

The Ionic temple relief in the Capitoline: the temple of Victory on the Palatine?

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In recent years the historical reliefs of the empire have been given a much deserved share of attention, and as a result a number of important works have been redated or reidentified.¹ One of the historical reliefs which continues to pose problems of date, interpretation and even attribution to a specific monument is the block in the Capitoline Museum showing portions of a human figure and the façade of a tetrastyle Ionic temple with a sculptured pediment (figs.1a-b).² This note focuses on two related issues: the identification of the pedimental subject, and the identity of the temple. A consideration of related reliefs attributed to the same monument helps to identify the Ionic temple on the Capitoline relief.

History of the relief

The relief was found on the Corso (Via Flaminia) near the Via Lata in 1923,³ among other sculptured and plain blocks of various dates, some of which had been reused as *spolia* in the Arcus Novus of Diocletian.⁴ Our block in particular exhibits physical signs of several phases of use.⁵ Thus, the findspot of the relief cannot be considered to indicate the location of the monument to which it originally belonged. Because the Ionic temple façade possesses several sculptural peculiarities (discussed below), it was identified as belonging to the same monument as 2 other reliefs with the same characteristics, those depicting the façades of the temples of Mars Ultor (figs.2a-b)⁶ and Magna Mater (figs.3a-b).⁷ The original findspot of the 2 reliefs with the façades of identifiable temples is unknown, but they have been immured in the garden façade of the Villa Medici since the late 16th c.⁸

In an influential article published in 1939, R. Bloch argued that all 3 reliefs with temple façades belonged to the Ara Pietatis Augustae, which he believed to be a monumental altar precinct of Claudian date,⁹ resembling the better known Ara Pacis Augustae.¹⁰ This article was reprinted in 1951 in the publication of the sculptures of the Villa Medici.¹¹ Bloch's case was generally accepted without question until

1 For relevant bibliography on historical reliefs see especially G. Koeppel, "Official state reliefs of the city of Rome in the imperial age. A bibliography," *ANRW* 2.12.1 (1982) 477-506; id., "Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit I. Stadtrömische Denkmäler unbekannter Bauzugehörigkeit aus augusteischer und julisch-claudischer Zeit," *BonnJbb* 183 (1983) 61-144 (hereafter Koeppel 1983), and articles by the same author *ibid.* 1984, 1-65; 1985, 143-213; 1986, 1-90; 1987, 101-57, 1988, 97-106.

2 Museo Nuovo Capitolino inv.1386. For bibliography see Koeppel 1983 (*supra* n.1) 107-8 no.17; E. Simon, *Augustus. Kunst und Leben um die Zeitenwende* (München 1986) 20 pl.7; P. Zanker, *The power of images in the age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor 1988) 242, fig.187.

3 See especially A. Colini, "Indagini sui frontoni dei templi di Roma," *BullCom* 51 (1923) 334 n.2; F. Mancini, "Roma," *NotSc* 1925, 232-34.

4 H. Laubscher, "Arcus Novus und Arcus Claudii: zwei Triumphbögen an der Via Lata in Rom," *GöttNachr* 197.3 (1978) 5-44 (69-108); T. Buttrey, "The date of the arches of 'Diocletian' and Constantine," *Historia* 32 (1983) 375ff.

5 The top of the block has half an anathyrosis, of which a smooth raised band survives in places along the top of the block at the front. Two long, deep cuttings survive on the top, one near the right end, the other at the back near the left end. Since the preserved width of the block is only 1 m., the size, number and proximity of the cuttings seem too great for the original use of the relief. The back of the block is smooth but not polished; the modern setting of the block precludes its examination.

6 Koeppel 1983, 98-101, no.12.

7 *Ibid.* 101-3, no.13.

8 G. Andres, *The Villa Medici in Rome* (New York and London 1976) 232-33, 250, and n.528, 251-53.

9 R. Bloch, "L'Ara Pietatis Augustae," *MEFRA* 56 (1939) 81-120.

10 On the Ara Pacis, see especially the articles by Koeppel cited in n.1.

11 M. Cagianò de Azevedo, *Le antichità di Villa Medici* (Roma 1951) 3-31.