

*R*EMARKS ON THE MEETING PLACES OF THE ROMAN SENATE IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Abstract:

The present article discusses the problem of meeting places of the Roman Senate in late Antiquity. The rich literature on the subject has so far focused on the places of regular sessions of the assembly. Here, efforts were made to collect and evaluate the informations on others, irregular meetings of the Roman Senate.

Keywords:

Late Antiquity, the Roman Senate, attendance, *senatus legitimus*, irregular meetings

In his handbook written for Pompey's entry to the Curia in 70 B.C., Varro said that a decree passed by the Senate was regular or legally valid on condition it was made in a place appointed by an augur and called a 'temple'.¹ This rule was observed in the Republican era and the same seems to have applied under the early Empire, as the words of an unknown speaker (possibly Emperor Claudius) from the mid-first century plainly show: 'If these [proposals] meet with your approval, Conscript Fathers, say so plainly at once, in your own words. But if you disapprove, find other solutions, yet do so in the temple, or, if you perhaps want a more generous interval in which to think, take it, provided you remember that to whatever place you are called, you must give us your own *sententia*'.²

¹ Gell. *Noct. Att.* 14.7.7. Cf. Serv. *ad Aen.* 11.235. Not all sacred edifices at Rome were temples, and a edifice or a place called 'templum' did not need to be consecrated to any particular god/goddess.

² *FIRA*² I, no. 44, col. III, ll. 10–17 (*Oratio Claudii de aetate recuperatorum et de accusatoribus coercendis*). Dated to A.D. 42–51.

This passage indicates clearly that the meeting of the Senate took place in the *templum*, but it did not have to be limited to one place. If the meetings of the Senate were not confined to one building, we should examine the evidence for those meeting places. This was done by Richard J.A. Talbert, but he limited himself to discussing the sources which we possess for the sessions of the Senate during the Principate.³ Now I would like to expand this discussion to the period of the late Roman Empire, strictly limiting my research to Old Rome and essentially without entering into topographic discussions. First of all, it should be stressed that our evidence is sparse, and I have been unable to collect much data, without any expectation that it is complete. Besides, we are sometimes informed there was a session of the Senate, but we do not know where the meeting took place. For example in *Vita Gregorii Magni* there is an entry regarding the election of Gregory the Great as Pope (... *Gregorium ... clerus, senatus populusque Romanus sibi concorditer pontificum delegerunt*),⁴ but the author of this biography neglected to mention the place(s) where this event occurred, perhaps because this information was deemed unimportant. Another good example is the story narrated in *Vita Caesari episcopi Arelatensis*. In A.D. 513, Caesarius appeared first in Ravenna and *post haec Romam veniens, beato Symmacho tunc papae ac deinde senatoribus et senatricibus praesentatur*.⁵ But the author of this passage does not say a word about where the meeting took place.

The number of regular meetings (*senatus legitimus*) of the Roman senate in late antiquity was 25 days a year.⁶ This corresponds almost exactly to the number of meetings of the Senate set by Augustus in 9 B.C. In the *Lex Iulia de senatu habendo*, the innovation was introduced that meetings of the Senate should be held regularly, on fixed days.⁷ This shows the fundamental continuity of tradition in this regard.⁸ Nevertheless, a certain number of extraordinary meetings should

³ Talbert 1984: 113–120.

⁴ Iohannes Diaconus, *Sancti Gregorii Magni vita*, Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, vol. 75. ed. Jacques Paul Migne, Paris 1862, coll. 59–242, here col. 79, l. 39. The election of Gregory the Great is also mentioned by Gregory of Tours (see Gregorius Turonensis episcopus, *Libri historiarum X*, ed. Bruno Krusch, Wilhelm Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov.1/1, Hannoverae 1951², 10.1, p. 477), but without giving its place either.

⁵ *Vita Caes. Arelat.* 1.42, cf. 38; see Näf 1992: 445–446.

⁶ *CIL* I 1² 296; Divjak, Wischmeyer 2014: 230 listed the sessions of *senatus legitimus*. For a criticism of this edition of Philocalus, see Burgess 2017: 383–415.

⁷ Dio 55.3.1–2; Suet. *Aug.* 35.3 with de Martino 1962: 509 and n. 81; Ramondetti 1977: 135–168; Talbert 1984: 222–224. Deliberations of the Senate were to take place on every Kalendas and on the Ides. In the months of September and October only a special commission deliberated, draw by lot from whole Senate, Suet. *Aug.* 35. But they acted in the name of the entire Senate, so we can treat their meetings as regular meetings of the entire assembly.

⁸ The number of fixed sessions in a year in the period of the Principate was maximum of twenty-four, however, there was always one meeting for elections. This makes 25 sessions annually

be added to this. They were omitted by Demandt⁹ but were already provided for in the law of 9 B.C.¹⁰

The attendance suggested in modern scholarship had to be low, since according to imperial law from April 11, 356 only 50 senators were required for the meeting to be formally valid.¹¹ This is puzzling, because in the earlier period the quorum was much higher.¹² Muriel Moser makes a convincing argument, that Constantius II elevated the Council of Constantinople to the status of Senate 'sometime between mid-350 and mid-351'.¹³ We do not know whether the decision of Emperor Constantius II to increase the number of senators in Constantinople in the years 358–361¹⁴ from 300 to 2000¹⁵ also had an impact on the number of senators in Old Rome. André Chastagnol,¹⁶ followed by Alexander

in total. The continuation of the described meeting on 1 October is confirmed by a fragment of a calendar from Viterbo, which most probably dates to the third century, Colonna 1975: 37–42 = *AE* 1977: 252. *Senatus legitimi* listed by the fourth-century calendar of Philocalus for 15 October and 2 December are confirmed in a contemporary painted calendar which has come to light under the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Maggi 1972: 26–27; Chevallier 1976: 245–252. Stern 1973: 46, with the reading under 2 December: *QUEST(ores) SORT(iunt)* instead of Maggi's: *II [II non.] questo(orum) sor[titio]*. The annual principle of the number of regular sessions essentially remains, but specific dates were changed at 12 places in the fourth century, Divjak, Wischmeyer 2014: 230.

⁹ Demandt 2007: 332.

¹⁰ De Martino 1962: 509: 'Naturalmente potevano aver luogo delle sedute straordinarie in tempi diversi da quelli stabiliti; esse presero il nome di senatus indicti.' Cf. Talbert 1984: 213–215.

¹¹ *CTh* 6.4.9: *Placet ne minus quinquaginta c[lariss]imi veniant in senatum; certum est namque hoc nu[m]ero large abundare substantiam virtuti omnim[od]ae*. Cf. Demandt 2007: 332. However, it should be noted that *CTh* 6.4.9 refers to the election of the new praetors and quaestors to the Senate, and it does not necessarily infer that the quorum on other discussed matters was also 50 senators. Long ago Jardé expressed the view: 'Rien ne prouve que la même minimum n'ait pas été également suffisant pour d'autres votes du Sénat' (Jardé 1925: 23). Despite the special analysis of the passage by Chastagnol 1990: 161–162, the problem remains disputable and still unresolved for me.

¹² Dio 54.35.1 informs us that when Augustus revised the senatorial roll in 11 B.C., he abandoned the rule in force at that time that no decree could be passed with fewer than 400 senators present. The few figures which we possess for attendance in meetings at that period were put together by Talbert 1984: 149–152.

¹³ Moser 2018: 189–196.

¹⁴ Dagron 1968: 5–13, 213–217. According to Jones 1964: 527, only between the years 357 and 385 had the number of the senators 'swelled to 2000'. Chastagnol 1976: 350–351 argued against his hypothesis. However, not convincingly, because Jones 1964: 144 n. 16 referred to a letter of Emperor Valens to Festus, the content of which clearly shows that the process of the composition of the Eastern Roman Senate had not been completed by 375, cf. Bruns, *FIR*⁷, 97b. Jones' mistake is '385' instead of '375'.

¹⁵ Chastagnol 1990: 163. The figure of '2000' is given by Themist. *Or.* 34.13. Begass, 2018: 39 is probably right, when he says: '...die immense Zahl von 2000 Senatoren nicht den Kern der Stimmfähigen Senatoren widerspiegelt [hat]...'.¹⁶

¹⁶ Chastagnol 1970: 311; Chastagnol 1976: 350.

Demandt,¹⁷ suggests ('on peut admettre') that under Constantine the number of members of the Senate in Rome increased from 600 to 2000 ('au moins').¹⁸ However, this hypothesis is based on the obvious and extreme rhetorical exaggeration in Ausonius, *Commemoratio professorum Burdigalensium*:

[Tiberius Victor Minervius Orator] mille foro dedit hic iuvenes,
bis mille senatu adiecit numero
purpureisque togis.

A thousand pupils has Minervius given to the courts,
and twice a thousand to the Senate's rank
and to the purple robes.¹⁹

Even the most hardworking and most famous rhetorician in Gaul would not have been able to gather in his school 2000 future senators, of course.²⁰ This information should therefore be dispensed with. It also has no value as an indication of the total number of active Senate members in Ausonius' days.

During the reign of Amals in Italy (ca. 490–540), 110 active senators can be traced.²¹ But it is by no means the total number of active senators in this period, as Alexander Demandt seems to believe.²² Unfortunately, we do not have any account about either their number or their attendance from these times.²³

There are references to many meeting places in the period of Late Antiquity. Firstly, let us deal with the sites of regular sessions. The Syriac chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor from A.D. 569 reports, in his description of the 'decorations' (noteworthy buildings) the city of Rom:

'Within it are: [...] two vast basilicas where the emperor takes his seat and the senators assemble daily before him'.²⁴

The source of this description could be a version of Latin *Breviarium* and 'it certainly does not reflect the situation of the mid-sixth century but probably goes back rather to the fourth'.²⁵ In his invaluable commentary to Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, Geoffrey Greatrex suggests that 'two basilicas seems a low figure', and,

¹⁷ Demandt 2007: 333. See Jones 1964: 527.

¹⁸ Chastagnol 1970: 311; Chastagnol 1976: 350. See Cracco Ruggini 1998: 285–286.

¹⁹ Auson. *prof.* 5.1.9. Translated by Evelyn-White, p. 97.

²⁰ The thesis of Chastagnol has been rejected by Dagron 1974: 129 n. 1; Nāf 1995: 14 and n. 12.

²¹ Schäfer 1991: 8.

²² Demandt 2007: 333.

²³ According to Proc. *Bella* 8.34.7–8, in 552 Tejas, King of the Ostrogoths, killed 300 children of outstanding Roman families. But in principle they were not senatorial children, although such could also have been among those sentenced to death, Stein 1949: 603. For the anti-senatorial policy and punitive actions against the Senate under Witigis, Totila, Teia, see Radtki 2016: 142–143.

²⁴ PZ 10.b.2, ed. Greatrex 2011.

²⁵ Greatrex 2011: 50, 419 n. 149.

on the basis the *Laterculus* of Polemius Silvius, which lists 11 basilicas at Rome,²⁶ proposes that the Syriac author mistook the initial figure in XI for an I, thus yielding II.²⁷ This cannot be excluded, but I think there is one argument in favor of retaining the preserved text. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor mentions in this context only the ‘two vast basilicas’, but he made it clear that the regular meetings of the Senate and emperor were held there. Two senate buildings in Rome are not improbable, as we hear about two senate buildings in Constantinople,²⁸ in which imperial administration copied the architectural solutions of the old capital. One of them was certainly the structure of Curia Iulia.

In the period of the early Empire, the Senate was most closely associated with the Curia Iulia and met most frequently there. The building known as Curia Iulia was begun by Julius Caesar shortly before his assassination, and eventually dedicated to him by Octavian on 28 August 29 B.C.²⁹ The structure occupied the traditional site for a senate house on the northern edge of the Comitium, in the northwest corner of the Forum Romanum³⁰ and from that time enjoyed the unique distinction of being designed for the sole purpose of accommodating the Senate. We know that it was burnt in 283 and rebuilt by Diocletian.³¹ It is the reasonable contention of modern scholarship that Diocletian retained the site, size, orientation, and certain details of the previous Curia Iulia. His Curia is approximately 26 meters long and 18 meters wide, while its height to the ceiling is 23 meters. We are told that by the late second century there was an ‘imperial throne’ in the building.³² In the seventh century, after the disappearance of the Roman Senate, the curia was converted for use as the church of S. Adriano under Pope Honorius I (A.D. 625–638). In 1935–1938 the church was deconsecrated, and the Curia was restored, under the scientific supervision of A. Bartoli, to its ancient form.³³

In our period, direct written evidence for Curia Iulia is very sparse. Referring to the trial of praefectus pretorio Galliarum Arvandus in early 469,³⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris

²⁶ Pol. Silv. *Quae sint Rome*, ed. Valentini-Zuchetti, p. 309, 4–5.

²⁷ Greatrex 2011: 421 and n. 154.

²⁸ *Notitia urbis Const.* 16.28: *Senatus duos*. For its topography, see Berger 1995: 131–142.

²⁹ Dio 44.5.1–2; RG 19.1; cf. 34.2; Ehrenberg, Jones 1976: 51.

³⁰ Pliny, *NH* 7.181; 35.27 (*in comitio*). The *SC de nundinis saltus Beguensis* of 138 was passed *in comitio in curia lu[ll(ia)]* – *FIRA*² I, no. 47, line 5.

³¹ *Chronogr.* 354, *MGH IX*, p. 148, s. vv. Carinus and Diocletian.

³² Herodian 2.3.3–4.

³³ Bartoli 1954: 129–137; Bartoli 1963.

³⁴ The identification of the site Arvandus’ trial depends on our interpretation of Sidonius’ words ‘*procedit noster (sc. Arvandus) in curiam*’, *ep.* 1.7.9. If ‘curia’ does mean here the proper senate house, it would be Curia Iulia, but if in this way any other meeting place of the senators is determined, then we will not be able to say in which building the trial was held; see also Purcell 1993: 147, 149. For Arvandus’ trial, see Prostko-Prostyński 2008: 70–86; De Luca 2017: 483–508.

gives some valuable information about the internal arrangement of the building. The Gallic author and senator speaks of plaintiff Ferrolus and defendant Arvandus, with their accompanying persons, ranged opposite one another in the chamber.³⁵ However, it is impossible to say whether the earlier practice is reflected here.³⁶

But where should we locate the second ‘vast basilica’ which Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor mentioned as the meeting place of the Emperor and the Senate?

In 1888, Theodor Mommsen³⁷ drew the attention of the historians and topographers of Rome to some information about the *atrium/aula Libertatis* provided by Cassiodorus’ *Variae*,³⁸ and to its connection with the inscription found at Forum Romanum, in which the same name occurs.³⁹ Mommsen was of the opinion that it is worth verifying whether Atrium Libertatis is a building adjacent to Basilica Ulpia.⁴⁰ Later interpreters gave the expression ‘Atrium Libertatis’ a literary sense,⁴¹ not a topographic one, but then Piero de Francisci⁴² and Attilio Degrassi⁴³ argued that the Curia Iulia was unusable for much of the fifth century, and that the Atrium Libertatis must therefore have been a real structure. Nicholas Purcell believes ‘that the Roman building under the Palazzo Senatorio answers very well to what we know of the Atrium Libertatis’. He located it therefore on the Capitoline Hill.⁴⁴ On the other hand Augusto Frascchetti indentified the building with the Atrium Minervae.⁴⁵

The argument asserting that it was in fact a real building is clearly supported by the text of the inscription, in four fragments, dated to the reign of Emperor Anastasius I (491–518) and Theodoric (491/493–526),⁴⁶ which informs of construction repairs in the Atrium Libertatis, where 70 columns⁴⁷ were restored (I cite the inscription in its recent, supplemented state):

³⁵ Prostko-Prostyński 2008: 77; De Luca 2017: 496. For the earlier seating arrangements and the interior of the Curia Iulia, see Talbert 1984: 121–127.

³⁶ Talbert 1984: 125.

³⁷ Mommsen 1888: 631–633.

³⁸ Cass. *Var.* 3.6.1; 9.25.3; 3.11.3; 3.33.3; 5.21.3; 6.4.3; 6.15.2–3; 6.16.3; 8.10.11.

³⁹ *CIL* VI 1794 = *CIL*² VI 8.2, 40807.

⁴⁰ Mommsen 1888: 633.

⁴¹ *Exempli gratia*, Bonnefond 1979: 610.

⁴² De Francisci 1946–1947: 314.

⁴³ Degrassi 1946–1948: 39. Contra: Lugli 1964: 807–815.

⁴⁴ Purcell 1993: 145.

⁴⁵ Frascchetti 1999: 103–121, esp. 120–121.

⁴⁶ ‘Tabula medio aevo in ecclesia S. Adriano i.e. in curia...ad posteriorum usum adhibita in tres partes eiusdem fere latitudinis (*a* et *b-c* nunc infra fractae, *d*) dissecta est’, *CIL*² VI 8.2, 40807. Approximately one third of the inscription is now lost.

⁴⁷ For the other interpretation of the line 5, see Frascchetti 1999: 116: ‘...Valerius Florianus provide a restaurare strutture che non è possibile identificare ma comunque ai suoi tempi erano ormai “settuagenarie” (septuagenarias) e che quindi la “vecchiaia” aveva reso inadeguate’.

[±] *Salvis dominis nostris Anastasio perpetuo*
Augusto et gloriosissimo viro
Theoderico Valerius Flori[an]us, v(iri) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris),
ex com(ite) domest(icorum), ex com(ite) [sacrar(um)] larg(itionum),
prae(fectus) urb(i),
in atrio libertat[is columnas] septuaginaras (!),
quae vetus[tate ac temporis] carie fuerant
[f]ere cōn[fectae, reparavit et] omnia eius loci
[re]fecit [- - -] et in secretario
[senatu - - -]ves simili
[- - -]tavit quam eius
[- - -]Capitolium
[- - -]fuerat ex omni
[- - -]ive loc (vac.).

As we have seen above, Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor refers to two ‘senate buildings’ in Rome during the late Antiquity. He used the word ‘basilicas’, but this does not rule out identifying the second building with Atrium Libertatis, as the two terms, ‘basilica’ and ‘atrium’ are used interchangeably in the language of this period. The Church of St. Peter in the Vatican is normally termed *basilica beati Petri apostoli*,⁴⁸ but Cassiodorus named it ‘atrium’: *tam definita nostra (sc. Athalarici regis) quam senatus consulta tabulis marmoreis praecipimus docentur incidi et ante atrium beati Petri apostoli in testimonium publicum collocari*.⁴⁹

If Géza Alföldy’s restoration of the text in line 5 (*in atrio libertat[is columnas] septuaginaras*) of the Valerius Florianus inscription is correct, we would have to assume that the Atrium Libertatis was a large structure, since there were 70 columns either inside or outside of it. The *Capitolium* in line 11 must indicate some relationship between Atrium Libertatis and the Capitoline Hill, and Purcell’s hypothesis identifying the building with the ‘Tabularium’ beneath the Palazzo Senatorio⁵⁰ is not as unfounded as it has been suggested.⁵¹

There are single references to other meeting places within our period.

⁴⁸ *Acta synhodi a. CCCXCXVIII: P(ost) c(onsulatu) Paulini v(iri) c(larissimi) sub die kal. Martiarum (= March 1, A.D. 499) in basilica beati Petri apostoli residente viro venerabili papa Symmacho una cum ... ; Acta synhodi a. DII: Fl. Avieno iun(ioris) v(iro) c(larissimo) consule sub die VIII id. Nov. (= November 6, A.D. 502) in basilica beati Petri apostoli residente venerabili viro papa Symmacho una cum venerabilis viris ...*

⁴⁹ *Cass. Var. 8.16.3 (fin. 533).*

⁵⁰ Purcell 1993: 154–155.

⁵¹ Coarelli 2010: 107–132, esp. 108–111. Pier Luigi Tucci, starting from Purcell’s point of view (the ‘Tabularium’ is not *Tabularium*) relocates the temple of Juno-Moneta in ‘Tabularium’, Tucci 2005, 6–33; Tucci 2013–2014: 43–123. He is of the opinion that ‘the *Tabularium* is neither in *Capitolio* nor is the public archive’, Tucci 2013–2014: 61 n. 45. Of course, in our period the temple of Juno-Moneta could no longer have been a pagan temple.

Palma Aurea. The minutes of the famous senate meeting of December 25, A.D. 438, preserved only as a copy, inform us that it was held at the palace of Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus *in domo sua quae est ad Palmam*.⁵² It could have been his private home, as Faustus presided over the Senate not as a prefect Urbi, but as a praetorian prefect (*Gesta Senatus*, 1 and 3).⁵³

King Theodoric visited Rome in 500.⁵⁴ According to *Excerpta Valesiana*, he came to the Senate (*venit ad senatum*), and later, he spoke *ad Palmam* to the Roman people, announcing the observance of all regulations given by former Roman emperors (*et ad Palmam populo adlocutus se omnia, deo iuvante, quo retro principes Romani ordinaverunt, inviolabiliter servaturum promittit*).⁵⁵ This event was witnessed by St. Fulgentius (Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe), who may have come from a senatorial family⁵⁶ and therefore was interested in details that are missing in the *Excerpta Valesiana* report. Although he was watching the spectacle reluctantly, Fulgentius also noticed the presence of the Senate during Theodoric's speech *in loco qui Palma Aurea dicitur*. If the observer was able to see the *contio* with the participation of the ruler and Roman people from one side, and the meeting of the Senate, arranged according to the rank of the senators,⁵⁷ from the other, it must mean that the Senate was located in front of the building. The location of *Palma Aurea* given in the *Vita Fulgentii* may be identical to the term *ad Palmam* of the previous quoted sources.⁵⁸ The *Acta S. Restituti* of the Christian martyr who was put to death in A.D. 309/310 indicates that *ad Palmam* is the location of *iuxta arcum Triumphi*,⁵⁹ i.e., if certain assumptions are correct, between the Triumphal Arch of Septimius Severus and the Curia Iulia.⁶⁰

⁵² *Gesta Senatus*, 1.

⁵³ Nāf 1992: 442.

⁵⁴ Cass. *Chron.* s.a. 500, *MGH AA* 11, 1894, p. 160: *Hoc anno d(ominus) n(oster) rex Theodericus Romam cunctorum votis expeditus advenit et senatum suum mira affabilitate tractans...*

⁵⁵ *Exc. Vales.* 66.

⁵⁶ Nāf 1992: 436–438.

⁵⁷ *Vita Fulg.* 9: *In loco qui Palma Aurea dicitur, memorato Theodorico rege concionem faciente, Romanae curie nobilitatem decus ordinemque distinctis decoratam gradibus exspectaret et favores liberi populi castis auribus audiens, qualis esset huius saeculi gloriosa pompa, cognosceret. Neque tamen in hoc spectaculo libenter aliquid intuitur...*

⁵⁸ See also Cass. *Var.* 4.30.2: *...Curvae porticus, quae iuxta domum Palmatam posita forum in modum areae decenter includit...* Porticus Curva and Domus Palmata is sometimes localized on the Forum Traiani, Platner-Ashby 1965²: 187, 382 with 604–605; Richardson jr. 1992: 132, s.v. Domus Palmata, which is however misleading.

⁵⁹ *Acta SS. Mai* VI, 29. Mai, Venezia 1739: 361.

⁶⁰ Della Valle 1959: 162–166; Nāf 1992: 440. Near the Curia (Iulia?), located by Wiemer 2018: 25.

Palatium.⁶¹ At times, the assembly met outside the Curia even on matters relating to the senators. The constitutions sent by the emperor as a letter to the Senate (*oratio principis*) were read in the presence of senators by high officials of the state, hence the additions *lecta* or *recitata* in the preserved legislation clearly indicate a session of the assembly.⁶² We know of such a meeting at the imperial Palatio on August 3, A.D. 326.⁶³

Pantheon. Another session of the same type was that of November 5, A.D. 370 in the Pantheon.⁶⁴ The meeting of the Senate in this place is already attested to during the reign of Hadrian.⁶⁵

Rostra Augusti. The Senate assembled on Rostra Augusti during the famous oration of Emperor Constantine the Great to the Romans after his victory at the Mulvian Bridge on October 28, A.D. 313.⁶⁶

Basilica Iulii (Lateran). In A.D. 602, in 'basilica Iulii' in Lateran, Pope Gregory the Great in the presence of clergy and the Senate, acclaimed the *imago* of the new Emperor Phocas and his wife Leontia.⁶⁷

Basilica Heleniana in the palace Sessorium. Between A.D. 432 and 440 Pope Xystus (III) was accused of rape and put on trial. Emperor Valentinian III called the entire senate to Basilica Heleniana in the palace known as the Sessorium.⁶⁸ The

⁶¹ For the imperial palace in the fourth to sixth centuries, see Richardson 1992: 282. For a detailed and very intense discussion of the Palatium's topography, see Coarelli 2012; Wiseman 2013: 234–268; Carafa, Bruno 2013: 719–786; Ziolkowski 2015: 569–581; Ziolkowski 2019: 40, 49, 50, 61–66, 68, 71, 79, 196, 215, 258.

⁶² Seeck 1919: 8; Wenger 1953: 381 n. 2; 387, 425; Classen 1977: 8, 16, 34–35, 68–69, 71, 205; Prostko-Prostyński 2008: 45–49.

⁶³ *CTh* 10.8.3 [= *Brev.* 10.4.1]: *Imp. Constantinus a. ad Severum pu.*, and the important note: *Recitata III. Non. Aug. in Palatio, Constantino a. VII et Constantio c. cons.* = August 3, 326, Seeck 1919: 8, 177.

⁶⁴ *CTh* 14.3.10: *Idem aa. [= Valentiniano et Valente] ad Olybrium pu. [...] Dat. non. Iul., lecta in Pantheo non. Nov. Valentiniano et Valente [III] aa. cons.* (November 5, A.D. 370). For the date, Seeck 1919: 8, 240; Ziolkowski 1999: 60 '368 or 370'. For many reasons, I followed Seeck's dating here.

⁶⁵ Dio 69.7.1; Ziolkowski 1999: 54–61 helds Hadrianic Pantheon for 'a freestanding imperial aula'.

⁶⁶ *Pan. Lat.* 12(11).19.1–6 with Alföldi 1999: 152–155 and fig. 197. Some days later senators accompanied the Emperor when he appeared in public *domi*, which, however, is difficult to locate. One is thinking of one of the imperial *fora*, see Alföldi 1999: 153.

⁶⁷ *Greg. Reg. epist.* Appendix 8, CCL 140 A, 1982, p. 1101: *Venit autem icona suprascriptorum Focae et Leontiae Augustorum Romae septimo Kalendarum Maiarum, et acclamatum est eis in Lateranis in basilica Iulii ab omni clero uel senatu...*; Joh. Diac. *Vita Gregorii Magni*, 4.20, PL 75, col. 185. For the location of the basilica Iulia, Prostko-Prostyński 2014: 114 and n. 294 with further bibliography. Brown 1984: 21 n. 1 seems to have doubts whether the 'senate' here was indeed the Senate. But without good reasons.

⁶⁸ *Gesta de Xysti purgatione*, ed. Wirbelaue 1993, 264, lines 39–43: *Audito hoc [sc. petitio Xysti] augustus Valentinianus dixit: 'pia petitio' et iussit fieri secundum dicta. Et rogavit uniuersum senatum urbis Romae. et Xystus episcopus rogavit presbyteros urbis Romae vel clerum, nam et monasteria seruorum dei. et sederunt in uno conficto in basilica Heleniana, quod dicitur Sessorium.* For a brief history of the basilica of S. Croce in Gerusalemme and palatial complex Sessorium, Richardson 1992: s.v. Sessorium.

files of the trial may be completely⁶⁹ or partially forged,⁷⁰ but this does not apply to the fact of the trial itself, or to the place where it took place. In the same Hierusalem basilica Sessoriani palati, on September 1, A.D. 502, an ecclesiastic trial against Pope Symmachus was held.⁷¹

Colloiseum. The Colloiseum can be considered a semi-official meeting place for the Senate, with inscriptions confirming seats specially reserved for individual senators.⁷²

Extra urbem. We are told of the official welcome of King Theodoric in A.D. 500 by Pope Symmachus, the entire Senate (*cunctus senatus*) and the Roman people somewhere outside the city. It was an *adventus principis* ceremony known from the imperial period. However, no further details are available.⁷³ The Roman senate welcomed the Frankish king at the Mulvian Bridge in A.D. 896.⁷⁴

It is possible that the Senate was also present *in loco Brontotas* (3 or 8 miles before Rome), where Emperor Anthemius was acclaimed Augustus, but due to the lack of direct evidence I omit such meeting places here, although from a purely constitutional point of view the Senate should appear in Rome wherever the Emperor appeared in public.

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⁶⁹ Scharf 1996: 100.

⁷⁰ Prostko-Prostyński 2008: 83–86.

⁷¹ *Acta synhodorum habitatum Romae a. DI*, p. 428, line 10.

⁷² See admirable work of Orlandi 2004: 191–521.

⁷³ *Exc. Vales.* 65: ...*ambulavit rex Theodericus Romam et occurrit Beato Petro devotissimus ac si catholicus. cui papa Symmachus et cunctus senatus vel populus Romanus cum omni gaudio extra urbem occurrentes.*

⁷⁴ *Annal. Fuld.* s.a. 896: *Omnis namque senatus Romanorum necnon Grecorum scola cum vexillis et crucibus ad Pontem Malvium venientes regem honorifice cum ymnis et laudibus suscepiantes ad urbem perduxerunt.* Cf. Prostko-Prostyński 2014: 86 and n. 212.

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