

# The Aqua Claudia's Role in the Jubilee Celebration of 1300

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Over the centuries, the growth in the number of pilgrims to religious sites directly impacted the development of Rome as the center of international church government.<sup>1</sup> It is undeniable that the wealth acquired in trecento Rome coincides with the overwhelming influx of pilgrims during the first Christian Jubilee in 1300 organized by Pope Boniface VIII.<sup>2</sup> Boniface strategically used this function as a means of reviving an enthusiasm for Christianity and to aid papal finances by the sale of indulgences. Throughout the history of Rome, there has been an important connection between the accessibility of reliable water sources and the city's ability to prosper. During this time, the Aqua Claudia<sup>3</sup> was one of Rome's primary aqueducts, supplying water to the Lateran Complex<sup>4</sup>, and serving as one of the major

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<sup>1</sup> Hetherington, Paul. *Medieval Rome: A Portrait of the City and Its Life*. Rubincon Press, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII inaugurated the first Jubilee year, granting indulgences to visitors who visited the holy sites. There was no Christian precedence for this event – Boniface and his theologians drew on Jewish tradition described in the Old Testament, in which a jubilee celebration was declared roughly every fifty years so that people could return to their ancestral lands in order to be pardoned for their sins. It is important to note that indulgences were only granted to financial supporters. To qualify for indulgence, one had to visit certain specified churches. The funds generated from pilgrims who visited Rome became a relied upon source of income for papal powers. There was a relationship between papal plans for rebuilding/ revamping Rome based on facilitating movement between the seven principal churches. The Jubilee sought to promote the general authority of the church. Over 30,000 pilgrims came in and out of the city per day.<sup>2</sup> Their destination is Sta. Maria Maggiore, where on the feast, which celebrates her assumption into heaven, the Christ of the *Acheropita* will greet and welcome his side the city's most revered icon of Mary.

<sup>3</sup> The Aqua Claudia was completed in 52 AD. It brought water in from 45 miles from the mountains of a south-eastern city. Two centuries later, Aurelian incorporated the aqueduct into his wall so water could flow along with traffic into Rome.

<sup>4</sup> The Lateran, situated near the Porta S Giovanni, is a complex that consists of the former papal palace, the basilica of S Giovanni in the Laterno, and the baptistery. It served as the pope's primary residence before their departure to Avignon in 1308.

pilgrimage routes through the city.<sup>5</sup> The Aqua Claudia led pilgrims of the Jubilee of 1300 through the streets of Rome, focusing their journey on specific shrines, buildings, and experiences. The Aqua Claudia also serves as a metaphor for Italy's public health initiatives during the pilgrimage in order to ward off death, disease, and the plague.



**Image 1. Map of Rome inserted into Paolino Veneto's *Chronologia Magna* -1330-40**

Paolino Veneto's print *Chronologia Magna*, 1330-1340 (image 1) reflects the pilgrims' visit during the Jubilee of 1300.<sup>6</sup> The Porta Maggiore is at the top, the Vatican on the left, and the Lateran on the right. Designated by 22 arches, the Aqua Claudia is shown running from Sta. Croce to the Colosseum. This print illustrates how the Aqua Claudia was integral in economic and papal prospers in the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Aqua Claudia allowed visitors to move throughout the city and focus their experiences on specific shrines, buildings, and experiences. While majority of the pilgrims visited the same papal sites, several routes were used during their travels.

<sup>5</sup> The Aqua Claudia was built by Emperor Claigula and finished by Emperor Claudius. Claudius brought both the Aqua Claudia and the Anio Novus to Rome. Their channels were carried across the Via Labicana and the Via Praenestina by the Porta Maggiore in AD 52.

<sup>6</sup> Kessler, Herbert L., and Johanna Zacharias. *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim*. Yale University Press, 2000.

Herbert Kessler and Johanna Zacharias have constructed two narratives of the pilgrims' journeys; each divides and describes sections of Rome's sacred land.<sup>7</sup> The first follows the pilgrims' footsteps as they enter Rome from the southeast through the Porta Maggiore, making their way along the Aqua Claudia toward the papal precinct of St. John Lateran. From there, the pilgrim encounters a number of buildings, such as the basilica of St. John, the Baptistery of Constantine, and the papal palace that faces north out of the Lateran Piazza.<sup>8</sup> Although this is not the most direct processional route from St. John Lateran to Sta. Maria Maggiore, this passage displays the Lateran icon of Christ down the Via dei SS. Quattro Coronati, to Via Labicana, past the Colliseum and through the Arch of Titus into the Roman Forum.<sup>9</sup> The procession continues from the Forum to the old Roman curia. At the church of St. Hadrian's, the acheiropoietia, an icon, entered the church and Mass is celebrated. The procession culminated in a papal mass.<sup>10</sup>

During the Middle Ages, a visual culture developed that was intended to enhance and focus a pilgrim's experience at any particular site. This visual culture tends to fall into broad categories of reliquaries and shrines, architecture and architectural decorations and motifs, costumes, or souvenirs. Whether at large sites, like Rome, or small religious parishes, artworks were used to lure pilgrims into specific areas of the church and focus their attention on specific lessons or attributes. All of these elements facilitated the experience of the devotee.<sup>11</sup> Rome was the hub of Christianity. It had generated the greatest concentration of shrines and relics in Europe, and its seven major basilicas formed a well-

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, page 5,

<sup>10</sup> Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, pages. 5-15.

<sup>11</sup> Blick, Sarah. "Pilgrimage and Medieval Art." *Grove Art Online*, n.d.

defined pilgrimage route within the and immediately outside the walls of the city itself, imitating the shrines of the holy lands.<sup>12</sup>

Public spaces during medieval times have often been described as unsanitary.<sup>13</sup> Administrations sought to control public hygiene by convincing the citizens not to pollute wells for drinking water. During the later part of 13<sup>th</sup> century, Italian civic governments passed laws regulating waste disposal, street sweeping, removal of animal and human waste, and runoff from sewers and streets drained (as it was polluting drinking water). These laws concentrated on the drainage of dirty water and sewage from residences, which signaled an important shift in awareness of diseases, concerns with public health, and the cleanliness of the city.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the thirteenth century, legislations in several cities, including Rome, outlawed their residents to close off waste passages and sink their outlets underground in order to maintain a clean appearance. Citizens could no longer rely on rainfall to flush their waste, which was previously dumped directly into the streets. Towards the end of the century, a wider drain that ran through the middle of the blocks of houses was introduced. This system was more advanced, as it collected and removed the drainage of all houses and made it possible to link up with the network of waterways in the cities and receive water cleansing the public supply. Near the end of the century, most cities had established better, and more private, drainage systems. Because of the importance for water supply to the Lateran, the Aqua Claudia was well maintained from its construction and throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Paoletti, John T, and Gary M Radke. *Art in Renaissance Italy*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2012. P. 542

<sup>13</sup> Bocchi, Francesca. "Regulation of the Urban Environment by The Italian Communes from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century," n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*.page 10

<sup>15</sup> Magister Gregorius de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae: A new Description of Rome in the Twelfth Century pg. 23

The channels of the Aqua Claudia were carried some forty-five miles across the Via Labicana and the Via Praenestina by the Porta Maggiore, one of the eastern gates of the Aurelian Walls of Rome. At the time of the first jubilee, the Aqua Claudia was kept largely to serve the religious and secular needs of the papal complex at the Lateran. If it were not for the Lateran, the Aqua Claudia would have fallen to ruins.<sup>16</sup> There is a bell tower at the Lateran church, which can be seen inside from the Porta Maggiore, that serves as a beacon for the traveler who would stay on course for the papal precinct. To avoid treading on cultivated lands, the pilgrim had to pass back under the Aqua Claudia and follow it towards the Lateran.

In the decades prior to the first jubilee, the beautification of Rome, its holy sites, and the commissioning of religious artworks were of the utmost importance to the pope. While the pope, like the pagan emperors who came before him, was responsible for civic developments, he saw the patronage of these public works as serving a dual function: to gain popularity amongst his citizens and as a way to secure entrance into heaven through acts of piety. The Aqua Claudia is a perfect example of Pope Boniface's agenda – it improved civic life by providing Rome with a clean water supply and acted as a pilgrimage route to the city's principal religious sites. What the pilgrims saw beyond the great ancient aqueduct is really thousands of building and rebuilding that establishes the papacy as the dominant political power.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, pages 5-7

<sup>17</sup> Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, pages 11-14

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