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The third man: restoration problems on the North Frieze of the Ara Pacis Augustae

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The reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Augustae has brought this remarkable structure closer to scholar and tourist alike.¹ In recent years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the assembly of its disparate fragments, carried out hastily after the last excavations under Palazzo Fiano in the late 1930s, misrepresents the design of the original monument in a number of instances. Diane Atnally Conlin's discovery that the figure generally held to be Antonia Minor on the reconstructed South frieze actually represents the joining of a female figure with remains of a male is a case in point.² In this note, a portion of the North frieze will be examined where, by placing two of the slabs too closely together, the restorers have fused two figures into one.

In 1966, Erika Simon had observed that, at the join of North panels II and III,³ the remains visible on the left edge of slab II consisting in the front part of a profile face and some drapery (figure no.26) should not have been combined with the back part of a head and some drapery on the right edge of panel III.⁴ Concluding that these remains belonged to one and the same figure, Moretti had in fact approached the two panels in such a manner as to leave a gap wide enough for one figure only (fig.1).⁵ However, the man bridging the gap as reconstructed today has a serious flaw: while the remains of drapery and a head to the left of the gap are clearly those of a foreground figure, those to the right are in low relief. Erika Simon's observation was to the point, but it was either not noticed or not taken seriously.

A 16th-c. drawing in the Vatican Library⁶ showing the segment of the North frieze in question without the 18th-c. restorations substantiates Simon's observation (fig.4).⁷ It represents the anonymous artist's judgement that these two slabs join. At the left end of the right slab, to the left of the attendant with the incense box (figure no.24), three, not two, figures are drawn: a togate figure (no.25) in the middle ground behind the *camillus*, another *togatus* in the background (no.26), and, in the foreground, a third togate figure (no.27) in profile, his right hand close to the *camillus'* shoulder and his left grasping what appear to be the lower portions of branches. Because of the diagonal break drawn at the upper left corner of this slab and the damaged portion depicted below the knee of the last *togatus* (no.27), it can be concluded that the 16th-c. artist did not suggest a restoration but represented the left edge of panel II as he had actually seen it. It appears, therefore, that c.20 cm were trimmed off the left edge of panel II before it was immured in the Uffizi. A comparison of the drawing (fig.2) with the remains on the reconstructed monument (fig.1) reveals that the front half of the figure as reconstructed by Moretti belongs to a man in the background (no.26) while the rear portion stems from another man prominently placed in the foreground (no.27). The two slabs as preserved today should therefore be separated by an additional c.20 cm (figs.3-4) to indicate the space once taken up by the missing portions of those two men.

This correction has significant consequences for the composition.⁸ Between the profile *togatus* no.22 and the *camillus* no. 24, both in the foreground, stands the single figure of the veiled priest no. 23 in the back-

1 See *BonnJbb* 187 (1987) 152-57 for a recent bibliography on the Ara Pacis.

2 *Supra* pp.000-00. For a similar join of two fragments close to the left end of the South frieze, one representing a male, the other a female, see G. Koepfel, *BonnJbb* 187 (1987) 117.

3 The numbering of the panels of the North frieze begins at the right end. Figure numbers correspond to those used in *BonnJbb* 187 (1987) 126-37.

4 E. Simon, in *Helbig*⁴ II (1966) no.1937, p.686, and *Ara Pacis Augustae* (1967) 20 f.

5 G. Moretti, *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Roma 1948) pl.11.

6 *Codex Vaticanus Latinus* 3439, fol.96 (dated 1570-80); E. Petersen, *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Sonderschr. OAI 1, 1902) 87, fig.33; G. Koepfel, *BonnJbb* 187 (1987) 134, fig.23, and 156.

7 For a listing of the restored portions, see *BonnJbb* 187 (1987) 131-33.

8 Although most of the heads are restored, the direction of their gaze is to a great extent correct.