

REQUISITIONS RESPONSE - PROJECT MONUMENT SUBJECTS

Date of Request: 29-04-2010

Date of Response: 03-05-2010

Request: One (1) permit to carry a handgun in Italy

Response: APPROVED - permit is enclosed

Request: Emergency telephone number for SCP in Rome

Response: APPROVED - please call 06 5553 8718 in the event of an incident that you believe would require SCP's intervention.

Request: Dossier regarding supernatural and occult activity in Rome.

Response: MODIFIED - As the supernatural and occult history of Rome spans thousands of years, and SCP's involvement with it spans many decades, the document you request would be prohibitively long. However, we have taken the liberty to narrow your request, and have provided you with an attached dossier regarding our knowledge of supernatural and occult activity related to the Roman catacombs in specific.

Request: [Game terms Resources 3]

Response: APPROVED

DOSSIER: ROMAN CATACOMBS

Prepared 2010-02-05 by Agent C [REDACTED] Giallo

The Roman Catacombs (Catacombe di Roma) were first established in the 2nd century CE, primarily as a burial place for the Christians of the day. Whereas cremation was the original Roman custom, Christians believed in bodily resurrection at the imminent Second Coming and thus preferred inhumation. As Roman law forbade burial within city limits, the catacombs were excavated just outside the boundaries of Rome proper, along Roman roads such as the Via Appia, the Via Ostiense, the Via Labicana, the Via Tiburtina, and the Via Nomentana. Geologically, the volcanic tufo rock beneath Rome was an excellent material for the digging of catacombs, as it is soft when first exposed to air and hardens thereafter.

When Christianity became the official state religion of Rome in 380 CE, catacomb burial began to decline as the Romans increasingly preferred to bury their dead in aboveground cemeteries. By the 6th century CE they were primarily used only for martyrs' memorial services. Many catacombs were sacked during the fall of Rome, and by the 10th century CE the catacombs were mostly abandoned and the surviving holy relics had been transferred above ground. The catacombs were largely forgotten until their rediscovery in 1578. Mundane history paints their rediscovery as accidental, but SCP has obtained evidence suggesting that this was actually a consequence of a botched search for supernatural artifacts which may have been staged by [REDACTED] or possibly [REDACTED]. Whether the group responsible for the reopening of the catacombs found anything of value there cannot be known with certainty. Although the Foundation has never recovered any such objects from the catacombs themselves, the possibility that they exist should not be discounted out of hand. See document # [REDACTED]-[REDACTED] for further discussion of this evidence.

There are 40 (forty) known subterranean burial chambers in Rome. Six are predominantly Jewish; the remainder are either Christian or contain a mixture of Christian, Jewish, and Pagan tombs. The Christian and Jewish catacombs are extremely important historically as they contain both the purported graves of various early Christian martyrs, and the vast majority of well-preserved examples of Christian and Jewish art from before 400 CE. These catacombs were as much as a response to overcrowding and shortage of land as they were to satisfy the need for persecuted Christians to bury their dead secretly; as such, some Christian catacombs also served as occasional places of

were served with trespassing citations, and the "unexplained scratching" emanating from the *loculi* was proven to be a family of squirrels rather than the purported "dueling bands of Christian and pagan zombies" that supposedly inhabited the site. Dr. Storm was reprimanded and urged to think critically before requesting the use of Foundation resources in the future. See Document # [REDACTED]-[REDACTED] for further details.

It is Foundation's understanding that the specific unexplored catacomb which the Project MONUMENT subjects have been asked to investigate is known as the Catacombe di Antonio Bosio along the Via Flaminia, named after the first systematic explorer of subterranean Rome (the "Columbus of the Catacombs") and author of the seminal if posthumously published *Roma Sotterranea* (1632). Owing to their small size and isolated location (the nearest other catacomb is about 11 kilometers to the south), as well as the fact that the only entrance had been unwittingly paved over, these catacombs were not discovered until 1867, when a minor earthquake cracked the street open and revealed them. Although some minor explorations of the catacombs were undertaken over the next few decades, they were limited by Italy's political instability and brought to a complete halt by the First World War. During the wartime period, the catacombs were purportedly used as a meeting place by various radical political groups who required secrecy in their dealings.

When Italy began to stabilize after the Second World War, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology authorized archaeological digs in 1953, 1956, 1957, 1962, and 1963. Although some of these digs yielded items of interest in the form of both early Christian frescoes and pagan Roman relics, all were abandoned before reaching completion for a variety of reasons including injuries and deaths among the archaeological teams, conflicts with local (and possibly corrupt) political authorities, equipment failures, conflict among team members, and difficulty in recruiting assistance from the local population. The final 1963 dig ended in failure when a utility pipe burst nearby and flooded the catacombs entirely, necessitating a total withdrawal from the dig site. Owing to the fact that five digs had produced findings of only minor historical and financial value and facing major shakeups to the Church in the form of the Second Vatican Council, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology chose to seal the site and allow it to remain submerged, with the understanding that they might return to it in the future. However, the Catacombe di Antonio Bosio has remained abandoned ever since.

In the intervening decades, the Foundation has not collected any incontrovertible proof of supernatural or occult activity centered on the Catacombe di Antonio Bosio. However, the failed excavations of the 1950s and 1960s gave rise to pervasive rumors of a curse that had been placed upon the site. According to these rumors, the Roman pagan priest who had originally overseen the site had been angry with the growth of Christianity in Rome, and had laid a curse stating that anyone who disturbed the bones of his fellows "under the emblem of the cross" would be met with misfortune. The veracity of this curse certainly cannot be proven, but it is true that this catacomb's mixture of pagan and Christian remains is somewhat unusual in Rome, and that previous excavations have seemed to be more unlucky than normal.

A local urban legend also speaks of "water creatures" (described in the manner of the Creature from the Black Lagoon) that make their home in the flooded catacombs and come out at night for unknown, possibly nefarious purposes in the city. Their passing can be detected by a strong odor of brine, and seaweed and large wet footprints left behind in the street. The Foundation has no past experience with "water creatures" of the type described, and found no evidence to confirm or deny the truth of these stories.