

The triple arch of Augustus and the Roman triumph

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Fascination with the Roman triumph begins with Flavio Biondo's *Roma triumphans* (1457-59), followed by Panvinio's *De triumphis liber unus* (1542). Had the latter work been composed only a few years later, attention would certainly have been given fragments of the *Fasti* that were discovered in 1547 in the Roman Forum, in the general area where in 1888 O. Richter would discover the remains of the triple arch of Augustus.¹ Speculation about the nature of the monument or monuments to which the fragments belonged has continued.²

Drawings made by Pirro Ligorio and preserved in the Codex Taurinensis provided the basis for associating them with an arch of remarkable design that might — depending on the interpretation of Ligorio's language — have been situated near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina.³ Support for this position, though not for the design of Ligorio's arch, could perhaps be alleged from the drawings of Martin van Heemskerck.⁴ Other scholars, mindful of the original findspot of the fragments, argued for their having been displayed on the Regia (also discovered in the 1880s), a little building whose eccentric design owes nothing to Ligorio's pen⁵ (I will return to him below).

While there were, and perhaps still are, some grounds for arguing that such documents as the consular and triumphal *Fasti* might have adorned the headquarters of the Pontifex Maximus, the peculiar trapezoidal shape of the Regia could not be made to accommodate the calculated number of panels of the *Fasti* with their architectural frame. A. Degrassi made that estimate and posited the obvious corollary: namely that the *Fasti*, including additional fragments found in the area of the arch in the 1870s, had indeed decorated the Arch of Augustus, rather as they appear in Ligorio's drawing.⁶

The various arches that may be associated with Augustus have themselves been objects of scholarly debate (admirably summarized by E. Nedergaard in *LTUR* I [1993]), but for present purposes it is sufficient to remember the setting of the triple arch, between the S flank of the temple to Caesar and the NE corner of the Temple of the Castors — that is, the SE corner of the Forum — and what was on it: a recapitulation of Rome's triumphs down to the Augustan era.⁷ And while there are a multitude of other arches in Rome, some attested archaeologically, others only literarily, with which scholars of the Roman triumph must reckon, I will argue that the Arch of Augustus may be the most important of them all for a reconstruction of the triumphal procession's route to the Capitoline.

Of the other triumphal arches that matter the following should also be noted: at the NW corner of the Forum, the Arch of Septimius Severus; on the *clivus Capitolinus*, the Arch of Nero (which was dismantled); in the vicinity of the Basilica Julia on the *vicus Iugarius*, the Arch of Tiberius; in *summa Via Sacra*, the Arch of Titus; in the valley of the Flavian amphitheater,

- 1 R. T. Scott, "Lavori e ricerche nell'area sacra di Vesta 1990-1991," *ArchLaz* 21 (1993) 11; O. Richter, "Der Tempel des Divus Iulius und der Bogen des Augustus auf dem Forum Romanum," *Antike Denkmäler* 1 (Berlin 1888); id., "Die Augustusbauten auf dem Forum Romanum," *JdI* 4 (1889) 137.
- 2 A. Degrassi, "L'edificio dei Fasti Capitolini," *RendPontAcc* 21 (1945-46) 57.
- 3 F. Castagnoli, "Pirro Ligorio, topografo di Roma antica," *Palladio* 2 (1952) 97.
- 4 For example, C. Hülsen and H. Egger, *Der römischen Skizzenbücher von Marten van Heemskerck* vol. 1 (Berlin 1913) p. 5 and pl. 9 r.
- 5 A succinct recapitulation is found in L. R. Taylor, "Degrassi's edition of the consular and triumphal *Fasti*," *CP* 45 (1950) 88-91 and in E. Nedergaard in *LTUR* 1 (Rome 1993) s.v. "Arcus Augusti (a. 29 a.C.) and (a. 19 a.C.)."
- 6 Degrassi (*supra* n.2).
- 7 See also E. Nedergaard, "La collocazione originaria dei Fasti Capitolini," *BCom* 96 (1994-1995) 33.