



Over the last decades, the study of the **Christianisation of territory in Late Antiquity** (4th–7th centuries) has generated an extensive historiographical production that has substantially improved our understanding of rural religious change. Scholarship has moved beyond linear and institutional models to explore the diverse rhythms and modalities of Christianisation, the plurality of agents involved –particularly the tensions and negotiations between lay initiative and episcopal authority– and the socio-economic implications of these processes. At the same time, recent approaches have questioned the rigidity of the urban–rural dichotomy, emphasising the interconnectedness of cities and countryside through mobility, communication and religious exchange. Furthermore, methodological advances –such as stratigraphic analysis of standing buildings, refined dating techniques and large-scale spatial approaches linked to landscape archaeology and corpora-based research– have further enhanced our understanding of the rhythms through which ecclesiastical structures penetrated rural spaces, while also drawing attention to the dynamics of religious expressions beyond formal ecclesiastical frameworks.

Despite these advances, the archaeological invisibility and uneven preservation of many rural churches and cult sites continue to pose major interpretative challenges, limiting our capacity to assess the real spatial, social and territorial impact of the construction of Christian landscapes in Late Antiquity. At the same time, the growing availability of archaeological, textual and topographical data now provides an increasingly solid documentary basis for comparative and large-scale analyses. In this context, **the use of spatial technologies**—such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing techniques and network analysis—opens promising perspectives for revisiting long-standing questions from new methodological angles. These approaches make it possible to move beyond isolated case studies and to explore patterns of distribution, connectivity, accessibility and territorial logic within ecclesiastical landscapes, as well as the relationships between cult places, settlements and routes of movement.

The aim of this workshop is to bring together scholars working on the Christianisation of the countryside in so-called Long Late Antiquity (4th-7th centuries) in order to **investigate, through the use of spatial technologies, the distribution of rural churches and cult places within late antique landscapes, and to examine the social, political, religious and**

territorial factors that shaped these patterns. Attention will be paid to the relationship between ecclesiastical infrastructures, systems of mobility and strategies of territorial control, with the goal of assessing whether the organisation of Christian space resulted from coherent institutional planning or from more fragmented, locally driven initiatives.

Possible topics include:

- **The “Christianisation of travel”.** Building on the seminal work of C. Corsi (2005), who has shown how Christian institutions progressively assumed functions traditionally fulfilled by the *cursus publicus*, contributions may explore the emergence of *xenodochia* and rural *ecclesiae* promoted by monastic and ecclesiastical actors from the mid-fourth century onwards along communication routes. At the same time, effective diocesan governance required bishops and their collaborators to undertake regular pastoral visitations, aimed not only at supervising doctrine and the physical condition of churches, but also at managing revenues and reinforcing personal ties with local communities. What relationships existed between rural churches and the late antique road system? Can spatial analysis help to clarify whether transport routes actively structured patterns of ecclesiastical establishment? To what extent was episcopal control of territory effectively articulated through the surveillance of road networks and their immediate surroundings? How can such approaches contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between episcopal centres, rural churches, road networks and other potential nodes of power? Do spatial and network analyses confirm a model of centrally directed organisation of ecclesiastical structuring, nuance it, or instead point towards alternative and more complex patterns?
- **Density and asymmetry in ecclesiastical landscapes.** Some regions display extraordinarily dense concentrations of churches, while others present striking gaps. In Mérida, for example, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* and the Council of Mérida of 666 (c. 18) describe a hinterland so saturated with churches that a single presbyter was required to circulate among several buildings in order to celebrate Sunday liturgy. What factors account for these asymmetries? Are they primarily the result of demographic conditions, political structures, economic constraints or institutional strategies? Do extensive ecclesiastical voids reflect territorially limited processes of Christianisation, or rather gaps in documentation and archaeological visibility?
- **Churches and cult places in peripheral and marginal areas.** Related to the previous issue is the presence of churches in isolated, peripheral or frontier zones. How should such locations be interpreted? Do they respond mainly to pastoral needs, to symbolic claims over marginal spaces, or to mechanisms of political and ecclesiastical control? To what extent might such foundations instead reflect the agency of multiple religious actors—including itinerant clerics, wandering-beggar priests, hermits or other similar figures—whose activities could both complement and challenge episcopal authority within rural territories?

The workshop particularly welcomes **contributions that employ GIS-based approaches, remote sensing techniques, network analyses, spatial statistics or digital cartographic methods**, whether applied to regional case studies or to comparative perspectives across the Mediterranean during Late Antiquity. Interdisciplinary dialogue between archaeology, history and digital humanities is strongly encouraged. By integrating spatial technologies with historical interpretation, this workshop seeks to reassess how Christian landscapes were constructed, experienced and governed, and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformation of territory in Late Antiquity.

The workshop will take place at the Warburg-Haus in Hamburg between 22 and 24 October 2026. Proposals including an abstract and a short CV (each with a maximum length of 300 words) should be sent to José Carlos López Gómez at joslopez@uma.es by 9 March 2026. Papers may be submitted in English. With this CFP, we would particularly like to encourage PhD students and early-stage postdocs to submit contributions related to their current projects!

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