

# The fourth *flamen* of the Ara Pacis Augustae

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Four patrician *flamines maiores* appear in the center of the S frieze of the Ara Pacis, in a group between the figures of Augustus and Agrippa (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> These are thought to represent the *flamines Dialis, Martialis, Quirinalis, and Iulialis*, who were in charge, respectively, of the worship of Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus (the deified Romulus), and (after 42 B.C.) of the deified Julius Caesar.<sup>2</sup> Following the death of Augustus in A.D. 14, a fifth (*Augustalis*) was added for his cult.<sup>3</sup> The presence of the four Augustan *flamines* on the S frieze has been considered a historical crux. The current consensus is that the procession represents a general religious celebration of thanksgiving (*supplicatio*) in 13 B.C., on the occasion of Augustus's return from an extended stay in Spain and Gaul, rather than another one in 9 when the altar was dedicated.<sup>4</sup> But Tacitus and Dio report that the office of *flamen Dialis* was vacant between the suicide of Cornelius Merula in 87 and the appointment of Servius Cornelius Lentulus Maluginensis in 11 B.C.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the presence of the fourth priest seems to argue against the frieze's portrayal of an event in 13. In order to resolve this problem, G. Bowersock argued on textual grounds that Servius Maluginensis became *flamen Dialis* in 14, not 11<sup>6</sup> — an idea that has not won wide acceptance. I suggest instead that there is a technical, sculptural explanation for the inclusion of the fourth *flamen*.

The *flamines* are carved over two relief blocks and share certain characteristics. All wear a distinctive garment with heavy folds, the *laena*, which resembles a poncho, and they have a special leather cap (*galerus*) tied under the chin and decorated over the ears with palmettes.<sup>7</sup> It is surmounted by a point of olive wood, mounted on a disk (*apex*).<sup>8</sup> Each wears high senatorial boots (*calcei senatorii*), and at least two individuals wear a ring on their preserved left hands.

- 1 Augustus and Agrippa are identified by their portraits (though the identification of the latter is not universally accepted), the *flamines* by their costumes and headgear. Of the immense bibliography the following are most relevant here: G. Moretti, *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Rome 1948); I. S. Ryberg, *Rites of the state religion in Roman art* (MAAR 22, 1955) 44, pl. XII figs. 23a-b; J. Pollini, *Studies in Augustan 'historical' reliefs* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Berkeley 1978) 82-84; M. Torelli, *Typology and structure of Roman historical reliefs* (Ann Arbor, MI 1982) 45-47, pl. II.27; G. Koepfel, "Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit V. Ara Pacis Augustae, Teil I," *BjB* 187 (1987) 101-57; P. Zanker, *The power of images in the age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor, MI 1988) 118-25, fig. 98; D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman sculpture* (New Haven, CT 1992) 90-99; D. A. Conlin, *The artists of the Ara Pacis. The process of hellenization in Roman relief sculpture* (Chapel Hill, NC 1997). There is a sixth *flamen*, represented on the inner side of the southern *pulvinar* of the central altar (Ryberg 44-45 and n.33; Koepfel 143, Cat. 9 no. 2, 144 fig. 133) which will not be discussed here. In addition to the *flamines maiores*, there were also 12 *flamines minores* in the Augustan period: *RE* VI.2 (1909) 2492 s.v. *flamines*.
- 2 M. H. Lewis, *The official priests of Rome under the Julio-Claudians* (PapAAR, 1955) 74-77.
- 3 Tac., *Ann.* 1.10.
- 4 R. Billows, "The religious procession of the Ara Pacis Augustae: Augustus' *supplicatio* in 13 B.C.," *JRA* 6 (1993) 80-92. Dio 55.25.3-4, however, says that Augustus avoided all honors on the occasion, and entered the city at night.
- 5 Tac., *Ann.* 3.58; Dio 54.36.1. The episode and its implications are discussed by M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* vol. 1 (Cambridge 1998) 130-32. Julius Caesar was briefly *flamen Dialis* in 74 under Marius and Cinna, but he was removed when Sulla annulled their acts: Vell. Pat. 2.43.
- 6 G. Bowersock, "The pontificate of Augustus," in K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher (edd.), *Between Republic and Empire* (Berkeley, CA 1990) esp. 391-93. Bowersock argued that the S frieze is a specific representation of a celebration in honor of Augustus' assumption of the rôle of *pontifex maximus*.
- 7 A. V. Siebert, *Instrumenta sacra* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten Bd. 44, 1999) 265-66 no. 72, s.v. *Galerus*.
- 8 L. Bonfante suggests that this headgear developed out of Villanovan helmet types: "Roman costumes: a glossary and some Etruscan derivations," *ANRW* I.4 (1973) esp. 587-88, 605. The *flamines minores* instead wore a *galerus* with a knob-shaped apex.