

TEMPLUM DIVI TRAIANI PARTHICI ET PLOTINAE: a debate with R. Meneghini

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The ancient sources unequivocally state that there was a temple of Trajan and seem to locate it north¹ of his Column.² Since the late 16th c., numerous architectural remains³ found there had suggested to scholars that the temple Hadrian dedicated to Trajan and Plotina, his adopted parents,⁴ had been on the site of the present Valentini palace (figs. 2, 11-12, 16).⁵ By 1933, I. Gismondi, architect for the excavations in the Forum of Trajan, could graphically restore (fig. 1) a prostyle octastyle shrine colonnaded on the front and sides, a Vitruvian *ambulatio* ... *sine postico* (3.2.5).⁶

- 1 For compass directions throughout this article I assume that the actual NW-SE axis of the Forum of Trajan runs N-S.
- 2 SIIA *Hadr.* 19.9: *Traiani patris templo* ...; Aul. Gell, *NA* 11.17.1: ... *bibliotheca templi Traiani*... (implying that the collections in the twin pavilions flanking the Column were, owing to their proximity to the Temple, sometimes called the 'Temple of Trajan Library'). In order to interpret this phrase otherwise, Meneghini has suggested that the Temple (wherever it was) may have had flanking archives "oppure ... la definizione *templum Traiani* abbia un valore non rigorosamente topografico"; La Rocca 1998, 165. But to ignore the imposing remains of the existing libraries to postulate instead the existence of otherwise unattested 'archives' seems cumbersome. Under *Regia VIII*, both the *CVRIOSVM* and the *NOTITIA* (Nordh 1949, 73) mention the Temple (ibid. 84): *Templum Traiani et columnam!* (*Curiosum*); *Templum divi Traiani et columnam* (*Notitia*). Arce (1999, 22) suggests a date after 334 for the *Notitia*, one after 357 for the *Curiosum*. Both list the *templum Traiani* in a sequence of monuments that begins with the *Senatum* in the Forum Romanum, continues north past the Forum Traiani and ends with the Temple, a progression that implies that the Temple stood north of Forum.
- 3 Quoted in Lanciani 1990b, 137, Piro Ligorio noted the existence in this zone of a "Tempio Heroico di esso Principe, lo quale aveva un portico decastilo di marmo augustale e le sue colonne erano sei piedi nell' himoscopo (1.34 m) et alte cinquantaquattro (12.06 m) ..." (cited also by Milella 1969, 83).
- 4 *CIL* VI 966: ... *DIVI(S) TRAIANO PARTHICO ET [divinae Plotinae uxori]... PARIANTIBVS SVI[S]*; *CH.* VI 31215. Packer 1997, vol. 1, 127, and id. 2001, 80, gives the full text. See also Bertoldi 1962, 7; La Rocca 1998, 167; Meneghini 1996, 47-48 and 78 (Appendice I by L. Bili and S. Colletti); id. 1998, 130; Micheli 1984, 111-14; Packer 1997 vol. 1, 127. For the 'official title' of the Temple of the Divine Trajan in the title to this article, I combine *CIL* VI 966 with *Gell., NA*.
- 5 Meneghini 1996, 47-74, ably summarizes and discusses archaeological discoveries in the area north of the Column, the site traditionally assigned to the Temple beneath the Valentini Palace and the surrounding streets (figs. 2 and 16 here, map; Packer 1997 vol. 3, folio 21). From that evidence, scholars had begun, as early as 1824, to assemble the conjectural plan of an octastyle temple in a rectangular temenos. Their details differ considerably. Lesueur (1823, pl. 2; reproduced in Packer 1997 vol. 1, 140 fig. 82; id., 2001, 88) suggests a prostyle shrine on a high podium. Uggen (1833, pl. 4; Packer 1997 vol. 3, pl. 212) restored a dipteral south porch on a low podium; Morey (1835, pl. 10; Packer 1997 vol. 1, 153 fig. 91; id., 2001, 95) posits a similar structure, this time on a stylobate; Richter and Grifi 1839, pl. 3 (Packer 1997 vol. 1, 162-63 fig. 95; id., 2001, 103) present an amphiprostyle building with an interior apse. For Canina (1848, vol. 2, pl. 111; Packer 1997 vol. 1, 175 fig. 102; id. 2001, 110) the prostyle temple, tripteral in front, on a high podium, has an altar built into the front stair. Nearly the same, Guadet's apsidal temple (1867, pl. 30; Packer 1997 vol. 1, 187 fig. 110; id. 2001, 121) stands on a low stylobate. Lanciani (1990a, pl. 22) reproduces Guadet's temple but sets it, once again, on an impressive podium.
- 6 Gismondi's reconstruction first appeared in Colini 1933, pl. A, facing p. 256. It was based on earlier scholarship (see n.5) and on the then-recent excavation of the Temple of Mars Ultor (plan; Ganzert 1996 vol. 2, Beil. 47). Since the many gray granite shafts found under Palazzo Valentini (see Table 2 below) came from an unfluted order the size of that on the porch of the Temple of Mars Ultor (Packer 1997 vol. 1, 458-60), and since the Forum of Trajan took many of its architectural details from those of Augustus' Forum, Gismondi modelled his interior on that of the Temple of Mars Ultor. Following G. Gatti 1934, 125-26, pl. I (fig. 3 here), the E and W walls of the temenos curved to meet the sides of the *cella*. Pierino di