monuments indicate the possible existence of a mithraeum. The accounts of Smetius and Vacca seem to describe a natural cave sanctuary. The recovery of two monuments from the same vicinity greatly strengthens the possible existence of a cave sanctuary, but without architectural remains to provide a context, it is impossible to identify a definite mithraeum.
25R: Sta. MARIA IN MONTICELLI

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coarelli</th>
<th>CIMRM</th>
<th>TMM</th>
<th>CIL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MITHRAEUM</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed altar</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6.743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed altar</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>48bis</td>
<td>6.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed altar</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 517: A dedication to Deus Invictus Mithras made by C. Lucretius Mnester, M. Aemilius Phileus and their master, M. Aemilius Chrysanthus.

CIMRM 518: A dedication to an unidentified deity made by a slave, Fructus of Pontus, and his son, Myron, under their master M. Aemilius Chrysanthus.

CIMRM 519: A dedication to Sol Invictus by M. Aemilius Chrysanthus and M. Limbricius Polides.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Coarelli deserves credit for linking these three marble altars dedicated by M. Aemilius Chrysanthus and his freedmen and slaves. However, the monuments do not indicate the existence of a mithraeum since no architectural remains for a mithraeum were recovered, and the dedications do not mention a cave or other structure.183

183 Coarelli, 1979, 73-74. According to CIL, only CIMRM 517 and 518 came from the same provenance, the church of Sta. Maria in Monticelli. Coarelli identified the former Piazza Branca as the new Piazza Cairoli, close to the church of Sta. Maria in Monticelli, and thus proved that the provenance of CIMRM 517-18 was almost the same as 519.
SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Mithras is mentioned only in CIMRM 517 (with the epithet "Deus Invictus"), while CIMRM 519 is dedicated to Sol Invictus, and the deity in CIMRM 518 is unidentified. It is significant that the two inscriptions which mention a deity were found together because they do not seem to be dedicated to the same deity. At issue is whether Deus Invictus Mithras and Sol Invictus are to be understood as the same deity with two different names, as two interchangeable deities, or as two entirely separate deities. It is more plausible that Mithras and Sol Invictus were two separate deities worshipped in the same location. It seems less reasonable to assume that Mithras and Sol Invictus were interchangeable deities, that is to say that a dedication which mentioned only one of the two automatically referred to the other, or that any deity with the epithet "Invictus" actually refers to Mithras. This issue of the different epithets of Mithras will be examined in Chapter Four. In the present example there is no specific reason to assume that Deus Invictus Mithras and Sol Invictus are the same deity, despite the shared provenance. It is more likely that these monuments represent two dedications made to different deities by the same group of dedicators.
The exact provenance of this monument is so uncertain that it should not be taken to represent the location of a mithraeum. Moreover, the monument does not represent any typical Mithraic scenes or figures. It is a high marble relief of two figures standing side by side. The male figure on the left is in a frontal pose with his arms held stiffly at his sides. He wears an Egyptian kilt and holds an ankh symbol in his left hand. The female figure on the right wears a long garment which hangs only from her right shoulder. Her right arm is bent so that her hand rests by her shoulder, and Vermaseren has proposed that she was holding a sistrum (rattle). Her left arm is lost but probably hung down by her side. Coarelli suggested that this is not a Mithraic monument, but he still concluded that it possibly implied the existence of a mithraeum.

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184 According to Vermaseren, 1956, 178, this monument was "probably found in Rome during the construction of the Palazzo Primoli."
27R: PALAZZO MONTECITORIO

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<th>Coarelli</th>
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<tr>
<td>MITHRAEUM</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tauroctony relief</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This tauroctony relief was found in 1907 under the Palazzo Montecitorio. It was not found in situ and cannot be associated with any architectural remains of a mithraeum. As with all other single monuments with no known context, it cannot indicate the existence of a mithraeum.
THE PALATINE HILL, FORUM ROMANUM, AND THE IMPERIAL FORA:

28R: VIA SACRA

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<tr>
<td>MITHRAEUM</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed base</td>
<td>413a</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS:

CIMRM 413a: The dedication of a base to Deus Invictus Mithras by Ulpius Paulus with L. Iustinus Augurius, a pater, and Melitus.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

No architectural remains have been recovered for this mithraeum. The evidence consists only of two monuments found in different locations. The first is an inscribed base reportedly found on the Via Sacra in front of the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine in the Roman Forum.\textsuperscript{135}

Vermaseren loosely associated this base with a fragment of a relief of Cautes (CIMRM 413b) found in the Forum of Caesar more than 200 meters away.\textsuperscript{136} The provenances of both monuments are uncertain and it is likely that neither monument was found \textit{in situ}. The evidence does not warrant

\textsuperscript{135} Vermaseren, 1956, no.413a. The inscription was originally published in AE 6 (1903).

\textsuperscript{136} Vermaseren, 1951, 43-44. Coarelli grouped this monument with others found on the Capitoline hill (see above).
the conclusion that there was a mithraeum in the Roman Forum.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

It is significant that no architectural or epigraphical evidence supports the presence of a mithraeum in the Roman Forum. The Forum was the center of political life and, in certain respects, of religious life in Rome. The temples of some of the oldest and most venerated traditional Roman deities were there. According to modern understanding of the identity of the various temples, those to foreign deities seem to have been excluded from the Forum in all periods of Roman history.
29R: FORUM OF NERVA

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<tr>
<td>MITHRAEUM</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>inscribed relief of Sol</td>
<td>411/12</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 412: A dedication to Deus Sol Invictus

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This monument was recovered from the forum of Nerva, but it was almost certainly not found in situ. The monument represents Sol in relief, and although part of the dedicatory inscription is poorly understood, the dedicatee is clearly Deus Sol Invictus.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Paribeni published a brief announcement about this monument which included a description of the relief of Sol and commentary on the inscription which reads: 188

(s)i)mulacrum restitutum deo Soli Invicto
(s)acratis speleus patetap

187 Vermaeren (1956, no.411/2) reported that it was found in the Forum of Nerva. It is now in the Capitoline Museum.

188 Paribeni, NS (1933) 478-80, but also see Pietrangeli, 1951, 13-14, n.13.
He suggested several emendations, but none of them renders an intelligible translation. He offered two options:

(This) image restored
to Deus Sol Invictus
the most sacred
the cave lies open

OR

(This) image restored
to Deus Sol Invictus
The cave lies open to the initiated

Paribeni dated the inscription to the late 4th century on the basis of the style of the characters, and he also suggested that the phrase "restored monument" indicates that the monument and the cave were restored following Gracchus' "persecutions" of 377 (see discussion of 22D above).

This monument is difficult to interpret. It represents and is dedicated to Sol Invictus, and although Mithras is not mentioned specifically, his sanctuary is referred to by the word "cave" (speleum). The question is not whether this monument is Mithraic, but whether the reference to the cave should be interpreted as representing the existence of a mithraeum. Because this dedication cannot be associated with any architectural remains of a sanctuary and because the inscription is incompletely understood, it should

189 Paribeni, NS (1933) 480, suggested that "sacratissi" might be an abbreviated form of "sacratissimo" and thus should be taken with "deo Soli Invicto", that "speleus" might be "speleis" and thus should be taken with "sacrasis", that "pater ap" could either be "pater et apparatores" or that it could be taken as "pater."

190 Jerome, Ep. 107.2.

191 Vermaseren, 1951, 44, agreed.
probably not be taken to indicate a mithraeum under the criteria of this investigation.
30R: PALATINE SLOPE

REJECTED MITRAEUM

CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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<td>MITHRAEUM</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautes and Cautopates</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This pair of figures, the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates, was found on the slopes of the Palatine, but not in situ. Since there were no associated architectural remains, the figure pair cannot indicate the existence of a mithraeum.
**31D: FORUM BOARIUM**

**DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (possibly late 3rd or early 4th century)**

**CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES**

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<td>31</td>
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<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tauroctony relief</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautes relief fragment</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snake figurine fragment</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilaster with head of Sol</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva statuette fragment</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one and possibly two Venus statuette bases</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>headless male bust</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>small finds: terracotta, bone, bronze, coins, glass</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>lamp with Victory relief</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>dolium fragment with relief of a flute-playing youth</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamp fragments with Luna</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamp with a ram</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>inscribed stele</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>inscribed stele</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>inscribed stele fragment</td>
<td>451</td>
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<tr>
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<td>452</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed stele fragment</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>graffito</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>inscribed stele fragment</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS**

CIMRM 436: The dedication of a tauroctony relief to Deus Sol Invictus Mithras by Ti. Claudius Hermes.

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192 The texts appear as published by Pietrangeli, BCR 68 (1940) 169-71 with suggested emendations by Vermaseren (1956, 188) where noted. Recent studies include Guarducci, 1979, 171-86 (the graffito); and Solin, 1979, 126-31.
CIMRM 449: A dedication of a shrine to Sol Invictus Mithras by P. Aelius Urbanus (or Urbicus) under the priest Aulus Sergius Eutychus.

CIMRM 450: A dedication to Deus Invictus by L. Reminius Fortunatus.

CIMRM 451: A fragmentary dedication in which only Cossius [A]ltianus, pater, can be recognized.\(^{193}\)

CIMRM 452: A dedication too fragmentary to read.

CIMRM 453: A dedication too fragmentary to read but in which the words "Pontifex Maximus" can be deciphered.

CIMRM 454: A dedication too fragmentary to read.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Pietrangeli and Colini discovered this mithraeum in a multi-phase public building near the starting gates of the Circus Maximus (see figs.17-19a-b).\(^{194}\) The mithraeum, part of the latest phase of the building, was built into a series of communicating rooms which were partially blocked off to create a long, narrow space for the sanctuary. The long axis of the mithraeum cut across the short axes of these rectangular rooms (see figs.20–21). The extensive remodelling of these rooms provided a slightly wider space than most other mithraea had. It is possible that the initiates seated themselves according to their grades in the compartmentalized space created by the rooms used for the mithraeum.\(^{195}\)

\(^{193}\) Vermaseren, 1956, 186, suggested this emendation.

\(^{194}\) The primary excavation publication for this mithraeum is Pietrangeli, RHR 68 (1940). Colini, RHR 59 (1931) published the tauroctony relief in more detail. Brief announcements of the excavations are in AA (1932) 484; RHR 61 (1933) 279; and FH (1941) 517–22.

\(^{195}\) This compartmentalization is not as common in Rome as it is at Ostia. There several mithraea, including the mithraeum of the Footprint, the mithraeum of the Animals, and those
This building had three phases. The earliest, Republican remains include a drain encased in terracotta, 14 m. below the modern street level. Fragmentary vases with dipinti representing "H" (Hercules) or "IV" (Invictus) on the bottom of the inside were also recovered from the Republican level.\footnote{Pietrangeli, RCR 68 (1940) 144.} During the 2nd century CE a brick building with cement-block foundations was erected on the site. This structure was modified with a 4th-century wall of red and yellow brick.\footnote{Pietrangeli, RCR 68 (1940) 147.} The walls added to create the mithraeum date to the second half of the 3rd century.

The mithraeum was constructed from four barrel-vaulted rooms (see A–N in fig.21). A small entrance (C in fig.21) with a herring-bone brick floor led to the main sanctuary. The nave of the mithraeum was divided into three parts. The first two rooms had a simple floor of bipedales. The third, inner chamber contained the main altar and cult niche and had a polychrome opus sectile mosaic floor (see L and M in fig.21). Niches for statuary were added to the dividing walls (see c', c", d' and d" in fig.21) and a basin (d in fig.21) for water was placed in the passage between G–H and L–M. Podia with marble revetment were also installed on both sides but survive only in rooms L, M and G. The walls were

in the House of Diana, the house of Lucretius Menander, the Baths of Mithras, the house of the painted walls, and in the Sabaeum have compartmentalized spaces.
stuccoed, and faint traces of a zodiac are visible on the wall above the podium in room L.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

Several names appear in the eight inscriptions recovered from this mithraeum: Tiberius Claudius Hermes, Publius Aelius Urbanus (or Urbicus), Aulus Sergius Uticus, Lucius Reminius Fortunatus and Cossius Atillianus. The names are combinations of both Roman and foreign elements, and all are non-aristocratic. They indicate that the mithraeum was generally used by freedmen and/or other non-aristocratic initiates. None of the individuals can be identified as the owner or builder of the mithraeum, although Cossius Atillianus calls himself *pater*. These men perhaps rented the space for their mithraeum. The quality of the materials used in the mithraeum (especially polychrome marble), the amount of sculpture, and the number of inscriptions all indicate that at least one of the members of this congregation was reasonably well off, or that the mithraeum had at least one wealthy patron.\(^\text{198}\)

This mithraeum is similar to those in the baths of Titus (6D) and Caracalla (34D) because it is located within a public building. Unlike those mithraea, however, the paucity of information about this building makes it difficult to ascertain whether the sanctuary lacked privacy. What is known about the structure of the building suggests

\(^{198}\) Verwaseren, 1951, 45-47.
that the mithraeum lay below a flight of stairs and had close, confined surroundings on the ground floor or below ground level. Thus it might have enjoyed a certain degree of isolation. The possibility that the mithraeum was secluded suggests that this congregation had a distinct membership which knew when "services" occurred. The situation of this mithraeum with its stable, discrete congregation which rented the space for its sanctuary might differ from that in the mithraea in the Baths of Titus (6D) and in the Baths of Caracalla (34D). Evidence indicates that these mithraea might have had larger, or even unlimited, congregations whose attendance was less predictable, as will be discussed below.

The Venus statuette bases and Minerva statuette fragment are surprising finds in the sanctuary of a cult which excluded women as initiates, and their presence deserves consideration here. Only two other sanctuaries have produced representations of Venus; a slightly under lifesize statue of Venus Anadyomene was recovered from one of the side chambers of the mithraeum of the Baths of Caracalla (34D),\(^{199}\) and a figurine of Venus was also recovered from the mithraeum under Sta. Prisca (32D).\(^ {200}\) A head of Isis was recovered from the ante-chamber of the mithraeum in the Castra Peregrinorum (1D).

\(^{199}\) CIVITAT 460.

\(^{200}\) CIVITAT 488.
The place which female deities held in Mithraic worship generally deserves more study. It has been suggested that Venus was associated with the Mithraic grade *nymphus* (male-bride).\textsuperscript{201} This explanation is unsatisfying, however, because none of the other Mithraic grades was ever represented by free-standing sculpture in mithraea, although they, and their planetary equivalents, were often represented in tauroctony reliefs, paintings, and mosaics. Moreover, this explanation does not account for the presence of Minerva and Isis. The problematic presence of these female deities in mithraea is complicated by the lack of inscriptions which clearly mention them together with Mithras. On the whole joint dedications to a deity like Mithras, worshipped exclusively by males, and a another female deity seem highly unlikely. But the lack of such dedications, even though it might be caused by a bias in the archaeological record, certainly suggests that although these deities were represented in certain mithraea, none was so central to the sanctuary that she received inscribed dedications.

It is perhaps more helpful to examine dedications to female deities within the broader spectrum of the dedications to or representations of other male deities recovered from several mithraea in Rome, most notably from those in the *Castra Peregrinorum* (1D), under Via Giovanni Lanza (7D), under Sta. Prisca (33D), and in the Baths of

\textsuperscript{201} Gordon, 1980, 48, points out that the word *nymphus* does not exist in the masculine gender in Latin or Greek, and seems to have been coined for the Mithraic mysteries.
Caracalla (34D). Such dedications had counterparts in the form of Mithraic monuments recovered from the sanctuaries of other deities, particularly Jupiter Dolichenus (33D) and Magna Mater (38P). Finally, it must also be noted that part of the problem in distinguishing possible mithraea from definite sanctuaries revolves around the problem of distinguishing Mithras from other deities such as Sol Invictus and Aion (see the possible mithraea and certain monuments in definite mithraea 2D, 14D, 15-17P, 25R, and 35P). Thus the presence of female deities in Mithraic sanctuaries can probably accounted for in the same way as is the presence of male deities. Mithraists were polytheistic, and more importantly, non-exclusive. While Venus, Minerva, and Isis may all have domains which vaguely overlap that of Mithras’, it is more likely that their presence in mithraea results from the complex religious needs of Mithraists who were willing and able to make dedications to these deities in mithraea.

Other important issues pertaining to this mithraeum warrant close attention in the context of other mithraea and the topography of the city. These topics, which will be addressed in chapters Three and Four, include the late-3rd century date of the mithraeum and its proximity to the Circus Maximus, the Forum Boarium, and especially several shrines and temples of Hercules.
## Catalogue of Cross-References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Coarelli</th>
<th>CIMRM</th>
<th>TMMM</th>
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<tr>
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<td>476</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statue of Cautes</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cult niche statues:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caelus-Oceanus</td>
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<td>Mithras</td>
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<td>north wall</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: See below.  

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This mithraeum was discovered in a domus under the church of Sta. Prisca on the Aventine hill in 1935, and it was partially excavated by Antonio Ferrua at that time. His publication of the site included a detailed discussion of the dimensions, materials, and phases of the construction of the walls of the mithraeum, and also of its wall paintings and contents.  

Vermaseren and Van Essen carried out further excavations from 1947 until 1959. Their lengthy publication has become the definitive work about the site. This mithraeum is exceptional because it is part of a group of rooms which may have contained more than one sanctuary, and because it contains not one but two layers of paintings which are useful for dating the phases of the mithraeum and which also document part of the Mithraic liturgy.

The structures which originally occupied the site of the mithraeum were destroyed by the fire in 64 CE. A house dated to ca.95 by brickstamps was built under what is now the northern half of Sta. Prisca (see fig.22).

202 Special discussions of the graffiti and other inscriptions were recently published: Guarducci, 1979b; and 1979d; and Paparatti, 1979b.

203 Ferrua, BCT 68 (1940). Announcements also appeared in Cumont, CPAI (1945); Merlin, RA 17 (1941); and in AA 55 (1940).

204 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965.

205 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 109, report that Herbert Bloch identified the brickstamps as Domitianic for the earliest phase of House I and Trajanic for the additions to House I and the construction of House II. Bloch has identified numerous brickstamps from the works of Avita which are otherwise rare in Rome (Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 109-10, n.3). He suggests
later a second house was built immediately east of the first (see fig. 22). During the Severan period a wall was built across the north side of both houses (see wall H, fig. 22), and communicating doors were added. According to the stylistic dating of the lower layer of its paintings, the mithraeum was built into rooms of the second house soon after the addition of this wall (ca. 195) (see room W, fig. 23).

The mithraeum was located in room W (see fig. 23). The sanctuary also included the side chambers X and Y, a smaller sanctuary Z, and the ante-chamber V (see fig. 23). Statues of Cautes and Cautopates flanked the entrance of the mithraeum. Only Cautes, a nude of Mercury recut to show eastern clothing, survived in situ (see fig. 24, at right). During the first phase the mithraeum had stuccoed podia, stuccoed and painted walls, and a painted and gilded stucco relief of the tauroctony above a reclining Caelus-Oceanus in the cult niche (see fig. 25). In the second phase the podia were raised up and revetted in marble, and the walls were repainted.

that Trajan acquired the "Quint." of Avita and left them to Plotina. On the basis of this evidence, Bloch suggested that the houses might have belonged to Trajan.

206 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 112-13 and 173-78. For dating the lower layer of paintings, Vermaseren and Van Essen compared the letter style in the painted inscriptions to that in Severan stone inscriptions and arrived at a date of 190-200. The paintings are comparable, they say, with those in phase III of the Baths of the Seven Sages in Ostia and with phase IV of the Baths of the Pharaoh in Ostia (190-205 CE). They dated the upper layer of the Sta. Prisca paintings to 220-230 CE by comparing details of the figures there with those in sculptural portraits of the Severan emperors (Elagabalus to Severus Alexander), with Severan mosaics and with other paintings from the period (notably in the tombs of Priscilla).
Each painting on the south wall depicts processions of initiates of each of the seven Mithraic grades. They are leading a pig, a bull, a ram, and a cock (in the upper layer only). Painted inscriptions above each figure identify their grades. The layers on the north wall depict Mithras and Sol at a banquet in a grotto. They are approached by a procession of leones, and each initiate is identified by a painted inscription. The names on the upper layer are Greek: Foebus, Gelasius, Heliodorus, Niceforus, Phoebus, and Theodorus. The names of the lower layer are all Latin: Florentius, Ianuarius, Salutius, Saturnius, Steturstadius, and Tinetlius (the last two are unparalleled). Vermaseren and Van Essen have suggested, plausibly, that the initiates adopted special names for the cult.

The least understood aspect of the paintings is a long inscription on the lower layer of paintings of the south wall. The lines are grouped and appear to be part of a poem, but they are now in such poor condition that transcription is extremely difficult and rendering an intelligible translation is impossible. Vermaseren and Van Essen attempted to reconstruct the lines but met with only partial success. Their efforts included a diligent search of ancient literature for parallel concepts, images, and words.

207 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 179-240.
208 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 184-85. They compare this practice of adopting names to a similar practice in the cult of Cybele.
Although they discovered that certain phrases and words in this inscription appeared frequently in Graeco-Roman literature or expressed ideas common to Roman religion, the two scholars were unable to render a comprehensible translation.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

Vermaseren and Van Essen interpreted this mithraeum as an important center for the Mithraic cult in Rome. They also argued that certain features of this mithraeum indicated not only a general and perhaps even official acceptance of Mithraism in Rome, but an actual integration of this cult into Roman religion. The evidence does not warrant these extreme conclusions, but it does deserve careful examination.

Vermaseren’s and Van Essen’s interpretation of the mithraeum as a center rested on the size of the sanctuary, the quality of its furnishings, and the presence and content of the paintings. However, other sanctuaries in Rome also had these attributes. Several mithraea, including those under S. Clemente (5D) and the Baths of Caracalla (34D), were composed of several rooms. Paintings were discovered in the mithraea in the Baths of Titus (6D), in the Baths of Caracalla (34D), and under S. Clemente (5D), and also in the Barberini mithraeum (12D). The podia in the mithraea near the Forum Boarium (31D) and in the Baths of Caracalla (34D) were also revetted in marble, and several mithraea had mosaic floors.
Vernaseren and Van Essen claimed that Mithraism was generally accepted in Rome on the basis of elements in the mithraeum at Sta. Prisca, its furnishings, and the paintings that reflected a connection with officially accepted Roman religions and with Graeco-Roman literature. They cited the depiction of a *suovetaurilia* (the sacrifice of a pig, a bull, and a ram) in the painting on the south wall, and the literary and iconic graphic concepts from Graeco-Roman literature and religion in the long painted inscription. Their interpretation of the sacrificial procession does not account for the presence of a cock in the *suovetaurilia*. Because the long inscription is fragmentary and, for the most part, untranslatable, the elements it shares with Graeco-Roman literature or religious imagery do not have a complete context and cannot be interpreted adequately.

Whether the finds from the mithraeum provide evidence for the general acceptance of the cult is debatable. Like the sculptural finds from other mithraeum, those from the mithraeum at Sta. Prisca represent several other deities. Caelus-Oceanus appears in relief beneath the traditional tauroctony in the cult niche, while a head of Serapis was recovered nearby. Fragments of Venus (or perhaps Isis), an almost unparalleled example of a three-bodied Hecate,
fragments of a snake-footed giant statue, and fragments of a statue of Fortuna were recovered from elsewhere in the mithraeum. The presence of these deities does not indicate the general acceptance of Mithraism by other cults, as Vermaseren and Van Essen argue, but the acceptance of other deities by Mithraists (see discussion of 31D, the Forum Boarium mithraeum, above).

Finally, Vermaseren and Van Essen argued that this mithraeum was built and used by imperial freedmen. According to their interpretation, the two houses into which the mithraeum was eventually built originally belonged to Trajan and were part of the so-called Privata Traiani (the private properties of Trajan). Vermaseren and Van Essen assumed that this land became part of the imperial treasury (fiscus) upon the accession of Trajan, and that it remained so when the mithraeum was built. Since the emperors lived on the Palatine hill, Vermaseren and Van Essen proposed that they allowed their freedmen use of this property on the Aventine hill, and they argued further that imperial ownership of the land, the houses, and by extension, the mithraeum demonstrated official acceptance of the cult.213 Their interpretation is based on the disputed evidence that Trajan actually owned this land and that it became part of the fiscus, and it will receive more attention in the topographical discussion in Chapter Three.

213 Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 184.
This mithraeum is undeniably well-appointed, but the identity and social status of the owner and the members of the congregation are unknown. The evidence does not demonstrate that the size, location, and quality of this mithraeum have any implications for its relative importance in the city of Rome. Finally, the content of the painted inscription, the representation of a *suovetaurilia* on the south wall, and representations of other deities do not warrant the interpretation that Mithraism was a generally accepted and officially recognized Roman religion.
33D: THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER DOLICHENUS

DEFINITE SITE OF MITRAIC WORSHIP (date unknown)

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 470: A dedication to Deus Sol Invictus (and possibly Mithras).

CIMRM 471: A the dedication of an altar (and statue) to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Eternal Dolichenus and Sol by C. Fab(ianus?) Germanus, a priest, on behalf of Marcus Aurelius Andronicus, his wife Tarquilia Marcella, and his daughter.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The temple of Jupiter Dolichenus does not indicate the presence of a mithraeum, but it does represent a site of Mithraic worship. This sanctuary is one of the most interesting in Rome because of the variety of divinities which appear to have been worshipped in the same place. When it was excavated in 1935, this sanctuary on the Aventine hill was identified as a Dolichenum because the dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus outnumbered those to other deities.214

214 Merlin, 1907, 317-19, summarized the details about the excavation of this building. Its discovery settled a lengthy debate regarding the mention and meaning of "Doliolum" in the Notitia and of "Dolicenum" in the Curiosus.
The sanctuary, almost twice as long as it is wide (22.6 m. X 12 m.), has the canonical shape of a mithraeum, but it is roughly twice as large (see the reconstruction, fig. 26). The north wall and parts of the east and west (short) walls were found in the excavations of 1936. The earlier excavation of the south wall has not been reported. The main room had a black and white mosaic pavement which stopped 1.5 m. from each of the long walls, probably for podia (compare mithraeum 13D in the domus of the Nummii Albini for a similar occurrence). A vestibule leading into the main room had a large niche with marble and mosaic revetment. There were three more niches above it, and a bench below. Beyond the main room was a third room, measuring approximately 6 m. on each side. It was paved in plain bricks and contained a collapsed Corinthian column.

Over fifty objects were recovered from the Dolichenenum including altars, statues, and inscriptions. The statues represented Hercules, Omphalus, Silvanus, Artemis and Iphigenia, Apollo, a genius, Venus, Hermes, Dionysus and Ariadne, Juno Regina, herms of Bacchantes, and several male and female portrait heads. Three statues and seven reliefs represented Jupiter Dolichenus, and almost all of the altars and inscriptions were dedicated to him. Among the large group of dedications were two fragmentary reliefs of Mithraic tauroctonies. 215

Antonio Colini, the excavator, dated the Dolichenenum to the latter half of the 2nd or the first half of the 3rd century on the basis of the inscriptions, statuary, architecture, and coins. The datable inscriptions and statuary included two altars from 150; a fragmentary dedication with the name of Antoninus Pius (138-61); a relief of Jupiter Dolichenus dated to 1 March 183; and a relief with Juno and other pieces, including a group with Artemis and Iphigenia, datable to the late 2nd and early 3rd century. Of thirty-five datable brickstamps, six from the walls indicate an Antonine date (138-61) and the other twenty-nine postdate the year 159. Colini argued that the dates from brickstamps were contemporary with the style of wall construction in opus reticulatum and opus latericium. He used the beginning of Antoninus Pius' reign (138) as a terminus post quem for the sanctuary. Colini also identified a later 3rd-century phase in the building on the basis of a coin of Gordian (238-44), a fragment of fallen wall, an inscription which might mention Gallienus, and possible restorations to the altar made under Julian (361-63).

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Colini dismissed the possibility of a close connection between the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus and that of Mithras. He argued that this appearance of both deities in the same sanctuary was unparalleled and interpreted this exceptional

example as reinforcing the perception of Mithraism as a strict and rigid cult.\textsuperscript{217} However, it may be that the significance of the Dolichenenum lies in its uniqueness. The structure of this Dolichenenum is identical to that of a mithraeum, and without the dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus, the sanctuary would have been mistaken as a mithraeum. The presence of Mithraic monuments and representations of several other deities suggests that the worshippers of Jupiter Dolichenus were not exclusive, and neither were the initiates of the other cults who made dedications in this sanctuary.

It is worth noting about shared space that it seems to have occurred more often in the sanctuaries of the non-traditional, or imported, cults. This investigation has examined several mithraea (see discussion in 31D above) and now a temple to Jupiter Dolichenus which clearly showed that certain foreign cults were not exclusive to other deities. This feature is also found in the Phrygianum in the Ager Vaticanus discussed below (38P). Why these cults shared space is not definitely known. It may reflect contemporary religious trends, or it may indicate the necessity for cohesiveness and safety in numbers during the later empire (see discussion in Chapter Four below). What is certain is

\textsuperscript{217} Colini, 1935, 156. Vermaseren, 1951, 52, held the opposite view and argued the dedications in the Dolichenenum illustrated the connection between Mithras and other oriental deities. He also noted that many of the deities represented in the Dolichenenum are also represented in other mithraea.
were receptive to a variety of dedications including those to traditional Roman deities, for example Venus and Minerva, no archaeological evidence yet indicates that the temples of traditional Roman deities reciprocated this favor.

Coarelli identified the Dolichenum as a mithraeum solely because of its architecture and the presence of two Mithraic reliefs, but the evidence indicates a non-Mithraic sanctuary where the worship of Mithras was permitted. The architectural similarities between this sanctuary and other mithraea certainly suggest a sanctuary shared equally by Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras, but the number of dedications to each deity make that possibility unlikely. The number of representations and dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus greatly exceeds those for the other deities, particularly those for Mithras, indicating that Jupiter Dolichenus must have been the main deity here.

218 Coarelli, 1979, 75.
THE AVENTINE HILL: THE EASTERN AVENTINE HILL AND THE BATHS OF CARACALLA

34D: BATHS OF CARACALLA

DEFINITE MITHRAEUM (early 3rd century or later)

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 463 (in Greek): A double-sided dedication to Zeus Helios Mithras and to Zeus Helios Serapis Mithras.

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This room in the subterranean structures of the Baths of Caracalla is definitely a mithraeum.219 This mithraeum is the largest in Rome (23 m. X 9.7 m.) (see fig.27). The two podiums, which run almost the entire length of the room, are still preserved, but the cult niche is no longer extant. There are two "basins" set into the floor. One is round (ca.11 cm. deep and 93 cm. in diameter) and lies directly in front of the entrance (see fig.28a, 1). The other is a rectangular pit in the center of the mithraeum (1.9 m. deep)

219 The primary excavation publication for this mithraeum is Ghislanti, HS (1912) 317-25. Brief discussions also appear Gotti, BCR 11 (1912) 156-59; AIA 17 (1913) 113 and 18 (1914) 101; and Constans, HS (1915) 85-86.
which can be entered through a tunnel from a room beside the
mithraeum (fig. 28a, 2 and n). The mithraeum is actually one
room in a complex (fig. 28a and b). Two ante-chambers lead
into the mithraeum, and the sanctuary is flanked by, but not
directly accessible to, two side chambers (fig. 28a). There
is access between the mithraeum and a small room off the end
of the left podium, directly beside the entrance (see
fig. 28a, 0). The mithraeum has stuccoed brick walls, one of
which has a small painting of Mithras (fig. 28a, 9 and
fig. 29).

Dating the mithraeum is problematic. The sanctuary
could have been installed at any time after the completion
of the baths in 216. Lugli dated the mithraeum to 275, when
Aurelian made some repairs to the baths after a fire in the
portico.\textsuperscript{220} No evidence for a certain date exists, although
it is probable that the mithraeum dates to the 3rd century,
either early, when the baths were built, or late, as Lugli
has suggested.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The rectangular pit has inspired considerable
speculation about the performance of the rite of the
taurobolium in this mithraeum. This rite, and that of the
criobolium, involved the slaughter of a bull or a ram on a
grate over a man or woman crouching in a pit. The ensuing
blood flowed down onto them. In a recent study of the

\textsuperscript{220} Lugli, 1940, 159-61.
inscriptions commemorating the celebration of this rite, Robert Duthoy has demonstrated convincingly that in their original form the taurobolium and criobolium were merely traditional animal sacrifices, and that the aspect of the bloodbath developed only late in the history of the sacrifice.221 In his epigraphic investigation Duthoy also traced the deities for which these rites were performed. He firmly concluded that the sacrifice was performed primarily for Cybele and Attis and not at all for Mithras.222 Dario Cosi has further argued that the association between Mithras and the taurobolium stems from confusion between the terms "taurobolium" and "tauroctony". Both words signify the sacrifice of a bull, but only the term tauroctony applies to Mithraism.223 Cosi's suggestion is compelling and complements Duthoy's epigraphical study well.

The strongest argument against the performance of the taurobolium, or even a tauroctony, in mithraea is that these sanctuaries were too small. Duthoy's analysis has generally

221 Duthoy, 1969, traced the usage of certain verbs, and he identified three chronologically distinct categories. The first (160-313 CE) involves verbs of making and doing such as "facere" (to make) or "celebreatr" (to celebrate); the second (mid-3rd century) involves verbs of receiving or undertaking such as "suscipere" (to receive), "suscipere" (to undertake or receive) or "trader" (to hand over); and the third (4th century) involves verbs of undergoing such as "perciere" (to seize or take wholly). Duthoy, 1969, 1-3, has also argued that Prudentius and other 4th-century authors who give a lurid description of the rite are unreliable and have attracted too much scholarly attention.

222 Duthoy, 1969, 64-66. Cumont, 1899, 334, also agreed with this interpretation. Nock, 1925, 88-89, cited this mithraeum in a discussion concerning Mithraism's tendency not to be exclusive. He argued that the "taurobolium pit" proved that the cult was "closely associated" with the cult of Cybele. Verheesen, 1951, 82, followed Nock's interpretation.

223 Cosi, 1979, 934.
been accepted, but the mithraeum in Baths of Caracalla is regarded as being exceptional because it, unlike the other mithraea in Rome, is accessed by passages large enough to allow a bull inside. Although small, the pit is technically big enough for one person to undergo the rite. Cosi offered a practical argument against the performance of the bloody 4th-century version of the rite by pointing out that the pit has no drain for the fifty liters of blood in a bull.\textsuperscript{224} Taken together, Duthoy’s and Cosi’s analyses indicate definitively that the taurobolium, as a bloodbath, did not occur in the pit in the Baths of Caracalla.

It can be argued, even while agreeing with Duthoy and Cosi that Mithraists did not practice the taurobolium, that this pit is evidence for the worship of Cybele in this sanctuary. Other artifacts further support this view that the Mithraists in this congregation were not exclusive. One is a double-sided Greek inscription found in the ante-chamber leading to the mithraeum (see fig.30). It is a dedication to Zeus-Helios-Mithras (where Mithras has been recarved over Serapis) on one side, and to the great Zeus-Helios-Serapis on the other side.\textsuperscript{225} As with multiple dedications discussed in the context of other mithraea, this dedication does not constitute evidence for equating Mithras with Zeus or Helios. However, it can be (tentatively) viewed

\textsuperscript{224} Cosi, 1979, 938.

\textsuperscript{225} See Cumont, 1919, 313-28 for a discussion.
as evidence for multiple initiation in cults and the sharing of cult space by several cults. Nock argued that the inscription does not indicate an association with Serapis, but rather a degree of resentment towards Egyptian gods after the death of Caracalla (who was especially devoted to Egyptian religion).\textsuperscript{225} Nock's argument does not address why Serapis' name was erased only on one side of the inscription and not the other. Finally, a headless statue of Venus Anadyomene found in the small chamber beside the ante-chamber is also worth noting. The common recovery of statues of Venus (and Isis) from other mithraea has been discussed above (see 31D).\textsuperscript{227}

Whether Cybele, Serapis, and Venus were formally worshipped in this or any other sanctuary is unknown. The mere allusion to other deities and the possible presence of their rites and dedications to them is enough to substantiate the non-exclusivity of the Mithraists in this congregation. The issue of who actually used this mithraeum will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{226} Nock, 1925, 89.

\textsuperscript{227} Twenty-two Venus figurines have been recovered from mithraea around the empire. Twelve are from Ostia and four are from Rome.
POSSIBLE MITRAEUM

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<td>475</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: see below

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The existence of this possible mithraeum is based on a group of three Greek inscriptions found in 1931 near the remains of the Arco di S. Lazzaro at the southwestern foot of the Aventine hill along the modern Via Marmorata. No architectural remains have ever been recovered, but since the inscriptions were found together and were in relatively good condition, scholars have argued that a sanctuary, perhaps a natural or man-made grotto in the slope of the hill, was nearby.\textsuperscript{228}

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The topographical context of the inscriptions has been used to prove the existence of a mithraeum. If the mithraeum was actually near the location of the inscriptions, it would have overlooked the Porticus Aemilia, the Horrea Galbana and

\textsuperscript{228} Consult the original excavation report in Patriarca, ECR 60 (1932) 239. A short announcement of the excavation also appeared in CRAI (1933) 469-70, and see also Cunont, 1934, 63-72.
several emporia along the Tiber. Goffredo Patriarca argued that the steep declivity of the hill offered a good location for a natural or intentionally excavated grotto. Patriarca essentially suggested that the situation of this mithraeum was similar to that of the possible mithraeum on the slopes of the Capitoline hill (see 24P above), but there are no architectural or other remains to support this conclusion. Vermaseren argued that foreign traders were linked to Mithraism in Rome, and he suggested that the location of the three inscriptions near the ports provided enough evidence for the existence of a mithraeum. This circular argument uses a theory about the relationship between traders and Mithraism to support the existence of a mithraeum near the emporia. Both arguments assume that the provenance of these inscriptions indicates the location of the mithraeum. The inscriptions might have been reused in a nearby structure, or they might have fallen down the hill from a building at the top. There is no way to determine whether they were discovered in situ.

The content of the inscriptions provides the strongest evidence for the existence of a mithraeum. The longest of the inscriptions (CIMRM 473) records the dedication of two bronze lamps to the unconquered Zeus Helios Mithras and to the gods dwelling with him by the longest list of

229 Patriarca, BSR 60 (1932) 239.

230 Vermaseren, 1951, 51-56 and 1956, 192.
individuals in a Mithraic inscription in Rome. The
dedicators are Kastos, a pater, his son Kastos, a corax (the
grade of "raven"), and also the patres Lucius Satrius Sporus
and Paktumeius Lausus, and the leones (the grade of "lion")
Modestus, Paralius, Agathemerus, Felix, Apameius, and
Keloides. These names, most of them Greek, undoubtedly
belonged to freedmen and foreigners who made up part of a
Mithraic congregation. The two men named Kastos also
dedicated another inscription (CIHRN 474) to Zeus Helios
Mithras. The third inscription (CIMRM 475), was dedicated to
Zeus Helios Mithras Phanetos by a Venustus.

It is more than coincidence that two of three
dedications were made by a father and son, that ten
individuals made a single dedication, that all three
dedications were made to the same trio of deities (or
attached the same epithets to Mithras’ name), and that all
the inscriptions were in Greek. The content of the
inscriptions and their recovery as a group in good condition
suggest the existence of a mithraeum; but since no actual
remains of the sanctuary are extant, it must be considered
only as a possible mithraeum.
36R: Sta. SABA

REJECTED MITHRAEUM

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS: none

EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Until now, no one has ever challenged the designation of this building as a mithraeum. In 1925, excavations on the east side of Sta. Saba and Via Salvator revealed brick walls 0.6–0.67 m. thick that formed a corridor running approximately east to west (see fig. 31).231 On its north side were three niches with walls of opus listatum (alternating rows of cut tufa blocks and brick).232 The outer niches had black and white geometric mosaic floors. Closing off the west end of the corridor was a fourth niche, slightly wider but more shallow than the other three. Beside this niche an opening in the south wall lead to a larger room for which only part of the north and west walls were recovered (see fig. 31). On the west end of this larger room was a basin 6.4 m. long, 4.85 m. wide, and 1.95 m. deep with pilasters at the corners. Four rectangular stairs followed by four semi-

231 Gatti NS (1925) 383.
232 These ranged in size from 2.87–3.45 m. wide and 2.12–2.6 m. deep.
circular stairs descended into the west side of the basin (see fig. 31).  

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

Edoardo Gatti argued that this building was a mithraeum primarily on the basis of its plan and the recovery of a tauroctony relief there. Although no provenance was reported for the small marble relief with a badly executed representation of the tauroctony, Gatti suggested that the sanctuary was in the narrow corridor with the niche, rather than in the large main room. He compared this layout with niched side corridors flanking a larger central space to the mithraeum of Felicissimus at Ostia. However, Gatti did not account for the unparalleled presence of the basin in the main room, for the lack of evidence for podia in the niched corridor, or for the fact that the niches on the north wall would have prevented the traditional arrangement of opposing podia.

The identification of these remains as a mithraeum is problematic. Gatti argued that the proximity of these remains to the statio of the fourth cohort (now under Sta. Saba) substantiated his identification of the mithraeum.

Following Antonielli's analysis of Mithraic worship in the

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234 Gatti, *HS* (1925) 387, says only that it was "...rinvenuta fra le rovine dell'edificio..." (found among the remains of the building).

235 Gatti, 1925, 386.

236 Vermaseren, 1951, 52, argued that a water-supply was necessary in all mithraea.

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praetorian cohorts, Gatti assumed that Mithraism was as prevalent in the cohortes vigilum as it was in the praetorian guard.\textsuperscript{237} He then reasoned that there must have been a mithraeum in the statio, and that any architectural remains discovered in the vicinity could certainly be attributed to it. So few remains of any of the stationes in Rome have been recovered that little is known about these cohorts and even less about their barracks. Thus the popularity of Mithras among the cohortes vigilum has not been satisfactorily established.

Despite the recovery of a tauroctony relief, these remains cannot be identified securely as a mithraeum. Too many important elements (such as podia) are lacking and there are too many unexplained elements present, including the basin and niches along the side walls, to conclude that the remains were part of a mithraeum.

\textsuperscript{237} Antonielli, BCP (1912).
**378: Sta. BALBINA**

**REJECTED MITHERAEUM**

**CATALOGUE OF CROSS-REFERENCES**

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<td>54a</td>
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**ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS**

CIRM 501: A dedication to Deus Invictus Navarze by Terentius Priscus, son of Publius.

CIRM 502: The dedication of a shrine to Silvanus by T. Aelius Tryfon, a priest of Sol Invictus.

**EXCAVATIONS, TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

The identification of this mithraeum, based on two inscriptions found in 1727 (near the church of Sta. Balbina) and 1740 (in Sta. Balbina), is uncertain. No structural remains have ever been recovered, but Coarelli has argued that these inscriptions represent a mithraeum on the basis of their ancient topographical context.\(^{238}\)

Neither inscription names Mithras specifically: one is dedicated to Deus Invictus Navarze (CIRM 501), and the other is dedicated to Silvanus by a priest of Sol Invictus (CIRM 502). Cumont argued that Sol Invictus refers to Mithras in both examples,\(^{239}\) and on the basis of another

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\(^{238}\) Coarelli, 1979, 74. Vermaseren, 1951, 51, originally suggested that the two inscriptions might represent a mithraeum, but he later changed his opinion (1956, nos. 510-502).

\(^{239}\) Cumont, 1896, 103 and 467.
inscription (TMHM 54) which marks a dedication to Silvanus and Sol separately, he further argued that Mithras and Silvanus were worshipped together. Limited evidence suggests that Mithras and Silvanus were both worshipped in certain mithraea, or at least that Silvanus' iconography could be used in a Mithraic context. However, it is impossible to equate Mithras with Sol Invictus or with Silvanus in these inscriptions without any other reference to Mithras.240 Neither of these inscriptions is definitely a dedication to Mithras.

Like Cumont, Coarelli assumed that both of these inscriptions were Mithraic. He also assumed that the inscriptions belonged to the domus of L. Fabius Cilo, the urban praefect of 203, because they were found near the remains of this domus. Coarelli proposed that L. Fabius Cilo had a mithraeum in his domus just as the owner of the domus under Sta. Prisca had one in his.241 It is difficult to substantiate this argument because no architectural remains for a mithraeum have been recovered from the domus of Cilo.

240 There are six instances of representations of Silvanus found in mithraea around the empire. Four from Italy include a Silvanus relief found at the Aldobrandini mithraeum at Ostia (CIMRM 236), a polychrome mosaic of Silvanus found in the Palazzo Imperiale at Ostia (CIMRM 252), a statue of Silvanus from the Dolichenum on the Aventine (CIMRM 467), and a statue of Silvanus from the cave at Angera (CIMRM 716). The other examples are a figurine from the mithraeum at Rusicade, Numidia (CIMRM 126), and a relief fragment with Silvanus from the mithraeum in Ptuj, Slovenia (CIMRM 1604). The evidence for a connection between Mithras and Silvanus is weak, but it is interesting that two-thirds of the examples come from Italy, and half from Rome and Ostia.

241 Coarelli, 1979, 74.
TRASTEVERE AND THE AGER VATICANUS:

38P: THE VATICAN PHRYGIANUM

POSSIBLE MITHRAEUM WITHIN A NON-MITHRAIC SANCTUARY (4th century)

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<td>514</td>
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<td>6.504</td>
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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 513: A dedication to the Great Idaean Mother of the gods and Attis Menotyrannus by Caelius Hilarianus, who was a most distinguished man, a duodecimvir of Rome, a pater and herald at the sacrifices and rites of Invictus Mithras, a priest of Liber, and a priest of Hecate on the Ides of May in the third consulship of the emperor Gratian and Merbaudes (377).

CIMRM 514: A dedication to the Great Gods by Ulpius Egnatius Faventinus, who was a most distinguished man, an augur of the Roman citizens, a pater and herald at the sacrifices of Deus Sol Invictus Mithras, a chief priest of Liber, a priest of Hecate, a priest of Isis, and a tauroboliate and crioboliate made on 13 August in the fifth consulship of Valens and the first of Valentinian (376).

EXCAVATIONS, TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

These inscriptions, found during excavations for the foundation of the facade of St. Peter's basilica in 1609, were part of a larger group of altars dedicated to various oriental deities, primarily Magna Mater and Attis, from 305-390.\(^242\) This group of inscriptions is the only significant body of evidence for a sanctuary called the Phrygianum. No architectural remains for the sanctuary have ever been

\(^{242}\) CIL 6.497-504.
recovered, and its exact location is still unknown. However, the provenance of these dedications suggests that the Phrygianum was near the circus of Caligula (thought to have been on the site of St. Peter’s) in the Ager Vaticanus (see fig. 32). An inscribed marble altar found in Piazza S. Pietro in 1949 and dedicated to the Great Idaean Mother of the gods and Attis Menotyrannus on July 19, 374 by Alfenius Ceionius Iulianius Kamenius, who was a most distinguished man, a septemvir of the Epulones, a pater and herald of the sacred rites of Invictus Mithras, priest of Hecate, chief priest of Liber, and a tauroboliate and crioboliate, should be added to the group.

None of the three inscriptions above was dedicated to Mithras, but each dedicatory was a pater and hieroceryx (attendant at sacrifices) in the Mithraic cult. These dedications do not suggest the existence of a mithraeum, but they might indicate that there was a shrine to Mithras in the Phrygianum. The possibility of Mithraic worship in this sanctuary is weaker than that in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus on the Aventine hill because architectural remains and actual dedications to Mithras or monuments representing him have not been recovered. While a series of dedications to Cybele and Attis by men who were initiated

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243 Jordan and Huelsen suggested that CIL 13.1751 "L. Aequilius Carpus IIIIII:vir Aug(ustalis): item dendrophorus viros exceptit at a Vatican transtulit" might be the only inscription to refer to the Phrygianum specifically. Platner and Ashby, 1929, 325-26, dated it to the Hadrianic period, while Jordan and Huelsen, 1906, 659 n.93, dated it to ca.160.

244 First published in AE [1953] 72-73, no.238 and later as CImIn 515.
into several oriental cults including Mithraism strongly suggests that Mithras was also worshipped in the Phrygianum, it is not conclusive evidence.
CATELOG OF CROSS-REFERENCES

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ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

CIMRM 510: A dedication to Sol Invictus Mithras on behalf of the health of Commodus by Marcus Aurelius Stertinius Carpus, another Carpus who was a pater, and two brothers, Hermioneus and Balbinus.

CIMRM 511: An epitaph for Lucius Septimius Archelaus, a freedman of Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta and a pater and priest of Invictus Mithras of the Augustan house, and also for his wife, Cosia Primitiva.

CIMRM 512: An altar with a fragmentary dedication to Sol Invictus.

EXCAVATIONS, TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND FINDS

This group of three inscriptions does not represent a mithraeum. Little is known about these inscriptions beyond what Cumont and Vermaseren have mentioned in their catalogue entries. Coarelli grouped the monuments together because of their provenance (the right bank of the Tiber, in Trastevere near the Pons Aemilius). Despite the proximity of the inscriptions, they were found at different times and none of them was found in situ. The content of the inscriptions reveals another important difference about them.
SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The first inscription (CIMRM 510) is useful because it reveals the names of freedmen or foreigners who worshipped Mithras, and because it is datable to the reign of Commodus. The third inscription (CIMRM 512) is too fragmentary to be useful and might not even be dedicated to Mithras. The second inscription (CIMRM 511), however, contains important information about the cult. Although it is generally agreed that "pater and priest of Invictus Mithras of the domus augustana" in lines three and four refers to a mithraeum in the imperial palace on the Palatine hill, Alfonso Bartoli has argued that since he did not find a mithraeum when he excavated the domus augustana, there was no mithraeum to be found.245 Yet, in dismissing the existence of a mithraeum Bartoli appears to have relied too heavily on the accidents of preservation. Although architectural remains for a mithraeum on the Palatine are lacking, this inscription is sufficient evidence for a sanctuary there. It is also important to note that the provenance of the inscriptions in Trastevere near the Ponte Emilio is neither the original provenance nor the site of a mithraeum. The implications of the presence of a mithraeum in the imperial palace and of the epitaph of the freedman Lucius Septimius Archelaus who was a priest there will be more carefully examined later.

245 The inscription reads "D(is) M(anibus)/ L. Septimius Aug(ustorum trius)
lib(ertus) Archelaus/ pater et sacerdos invicti/ Mithrae domus augustanae/ fecit sibi et Cosiae
Primitiavae/ coniugi benemerventi libertis liberta/busque posterisq(ue) eorum." Versaceren, 1951, 86
and 1956, 204, did not discuss the existence of a mithraeum on the Palatine. Bartoli, 1956-57, 25-
26.
REJECTED MITHRAEUM

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<td>tauroctony relief fragment</td>
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EXCAVATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This monument is the lower half of a tauroctony relief and does not imply the existence of a mithraeum. It was not recovered with any architectural remains and is of uncertain provenance.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ See PGR (1891) 296.
CHAPTER THREE
THE TOPOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE MITHRAEA

In Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as the population of Rome declined, the size of the city shrank and for centuries occupied only a fraction of the area within the Aurelian wall. The ancient buildings were dismantled for their lead and iron joinings, and their stone was reused or burned for lime. This decline lasted until the late 19th century, when the pressure of a steadily growing population finally caused the city to expand outward in every direction. The project of reclaiming the hills, levelling slopes, digging sewers, building streets, and laying building foundations soon made Rome an archaeologist’s paradise, even though the Roman remains were exposed only by the process of building new structures to cover them. Too much to do in too short a time made early casualties of sound excavation methodology and detailed, informative publications. Rodolfo Lanciani (with assistance from Giuseppe Gatti and Carlo Visconti, among others) announced thousands of discoveries in the four major archaeological journals then published in Rome.¹ The enthusiastic tone of

¹ The Bullettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica (Rdf) (1829-85), the Annali dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica (Adf) (1829-85), the Bullettino della

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these reports partially compensates for their lack of detail. Between 1876 and 1913, Lanciani also wrote a weekly column entitled "Notes from Rome" for the English journal of fine arts, the Athenaeum. Here his vivid descriptions of the latest discoveries in Rome often constituted the only published record for these excavations.²

Because of these notices, this chapter can examine the neighborhood of each definite mithraeum investigated in Chapter Two. At times the detail of this survey of neighborhoods might seem exhaustive, but one of the goals of this investigation is to determine whether buildings near mithraea illuminate understanding of the sanctuaries and their congregations. Thus it is necessary, at times, to establish how many and what kind of buildings were near a given mithraeum before dismissing them as irrelevant. Moreover, such precise detail gives a more comprehensive view of a given area, and it is this level of detail which all other discussions about Mithraism in Rome lack. Much of the material may seem dated to those scholars not accustomed to relying on sources more than a century old. On the other hand, those who know modern Rome well will easily envision the streets and substantial buildings which now overlie almost every monument under discussion here, and they will

² Cubberley, 1988. Cubberley's introductory remarks on Lanciani are interesting and relevant. Particularly pertinent is his discussion of Lanciani's perspective on the archaeology of his time, and the (often) political motivation for the new discoveries.
quickly realize that little additional (or substantial) excavation has been possible since these initial excavations.3

Previous discussions about Mithraism in Rome have treated all of the mithraea as a single group without regard for their discrete chronological and topographical contexts. However, these mithraea are at least as informative as separate entities as they are in a group. The survey of mithraea in Chapter Two, for example, demonstrated that the distribution of mithraea varied chronologically. The topographical survey of the Roman mithraea in this chapter will demonstrate that the location of mithraea is meaningful and that the relationships between mithraea and the buildings near them are important because social bonds and the proximity of mithraea to the domiciles or workplaces of its initiates determined the makeup of any Mithraic congregation. Many of the mithraea in this survey were located in areas with domus and insulae, or in barracks. These mithraea associated with living quarters had small congregations, and for certain sanctuaries there are known patrons, which suggests that Mithraists knew each other outside and prior to the existence of the mithraeum. Mithraists in these congregations might have shared one or

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3 The preliminary research for this chapter relies upon the standard (and indispensable) topographical catalogues (listed in chronological order): Ulrichs, 1871; Jordan and Huelsen, 1871-1906; Lanciani, 1907 and 1912; Lanciani, 1990; Kiepert and Huelsen, 1912; Platner and Ashby, 1929; Lugli, 1930-38; Lugli, 1940; Lugli, 1952-62; Castagnoli, 1958; and Nash, 1968. Consult the bibliography for other sources by the same authors, particularly works by Lanciani.
several relationships with each other: they might have been engaged in similar occupations, or they might have been members of the same collegium, members of one family, friends or neighbors. Like the mithraea in residential areas, the sanctuaries in the baths of Titus and Caracalla might also have been founded by socially connected initiates, but they might have created social ties in addition to fostering them.

This topographical survey also shows that certain areas of the city lack evidence for mithraea (see fig. 33). The most noteworthy absences are in areas which the "provincial model" predicted would have the most mithraea: the poorer sections of Rome, especially the Subura and the ports along both sides of the Tiber, the areas near the many gates, particularly the Porta Capena, and the many insulae which have been excavated all over the city. Such areas are still informative because they illustrate that the expectations for finding mithraea in contexts related to traders, slaves, freedmen, and other marginal members of society might not apply to Rome completely. The only mithraeum located near the Tiber, that in the Forum Boarium, was not in the area of the ports, strictly speaking. Similarly, the lack of Mithraic evidence from the Roman Forum or the imperial fora weakens the argument that Mithraism was recognized as an official Roman cult after it became attractive among the upper levels of Roman society and after even some emperors became Mithraists.
This survey proceeds through the city in the same order as Chapter Two (the order of Augustus' fourteen regions), beginning on the Caelian hill and ending at the Aventine hill. The survey will focus only on the neighborhoods of definite mithraea, except in certain instances where the topographical context of certain Mithraic evidence has been used to prove the existence of a mithraeum. The location of definite and possible mithraea is marked on the map of Rome provided in Figure 33. Figure 33 also indicates where detailed maps provided in other figures are located within the ancient city.

THE CAELIAN HILL (Regiones I-II)

The Caelian hill belonged to Regio II, and although the Servian wall separated the western from the eastern side of the hill, the Aurelian wall enclosed it entirely. The archaeological evidence from the hill indicates that many well-appointed domus were there. However, a second distinctive feature of this hill was its barracks, the Castra Peregrinorum on the southwestern side and the Castra Equitum Singularum Priora et Nova on the eastern side.

In Chapter Two the discussion of the Mithraic evidence for this hill focused on two definite mithraea, in the Castra Peregrinorum (1D) and on the grounds of the modern Ospedale S. Giovanni (3D). The evidence for a possible sanctuary in the Piazza della Navicella (2P) near the barracks of the Fifth Cohort and a rejected sanctuary in the
Castra Equitum Singularum (4R) was also examined. Despite possible accidents of preservation, it is significant that the Mithraic monuments recovered on the Caelian hill come from barracks or their environs, and that none of it comes from the many domus. The following investigation seeks to recreate both the immediate and more general neighborhood of each definite and possible mithraeum. Because of the nature of the argument used to support the existence of a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum, the environs of this rejected mithraeum will also be examined.

THE AREA AROUND THE CASTRA PEREGRINORUM

The Castra Peregrinorum lay on the southeastern side of the intersection of several streets at the Porta Caelimontana in the Servian wall (figs. 1 and 34 at center). A great deal of archaeological evidence has come from this area. Near the Castra Peregrinorum were a sanctuary to Magna Mater, several wealthy residences, and the Statio Cohortis V Vigilum (the barracks of the Fifth Cohort of Firemen).

The Castra Peregrinorum

The site of the Castra Peregrinorum has a long history of misidentification which has only been resolved recently. Excavations during 1969-75 established that the Castra Peregrinorum included the area under the church of San Stefano Rotondo, and that the macellum magnum of Nero,

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4 These excavations are summarized in Colini, 1944, 235-53, especially 240-45, and in Ceschi, 1982, 7-20 and appendices. The most recent excavations are published by Lissi-Caronna, 1986. See also Bailie Reynolds and Ashby, 1922, and Bailie Reynolds, 1923, for the discovery of the Castra Peregrinorum. Inscriptions pertaining to this barracks, and particularly to the deities worshipped...
which had traditionally been identified with that church, lay elsewhere on the Caelian. These excavations also revealed the mithraeum in the barracks, which has been discussed in detail in Chapter Two (see 1D in Chapter Two and figs. 1 and 2a-b).

The Basilica Hilariana

On the northeastern side of the same intersection at the Porta Caelimontana, and directly north of the Castra Peregrinorum, lay a building now called the "Basilica Hilariana" (see figs. 1 and 34). It was discovered in 1889 in the process of digging foundations for the Ospedale Militare under which it now lies. The structure is not a basilica, technically speaking, but certain of its features are similar to those of mithraea. These architectural features, certain other iconographical elements, and the proximity of this sanctuary to the mithraeum in the Castra Peregrinorum warrant careful examination.

there, have been found scattered up to the Piazza della Navicella and can be identified as belonging to the castra only because they mention the building itself. See Huelsern and Jordan, 1906, 237-39, for a complete discussion and list.

5 See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 323, for the ancient references, coins and inscriptions which relate to the macellum magnus. See also Colini, 1944, 56-57 and 246. Platner and Ashby have argued that the market was thought to have been destroyed and rebuilt in the late 4th century and then transferred into S. Stefano Rotondo in the 5th century by Pope Simplicius. They admit that the discovery of the Castra Peregrinorum only 15 m. from the outer circle of columns of S. Stefano (and thus only 5a. from the the outer wall of the church) has made it unlikely that S. Stefano Rotondo was the site of the macellum magnus.

6 See Gatti, MS (1908) 105 for the original discovery. The excavation reports are succinct, but many are useful. Gatti made several short reports in MS (1885) 66, 248, 316, 341, 422, 473; (1886) 11, 121, 269, 416-17, 451; (1888) 398, 434, 623, 696; (1889) 32, 337, 398-400 and (1890) 79-80 and 113; and Visconti, ECR (1889) 483-94 and PCC (1890) 18-26 and Tav. 1-2, 78 and 112 (by far the most useful of all the reports). See Colini, 1944, 278-81, for the best general description of this site. It includes black and white reproductions of two water-color drawings of the excavations from the archives of the Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma.
The "basilica" had the remains of twelve stairs leading down to an entranceway (measuring 3 x 2.5 m.) and an atrium (see figs. 35a-b). At the entrance to the atrium a black and white mosaic pavement included an inscription asking the gods for good fortune for the Basilica Hilariana and those who entered it.\(^7\) Beyond this inscription was a marble threshold with two pairs of footprints, one entering and one exiting. Below the inscription was a black and white figural mosaic whose central feature was first identified as a red and yellow crown decked with a laurel garland and pierced by a lance.\(^8\) Surrounding the "crown" were an owl (just above the "crown") as well as, running clockwise, a raven, a snake, a deer, a dog, a bull, a scorpion, a lion or a panther, a goat, and a dove in a tree. Roscher’s *Lexikon* correctly identifies the "crown" as an evil-eye, and Marion Blake has discussed its apotropaic significance fully.\(^9\)

Several figures, particularly the raven, snake, dog, bull, scorpion and lion/panther, also appear in depictions of the Mithraic tauroctony and have astrological significance.\(^10\) However, these iconographic similarities provide insufficient evidence for the possible worship of Mithras in this sanctuary.

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\(^7\) *CIL* 6.30973a. "Intrantibus hic deos/ propitios et Basilic(ae)/ Hilarianae."

\(^8\) Gatti, *RS* (1889) 399.


A third room beyond the entrance and atrium was excavated in 1890. It measured 7.5 X 3.5 m. and had four pilasters in the center, a partially preserved black and white mosaic, and a rectangular depression in the floor.\(^{11}\)

This room also contained a statue base with an inscription dedicating it to a pearl seller named Manius Poblicius Hilarus by the college of the torchbearers of Magna Mater and Attis, which reveals the purpose of the "basilica."\(^{12}\)

Beside this base was a brick-lined well of unreported depth, but wide enough for a person to enter. Gatti asserted that the well was for the taurobolium or criobolium.\(^{13}\)

The date of the building is unclear. The main evidence is provided by the five-stroke "M" in Manius' name, said to be no later than the reign of Hadrian, and the incised eyebrows of a portrait head recovered in the debris, which have been compared to portraits of Antoninus Pius.\(^{14}\)

This discussion assumes that the "Basilica" stood in the area from the time of Hadrian onwards, and that it continued to

\(^{11}\) The pilasters were mentioned only very briefly by Visconti, ECR (1890) 112. Gatti, NS (1890) 113. The depression was 0.70 m. deep.

\(^{12}\) CIL 6.30973b. Visconti, ECR (1890) 20, argued that the use of the praenomen "Manio" and the form "Poblicius" instead of "Publicius" indicated that the base was later than the Hadrianic period. This Manius Poblicius Hilarus the pearl-seller is known from another inscribed dedication (CIL 6.641) which he made with his sons to celebrate 15 years of being a dendrophorus (a special torch-bearing priest). This inscription, found centuries before, was of unknown context until the discovery of the "basilica". Presumably it too came from this part of the Caelian hill.

\(^{13}\) Gatti, NS (1889) 400.

\(^{14}\) The evidence is well reviewed in Blake, 1936, 158-159.
exist throughout the period of the mithraea on this part of the Caelian (the 2nd-4th centuries).

The sanctuary is significant for the unanswered questions it poses. It is remarkably similar to a mithraeum in its underground location, its rectangular shape, and the figures in the mosaic which are also commonly found in Mithraic cosmology and iconography. The inscriptions indicate that the space was used for the worship of Magna Mater and Attis, but it is remotely possible that the sanctuary was also used as a mithraeum, perhaps by troops from the Castra Peregrinorum, by the other residents in the area, or by the troops in the statio of the Fifth Cohort. Unfortunately, it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion about who used this sanctuary.

The Domus Symmachorum

Some of the residents near the Castra Peregrinorum may have been part of the family of the Symmachi. The letters of one family member, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, mention that this family had a domus on the Caelian hill.\textsuperscript{15} The provenance of two inscribed statue bases dedicated to him by his son, Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, and by his maternal grandfather, Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, further indicate that this domus lay slightly to the east of the

\textsuperscript{15} Ep. 3.12, 3.88 and 7.18.
"Basilica" Hilariana (and thus northeast and across the Via Caelimontana from the Castra Peregrinorum) (fig. 34).  

The archaeological evidence for the house itself is disputed, and few detailed excavation reports are available for these remains, which include a room with two Ionic columns and an opus sectile and tessellated mosaic pavement.  

There is no discussion of the material of the walls or of any brick stamps, except two from the year 151.  

Only Lanciani has suggested that the house belonged to the Symmachini on the basis of this limited evidence.  

Other architectural remains clearly indicate that many domus belonging to senators and other wealthy residents were located in the neighborhood immediately to the north of the Castra Peregrinorum, but it is not possible to trace specific architectural remains to a particular owner.  

The inscriptions are CIL 6.1699 and CIL 6.1782. Colini, 1944, 281-82, has an extremely brief description of the domus of the Symmachini, but he does not mention the excavation report. Santolini Giordani, 1989, discusses the entire history of the "Vigna Casali", the estate which occupied the area north of the Via di S. Stefano Rotondo. He described in detail the circumstances surrounding the many excavations, and he provided a catalogue of all of the antiquities in the Villa Casali, regardless of provenance. In this report, the bases of Q. Aurelius Symmachus and V. Nichomachus Flavianus are catalogued as 135 and 137 (pp.163-64), respectively, and are illustrated in Tav.26.  

Lanciani, 1985, 302-3 (originally 1897, 347-349) conducted excavations in the foundations dug for the Ospedale Militare in 1885-87, and he reported the recovery of the ruins of a thoroughly destroyed house with traces of fire and statues smashed but left in place rather than taken away. For other reports see Gatti's announcements in BCR (1886) 359, 405-6 and (1888) 310-12 and 411-14; also in NS (1886) 121, 269-70, 416-17 and 451, and (1888) 434-35 and 623.  

The room measures ca. 6.4 m. on a side. See Gatti, NS (1886) 416 and BCR (1886) 405.  

On his Forma Urbis Romeae, pl.36, he further indicated, on the basis of inscriptions recovered in the area, that domus belonging to at least six other families were located there over several centuries. See Lanciani's Note from Rome, April 17th, 1886 (Cubberley, 1988, 186-89) for a more thorough, though brief, discussion.
The *Domus Valeriorum*

The residence of the Valerii was also located close to the Castra Peregrinorum and the "Basilica" Hilariana (see figs. 1 and 34 at far right). This residence was discovered during the 16th century, when the atrium of a Roman domus, six bronze plaques inscribed to Q. Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus, and four statue bases dedicated to L. Aradius Valerius Proculus and L. Valerius Publicola Balbinus Maximus (consul in 232) were recovered. Unlike the nearby domus of the Symmachi, the existence of this domus and the identity of its owners are not in doubt. Excavations carried out from 1902-1905 revealed more architectural remains, including a fountain, brick walls (which are not dated in the publication), and fragments of architectural decoration, inscriptions and sculpture.

The survey thus far has shown that the neighborhood to the north and east of the Castra Peregrinorum consisted of the incompletely understood sanctuary to Magna Mater (the

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20 *CIL* 6.1684-88 and 1694-95. See also *PLRE* I, 749. Q. Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus was the praeses of Piacenza in 321.

21 *CIL* 6.1690-93. L. Aradius Valerius Proculus, the younger brother of Q. Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus was the urban praefect of Rome in 337-39. De Rossi, 1886, 235-36 gives a short family history in which he explains when the Aradii were united with the Valerii Publicoli Marini and Proculi. Symmachus mentions Valerius Proculus in Ep. 1.2. See also *PLRE* I, 749 and Chastagnol, 1962, 96-102, no.40.

22 See Lanciani, 1907, 69-72; Colini, 1944, 253-58; and De Rossi, *BAC* (1867) 27-28, and 45, (1868) 34-35, (1869) 56-58, (1876) 14 and 54-55, (1886) 24-28 and (1887) 26 where these and other artifacts are reported. See also *PLRE* I, 590.

23 See reports by Gatti in *NS* (1902) 356,463-64 and 509-10; (1903) 59 and 92; (1904) 390 and 436 and (1905) 363 and 405 and also *CQR* (1902) 74-78 and 145-63 and (1903) 285-86; and finally De Rossi and Gatti in *CQR* (1890) 288-91.
so-called "Basilica" Hilariana) and the domus of several wealthy families, including the Valerii and perhaps the Symmachi. In comparison to other neighborhoods in Rome, this one had more prestigious residents than almost any other. As yet there is no evidence that the peregrini and their aristocratic neighbors had any significant contact. For Mithraic worship the peregrini almost certainly kept to themselves. Whether they built and used the sanctuary to Magna Mater, and whether the owners of the nearby domus joined them there, remains uncertain.

The *Statio Cohortis V Vigilum*

To the south and west of the Castra Peregrinorum lay the *Statio Cohortis V Vigilum* (figs.1, XIII-XVI and 34). The propinquity of the two barracks suggests possible interaction between them, but the remains of the barracks of the Fifth Cohort are also important because they are near the modern Piazza della Navicella, from which several Mithraic monuments discussed in Chapter Two were recovered (see 2P in Chapter Two). Examination of the remains of the barracks of the Fifth Cohort provides a broader context for the Mithraic monuments from the area of Piazza della Navicella. The discussion of these monuments in Chapter Two focused on their content and provenance and concluded that the number and quality of the reliefs and inscriptions might indicate the existence of a mithraeum despite the lack of architectural remains of one in this area. According to the "provincial model" of Mithraism discussed in Chapter One,
these barracks, home to the freedmen who staffed the cohorts of the vigiles and the military equestrians who led them, would be the ideal place for a mithraeum. However, the archaeological evidence does not corroborate the model in this example.

The archaeological evidence for the barracks consists of two inscribed pedestals21 discovered in the gardens of the Palazzo Mattei in 1820.25 The two dedications, which mention all the members of the Fifth Cohort for the years 205 and 210, were located in a large, brick-walled room with a mosaic pavement thought to be a vestibule. New excavations in the same area in 1931 revealed two parallel rows of rooms slightly to the south (fig.1).26 The inscriptions provide crucial, but limited, information about the structure of this and other urban cohorts. Although no definite

21 CIL 6.1057 and CIL 6.1058, respectively. One pedestal was inscribed with the names and offices of members of the Fifth Cohort, and the other was a statue base for a dedication to Caracalla by C. Iulius Quintilianus, the praefectus vigilum, and by the other officials and men of the Fifth Cohort.

25 Colini, 1944, 58 and 231-32. Several inscriptions are known from the area: CIL 6.221-22, 1057-58, and 2977-83. Lanciani, 1902-12, 2.132 and 1897, 338-39, discussed the 16th- and 19th-century excavations. Also see Buelsen and Jordan, 1906, 236; Kellerman, 1835 in Colini, 1944, 228 n.17 and Lanciani, 1905 (reprint of 1897), 298. As De Rossi, Atti (1885) 289-90 n.1, noted, the statio of the Fifth Cohort is the only one whose location is certain. It is known from two inscriptions (CIL 6.221-22) dedicated to the genius of one of the centuries of the cohort in 111 and 113.

26 Some of the rooms opened on to the street and are thus thought to have been tabernae; while the entrances of the others faced westward and are thought to have been part of the statio. Colini, 1944, 230, briefly discussed the difficulties in determining the exact extent of the statio on the basis of the present remains. Colini, 1944, 235-36, reported other occasional discoveries from this intersection including walls of various construction with no date and virtually no context. Further discoveries of inscriptions and statuary fragments were made while the foundations for the Ospedale Britannico were being dug. See Gatti, NS (1904) 225, 296-97 and 365; (1905) 37; (1907) 183 and (1909) 37. Gatti, NS (1904) 272, reported the remains of several ancient walls and even the room of a private house (Gatti, NS [1905] 12-13 and 79).
architectural or epigraphic evidence substantiates the worship of Mithras by the members of the Fifth Cohort, these men certainly knew of the god, and might possibly have availed themselves of the sanctuary of the *peregrini* or of another sanctuary in the area which no longer survives.

This survey of the neighborhood immediately surrounding the *Castra Peregrinorum* has not revealed any conclusive evidence indicating that anyone except the *peregrini* used the mithraeum in the barracks. The neighborhood had many residences of wealthy Romans, but there is no indication that they had significant contact with the *peregrini*. While it is possible that the members of the Fifth Cohort fraternized with their counterparts in the *peregrini*, no clear evidence, such as inscribed dedications mentioning specific individuals from the cohort, indicates that they worshipped in the mithraeum in the *Castra Peregrinorum*. Finally, this survey has determined that while numerous excavations in this area of the western Caelian have produced many remains, it is still difficult to substantiate the definite existence of a mithraeum near the Piazza della Navicella or its exact location.

**THE AREA AROUND S. GIOVANNI IN LATERANO**

One of the most thoroughly excavated and most complicated areas of the Caelian hill is the eastern slope under what is now the Ospedale S. Giovanni and the church of S. Giovanni in Laterano (figs. 36 and 37). Two Mithraic monuments were found near the Scala Sancta: a statue of the
tauroctony and a relief of Sol (figs. 36 and 37 at far right). The discussion in Chapter Two (see 4R) concluded that this group of finds probably did not represent a mithraeum in the area because the pieces were not found in situ. An examination of the excavations and the architectural remains recovered underneath S. Giovanni in Laterano, as well as of some of the inscriptions from the castra, will challenge Vermseren’s, Cumont’s, and Coarelli’s assumption that the nearby barracks of the Equites Singulares under S. Giovanni must have been the original provenance of this Mithraic material.

The excavations under the apse of S. Giovanni in Laterano

In 1876 a controversial restoration of the apse of the Lateran basilica27 produced finds published by Stevenson.28 Under the apse were found the remains of a house of mediocre brickwork with a black and white mosaic floor, a circular piscina with marble inlay, and a series of six rooms with mosaic paving along a corridor (see fig.38, A-H).29

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27 Lanciani was outraged by this restoration. In his Note from Rome of October 7th, 1876 he wrote "Several London newspapers have already informed the English public of the unfortunate proceedings which have been going on since the beginning of the summer; I mean the demolition of the apse of St. John Lateran. This act of Vandalism has excited the indignation of all who care for the history of art..." (Cubberley, 1988, 18).

28 Stevenson, Adl (1877). Stevenson also reported briefly on other excavations around the Lateran, including some poorly reported remains of ancient buildings and numerous amphorae near the facade, wall-paintings found by Lupi in 1838, and some inscriptions discussed by Benzon in 1850. Stevenson, Adl (1877) 147-57, even mentioned the fragment of the tauroctony relief found near the Scala Sancta in 1870, but he did not discuss the existence of a mithraeum.

29 There are also brief announcements of these finds in NS (1876) 141 and 185-86.
Stevenson dated the remains to the 2nd century on the basis of the quality of the brickwork and Hadrianic brick stamps.\textsuperscript{30} Stevenson associated the remains under the apse with bath remains to the west and assumed that only a wealthy family such as the Laterani, which was known to have lived in the area, could have owned such a large house (fig. 37, nos. 8 and 17).\textsuperscript{31} To this architectural evidence Stevenson added two lead pipes found in 1595, one inscribed "Sexti Laterani" and the other "Torquati et Laterani", whose owner he identified as T. Sextius Lateranus, consul in 197.\textsuperscript{32} Stevenson also accepted information from Juvenal\textsuperscript{33} and Tacitus,\textsuperscript{34} who said that the Laterani lived in this area of the Caelian hill. Finally, Stevenson connected the name of the later church, S. Giovanni in Laterano, with the Laterani, and assumed that any remains of a domus in the area belonged to that family originally. Whatever the fate of Stevenson's arguments about the owner of this domus, the lack of any further archaeological or epigraphic evidence for Mithraic worship there makes it unlikely that it could

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Stevenson, \textit{Adi} (1877) 338-39.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Stevenson \textit{Adi} (1877) 362-63.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Stevenson \textit{Adi} (1877) 363. See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 183-84, for a summary of the literary sources.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Juvenal 3.146-47 and 10.15. The former passage refers to Plautius Lateranus' affair with Messalina in 48, for which he lost his senatorial rank, later restored to him in 56, but lost again in 65 when he was executed for his participation in the conspiracy of Piso. The latter passage mentions Nero's confiscation of Plautius Lateranus' domus after his implication in the conspiracy.
\item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ann.} 15.49, 60.
\end{itemize}
have been the original provenance of the Mithraic monuments found near the Scala Sancta.

The Castra Equitum Singularum

Wilhelm Henzen’s article of 1850 on the Equites Singulares stirred the first significant interest in these barracks, although the exact location of the two castra (priora and nova) was not yet known. In 1885, recently found inscriptions from the Castra Equitum Singularum were published in several different articles. One by Lanciani was a catalogue of the inscriptions by CIL number, while a later article by Henzen was more analytical and synthetic. These and other briefly announced inscriptions do not indicate any evidence for the worship of Mithras in the castra. The complete list of deities which appear in many of the dedications is so long that Mithras’ name would certainly have appeared if the Equites Singulares worshipped him. The list includes the Capitoline triad, Mars, Victory, Fortuna, Felicitas, Health (Hygieia), the Fates, the Mothers (Matres), the Sulevae (gods of the fields in German mythology), the Campestres, Hercules, Mercury, Silvanus,

35 Henzen, ADI (1850) 5-53, discussed the origin and meaning of the name of the corps and examined the available epigraphic and literary evidence thoroughly. He did not assign a single date for the foundation of the corps, and he was generally more interested in reconstructing the command structure from epigraphic evidence. Henzen was not at all interested in the physical building of the castra or its location. Inscriptions from the castra were regularly recovered from the area before and after the publication of Henzen’s article, up until the actual architectural remains were found in 1934 (see below). See also RG (1887) 139-40, (1889) 360 and (1891) 126-29.

36 Lanciani, PCT (1885) 137-56. Henzen, ADI (1885) 235-91, was most interested in the length of service and the origins of members of the cohort represented by a group of inscriptions commemorating the honesta missione of several of the guard between 132 and 143.
Apollo, Epona, Sol, and Luna. The names of the gods are listed in almost all the inscriptions (military diplomas) in a formulaic order with only a few variations. Only in 1934 did excavations under the nave floor of the Lateran basilica reveal the first securely identifiable architectural remains for the castra (fig. 39, the dark lines under the basilica plan). However, no physical remains of a mithraeum have ever been recovered.

Like the Statio Cohortis V Vigilum, the Castra Equitum Singularum is a likely location for the worship of Mithras according to the "provincial model" that postulated its greatest popularity among legionaries, among other groups. Cumont and Vermaseren used this provincial model to substantiate Mithraic worship in the castra, despite the lack of epigraphic or architectural evidence. The only Mithraic monuments from the area, those from near the Scala Sancta, were not found in situ and thus do not corroborate Cumont's and Vermaseren's theory.

The excavations under Ospedale S. Giovanni

Excavations under the modern Ospedale S. Giovanni, which ultimately recovered the remains of a mithraeum (see 3D in Chapter Two), have been numerous and are often

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37 Lanciani NS (1886) 11-22 and 48-50 and BCR (1886) 93-101; Gatti BCR (1889) 145-49; and Marchetti NS (1889) 239.

38 Brief announcements of these excavations appeared in the "Notiziario" of the BCR (1934) 163-65 and in Kirsch, 1934, 359-60 and 1937, 361-62. The most extensive and informative report can be found in Josi, 1934, 335-58, which includes a summary discussion of previous excavations and random finds. See Josi, Krautheimer, and Corbett, 1958, 59-72, for later excavations of the walls and foundations of the Constantinian basilica.
difficult to understand. This survey will outline the work of two major undertakings, one in the late 19th century and one in the 1960s. Though the excavations are complicated, the finds from them have led several scholars to attempt an identification of the owners of certain buildings, and also to conclude that this neighborhood on the eastern slope of the Caelian was strikingly like that just examined on the western side, since it too included a barracks surrounded by wealthy and perhaps even imperial estates. What emerges clearly from the archaeological evidence is that it is impossible to identify the owners of the mithraeum found under the Ospedale S. Giovanni.

The earliest excavations, which began in 1870 in the garden of the hospital, exposed statuary fragments, walls of several different types of construction, and polychrome mosaic pavements. At the time, both Lanciani and Stevenson argued that these remains belonged to the domus of the Laterani (discussed above). An expansion of the hospital in the 1890s provided opportunity for more excavations (fig.39, nos.1-9). Borsari published a detailed report in 1898 which discussed all of the architectural fragments.

39 They are referred to briefly by Stevenson, Ad I (1877), 368. Lanciani NS (1870) 50-54, made a succinct announcement.

40 Stevenson Ad I (1877), 362-63 and also Lanciani, NS (1870) 52-53, who reported the discovery of the remains of an ancient street and also of opus reticulatum and brick walls in which several bricks were stamped "Lucill(ae)", referring to Domitia Lucilla, the mother of Marcus Aurelius. Lanciani used the stamps to date the house to the Antonine period, but not to propose that Lucilla or another Antonine relation was its owner.

41 Announced by Gatti in NS (1892) 264 and (1898) 240.
recovered from the area. He noted that the *domus Anniorum* and the *aedes Vectiliana* were nearby, according to literary sources, and he concluded that these architectural remains could have belonged to any one of several buildings and could therefore not be associated with a particular building.43

During the 1960s Valnea Santa Maria Scrinari conducted excavations in the area of the Ospedale S. Giovanni which ultimately revealed the *mithraeum* discussed in Chapter Two (see 3D in Chapter Two).44 The excavations on the east side of the hospital revealed that the Caelian hill had once sloped sharply to the southwest, necessitating the construction of a series of terrace-walls in ancient times.45 The excavations also revealed three different buildings (see fig.40), one facing south and oriented east-west, the second immediately to the east of the first with a north-south orientation, and the third also oriented north-

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42 Borsari, NS (1898) 409-12. These remains included marble columns and molded marble fragments of architraves and cornices, as well as polychrome marble pavements. Scholars associated these remains with those found earlier in 1870 and in previous excavations in 1732 in which Lupi and others recovered architectural fragments of a similar high quality. These discoveries were recorded in *Epitaphium Severae* p.43 and quoted extensively by Borsari, NS (1898), 410-11 and mentioned by Stevenson _Adi_ (1877) 349 n.3.

43 SHA, _Marc. 1_ for the *domus Anniorum* and SHA, _Comm. 16_ and _Port. 5_ for the *domus Vectiliana_. Intermittent excavations in the plaza in front of the church revealed still more walls and another pipe with the name of "(Do)mitiae Lucillae". For theses see NS (1901) 200-1, (1908) 172, and (1913) 116 and _PoB_ (1913) 73-74.

44 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 38-45.

45 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 38.
south and built in the middle of the second structure. The first building was a house which Santa Maria Scrinari dated to the 1st century CE on the basis of its walls of opus reticulatum in tufa and their paintings. She dated the second house to the late 1st century on the basis of its second- and third-style paintings and its many renovations with bricks from the Flavian period. Santa Maria Scrinari noted that the 1st-century houses would have been in the same neighborhood as those of the Pisones, Laterani, Annii, and the Domitii.

The third building, which cut into the second, was built in the early 3rd century and restored in the early 4th century (see fig. 40 for the remains of a large rectangular building). Santa Maria Scrinari identified this building, which had stuccoed and painted walls depicting a procession of several togate figures, as a portico or "atrium" (her quotes). She also proposed that this portico was part of the residence of Fausta, the wife of Constantine, and that the togate figures were members of the imperial family. In a

46 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 38 and fig. 67.
47 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 40, where there is a very convincing and well-researched discussion.
48 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 40.
49 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 42, argued that the house of the Annii and the gardens of Domitia were conclusively identified in the previous excavations in the garden of the Ospedale, and that the house in which Marcus Aurelius grew up must have been located between the modern Via Ambo Aradam and the Piazza S. Giovanni on the basis of the reference to it in SHA, Marc. 1.
50 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1965, 40-43.
later article, Santa Maria Scrinari concluded that the paintings were added after Constantine's decennalia of 315 in the consulate of Licinius and Crispus, and after the birth of two of his sons (the name of Constantius is clearly added later), on the basis of the repeated appearance of the names of the Constantinian house. 

This discussion of the many buildings around the mithraeum found under Ospedale S. Giovanni has demonstrated the difficulty of associating that sanctuary with any single set of nearby remains. If more of the appointments of the mithraeum had survived, it might be possible to discern whether the wealthy owners of the many domus or their slaves used the sanctuary, but such a determination is not possible on the basis of the present evidence.

CONCLUSION: THE CAELIAN HILL

This topographical survey of the mithraea on the Caelian hill has reconstructed two neighborhoods there. On the western side of the hill the survey showed that the Castra Peregrinorum was immediately surrounded by several domus of wealthy, if not prominent, Romans, by a sanctuary

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51 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1970-71, 207-22, reported a detailed study in which she photographed and thoroughly examined the paintings, as well as the extremely faded dipinti beneath them. The dipinti letters are of a late style and repeatedly mention names of the Constantinian house as well as monuments in Rome.

52 Santa Maria Scrinari, 1970-71, 220. The painting was still up in 325, when Theodora's name is painted over Helen's for the vincennalia. Nash, 1976, 1-21, disagreed with Santa Maria Scrinari's interpretation, and argued instead that the remains discovered under the apse of S. Giovanni in Laterano were those of the domus of Constantine. His argument, based almost solely on the literary sources rather than on the archaeological evidence presented by Santa Maria Scrinari, is not entirely convincing.
to Magna Mater, and by the barracks of the Fifth Cohort. The neighborhood was a luxurious one, but there is insufficient evidence to establish what effect the two barracks had on the character of the neighborhood, and how much interaction there was, not only between the residents of the barracks but also between these individuals and the owners of the nearby domus.

The situation on the eastern side of the Caelian hill was much the same as that on the western side, two barracks surrounded by wealthy residences. None of the archaeological evidence from the two barracks of the Equites Singulares, either architectural or epigraphic, indicates that the Mithraic evidence found by the Scala Sancta (4R) can be associated with them or with the domus under the apse of the church of S. Giovanni in Laterano. Similarly, the definite mithraeum under the Ospedale S. Giovanni (3D) has an indefinite immediate context and cannot be directly associated with any of the several domus and other structures nearby.

THE ESQUILINE HILL (Regiones III-V)

The Esquiline hill occupied almost the entire eastern side of the city. This area was sparsely inhabited until the 19th century, when it became the largest target of urban expansion. The Esquiline hill is actually comprised of three spurs -- the Mons Cispius, Mons Oppius and the Esquiliae -- off a main spine which arcs across the northern side of the
city and also includes the Pincian and Quirinal hills. These three smaller hills of the Esquiline represented a cross-section of the ancient city; they had lavish gardens and *domus*, walls, gates, aqueducts, *castra*, *stationes*, temples, markets, the Colosseum and several of its supporting buildings, *insulae*, and slums. The Esquiline hill even had a major temple dedicated to Isis, and several mithraea, but it also had shrines and temples to traditional Roman deities. The hill boasted the residences of Nero, Titus, Elagabalus, and Balbinus, one empress, Helen, and several other prominent Romans including Pompey, Cicero, Propertius, and Pliny the Younger, among others. As was so often the case, the more luxurious quarters were at the top of the hill and the slums were at the bottom.

The three definite mithraea on the Esquiline hill were located in entirely different contexts: first, the mithraeum under S. Clemente (5D), was located in a *domus* which may have belonged to an official of the Colosseum; second, the mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza (7D), was also associated with a *domus*, but one located in a more residential neighborhood; and third, the mithraeum in the Baths of Titus (6D), was located in a public space. A brief discussion about the impossibility of associating the Mithraic finds from Piazza Dante (see 8P in Chapter Two) with the *Statio Cohortis II Vigilum* and the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus will conclude this exploration of the topography of the Esquiline hill.
THE ENVIRONS OF SAN CLEMENTE AND THE COLOSSEUM

The preceding investigation of the Caelian hill ended at the basilica of S. Giovanni in Laterano, an area which also lay partly on the eastern Esquiline hill. The mithraeum under S. Clemente lay closer to the center of Rome at the southern foot of the hill. Chapter Two examined some of the buildings contiguous to it, namely a *horreum* (warehouse) directly east of the *domus* which contained the mithraeum. Dominating this neighborhood was the Colosseum and its supporting buildings, which included the four *ludi* (*Magnus, Gallicus, Dacicus, and Matutinus*) (figs. 41a-b, mithraeum at far right). Only the *Ludus Magnus* has been securely located between San Clemente and the Colosseum by excavations in 1937 and by confirmation from a fragment of the Severan marble plan (figs. 41a-b).53 Several inscriptions have revealed that the *Summum Choragium*, a building for the storage of equipment, also lay between the *Ludus Magnus* and San Clemente, possibly along the north side of the Via Labicana.54 Excavations here in 1888 also revealed a row of small, square rooms that may be *tabernae* or small *cubicula* of barracks, indicating the possible location of the *Castra Misenatium* (figs. 41a-b, the row of small square rooms at the

53 Colini, *PAE* 14 (1938c) 61-66, reported these excavations. Colini and Calza, 1962, is a much more detailed publication on the same subject. For the Severan marble plan see Fragment 4 (Jordan, 1874).

54 See *CIL* 3.348 and 6.297, 646, 776 (cf. 30829), 8950, and 10083-87, all 2nd-century inscriptions. Both the regional catalogues agree that the *Summum Choragium* was located in Regio III, and the marble plan (Jordan, 1874, fr.7) reveals that it gave its name to a *vicus*. For references see Platten and Ashby, 1929, 502-3.
Unfortunately, excavation has not revealed any identifiable remains of the other buildings mentioned in the Notitia and the Curiosum under Regio II, including the Armamentarium, the ludi Matutinus and Dacicus, the Spoliarium, and the Sanarium (Curiosum) or Samarium (Notitia). De Rossi, Junyent and Guidobaldi have made several suggestions concerning the function of the tufa-block building beside the domus under S. Clemente.

55 See NS (1888) 727-28 (1890) 60-61 and (1891) 335, for brief and barely informative announcements of the excavations. The Castra Hisenarium was the barracks which housed the detachment of sailors from Hisenum who handled the volarium at the Colosseum (Platner and Ashby, 1929, 105 and Euelsen and Jordan, 1906, 101). The discovery in this same area of several inscriptions which mention the castra has also led scholars to locate it here. See Euelsen and Jordan, 1906, 101 n.42 for the best discussion. The castra also appears on a fragment of the marble plan (Jordan, 1974, fr.5) and is mentioned in SEA, Comm. 15.

56 A storage facility for weapons (Platner and Ashby, 1929, 54 and Euelsen and Jordan, 1906, 300). Only the Notitia has the Armamentarium listed in Regio II. It is not listed in the Curiosum.

57 This is the entry as the Curiosum lists it. The Notitia has "ludum matutinum et Dacicum" in Regio III.

58 SEA, Comm. 16-19 and Sen. Ep. 93.12 mention this building. Platner and Ashby, 1929, 494, state that dead gladiators were stripped of their armor in this building. See also Euelsen and Jordan, 1906, 300.

59 Platner and Ashby, 1929, 463, suggest that it is a building where the weapons were maintained. See also Euelsen and Jordan, 1906, 300.

60 Junyent, 1932, 41-43, originally suggested that the tufa-block structure was the outer wall of the lot of a domus, although he noted that the construction was more suited to a public building. This countered De Rossi's suggestion in RAC, 1863b, 28, that this wall belonged to the mint, which was later associated with remains found further west. Guidobaldi, 1978, 27-28, made a good case for a horrea or an industrial site and ruled out any possibility that it was a private space, either domus or castra. Other suggestions include the pre-Trajanic moneta by Rodríguez-Almeida, 1981, 63, fig. 15, which Guidobaldi, 1978, 30-31, also suggested as a possibility. Guidobaldi favored the hypothesis that the building was a horrea and cited Suetonius, Nero 18, which mentions a horrea as part of the Domus Aurea, and also an inscription (CIL 6.9470) "...custos horrei [qui fuit ad ludum Gallicum]" already mentioned by Collini and Calza, 1962, 118 n.17. While the restoration of the inscription is plausible, associating the horrea mentioned with the remains east of the nithreaum depends on locating the Ludus Gallicum nearby (perhaps immediately to the south, across the modern Via Ss. Quattro).
Guidobaldi’s argument that it is a *horreum*⁶¹ is the most plausible, but whether it, too, was connected with the Colosseum is unknown.

Thus the immediate neighborhood of the mithraeum under S. Clemente was almost entirely occupied by buildings relating to the functions of the Colosseum. Despite the lack of archaeological evidence, *insulae* or *domus* may also have been present. However, the neighborhood was not primarily residential. Guidobaldi has suggested, quite plausibly, that the Flavian *domus* under S. Clemente was occupied by an official connected with the Colosseum or the mint, either the procurator of the *Ludus Magnus* or the procurator of the mint.⁶² If this were the case, argued Guidobaldi, the *domus* would have been "public" (i.e. state-owned), and the late 2nd-century renovations, which included the installation of the mithraeum, would have suggested new ownership by a private (and aristocratic) individual. He did not explain fully why the renovations must indicate that the building was purchased by a private individual, especially since it functioned as a *domus* throughout its existence. Perhaps the *domus* simply continued as a residence of a governmental official.

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⁶² Guidobaldi, forthcoming.

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THE BATHS OF TITUS

Because the existence of a mithraeum in the Baths of Titus (6D) is controversial, it is important to examine the equally disputed information about the baths themselves by investigating first the state of scholarly knowledge in the 16th century when Palladio published his plan of the baths; second, the 19th-century excavation of the baths; and finally, the implications of this information for the supposed mithraeum in the baths.

Very little remains of these baths, which were hastily built by Titus to coincide with the opening of the Colosseum in 80. Before the 1890s it was uncertain whether the Baths of Titus had even existed separately from the Baths of Trajan, and it was generally assumed that these larger baths had incorporated the smaller complex of Titus. The source of the confusion stemmed from a plan of the so-called "Thermae Titianae" made by the architect Andrea Palladio in 1550 (see fig.42a) The only other sources, the two regionary catalogues, listed "Thermas Titianas et Traianas" as if the baths were a single building with the names of two emperors.63 Lanciani resolved the controversy when he discussed an inscription which distinguished the Baths of

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63 Lanciani, 1903, 228-29, quoted at length a passage of Ligorio in which the latter described the location of the Baths of Titus in relation to those of Trajan (at the foot of the Esquiline, below the baths of Trajan). In his Memorie of 1594, Flaminio Vacca, too, described the remains of the Baths of Titus as being separate from those of Trajan. Thus it seems that certain topographers thought that there was sufficient evidence for two separate bath structures.
Titus from the Baths of Trajan by inserting the Baths of Agrippa between them.  

Lanciani had noted in 1880 that the baths were being prepared for excavation and would be opened to the public soon. Later, on map 30 of his Forma Urbis Romae (fig. 42a at center), he indicated that excavations in 1884 in the area of the palaestra (exercise area) of the Baths of Titus had exposed wall remains. The walls were not published in Notizie degli Scavi or Bullettnino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma during the 1880s. Several years later, however, Lanciani mentioned excavations in 1882 which revealed white marble columns. He argued that these remains vindicated Palladio’s claim for two separate baths. He further reported that the site of the baths had already been excavated several times before the 19th century, implying that few ancient remains could still be found there.

There are other publications of excavations in the area, but none reports these excavations of 1884. In 1887

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64 Lanciani, BCR (1895a) 110-15. The inscription is CIL 6.9787.
65 "Notes from Rome" on July 3, 1880 and November 27, 1880 (Cubberley, 1928, 81 and 88).
66 Platner and Ashby, 1929, 533-34, and Huelson and Jordan, 1906, 307-10 add little information.
67 Lanciani, BCR (1895a) 113-14.
68 Lanciani, BCR (1895a) 113, quoted Vacca, Memorie 116, who reported that in his day deep excavations on the site revealed that there had been a luxurious building whose cornices were removed and taken to the "chiesa del Gesù."
Visconti reported that excavations "under the remains of the baths of Titus" revealed fragments of statuary, including several heads and torsos from Jupiter Serapis, Isis (5 examples), Apollo, Mercury, and Flora.\textsuperscript{69} Visconti thought that the objects were not found \textit{in situ} and that they had been placed either in the Baths of Titus (because of their location) or in the temple of Isis (because of their content).\textsuperscript{70} Lanciani also knew about this cache and described it as being from "...the foundations of a new house on the north side of the (modern) Via Labicana...".\textsuperscript{71} If Lanciani reported the provenance correctly, then it is unlikely that he confused these excavations with those of 1884 which he noted on his map. Lanciani thought that these statues came from the temple of Isis in \textit{Regio III}, thus from somewhere further east on the Via Labicana, rather than from under the Baths of Titus.\textsuperscript{72} Excavations in 1895 on the side of the baths adjacent to the Colosseum finally revealed architectural remains, in this case a portico, of the Baths of Titus.

Thus, despite the number of excavations in this area of the Esquiline hill, few were reported at all, and few were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} Visconti, \textit{BGR} (1887) 132-36, specifically said "sotto gli avanzi delle terme di Tito" at a time when few believed such a structure existed. He further described the location as being approximately 100 m. from the modern church of Ss. Pietro e Marcellino.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Visconti, \textit{BGR} (1887) 132.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Lanciani, "Note from Rome," December 22nd, 1888 (Cubberley, 1988, 266).
\item \textsuperscript{72} Lanciani, ibid.
\end{itemize}
reported in easily obtainable sources. The implication for the mithraeum in the Baths of Titus is that the discussion of its topographical context must remain focused on the bath building itself and on the evidence for the Mithraic painting. However, it is possible to question whether the Mithraic painting was really located in the Baths of Titus. Modern knowledge of the painting comes from Pietro and Francesco Bartoli, two 17th-century engravers who were particularly interested in the Baths of Titus and Trajan and in the Domus Aurea and who made at least one drawing of the painting. They listed the provenance of several other paintings as either "from the baths of Titus" or "from the palace of Titus".

At issue is the identification of the "baths of Titus" as opposed to the "palace of Titus". Quoting another source, Vermaseren said that the painting was found in the "...house of Titus on 22 January, 1668 near the Colosseum." He did not cite the source of this quotation, and he did not clarify whether he thought the Baths of Titus and the "house of Titus" were the same building. Lanciani believed that the "palace" mentioned by the Bartolii referred to the Domus Aurea and that the "baths" referred to an entirely different structure. Both Lanciani and Platner and Ashby argued

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73 Vermaseren, 1956, 155, no.337.
74 Lanciani, BCR (1895b) 174-75.
75 Lanciani, BCR (1895b) 174-75; Platner and Ashby, 1929, 194.
that the *domus* ("palace") of Titus was Nero's Domus Aurea, and thus near the Baths of Titus. Their argument is based on Pliny the Elder's information that the statue of Laocoon was located in the "palace" of Titus.\(^6\) Although Pliny the Elder indicated that Titus did indeed live in the Domus Aurea, his information is not helpful in establishing the provenance of the Mithraic painting because the Baths of Titus were also built on land occupied by the Domus Aurea and its gardens.

If this painting were located in the Domus Aurea, it would be highly unlikely that either Nero or Titus had it painted because there is no evidence to indicate that Mithras was worshipped in Rome in the 1st century (see Chapter Four below). Moreover, the Baths of Titus remained in use longer than the Domus Aurea, which was largely built over by Trajan and Hadrian after it burned in 104. As Chapter Four will demonstrate, the earliest date for Mithraism in Rome falls in Trajan's reign. Thus the group of Mithraists who installed this mithraeum did so in the Baths of Titus and not the "palace."

It is arguable that when the painting in question was discovered in the 17th century, traces of the Baths of Titus depicted in Palladio's 16th-century drawing might have remained visible. On the other hand, the Baths of Titus might only have been a place-name attached to a spot where

\(^6\) Plin. *Nat.* 36.37. The statue was recovered on the slopes of the Esquiline hill in 1506 in the presence of many witnesses (among them Michelangelo), thus from the area once occupied by the Domus Aurea.
there were no longer any ancient remains. For lack of evidence to the contrary, it might be assumed that there was a mithraeum, and that it was in the Baths of Titus, which were independent both of the Domus Aurea and of the Baths of Trajan.

This alleged sanctuary certainly would have differed from the mithraeum in barracks of the Castra Peregrinorum on the Caelian hill, and from the private, domestic mithraeum under San Clemente. A mithraeum anywhere in the baths would have been markedly less private and secret. While the congregation might have had a core of regular members, its location in a public building almost certainly widened that circle. Lack of enough structural remains for the Baths of Titus may prevent specific knowledge of activities there, but the ample remains of the Baths of Caracalla provide an apt analogy. Recent studies on the substructures there have greatly increased scholarly understanding of the variety of functions of the subordinate rooms in bath complexes.77 Therefore, the topic of mithraea in imperial baths will be addressed more thoroughly below.

VIA GIOVANNI LANZA

The modern Via Giovanni Lanza follows the direction of the ancient Clivus Suburanus, which ascended the valley between the Oppian and the Viminal and Cispian hills from the Forum Transitorium. The lower part of the street, the

77 Schioler and Wikander, 1982, 47-64 and DeLaine, 1988, 11-32.
Argiletum, was a trade district known partly for its bookshops but mostly for its unsavoriness.\textsuperscript{78} The route continued to the Subura, another trade district known especially for its foulness.\textsuperscript{79} As it ascended the Oppian, the Clivus Suburus passed the Porticus of Livia and passed through a neighborhood whose finds suggest that it was full of \textit{insulae} and, often, well-appointed \textit{domus}.\textsuperscript{80}

The \textit{domus}, mithraeum and \textit{lararium} at Via Giovanni Lanza (7D) provide a particularly good example of a residence in this neighborhood. The one published report about the mithraeum included a tantalizing but non-specific reference to a house of the Constantinian period associated with it. Lanciani’s \textit{Forma Urbis Romae} map 23 (fig.43a) clearly illustrates remains which can be identified as part of a \textit{domus}. These remains were found in two places directly under and to the north of Via Giovanni Lanza, and Lanciani has labelled them "Scavi IV, 1884" and "Scavi II, 1890," respectively. Brief excavation reports appeared for both years.\textsuperscript{81} One account described the remains of the house as a

\textsuperscript{78} Platner and Ashby, 1929, 53-54. See also Martial, 1.2, 1.117.8-11, and 2.17.3.

\textsuperscript{79} The ancient sources are full of references, especially Martial. See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 501, for a good list.

\textsuperscript{80} For the Porticus of Livia see Platner and Ashby, 1929, 423 and Jordan, 1874, frags.10, 11 and 109. The conclusion that the neighborhood was residential is based on the recovery of numerous \textit{mosaic} pavements and statue fragments from the area. These are published in numerous short announcements in the \textit{P.R.R.} "Trovantici" during the 1870s and 1880s.

\textsuperscript{81} The best, but unillustrated report is in \textit{NS} (1884) 153-54 and 189. See also \textit{P.R.} (1884) 48-49 and (1885) 27-36 and Tav.3-5 (the report on the \textit{lararium} and the mithraeum). The remains on the northern side of Via Giovanni Lanza are not well published. \textit{NS} (1890) 29-30, discusses a 4th-century hoard of bronze coins from the time of Maxentius to Honorius, but the
corner of a room connected with an apsidal room joined to
two other small rooms and a nymphaeum. The walls of the
apsidal room were built of *opus listatum* (alternating layers
of brick and tufa) (fig. 43b reproduces the plan). The walls
of the other two rooms were stuccoed *opus reticulatum*, and
one of the rooms was painted with idyllic scenes. Two of
three semi-circular walls of the triconch nymphaeum remain
(fig. 42b). A room with a semi-circular bath revetted with
marble and lined with about 1200 hollow ceramic tubes was
also recovered.

This mithraeum is the second associated with a *domus*,
but it differs from that under S. Clemente (5D) in two
fundamental respects. The first is the context, for unlike
the *domus* under S. Clemente, which may have been occupied by
an official, this *domus* seems to have been fully private.
The second is the date: the house, and probably the
mithraeum as well, are Constantinian. The evidence for this
Constantinian date deserves some attention. Although
conclusive archaeological evidence is lacking, the mithraeum
and the house are so close together that they must be
related. The *domus* is founded on and partially composed of

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82 *NS* (1884) 153.
83 *NS* (1884) and *NS* (1884) 189. Remains of a water-pipe were found in the wall of
the central niche, as well as a bronze panther-head fountain. One of the walls had seven niches with
statues which included an Eros and a female figure dressed in a tunic and mantle.
84 *NS* (1884) 189.

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structures with brick stamps dating to the Antonine period, whereas the wall construction of the lararium and the structure into which the mithraeum was built indicates that these buildings are earlier. However, the contents of the lararium and the installation of the mithraeum may be later than the structures into which they were built and thus contemporary with the domus.

The significance of the lararium and the mithraeum lies in the identity and range of the deities worshipped in them. The life-size statue of Isis-Fortuna was prominent in the lararium, but figurines of Jupiter-Serapis and a relief of Horus were also present among the more traditional Roman deities, Jupiter, Diana, Venus, Mars and Hercules. This group represents the eclectic polytheism in Roman religion, but the presence of the Egyptian deities, even combined with Roman deities, and of Mithras, is also a function of changing practices in Roman religion. Evidence indicates that the popularity of any deity was variable. For example, imported oriental deities such as Cybele and Attis or Isis and Osiris were worshipped during the Republic, but they became distinctly more popular during the empire. Indeed, during the imperial period the variety of these foreign cults grew with, or as a result of, their popularity, and

85 BCP (1885) 29.

86 None of the reports discusses the brick stamps of the no longer extant lararium. However, the walls of the structure of the mithraeum are opus reticulatum at the top of the stairs and brick lower down. No evidence from brick stamps evidence is reported, but the opus reticulatum on top of the brickwork certainly indicates that the structure is not constantinian.
were practiced throughout the empire. Sculpture, shrines, and sanctuaries from private domus like this one, from public contexts, and also from inscriptions from the city of Rome indicate that oriental deities were especially popular there in the 4th century. Thus 4th-century religious trends make it more plausible to date the contents of the lararium and the installation of the mithraeum to the Constantinian period, contemporary with the house, than to associate them with the earlier structures into which they were built. 87

**THE STATIO COHORTIS II VIGILIAE AND THE DOLICHENUS**

The statio (barracks) of the Second Cohort and the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus may provide a context for four Mithraic monuments (see 8P in Chapter Two) found near the modern Piazza Dante in the immediate vicinity of the ancient barracks and the temple. The location of these buildings has been disputed, and it is necessary to review briefly the evidence for their existence and location before discussing their possible relationship to the four Mithraic monuments.

It is thought that the barracks of the Second Cohort and temple of Jupiter Dolichenus lay somewhat to the east of the Via Giovanni Lanza, and immediately to the east of the

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87 Professor Russell T. Scott kindly brought to my attention the Domus Fulminata at Ostia (III.7.3), a house of the 60s or 70s CE with Hadrianic period modifications. The peristyle, originally a garden, had two dining couches added during the later restorations. Between the couches is an altar, and behind them, a lararium (see fig.14). According to Carlo Pavolini, this 2nd-century change reflects a transitional period when peristyles began to take on the function of a central room in the house (Pavolini, 1986 166-68). Professor Scott suggested that the Via Giovanni Lanza mithraeum also reflected this later trend, perhaps making double use of dining couches in the garden by the lararium because the mithraeum itself was too small for them. See Becatti, 1953, Map sheet 11; Becatti, 1962, 104-109, nos. 191-207, figs. 37-43 and tav. 55; Packer, 1971, 6-7, 11, 71, 171-72, plan 22 and pls. 54-55; and Packer, 1967, 80ff.
modern Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele and the Piazza Dante (see fig. 44, along the course of the ancient Via Merulana at the left). The only evidence for their location comes from the provenance of figurines, reliefs, and inscriptions dedicated by members of the Second Cohort to Jupiter Dolichenus. However, when De Rossi published an article in 1858 about the stationes of ancient Rome, the location of the barracks of the Second Cohort was generally believed to be further east near the Porta Maggiore on the basis of two inscribed monuments recovered from near the area in 1734. The content of the inscriptions provided evidence for a temple to Jupiter Dolichenus within the barracks, but the location of the barracks remained uncertain.

Several years after De Rossi's article the recovery of several dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus including inscribed bases, reliefs, and eleven military diplomas indicated that the barracks were not near the Porta Maggiore but more than a kilometer to the west. In 1874 the demolition of an old wall (whether ancient or not is never explicitly stated) revealed several more dedications to

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88 De Rossi, 1858, 278-85. For the monuments see Merlat, 1951, nos.223-24.

89 The first monument was dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus on behalf of Septinius Severus by Decimus Iunius Pacatus with his son Alexander through an agent, Caecilius Rufus, a centurion under the sacerdotes Sopatrus, Marinus and Calus. The second inscription marked the dedication of a tetrastyle nymphaeum and an altar on behalf of Commodus by Marcus Caecilius Iulia Rufus Concordia, a centurion of the III Cirenaica, through the agent Clodius Catullus, a praefect of the vigiles, Orbius Letaianus, an under-praefect, and Castricius Honoratus, a tribune of the second cohort, on 31 July 191. Visconti RCR (1875), 214-15, put forward this opinion, but De Rossi, ADI (1858), disagreed.
Jupiter Dolichenus.⁹⁰ Eleven military diplomas were recovered from another part of the same wall, and among these were dedications to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Apollo, Juno, Sol, and Asclepius.⁹¹ Visconti argued that all of these deities reflect aspects of Jupiter Dolichenus without naming him specifically, and that dedications to different deities within one sanctuary are common.⁹² He concluded that the prevalence of dedications to aspects of Jupiter and other solar deities indicated a sanctuary to Jupiter, and most likely one to Jupiter Dolichenus.⁹³ Visconti further concluded, on the basis of the military diplomas recovered nearby, that this sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus was within the barracks, and that these barracks were near the Piazza Dante and S. Eusebius (rather than the Port Maggiore).⁹⁴ His argument is plausible, and it is now generally accepted.

Whether it is possible to associate the four Mithraic monuments found in the southeast corner of the modern Piazza Dante (0.5 km. to the southeast) with the barracks remains

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⁹⁰ Visconti, BCR (1875) 204-20. These included a base was dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus by T. Aelius Hilarus, a freedman of T. Aelius Heraogenes (BCR (1875) 208 and Tav.21.1 and Merlat, 1951, no.228); a figurine of the god (BCR (1875) Tav.21.2 and Merlat, 1951, no.226); an inscribed base with a figure of a deer’s head (BCR (1875), Tav.21.3 and Merlat, 1951, no. 227); a figurine of a bull’s head (BCR (1875), Tav.21.4 and Merlat, 1951, no.229); and a small inscribed altar with reliefs pertaining to the cult (BCR (1875), Tav. 21.5).

⁹¹ See Lanciani, BCR (1875) 77-82 and Henzen, BCR (1875) 83-117.

⁹² Visconti, BCR (1875), 217.

⁹³ Visconti, BCR (1875), 218-19.

⁹⁴ Visconti, BCR (1875), 216-17. The military diplomas were published by Henzen, BCR (1875) 83-117.
an open question. Though incompletely understood, the provenance of these Mithraic monuments (possibly from a house with a private mithraeum, see 8P in Chapter Two above) is too specific and too far from the location of the barracks to permit the association. Thus this urban barracks does not support the conclusion expected from the "provincial model," that soldiers were especially attracted to Mithraism at Rome.

CONCLUSION: THE ESQUILINE HILL

This investigation of the topographical context of the mithraea on the Esquiline hill has proven slightly more informative than that for the Caelian hill, and it has begun to reveal a pattern in the location of mithraea in Rome. The three mithraea from the Esquiline hill were located in different contexts. The Severan-period mithraeum under S. Clemente, although part of a domus, was located in a neighborhood whose buildings all related to the varied functions of the Colosseum. The argument has thus been advanced that the domus with the mithraeum was also related to the Colosseum.

Like the mithraeum under S. Clemente, the evidence for the mithraeum at Via Giovanni Lanza indicates that it, too, was part of a domus, although one dated to the 4th century and located in a completely residential neighborhood. This mithraeum was actually too small to permit the performance of the entire liturgy inside it, and it certainly could not have held more than half a dozen people at one time. Many
activities, especially the cult meal, must have been carried out in the garden above the mithraeum (see infra n.88). None of the archaeological evidence has revealed the owner of the mithraeum or the other members of the congregation.

Finally, the mithraeum in the Baths of Titus existed in an entirely different context: the subterranean structures of a bath complex. Unlike the mithraeum in domus, this one would probably have had a larger and more socially varied congregation. While this mithraeum probably lacked the privacy and secrecy enjoyed by the other mithraeum in domus, it was so enclosed by the bath structure that exploring the neighborhood surrounding the baths is superfluous. Presumably any client of the baths could have worshipped in this mithraeum. Since these baths were the first truly imperial baths in the city of Rome, its clients undoubtedly came from all parts of Rome.

THE QUIRINAL HILL (Regio VI)

The Quirinal hill is distinctive not only because of the number and antiquity of its many temples, but also because its main street, the Alta Semita, was lined with houses of prominent Romans throughout Roman history.\footnote{Tradition holds that Numa lived here, but there are more solid literary references for other prominent and less mythical Romans. See Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 418-29 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 154-98. Good general discussions of the inhabitants of the Alta Semita can also be found in Santangolo, 1941, 144-54 and Lanciani, PPR (1889) 379-91.} The Quirinal hill was also the site of several Mithraic dedications and three definite mithraea, on the grounds of
the Barberini palace (12D), in the house of the Nummii Albini on the modern Via XX Settembre (13D), and in the Castra Praetoria (14D). The following examination of the neighborhood of these mithraea begins at the lower end of the Alta Semita (the modern Via del Quirinale and Via XX Settembre), moves on briefly to the area of the modern Via Nazionale, and ends at the Castra Praetoria (fig. 45a). It focuses on the consistently residential character of the Quirinal hill, particularly in the areas immediately surrounding the mithraea. Chapter Four will explore further the significance of this area as residential and its implications for the development of Mithraism in Rome.

THE ANCIENT ALTA SEMITA

At the southern end of the Quirinal were the baths of Constantine (see fig. 46), located in a trapezoid formed by four ancient streets: the Alta Semita, the Vicus Longus, the Clivus Salutaris, and the Vicus Lacus Fundani. These baths, built before 315, were the last of the great imperial baths. Excavations beginning in 1876 in what was then the Palazzo Rospigliosi-Pallavicini revealed the great hemicycle delimiting the palaestra of the baths and earlier remains of three rows of 10 tabernae, each dated to before 150 CE by

96 The finds of the excavations are announced in NS (1876) 11, 25, 55, 73 and 99, (1877) 204 and 267-68, (1878) 91-92, 233, and 340, and (1880) 32 and 52; RCR (1876) 102-6 and (1895) 88 and pls. 6-13; and BCH, (1898) 273-74 and (1900) 309-10. See also Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 439-40 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 525-26. There is a general discussion in Lanciani, RCR (1889) 379-91; in Huelsen, RM (1894a) 384-88 and 396-403; and in Santangelo, 1941, 203-8. Despite earthquakes and fire and subsequent restoration in 443 by the urban praefect, Petronius Perpenna Magnus Quadratus (CIL 6.1750), the baths were still standing in the 17th century, at which time drawings and plans were made (see Santangelo, 1941, 204-205).
their brickwork (fig.46, bottom center). Also recovered from beneath the hemicycle, on the eastern side, were remains of a domus and a nymphaeum which have been dated to the early Antonine period, and which are thought to have belonged to T. Avidius Quietus. Although the remains of the baths were located near the Mithraic finds from the modern Via Mazzarino (fig.46, directly below the baths), it is not possible to associate these directly with the baths, the row of tabernae, or the domus with the nymphaeum.

Further up the Alta Semita, at the modern Via Quattro Fontane, was the temple of the Gens Flavia and also their domus (fig.45a, at number "12" at center).

Further still (now the modern Via XX Settembre) was the area immediately southwest of the Baths of Diocletian, now underlying the Ministero della Guerra (fig.45a and fig.47, 97 97 See Vespiqiani, BCR (1876) 102-20 and Tav. 16-17. After the baths were completed, only one row, or ten tabernae, remained. Although Vespiqiani wanted to associate these remains with an area called decess tabernae mentioned in Regio VI of the regionary catalogus, his view is not generally accepted.

98 These remains are dated later than the only known T. Avidius Quietus, who was a legate under Domitian. However, the remains are definitely those of a domus. See Vespiqiani, BCR (1877) 59-65; Visconti, BCR (1877) 73 for the inscription; NS (1877) 267-68; and BCR (1878) 276. See also Santangelo, 1941, 146. For the reports of new excavations in 1980 see BCR 90 (1985) 77-80; and also Vilucchi, 1985 and Vilucchi, BCR (1986) 350-355, which discuss new and old findings. For other remains nearby see Lanciani, BCR (1886) 134-91.

99 On the basis of a marble cipus inscribed with the name of Flavius Sabinus (CIL 6.29788), as well as pipes inscribed with the names of T. Flavius Sabinus (CIL 15.7451) and T. Flavius Salinato (CIL 15.7452). For the publication of these see Huelsen, BW (1894) 399-401. See NS (1893) 418, for another fragment with the name T. Flavius Sabinus which was found in 1893 further up the street at the modern Via Firenze and the Via XX Settembre. See also Platner and Ashby, 1929, 180 and 247 and Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 426. The house is mentioned in literary sources: Suet. Dom. 1.5; Mart. 9.1.8, 3.12, 20.1 and 34.7 and SHA, Trig. Tyr. 33.6. Domitian is said to have built the temple on the remains of his father's house. Whether the temple was separate from the house belonging to Vespasian's brother, T. Flavius Sabinus (Tac. Hist. 3.69), is unclear. The problem is complicated by the lack of architectural remains.
lower right). Excavations for the foundations of this building in the early 1880s revealed several domus of different periods (fig.45a).\textsuperscript{100} The discovery of an inscription in 1641 had already indicated the provenance of the house of Q. Valerius Vegetus, suffect consul in 91.\textsuperscript{101} By calculating the original provenance of this pipe and by identifying a unique type of construction used in the domus, Alessandro Capannari was able to associate certain architectural remains with the domus Valeri Vegeti.\textsuperscript{102} Near the domus Valeri Vegeti were remains of another domus associated with Vulpacius Rufinus on the basis of an inscribed statue base (fig.45a, upper right quadrant).\textsuperscript{103} The inscription gives his cursus honorum and also states that the base was erected in vestibulo domus (in the vestibule of his house).\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{100} See NS (1884) 40, 102-3, 154, 221-22 and 422, and for a synthesis, Santangelo, 1941, 152-54.

\textsuperscript{101} See Lanciani, EHR map 16 (fig.45a here) and CIL 15.7558. See also Platner and Ashby, 1929, 197 and Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 428 and n.95.

\textsuperscript{102} See Capannari, ECR (1885) 11-12, for a discussion of the original provenance of the water-pipe. Capannari, NS (1884) 102-3, associated this water-pipe with newly discovered remains of a lavishly decorated nympheum with an elaborate plumbing system. He then associated these architectural remains with the Valeri Vegeti on the basis of their proximity to the inscription found in the 17th century. However, Capannari also identified a stretch of wall 1.5 m. long x 0.40 m. high x 0.22 m. wide and consisting of two slabs of plaster filled with compact earth as formacon or terra parietes (Plin. Nat. 35.48.169). This construction was common to Spain and North Africa, and Capannari, ECR (1885) 13-17, was able to connect Q. Valerius Vegetus to Spain through inscriptions (CIL 2.2074 and 2077) dedicated by his wife and mother and also through his probable proconsulship there.

\textsuperscript{103} CIL 6.32051. See NS (1884) 40 and 188 and ECR (1884) 45.

\textsuperscript{104} Discussion of the inscription appears in Capannari, ECR (1885) 17-21. Vulpacius Rufinus was the uncle of Gallus (ECR [1883] 234) and praetorian praefect under Valentinian (Ann. Mar. 27.7.2, CIL 3.4180 and 8.2403). He was also consul in 347, urban praefect in 349 and in 366,
The Domus of the Nummii Albini

Further to the northeast were found the remains of the domus of the Nummii Albini, which had a mithraeum (see 13D in Chapter Two and figs.454a-b, upper right at the number "1"). The earliest discovery on the site was an inscribed base dedicated to M. Nummius Albinus on the occasion of his second consulship in 345. An inscription to another relative, M. Nummius Attidianus Tuscus, was recovered in 1877, and still more fragments referring to the Nummii Albini were recovered in 1883. Two fragments found ten months apart in 1884 and 1885 refer to Flavius Valerius Constantius and Marcus Aurelius Maximianus, and mention Nummius Tuscus as urban praefect (302-303).

The archaeological remains associated with the domus of the Nummii Albini consisted of a cryptoporticus surrounding several vaulted rooms, one of which had been converted to a mithraeum. Capannari argued that the surrounding rooms

among other offices. See also Chastagnol, 1962, 73 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 198 and Huelson and Jordan, 1906, 442 and n.140. Capannari, PCSR (1885) 17, reported that the base was discovered in a room paved with several different types of colored marble.

105 For the general discussion, see Santangelo, 1941, 153.

106 Chastagnol, 1962, 127.

107 See CIL 6.1748 for the first inscription. For the second see BCR (1877) 168 no.145 and Capannari, PCSR (1885) 6, and for the fragments see NS (1883) 233-34. See also Chastagnol, 1962, 30. According to PLRE I, 1142, M. Nummius Attidianus Tuscus may have been the great uncle of M. Nummius Albinus.

108 Chastagnol, 1962, 38-39, no.12, reports that Nummius Tuscus may have been the son of M. Nummius Tuscus. See NS (1884) 103 and 422 for the lower half and Capannari, PCSR (1885), 7 for the upper half. This article was a year too early to contain any discussion of archaeological remains. Instead it focuses on the various known members of the Nummii Albini.

109 Capannari, PCSR (1886) 17-26 and Tav.4.
were also associated with Mithraic activities, although no evidence (beyond circumstantial) supporting such a theory has been recovered. However, Capannari used the surrounding topography effectively in his discussion and conclusions. He first cited an inscription found on the other side of the Alta Semita, opposite the domus of the Nummii Albini, which mentions Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius as a pater in the cult of Mithras. He then underscored the close ties between the two families through marriage and through M. Nummius Ceionius Annius Albinus, praetor and urban praefect in the later 3rd century. On the basis of the familial relationship and the interest of both parties in Mithraism, he suggested that Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius was a pater in the mithraeum in the domus of the Nummii Albini.

The Domus of the Ceionii Kamenii

Before examining Capannari's hypothesis thoroughly, it is important to examine the archaeological evidence for the domus of the Ceionii Kamenii (see fig. 45, upper right by the word "nymphaeum" and figs. 47a-b). This evidence includes

110 Capannari, BCR (1886) 24-25. However, in 1893 when the Methodist and Episcopal church at the corner of Via Firenze and Via Venti Settembre was built, the excavation of its foundation revealed still more architectural remains and fragments of statuary from the domus of the Nummii Albini. See HS (1893) 357-58, 418-19, 430-31 and 517 and (1894) 13-14.

111 For the inscription see HS (1884) 221-22 and BCR (1884) 43-44. Capannari also refers to his previous publication, BCR (1885) 10.


113 Capannari, BCR (1886) 25.
architectural remains of part of a peristyle courtyard found at the corner of the modern Vicolo di S. Nicola and the Via del Quirinale (now part of the grounds of the Palazzo Barberini). Lancaster associated these architectural remains with the Ceionii Kamenii because of the provenance of the inscription mentioned above and because of a second inscription, found in the process of building the Palazzo Barberini, which has the same text as the first and differs only in the quality of the lettering.

The domus of the Kamenii lay within a few meters of not one but two mithraea, the Barberini mithraeum discussed above and that in the domus of the Nummii Albini. The Barberini mithraeum was constructed during the Severan period (see 13D in Chapter Two), but it is difficult to determine when it went out of use. It is so close to the remains of the domus of the Ceionii Kamenii that it might have been on their property, but since Lancaster did not describe the architecture in detail, and since the remains of the domus of the Kamenii are now inaccessible, the connection between the two structures cannot be determined now.

Capannari’s proposal that Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius attended the mithraeum of the Nummii Albini is more plausible than the one that he owned the Barberini mithraeum

114 Lancaster, BCR (1884) 44 and Tav.4, reports this information very briefly.
115 CIA, 6.1675.
because of the proximity and contemporary date of the two domus, as well as the connection between the two families. Moreover, it is possible to identify a different owner for the Barberini mithraeum. The domus of Spurius Maximus has been located near the Barberini mithraeum on the basis of a lead pipe bearing his name found in the Barberini gardens in 1628 (fig. 47a, upper left). This Spurius Maximus might be identified as the L. Spurius Maximus who was a tribune of the Cohors IV vigilum under Septimius Severus. The remains of a large nymphaeum lying on both sides of the Vicolo di S. Nicola also found in 1628 have often been associated with Spurius Maximus rather than with the domus of the Ceionii Kamenii. This nymphaeum could have belonged to either residence because it has not been dated. However, the Severan date of the mithraeum and the possibility that the Spurius Maximus of the lead pipe was L. Spurius Maximus, the Severan tribune, makes a good case for him as the owner of the Barberini mithraeum.

116 CIL 15.7540.

117 CIL 6.643. See Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 427 and n. 95; CIL 15.7540 and PIR 3.258 n. 583.

118 See Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, who discuss the publication of the lead pipe and the nymphaeum. The nymphaeum is also discussed in Huelsen, BH (1897) 85-86 and Lanciani, ECR (1872-72) 227 n. 1 (both are helpful for the 17th-century sources).

119 Verssen, 1951, 63, noted the proximity of the mithraeum and the proposed domus of L. Spurius Maximus, but made no direct connection between the two.
The Castra Praetoria

The Castra Praetoria lay at the culmination of the Alta Semita outside the Porta Collina. The remains include much of the eastern wall of the barracks, which was also a part of the Aurelian wall (fig. 48). The other walls of the camp did not survive as well, and the exact extent of the castra was not established until 1872 and 1873, when excavations exposed small parts of the western wall and the interior barracks. 120 It was not until 1983 that excavations revealed large portions of the central structures of the barracks. 121 Although remains of a mithraeum have never been recovered, the evidence indicates that there was one in the barracks. As discussed in Chapter Two (see 14D), the composition of the praetorian guard and dedications made by certain of its members had implications not only for the mithraeum here, but for Mithraism in the city of Rome as a whole.

The evidence from this residential neighborhood along the Alta Semita thus demonstrates the existence of mithraea and Mithraists from two different periods, the Severan period and the 4th century, and from two different social groups, senators and non-senatorial provincials. The Mithraic evidence from the modern Via Nazionale, which lies

120 Lanciani and Visconti, BCR (1872-73) 5-20. Because of the nature of the excavations, this article is a list and brief commentary on the finds rather than a synthetic discussion of the castra and its remains. See also Antonielli, BCR 41 (1913) 31-47 about the orientation of the castra.

to the east and runs parallel to the modern Via del Quirinale (ancient Alta Semita) also had a residential context, albeit one that is not as firmly established or as closely dated (see 15-17P in Chapter Two).

The Modern Via Nazionale

Three possible mithraea were recovered on the Via Nazionale: one across from the church of S. Vitale (15P), another only a few meters away at the corner of Via Venezia and Via Nazionale (16P), and a third in the Temple of Serapis (17P). The evidence for these possible mithraea was not extensive, and although architectural remains were recovered for the mithraeum at S. Vitale, the sanctuaries were not reported in great detail. Because so little is known about the recovery of these sanctuaries, it is difficult to establish their topographical context. However, in the following brief survey of the area immediately surrounding these Mithraic finds, the available evidence indicates that these sanctuaries were also in a residential neighborhood.

At the corner of Via Venezia near the Via Nazionale (the area just across from S. Vitale) four rooms of opus latericium with mosaic floors were recovered in 1872 (see fig. 49, at right). These remains were identified as a house dated to 123 CE on the basis of consular dates among the stamps on water-pipes.  

122 See Lanciani, RCR (1872-73) 69-71.
nothing to do with these rooms, but it is also impossible to
discern from the excavation reports how close this house was
to the mithraeum.

Slightly to the north of the two mithraea, between Via
Modena and Via Nazionale, were found the remains of a late
3rd-century domus with wall-paintings and columns of giallo
antico marble. The date was assigned on the basis of a
brickstamp from the time of Diocletian.\textsuperscript{123} In 1879 remains of
a domus were recovered between the Via Torino and the Via
Firenze. These remains included the corner of a peristyle
with columns of stuccoed brick, along with a lararium and
other stuccoed walls dated to the reign of Marcus Aurelius
by brickstamps.\textsuperscript{124} Finally, near the Via Torino, the remains
of a domus with a peristyle courtyard were found. The house
is dated by brickstamps to 138.\textsuperscript{125}

CONCLUSION: THE QUIRINIAL HILL

In many respects the approach which the present
investigation takes, that of reconstructing the
neighborhoods surrounding each mithraeum, is most successful
for the ancient Quirinal hill. Three factors influence this
success. The first is the number and quality of the
excavations carried out on the Quirinal. The task of

\textsuperscript{123} See Lanciani, \textit{RCR} (1872-73), 68-69. Among the finds recovered were a statue
fragment of a copy of Praxiteles' faun, a head of Bacchus and the head of an unknown figure.

\textsuperscript{124} See \textit{NS} (1879) 38. Among the finds were a statue of Jupiter in the lararium, a
youth carrying water, Fortuna, a headless bust of a woman, a head of Arianna, and a copy of the
Hermaphrodite. Also recovered were many coins and other objects of bronze, iron and terracotta.

\textsuperscript{125} The consulship of Nigrus and Cæsarinius. See Lanciani, \textit{RCR} (1872-73), 66-67.
creating sufficiently wide road-beds for the Via del Quirinale, the Via XX Settembre, and the Via Nazionale was immense and revealed many ancient remains as a by-product. Certain other key 19th-century building projects, such as the building for the Ministero della Guerra, greatly added to modern knowledge of the ancient remains. The second factor is the ability to identify and trace with confidence the residential character of the ancient neighborhood over several centuries. Archaeologists are more certain about this area than other parts of ancient Rome. Finally, the fortunate discovery of inscriptions naming well-documented families and individuals (the Nummii Albini, the Ceionii Kamenii, and L. Spurius Maximus) associated with architectural remains including Mithraic sanctuaries allows more substantiated speculation about Mithraists here than in other areas of Rome. In the case of the Castra Praetoria, Mithraic dedications by members of the guard even permit, with great certainty, the identification of a mithraeum in the barracks despite the lack of architectural remains for a sanctuary.

THE CAMPUS MARTIUS AND THE CAPITOLINE HILL (Regiones VII-IX)

Augustus' Regio VII included the southern slopes of the Pincian hill and the northeastern part of the Campus Martius. On the Pincian hill were several gardens which were passed from one owner to another throughout the empire. Down on the plain of the Campus Martius the neighborhood was
quit different. Although the area lay outside the *pomerium*
until well into the empire, some of the oldest and most
sacred shrines of the city were there. \(^{126}\) During the early
Republic this open field was the place for military and
citizen assemblies, but it gradually became the showcase for
the spoils and wealth gained from Rome’s emergence as an
empire. Little Mithraic evidence has been retrieved from the
Campus Martius. Chapter Two discussed two definite mithraea
found in the Campus Martius. The first (22D) was on the
eastern side of the Via Lata near Aurelian’s temple to Sol
(the modern Piazza S. Silvestro). This mithraeum lay between
Augustus’ horologium and the Ara Pacis to the west and the
Castra Urbana to the east in the northern Campus Martius.
The other mithraeum (23D) lay under the modern church of S.
Lorenzo in Damaso in an area of the southwestern Campus
Martius from which few remains have been recovered.

PIAZZA S. SILVESTRO

Around the area now occupied by the Piazza S. Silvestro
lay the Horologium and Ara Pacis of Augustus, the graves of
Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, the *Castra Urbana*,\(^{127}\)

\(^{126}\) First and foremost among these was the *Altar of Mars*, whose specific location is
unknown (Platner and Ashby, 1929, 328-29). In the northwest corner of the Campus Martius was an
*altar to Dis and Persephone* six meters underground (Platner and Ashby, 1929, 152). There were
several Republican monuments of unknown location: the *temple of Fons*, a shrine to Feronia, the
temples of Pietas and Castor, the temple of the Nymphs, and the temple of Fortuna Huiusce Diei
(Platner and Ashby, 1929, 102, 207, 210, 216, 363, 399-90).

\(^{127}\) Aurelian built these barracks for the urban cohorts, previously part of the
*Castra Praetoria*, in an area called the Campus Agrippa. Several sources indicate that the *castra* was
east of Aurelian’s temple of Sol and also near the *Forum Suarium*. For a general discussion, see
Hueisen and Jordan, 1906, 452 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 103.
the Forum Suarium (fig. 50). The location of the most immediate monuments, the castra and the forum, has been determined by the provenance of inscriptions, but also, tentatively, by the order of monuments listed in the regionary catalogues. Aurelian's temple of Sol lay directly west of the castra, along the Via Lata. South of the castra and the temple lay the Statio cohortis I vigilum, the headquarters of the praefect of the vigiles.

Only a few Mithraic monuments have been recovered from this area. These monuments are inscriptions from a 4th-century mithraeum built by the senators Nonius Victor Olympus and Aurelius Victor Augentius (22D), but they do not refer to the castra or any other building.

123 It is CIL 6.1156 which connects the cohortes urbanae with the administration of this forum, which is mentioned in the Notitia. See also CIL 6.3728-31046, and 6.5631; SHA, Aur. 35 and Vict., de Caes. 35. See also Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 452-53 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 237.

129 The exact notation in the regionary catalogues is: "campus Agrippae, templum Solis et castra, porticum Gysani et Constantini, templo duo novi Spoi et Fortunae, eqvum Tiridatis regis Armeniorum, forum suarium" (Notitia, Regio VII). Scholars have generally concluded that these monuments were located in the Campus Agrippae because they follow it in the list (see Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 452 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 108). Such an assumption has proven to be inappropriate many of the other regiones. The actual location of several of these monuments is a problem. This reference is the only one to the temples of Nova Spes and Fortuna (Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 465 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 493). The location of the equestrian monument of Tiridates is also unknown (see Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 456, and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 493). The two porticoes, "Gysani et Constantini," should be "Vipsani et Constantini." The Porticus Gysani ran along the modern Via del Tritone, while the the Porticus Constantini ran along the Via Lata. Excavations for both are reported in NS (1915) 35 ff., (1917) 9-20; and PRR (1887) 116-18, (1892) 275-79, (1895) 46-48, (1914) 209, (1915) 218, and (1917) 220.

130 The evidence indicates that Aurelian restored the area. He built the temple of Sol after he returned from the east in 273. The temple was reputed to be quite lavish (SHA, Aur. 1.3; 10.2; 25.6; 28.5; 39.2, 6 and Vict. de Caes. 35.7, Eutropius, 9.15). Roscher (4.1147-48) has argued that the Sol worshipped in this temple was a mix of Ba'al and Sol or Helios. See also Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 453-55 and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 491-493.

131 See Huelisen and Jordan, 1906, 461-62. Several inscriptions attest the location of this statio, which is also illustrated on a fragment of the marble plan (Jordan, 1874, fr.36).
architectural remains or Mithraic dedications substantiate the existence of a mithraeum within or directly associated with the temple of Sol. However, the general area, including the southern slope of the Quirinal hill and the eastern Campus Martius, had long been the site of temples to Oriental and solar deities. To the southeast was the huge temple to Serapis built by Caracalla into the southern slope of the Quirinal hill, and to the southwest was the temple of Isis and Serapis at the Saepta Julia. Cumont marked the beginning of sun worship in the area with Nero’s initiation as a magus on the occasion of Tidates’ visit to Rome to be recognized as the king of Armenia. Whether the location of sanctuaries to solar deities nearby actually influenced Nonius Victor Olympius’ and Aurelius Victor Augentius’ decision to build a mithraeum in this area cannot be proven conclusively. The religious character of the area does, however, raise the expectation of finding more mithraea here in the future.

S. LORENZO IN DAMASO (THE WESTERN CAMPUS MARTIUS)

The western part of the Campus Martius in Regio IX resembled its eastern counterpart in Regio VII. The entire Campus Martius had long streets lined with porticoes or tabernae and dominated by large public or religious buildings rather than domus (although the evidence for the

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132 Suet. Nero 13.30. Cumont, 1913, 85-86, remarked that the initiation might signify the beginning of Mithraism in Rome, but this idea has received little attention, probably for lack of evidence, and it is rarely even alluded to now.
presence of insulae is increasing). The western Campus Martius was bordered by the Via Lata, which ran from the Capitoline to the Porta Flaminia, and the Tiber.\textsuperscript{133} The area south of the Via Recta (which ran from the Via Lata at the column of Marcus Aurelius to the river) and north of the Vicus Aesculatus (which ran from the Capitoline to the Pons Neronianus by the mausoleum of Hadrian) was full of the circuses, porticoes, stadia, and theaters which represented Rome's transition to an empire. Current evidence suggests that only one definite mithraeum lay in Regio IX, that under S. Lorenzo in Damaso. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence from this area does not permit reconstruction of the buildings in its immediate neighborhood, except for the stadium of Domitian and the theater of Pompey. It is unlikely that these buildings had any relation to the mithraeum since they were too far away from it. Therefore, it is difficult to make any conclusions about the neighborhood of this mithraeum solely on the basis of the present evidence.

A similar situation exists with the possible mithraeum, on the lower slopes of the Capitoline (in Regio VIII). The mithraeum itself is barely represented by architectural

\textsuperscript{133} The area was so large that sections of it had different names. For example, the Prata Flaminia were in the southern end just west of the Capitoline; the Codeta Minor was an area west of the stadium of Domitian; the Trigarium lay on the western side along the Tiber; the Tarentum was in the very northwest corner where the altar of Dis and Persephone was located; and the Ciconiae Nixae was south of the mausoleum of Augustus.

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remains, and the evidence for the nearby buildings (which were perhaps domus) is even more limited.

It is not clear why so few mithraea, and even Mithraic monuments, have been recovered from the Campus Martius. The area lay outside the pomerium only until the time of Hadrian, but evidence from other regiones has already revealed that mithraea could be located both inside and outside the pomerium. Although there are contexts for mithraea similar to those elsewhere in the city (baths, barracks, and domus), no Mithraic dedications or architectural remains of mithraea have been recovered from these types of buildings in the Campus Martius. The baths of Nero and Severus Alexander and of Agrippa in the central part of the Campus have not produced any evidence of Mithraism, and neither have the barracks of the urban cohorts or any of the insulae. Although cryptoporticoes and other vaulted architectural elements, an integral part of stadia, circuses, and theaters and also appropriate spaces for mithraea, were abundant, Mithraism does not seem to have been associated in any way with venues of entertainment here. The lack of Mithraic dedications or sanctuaries in the Campus Martius cannot be attributed to the predominance of cults to typically Roman deities as it can be in the case of the Roman Forum. On the Quirinal hill the temples to traditional Roman deities shared the same neighborhood with several mithraea. It may be, however, that the lack of archaeological remains for domus in the Campus Martius, a
common site for mithraea elsewhere in Rome, is directly related to the paucity of Mithraic monuments from that area.

THE FORUM BOARUM (Regio XI)

The Forum Boarium was an open area enclosed by the Tiber, the Velabrum (an area of the western Palatine hill), the Aventine hill, and the starting-gates of the Circus Maximus. It was an area of temples but also, as its name implies, a marketplace for cattle (fig. 51a). According to Roman tradition, Hercules rested and watered the cattle he had stolen from Geryon in the area of the Forum Boarium, and several monuments to Hercules have been recovered from the immediate area. 134

These monuments, along with the starting-gates of the Circus Maximus, formed the immediate neighborhood of the mithraeum discovered slightly to the north in a public building (see 31D in Chapter Two and fig. 51b). It is difficult to gauge whether the mithraeum was associated with the Circus or with the Forum, and whether the nearby monuments to Hercules influenced the decision of the congregation to install a mithraeum here. It may be erroneous to associate the mithraeum specifically with the Forum or with the Circus because its immediate context is unidentified. The possible relationship between the mithraeum and the cult of Hercules, however, is worth considering.

134 Virgil, Aen. 8.203 and 291.
The monuments to Hercules included three temples, an altar, and a statue. Closest to the mithraeum was the Ara Maxima of Hercules Invictus, the oldest of the monuments to Hercules (figs. 51a-b, "aedes...Herculis"). A statue representing Hercules Olivarius and a temple to Hercules Pompeianus might also have been located here. Further away were the round temple by the Tiber, usually identified as that of Hercules Invictus or Victor (see figs. 51a-b at upper left), and another temple to Hercules Invictus at the nearby Porta Trigemina.

The identification of the temple of Hercules Pompeianus has been disputed. Republican remains under the church of S. Maria in Cosmedin were first associated with this temple by Huelsen (see fig. 51a, lower right). Remains of a portico

135 The tradition attesting to this altar is extremely old. See Livy 1.7.10-11 and 9.29.9, who said that Hercules and Evander built the altar together to mark Hercules’ victory over Cacus. For other ancient sources, see Platner and Ashby, 1929, 253. The altar burned in the 64 CE fire but may have been restored.

136 An inscribed statue base (CIL 6.3393) which attributes a statue of Hercules Invictus Olivarius to Scopus Minor (Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 145-46 and n. 84). The Capitoline Base (CIL 6.975) records a vicus Hercules Olivarius. This monument is mentioned in the Notitia.

137 See Vitr. 3.3.5.

138 See Huelsen and Jordan, 1884, Vol. 1.2, 482-83 n. 58 for a good list of ancient sources. Several inscriptions, now destroyed, were dedicated by the praetors of Hercules Invictus (CIL 6.312-15, 317-318) and have often been associated with the round temple.

139 This temple is mentioned by Macr. 3.6.10-11 and Serv. A. 8.363). It may also appear on various coins. Platner and Ashby, 1929, 254, have a good general discussion and basic bibliography.

140 See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 255-56; Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 147-48; and Huelsen, 1896, 271. The temple itself stood until the time of Pope Hadrian I (772-95). A temple of Hercules Invictus is said to be "near the Circus Maximus" by Vitr. 3.3.5. Plin. Nat. 34.57, said "Hyron made...a Hercules [statue], which is near the Circus Maximus in the temple of Pompey the Great." The temple of Hercules Pompeianus has thus been associated with the round temple of Hercules.
in front of the temple have also been identified underneath
the church. 141 On the basis of an inscription found in the
area in 1715, De Rossi identified this portico as part of
the office of the Statio Annonae, the office of grain
distribution for Rome. 142 Many scholars have accepted this
identification, among them Lanciani, who subsequently
identified the temple as that of Ceres, not Hercules
Pompeianus. 143 Others have argued that the temple of Ceres
was located on the slopes of the Aventine. 144 But Coarelli
has recently provided plausible counter-arguments which
refute De Rossi's and Lanciani's identification of both
buildings and which, with additional textual evidence,
support Huelsen's original identification of the temple as

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Invictus on the assumption that Pompey made a restoration to the building which gave the temple a
new name. The problem is whether there were two or three temples to Hercules in the Forum Boarium.
Macrobius said that there were only two, that at the Porta Trigemina and the round temple (3.6.10).

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141 Coarelli, 1988, 76. He assigns a date in the late 4th or early 5th century to a
restored version of the building based on the stucco. The capitals are thought to come from the
previous phase and are dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.

142 This is CIL 6.1151, but see also 6.31856 and 15.7941-51 and De Rossi, AdI (1885b)
223-36. A dedication by the elder Symmachus was found on the opposite bank of the Tiber. See NS
(1886) 362; PCE (1887) 16 and (1889) 358-60; and PM (1891) 107.

143 See See Lanciani, 1897, 455-58 and also Van Berchem, PCE (1935) 91-95. The
identification of these remains as the temple of Ceres is based on the proximity of the portico to
the temple and the subsequent assumption that the two buildings must have had similar functions. If
the portico was the office of the statio annona, then it follows logically that the temple would be
that of the goddess of grain. Van Berchem's argument emphasized that records relating to the office
of the Annona would have been stored in the temple and would have been close by out of necessity.

144 Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 115-18, and Platner and Ashby, 1929, 109-10, accept the
location of this temple on the slope of the Aventine, overlooking the starting gates of the Circus.
This conclusion is based primarily on a text of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (6.94) which distinctly
says that the temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera stood at the end of the Circus Maxius above the
starting-gates. The critical word "above" (hyper) has led many to agree that the temple was on the
slopes of the Aventine. Tacitus, Ann. 2.49, said that the temple of Ceres was near the Circus and
that the temple of Flora was in the same place. For other reasons the temple of Flora has been
located on the Clivus Publicius, and thus also the temple of Ceres.
that of Hercules Invictus/Pompeianus.\textsuperscript{[145]} Coarelli also successfully associated the remains of the portico in front of the temple with a previously unidentified shrine to Hercules mentioned separately from the temple in several texts.\textsuperscript{[146]}

Although it is impossible to establish the exact motives for building a mithraeum near the Forum Boarium, certain elements in the Hercules myth make the area ideal for a cult associated with bulls (or cattle). Hercules is said to have brought the cattle of Geryon to water by the Tiber. While Hercules slept, a giant, Cacus, stole some of the cattle and dragged them backwards into his cave. Hercules awoke, found the cattle when the remaining half of the herd bellowed to the other in the cave, and clubbed Cacus to death. Shepherds from nearby crowded around Hercules, among them Evander, who recognized the semi-divine Hercules and promptly instituted sacrifices to him. This myth is offered as an explanation for the ancient function of the Forum Boarium as cattle market, and also for the worship of Hercules there. However, this long-standing association also raises the expectation of finding a mithraeum here because of the significance of bulls in both

\textsuperscript{[145]} Coarelli, 1988, 75-76, argued that the inscriptions which De Rossi cited did not prove conclusively that the remains of the portico were part of the Statio Annonae because their original provenance is unknown. He also argued that a portico would not have been an appropriate structure for an office.

\textsuperscript{[146]} Coarelli, 1988, 60-67. His argument is based on the number of other monuments to the cult of Hercules in the area and on the evidence in several texts for the location of the Ara Maxima of Hercules, the temple of Hercules Invictus and that of Hercules Pompeianus.
cults. Since few dedications to Hercules have been recovered from mithraea, the connection between Hercules and Mithras is unique to this location.

THE AVENTINE HILL (Regiones XII-XIII)

The Aventine hill occupied a singular position in Rome because it lay within the Servian wall but outside the pomerium until the reign of Claudius (41-54). It was the southernmost part of the ancient city, and lay on the left bank of the Tiber across from Trastevere. The following discussion of the imperial Aventine will focus on the buildings around the two mithraea, the Baths of Sura, near the modern church of Sta. Prisca, and the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus (figs. 52a-b and 54a-b). The archaeological evidence from these areas suggests that the imperial hill was an aristocratic neighborhood, unlike its Republican counterpart. The difference is significant and well worth reviewing, since previous interpretations of the Mithraic evidence from the imperial period have relied on Republican topography.

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE AVENTINE UNDER THE REPUBLIC

The relatively late inclusion of the Aventine hill within the pomerium was a critical turning-point in its development because it changed the hill from a marginal area in the city to a more central one. Roman tradition held that Remus chose the Aventine hill, and his murder, whether mythological or not, may have originated the perception of
this hill as a marginal, almost taboo, area. Historical events reinforced this character: the hill was the site of the two plebeian secessions, and C. Gracchus sought sanctuary there in the temple of Diana. Under the Republic, the Aventine hill had the reputation of being a plebeian neighborhood, even though the archaeological remains of Republican houses, which would support this conclusion, have not been recovered because of numerous devastating fires and continuous rebuilding under the empire.

Archaeological evidence from the Republican Aventine hill indicates that despite its marginal status, the hill had a concentration of shrines to several ancient and venerated deities. Alfred Merlin, a prominent scholar of the history of the hill, has argued that because it was excluded from the pomerium, during the Republic the Aventine fostered a number of shrines to foreign deities, whose cults were only permitted outside this boundary. In turn, these foreign deities reinforced the status of the hill as outside the pomerium, despite the presence of older, native deities. The religious monuments on the Aventine hill during the

147 Merlin, 1906, 9 and 257-60.
148 Merlin, 1906, 103 and 254.
149 See Merlin, 1906, 43-44 and 163-80 for ancient and modern references. Bona Dea, Jupiter Elicius (whose first altar is attributed to Numa Pompilius), Jupiter Liber, Ceres, and Faunus and Fauna were early agricultural deities worshipped on the Aventine.
150 Merlin, 1906, 66.
Republic reflect its character as both central and marginal. For example, the temple of the triad Ceres, Liber, and Libera\textsuperscript{151} and the temple of Flora\textsuperscript{152} lay on the northwestern approach to the Aventine up the Clivus Publicius from the Forum Boarium. Further up the Clivus were a pair of temples thought to be those of Minerva and of Diana (figs. 52a and 54, lower left).\textsuperscript{153} On the northern side of the Clivus Publicius was the temple of Luna, perched on the hill overlooking the Circus Maximus.\textsuperscript{154} Near the temple of Luna were those of Consus, of Vortumnus, and of Jupiter Liber and Libertas, which burned in the fire of 64 CE and were never restored.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{151} See P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 109-110 for a summary history.

\textsuperscript{152} P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 209-210.

\textsuperscript{153} This temple is represented on the Severan marble plan with the temple of Diana (Jordan, 1874, fr. 2, and Rodriguez Almeida, 1981, 101 and Tav. 15, fr. 22). See also P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 342. For ancient references to the temple of Diana see P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 149-50. For a history of the disputed location of this temple see Cassatella and Vendittelli, 1985. For excavation reports see Cassatella and Vendittelli, 1986, 551-60 and Vendittelli, 1987, 33-38. Scholars presently locate the temple on the north central part of the hill, west of the modern Largo Arrigo VII, and not at the modern Piazza Tempio di Diana, as was once thought.

\textsuperscript{154} P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 320, locate the temple on the extreme northern point of the Aventine hill at the top of the Clivus Publicius, overlooking the Circus Maximus and just above the Porta Trigemina. Huelseen and Jordan, 1906, 160-61, were the first to use the account of Gracchus' flight as evidence for the location of this temple. Scholars generally agree, on the basis of Mart. 6.64.13, that the temple of Luna was near the Baths of Suca, and thus on the extreme northern side of the Aventine hill.

\textsuperscript{155} For the temple of Consus see Huelseen and Jordan, 1906, 163; Merlin, 1906, 104 and 228; and P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 141. For the temple of Vortumnus see P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 584 and Huelseen and Jordan, 1906, 162. Both temples may have been located to the south of the temple of Luna in a grove called the Loreto Maior. Huelseen and Jordan, 1906, 167, have suggested that the temple of Jupiter Liber and Libertas may have been near that of Juno Regina, under the modern Sta. Sabina on the western side of the hill overlooking the Tiber. See also P. A. and Ashby, 1929, 297-98.
The Aventine hill of the Republican period seemed to support the "provincial model" of Mithraism perfectly because its plebeian character, location outside the pomerium, and proximity to the ports along the Tiber would have supplied the necessary freedmen, slaves, and traders required by the model. However, the mithraea from the Aventine, under Sta. Prisca and in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus, date to the late 2nd or early 3rd centuries CE. Vermaseren tried to unite the "provincial model" with the archaeological evidence from the Aventine hill by suggesting that wealthy freedmen and other initiates of foreign origin were using these imperial mithraea. Vermaseren relied on the plebeian character of the Republican Aventine hill to support his argument, and completely excluded the possibility that under the empire initiates of higher social statuses were also involved.\textsuperscript{156} The following topographical survey reveals archaeological and literary evidence for an aristocratic neighborhood on the Aventine during the empire.

\textbf{The Environ of the Sta. Prisca Mithraeum}

The late 1st-century CE baths built by Licinius Sura on the northern side of the Clivus Publicius were the closest building to the mithraeum under Sta. Prisca (see 32D in Chapter Two and figs.52b, upper half and 53, upper left). According to Cassius Dio, Licinius Sura was a close friend and countryman of Trajan and built a gymnasium, usually

\textsuperscript{156} Vermaseren, 1951, 54-56.
interpreted as balneum (bath) "for the Romans."\textsuperscript{157}

Alternatively, Trajan may have built the baths and dedicated them to Sura.\textsuperscript{158}

Vermaseren and Van Essen have argued that Trajan owned the land on which the baths and the later structures under Sta. Prisca were built. According to them, the area was destroyed by fire in 64 and lay vacant until Trajan purchased it late in the 1st century.\textsuperscript{159} As discussed in Chapter Two, the earliest post-fire building on the site of Sta. Prisca was a house (dated by brickstamps to ca. 95) with a courtyard into which the mithraeum was later built, a terrace added in 98, and slightly later, a second house in the area previously occupied by the eastern garden.

Vermaseren and Van Essen used the brickstamps from the original phase of the house to identify the property as that of Trajan. However, the brickstamps might indicate instead that the property belonged to the family of the Aviti (see 32D in Chapter Two).\textsuperscript{160} The original owner of the property is

\textsuperscript{157} Dio, 68.15.

\textsuperscript{158} Vict. de Cap. 13. The balnea Surae appear in the Severan marble plan (Jordan, 1874, fr. 41, and Rodriguez Almeida, 1981, 101, tav. 15, fr. 21), and a fragmentary inscription, CIL 6.1703, records that Caecina Decius Aginatius Albinus, an urban praefect in 402 CE (Chastagnol, 1962, 257-60, no.108), restored the tepidarium. However, Merlin, 1906, 331, argued that the inscription referred to the baths of Decian in the center of the hill. A fragmentary inscription found in S. Sabina in 1920 refers to an earlier restoration (see HS [1920] 141-42). See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 532-33, for a discussion of the ancient sources and the remains.

\textsuperscript{159} Tac. Ann. 15.38.

\textsuperscript{160} Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 107.
uncertain.\textsuperscript{161} Trajan could easily have used the property before he became emperor, but Vermaseren and Van Essen have argued that he continued to live on the Aventine hill, rather than on the Palatine hill, even after he became emperor.\textsuperscript{162} If Trajan owned the land on which the baths were built and also the adjacent house into which the mithraeum was built, both would have become part of the \textit{fiscus} (imperial treasury). The land would thus have been at the disposal of all succeeding emperors, who might have used it themselves or, more likely, awarded use of it to their supporters.\textsuperscript{163} The possibility that the land was part of the \textit{fiscus} directly influences modern thinking about the Severan \textit{domus} with the mithraeum because its owner cannot be identified securely.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{161} Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 109-14. Even the location of the baths and Trajan’s estate (the \textit{privata Traiani}) is disputed. The \textit{Notitia} and \textit{Curiosus} actually mention “baths of Sura and Decian” (\textit{thermae Surae et Decianas}). The recovery of a fragment of the Severan marble plan with the letters “BAL’ SURA’” confirmed that there were two separate baths. The order in which the catalogues mention the monuments implies that the Baths of Decius lay between the baths of Sura and Trajan’s estate. Thus it contradicts Vermaseren’s and Van Essen’s assumption that the \textit{privata Traiani} lay on the northern side of the hill. Excavation reports from the 1860s and 1870s present very good evidence for locating Trajan’s estate and the Baths of Decius in the central and southern part of the hill. See Pellegrini, \textit{Arch.} (1868) 177-83. Lanciani, \textit{Arch.} (1870) 74-90, and Parker, 1870, 171-72, report the remains of the Baths of Decius lay on top of part of Trajan’s estate. Parker perhaps overestimated the size of Trajan’s estate, which he thought would have covered most of the top of the Aventine. See also La Follette, 1985, 139-44, for a succinct history of the speculation of the location of the Baths of Decius and a discussion of the excavations in 1870.

\textsuperscript{162} Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 107, refer the reader to p.28. However, no information or citations relevant to their argument can be found there.

\textsuperscript{163} Coarelli, 1984, 157-65, has suggested that the most likely owner of the Trajanic-period house under Sta. Prisca was Sura himself. He also suggested that the remains found south of the Baths of Decius in 1870, and sometimes associated with the \textit{Privata Traiani}, are to be associated with remains of another structure found more recently under the Piazza del Tempio di Diana.

\textsuperscript{164} The only other evidence for the inhabitants of the area is a bronze tablet (\textit{CIL}, 6.1454) dedicated to Severus Alexander by G. Marius Pudens Cornelius, a legate of the seventh legion.
This survey has established that the domus with the mithraeum under the church of Sta. Prisca sat on the northeastern edge of the Aventine hill, and that the two separate bath complexes of Sura and Decius were its closest neighbors. Whether this domus sat on land which was part of the imperial fiscus will remain unknown unless further evidence emerges. What has been established is that the domus must have belonged to a reasonably wealthy owner of uncertain social status. Vermaseren's argument that the owner was a wealthy freedman is based on the requirements of the "provincial model" of Mithraism, but the archaeological evidence from the imperial period does not confirm it. Regardless of its owner and his social status, this mithraeum fits the pattern, now well-established from the preceding investigation of the Esquiline and Quirinal hills, of sanctuaries in private residences in Rome.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE DOLICHENUM

The temple of Jupiter Dolichenus (see 33D in Chapter Two) had the same proportions as a mithraeum, and revealed among many monuments to Jupiter two dedications to Mithras. This temple, usually dated to the Antonine period, lay in a laurel grove called the Armilustrum (fig.54). A century at Clunia Sulpicia, a colonia of Hispania Tarraconensis. Because this inscription was found several meters to the southeast of Sta. Prisca in the 18th century, it is not very useful. In general, scholars such as Platner and Ashby assume that there was a domus belonging to Trajan in the general area of the Baths of Sura (Platner and Ashby, 1929, 185).

Numerous ancient sources about this grove, which may also have been known as the Loreto, can be found in Platner and Ashby, 1929, 54 and 209 and Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 161-63. Several inscriptions have been found there including CIL 6.802, 975 and 31069 and 16 p.333.
later the baths of the emperor Decius were built nearby in 252 CE (fig. 54). The relationship between the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus, the Baths of Decius, and the temple of Juno Regina does not seem to have any significant implications for the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus or the Mithraic shrine within it. It is particularly difficult to establish, or even guess, who was using the temple. Huelsen and Jordan have proposed that numerous inscriptions and pipes recovered mostly from the southern side of the hill indicate that much of the southwestern slope was covered with luxurious homes. Lanciani has estimated that the Aventine hill had as many as 130 villas by the early 5th century. Presumably the owners of these residences used the temples on the hill, but whether they were definitely part of the congregation which used the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus is not certain.

166 See Platner and Ashby, 1929, 526-27 for a discussion of the ancient sources and 17th-century excavations of remains then standing on the Vigna Torlonia. A 16th-century plan of the remains of the baths by the architect, Palladio, indicates that the area occupied by the main hall, the caldari, and some of the other rooms measured approximately 70 m. X 35 m. Lanciani rediscovered the plan in the Devonshire collection (Lanciani, 1897, 543 and fig.10).

167 The location is attested to by two inscriptions found near Sta. Sabina (CIL 6.364-65), and also by structural remains at the foot of the Aventine and facing the Tiber.

168 Huelsen and Jordan, 1906, 168.

169 Lanciani, 1901b, 57. His evidence comes more from the discovery of inscriptions, brick stamps and pipes than from architectural remains, but he does not elaborate on how he arrived at his estimate.
THE EASTERN AVENTINE HILL AND THE BATHS OF CARACALLA

The eastern Aventine was a smaller hill separated from the main western hill by a shallow valley. As the discussion in Chapter Two demonstrated, definite Mithraic evidence has been recovered only from the Baths of Caracalla (34D). The Baths of Caracalla lay at the foot of the eastern Aventine in an area near the ancient Via Appia and the Via Nova about which little is known now. Excavations in the 1980s in the subterranean structure of baths revealed information about the immediate context of the mithraeum there. The subterranean structure of the baths was not symmetrical like the superstructure. In particular, only the western entrance was wide enough for the delivery of goods in carts. Large passages connecting this entrance with the caldarium indicate that delivery-carts could be driven well into the interior of the baths.\textsuperscript{170} This entrance was very close to the mithraeum. The excavations also revealed a row of tabernae and a water-mill for grinding grain near the mithraeum.\textsuperscript{171}

All these features give a picture of bustling activity complete with the sight, smell, and sound of animals, carts, and machinery. While many mithraea were meant to be private and secluded, this one certainly could not have been.\textsuperscript{172}


\textsuperscript{171} This mill would have supplied grain either for bread to be baked in the baths or for sale to bakers outside the baths. See Schoiler and Wikander, 1983, 47-64.

\textsuperscript{172} In a personal communication, Janet Delaine has suggested that there might be a relationship between the subterranean rooms and the western exedra which directly overlies them. The mithraeum underlies a large staircase which connected the road outside the baths with a gallery running around the exedra (see Chislanzoni, NS [1912]). The road ran alongside a terrace platform.
situation of the mithraeum in the Baths of Caracalla is relevant to that in the Baths of Titus (6D). Whether or not the latter mithraeum was located in the subterranean structures, it, too, would have lacked the privacy of a mithraeum in a *domus*.

**CONCLUSION: THE AVVENTINE HILL**

This topographical survey has clarified previous misconceptions about the context of the Mithraic evidence from the Aventine. The imperial hill had many residences of wealthy individuals, and perhaps even an estate which belonged to the imperial *fiscus*. The hill was also dominated by the temples of ancient and much-venerated deities, by imported deities, and later on by the large imperial Baths of Decius.

While much is known about the hill in the imperial period, it is difficult to connect any of the information directly with the two mithraea under Sta. Prisca and in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus. Crucial information about who worshipped in these mithraea is lacking. On the basis of observations elsewhere in the city, particularly the situation on the Quirinal hill, it seems reasonable to assume that the wealthy residents of the Aventine hill used these sanctuaries. This hypothesis is more plausible than the alternative view offered by the "provincial model," which would postulate that the slaves, traders, and freedmen

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next to the exedra. Delaine has further suggested that the rooms under the platform, which lie at the same level as the mithraeum, were most likely an assortment of shops, bars and brothels.

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involved in the running of the ports and warehouses at the bottom of the hill along the Tiber would have used the mithraeum and the sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus at the top of the Aventine hill. It is clear from the archaeological evidence that the residential neighborhood of the Aventine was too posh for those who worked in the ports, and thus it is unlikely that they made the steep climb to worship Mithras there. If the people working in the ports worshipped Mithras, it is reasonable to assume that they worshipped him near where they worked or lived. Although the barrel-vaulted design of the many porticus and horrea in the ports offered an ideal venue for mithraea, no sanctuaries have been revealed in the ports along either side of the Tiber.

Why the eastern Aventine hill lacked mithraea is unclear. The situation is, in part, influenced by the general lack of archaeological evidence from that hill. It is almost certainly the case, too, that the eastern Aventine hill retained its marginal character longer than its western counterpart and was sparsely inhabited in antiquity.

TRASTEVERE AND THE AGER VATICANUS (Regio XIV)

Topographical evidence for the ancient Janiculum, Transtiberim, and the Ager Vaticanus, which are the modern Gianiculum hill, Trastevere, and Vatican City, is limited. Each area lay outside the pomerium, and the Aurelian wall enclosed Trastevere and the Janiculum but not the Ager Vaticanus. The Janiculum and the Ager Vaticanus had large
gardens and estates and were not densely populated during the empire. The situation on the bank of the Tiber in modern Trastevere was different. Remains of numerous warehouses indicate that the area was part of the ports, and limited archaeological remains of insulae indicate that this neighborhood was more densely populated than the Janiculum. Some of the residents of this area were foreigners who worked in the ports, but it is thought that part of the mass of urban poor also lived here. Many of the residential buildings were doubtless built of flimsy and perishable materials, and thus little evidence of them remains. It is possible that mithraea in this area were built of similarly perishable materials, but it would be pure speculation to draw any conclusions on the basis of this non-existent evidence.

The only evidence for Mithraic worship from Regio XIV comes from sanctuaries to other deities, the Syrian sanctuary on the Janiculum and the Phrygianum in the Vatican. Both sanctuaries were located in areas where little is known about the immediate neighborhood. The presence of Mithraic monuments within sanctuaries to other divinities raises issues about multiple initiations and shared cult space. Because these issues transcend the topographical context, their implications for the sanctuary of the Syrian Gods, for the Vatican Phrygianum, and for Mithraism will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.
CONCLUSION

The preceding investigation had three goals. The first goal was to reconstruct the topographical context of the mithraea in Rome, which had four main locations: in certain barracks, in domus, in imperial baths, and in the sanctuaries of other Oriental deities. The second goal was to demonstrate that the location of mithraea in Rome does not always meet the expectations raised by the evidence for the "provincial model." The third goal was to illustrate how the examination of the topographical context can reveal exceptions to the pattern of the location of mithraea in Rome.

The evidence for Mithraism from the provinces indicates that the cult was most popular among soldiers on the frontiers along the Rhine and Danube, and among freedmen, slaves, and traders. Only two barracks in Rome had mithraea, the Castra Peregrinorum (1D) and the Castra Praetoria (14D). It was determined that the Mithraic monuments from the Scala Sancta did not represent a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum because they were not recovered in situ. With the possible exception of the statio of the Second Cohort on the Caelian hill, no conclusive evidence for mithraea in the stationes of the urban cohorts has ever been recovered. The absence of Mithraic evidence from the urban cohorts, staffed by freedmen, is significant and represents a major departure from the provincial model. But the distinct dichotomy between the barracks is also important because the peregrini
and the praetorian guard were more closely tied to the legions than the urban cohorts were. The impact this connection had on Mithraism in Rome is a subject which will be addressed in the next chapter.

The location of mithraea in domus in Rome, particularly those of Roman aristocrats, though recognized, has never been fully appreciated. Scholars have tried to justify the context of these mithraea within the parameters of the provincial model by assuming that freedmen clients and household slaves used the well-appointed sanctuaries in the domus of the Nummii Albini (13D), on Via Giovanni Lanza (7D), in the Barberini palace gardens (12D), and under Sta. Prisca (32D) and S. Clemente (5D). Yet, the owners and users of certain mithraea in domus cannot be determined from the present evidence. The prevalence of mithraea in domus belonging to 4th-century aristocrats and the additional epigraphic evidence for Mithraists of this social status from elsewhere in Rome (especially the Phrygianum in the Ager Vaticanus) is a second topic to be addressed in the next chapter.

The mithraea in the imperial baths of Titus (6D) and Caracalla (34D) were difficult to place within the wider topographical context of the neighborhood, and yet examination of their immediate context within the baths revealed unexpected problems. The mithraea in imperial baths, and perhaps also that in the public building in the
Forum Boarium (31D), lacked privacy and secrecy and probably had larger and less cohesive congregations.

The mithraea in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus (330) on the Aventine and the Phrygianum (38P) in the Ager Vaticanus are difficult to understand from their topographical context alone. The presence of Mithraic monuments in both sanctuaries is better understood through the context of Oriental, and particularly solar, deities in the later empire. This issue will also be explored more fully in the next chapter.

An important aspect of the mithraea in Rome is that they are not universally found in all buildings of a given type. This is easily understood in the case of domus; obviously not every domus in Rome had a mithraeum. It is more difficult to avoid the assumption that mithraea in two barracks or two imperial baths indicates the presence of mithraea in all barracks and baths, simply because there were so few of them. The point is illustrated best with evidence of known provenance but uncertain topographical context. This investigation rejected the existence of a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum, despite the long-held opinion to the contrary, because the archaeological evidence revealed that Mithraic monuments were only found near, but not within, the castra. Similarly, some scholars have assigned the Mithraic evidence from near the church of Sta. Balbina on the eastern Aventine hill to the domus of L. Fabius Cilo because of its proximity and
because of an established pattern of mithraeum in domus in Rome.

The method for locating mithraeum within their immediate and wider topographical context used in the preceding investigation was based on strict adherence to the provenance of the evidence. Thus, for example, previous scholarly opinion that the mithraeum in Sta. Prisca lay on land which belonged to the imperial fiscus was refuted due to a lack of undisputed evidence. The next chapter will give equally close consideration to the chronology of the mithraeum as it explores the development of the Mithraic cult in Rome within an historical, political, and social context.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MITHRAISM IN ROME

This chapter explores the development of Mithraism in Rome using the evidence for the mithraea and their topographical contexts reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The investigation progresses chronologically and focuses on historical and religious developments contemporary with the cult from the 2nd through the 4th centuries. The Mithraic evidence from Rome falls into three main periods: that of the Republic and early empire, that from the Severan period and the early 3rd century which forms the first peak of Mithraic activity, and finally, that from the 4th century when Mithraism experienced a second peak of activity. This chapter will also examine the factors which account for the quality and quantity of evidence for Mithraism during and between these peak periods.

The investigation herein focuses first on the earliest evidence for Mithraism at Rome and her port city at Ostia. Evidence from literary passages and Mithraic dedications from Rome actually predates the earliest architectural evidence from Ostia and thus challenges the currently held premise that Mithraism developed first in the port and then "travelled" from Ostia to Rome with merchants, traders or
crewmen on ships. The pattern of the development of Mithraism in Rome under the Severan emperors discussed below suggests instead that the practice of the cult there could have inspired or influenced similar practices in Ostia.

The remainder of the chapter will demonstrate the importance of Mithraism in Roman social and political life from the late 2nd through the 4th centuries. First, it assesses the archaeological evidence examined in Chapter Two within the context of the changes that Septimius Severus made in the recruitment of the praetorian guard. Literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence suggests that such changes in effect reintroduced Mithraism to all social levels in Rome, and perhaps also in Ostia, by bringing in soldiers from Pannonia, where worship of Mithras is extensively documented from the late 1st century through the 4th century. An examination of the second period of popularity looks at 4th-century aristocrats with mithraea in their homes and shows how senators used these sanctuaries to reinforce their position in the domestic, social, and political hierarchies of Roman society. Finally, this chapter confronts the problematic lack of Mithraic evidence during the later 3rd century. Despite the lack of archaeological evidence, Mithraism almost certainly continued in Rome between the two peaks of notable popularity in the early 3rd century and the 4th century. Certain Mithraic dedications and literary passages indicate that emperors from Commodus to Julian were aware of the
cult, if not Mithraic initiates themselves, and that Mithraism may have been part of the promotion of and identification with solar deities by Roman emperors.

**THE EARLIEST MITHRAIC EVIDENCE FROM ROME AND OSTIA**

The earliest evidence for Mithraism at Rome, two literary passages and two inscriptions, predates that from Ostia. The first passage, from Plutarch, attributed the institution of the Mithraic mysteries (but not their introduction into Rome) to the Cilician pirates whom Pompey defeated in 67 BCE.\(^1\) However, because Plutarch was writing more than 150 years after the event, his information is perhaps not reliable. In a passage of the *Thebaid*, Statius described Mithras as a figure who "beneath the rocky Persean cave strains at the reluctant-following horns."\(^2\) Statius wrote the poem in Rome, and it is customarily dated to 90 CE. Cumont and Vermaseren have proposed that an actual representation of a Mithraic tauroctony inspired Statius' remarks, and they have readily accepted both literary references as evidence for the beginning of the cult in Rome.\(^1\) Both passages reflect a knowledge of the cult, and it

\(^1\) Plu. *Romp*. 24.5, says "They also offered strange sacrifices of their own at Olympus [in Asia Minor], and celebrated there certain secret rites, among which those of Mithras continue to the present time, having been first instituted by them." Loeb edition trans. by B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA 1917).


\(^3\) Vermaseren, 1963, 29 and Cumont, 1913, 36-37.
can be inferred that the cult had gained a following if Plutarch felt obliged to offer explanations for its origin. But there are two problems with these passages: neither offers explicit evidence for the worship of Mithras in Rome, and there is at least an eighty-year gap between the date of the passages and the earliest architectural remains of a mithraeum in Rome.

Two 2nd-century inscriptions from Rome, one from the reign of Trajan and one from the reign of Commodus, partially fill this lacuna. The first, located on the base of a small marble statue of a Mithraic tauroctony, reads: "Alcinus, slave and overseer of T. Claudius Livianus, fulfilled his vow and presented this gift to Sol Mithras." Christian Huelsen has suggested that this T. Claudius Livianus was the praetorian praefect of the same name under Trajan (fig. 55). The second inscription is a marble base dedicated to Sol Invictus Mithras by M. Aurelius Stertinus Carpus, Carpus, Hermioneus, and Balbinus on behalf of the health of Commodus. While both inscriptions are of uncertain provenance, they still represent clear evidence for the knowledge and worship of Mithras in Rome at least from the reign of Trajan.

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4 CIL 6.718 and CHRM 593/94, "Alcinus Ti. Cl(audi) Liviani ser(vus) vilic(us) S(oli) M(ithrae) v(otum) s(olvit) d(onum) d(edit)." Huelsen, 1889, 683-84, links the T. Claudius Livianus of CIL 6.718 to the one mentioned in CIL 6.1604: "Ti. Claudio/ Liviano pr pr/ amico optimo)" , who was a praetorian praefect in 101/2 during the reign of Trajan. This statue is now in the British Museum, but if Huelsen's identification is correct, it is likely that it originally came from Rome.

5 See CHRM 510 in Chapter Two.
There are sixteen mithraea recognized at Ostia (for which there are still remains of fifteen); almost all were recovered in the excavations of the early 1950s. Giuseppe Becatti, the principal excavator, dated the three earliest temples to the third quarter of the 2nd century: the mithraeum in the House of Diana (ca.140-late 2nd century), the Mithraeum of the Animals (ca.160), and the Mithraeum of the Seven Doors (160-70). Of the twelve remaining mithraea, he dated seven to the late 2nd century or the early 3rd century, and five to the mid-3rd century. One mithraeum, excavated but no longer extant, is undatable.

The mithraeum in the House of Diana, the earliest in Ostia, precedes the earliest mithraeum in Rome (in the Castra Peregrinorum, 1D above) by as much as forty years, but it post-dates the slave, Alcimus', dedication to Mithras by at least two decades. This inscription is consistently overlooked in favor of evidence for actual sanctuaries. Thus it is thought that foreign traders and crewmen on trading vessels who had become Mithraists outside Italy introduced the cult to Ostia (and, ultimately, to Rome) through the ports there. While the actual sanctuaries at Ostia

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6 Becatti, 1954, 9-15 (House of Diana) 87-92 (Animals), and 93-99 (Seven Doors).

7 The Mithraeum of the Footprint, the mithraeum in the Palazzo Imperiale, the Mithraeum of the Painted Walls, the Aldobrandini Mithraeum, the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres, the mithraeum in the House of Lucretius Henander, and the mithraeum in the Baths of Mithra.

8 The mithraeum of Fructuosus, the mithraeum of Felicianus, the mithraeum of the Sabaceum, the mithraeum at the Porta Romana, and the Mithraeum of the Serpents.

9 The Fagan Mithraeum discovered in the late 18th century.
constitute more substantial evidence, this Trajanic-period inscription from Rome somewhat weakens the argument that Mithraism arrived at Ostia and then spread to Rome.

Observing the location of the mithraeum in Ostia by date reveals a pattern which, while it does not conclusively refute the spread of Mithraism from Ostia to Rome, also questions that argument. The earliest mithraeum in Ostia were primarily in residential contexts. The three mithraeum dated to the third quarter of the 2nd century were in insulae (the mithraeum in the House of Diana and the Mithraeum of the Animals), and in a horreum some distance from the Tiber (Mithraeum of the Seven Doors). Of the seven mithraeum from the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries, four were in domus, one was in a residence, either a domus or an insula (Mithraeum of the Footprint), one was in a subterranean corridor of a bathhouse, and one was in a multi-purpose building (misleadingly called the "Palazzo Imperiale") near the Tiber.10 The six mid- to late-3rd century mithraeum were located in horrea (the Mithraeum of Sabazeus and that of the "Magazzini Republican"). In a domus (the Mithraeum of Felicissimus), in a building formed from the city wall itself near the Porta Romana, behind a row of shops (Mithraeum of the Snakes), and in the temple of a collegium.

Clearly more mithraeum were located in domus and insulae in Ostia before they were located in warehouses near the

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10 This building is the subject of a dissertation entitled "A New Study of the Palazzo Imperiale at Ostia," by Joanne Spurza (Princeton University 1993).
port. Chapters Two and Three revealed that there were a significant number of mithraea in *domus* in the earliest period of peak Mithraic activity in Rome as well. It is therefore important to consider which city influenced the other. It is arguable that the presence of mithraea in residences earlier than in warehouses in Ostia is not significant because the entire livelihood of the town depended on sea- and river-trade. However, the following investigation will demonstrate that an impetus for renewed interest in Mithraism in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries did occur in Rome. Thus it is possible that Mithraic trends in the capital city influenced those in the port, and not the other way around.

**THE EARLIEST ROMAN MITHRAEA AND THE SEVERAN PERIOD**

The earliest mithraea in Rome are, by chance, some of the most securely dated examples: that in the *Castra Peregrinorum* (ca. 150-75, see 1D above), that under S. Clemente (5D), the Barberini mithraeum (12D), and the mithraeum under Sta. Prisca (32D) (all late 2nd or early 3rd century). The earliest evidence from the mithraeum in the *Castra Praetoria* (14D) also dates to the reign of Septimius Severus. The mithraea in the *Castra Praetoria* and the *Castra Peregrinorum* are the only two sanctuaries in barracks, and they fulfill the expectations raised by the provincial evidence indicating the popularity of Mithraism among the legions (see Chapter One). However, the other early mithraea
in the wealthy, civilian context of domus, under S. Clemente and Sta. Prisca, and on the grounds of the Barberini palace, do not. While the lack of Mithraic evidence from barracks is not surprising in light of how little architectural remains exist for any of the barracks in Rome, the presence of mithraea in domus from this period underscores the importance of examining the evidence for Mithraism in Rome without drawing a priori conclusions solely on the basis of the "provincial model."

THE ACCESSION OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS AND THE RISE OF MITHRAISM

After his accession to power in 193, Septimius Severus made important changes in the recruitment of the praetorian guard. Cassius Dio summarizes these proceedings:

There were many things Severus did that were not to our liking and he was blamed for making the city turbulent through the presence of so many troops ... But some found fault with him particularly because he abolished the practice of selecting the body-guard exclusively from Italy, Spain, Macedonia and Noricum ... and ordered that any vacancies should be filled from all the legions alike. Now he did this with the idea that he should thus have guards with a better knowledge of the soldier's duties, and should also be offering a kind of prize for those who proved brave in war; but, as a matter of fact, it became only too apparent that he had ... succeeded in filling the city with a throng of motley soldiers most savage in appearance, most terrifying in speech, and most boorish in conversation (75.2.3-6).¹¹

In his observations Dio notes that Septimius Severus vastly increased the number of troops in the city by bringing with him the legions under his control as

provincial governor of Pannonia. Septimius disbanded the existing praetorian guard and replaced it with legionaries from Pannonia, thus planting in Rome several hundred men among whom worship of Mithras was likely to be common. Dio also alludes to Septimius Severus’ modification in recruitment for the praetorian guard, stating specifically that previously recruits had been from Italy, Spain, Macedonia, and Noricum, but that afterwards all the legions alike supplied recruits. This change in recruitment has been amply documented by Marcel Durry’s study of 2nd-century laterculi, or inscriptions dedicated at the time of retirement of a soldier from the army. Significantly, the new praetorian guard was culled primarily from the Danubian provinces and Illyria (especially from Dalmatia and the Pannonias), where archaeological evidence has demonstrated the earliest and strongest presence of Mithraism in the empire. The legionaries recruited from these provinces probably continued to worship Mithras after they moved to Rome. While the Mithraic evidence from Rome indicates that

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12 Had. 2.10 says that the army in Illyricum and other legions from the Rhine and Danube would also have been under Severus’ power. According to D.C. 55.23, Severus would have had the X and XIV Gemina of Pannonia Superior and the I and II Adiutrix of Pannonia Inferior.

13 For Septimius Severus’ method of tricking the guard into leaving the safety of their camp and disarming them see D.C. 75.1.1-2 and Had. 2.13 (a slightly different account). For his use of the Pannonian legions as a replacement see Had. 2.14.5.

14 Durry, 1938, 245-51, esp. 246 and 247, n.7, confirmed that from the time of Hadrian to the Antonines, at least 89% of the praetorian guard was Italian with the remainder made up of a provincial contingent of soldiers from Macedonia, Spain, and Noricum, and a few representatives from Dalmatia and Pannonia Superior. Under Marcus Aurelius the percentage of Italians fell to 65%, and after the reforms of Septimius Severus, almost no Italians served in the guard.
the Pannonian legions of Septimius Severus did not introduce Mithraism, their arrival in the city coincided with an increased interest in the cult indicated by the archaeological record.\textsuperscript{15}

The archaeological evidence for Mithraism from the barracks which housed legionary recruits, particularly from the Castra Praetoria (14D) and the Castra Peregrinorum (1D), supports the idea that Pannonian troops were the source of renewed interest in Mithraism in Severan Rome. The appearance of mithraea in these barracks during Severus' reign is not a coincidence. Moreover, these mithraea completely fulfill the expectations of the "provincial model." However, there is no evidence for a mithraeum in the Castra Equitum Singularum, whose troops were also recruited from the legions,\textsuperscript{16} and the Castra Urbana and the barracks of the cohorts of the vigiles have virtually no evidence for Mithraic worship (with the possible exception of the statio of the second cohort).

Although the Severan reforms of the praetorian guard aroused more interest in Mithraism in barracks, the presence of mithraea in domus at that time must still be explained. The path of diffusion might have been through officers or praetorian praefects such as L. Spurius Maximus, a tribune

\textsuperscript{15} Vermeiren, 1951, p.67 nn.139-40, specifically noted the change in recruitment for the praetorian guard under Septimius Severus, but he did not link the change to the evidence for Mithraism in Rome during this period.

\textsuperscript{16} Interestingly, it is known that Severus built a second barracks to house the Equites Singulares. Whether he expanded their number or merely their accommodations, is uncertain.
of the Fourth Cohort under Septimius Severus who was associated with the Barberini mithraeum (see 12D above). If, as Guidobaldi has suggested, the domus with the mithraeum under S. Clemente (5D) was related to the administration of the Colosseum games, then its occupant would have been a Roman official as well.\footnote{It is important to refrain from stretching the evidence, but it is interesting that the dedicatory of the earliest monument and inscription, Tiberius Claudius Livianus, was a praetorian praefect under Trajan.} A simpler and more likely explanation for the presence of mithraea in domus, however, is that the increased number of Mithraic initiates in Rome brought about by Severus' reforms drew more attention, and more initiates, to the cult. In a strict sense, the cult did spread upward through the social hierarchy as the "provincial model" predicted it would, but at an extremely rapid rate.

The sudden influx of troops from Pannonia renewed interest in Mithraism into Rome. In the previously unexploited context of the urbs Mithraism could potentially attract not just soldiers, merchants, traders, and other camp-followers, but men of every level of Roman society. An appeal to such a range of social strata also allowed a range of locales for mithraea. Indeed, whereas many of the mithraea in the provinces of the Danube and the Rhine were built specifically for that purpose, the urban mithraea were jammed into pre-existing spaces modified to allow the sanctuaries. Finally, joint dedications to Mithras and to
other officially recognized and unofficial deities, as well as sanctuaries shared with Jupiter Dolichenus, show that Mithraism became less exclusive. This flexibility was undoubtedly a decisive factor in the success of Mithraism in Severan Rome.

Accepting Severus’ changes in the recruitment of the Praetorian Guard complicates the issue of whether Ostia influenced the Mithraic development in Rome. The renewed interest in Mithraism, which began in Rome and quickly spread to all levels of society there, can also be observed at Ostia (see above). Perhaps the parallel expansion of the cult in both cities during that period can be attributed to the Severan reforms. This explanation would account for the appearance of the earliest mithraea in Ostia in domus and not in horrea closer to the port. While the "provincial model" accurately predicts that merchants, traders, sailors, freedmen brought Mithraism to Ostia, it does not adequately account for the Trajanic-period inscription or forty-year time lag in the evidence for Mithraic sanctuaries in each city. The sudden appearance of a significantly large number of sanctuaries in the Severan period in both cities, many located in domus, a context which the "provincial model" did not predict, suggests that events in Rome could account for this occurrence in Ostia.

Examination of the 3rd- and 4th-century development of the Mithraic cult in Rome indicates that widespread appeal, variety of venue, and willingness to share sanctuaries and
dedications with other deities became, and continued to be, the hallmark of Mithraism in its urban context. Unfortunately, the body of evidence for Mithraism in Rome during the second half of the 3rd century is scant because it is difficult to date existing evidence accurately, and because the archaeological record for all aspects of the middle and later 3rd-century in Rome is lacking. After the Severan period, the first datable mithraeum is that in the domus of the Nummii Albini in the early 4th century. Given this state of affairs, there are two reasonable assumptions about Mithraism in 3rd-century Rome: first, that some of the existing Mithraic evidence may date to the 3rd century, and second, that if the cult was so popular under the Severans and even more prominent in the 4th century, then it may also have been successful in the intervening period. Only the latter suggestion can be profitably discussed in a work of this scope, but since any knowledge of Mithraism in 3rd-century Rome must be inferred from the later prominence of the cult, the issue can be raised only after an examination of Mithraism in 4th-century Rome.

MITHRAISM IN THE 4TH CENTURY

This final period of Mithraism is distinguished by the participation of prominent 4th-century senators who built private mithraea in their domus. These 4th-century mithraea include the small mithraeum and garden lararium at Via Giovanni Lanza (7D), the mithraeum in the house of the
Nummii Albini (13D), the mithraeum dedicated by Nonius Victor Olympius and his family in the Campus Martius (22D), and the mithraeum in the Phrygianum in the Ager Vaticānus represented by Mithraic inscriptions and dedicated by Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius and his peers (38P). These mithraeum in domus differ from their earlier Severan-period counterparts in that the identity of their owners is known. Why certain Roman senators built mithraea in their own homes and who actually used the mithraea are two important issues which distinguish Mithraism in Rome from the cult as it existed outside Italy.

In Rome, this cult of supposedly secret rites was part of the resurgence of pagan and eastern cults in the late empire. Despite the intimacy of its sanctuaries and the mystery of its liturgy, Mithraism in Rome became a remarkably public and ostentatious cult. To understand this dichotomy, the following investigation will determine which senators participated in the cult, and will then examine how 4th-century senators were able to use Mithraism’s characteristically secret, mysterious, and hierarchical nature to fulfill their own political and social needs.

The epigraphic evidence indicates that senators played a prominent role in 4th-century Mithraism. Among them were Nummius Albinus and Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius, whose families produced several consuls, urban praefects, urban praetors, and numerous other magistrates in the 3rd
and 4th centuries.\(^{18}\) Considering the high social status of these two Mithraists it is not surprising to find an inscription revealing that the well-known pagan Vettius Agorius Praetextatus was a pater sacrorum (father of the sacred rites) in the cult of Mithras.\(^{19}\) Further, if the restoration of the name Sextius Rufus is correct in an inscription found near St. Peter's in the Vatican, then this dedication, made by the proconsul of Africa from 371-73, provides further evidence for the participation of aristocratic men in the cult.\(^{20}\) The dedications made in the Vatican Phrygianum also revealed several senators, among them Caelius Hilarianus and Ulpius Egnatius Faventinus, who were both patres and hieroceryxes in the cult of Mithras.\(^{21}\) Finally, Nonius Victor Olympius, his son Aurelius Victor Augustius, and his grandsons Aemilianus Corfinius and Tamesius Augustius Olympius show the involvement of three generations of one senatorial family.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{18}\) For the Numiae Albini see Chastagnol, 1962, 38 and 52 and PLRE I, 33-38 and for the Iulianii Kamenii see PLRE I, 474-75. A good discussion of changes in the cursus honorum in the later empire and the emergence of the urban praefecture of Rome at the top of the cursus appears in Matthews, 1975, 13-16. While the consulship was dominated by generals and court officers, the urban praefecture was dominated by senators, and certain families held the office often. The Ceonii, for example, held the office ten times between 300 and 430, a number which increases when marriage alliances are also considered.

\(^{19}\) See CIL 6.1778, a lengthy epitaph including his cursus honorum.

\(^{20}\) AE, 1953, no.237. The inscription is a dedication to Maha Mater and Attis by [Sextius Rus]ticus and was found near the church of S. Lorenzo in Piscibus.

\(^{21}\) For Caellius Hilarianus see PLRE I, 168. This inscription is the only record of him. For Ulpius Egnatius Faventinus see PLRE I, 974.

\(^{22}\) The family is known only through these Mithraic dedications. See PLRE I, 124 and 646-47.
John Matthews has argued that the oriental cults were more emotionally charged but no more "active in a political sense" than their Roman pagan counterparts. How Mithraism could be active politically is not readily discernible because the performance of the Mithraic liturgy required a small, secluded, cavelike space which could accommodate only about thirty initiates at once. The location of mithraea in private domus is not surprising since the underground rooms provided the perfect venue. However, installing a private mithraeum must have had some benefit for a senator. A private mithraeum would actually have afforded more opportunity for the display of piety and wealth, provided that the sanctuary was not kept a secret from the owner he wanted to impress. If a traditionally secret and private cult like Mithraism could maintain the proper intimate setting for the ritual and yet still be a means of aristocratic competition, then Mithraism is an apt illustration of Matthews' observation about the political status of the oriental cults.

Elsewhere Matthews has discussed the concepts of negotium (time in office) and otium (leisure, or time out of

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24 Matthews (1975, 30) has observed that 4th-century senators in Rome had more prestige because they did not have to compete with the emperor, who was usually absent. According to Matthews, senators maintained their social and economic standing through landholdings, munificence, clients and certain provincial governorships. The installation of a mithraeum in a domus, it can be argued, was an improvement which created a space to enhance and advertise social standing further.
office) in the context of the urban praefecture of Rome.\textsuperscript{25}

He emphasized that the distinction between \textit{negotium} and \textit{otium} is not equivalent to the distinction between public and private life and argued that senators were always public figures, even when they were not holding an office. The significant implication of Matthews' argument for mithraea in the \textit{domus} of senators is that while private worship may have occurred, these mithraea also functioned socially and politically in the careers of the senators who had them.

To illustrate his point, Matthews used Symmachus, often considered to be the paradigmatic pagan Roman aristocrat, as the primary example in his argument. Matthews considered the epigraphic and literary evidence for Symmachus' life in the social and political context in which it was produced. He emphasized that many of Symmachus' letters were "public" documents, that is to say documents of \textit{negotium} relating to the administration of the Roman government, and thus not the proper venue for the transmission of certain personal details. Matthews was thus able to demonstrate convincingly that the purpose of the statue bases dedicated to Symmachus by his clients and of the letters he wrote to his colleagues precluded any mention of his participation in oriental cults because dedications and letters were part of Symmachus' public persona.\textsuperscript{26} Matthews suggested that privately

\textsuperscript{25} Matthews, 1975, 13-15.

\textsuperscript{26} Matthews, 1973, 187 ff.
Symmachus may have been an avid initiate of oriental cults just as his colleagues were, but that since the sources about Symmachus pertain to his public life they do not reveal this private aspect of him.

This idea has interesting implications for certain Mithraists, for example, Alfenius Ceionius Iulianius Kamenius. Ample evidence from his dedication to Magna Mater in the Vatican Phrygianum, his epitaph at Antium,\(^{27}\) and an inscription on the statue base recovered from the peristyle of his domus on the Alta Semita attests the extent of his participation in several oriental cults including Mithraism. The discussion in Chapter Three (see page 207) mentioned Capannari's suggestion that a known Mithraist like Alfenius Ceionius might have worshipped in the nearby mithraeum of the Nummii Albini, into whose family the Ceionii had married. Capannari has offered the best hypothesis from the available evidence, but the possibility still exists that Alfenius Ceionius also had a private mithraeum in his own home which has not survived or which excavation has failed to recover.

If mithraea in domus were built for show, the implications for the cult are significant. Secrecy, privacy, and intimacy are the words most often associated with Mithraic rituals. Mithraism was, after all, a "mystery religion," and the degree of secrecy has prevented the

\(^{27}\) CIL 6.1675=31092 and Ephemeris Epigraphica 6.648, respectively.
transmission of any significant quantity of literary evidence concerning the Mithraic liturgy. Household sanctuaries were undeniably small and isolated enough to fulfill the requirements of discretion and seclusion. The possibility that mithraea were built for display and the existence of dedications to Magna Mater (also indicating the Mithraic grade of the initiate) from the temple of that officially recognized cult (the Vatican Phrygianum) suggests that revealing Mithraic initiation to one's social peers was important. Mithraic initiations were fashionable in the 4th century, but "mysteries" known by so many may well have ceased to be mysterious.

The final issue concerning the popularity of Mithraism among 4th-century senators is that of the hierarchy of the Mithraic grades. Hierarchy has always been used to explain why Mithraism appealed to the legions: the soldiers were accustomed to the rigidity of the military hierarchy, and Mithraism offered a similar structure which simultaneously acted as a social equalizer, because any legionary could theoretically hold a higher grade than his superior officers. This idea of hierarchy perhaps mistakenly assumes that the average Roman soldier enjoyed the military hierarchy so much that he also sought it in his religion. However, the possibility that a soldier could have found hierarchy appealing is not easily dismissed. In his analysis

28 Gordon, 1972, 109, warned not to overemphasize this aspect of Mithraism: "the idea of an ordinary private soldier lording it over his, or any centurion, is absurd."
of the appeal of the hierarchical aspect of Mithraism, Richard Gordon stressed that the "young, strong, unbearded" Mithras in tauroctony depictions was, in fact, an image of social conformity which reinforced the idea that "promotion was achieved only by acceptance of and submission to authority." Hierarchy, or the reaffirmation of submission, might have been a motivating factor in the barracks mithraea in the Castra Peregrinorum (1D) and the Castra Praetoria (14D), but that it was also a factor in the mithraea in domus is unlikely, except for the members at the lower end of the hierarchy. The potential for an individual to improve his station in a religious hierarchy could have worked only among legionaries, slaves, and freedmen; inscriptions from all over the empire amply demonstrate that individuals of lower status often reached the top Mithraic grade of pater. But these inscriptions, almost all on altars, also indicate that it took a certain sum of money to make the dedication, to say nothing of the possible sacrifice of a bull. The members of lower social status were perhaps attracted to Mithraism by the potential of reaching a higher religious status, but that potential must often have remained unrealized for reasons of economy.

The image of Mithraism as a social equalizer does not explain why a traditionally distinguished centurion, senator or any other individual of high social status found the cult

appealing. However, the potential for increasing and especially for reinforcing social status through ostentatious display certainly existed. Officers and senators could afford expensive dedications and sacrifices, and even whole mithraea. The Mithraic inscriptions dedicated by this group only reflect their grade as pater or pater patrorum, suggesting that they did not proceed through the grades from the bottom. Being non-aristocratic, officers might actually have worked their way through the grades, but it seems unlikely that senators did. If installing a private mithraeum automatically promoted the owner to pater, then he gained the opportunity to reinforce his social status by doing so. If the owner worshipped with other members of his immediate family, relatives, slaves, freedmen, and clients, he could easily and continually reaffirm the natural order of domestic life. If he worshipped with his colleagues, he could at least keep up with, if not emerge at the top of, that social hierarchy. Whichever social dynamic was at work, it is clear that the domestic context of the 4th-century mithraea supports the view that an oriental cult like Mithraism could be fulfilling in the public and political arena as well as in the personal and private sphere.

30 Gordon, 1972, 95: "the considerable scope for religious leadership offered by Mithraism provided yet another opportunity for the comparatively successful in social groups which had no a priori hostility to new cults to display their status and achievements."
BRIDGING THE GAP: MITHRAISM IN 3RD-CENTURY ROME

The demonstrably widespread popularity of Mithraism during the Severan period and later during the 4th century suggests that worship of Mithras continued during the intervening period. Proving that there was imperial patronage of the cult would certainly help explain its ongoing popularity. While none of the archaeological, epigraphic or literary evidence clearly corroborates the supposition that some of the later emperors were Mithraic initiates, it does indicate that they were well aware of the cult, and that some of them may have had significant influence over the success of Mithraism through their patronage of an all-encompassing cult of Sol Invictus. This tacit and indirect support also attests to the continued worship of Mithras throughout the 3rd century. A survey of the literary passages and dedications which pertain to Commodus, the early Severan emperors, and the Tetrarchs and which are often used to validate the claim that the later emperors were Mithraic initiates will demonstrate their awareness of the cult.

Commodus is most often identified as the first emperor to become an initiate in Mithraism. A passage in the Vita Commodi in the Historia Augusta says that Commodus polluted the rites of Mithras with an actual murder rather than saying or doing something to produce the impression of
terror.\textsuperscript{31} The key words are "actual murder" (\textit{homicidio vero}), because they imply that Commodus committed this murder in the course of performing a sacrifice for Mithras and therefore that he \textit{was} a Mithraist. The \textit{Historia Augusta} is never a definitive source, especially since the author of Commodus' life intended not to describe Commodus' religious preferences, but to illustrate his outrageous behavior. Since the source is suspect, it cannot substantiate that Commodus was a Mithraist, or that as a Mithraist he increased the cult's popularity. Indeed, considering the outcome of Commodus' reign, his patronage of Mithraism might easily have stifled the cult altogether. Moreover, as Marcel Simon has pointed out, Commodus patronized Hercules more than any other deity.\textsuperscript{32}

Two inscriptions from Rome link freedmen of Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta to Mithras. The first is the epitaph found in Rome near the site of the ancient Pons Aemelius (see 40D above), which describes one Lucius Septimius as a "father and priest" (\textit{pater} and \textit{sacerdos}) of "Invictus Mithras of the Augustan house" (\textit{domus Augustana}).\textsuperscript{33} The phrase "Mithras of the Augustan house" is unparalleled. As mentioned above, no archaeological remains

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{"...sacra Mithriaca homicidio vero polluit, cum illic aliquid ad speciem timoris vel dici vel fingi soleat."} (SHA, \textit{Comm.} 9).

\textsuperscript{32} Simon, 1979, 412-13, also disagrees with Cumont's interpretation of the evidence and points out that since Commodus' favorite deity was Hercules it would have been unlikely that he would have considered Mithras as more important.

\textsuperscript{33} CIHHM 511.
for a sanctuary have been recovered from the palace on the Palatine hill. That aside, the issue of whether it was the emperors or their slaves and freedmen who worshipped in the sanctuary is still unresolved. That the slaves and freedmen of the imperial family were Mithraists is not extraordinary, but Vermaseren has, on the basis of this inscription, argued that Mithras "had also found acceptance with the Imperial Court." In fact, this inscription indicates only that there might have been a mithraeum in the imperial residence on the Palatine hill, perhaps within that part which is traditionally referred to as the *domus Augustana*. It does not prove that Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta were Mithraists.

The second inscription, found on the Via Sicilia in Rome, records the dedication of a cave (*antrum*) to Dcus Invictus Mithras, the Invincible God Mithras, on behalf of the health, safe return and victory of Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta by two of their freedmen named Aurelius Zosimion and Aurelius Titus. In this example, the connection between Mithras and the Severan emperors is even more tenuous than the first inscription. Again, it corroborates that the freedmen were Mithraists, but not that Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta were.

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34 Vermaseren, 1956, 204, no.511. Cumont, 1896, 100, no.35, first suggested the idea.

35 CPhWM 407. This inscription was not found *in situ* and in Chapter Two this inscription was rejected as evidence for a mithraeum.
I.M. Hackethal has claimed that the Severan emperors were Mithraists. He based his argument on Septimius Severus' close connection with the praetorian guard, on the large number of dedications to Mithras on behalf of the health of the three emperors, on the presence of members of the imperial service in the cult, and on the inscriptions discussed here and one additional dedication by freedmen of the Severans. This third inscription, found outside the walls near the Castra Praetoria, was dedicated on behalf of the imperial family by Nicephorus, their freedman. The name of the dedicatee has been partially eroded, and all that really remains is the word "deum" (god). Vermaseren has suggested restoring "invictum Solem" (Sol Invictus) after "deum," with which Hackethal has agreed. But for reasons which will be explained more fully below, a dedication to Deus Sol Invictus cannot be considered as a dedication to Mithras.

None of these inscriptions links Septimius Severus, Caracalla, or Geta directly with Mithras. All of the

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36 Hackethal, 1968, 221-54. The claim that the Severan emperors were Mithraists is part of Hackethal's general premise that the cult of Mithraism and its diffusion are to be understood, and connected to, the cult of the emperor. Hackethal has interpreted the paintings of the Mithraic procession in the Sta. Prisca mithraeum according to this assumption and has argued that the depiction of a traditional Roman sacrifice (a suovetaurilia) in a mithraeum indicates the degree of acceptance of Mithraism in Rome (1968, 228). Unfortunately, Hackethal offered no reasons for the obvious counter-arguments that Mithraists might have found that a suovetaurilia suited their needs and that there was nothing to stop them from "borrowing" the sacrifice, and that Mithraists did not need to justify Mithraism through this relatively weak attempt to link it with traditional Roman religion.

37 CIMRM 626. Hackethal, 1968, 223. Hackethal equated Sol Invictus with Mithras in several examples to support his argument that the Severan emperors were Mithraists (1968, 226).
connections are made through third parties, the praetorian guard, Mithraists not connected with the imperial family, and freedmen of the Severans.

In 308, Diocletian called a conference in Carnuntum in Pannonia Superior to reestablish the supremacy of the Tetrarchy. The inscription that celebrated the agreement reached by Diocletian, Galerius, Maximinus Daia (the Jovians), and Maximian, Licinius, and Constantine (the Herculians) marks the dedication of a shrine to the God Sol Invictus Mithras by the Jovian and Herculian Augusti and Caesars.\(^3\) While most scholars accept this dedication as evidence that these emperors were Mithraists, further consideration reveals that a dedication to Mithras was not only suitable but obligatory on this occasion. Because Mithras was also perceived as a mediator and a deity who oversaw contracts and agreements, he was an apt deity for overseeing a renewed commitment to cooperative rule. Moreover, substantial archaeological evidence from Carnuntum, including numerous dedications, four mithraea, and the earliest datable Mithraic dedication in the empire, indicates that a Mithraic dedication was also appropriate to the location of the conference.\(^3\) Finally, a dedication to Mithras was invaluable for creating a bond of loyalty between the emperors and the legions, and for mitigating

\(^3\) CIMM 1698 and CIL 3.4413. D(eo) S(olus) I(nvictus) M(ithrae)/ f( neutri) i(merii) sui/ Iovii et Herculli/ religiosissimum Augusti et Caesarum/ sacrarium/ restituerunt.

\(^3\) Verwaeren, 1956, 210-24, nos.1644-1722.
future revolts. In sum, a dedication to Mithras at Carnuntum in the presence of several legions in 308 was politically expedient. However, the inscription does not prove definitively that the Tetrarchs worshipped Mithras. This dedication is such an isolated example that it must be treated with caution. A single dedication to Mithras by the Tetrarchs does not prove that all of the preceding emperors were Mithraists. Nor does it prove that Mithraism became more popular because of imperial involvement.

With the possible exception of the Tetrarchs, it is clear that the evidence for the worship of Mithras by emperors is completely circumstantial, if not entirely inconclusive. Although it lacked direct imperial support, Mithraism was popular in Rome and escaped the persecutions which some of its oriental counterparts, for example the cults of Isis and Christianity, suffered periodically. That Mithraism escaped such persecution is a significant factor which influenced the possibility that its popularity continued throughout the later 3rd century.

Cumont argued that while the legal status of Mithraism could not be discerned from the available texts, a cult so popular would have not have remained in "an anomalous condition" for any great length of time. He suggested therefore that Mithraism must have gained appeal through association with other more established cults, possibly solar cults. Noting that the self-styled relationship
between rulers and solar deities was already several millennia old by the time Aurelian built his temple to Sol Invictus in the Campus Martius in ca. 270, Cumont explored an expanded form of this relationship which included emperors, solar deities, and Mithras.

Cumont observed that the popularity of the imperial cult rose proportionately to that of Sol, and especially Sol Invictus. He further argued that the predilection for the later Roman emperors to assume the title "Invictus" reflected the growing inseparability of the emperor and Sol. In Cumont's view, the 3rd- and 4th-century manifestation of the emperor as Sol, exemplified by Elagabalus, Aurelian, Constantine, and Julian, also involved other forms of Sol, including Sol Invictus, Mithras, Invictus Mithras, or Sol Invictus Mithras. By linking the emperor with Sol Invictus in this way Cumont was, by extension, linking the emperor directly with Mithras.⁴⁰

Cumont may have overstated his case. Mithras was sometimes referred to with the epithets "Sol" and "Invictus," but it is unlikely that every instance of Sol Invictus in inscriptions also refers to Mithras. However, the basis of his argument, the all-encompassing cult of Sol, is well founded. This umbrella effect is documented in the proliferation of multiple epithets for Sol and Mithras in the inscriptions described earlier. It is also apparent in

⁴⁰ Cumont, 1913, 86-90.
the recovery of dedications to Mithras from the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus on the Aventine Hill. In his *Hymn to King Helios*, the emperor Julian even articulated this concept of affinity between deities related to sun, fire, and light by describing Helios as the leader and uniter of the gods Apollo and Mithras and the Vestal Virgins, who guard the eternal flame together.\footnote{Jul. Or. 4.151, 155. Loeb edition trans. by W.C. Wright (London and New York 1930).} In short, in Julian's theory of associated solar deities, one deity precedes but does not exclude the others, and all the solar deities maintain their separate identities.

Thus, imperial interest in solar cults was critical to the continuing survival of Mithras. As a minor solar deity, Mithras was included in the imperially sponsored and officially recognized cult of Sol Invictus and received dedications under the title of Sol Invictus Mithras. The significance of this association explains the continued popularity of Mithraism in the 3rd century, even though it does not prove that any of the 3rd- and 4th-century emperors were initiates of Mithras.

This examination of Mithraism during the 3rd century has addressed the lack of datable evidence and the often misinterpreted and overemphasized issue of imperial involvement in the cult. The investigation demonstrated that the major obstacle to proving imperial involvement is the interpretation of circumstantial evidence. For Commodus, the
only evidence comes from the dubious, and biased, Historia Augusta. An unspecific reference to a mithraeum in the palace on the Palatine and inscriptions indicating that several Severan freedmen were Mithraists provide only an indirect connection between the Severan emperors and Mithraism. Finally, Elagabalus, Aurelian, and Julian can be considered as Mithraists only if Mithras is equated with another deity, Sol Invictus. The dearth of clear evidence for imperial involvement in Mithraism is frustrating because such participation could easily explain why Mithraism was so popular in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, not only in Rome, but throughout the empire. At times this circumstantial evidence has been overemphasized because there is so much of it, but the large quantity does not increase its quality.

This investigation of Mithraism has surveyed the Mithraic evidence from the Severan period through the 4th century. In Rome, strong evidence for Mithraism began much later than it did in Ostia and in the provinces. When the cult first made a significant appearance in the archaeological record in the late 2nd century mithraea were located in domus as well as in barracks, indicating that the cult had at least penetrated the upper levels of wealth if not the upper social strata in Roman society. This phenomenon can be directly attributed to changes which Septimius Severus made in the praetorian guard and its recruitment. These changes brought legionaries to Rome from
the two Pannonias, where Mithraism had its greatest following. The archaeological record clearly demonstrates that these legionaries increased the popularity of Mithraism not only in Rome but also in Ostia.

The location of mithraea in domus from the beginning of this development is significant because it is a continuous trend in the history of Mithraism in Rome. However, in the 4th century the evidence for mithraea is more informative because of the ability to identify the aristocratic owners of the domus and to prove the participation of their colleagues. The involvement of senators raises the issue of why they would become Mithraic initiates and whether the cult retained any degree of secrecy with such a following. This investigation hoped to show that while the incentive of promotion made Mithraism appealing to lower social orders, the ability to dominate the hierarchy of grades, as well as the opportunity for ostentatious display and the reinforcement of social standing and prestige, drew the aristocrats into the cult.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to examine closely the Mithraic evidence from the city of Rome, to recreate the topographical context of each sanctuary, and to evaluate these mithraea within their social and historical contexts. Using as a guide the four previous lists and catalogues of mithraea and Mithraic monuments, this study re-examined the original excavation reports and other topographical descriptions of these mithraea and other monuments and summarized the current state of knowledge about them. The resulting catalogue in Chapter Two described the conditions of discovery and the actual state of the remains, and also discussed evidence for dating each sanctuary or monument. This catalogue differs from its predecessors significantly because it evaluates the quality of the archaeological evidence and rates it as representing the presence of a definite or possible mithraeum, or of no mithraeum at all. This catalogue also highlights gaps in modern knowledge of these mithraea caused by unscientific excavation, incomplete reporting, and destruction or reburial of the monuments subsequent to excavation. Finally, this catalogue examines the mithraea comparatively and outlines the significance of
a particular monument and how it contributes to current knowledge of Mithraism both in Rome and in the empire generally.

Recreating the topographical context of the mithraea in Chapter Three was an important enterprise and a helpful one. In certain cases, most notably near the Piazza della Navicella (2P) and near the barracks of the Equites Singulares (4R), this examination was the final factor in deciding whether certain Mithraic dedications actually represented the existence of a mithraeum. This topographical analysis proved to be more illuminating in extensively excavated areas such as that on the Quirinal hill. There the ability to reconstruct a residential neighborhood and identify not only the owners of certain mithraea, such as L. Spurius Maximus and the Nummii Albini, but also some of their friends and peers, such as Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius, proved that the approach adopted could be successful under certain circumstances. It must be noted, too, that for this neighborhood inscriptions from elsewhere in Rome and the empire revealed many details about the two families involved and therefore greatly increased our understanding of the architectural and other remains.

The obvious limitation of the sort of topographical analysis which has been carried out here is that such an approach is entirely dependent on the quality, quantity, and variety of the evidence for a particular area of Rome. Certain factors, such as the extent and amount of
excavation, are nominally within the control of modern archaeologists. But additional evidence from literary and epigraphic sources, which often fills in certain critical gaps and facilitates a better understanding of the information retrieved through excavation, is strictly limited by the accidents of preservation. Despite these limitations, topographical analysis can greatly expand knowledge and understanding not only of Mithraism, but of almost any urban social institution. As will be discussed further below, it is an approach which has recently been applied more often and more stringently.

But topographical analysis is not enough, as the examination of the historical, social, and political context of the mithraea in Chapter Four revealed. This investigation focused on the chronological development of Mithraism in Rome and demonstrated that what has been generally accepted as true about its development in the provinces did not necessarily apply to the cult in the capital. For example, while Cumont's "provincial model" predicted that traders, slaves, freedmen, and other foreigners were the owners of the mithraea in Rome, no evidence has emerged which actually proves that this was the case. This investigation also demonstrated that examining Mithraism in light of historical factors unique to a particular time and location significantly increased modern understanding of that cult. Septimius Severus' new praetorian guard and a sudden, but not coincidental, renewal of interest in Mithraism in Rome
provides an interesting example of the success of additional study of historical factors. On the surface Severus' changes to the guard support one aspect of the "provincial model," namely the popularity of Mithraism among legionaries. But the issue is actually more complicated. The model would also attribute the introduction of Mithraism into Rome to the legionaries in the praetorian guard. However, the references to Mithraism from Plutarch and Statius, as well as the two inscriptions from the reigns of Trajan and Commodus clearly show that the Severan praetorian guard was not responsible for the original introduction of the cult to the capital. Moreover, knowledge of the presence of mithraea in domus of the Severan period further indicates that Mithraism in Rome did not "trickle up," as the model suggested it would, but became popular among different social levels simultaneously.

Finally, the study of the historical context of Mithraism modified the hypothesis that its popularity reflected some kind of official sanction, either from the emperor or from close association with another officially recognized cult. Here the treatment of circumstantial evidence for imperial participation in Mithraism was cautious, and the argument was advanced that in the later 3rd century the prominent cult of Sol Invictus, an officially recognized deity with whom many of the later emperors associated themselves, subsumed Mithraism and other solar cults.
Mithraism became flexible in order to survive and thrive in its urban context. While it might have been an equally flexible cult in the military garrisons of the frontier along the Rhine and Danube, only the present examination of Mithraism has been able to highlight this quality by identifying certain differences in the practice of Mithraism in an urban setting. In Rome inscribed dedications clearly show that all social levels participated in the cult. Thus each initiate was probably able to interpret the cult for himself and adapt it to his own needs. In much the same way, Roman mithraea were adapted to a variety of spaces, including public buildings, barracks, baths, domus, and the sanctuaries of other cults. Some of these locations lacked sufficient privacy or had larger, less cohesive congregations, all factors which undoubtedly challenged or changed the fundamentally secretive nature of this mystery cult. The urban nature of Mithraism was that it could compromise without being compromised. The inability of Roman initiates to fulfill certain requirements which have usually been stereotypically characterized as absolutely necessary to the cult does not seem to have had an adverse effect on its integrity in an urban context. Thus mithraea in baths and public buildings, while perhaps not in optimal locations for privacy and secrecy, could successfully meet the religious needs of a large body of initiates. Similarly, the evidently extensive practice of Mithraism by 4th-century senators would seem to detract from the secrecy of the cult,
but the urban reality was that these senators used this sham secrecy to their own political and social advantage.

It is important to consider whether the multi-faceted analysis of archaeological evidence which has been carried out here can be applied to other social and cultural phenomena or locations. There is a tremendous amount of archaeological evidence from Rome, but it is often difficult to access and equally difficult to understand and interpret. The site, continuously occupied for nearly three millennia, is a problematic one, and unscientific excavation practices lasting until this century and the hurried salvage archaeology dictated by the urgent needs of the modern city complicate scholarly efforts even further. However, the results of the present study underscore the benefits of attempting to surmount these obstacles and to examine in detail the development of Mithraism, or any cult practiced in Rome, closely and within its original urban context. Indeed, this exploration of the development of Mithraism in Rome was inspired by a limited number of recent urban studies seeking to illuminate the experience of Christians and Jews within Rome or to reconstruct a certain neighborhood within it.\(^1\)

\(^1\) See, among many others, several studies on the urban experience of Christians: Jeffers, 1991; Wilken, 1984; Benko, 1984; Woeks, 1983; Theissen, 1982; Banks, 1980; and Gager, 1975. A related study on the architectural solutions achieved by urban Mithraists, Christians, and Jews is White, 1990. Leon, 1960 provides a slightly older study of the Jews in Rome. Richardson, 1992, reflects the extent of the trend in topographical studies perfectly. It is, however, riding the crest of a wave which includes the re-edition of several standard topographical works by Lanciani, Nash, Lugli and others discussed in Chapter 3, note 3. For additional topographical studies of particular areas of Rome see Krautheimer, 1980 and 1983, Laeuchli, 1968, and Savage, 1940.
The most obvious application of these approaches is to the development of other Oriental cults, but investigating the experience of collegia (guilds), which were often centered around the worship of a particular and often foreign deity, might also prove fruitful. Knowledge of the topographical context of any institution will help to orient it within its social and historical milieu. Consideration of the periods of greatest popularity and decline for a given institution and the possible causes for these shifts in light of historical events, the social makeup of the city, legislation, the tastes and temperament of the contemporary emperors, and numerous other factors will also increase understanding of that institution. The one restriction on this kind of study is that the social institution under examination be one that is relatively well documented within Rome.

The intensive examination which has been carried out here also suggests the need for a reassessment of the relationship between certain cults, particularly between Mithraism, other Oriental cults, traditional Roman state religion, and Christianity. As regards Mithraism, Ernest Renan's sweeping remark that "...if Christianity had been stopped in its development by some fatal malady, then the world would have been Mithraist," certainly fueled interest in the cult, but it has misled more than one generation of scholars of ancient religion and students of the ancient
world in general.² Luther Martin has recently argued that present understanding of Mithraism is heavily derived from the ancient Church father's views of the cult, that is, from hostile sources.³ He has suggested that the relationship between Mithraism and Christianity is better revealed by studying the revival of paganism in the 4th century. The discussion of mithraea, Mithraists, and Mithraism in the lives of 4th-century Roman senators in the present work will, hopefully, provide sufficient groundwork for re-examining Mithraism within the framework of 4th-century religious conflict and in comparison to the few Christian sources about it.

Just as it is not limited to one cult, a group of particular cults, or to one social institution, the approach in the present study need not limit itself to the city of Rome. Mithraism is archaeologically well-documented in different areas around the empire. The type of investigation carried out here can be easily applied to other extensively excavated and published sites where Mithraism was at least as popular as it was in Rome, for example Ostia, Carnuntum in Pannonia Superior, and Dura Europus in Syria. In fact, the study of Mithraism in areas where certain Oriental cults were widely practiced will undoubtedly inform our knowledge of their collective experience in Rome.

² Renan, 1882, 579, "On peut dire que, si le christianisme eût été arrêté dans sa croissance par quelque maladie mortelle, le monde eût été mithraiste."

³ Martin, 1989, 1.
As the centennial of Cumont’s *Textes et Monuments* approaches, scholarly opinion of the field of Mithraic studies has come to an interesting pass. It is not common knowledge that much of Cumont’s work has been seriously challenged, and for that reason Mithraism is not generally perceived as a field in which much remains to be studied. The present study is a product of current revisionist trends within Mithraic studies because it has questioned the assumption that Mithraic practices were the same at all times and in all places throughout the empire. This study has shown that Mithraism in Rome was embedded in its social historical, chronological, and geographical context, and was thus an urban phenomenon unto itself.
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td><em>Archaologischer Anzeiger</em></td>
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<td><em>L’Annee Epigraphique</em></td>
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Fig. 44 Map of the area around Piazza Dante (Scagnetti)
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Fig. 45b Map of the buildings under the Ministero della Guerra. The mithraeum is located at the number "1" (Scagnetti)
Fig. 46 Plan of the Baths of Constantine and the surrounding area (Lanciani, 1893-1901, maps 16 and 22)

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Fig. 47a Map of the area around the Barberini mithraeum and the Ministero della Guerra (Lanciani, 1893-1901, maps 9 and 16)

Fig. 47b Plan of the remains of the domus of Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius (Lanciani, 1884, tav. 4)
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Fig. 53 The Baths of Sura represented on fragments of the Severan marble plan (courtesy of the Fototeca of the American Academy)
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Fig. 55 Statue of the tauroctony with inscription (Vermaseren, 1956, fig. 168)