

# 'Where high Moneta leads her steps sublime'. The 'Tabularium' and the Temple of Juno Moneta

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## The Late-Republican substructure known as 'Tabularium'

Few attempts have been made to reconstruct the building that once occupied the top of the so-called 'Tabularium', the Capitoline substructure built in the first half of the 1st c. B.C. where rises today the Palazzo Senatorio (fig. 1). Following A. Nibby's advice, R. Delbrück attributed several travertine architectural fragments discovered in 1835 at the foot of the 'Tabularium' to a presumed portico of the Corinthian order surrounding a wide hall built over the Late-Republican substructure, whose surviving façade towards the Roman Forum was characterized by a gallery of 11 arches between Doric half-columns (fig. 2). However, if the columns of this portico really corresponded in spacing to the half-columns below, their intercolumniation would have been too wide (about 5.89 m) and their travertine entablature would have cracked.<sup>1</sup>

Not only the reconstruction, but also the name requires further discussion. 'Tabularium', indeed, is a conventional name which derives from an inscription once visible inside Palazzo Senatorio but already lost at the end of the 15th c. (CIL VI 1314, 31597):

Q(uintus) Lutatius Q(uinti) f(ilius) Q(uinti) [n(epos)] Catulus co(n)s(ul) / substructionem et tabularium / de s(enatus) s(ententia) faciundum coeravit [ei]demque / pro[bavit].

It reports that at least two parts of the structure were built under the supervision of the consul Q. Lutatius Catulus around 78 B.C., probably after the fire of 83 which had also destroyed the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The *substructio* should be identified with the large surviving platform under Palazzo Senatorio, which served as the foundation for the lost building above. The word *tabularium*, from which derives the inaccurate term used in modern scholarship to indicate the substructure, does not refer to the *Tabularium*, a sort of state-archive of the City — which probably never existed— but just to a *tabularium*, one of the many record-offices widespread in Roman buildings and temples. This *tabularium* — literally a place provided with niches or cupboards for storing *tabulae* (writing tablets) — was just one section of the whole Late-Republican structure.

A second inscription, which is still preserved and visible from the outside on the lintel of a door, on the NE side of the 'Tabularium', was found in 1845 by L. Canina, who restored it there. It mentions neither the *substructio* nor the *tabularium*, and reads as follows (CIL VI 1313):

[Quintus Lu]t[ati]us Q[ui]nti f[ili]us Q[ui]nti n[epos] C[atulus] co[n]s[ul] / de s[en]at[us] sent[entia] faciundu[m] coeravit / eidemque prob[avit].

In the 19th c., part of a third inscription on 5 lines (now disappeared) was recorded on the other side of the same lintel:

---]us / ---]o / ---]las / ---]m / ---]unt.

The letters of the last line, the ending of a verb in the third person plural, suggest that at least two persons were involved in the construction.<sup>2</sup> Similar inscriptions, carved on the lintels of minor doors and attesting the construction process, can still be seen on the top of the acropolis at Ferentino (mid-2nd c. B.C.) and elsewhere, for instance in the sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Ti-

- 1 R. Delbrück, *Hellenistische Bauten in Latium* (Strasbourg 1907-12) vol. I, 44-45 and figs. 41-42; vol. II, pl. III. Alternative reconstructions by L. Canina (1845) and C. Moyaux (1866) show an upper gallery with Ionic semi-columns: see, respectively, L. Canina, *Esposizione storica e topografica del Foro Romano* (Rome 1845) pls. V-VI and IX; M. David (ed.), *Frammenti di Roma antica* (Novara 1998) 78-79, fig. 23. For the discovery of the architectural fragments, see C. Bunsen, "Il Foro romano secondo gli scavi fino al 21 aprile 1835," *BdI* 1835, 74; id., "Les forum de Rome," *AdI* 8 (1836) esp. 222-23; A. Nibby, *Roma nell'anno MDCCCXXXVIII* (Rome 1838) vol. I, 553.
- 2 A. Mura Sommella, "Tabularium," in *LTUR* V (1999) 17-20 and fig. 5.