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On the cover
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The Temple of Portunus, stucco
decoration on capital, 2011 restoration

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Forum Boarium, satellite photo,
August 2009

Preface

In 1996, the Temple of Hercules was placed on the World Monuments Watch drawing attention to a highly significant monument in dire need of conservation treatment. World Monuments Fund engaged in conservation work at the site with support from American Express. The project revealed the Temple's beauty and renewed recognition for its importance mounted. The 2006 World Monuments Watch included the Temple of Portunus, an equally important Roman temple immediately adjacent to the Temple of Hercules. WMF, through the Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, entered into a partnership with the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma to conserve the Temple of Portunus and return it to public view. Maria Grazia Filetici directed the architectural conservation work.

An essential element of WMF's work is public access at the conclusion of projects; of equal importance is equipping the public with information to understand what they see and appreciate the conservation process. The Temple of Hercules and the Temple of Portunus are not merely isolated monuments, but important areas within the Forum Boarium, reminders of its role in Roman history. American Express's support of this volume was secured through WMF's Sustainable Tourism initiative to assure that the conservation program would lead to the creation of resources for the public to learn about the Forum Boarium and its monuments.

Bonnie Burnham, President
World Monuments Fund

Introduction

This guide appears after twenty years of study, restoration and conservation of the Forum Boarium; the discovery and ideas that emerged in this fruitful period are presented in the following text, offering the reader a history of this marvelous part of the city, with an emphasis on the multidisciplinary that today distinguishes the practice of restoration and conservation of antique patrimony. "If you restore archaeological complexes it is because the state of ruins is not *an objective condition*, it is a threshold that moves from time to time, depending on the specific measures one takes, and then depending on the judgments that are made and the goals that are pursued. What can be made depends on what one wants. Ends and means are not independent variables." *Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro*.

One cannot separate a visit to the Forum Boarium today from an appreciation of the building and urban transformations that have profoundly modified the area, including the circumstances that have changed its relationship with the river and the surrounding hills and affected the perception that the visitor has of this site. Restoration, in its ultimate aim, meticulously follows the evolution of the handmade, looking to stem, where possible, the damage and dangers caused by time, accidents, profound transformations of the environment and the physical state of the sites. Interventions in which the monument is the principal point of reference for restoration make us privileged actors of the most engaging activity, that of conservation.

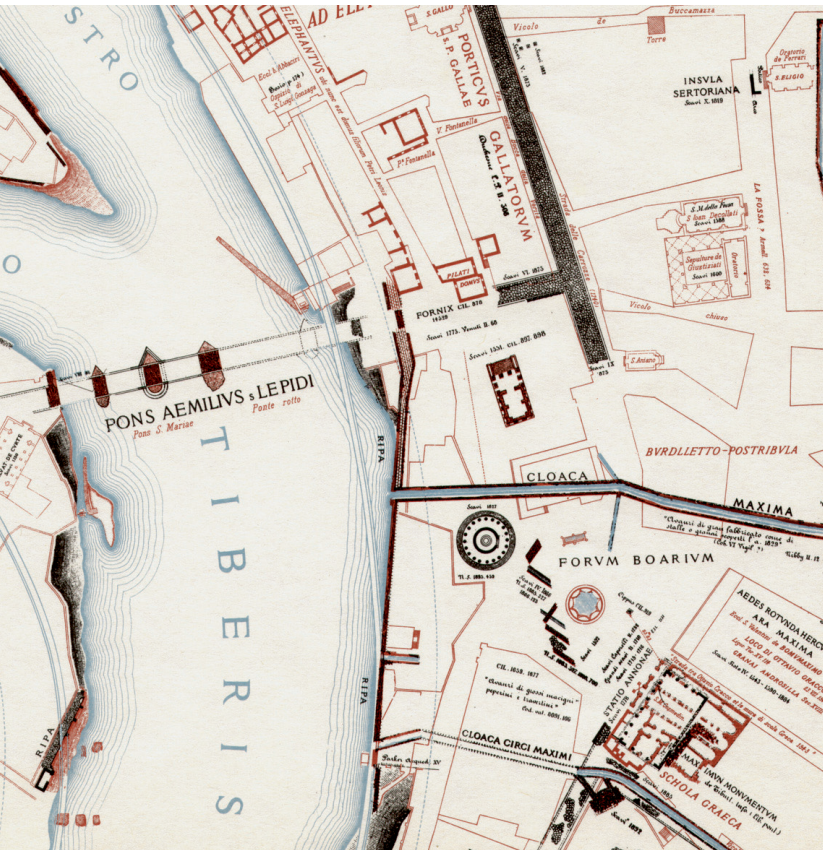
Maria Grazia Filetici
Special Superintendency for Archaeology of Rome



Piazza Bocca della Verità, 2011

1

the Forum
Boarium
and the
transformation
of the area
over the
centuries



Forum Boarium in the Imperial Age,
Lanciani FUR, tab. XXVIII, detail

the Forum Boarium and the transformation of the area over the centuries

“A very popular area exists that borders the bridges and the Circus Maximus, named for an ox located there”.
Ovid, *Fasti* (VI, 477-8)

The Forum Boarium

With the Forum Boarium the ancients defined a level zone that included the eighth and eleventh Augustan districts, located between the slopes of the Capitoline and Aventine hills and the Tiber River. The ancient tradition is unanimous in acknowledging a very early use of the Forum Boarium, which played a preeminent role in the creation of the urban center and the consolidation of the city of Rome. Originally it was a marshy area, subject to continued flooding from the river, but reclaimed during the Tarquinian age, owing to the construction of the *Cloaca Maxima* (the Great Sewer).

Given the location and the presence of the first ford (Pons Sublicius) and the first point of entry along the Tiber (Portus Tiberinus), the area became a place of business and manufacturing, especially related to food, and in connection with its role of communication between the port and the Roman Forum. In this initial phase the Forum Boarium represented a great public space that allowed for commercial exchange among people that lived in individual villages on the surrounding hills (in particular the Palatine and Capitoline) and became a type of salt market under the tutelage of a divinity, later identified with the Greek Hercules (perhaps Caco originally). Only

afterwards would it be transformed into a market specializing in the commerce of cattle, a historical episode also echoed in mythology with the story of Hercules pausing for a rest with the oxen of Geryon. With the expansion of Rome, the area became an integral part of the city and the piazza was transformed into a trans-regional meeting place, already frequented by Greek and Phoenician merchants by the beginning of the eighth century B.C. The development of commercial traffic also saw the convergence of a series of streets, the Salaria and its extension across the river (Campana road), the Latina and Appian ways, and from Etruria the Aurelia and Triumphalis, naturally on the other side of the Tiber.

Probably from the beginning of the sixth century B.C., there was a shift from the principal piazza of the Forum Boarium to the Roman Forum, wider and in a more favorable position, while the Forum Boarium maintained its role as a landing and a place for the unloading of goods. The Forum Boarium was considered a true and appropriate extension of the Roman Forum, to which it was closely linked across the two streets *vicus Tuscus* and *Iugarius*. It constituted an open area, where its interior had a true and proper piazza, of moderate dimensions, geared precisely for the cattle market, probably located between the Tiber, *Circus Maximus* and Velabro. It was believed that the Arch of the Bankers formed one of the entrances of the complex, while the northern limit was probably the *vicus Tuscus*, the southeast the prisons of *Circus Maximus* and the south via della Greca with other boundaries difficult to determine.

A bronze bull is reported by some sources to have been located in the Forum Boarium. Tacitus (*Annales*, XII, 24, 1) mentioned “a foro Boario ubi aereum tauri simulacrum aspicimus” that existed in his time. Ovid (*Fasti*, VI, 478) described an area “quae posito de bove nomen habet.” Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, XXXIV, 10) “bos aereus inde captus in foro boario est Romae”) confirmed the location of the stat-



ue in the forum and its place of origin as Aegina. The statue, then a prize of war, was taken to Aegina in 210 B.C.

Moreover, there is evidence of *insulae*, or multi-level dwellings, which already characterized the region in the Republican era. Literary sources indicate that the natural environment consisted primarily of oak tree forests (*Poetelinus* near the Temple of Portunus and *Stimulae* on the Aventine), and was supplemented in the open spaces by cultivated grain, vegetables, olives and wine.

With the Roman expansion in the Mediterranean basin and the creation, in the Imperial Age, of large ports near the coast, the Forum Boarium lost some of its commercial importance, even though the entire zone always maintained a sacred character for the Romans, given its vicinity to the location where Romulus and Remus were found.

The quarter was moreover rich as a cult place, as evidenced by the Temples of Portunus and Hercules Olivarius and the Arch of Janus, adding merit to the founding myths of Rome and the presence of the Great Altar of Hercules.

With the end of the Roman Empire, the entire area kept its popular connotations and in the Medieval Age, the Forum Boarium saw the construction of modest buildings. After the Gothic wars, Rome became an agricultural city in which

Drawing reconstructing the Forum Boarium in the Imperial Age, by G. Gatteschi (20th century)



traces remained up until the modern era (in the early 1900s the market for beasts was still located near the Theater of Marcellus); the urban landscape was profoundly altered by catastrophes that hit Rome between the sixth and eighth centuries. At the time of Gregory the Great (540-604), only some parts of the area inside the Aurelian Wall were still inhabited and the population withdrew in limited sections to the two banks of the Tiber.

One of the most densely populated zones in this phase was near the Tiber Island, on the left bank of the river. Its nucleus included the Capitoline, the Theater of Marcellus and the Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin.

It was not only that the flood of 589 devastated this area, elevating the levels of the roadway, but a change of use came about, moving from commercial to religious and charitable. Already by the High Medieval era, many pilgrims came to Rome.

The entire zone was taken up by a deaconry in charge of the Tiber docks, storerooms and markets. The port facilities were in fact recycled between the eighth and the tenth centuries A.D. to assure a regular flow of supplies along the waterway to a network of between eight and eighteen deacons installed between the Forum Boarium and Roman Forum, to provide pilgrims with food, accommodations, and other services.

Forum Boarium in the 19th century

In the Medieval era, the highest areas would lose importance (apart from some isolated clusters on the Celio, Esquiline and Aventine hills) and the built-up region would move toward the monumental zone near the river. While the antique city expanded from the settlements on the hills, remaining centralized in the Forum, the Capitoline and the Palatine, the Medieval city remained anchored to the Tiber River. The river was in fact the protagonist of the urban development of Medieval Rome, although it also represented a danger: two or three times a century, usually at intervals of thirty or forty years, but sometimes every two or three years, the city flooded near the principal loop, as it had done previously in antiquity.

Between the final decades of the eleventh century and the end of the thirteenth century, Rome underwent a process of renovation reflected in its monuments. New churches rose up and changed the urban configuration of the city.

Overall, however, excavation data are limited in this area due to interrupted periods of habitation that damaged the structures of earlier periods.

“Poverty and neglect have safeguarded the zone, the churches that came to inhabit the antique temples have kept them sacred; some modest little house was erected and a



Forum Boarium in the 19th century



damp atmosphere of silence has enveloped the piazzas of the Bocca della Verità and the Velabro, moved only by carts on their way from the countryside through Ostiense Way”.

(G. Giovannoni, *Il Tempio della Fortuna Virile ed il “Forum Boarium”*, Rome 1914).

After the long period of papal government in which restoration and recovery were overwhelmingly oriented towards buildings of worship, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Napoleonic administration, ambitious to recover antique Rome, drew up a series of master plans.

A first pass was accomplished with an amendment to the Decree of 17 May 1809, when Napoleon declared that antique buildings would be maintained and conserved with Treasury funds. In June of the same year, a Commission was created to examine the monuments and make government reports on the necessary conservation. The Commission immediate-

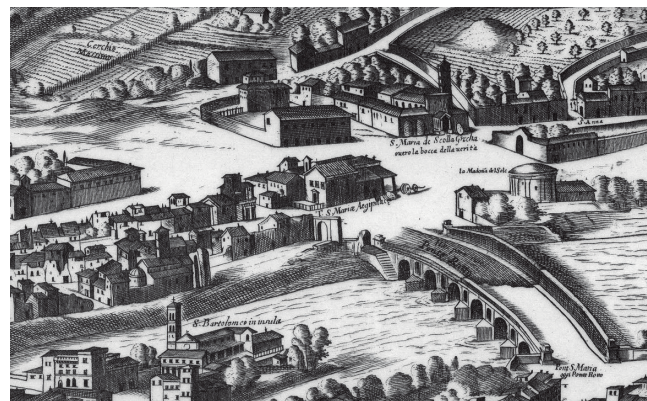
Detail of the Arch of Trajan at Benevento and the arrival of the emperor near the Tiberinus Port. On the upper left are personifications of Portunus

(Rectangular Temple), Hercules (Round temple), and a statue of Apollo, suggesting that it must have been near the Trigemina Gate

ly displayed an interest in the Forum Boarium, where architect Giuseppe Valadier had already directed an excavation of the Temple of Hercules. In the course of the work, a building that belonged to the temple was demolished, the foundations were excavated, revealing an antique staircase, and enormous amounts of land were removed, thereby resolving the problem of drainage.

The excavations, probably conducted by prisoners as they were during the Pontifical government, were made not for archaeological purposes but rather to adorn a modern imperial Rome with the remains of antique culture.

In 1810, the Commission was reorganized and given the name *Commission des Monuments et Batiments Civils*. The first unified plan for the Forum Boarium was created, aimed at bringing the monuments back to their antique condition. The Temple of Hercules was used as a point of reference for the excavation of the Temple of Portunus and the Arch of Janus. Both temples were used as churches and enlarged to meet their new functions, but it was also thought that they must reacquire their original aspect. In the same year Valadier began restoration of the Temple of Hercules: the wall around the perimeter was demolished and a fence made to



Detail of Forum Boarium in a veduta by A. Tempesta, 1693

protect the temple from vandalism and unwanted entrances. The plan provided that many buildings, including those toward the Tiber, would be removed to offer a more open view of the monumental area. The year 1812 saw an expropriation of the first building owned by the Armenians, adjacent to the rear side of the Temple of Portunus, and then a massive expenditure was approved to take down other buildings connected to the area of the Forum Boarium. The *Newspaper of the Capitoline* informed the Romans on the progress of the excavations and described the work in detail. When the French domination ended in 1814 and power returned to the pontifical government, the Temple of Hercules and that of Portunus were excavated and the land in between was partially levelled.

Even the Arch of Janus was excavated to its base and probably the adjacent houses were also demolished. During those years, teams of landscapers were hired to embellish the surrounding area.

In 1813, the French architect Berthault reached Rome and presented the Commission with various proposals for arranging the monumental areas of Rome. Among these was a plan for the zone of the Roman Forum - Colosseum - Palatine - Arch of Janus - Temples of Hercules and Portunus. The project involved the destruction of many buildings to make way for large and straight tree-lined roads. The boulevards, flanked by at least two rows of trees on either side, would have connected the various monuments, which would then have emerged well isolated from surrounding constructions. A *piazza* was ultimately planned, with a short semi-circular tree-lined side that would framed the Arch of Janus. Ultimately, the majority of design proposals for the Forum Boarium were never approved due to an abrupt end of French rule.

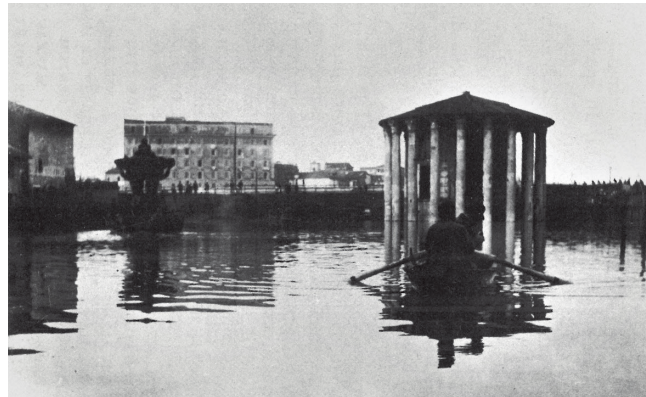
In the subsequent years of the Pontifical government the work proceeded slowly. In 1829 Valadier designed a new plan for the Forum Boarium aimed at restoring the unity of

the site. The idea was to link the antique level to the modern road network and the Tiber by taking down other buildings between the river and the monuments. A piazza was to be created in front of the antique Aemilius Bridge (Broken Bridge), and the monuments, after restoration, would be isolated from the neighboring buildings of later periods. Due to shortage of funds, the work continued slowly and the restorations of the Temple of Hercules and the Temple of Portunus consisted mostly of routine maintenance to safeguard the buildings from immanent collapse.

In 1870, following a disastrous flood in December that occurred after the Capture of Rome in September, a much-needed system was developed to protect the city from the fury of the Tiber. The Ministry of Public works nominated a Commission to address the problem and, after years of study, approved a plan of the engineer Raffaele Canevari. In 1877, he began work in Rome on the embankment of the river that involved a comprehensive modification of the area: the zone was contained by the road along the river (Lungotevere) and crossed by a street which ran between the Temples of Hercules and Portunus, joining the *piazza* to the Palatine bridge. The scholar Luca Beltrami described such interventions as merciless: "Hydraulic engineers lord it over in the name of public benefit: seizing land from the large zone of the Tiber, freely bossing everyone around, demolishing buildings along the river, to make way for miles of walls in travertine."

In this way, the Forum Boarium lost its relationship to the river.

New and severe transformations were involved in the Regulatory Plan of 1909. This latest strategy, to resolve problems related to the location of buildings designed as city offices and to connect the center of the city to the southern zone (already considered in the Regulatory Plans of 1873 and 1883), allowed for an enlargement from via Tor de' Specchi to via Bocca del-



The Forum Boarium flooded

The Forum Boarium in 1920



The Temple of Hercules from above,
after restoration in 2000

la Verità, demolishing the front part of the isolated buildings on the east side of via Bocca della Verità. The arrangement of the Forum Boarium was the subject of a specific study by an Artistic Association of Architecture Connoisseurs. The Association, established with the principal goal of conserving the monuments of Rome, nominated a commission in 1892 with the architect Giovanni Battista Giovenale as President, that was originally dedicated to the study and safeguarding of the church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin. The goal of the restoration, begun in 1898, was to make the intrinsic coherence of the twelfth century structure stand out, removing the Rococo veneer used by Giuseppe Sardi to transform the building into a church in 1718.

After completing the restoration of Saint Mary in Cosmedin, the Artistic Association of Architectural Connoisseurs drew up a plan in 1914 to further define the area. Two curved ramps were designed that would divert traffic to the left and right of the temples, reconstructing the original unified plan. The ramps and avenues would then be adorned with trees and flowerbeds.

In 1907, a law was passed that provided clear rules and restrictions for the monumental area of Rome, including the Forum Boarium. In 1914, the architect Gustavo Giovannoni denounced prior work near the Temple of Portunus, begun by the College of Armenians, a private building speculation, to elevate and convert existing small and modest constructions, transformations that were expressly prohibited by law. Giovannoni, after having the work suspended, called for the isolation of the Temple of Portunus as a first step to liberating the entire zone of the Forum Boarium, to which it belonged. World War I required a break of about eight years after which Antonio Muñoz resumed the previously proposed work of Giovannoni to isolate the Temple of Portunus.

This intervention, begun in 1921, consisted of freeing the temple from other buildings leaning against it; subsequent restoration focused on returning the monument to its antique likeness, to conserving traces of the past and

replacing missing architectural elements. Between 1923 and 1926, Antonio Muñoz also worked on the restoration of the church of Saint George at Velabro. His main objective was the elimination of superficial additions so as to restore the unity of the original appearance, which had been altered by Baroque and nineteenth century transformations.

In 1926, Gustavo Giovannoni and the architect Vincenzo Fasolo developed a plan for the enhancement of all the antique monuments in the Forum Boarium. The project provided for the creation of a tranquil environment, concentrated around the buildings and deviating the traffic along the Lungotevere. Like that already proposed in 1914, the one existing ramp between the two temples would be replaced with two identical ramps at either side, the one on the left providing a very large entrance to the Palatine bridge, considered the most eastern point of entry to the Trastevere quarter. To remove the road from the area, a grand artery was designed, passing along the right side of the church of Saint George at Velabro. This involved the demolition of the convent. The ground between the temples and the Arch of Janus would have been leveled to bring it back to its original height and a modest little house adjacent to the arch, at one time a stable and then a garage for trucks, would have been demolished.

The planned composition, unrealized, would have had a central axis joining the Temple of Hercules with the Arch of Janus while a connection between the piazza and via Bocca della Verità would consist of a series of buildings of modest height, with facing in brick or tuff, porches, roofing and designs, like the example given by Fasolo in his drawing, “in Medieval Roman style, not dissimilar to that of the little houses of Saint Cecilia.”

The appearance of the area as we see it today is the result of changes and demolitions carried out from 1930 forward: based on project outlines, the arrangement in the Forum Boarium followed the principal objective of joining the tem-

ples with the Arch of Janus and recreating the unity of the site. The work involved the complete leveling of the area, the destruction of buildings near the Temple of Portunus and those located between the Salara road, now gone, and the Lungotevere, and between the Bocca della Verità and the Velabrum, to the end of via de' Cerchi. It also involved the creation of two external ramps and a garden around the temples as well as the nearby baroque fountain.

Although many in the early twentieth century called for the demolition of the former pasta factory Pantanella, an industrial building built in 1882, it was conserved and Muñoz transformed it into the Museum of Rome and the Empire, which was ultimately transferred to the Braschi Palace. The internal structure of the factory was completely modified to accommodate its new functions: the wooden attic was substituted with an iron structure and a majestic staircase was built at the entrance. Externally, to rid the building of its industrial imprint it was painted with dark colors, the chimney was removed, and a small porch was constructed, further breaking the volumetric continuity of the building along via de' Cerchi.

The present appearance of the piazza was also significantly influenced by successive demolitions that occurred according to the Master Plan of 1931. The roads were arranged in two directions, toward the mountains and toward the sea: the Forum Boarium was crossed by the Street of the Sea, a route of about thirty meters (ninety feet) which followed via Tor de' Specchi, the Mouth of Truth (today Petroselli Road), Lungotevere Aventine, and via Marmorata to then join the Ostiense Way. Following the expropriations of 1935, in the years 1936-1937 the existing buildings along via Bocca della Verità were demolished for the purposes of enlarging the street and constructing new and massive buildings to house municipal offices. The new building for the Divisions III and IV Registry completely erased all traces of preceding road structure.



As a result of demolition, Saint Aniano, a small chapel that rose near the Bocca della Verità, was also destroyed. Initially called the Church of the Our Lady, the chapel was given to the Society of the Scarpinelli, instituted in 1612, who dedicated it to Aniano. In 1805, the church became the property of the congregation of Saint Mary of the Tears, who restored it.

Amidst the vast demolition that took place in the area, the House of the Crescenzi was saved, thanks to a bond of protection already recognized by a deliberation of the Town Council on June 21, 1897 for buildings with artistic and historic value and successively reiterated by the Artistic Association of Architectural Connoisseurs. This last bond in fact put the House “of Rienzi,” referring to the House of the Crescenzi, on a list of untouchable and immovable buildings in an “Inventory of Monuments” printed between 1908 and 1912. The restoration of these structures ended in 1939, coinciding with the completion of the building of the Registry. In 1940, a connection between the two buildings was realized, a decision probably made after the original project plan.

The Church of Saint Aniano, now demolished, seen from the Temple of Portunus, 1920

2

the Forum
Boarium
and its
Monuments



The Temple of Hercules,
seen from the Arch of Janus

the Forum Boarium and its Monuments

The Tiber River and its Port

Already in antiquity, the Tiber made an excellent navigable river, useful above all for commercial purposes. No one knows the exact etymology of its name, and diverse legends exist about it: originally, it was called *Albula*, which, according to Latin historian M.T. Varro, derived from the Latin city of Alba Longa, or from the word *albus*, meaning “river of white water.” In fact, we know that ancient authors celebrated the Tiber as *flavus* (blonde) for the condition of its water, which must have been yellow and not clear, caused by lime deposits that were transported to the valley of the river.

The construction of four dams upstream from Rome, including Corby (Valley of Orvieto), Alviano, Nazzano and Castel Giubileo, changed the riverbed in the 1930s, preventing the passage of silt and adjusting the speed of the water and its depth, so that today one cannot define it, as in the past, as the “blond Tiber.” Modern scholars prefer to think of an Indo-European origin for the term Tiber, which would mean “river that comes from the mountains.”

The name was otherwise associated with the Latin king Tiberino Silvio, who drowned in the river.

Another antique name for the Tiber is *Rumon*, of Etruscan origin, for which there are two meanings: the first is “udder,” connected to the myth of Romulus and Remus, the legendary twin founders of Rome, who were suckled by a she-wolf. The second derives from the verb “to run or flow” and as such Rome was considered as the city constructed along the course of the river. Also deriving from the Etrus-



The Port of Rome in the Republican Era

The Tiber River with the Forum Boarium in the background during the construction of the embankments (20th century)

A navis caudicaria (cargo ship) with a scene of a load of wheat

cans, according to Varro, the name was associated with king of Veii named Thebris.

The area of the Forum Boarium, bordered by the Tiber and the Palatine and Aventine hills, was formed by alluvial deposits and always submerged from flooding and therefore subject to the formation of marshes. After passing the Tiberina Island, the river in fact made a sharp bend. Here, it often formed a wide depression between the Palatine and the Capitoline Hills and spread on the grass to the left of the river a *velum aureum*, a film of water that looked like gold, as seen from the summit of the Palatine hill. From this, according to tradition, the zone was called by the name of Velabrum. At this point, an encounter occurred that forms a base of the founding myth of the city. Here, at the behest of the cruel king of Alba Longa, Amulius, the twin sons of Rea Silvia, Romulus and Remus, were abandoned in a wicker basket. The river current that would otherwise have kidnapped and carried them away instead pushed the twins toward the base of the Palatine hill among the roots of a large fig tree. When the water withdrew, the basket containing the twins remained trapped below the tree. A wolf drinking from the river, noticed the twins, and, having probably lost some of her pups, fed the babies with her remaining milk. Thanks to that animal and the sweet fruits of the fig tree, the babies survived, until they were found by Faustulus, a shepherd of pigs living on the Palatine, who took the babies and, together with his wife Acca Larentia, fed and raised them.

The tale, quoted in many sources such as Titus Livius and Plutarch, sustained, since ancient times, a series of interpretations. According to some, the legendary wolf was none other than the very Acca Larentia, who was a prostitute. The etymology of the wolf, as emphasized in many studies, has a strict affinity with *lupanar* (brothel), referring to prostitution. Also the topographical position of the discovery of the twins, though still in the Velabrum and then at the foot of the

The Blonde Tiber

lamque rubescebat radiis mare et aethere ab alto
 Aurora in roseis fulgebat lutea bigis,
 cum venti posuere omnisque repente resedit
 flatus, et in lento luctantur marmore tonsae.
 Atque hic Aeneas ingentem ex aequore lucum
 prospicit. Hunc inter fluvio Tiberinus amoeno
 verticibus rapidis et multa flavus harena
 in mare prorumpit. Variæ circumque supraque
 adsuetæ ripis volucres et fluminis alveo
 aethera mulcebant cantu lucoque volabant.
 Flectere iter sociis terraeque advertere proras
 imperat et laetus fluvio succedit opaco.

Now the sea was reddening with the sun's rays,
 and saffron Aurora in her rose-coloured chariot,
 shone from the heights of heaven,
 when the winds dropped and every breeze
 suddenly fell away, and the oars laboured slowly in the
 water.

At this moment, gazing from the sea, Aeneas saw
 a vast forest. Through it the Tiber's lovely river,
 with swirling eddies full of golden sand,
 bursts to the ocean. Countless birds, around and above,
 that haunt the banks and streams, were delighting
 the heavens with their song and flying through the groves.
 He ordered his friends to change course and turn their
 prows
 towards land, and joyfully entered the shaded river.

Virgilio, *The Aeneid*, VII, 25-36



Personification of the Tiber, 2nd century
 A.D. Tivoli, Hadrian's Villa, Museum
 of the Canopus



Fresco with the wolf, the Tiber, and Romulus and Remus, anonymous, 16th century

Tenet fama cum fluitantem alveum, quo eiti erant pueri, tenuis in sicco aqua destituisset, lupam sitientem ex montibus qui circa sunt ad puerilem vagitum cursum flexisse; eam submissas infantibus adeo mitem prae buisse mammas et lingua lambentem pueros magister regii pecoris invenerit – Faustulo fuisse nomen ferunt – ab eo ad stabula Larentiae uxori educandos datos.

The tradition goes on to say that after the floating cradle in which the boys were left ended up on dry land, due to retreating water, a thirsty she-wolf from the surrounding hills, attracted by the crying of the children, came to them, gave them her teats to suck and was so gentle towards them that the king's flock-master found her licking the boys with her tongue. According to the story, his name was Faustulus. He took the children to his hut for his wife Larentia to raise.

Titus Livius, *The History of Rome*, I, 4

Palatine hill, was moved several times, according to scholars, more toward the Palatine Hill or more toward the Forum Boarium.

The validity of the legend was above all never questioned. The location of the discovery was made sacred from the most antique times, and popular rites and festivals were dedicated to Acca Larentia. The wolf became the most venerated animal in the Roman tradition and the fig also became a sacred plant. Called *figus ruminalis* (according to some, *rumes* means breast), it continued to turn green, according to Varro, always in the same place for 840 years, reborn from its roots. The grotto in which the wolf suckled the two babies was monumentalized as the Lupercal Grotto and became a base for religious ceremonies that lasted until the end of the Imperial age.

By the sixth century B.C., the Tiber was probably navigable to the Forum Boarium with small rowboats that could move smoothly against the river currents. Here was the most antique port of the city, which between the first and second Punic wars still must have been a simple landing in its natural state. The first official notice about the port dates to 179 B.C.; in this year the censor M. F. Nobilior contracted "...portum et pilas pontis in Tiberim..."

"Portunalia dicta a Portuno, cui eo die aedes in portu Tiberino facta et feriae institutae" (M. C. Varro, *De lingua Latina*, 6,19): actually it was the definitive identification of the Temple of Portunus that made it possible to ascertain the location of the Tiberinus port; this was on the left bank of the river, immediately north of the temple, where there was a natural landing. The position of the first port in Rome was not, however, practical. The river was frequently filled with sand and above all had limited space available to build the infrastructure needed for a port. Such difficulty would determine the movement of the port to the south, at the foot of the Aventine hill, even as the primitive landing continued to be used and restored following numerous floods, among

them those that occurred under Nerva (96-98 A.D.) and again during 105 A.D. This finding was confirmed following construction of the building for the Municipal Records of Rome (1936-1937), which brought to light ruins of warehouses along the river, dating to the Trajan era (98-117 A.D.). Between 1877 and 1926, as already mentioned, the construction of embankments along the river changed the relationship of this area to the city.

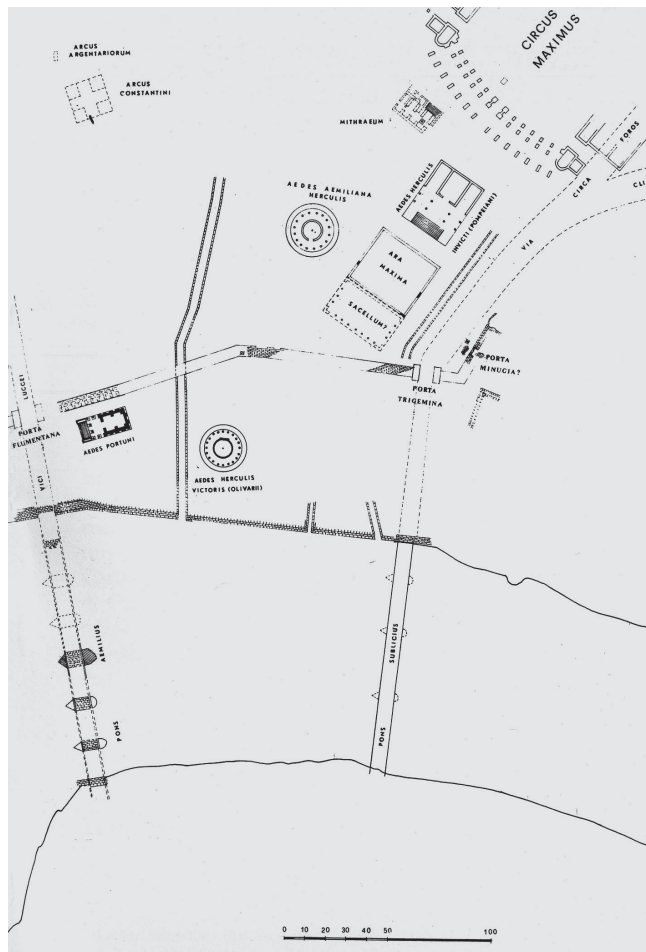
The Servian Wall

The area of the Forum Boarium was bordered by the so-called Servian wall, because it was attributed to the Etruscan king Servius Tullius (578-539 B.C.). The wall was restored in the fourth century B.C. immediately following the Gauls' sack of Rome in 390 A.D. Still discussed is the problem of the course of the wall between the Aventine and Capitoline hills. Long in doubt has been the existence of a wall in this part of the city, which, according to some scholars, would have been protected directly by the Tiber River. In all probability, however, a wall did exist, running parallel to the river with three gates, as cited in historical sources. These were the *Flumentana* Gate (near the Temple of Portunus), the *Trigemina* Gate (near Saint Mary in Cosmedin), and the *Carmentalis* Gate, leading directly to the steps of the Capitoline Hill.

This stretch of the wall would have been abandoned following a fire in the 3rd century B.C. and not re-built as it no longer met the defensive needs of Rome, which by this time dominated a good part of the western Mediterranean basin.

Great Sewer

The area was also concerned with the passage of the *Cloaca Maxima*, or the Great Sewer. It is one of the most famous monuments in antiquity. The ancient historian Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, 36.24) suggests that it was made by Tarquin the Elder and the historian Livius (*History of Rome*, 1.38.6 and 1.56.2) ascribes it to the last Roman king Tarquin the



Reconstructed plan of the Forum Boarium
in Late Republican Age, from Coarelli 1988

Interior of the Great Sewer





Proud, who aimed to clean the marshy area of the Roman forum. Crossing all of the Forum and the vicus Tuscus, the *Cloaca Maxima* reached the Forum Boarium in the area of the Arch of Janus. This stretch is still viable, although the *Cloaca* no longer functions and has been replaced by a modern sewer along the Lungotevere. The entire tract to the mouth of the Tiber River, located north of the Temple of Hercules Olivarius and built with an arch that had a triple ring still visible, is otherwise entirely buried in the sand.

Sublicius Bridge

The first known bridge in Rome was made completely of wood and according to tradition built by Ancus Marcius (T. Livius, *History of Rome* 1.33.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 3.45.2). This structure must have played a fundamental role in the early development of the city, an importance that remained throughout the centuries, as demonstrated by continual reconstructions.

The name Sublicius would have derived from *sublica*, a word from an ancient Italic language, which indicates that

The opening of the Great Sewer
before construction of the massive
walls (late 19th century)

the beams were made of wood. The bridge was in fact made entirely of wooden elements joined and tied together with rope, without the use of any metal pieces (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 36.100). Such requirements were necessary to facilitate rapid dismantling in case of enemy attacks from the opposite side of the river (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 9.68.2). This design characteristic was then maintained in subsequent renovations so that the absence of metal took on a religious significance.

The fame of the bridge is closely linked to events of the end of the sixth century B.C., when during the Etruscan siege of Rome and according to ancient tradition, Horatius Cocles prevented his enemy Porsenna from crossing the river, thus saving the city.

The Sublicius Bridge was cited again during a fire set by the Gauls in 390 B.C. and on the occasion of the escape and death of Gaius Sempronius Gracchus in 121 B.C., while in 88 B.C. it was occupied by Silla.

Sources tell us that ceremonies also took place on the bridge in the archaic era (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 3.45.2).

No one knows the exact position of the structure, which would have been built just downstream of the Aemilius Bridge.

One of the few antique representations we have of this bridge is a coin that dates to the time of Emperor Antoninus Pius, minted between 140 and 143 A.D., where the bridge appears very arched to allow the passage of boats, and Horatius Cocles is swimming across the river (an identical image of the bridge appears on a coin from 180 A.D. in the era of Marcus Aurelius). The bridge was cited again in the 4th century A.D. (*Notitia Regionum - Curiosum Urbis*), while no more notice was made from the mid-fifth century, when it probably suffered new damages and was no longer rebuilt.

Aemilius Bridge - Broken Bridge

Next to the Sublicius Bridge is another equally important structure called *Ponte Rotto*, or Broken Bridge, the

☛ Horatius Cocles

The first mention of Horatius Cocles comes from Polybius, in *The Histories*. He related that, after having defended, alone against the enemies, the head of the Sublicius Bridge at the right bank of the Tiber, thereby allowing the Romans to cut the bridge, Cocles threw himself into the river and drowned. Other later sources (Livy, Plutarch, etc.) place the tale of Horatius Cocles in the war between the Romans and the Etruscans of Porsenna (ca. 508 B.C.), when the hero, together with two companions Spurius Lartius and Titus Herminius, defended the bridge. Cocles then had to rescue his companions just before the bridge was cut. According to these authors, Horatius Cocles survived the battle. The Romans demonstrated their gratitude by dedicating a statue to him and giving him as much land as he could plow in a day. It seems though that Porsenna, unable to enter, took the city by starving the inhabitants.



“On the appearance of the enemy the country people fled into the City as best they could. The weak points were occupied by military posts; elsewhere the walls and the Tiber were deemed sufficient protection. The enemy would have forced their way over the Sublicius bridge had it not been for one man, Horatius Cocles. The good fortune of Rome provided him as her bulwark on that memorable day. He happened to be on guard at the bridge when he saw the Janiculum taken by a sudden assault and the enemy rushing down from it to the river, whilst his own men, a panic-struck mob, were deserting their posts and throwing away their arms. He reproached them one after another for their cowardice, tried to stop them, appealed to them in heaven’s name to stand, declared that it was in vain for them to seek safety in flight whilst leaving the bridge open behind them, there would very soon be more of the enemy on the Palatine and the Capitol than there were on the Janiculum. So he shouted to them to break

Horatius Cocles in an engraving
by Bartolomeo Pinelli (19th century)

down the bridge by sword or fire, or by whatever means they could, he would meet the enemies' attack so far as one man could keep them at bay. He advanced to the head of the bridge. Amongst the fugitives, whose backs alone were visible to the enemy, he was conspicuous as he fronted them armed for fight at close quarters. The enemy was astounded at his preternatural courage. Two men were kept by a sense of shame from deserting him – Spurius Lartius and Titus Herminius – both of them men of high birth and renowned courage. With them he sustained the first tempestuous shock and the onset of wild confusion, for a brief interval. Then, while only a small portion of the bridge remained, and those who were cutting it down called upon others to retire, Cocles insisted upon these, too, retreating. Looking round with eyes dark with menace upon the Etruscan chiefs, he challenged them to single combat, and reproached them all as being the slaves of tyrant kings, and while unmindful of their own liberty coming to attack that of others. For some time they hesitated, each looking round upon the others to begin. After some time, shame roused them to action, and raising a shout they hurled their javelins from all sides on their solitary foe. He caught them on his outstretched shield, and with unshaken resolution kept his place on the bridge with firmly planted foot. They were just attempting to dislodge him by a charge when the crash of the broken bridge and the shout raised by the Romans at seeing the work completed stayed the attack by filling them with sudden panic. Then Cocles said, 'Tiberinus, holy father, I pray thee to receive into thy propitious stream these arms and this thy warrior.' So, fully armed, he leaped into the Tiber, and though many missiles fell over him he swam across in safety to his

friends: an act of daring more famous than credible with posterity. The State showed its gratitude for such courage; his statue was set up in the Comitium, and as much land given to him as he could drive the plough round in one day. Besides this public honour, the citizens individually showed their feeling; for, in spite of the great scarcity, each, in proportions to his means, sacrificed what he could from his own store as a gift to Cocles."

Titus Livius, *History of Rome*, II, 1-10



first Roman bridge to be made entirely of stone. Aethicus (*Cosmographia*, 5th or 7th century A.D.) handed down its antique name as *Lapideus* “...post iterum ubi unus effectus per pontem Lepidi, qui nunc abusive a plebe *Lapideus* dicitur, iuxta forum boarium, quem *Cacum* dicunt, transiens...” but in reality the *Lepidus* Bridge was never mentioned elsewhere, while we know it principally as *pons Aemilius* from the Roman era and as many other names in the Medieval period.

The bridge was probably made after the first Punic War (264-241 B.C.), the work of M. Aemilius Lepidus Numidia, but the flood of 192 B.C. destroyed it, together with the Subclivus Bridge. The reconstruction was begun by M. Aemilius Lepidus and M. Fulvius Nobilior, censors of 179 B.C., during

Representations of Subclivus Bridge on two coins, of Antoninus Pius (above) and Marcus Aurelius (below), 2nd century A.D.

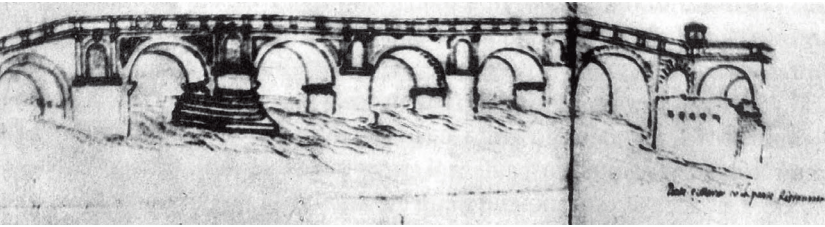
major work to settle the left bank of the Tiber River near the Forum Boarium, that was subjected to continuous flooding. In this phase only the pillars were built, while the censors of 142 B.C., P. Scipio the African and L. Mummius, constructed the arches (wooden platforms would have probably been constructed during the intervening period).

From this bridge, in 222 A.D., a furious crowd threw the body of Emperor Heliogabalus (r. 218-222 A.D.) into the Tiber River, and so it would remain sadly famous as a place used by desperate people for committing suicide.

Included in lists of bridges from the middle of the fourth to the fifth centuries, the Aemilius Bridge was surely in use in the eighth century, with the name of Greater Bridge. We know this from the *Itinerary of Einsiedeln*, a Roman guide for pilgrims, which says that the Aemilius Bridge was used to arrive at the Church of Saint George at Velabro and the Palatine. In 1144 the bridge was mentioned in another pilgrims' guide, *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, as *pons Senatorum* (the Senators Bridge), probably because it was restored at the initiative of the Roman senators.

The flood of 1230 caused grave damage to the structure and compelled Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227-1241) to intervene; in this phase he probably built a small chapel dedicated to the Madonna, stimulating him to change the name of the bridge from Senators to Saint Mary. Still other interventions would become necessary following the flood of 1422.

Under Pope Paul III (1534-1549), the bad conditions of the bridge convinced the pontificate to entrust Michelangelo (1475-1564) with rebuilding and repair. Perhaps because of the great artist's doubts about the promise of this work and his subsequent slowness, the next Pope Julius III (1550-1555) took it upon himself to revoke the job from Michelangelo and hire the architect Nanni Lippi. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), critiquing the bridge, found Nanni's work without criteria, irresponsible, and dishonest: “...But totally weakened and completely diminished, after five years it collapsed



again, reinforcing the idea that the priests were not wise to abandon the advice of Michelangelo...”

During the pontificate of Paul IV (1555-1559), the bridge suffered damage again, but was repaired only in 1561, under Pius IV (1559-1565). Still this work would not resolve the problem. Some years later, ongoing complaints from the populace, submersion of the Tiberina island, and above all, the approach of a new holy year (1575) convinced Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1575) to revisit the stability of the bridge.

For the first time, the architect Luca Peto proposed to remove a pier that collapsed during every flood to make one unique arch. His proposal was rejected and in 1573, the work was entrusted to Matteo Bartolani (1530-1597), but again, damage occurred. On Christmas night in 1598, a flooded Tiber submerged the city, taking with it the Senators Bridge, of which three arches out of six remain standing.

The bridge was never rebuilt again. In 1853, to make whatever remained of the bridge useable, a metal platform was built to connect it to the left bank of the Tiber River. In 1887, to ease the river flow and begin construction of the new Palatine Bridge, the Broken Bridge was in part abandoned and in part demolished. Today all that remains is one arch on two piers re-covered in travertine, which nonetheless conserves part of the original Roman structure arranged in squared blocks of peperino stone (*opus quadratum*).

Aemilius Bridge restored by Gregory XIII
in 1575



Aemilius Bridge in an engraving
by G. Vasi (18th century)

Broken Bridge in 1880
after the construction
of the footbridge



Portunus

According to the most ancient tradition, Portunus belonged to the cycle of the god Janus and is connected with the door and the house; therefore he was depicted with keys in his hand: "... clavim manu tenere finge batur et deus putabatur esse portarum..." (Sextus Pompeius Festus, Marcus Verrius Flaccus, *De verborum significatione*, 56). Because the port was considered a point of entry and exit for the city's commerce, Portunus also became the god of ports and had a temple dedicated to him near the Aemilius Bridge, where there was a goods yard, its own *flamine* (*fl. Portunalis*), and a feast (*Portunalia*) that fell on August 17 (day of the temple dedication) and that the late calendar by Filocalus called *Tiberinalia*. (The *flamine* was a priest of ancient Rome devoted to the cult of a god from which he took his name and celebrated the rite). No one knows in what mode the feast was performed, but it is possible to infer a rite with a fire in which a wooden key was burned.

Mythology later associated the goddess Mater Matuta with Portunus by using the tale of Leucothea & Palaemo (Ovid, *Fasti*, VI, 485), according to which, Ino (Leucothea), daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia, marries Athamas, king of Minyans, in Orchomenos, after he already had sons Phrixos and Helle from Nephele. Because of the bad influence of either Nephele or Hera, Athamas went mad and one day, mistook his wife and their young children Learchos and Melicertes for a lioness and her pups. He hunted them and succeeded in killing Learchos. Ino and Melicertes dove into the sea between Megara and Corinth but were rescued by Dionysos and Aphrodite. Ino was welcomed by the Nereids and venerated as Ino Leucothea, while Melicertes became the marine god Palaemo. Ino Leucothea is the protector of navigators in distress: she is known for help she gave to Ulysses (*Odyssey*, V, 333). With these characteristics, the gods were identified by the Romans as Mater Matuta and her child Portunus.



Fresco with portrait of Portunus, Rome, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme

The Temple of Portunus

After years of uncertainty regarding the exact location of the port of Rome, we now know that the Rectangular Temple located between the Forum Boarium and the Tiber River is the Temple of Portunus, dedicated to a water divinity that protected not only the temple, but the port of Tiberinus as well.

The Temple of Portunus, also identified in the past as The Temple of Fortuna Virilis (Manly Fortune) was for this reason the first temple to be restored by Benito Mussolini. It is in pseudoperipteral Ionic style, with the larger sides made up of two columns and five semicolumns on the walls of the cella, or sanctuary.

The columns of the pronaos and cella corners, as well as bases and capitals, are all made of travertine stone. The semicolumns and the cella itself are of volcanic tuff, all covered in precious Roman stucco.

The actual building rose on a grand embankment built from the second century B.C. forward for regulating the banks of the Tiber River. Based on esthetic elements and ceramic materials discovered during excavations, it probably dates from between 80 and 70 BC.

Underneath the existing building are earlier phases of the temple, more or less of the same dimensions, made in tuff from Grotta Oscura, near Rome, that date to the fourth and third centuries BC. This temple must have been connected, with a small bridge, to the street that constituted the continuation of the Aemilius (Broken) Bridge.

The transformation of the temple into a Christian church, which enabled the building to survive, is attributed by the majority of scholars to the second half of the 9th century, during the pontificate of John VIII (872-882).

A certain Stefano Stefaneschi, who came from a well-known family, dedicated the first church to Saint Mary in Secundicerio. During the pontificate of John VIII, Stefaneschi was honored with the title of *secundicerio*, an import-

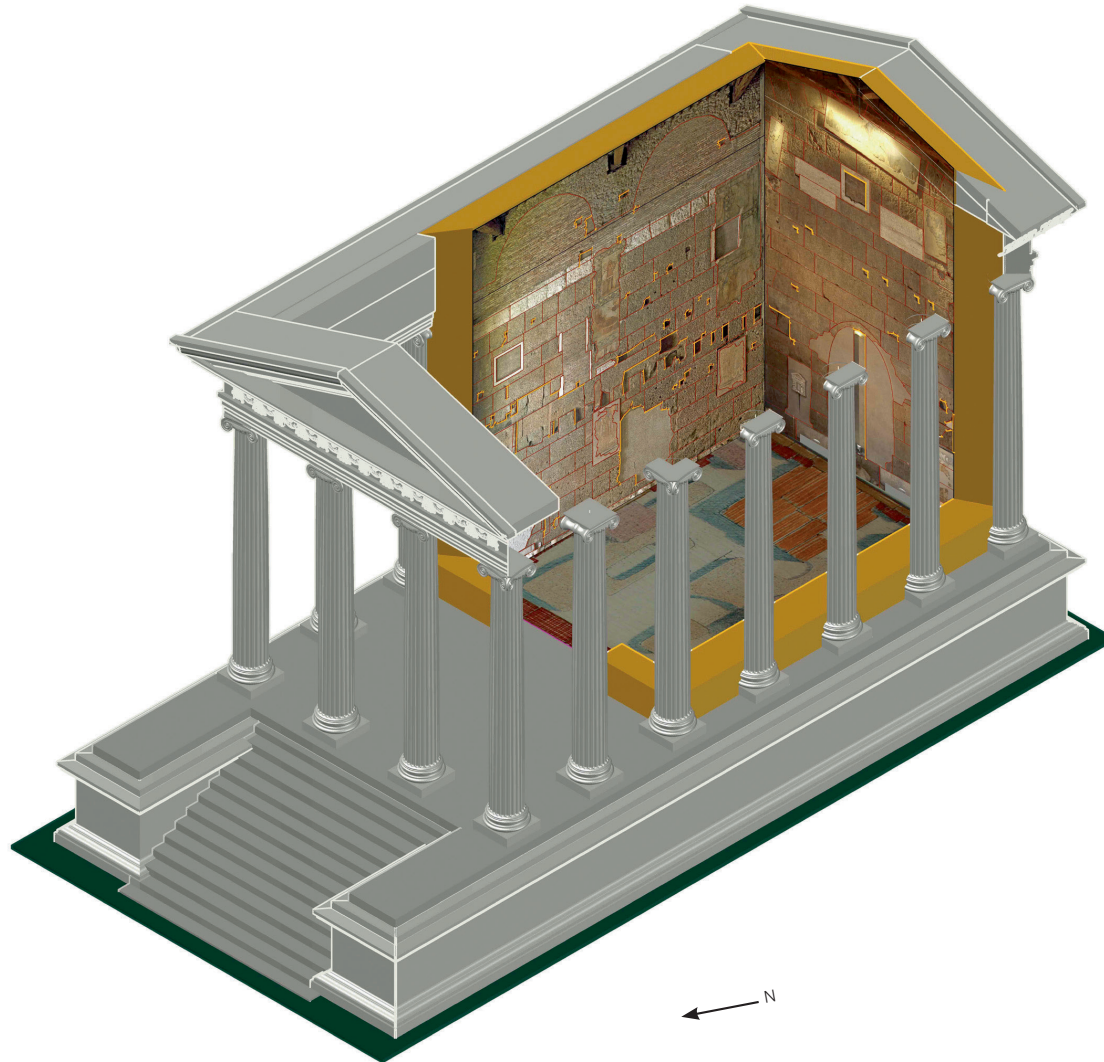


ant position in the internal papal court, even more important than that of some cardinals.

In the Catalog of 1492, however, the church of Saint Mary in Secundicerio no longer appears, and for the first time we find in the list of churches in the Ripa district of Rome (no. 249) a church of Saint Mary of Egypt, justly dedicated with most probability because of the presence there of a well-organized Eastern community.

In 1566, the Armenian community in Rome received this church from Pope Pius V (1566-1572) in exchange for what

The west front of the Temple of Portunus,
2003



Reconstruction of Temple of Portunus
in 3D model, digital imaging by
R. Di Re and A. Pollio, S.S.B.A.R., 2011

Saint Mary of Egypt

Born in 344 in Alexandria, Egypt, Mary left home at the age of twelve, making a living by begging and working as a prostitute. At the age of twenty-nine, she met in Alexandria a group of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Driven by her wish to leave Egypt, Mary left with them. She entered the city, on the day of the Feast of the Cross, and found it impossible to enter the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. A strange force restrained her; she was unworthy of paying respect to the cross of Christ. She prayed before the icon of the Mother of God and was then able to enter and worship the Cross of Jesus. Leaving, she prayed again in front of the same icon, and heard a voice that said, "If you cross the river Jordan, you will find peace and quiet."



Mary then went to the river Jordan, immersed herself in water to purify herself, and next received the Holy Communion in the basilica of Saint John the Baptist, then on the side of the river. From this moment, it is said that Mary began a long walk of penitence in the desert that lasted forty-seven years, during which she fed herself solely with grass she found on the side of the road.

Zosimas, a monk at a Palestinian monastery, met her during a similar pilgrimage that he undertook for the Lenten period. According to Sofronio, a monk who lived in the sixth century, Zosimas found before him a very thin and naked woman with long white hair, who agreed to speak with him after he gave her a cape with which to cover herself. Mary told Zosimas the circumstances of her long pilgrimage and, for the second time since arriving in Palestine, she received communion. Zosimas left Mary, promising to return to her the following year.

When he returned, he found her dead, wearing the same cloak he had given her. The legend has it that Zosimas found assistance from a lion that dug a grave with his claws into which Mary of Egypt was buried.

The life of Saint Mary of Egypt
on the stained glass window of the
Bourges Cathedral (13th century)

the ambassador of the Armenian kingdom had previously been given in 1560 by Pope Pius IV, but which was destroyed to enlarge the ghetto that housed the Jews. The rights of the Armenians to this church were again confirmed by Gregory XIII in 1574 and would continue until the first years of the 1900s, when the building became the property of the state.

In 1571 and again in 1575, a Jubilee year, the church was restored under Cardinal Giulio Antonio Sartori; a building next door, adjacent to the east side of the temple, today the front that proceeds along Via Petroselli, was constructed for use as a hospice for the Armenians.

Other restorations followed: toward the end of the 16th century by Cardinal Aldobrandini, in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Virgil Orsini, and then between 1700 and 1721, by Pope Clement XI.

The transformation on the interior and exterior of the temple caused the loss of some antique parts, including a crowning cornice on the east side, sacrificed to construct the hospice. The hospice, on a higher elevation than the temple, incorporated columns and capitals that were damaged from fires or tampering.

At the beginning of the 1900s, the Armenian community moved to the Church of Saint Nicolas of Tolentino, where today are still visible (on request in the nearby Collegio) parts of the furnishings of the Church of Saint Mary of Egypt, including a model of the Holy Sepulcher that occupies a side chapel.

In these years, the building was again tampered with: after demolishing houses near the temple, the architect Antonio Muñoz undertook the dismantling of the church to uncover the antique Imperial temple. The monument was thus isolated and brought back to its original appearance.

This work brought to light beautiful frescoes on the building's interior, probably dating to the first transformation into a church. These were in large part recovered today thanks to conservation needed to repair serious damages caused by earlier restorations from the 1960s, which, due to incorrect



The liberation of the Temple of Portunus in 1921

The Temple of Portunus, 2011

use of certain materials, profoundly altered the chemical and physical conditions of the paintings and significantly accelerated their decay.

Of the paintings, only four vertical bands (two for each wall), formerly hidden behind Renaissance pilasters and eight fragments of fresco, are preserved; they had already been removed by A. Muñoz and applied to mobile supports (actually the three largest were placed on the lower wall and the others on the side walls).

Notwithstanding the limited preservation of the pictures, it is most likely that the decoration consisted of six superimposed cycles, articulated in registers and subdivided vertically and horizontally by decorative bands. The western part presents an image of the life of the saints Joachim and Anna and above all scenes of the infancy and of the life of the Virgin. The importance of these pictures stems from their uniqueness; they are in fact the only conserved paintings in Italy that depict a young Mary with her parents Joachim and Anna, as mentioned in the apocryphal text of Pseudo-Matthew.

Equally rare is the scene of the death of the Virgin Mary with Christ giving Mary the announcement of the passing.

Another register is dedicated to the life of Saint Basil, on which remain only two episodes: the first, identifiable thanks to the inscriptions, however very ruined, *HIC MVLIER DEPRECANS SCM BASILIVM VT PRO EIVS CRIMINA DNM EXORARET*, relates how a sinner implores Saint Basil to intercede for her with God; and the second, the funerals of Basil. On part of the same register are two pairs of portraits with the Roman saints Rufina and Priscilla and the Eastern martyrs Pantaleon and Thuthail.

The lives of Zosimas and Mary of Egypt were assigned to another register; all that remains are two very deteriorated stories, but the tale must have instead been very interesting and powerful, considering that the name of the penitent Egyptian was dedicated to the church. The last register



Scene with the Death of the Virgin Mary.
Detail from a fresco in the church of Saint
Mary of Egypt, after restoration in 2011

toward the base is very fragmented and badly conserved, but it is possible to see some figures of Greek and Latin saints.

One could assume, thanks to many conserved examples in Rome, that the lower band, today lost, was probably a painting imitating a tapestry.

Finally, at the top of the back wall there was a vision of Christ in glory, however, the small parts remaining are not easily read.

Altogether, it is possible to conjecture that the entire pictorial cycle was entrusted to various painters employed in the same workshop.

On the lower wall of the sanctuary the fragment of a fresco was found with a face of the Virgin. This must have belonged to a small apse (now demolished) more recent than the principal decorative cycle and visible since the last restoration; around the face is a halo where traces of gold leaf were recovered. On the basis of these and other elements one can assume a date of around 1200.

On the external wall of the entrance to the sanctuary, there is still a small niche to the left, that must have belonged to the antique pronaos, since on this are two superimposed bands of plaster: the first, older and similar to the Roman stucco present on the rest of the temple surfaces, the second probably Medieval, of the same type as the frescoes on the interior of the sanctuary, still with remains of a very degraded fresco painting, perhaps representing a Madonna and Child (already cited by Muñoz in his story of his discoveries).

The recent restorations on the temple interior and exterior, conducted by the Special Superintendency for the Archaeology of Rome, under the direction of Maria Grazia Filetici and supported in part from contributions of the World Monuments Fund (through *American Express* and the *Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage*), have permitted the full recovery of part of the original stucco decoration that in antiquity covered the entire temple. On the side of the Temple overlooking the Tiber, is a frieze with candelabras and fes-

toons that rests above a cornice with figures of lion heads that dates to the beginning of the Imperial age. We maintain that Michelangelo was inspired by this decoration for his creation of the cornices at the Palazzo Farnese; to date, the stucco surfaces that covered the travertine drums of the front porch columns as well as the capitals have been recovered.

The restoration (2009-2011) dedicated to Marco Colonna surprisingly revealed stucco surfaces, which allowed for the study of the workmanship, composition and decorations preserved on the capitals as well as parts more hidden on the sculpted volutes. Layers of pozzolan mortar had been superimposed over the centuries on the surfaces of columns and capitals where antique covering had fallen.

The recovered stucco allows us today to observe the surfaces of the front porch in their original workmanship, dimension and decoration: a recovery very important for the understanding of an antique temple that is among the oldest still standing in Rome.

The restoration has also replaced the roof, providing major protection to the monument against seismic activity and removing rainwater from stone surfaces, thanks to a new system of gutters and downpipes made of copper. The transformations over time caused dangerous fractures in the architrave of the wall facing Via Petroselli and were consolidated with steel braces and improved structural interventions. The restoration of the entry wall to the sanctuary revealed yet another surprising discovery: two marble blocks *in situ* from the antique entryway. These were found after the cleaning of the surfaces, chiseled during late remodeling of the building, but conserved on the moulding of the antique cornice of the inside wall. This discovery has allowed for a study of the structure of the antique portal, shown here in the 3D re-creation. The width of the antique temple door was narrower than the current passage, because the cornices that formed the jamb and the lintel were removed; a classic model that was revived throughout the Renaissance.



Temple of Hercules Olivarius

Rising to the south of the Temple of Portunus it is the oldest antique building in Rome, constructed almost entirely in marble. It was long identified as the Temple of the Vestal Virgins, because of its circular form. Today we know with certainty that it was a temple dedicated to Hercules Victor, called Olivarius. During archaeological excavations of 1998, ceramic votive material was found decorated with the letter H that must have referred to *Hercules*. The timely identification was possible thanks to an inscription from the Severian age (third century A.D.) found near the temple at the end of the ninth century and partly integrated with the rest of the epigraph: [*Hercules Victor cognominatus vulg*] (or) *o Olivarius opus Scopae minoris*.

The temple was built by Marcus Octavius Herrenus, a Roman merchant of the late second century B.C. who

Temple of Portunus, stucco decoration on a capital, restored in 2011



3D re-creation of the facade of the Temple of Portunus with reconstruction of the portal made possible thanks to recent restoration. Digital imaging by R. Di Re and A. Pollio

Temple of Portunus, detail of the stucco decoration with festoons, candelabras and drip-ledges shaped like lion heads. Digital imaging by R. Di Re and A. Pollio



Hercules

“...We went to see, on the bank of the Tiber, the graceful temple of Vesta, set prominently by the Napoleonic administration (1810) and which is actually called the Temple of Victorious Hercules. The remains of the temple of Vesta or Hercules show its appearance as a temple: missing only a column, entablature and roof. The wall of the circular cella is made of white marble and the blocks are beautifully joined.

The style of the capitals and their shape are perhaps a bit too slim for the columns, suggesting that the temple of Vesta was redone toward the time of Septimius Severus. It was also called Saint Stephen of the Carriages. It was probably restored with an expenditure of three hundred *louis d'or*, and was as graceful as the temple of Diana at Nîmes”

Stendhal, *Walks in Rome*, 1829

Hercules is one of the most venerated divinities in antiquity; celebrated for his strength, representing the constant struggle against the forces of nature and evil. Son of Zeus and Alcmene, he was persecuted since birth by the jealousy of Hera, wife of Zeus, who tried many times to murder him and finally subjected him to the king of Tirinthos, Eurystheus, for whom he was required to complete his famous twelve labors. Hercules took Deianeira as his wife; she made him wear a dress soaked in corrosive poison believing that it was a love potion; the hero, tormented by unbearable pain, prepared a funeral pyre and asked Philoctetes to set fire to the pyre in exchange for his bow and arrows. Zeus then took Hercules to Olympus, where he married him to Ebe, the goddess of youth.

In the Italic world this divinity, certainly imported from Greece, also held other roles: in particular as protector of the countryside, agriculture, and cattle. He was also the tutelary divinity of traffic and commerce, markets and cross-cultural encounters.



Hercules, detail from the Arco degli Argentarii (Arch of the Bankers), 2011



The area of the restoration of the Temple of Hercules, with detail of a partially reconstructed capital, 1999

acquired his wealth from the commerce of oil, and donated the tax to the construction of the Temple of Hercules and its cult statue. Hercules was in fact the patron of the corporation of olive merchants and it is not accidental that the temple was built in the vicinity of a market and commercial exchange located near the river.

A conjecture was made about the statue of the divinity located on the inscribed base, founded on the reliefs of the Arch of Trajan at Benevento, where one sees the arrival of the emperor at the port of Rome, on the river in the zone of the Tiberinus port; on this relief are personifications (from left to right) of Portunus, with the anchor (i.e. the Rectangular Temple), of Hercules (i.e. the Circular Temple) and Apollo. Therefore we can suppose that the representation of Hercules Olivarius as a standing statue was inspired by models dating to the 4th century B.C.

His crown of poplar is characteristic of ancestral Italic divinities, before the introduction of the crown of laurels.

The temple is a round peripteral of twenty columns (of which only the base remains), which rests on the lower part of a stair grounded in tuff from Grotta Oscura. The sanctuary, in pseudo-isodome technique, is constructed in side-by-side blocks of pentelic marble on the exterior and travertine on the interior, in ashlar style, with a wide door open to the east.

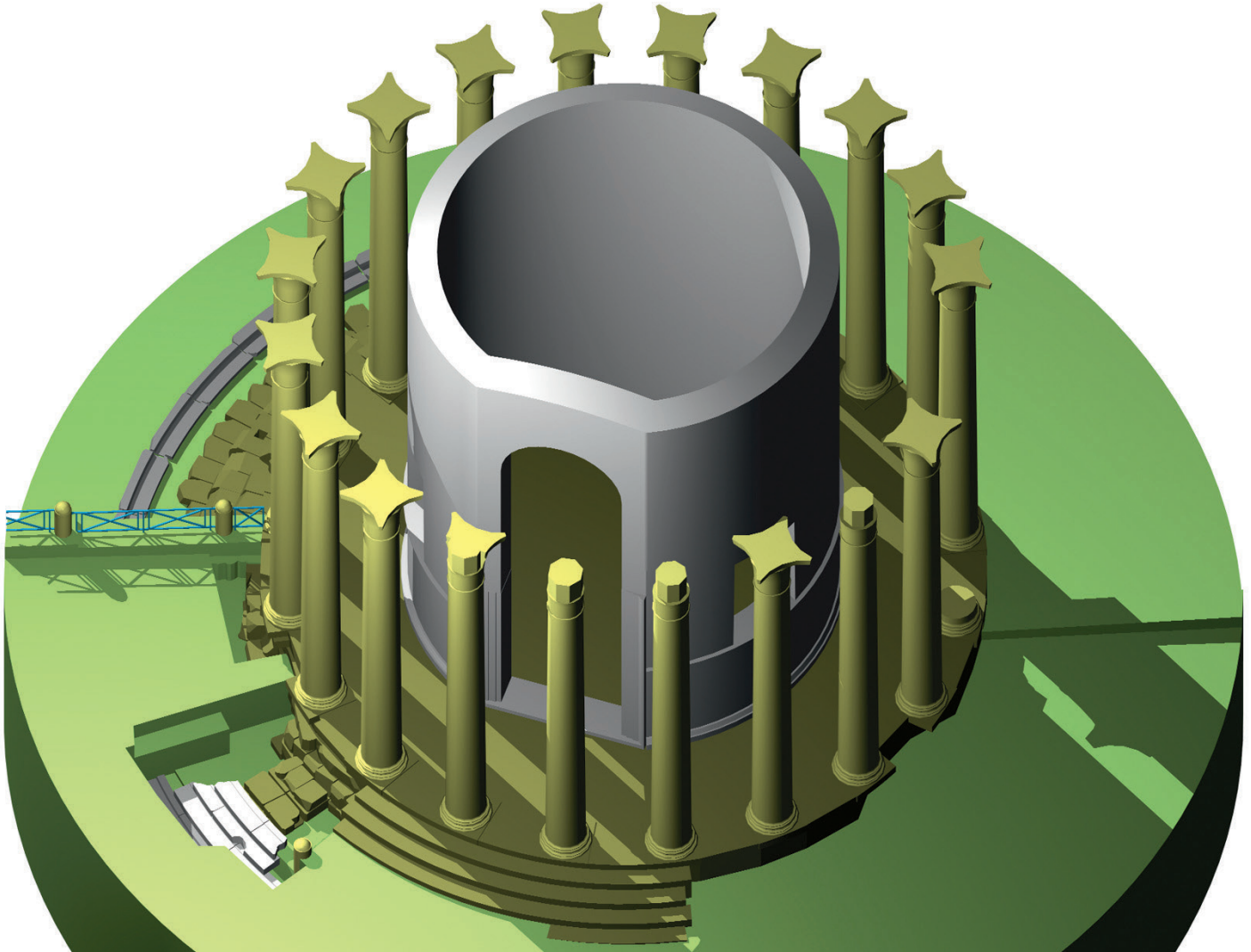
Lacking a marble architrave that existed in antiquity on top of the columns, there are signs of its support on the summit of the Corinthian capitals.

At the center of the Corinthian capitals is a bronze cup arranged by an ancient marble worker to prevent the collision of two carved cylinders, a rare discovery. The technique, of which there are few examples, dates to the Hellenistic period.

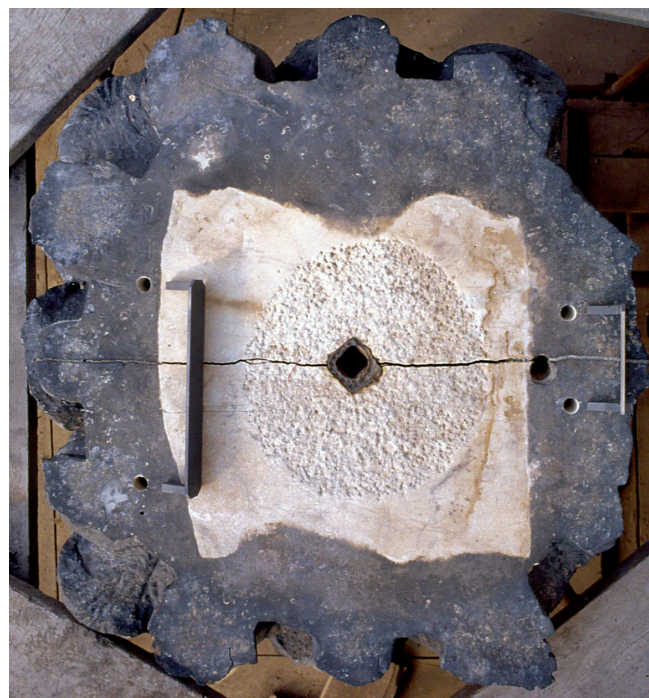
This antique temple was a construction that sustained earthquakes and floods, frequent in this zone near the river; the entablature constituted an important element of stability for the slim columns, helped by a ceiling of marble patches, of which a piece is conserved in the Vatican Museums.



Temple of Hercules, detail of capitals, 1999



3D Reconstruction of Temple of Hercules,
with the insertion of unique steps in Greek
marble discovered in excavations by M.
G. Pelletti, 1999, S.S.B.A.R.



The circular temple was constructed in a skillful manner, its foundation a cylinder in blocks of unyielding tuff bricks shaped like a cross: the base of this “well” was empty to allow for absorption of water and flooding to which this zone near the Tiber was subject. If one believes that the temple was built contemporaneously with the piers of the Aemilius Bridge, hypotheses born out also by the date of the capitals, one could infer a construction from the last third of the second century B.C.

On the monument are some visible repairs made over the course of centuries; the most evident are probably from the Tiberian epoch (perhaps following the flood of 15 A.D.), when

Temple of Hercules, detail of the bronze cup (a technique dating back to the Hellenistic age), 1998

nine columns and eleven capitals were redone in marble from Luni, while the ancient columns were in pentelic marble.

The architect of this restoration was probably Hermodoros of Salamina, Greece, while the workers who completed the project were local. We can recognize Greek sculpture in the first nineteen marble pentelic capitals, where the acanthus leaves appear more incised, while the later copies in Luni marble are marked by sculpted acanthus leaves on the Corinthian order, much more flattened and wide.

Even the marbles, pentelic or from Luni, present unique characteristics for which time has caused different reactions to agents of decay.

The temple was published in the Regional Catalogues of the fourth century A.D., without any more mention throughout the entire Medieval period (the size of two windows of similar form to those in the nearby Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin were changed in the High Medieval period).

The absence of information on the temple, by now transformed into a church, during the Medieval Age leaves one to assume a lack of interest in the building and, in a more general manner, in the whole surrounding area.

In the twelfth century, the Savelli family (who died out in 1728) dedicated the temple to Saint Stephen. It was known as Saint Stephen in the Round or Saint Stephen of the Carriages and now is under the jurisdiction of the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian.

The first known official document for the building appears in 1140, in the Papal Bull of Innocent II, dated October 27 and addressed to “dilecto filio Alberto presbitero ecclesiae S. Stephani rotundi...” in which he says: “quia vestra ecclesia S. Stephani rotundi occasione guerrae nostri apostolatus a scismaticis fere distructa est”. Almost contemporaneous is a passage from the oldest version of the famous pilgrims’ guide *Mirabilia: ad gradellas fuit templum Solis, S. Stefanus Rotundus fuit templum Fauni*. Probably immediately following the facts reported in the Bull (when the church



Temple of Hercules in an engraving
by G.B. Piranesi (18th century)



Frescoes on the interior of Temple of Hercules, after restoration in 1999 (SEI 1983), photo 2011

was almost destroyed, “fere distructa”) and referred to in the schism of 1132, works were implemented on the monument and the spaces between the columns were closed.

The writer Giovanni Antonio Bruzio (*Theatrum Romanæ Urbis*, 1655-1679) explained the following change in the name of the Church of Saint Stephen, when it became Our Lady of the Sun following a miracle that occurred in the mid-sixteenth century: “The year 1560, it is said, in the neighborhood lived Geronima Latini, an old woman of 115 years who had dedicated herself to God. Her brother, passing by the Tiber, saw an image of the Virgin painted on papyrus floating on the river, took it, and brought it to his sister who closed it in a chest with other coveted objects. Some days later, she entered the room and saw that the box was struck with a powerful light, similar to the ray of a sun. All of Rome conceded the fame of this marvel and spoke of the miracle of the Virgin of the Sun, which changed the atrium of that house into a shrine. Subsequently the Confraternity of the Holy Cross near the Church of Saint Marcellus created a new oratory around the effected image.” When “the atrium of that house was turned into a shrine,” a spontaneous veneration of the image occurred on the part of the populace, who attributed diverse miracles to it. From there, the image was brought to the church, and its name was changed to Saint Mary of the Sun. Ottavio Panciroli, writing in 1600, maintained that the image was used to exorcise the possessed.

The first documented repairs of the church are recorded in an epigraph located at the entrance to the sanctuary (SIXTUS IIII PONT MAX AEDEM HANC / BEATI STEPHANI PROTOMARTYRIS / DIU INCULTAM ET INCOGNITAM / INSTAURAVIT ANNO IUBILEI OPERANTE / GEORGIO DE RUVERE SAGRARUM / AEDIIUM URBIS CURATORE) in which the curator Giorgio della Rovere thanks Pope Sixtus IV for having permitted, in the year 1474, the repair of a church *diu incultam et incognitam* (unknown and neglected for a long time).



Saint Stephen

The figure of Stephen is tied to the earliest Christian community when, after the death of Christ, the apostles entrusted the care of a growing group of believers to seven new disciples, called deacons.

Among these was Stephen, who carried out the function of administrator among the nascent community in Jerusalem. As reported in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the activity of proselytizing and spreading the good word would evoke criticism against the Christian community and accusations by the priests of the temple, among whom Stephen would ultimately be tried and condemned as having offended the Laws of Moses. Stephen was stoned to death and hence became the first Christian martyr.

His martyrdom was witnessed by Paul of Tarsus (Saul) who assisted him before his conversion, when he was still a Roman official in charge of the repression of the Christian community.



The feast of the first martyr is celebrated immediately after Christmas, in the days dedicated to the *Comites Christi*, the Companions of Christ, who are closest to the manifestation of the Son of God, because they were the first to make testimony.

The area of the Forum Boario in an engraving by G. Vasi (18th century).
"Antique Temple dedicated to Saint Stephen, so-called of the Carriages, today Saint Mary of the Sun"

(Temple of Hercules),
"So-called House of Pilates"
(House of the Crescenzi), "Church and hospice of Saint Mary of Egypt" (Temple of Portunus)

Probably dating to this period is a fresco attributed to Antonio Romano, active in these years in Rome and the Vatican.

The painting was made on the sanctuary interior, between the boundary walls in marble and travertine, and the plaster on the upper part.

The painting was divided into three sections: on the lower register five entire figures of saints and martyrs are recognizable, from left George, Andrea, Stephen in the center, Lawrence and probably Benedict, initially confused as Saint Francis because the white habit had become brown due to products applied in prior restorations; the upper five niches contain Christ in the center and four saints, again from the left, Paul, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist and Peter. At the painting summit is a lunette with the image of God the Father making a blessing among angels.

The surface of the fresco, before restoration, was in a bad state of conservation. Damage caused by the infiltration of rainwater and from vandalism caused grave deterioration of the painting. Layers of subsequent pictures, with varied fixatives and plastering from previous restoration interventions, covered almost the entire pictorial surface, making it difficult to read the images. But in the break points of these thick and altered works emerged the original pictorial layer, that although incomplete and abraded, testified to a high quality composition and material of the painting. Inside the upper painting of Christ and the saints is inserted another fresco of smaller dimensions depicting the Madonna and child.

This painting, certainly of a later period, is surrounded by a marble frame and is almost unreadable, the surface being marred by graffiti, dense and deep, a result of recent vandalism.

The church achieved great popularity in the seventeenth century, during which a large feast for the Birth of the Madonna was held. Later, however, it experienced a sharp decline and, by the end of the nineteenth century, was deconsecrated.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, an interest on the part of the French government in the antique monu-

ments pointed to the establishment of a new urban quarter. In this way the circular temple assumed a central position, with the restitution of its monumental status, the reclamation of all the Forum Boarium and finally the restoration of the navigability of the Tiber and its dock next to the temple.

Also the arrangement of the interior, how it is presented now, did not immediately have large distortions, and maintained in large part its original stamp.

Still evident today are parts of the high Medieval church in brick, the antique temple and restorations by the French architect Valadier between 1810 and 1821. Like the Ionic temple nearby, the latest restorations conducted between 1989 and 1999, again by S.S.B.A.R., under the direction of Maria Grazia Filetici and supported in part with contributions from the World Monuments Fund thanks to American Express and the Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, has, based on a historic review of the building construction, inserted elements that augmented the level of conservative protection against seismic activity. As such, the roof that today with its protrusion of 1,50 meters (4.5 feet) is protecting the antique Greek and Roman capitals, was devised with a traditional structure in chestnut but refined by a precise system of steel links that makes it earthquake proof. The conservation work of this temple had a strong experimental connotation with consolidation systems for the columns and their multiple fractures amid the protection and conservation of marble surfaces.

Some curious legends and stories have been handed down about the monument. One episode took place in 1827, attested to by Giuseppe Valadier and then reported by Rodolfo Lanciani. That year, a man, in possession of an antique map, obtained an excavation permit to research a treasure on the inside of the Church of Our Lady of Light. "The visionary," commented Lanciani, "put the temple at great risk." The man probably thought he would find the treasure of the Savelli, the noble family that had transformed the building into a church.

What is certain today is the strong impact of pollution on the conservation of the stone, where the curve of the Tiber carries strong air currents that drag on the Greek and Luni marble surface, generating degrading pathogens. The crown of cypresses planted toward the river were an attempt to protect, with a vegetal barrier, the continuous environmental aggression and will perhaps one day overcome the indiscriminate use of automobiles in the area and the associated systems of combustion and heating.

The House of the Crescenzi

The House of the Crescenzi represents a rare example of Medieval house types in Rome, and is characterized by the re-use of numerous marble fragments from other buildings. The House was built between 1040 and 1065 according to the wishes of a certain Nicolas of the Crescenzi family, who by the tenth century were of noble status and assured a role in the governing of the city.

The house is at the border of the Forum Boarium, in front of the Temple of Portunus, and corresponds to the bridgehead of the antique Aemilius Bridge (Broken Bridge), one of the few bridges across the Tiber in the High Middle Age. The position of the house was strategic to the urban topography, as it allowed for a check on people and goods arriving in the city.

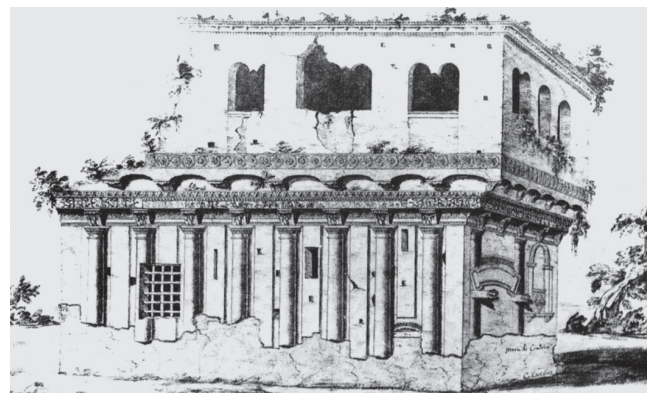
The house's ground, first and part of the second floors are preserved, and there is an external articulated brick wall.

Various names have been associated with this building over the course of the centuries; among the most frequent are House of Pilate, Tower of the Monzone and House of Cola di Rienzo. The first name may be explained by sacred performances celebrated in the Medieval age (the Roman version of the Calvary) that ended in Testaccio; during the course of such dramas an actor performed as Pontius Pilate and presented himself at the House of the Crescenzi; hence the name House of Pilate.

The term Monzone for some would have been connected to the Latin term *mansio*, often used as a synonym for house (from which derives the Italian word *magione*), and used in an epigraph on the facade, even though it had a different meaning.

The third demonination, House of Cola di Rienzo, would have derived instead from the mangling of the name Nicolaus cited in an epigraph, and Cola from a mistaken identification with the famous tribune of the Roman people in the mid-14th century.

In the front, on the architrave, now bent and broken, above the main door, is the famous declaration of the proprietor and builder Niccolò de Crescenzi. In these words is found a sense of the transience of life as well as the rebirth of the antique expressed in the exaltation of the building, erected both to dignify the city and renew the grandeur of ancient Rome. As such, it seems to refer to the climate of interest in renovating the antique and the political implications that would bring about the constitution of the city in 1144. In 1312, during the urban war that followed the entry of Henry VII, the Ghibellines, followers of the emperor, would construct a nearby barricade, entrusted to the com-



The House of the Crescenzi, drawing by Claudio Coello (17th century)



House of the Crescenzi, inscription
on the architrave of the main entry door,
2011



Arch of Janus, detail, 2011

mand of Stefano Normanni of the Stefaneschi. On this occasion, the tower that dominated the house was demolished.

† NON FUIT IGNARUS CUIUS DOMUS HEC NICOLAUS QUOD NIL MOMENTI SIBI MUNDI GLORIA SENTIT / VERUM QUOD FECIT HANC NON TAM VANA COEGIT GLORIA QUAM ROMAE VETEREM RENOVARE DECOREM

† IN DOMIBUS PULCRIS MEMORE ESTOTE SEPULCRIS CONFISIQUE TIU NON IBI STARE DIU MORS VEHITUR PENNIS / NULLI SUA VITA PERHENNIS MANSIO NOSTRA BREVIS CURSUS ET IPSE LEVIS SI FUGIAS VENTUM SI CLAUDAS OSTIA CENTUM / LISGOR MILLE IUBES NON SINE MORTE CUBES SI MANEAS CASTRIS FERME VICINUM ET ASTRIS OCIUS INDE SOLET TOLLE/RE QUOSQUE VOLLET

† SURGIT IN ASTRA DOMUS SUBLIMIS CULMINA CUIUS PRIMUS DE PRIMIS MAGNUS NICHOLAUS AB IMIS / EREXIT PATRUM DECUS OB RENOVARE SUORUM STAT PATRIS CRESCENS MATRISQUE THEODORA NOMEN

† HOC CULMEN CLARUM CARO PRO PIGNERE GESTUM DAVIDI TRIBUIT QUI PATER EXHIBUIT

The epigraph is translated as follows:

Nicolao, whose house this is, was not unaware that the glory of the world does not have importance by itself; vanity did not make him build this house, but the wish to revive the antique dignity of Rome. In the beautiful houses remember the sepulchers and be certain, by God, that you will not be here long. Death comes on wings; no one is eternal, our permanence is short and the course of life is fleeting. Even if you run faster than the wind, even if you close one hundred doors, if you command a thousand guards, you will not lay down without death. Even if you lock yourself in a castle as high as the stars, death will come to tear you away even faster. This sublime house rises toward the heavens, erected by the great Nicolao, first among firsts, to honor the dignity of the forefathers. His father is Crescenzo, and Teodora his mother. The father erected this illustrious building and dedicated it to his beloved son Davide.

At the sides of the principal inscription are incised more isolated letters. At the left:

LCLTNRSOCNST/TRSH/PNTT/RSHP/RTG/VB

Interpreted as: “Levitas, castra, Lisgor, te non reddent securum, ostia culmina non salvabunte. Tu reminiscere sepulcri heres. Palatium non tuebitur te. Rome surgit hoc palatium romane tutela gentis, urbis bono”.

At right:

NTSCLPTFGRS/NICD/DT/DD/FS

Interpreted as: “Nicolaus, Theodore Senator Crescentius liberum, palatium totum fecit gloriam Romae sue. Nicolaus dedit domum totam Davidi dilecto filio suo”.

This would have been a synthesis of the conceits expressed in the main inscription.

On the lower arc of the window to the right of the principal door, made from a segment of a Romanesque arch, is found another inscription:

ADSUM ROMANIS GRANDIS HONOR POPULIS

INDICAT EFFIGIES QUIS ME P[ER]FECERIT AUCTOR

Translated as : “I am here as a great honor to the Roman people, the portrait shows the name of my artist.”

It is possible that the inscription on this side refers to a marble bust now lost, that may have been near the window.

Abandoned and fallen into ruins, the building became stalls and haylofts, until 1868 when it was acquired by the Papal government.

The Arch of Janus

The arch that is known by the name *Ianus Quadrifrons* (four-sided Janus) is also situated near the church of Saint George at Velabro. This arch had an honorary function and arose from the eastern most part of the Forum Boarium, practically above the *Cloaca Maxima*. It has also been identified as the Arch of Constantine, as noted in the Roman Regional Catalogues (Reg. XI, last of the list after Velabrum).

It is commonly thought that the modern name does not



refer to the two-faced god Janus, but derives from the Latin term *ianus*, meaning a covered passage or door, and was given to this arch for its function as a meeting place and important crossroad. This is also borne out by the presence under the arch of the remains of a travertine pavement.

It is a massive building constructed of many marble-covered slabs, some reused, of 12 m (36 feet) in width and 16 m (48 feet) high, with four pilasters supporting a cross vault on which rests a high penthouse covered in marble. The penthouse was demolished around 1827 because it was considered Medieval. We can see it, in a pyramidal shape, in a drawing of the historian Christian K. F. Hulsen (late nineteenth century).

At the top of the baseboard two rows of three semicircular niches superimposed with shell-shaped basins to house statues are arranged on the front of every pilaster (48 in total), originally framed by columned stands on removed corbels. The four keystones are decorated with figures of Rome and Juno seated and Minerva and possibly Ceres standing.

The technique done with the reuse of marble slabs and the monumental style suggests that the building dates approximately to the middle of the fourth century A.D.

The Arch of Janus in an engraving by G.B. Piranesi (18th century)

In the Medieval period, the arch became the base of a fortified tower of the Frangipane, a powerful Roman family of ancient origins, mentioned as early as the eleventh century. We already have mention of the tower in a document from 1145 and its remains were still visible in the eighteenth century.

Partially buried over the centuries, the arch came back to light in 1827, when, to free it from the superstructure of the Medieval building, the core of the upper part in bricks was improperly removed. At the time, these bricks were considered Medieval but in reality belonged to the original penthouse of marble-covered bricks.

The Arch of the Bankers

Located near the left side of the Church of Saint George at Velabro and incorporated in 683 A.D. is the so-called Arco degli Argentarii (Arch of the Bankers), also known as the Arch of Septimius Severus or Monumentum Argentariorum (Monument of the Bankers). Notwithstanding the beauty of the monument and its important position, no mention is made of it until the end of the fifteenth century.



The Arch of the Bankers in an engraving by L. Rossini, 1831



Arch of the Bankers, detail with scene
of the sacrifice of a bull, 2011



Saint George

No certain knowledge exists about the life of Saint George. The main information comes from the *Passio Georgii*, which the Gelasianum Decree of 496 classified among apocryphal works. According to this hagiographic source, George was born in 280 in Cappadocia, the son of Geronzio of Persia and Policromia of Cappadocia. George's parents educated him in the Christian religion. He joined the military of the emperor Diocletian, and behaved like a valiant soldier to the point of joining the emperor's bodyguards. The future martyr would advance under Diocletian. George, before the court, confessed his Christianity; condemned to death for having repudiated the emperor's gods, he suffered the most excruciating torture at the hands of the executioners. Seeing George's courage and faith, the wife of the emperor converted. Finally, even Saint George bent his head on the columns and a sharp sword put an end to his life.

The image of the courageous knight fighting the dragon spread throughout the Middle Ages and can be traced to the legend of this martyr, referred to in various ways but particularly in *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus da Varagine (13th century).

The legend tells of a horrible dragon that from time to time came up from the bottom of a lake in Libya and advanced toward the wall of a city spreading death with his fiery breath. To ward off the scourge, the populace offered the monster random young victims. One day it fell to the daughter of the king to be offered as food to the dragon. The princess seemed hopelessly doomed to a terrible end, when a courageous knight from Cappadocia came to her aid, George precisely. The valiant warrior unsheathed his sword and reduced the terrifying dragon to the condition of a meek lamb, by now harmless, so much so that the princess could bring him on a leash inside the city walls, much, of course, to the amazement of the fearful inhabitants locked inside their houses. The mysterious knight reassured the city folk, announcing that the dragon was killed in the name of Christ, so that they could convert and be baptized.

This remarkable cult has had an enormous following since George's burial at Lydda (Lod, Israel), where the martyr was beheaded at the beginning of the fourth century, and which was already a destination for pilgrims in the period of the Crusades.

Constructed between December 10, 203 and December 9, 204 A.D., its original function is not clear. Probably it was used as an arch or a monumental door that served as an entrance to the piazza of the Forum Boarium from the little street *vicus Iugarius*. The monument was located at the borders of the eighth, tenth and eleventh districts and was made as a private dedication by the bankers and cattle merchants to the imperial family, in particular to the two Augustuses, Septimius Severus and Caracalla, to the Caesar Geta, the empresses Julia Domna and Plautilla and possibly also to the prefect commander of the Praetorian Guard, C. Fulvius Plautianus, father of Plautilla.

The inscription on the arch, a dedication to Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Julia Domna, was modified three times (which explains the mangled appearance of the decoration): after the fall of Plautianus in 205, after the exile (205) of Caracalla's wife Plautilla, or her murder (211; he also murdered his father-in-law), and after the murder of Caracalla's brother, Geta, in 212.

The structure is made entirely of marble, with the exception of the travertine bases of the pilasters. The arch measures more than 6 meters (18 feet) in height and 5,8 meters (17 feet) in width, while the passage is approximately 3, 3 meters (9 feet) wide.

The decoration is rich: at the lower part is a solemn sacrificial scene with bulls, a fascia with insignias, and sacrificial instruments that forms a divide with the higher, larger panels. On the left, very corroded, is the image of a figure that is possibly Caracalla, while on the pilasters of the external façade are Roman soldiers with barbarian prisoners.

On the internal passage is a representation of the imperial family: on the pilaster to the east are Septimius Severus and Julia Domna (with a missing figure) making a sacrifice. On the west side Caracalla also makes a sacrifice by hovering over a three-legged table loaded with fruit. Under the grand panels are a scene of sacrifice, friezes with instruments of sacrifice and images of libations. On the architrave, at either side of the

inscriptions, are pictures of Hercules and a protective divinity; above are images of victory and eagles. It is possible that the monument had statues of the imperial family at the top.

In the sixteenth century, one of the most persistent legends that circulated in the city related to an ancient codex, a secret book in which maps were conserved of places where treasures were hidden during the period of the barbarian invasions. According to this tenacious belief, the book was in the possession of some foreigners, especially "Goths" and "Oltromontani," that is to say individuals speaking German or French. In particular the "Goths," known by their accent and physical appearance, were suspected because they were considered direct descendants of the "barbarian" assailants. "I remember during the time of Pius IV," wrote the sculptor Flaminio Vacca at the end of the sixteenth century, "a Goth arrived in Rome with an antique book that dealt with a treasure with the sign of a serpent and a figure in low relief, on one side holding a cornucopia and on the other pointing toward the ground; and with much searching it was said that the Goth found the sign on the side of the arch." The stranger was able to convince first the Pope (Pius IV, r. 1559-1565) and then the local government that the treasure was hidden inside the Arch of the Bankers. The bas-reliefs of the arch were in fact similar to the engravings on his precious book. The Goth assumed the role of a stonemason with the name of Lucertola (Lizard) and began to bore through the antique arch: "with the force of the chisel," continued Vacca, "he went below, making a type of door: and allowing him to proceed, the Romans worried that he would ruin the arch, and suspecting the Goth of wickedness...would rise up against him." The search was abandoned, even if the legend of "the arch of the cow and the bull," as it was called in the Medieval age probably because of a frieze representing the sacrifice of some bulls, remained vivid enough to be referred to almost three centuries later in a sonnet by Gioacchino Belli, who cited it as an antique proverb, "among the cow and the bull you will find a great treasure."

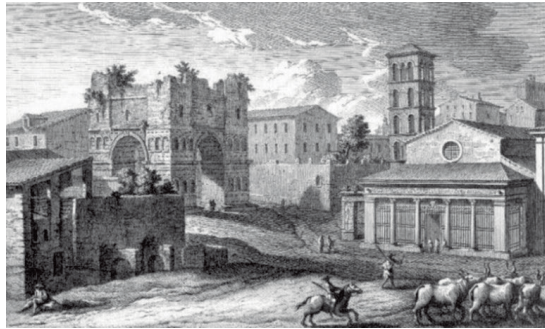


Saint Sebastian

Sebastian, according to the story of Saint Ambrose, was born and raised in Milan, with a French father and a Milanese mother, and educated in the Christian faith. He moved to Rome in 270 and embarked on a military career becoming a tribune of the first court of the imperial guards of Rome. Esteemed by the emperors Maximian and Diocletian for loyalty and intelligence, Sebastian's Christianity did not immediately become suspect. Thanks to his function, Sebastian could discreetly help imprisoned Christians, handling the tombs of martyrs and conversions of the military and nobles of the court, where he was furtively brought in by Castulus, servant of the imperial family, who subsequently died as a martyr.

For his work assisting Christians, Pope St. Caius (283-296) proclaimed Sebastian "Supporter of the Church".

Sebastian was discovered on the occasion of burying the martyrs Claudius, Castorius, Symphorian and Nicos-tratus, the so-called "Four Crowned Ones," at the cemetery on the Labicana road, where he was arrested and taken by Maximian and Diocletian. According to legend, Diocletian, furious at having discovered Christians nestled among his guards, told the tribune, "I have always kept you close to my home and you have worked in the shadows against me, insulting the gods." Sebastian was condemned to piercing by arrows: tied to a post in a zone of the Palatine hill called "campus," he was struck by many arrows; believed dead by soldiers, Sebastian was left as food for wild animals. But Irene, widow of the already cited Saint Castulus, who collected the body to put in a tomb, discerned that the tribune was in fact not dead, and transported him to her house on the Palatine and cured him. Miraculously, Sebastian recovered and, notwithstanding the counsel of his friends to flee Rome, he sought martyrdom and proclaimed his faith in front of Diocletian and Maximian while they attended the temple erected by Heliogabalus in honor of the Invincible Sun, then dedicated to Hercules. On hearing from Sebastian, Diocletian ordered that this time he be whipped to death and then thrown in the *Cloaca Maxima* (Great Sewer), to ensure that the body could not be recovered.



Saint George at Velabro

According to a note from the tenth century, the *Liber Pontificalis* (Pontifical Book) of Leon II (682-683) attributes the foundation of the Church of Saint George at Velabro to this pope, with the dedication to Saint Sebastian. The dedication connected to Saint George would have been made later, at the behest of Pope Zaccaria (741 -752) of Greek origin, who, according to tradition, carried from Cappadocia the head of Saint George; while according to another telling the same pope found the head of Saint George preserved in a reliquary in the Lateran palace, and with a solemn procession moved it to the church of Velabro, changing the dedication to San Sebastian and Saint George.

But with the passage of time, the church has only been remembered with the title of Saint George.

The same passage in the Pontifical Book also said that the church was originally a kind of office of the deacon, a religious institution that replaced a deficient state organization for distributing food to the poor, and was located in the traditional place of provisions.

Pope Gregory IV (827-844) made substantial renovations to the building with the construction of the porch and the rebuilding of the apse and sacristy. Other restorations are documented in an early thirteenth century epigraph carved into the architrave of the portico.

Saint George at Velabro,
engraving by G. Vasi, 1756



The facade of the church
after the attack of 1993

In 1295, the titular deacon Cardinal Jacopo Caetani Stefaneschi was elected and he commissioned the decoration of the apse in fresco, in which Christ is represented in the center, surrounded by a Madonna on one side, Saint Peter on the other and on the extremities the saints George and Sebastian. In the 1500s the church was served by six canons and transformed into a collegiate church. By the decree of Paul V, in 1612 the Agostinians of the Congregation of Genoa succeeded the Chapter, remaining there until 1748, when the church with a small convent was annexed for only two years to the Friars Minor Conventual. In 1750, the Barefooted Agostinians of Rome took possession of the church, which they held until 1798.

Repairs on the portico are recorded under Clement IX (1667-1669), perhaps singling out the installation of a beautiful iron gate in the front.

In 1704 Civalli, a modest student of Baciccio (1639-1709), painted large canvases designed to hide the wooden framework of the ceiling.

At the beginning of the 1800s, Pius VII (1800-1823) entrusted the church to the Confraternity of Saint Mary of the Tears and in 1819 Cardinal A. Savelli began to collect money for its restoration. These renovations, begun in 1828, were destined to continue at various periods for about a century, and contributed to clearing up the architectural beginnings and vicissitudes of the church over the centuries.

Among the first interventions was the creation of a cavity in the building wall to research the primitive structure. Gregory XVI (1831-1846) brought about the straightening of the bell tower formerly tilted by lightning.

Pius IX commissioned other repairs in 1869, but the most conspicuous interventions took place between 1923 and 1926, when the titular cardinal A. Sincero ordered Antonio Muñoz to restore the Romanesque profile of the church, freeing it from a baroque facade. Muñoz began remaking the roof, filling in holes in the wall of the church (on this occasion he found a bas-relief in white marble depicting a hunting scene)



Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin,
engraving by G. Vasi, 1753

The Area of the Forum Boarium, 2011

and lowering the floor that was raised in the 1800s with partial concealment of the columns. A true restoration then took place, when the nineteenth century altars were removed, the original triple lancet windows of the bell tower were discovered, and the antique opening of the apse and central nave were integrated with the transel screens, in which the design was elaborated on the base of traces discovered in situ.

On the nights of July 27 and 28, 1993, a car bomb exploded causing the near total collapse of the portico in front of the church, opening a wide breach on the main façade and causing enormous damage to the roof and the interior.

The restoration centered on the reconstruction of the portico. Also recovered were all the ornamental elements, Ionic capitals, decorated bands from the pilasters, marble entablatures, and a reconstructed fragment of a High Medieval fresco that was only discovered in the last twenty years. The covering to the roof was also reconstructed, missing parts of the bell tower were reintegrated, the breach in the wall from the bomb was covered, and fragments from the Classical and Early Medieval age were collected and reconstructed, particularly important for the history of the monument.

The materials used for the reconstruction were, for the portico's external surfaces, all recovered bricks while, for the internal surfaces, handmade new bricks of the same type and dimension as the antique ones, easily recognizable because the dates of their placement are on them.

The Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin

The church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin, located at the center of the piazza, has been known since the sixth century A.D. as Saint Mary of the *Schola Graeca*.

The origins go back to the Byzantine world and can be placed into a wider context of the East and connected to the presence of the port.

It was a diaconate church, a simple charitable institution designed to care for orphans, the sick and widows; these

charitable places depended on administrators and laity, supported by the clergy for spiritual matters.

The Greeks, who escaped the persecution of Constantine V *Copronymus* (774-780), conferred the attribute of *kosmidion* (ornament) on the Church, for its splendid decorations, and which became its definitive name.

With Nicholas I (858-867) began a series of repairs and expansions that would end only in 1927 with the work of the architect Giovanni Battista Giovenale. The church exterior is in the Romanesque form of Calisto II (1119-1124), restored with a new facade by Giovenale. The facade is preceded with a portico that has an arch. The central nave is dominated with three windows and the gable marked by corbels and medallions. At the right is the Romanesque bell tower of seven stories, one of the most elegant in the city.

The interior was radically restored in form from the eighth to the twelfth century. It had three naves with four pilasters and eighteen salvaged columns. Of the capitals eleven are Romanesque and five are from the era of Gelasio II (1088-1118). The Cosmatesque pavement and the ceiling are restorations from the nineteenth century.

Elements of the walls, dating from the Roman era, are attributed by some scholars to the *Statio Annonae*, the office responsible for the supply and distribution of food to the citizens of Rome. This building, commissioned by Augustus, was situated in the Forum Boarium because of its closeness to the harbour; it may have stood on the site of an earlier *Statio Annonae* of the Republican period.

To the period of Hadrian I (772-795) belongs the gallery for women (restored). The frescoes of the upper part of the nave and on the triumphal arch are on three layers datable to the eighth, ninth and twelfth centuries. The central nave has two pulpits from the period of Callisto II; the main altar is surmounted by a baldacchino (canopy) by Deodato, third son of Cosma the Younger (1294), who belonged to one of the most renowned families of Italian marble artisans.

The Icon of Our Lady in Cosmedin

In the church a miraculous image of the Virgin is venerated to which tradition assigns a Greek origin connected to the first construction of the church. The icon, on a gold ground with arabesques, was venerated on the main altar, in the central nave, but after the restoration of 1899, was moved to the winter choir chapel of the canons, where it can be seen today.



Miraculous Icon of Our Lady in Cosmedin,
engraving from Crescimbeni, L'istoria...,
Rome 1715

Tradition has it that the icon was present in the sanctuary since the time of the iconoclastic persecution in the east, carried out by Byzantine emperor Leo III the Isaurian in the eighth century.

Others, such as Armellini, considered the icon the work of the twelfth century Italian school, while still others believed it to be a later production.

The connection of the church with Greek culture is really very ancient and tied to the moment of the church's creation, when it was called Saint Mary in the *Schola Graeca*. That the area had many Greek residents is attested to by numerous Greek place names. Some centuries later the church assumed the name of Our Lady in Cosmedin, from the Greek word *kosmidion*, or ornament.

The icon was judged "miracolosissima" (extremely powerful in making miracles) and played a leading part in an episode that occurred on June 5, 1572, and which had a grand effect on the popular imagination of the time. That day was the feast of the Pentecost, and the rites and celebrations established for this occasion took place in the church. The doors of the aedicule where the icon was kept were not open as they were during sacred rites. According to testimonials, while the choir was singing the words "Adoramus Te" ("We adore you"), they suddenly heard a loud noise. "With holy terror" those present saw the wooden doors, which were double-locked, fly open, breaking a glass vase that crashed down in front of them. From that moment, the icon worked, according to the faithful, many blessings. A grand notoriety ensued between 1803 and 1815, when the painted image became the protagonist of the miraculous recovery of a girl, Annunziata Marcelli. The girl, assumed on two occasions to be dying, was cured by an apparition of the Madonna in the form of the "miracolosissima" icon of Saint Mary in Cosmedin.

The altar is an antique piece made of red granite (on the table is the date 5.5.1123), placed by Callisto II and containing relics of Saints Cirilla, Ilario and Coronato, preserved in a jar of porphyry.

An Easter candle with a little marble lion at the base is signed by Friar Pasquale (late thirteenth century).

In the left nave is the chapel of the Crucifixion, built from the design of Giovenale. The marble polychrome tabernacle, given by Cardinal Alessandro Albani, is from 1727.

At the side is the chapel of Saint John Baptist de Rossi. The altar, consecrated in 1727, is decorated with an effigy of the saint. The balustrade in bronze is from the eighteenth century. Also the baptistry was erected in 1727, while the font is a Roman basin, not pertaining to the place, given by Benedict XIII (1724-1730). The frescoes on the ceiling are by anonymous artists of the 1700s.

In the right nave, a door leads to the sacristy, constructed in 1647 and renovated in 1767. Here is found a mosaic of John VII (706-707) depicting the Epiphany, originally at Saint Peter's Church and transferred here in 1639. It was erected near the winter choir chapel in 1686 and attributed to T. Mattei.

The frescoes of the side apses are by C. Caroselli and A. Palombi and portray Medieval subjects.

From a stairway underneath the *Schola cantorum* (the Choir), one can descend into the crypt, reopened in 1717, in which are conserved many relics belonging to saints taken from the catacombs in the Middle Age. In particular there is an inventory of the skulls of twenty-two saints. Pope Gelasius II, as recorded on an epigraph located on the left side of the apse, in 1123 gave many other relics to the basilica.

The presence of these relics and the memory of an antique market near this place gave rise to the persistent legend that below this church existed an underground tunnel that connected the church to the catacombs of Saint Sebastian on the Appian Way. According to this legend, the Christians hid in the catacombs and used them to go and stock up on bread from the the Forum Boarium. Another legend relates that Saint Augustine stayed near this church during his time in Rome.

The crypt consists of three naves, divided by six columns, from the eighth century, in which a coeval mosaic is conserved. In 1893, the remains of a stall built of great massive blocks of red tuff came to light, comprising not less than ten rows of blocks and measuring over four meters (12 feet) high, identified as the Great Altar of Hercules Victorious.

This monument originally must have been a simple sacred area, even though of grand dimensions, with an altar and possibly an archaic bronze statue of Evander (the king of the Arcadians, who lived on the Palatine) of which we have information dating to the end of the fourth century B.C. The monument had to undergo several renovations over the centuries (particularly serious were the damages suffered during the famous fire of 64 A.D.).

The original sacred place was near a temple in Tuscan order style dedicated to *Hercules Invictus*, constructed in 142 by Scipio Aemilianus, in a circular form, and decorated by the painter Pacuvius (220-130 B.C.), who worked a lot in Rome in the second century B.C. Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) demolished the monument. Today all that remains is a core piece of tuff from the Aniene River that is tied to the reconstructions of the second century B.C.

The presence of the Great Altar of Hercules is also linked to the birth, many centuries later, of the legend of *la Bocca della Verità* (the Mouth of Truth). It derives from an even older myth that refers to the legendary presence of the earliest inhabitants on the Palatine Hill. According to this story, reported by Virgil in the *Aeneid* (VIII, 193-306) and also by Livius (*History of Rome*, I, 7), the Palatine was inhabited long before Romulus founded the city, by a group of Greek immigrants from Arcadia, commanded by Evander and his son Pallas (Livius, *History of Rome*, I, 5). These archaic inhabitants would have sided with Aeneas at the moment of the battle against a large group of ancient Latins. The Arcadians, as they were called, would have also come into contact with Hercules, when he (as told by Livius) returned from Spain with the herd of marvelous cattle sto-



La Bbocca de la Verità

In d'una cchiesa sopra a 'na piazzetta
un po' ppiú ssù dde Piazza Montanara
pe la strada che pporta a la Salara,
c'è in nell'entrà una cosa bbenedetta.

Pe ttutta Roma cuant'è llarga e stretta
nun potrai trovà ccosa ppiú rrara.
È una faccia de pietra che tt'impara
chi ha ddetta la bbuscía, chi nnu l'ha
ddetta.

S'io mo a sta faccia, c'ha la bbocca
uperta, je sce metto una mano, e nu la
strigne, la verità dda mé ttiella pe ccerta.

Ma ssi fficca la mano uno in buscía,
èssi sicuro che a ttirà nné a spigne
cuella mano che llí nnun viè ppiú vvìa.

Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, 1832



The Mouth of Truth

In a church, in a small plaza, / a little further than piazza
Montanara / on the road that goes to the Salara / when you enter
you find a blessed thing / In all of Rome, how very grand / You will
not find a thing more rare / A face in stone, that discovers / Who
tells a lie and who is sincere. / If I put a hand inside the open
mouth /
and it does not grip it / it is certain that I have told the truth. /
But if one who lies puts their hand there / It is certain that
no pushing or pulling / Will take that hand back

len from Geryon, stopping in this area to let them graze.

The giant Caco, son of Vulcan, who lived in a grotto on the Aventine and subjected the zone to looting, pillaging and stealing, was discovered by Hercules, who, called by the bellows of the animals hidden in the cavern of the giant, stuck Caco with his famous club and murdered him. Evander, who as stated previously was the head of the Palatine community, then dedicated an altar to Hercules, for his liberation of the territory from Caco. This altar, which was restored many times, became the Great Altar of Hercules.

The origin of the myth and the dedication in this zone of an altar to Hercules commemorate the presence of Greek or Hellenistic merchants in this loop of the river. This could also be confirmed from contracts among merchants that were often ratified in the name of Hercules. Considering the successive legendary developments, this little zone between the Tiber, Aventine and Palatine represents a delicate web around which tales were born that marked the birth of Rome.

The Mouth of Truth

The unique presence of this ancient sculpture, placed in the same building since 1632, inside the porch of the Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin, suggests some fascinating speculation.

It has been surmised that the disc was a big manhole cover for the purpose of inspecting underground channels. But most striking is the conjecture that the Mouth of Truth is the mask of a prophetic god that would have preserved ancient traditions with the same ritual motivation: to unmask false testimonies.

According to one of the legends, Virgil, the grand poet who lived in the time of Augustus, was a wizard and among his magic tricks was “la Bocca della Verità” (the Mouth of Truth). Legends about Virgil as a magician were born in Naples, and met with enormous success in the thirteenth century, when numerous northern European writers wrote about them. In the medieval visionary imagination, the importance given to Virgil’s works gave him the power to

The Fountain in the Piazza
of the Mouth of Truth, 2011



make enchanted palaces, magic mirrors, talking heads and mysterious machines. Some tales relate how Virgil was able to achieve these feats thanks to spells he learned from twelve devils that he found one day in a closed bottle, while hoeing a vineyard. In exchange for their freedom, the devils offered Virgil the possibility to make magic.

Soon stories of Virgil the magician spread to Rome, mingling with a pre-existing wealth of fables and wonders. The “*Bocca della Verità*” was a stone slab in a human likeness that severely punished those who told lies, if they put their hand in its mouth.

One day, the mouth ceased to function because it was deceived by an astute woman, determined to save herself from a trial. According to this tale, a woman suspected (rightly so) of adultery by her husband was condemned to be subjected to the “mouth.” The woman suggested to her lover that he present himself, wearing crazy clothes and attitudes, at the place of the stone slab at the exact moment she was led to the test. After acting in an agitated state for a while, the man would then hug the woman in front of everyone. The lover followed the suggestions of the woman, convincing all of his insanity; then he hugged the woman. She, acting surprised, chased him. When the moment came for the woman to put her hand in the mouth in front of her husband and the judges, she then said that she was in the arms only of her husband and the crazy man that everyone had just seen. Like this, she was saved. Since that moment, the Mouth has not worked.

The legend of the Mouth is very old, appearing at least in the twelfth century. That the origin of the Medieval legend is ancient can be surmised also by the fact that it recalls aspects attached to Roman imperial life. According to Ottavio Panciroli, writing in 1600, the legend was born because of the presence, in the same zone where the sculpture was discovered, of an altar where solemn oaths were made, probably in connection with the commercial functions of the contiguous Forum Boarium. This memory was transferred to the “*bocca*” that assumed a similar function of frightening perjurers. Other authors of the eighteenth century,

reporting even more specifically, emphasized how on the Great Altar of Hercules, located where the Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin would be built, and then demolished by Pope Sixtus IV “in order to remove every superstitious profanity,” solemn judgment was made in the name of Hercules, invoking even Jupiter Ammon, whose features would be legible in the sculpture.

The Fountain in the Piazza of the Mouth of Truth

In 1715, Pope Clement XI lowered the piazza of the Mouth of Truth by two meters (six feet) and commissioned a fountain of the Tritons to the architect of the Doria Pamphilj family, Francesco Carlo Bizzaccheri, who in turn entrusted a part of the execution to Francesco Moratti.

Crescimbeni, priest at the basilica of Our Lady in Cosmedin, wrote referring to this fountain: “On August 11, 1717, the foundation was begun; the first stone was privately blessed, and some medals, with images of the titular Blessed Virgin of the Church and Saint John the Baptist, protector of the water, were tossed.”

The architect Bizzaccheri designed for the basin an eight-pointed star, like that which appears in the coat of arms of the pope who commissioned the fountain. The same motif was repeated in the stair – today hardly visible – on the exterior. On the borders were arranged “four groups, or masks, with arms of his Holiness, and two jets of water streaming from each one;” these masks and their jets were removed, however, in the last century due to a scarcity of water that always afflicted this neglected fountain.

In the center of the basin Bizzaccheri placed a group of rocks, topped with two rather languid and bloodless travertine tritons “of more than ordinary stature” kneeling and with their tails twisted; turning their back with their arms up, they supported a cup “formed in the likeness of a niche or an open sea shell” on the outer edge of which were carved two pontifical coats of arms. Nearby this fountain, Clement XI built a smaller one for animals to drink from that was removed and reconstructed on the lungotevere Aventine.

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