

## THE FORUM AND CAPITOLIUM OF OSTIA

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## AN APPROACH ON (RE-)CONTEXTUALISATION

**Introduction**

The „Gran Tempio“ on Ostia’s main Forum is referred to a lot and stands not only on behalf of, but as the most symbolic building for the Hadrianic urban conversion of the *colonia romana*. Although the so called Capitoliium<sup>1</sup> is still standing with an imposing height of about 16.8 m its archaeological remains were since it was unearthed at the beginning of the 19th not easy to secure and the biggest part of its originally impressive decoration got robbed, burned, eroded or more or less undocumented transported away<sup>2</sup>. The focal point of research since then was lying on the temple’s architectural appearance and its dedication. This short first interim report should give a little insight into my PhD-project and therefore, is presenting an incomplete overview and comment about the recorded finds and excavation of the Forum in Ostia and its main temple. In addition, some details concerning the Forum and temple’s architectural reconstructions are in focus here – even for that purpose it is partly about historic documents. Studying those once again and in more detail may deliver some answers or additions to the topic.

**Excavations...**

From a first logical point of view, we would assume that the excavations were following stratigraphical layers. This assumption would then mean that the first excavations in Ostia mainly were dealing with late antique remains. But of course history is diverse. For the Capitoliium and the Forum we have to understand that the basic outline (or, that is to say the corset of the built structure) consists of the Hadrianic brickwork. The latest conversions were made in the second half of the 5th century<sup>3</sup>. From the old excavation plans we can derive that only parts of the northern side of the Forum and the Capitoliium were excavated in the 19th century. That the excavations in the 20th century not completely cleaned the structures from its eroded history, became known in the 21st century when A. Gering’s OFP again researched the Forum’s structures. But it is surprising to see that in Paschetto’s meritorious summary of the early excavations – not only under the aegis of the Popes Pius VII and IX – there is practically no account, besides some inscriptions, of late antique

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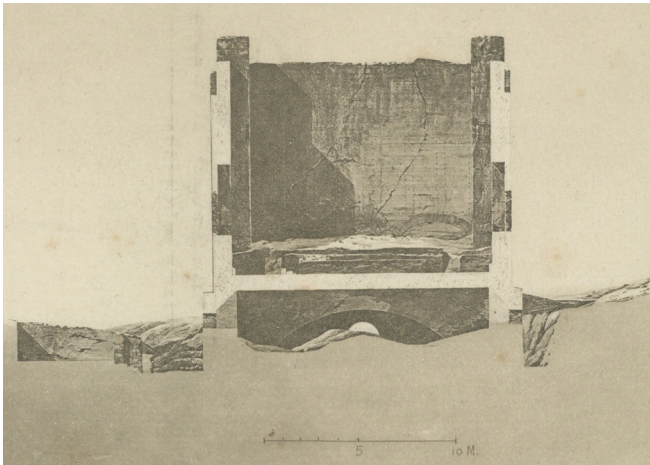
1 Although the identification of the temple as Capitoliium is not proven until today, I refer here to it as done by other scholars. In general the identification as Capitoliium is still the most probable (most recently: FTD 6, Ostia. „Capitole de l’époque d’Hadrien“ (Van Haepelen)).

2 I found just by checking historic photographs undocumented finds related to the Capitoliium. But this is not the subject of this interim report. – The history of the excavations, search for antiquities and marble is already very deeply researched for example by F. Marini Recchia, I. Bignamini, S. Ciranna and L. Paschetto.

3 Gering 2018, 211-220

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sculpture and structure. Derived from a few comments, it seems to be that the temple and the Forum are showing signs (through the old documents) of decay through an erosion process after the city was abandoned by its inhabitants. This may be indicated by the mentioned findings of architectural pieces like the cornice on the stairs and inside of the temple<sup>4</sup>. But on the other hand, we know the image of the temple from Nibby's account published in 1819<sup>5</sup>, which clearly is showing the situation before the excavations on the beginning of the 19th century. There are absolutely no traces of ornamental decoration of the temple visible. Although, after the first papal excavation campaign, there seem to be clear indicators of its original appearance. Guattani is even able to tell the size of today's completely untraceable pavement slabs made of white marble in the *pronaos* of the temple<sup>6</sup>. Not to speak of his account, impressively delivered by Holl's drawing, of the pavement inside the temple's cella<sup>7</sup>. But, not only in comparison to the actual archaeological situation of the temple and the Forum, it becomes clear that Holl's drawings are completing structures in a reconstructing manner<sup>8</sup>. In this regard I would like to refer to the more or less archaeological plans of the Capitolium, drawn in 1825 and 1826 by the French



Scan of a heliography after Gilbert's drawings from source: comp. here Note 8.  
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architects Henri Labrousse and Émile-Narcisse-Jacques Gilbert. Those drawings, resulting from excursions to Ostia, were leading to Gilbert's proposed reconstruction of the temple<sup>9</sup>. For that purpose Gilbert made very precise drawings of the contemporary situation and also documented a lot of architectural fragments which he found there at that time<sup>10</sup>. Besides that, he also documented the state of the excavation and his drawings are still showing still a high amount of unmoved earth around the Capitolium and in the porticos (roughly 3-4 m high). From his drawings, we can also assume that

the western portico (MFW) wasn't excavated as far as the plan of Holl is making us believe. I would rather suggest that Holl was reconstructing the structures of MFW in his plan through the finds of lots of fragmented columns and, of course, the little part of MFW which is also proven by Gilbert to be still freed from earth in 1826. The other, massive amount of earth can't be explained by normal erosion within twenty years<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See Plan of P. Holl from 1804 (to be found in SO I, Fig. 9) and 1805 (Guattani 1805, Tav. 1)

<sup>5</sup> Nibby 1819: between p. 294 and 295. - There is also the depiction of Verani from 1804 (see SO I, 47, Fig. 11, 2). The outer appearance is also certainly connected to the former time's plundering (comp. Bignamini 2001, 42; especially note 7). The heavily damaged walls in height of the podium are corresponding to the latest ground level documented by the mentioned depictions.

<sup>6</sup> Guattani 1805, CVII

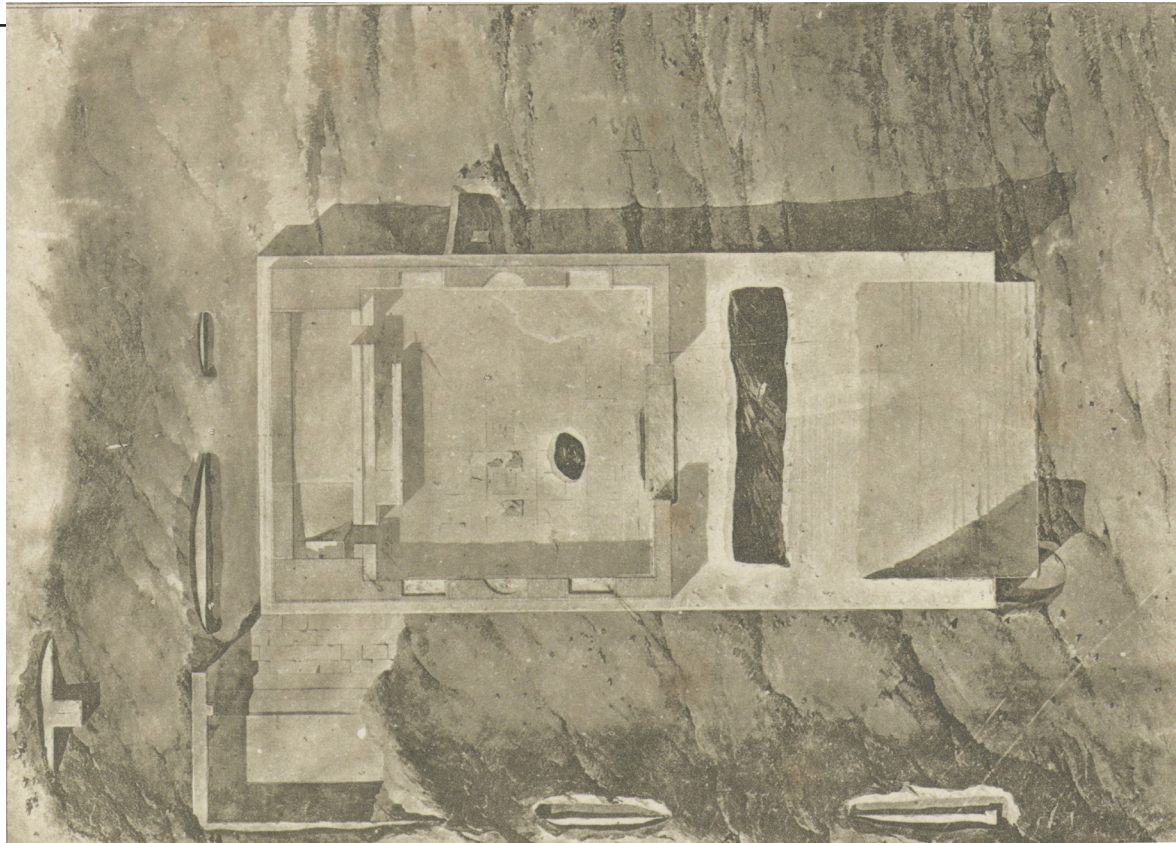
<sup>7</sup> Guattani 1805, Tav. XXII

<sup>8</sup> The same seems to be valid for the plans of Canina (Canina 1830, Tav. III; Tav. IV). Also here are structures visible, that are derived by a few wall fragments, but never existed in this outline.

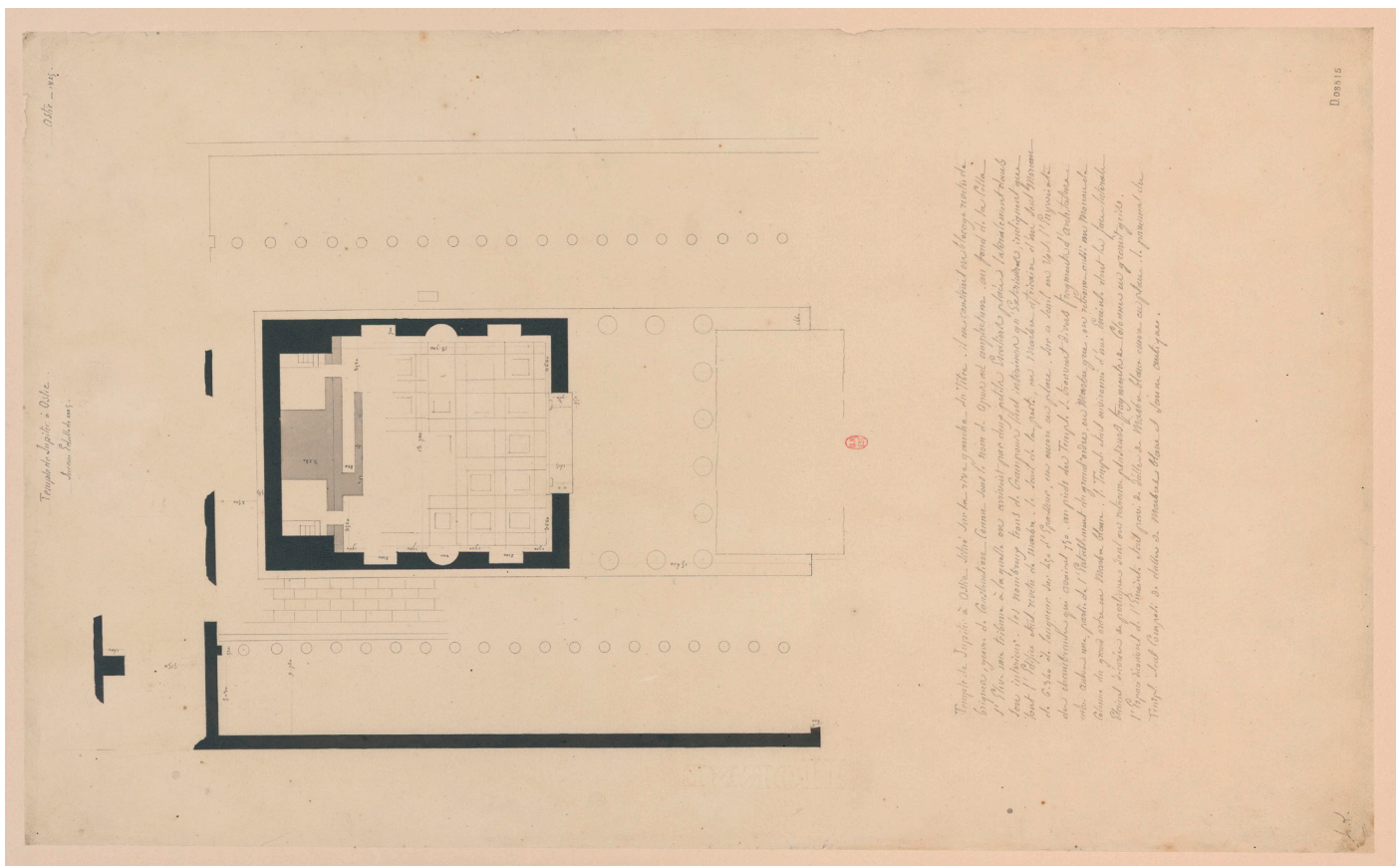
<sup>9</sup> This reconstruction proposal was published in: *Monuments Antiques relevés et restaurés* 1912, III, 231-233

<sup>10</sup> There are more of Gilbert's drawings already published (see here Notes 41 and 43)

<sup>11</sup> This also explains why Campana (Campana 1842, 107, Note 2; Marini Recchia 2002, 254-255) was still able to find Roman

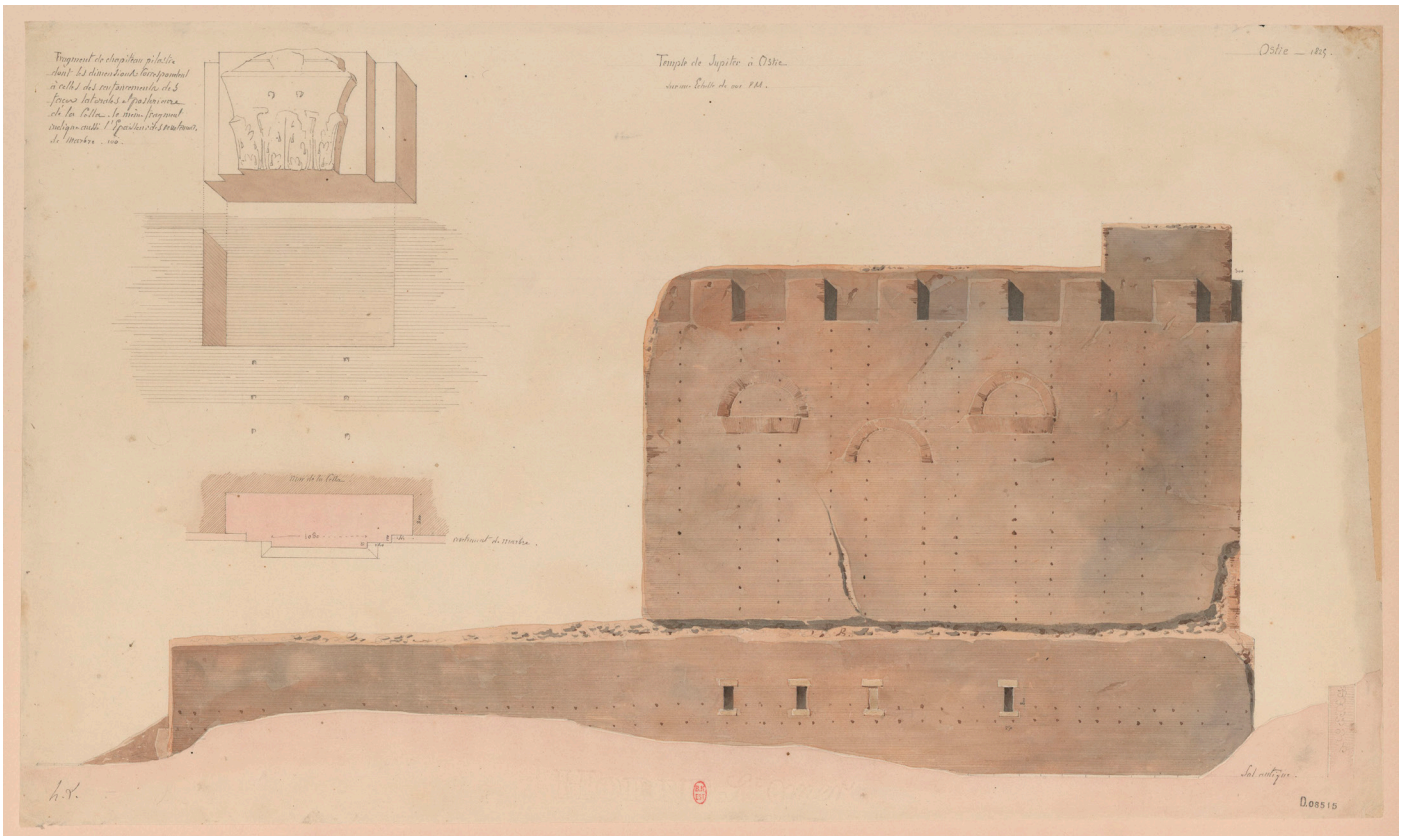


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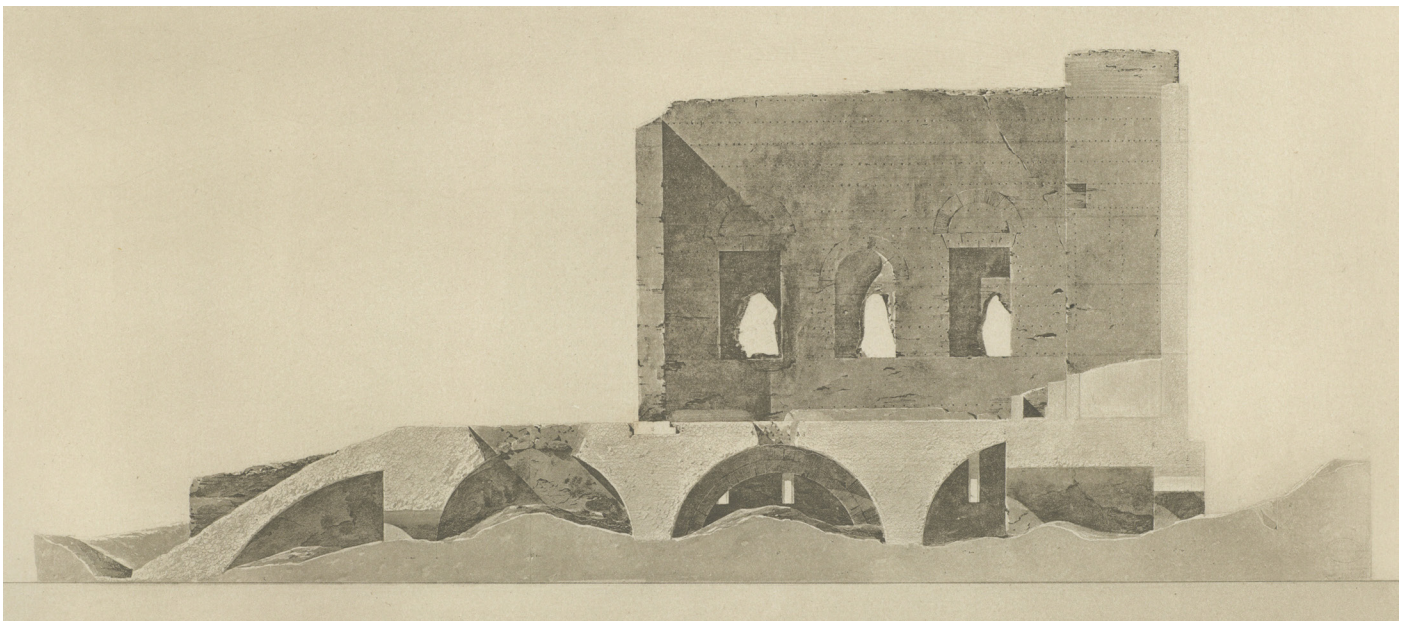


Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, FOL-VZ-1030 (9): Drawing by Henri Labrousse, Ostia 1825. Source: <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42779739j> - Also Labrousse is tended to reconstruct his drawing in a symmetrical manner.

material there and in the excavations from 1913 Vaglieri is still testifying finds in both porticos (NSc 1913, 237-239). Campana like Vaglieri mentions terracotta antefixes, maybe they dug on the same spot. - MFW turned out not to be more excavated than the late antique pavement level (see here Note 3) and the lime kiln in MFE mentioned by Vaglieri isn't deeper than this level either. Also the depiction from „Le Science e le Arti sotto il pontificato di Pio IX“ shows in the 1860s still a huge amount of earth in the porticos, as well as one big capital besides other fragments (the depiction is visible on: <https://www.ostia-antica.org/>



Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, FOL-VZ-1030 (9) : Drawing by Henri Labrousse, Ostia 1825. Source: <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb427797413> . This drawing shows the west side of the temple mirror inverted.



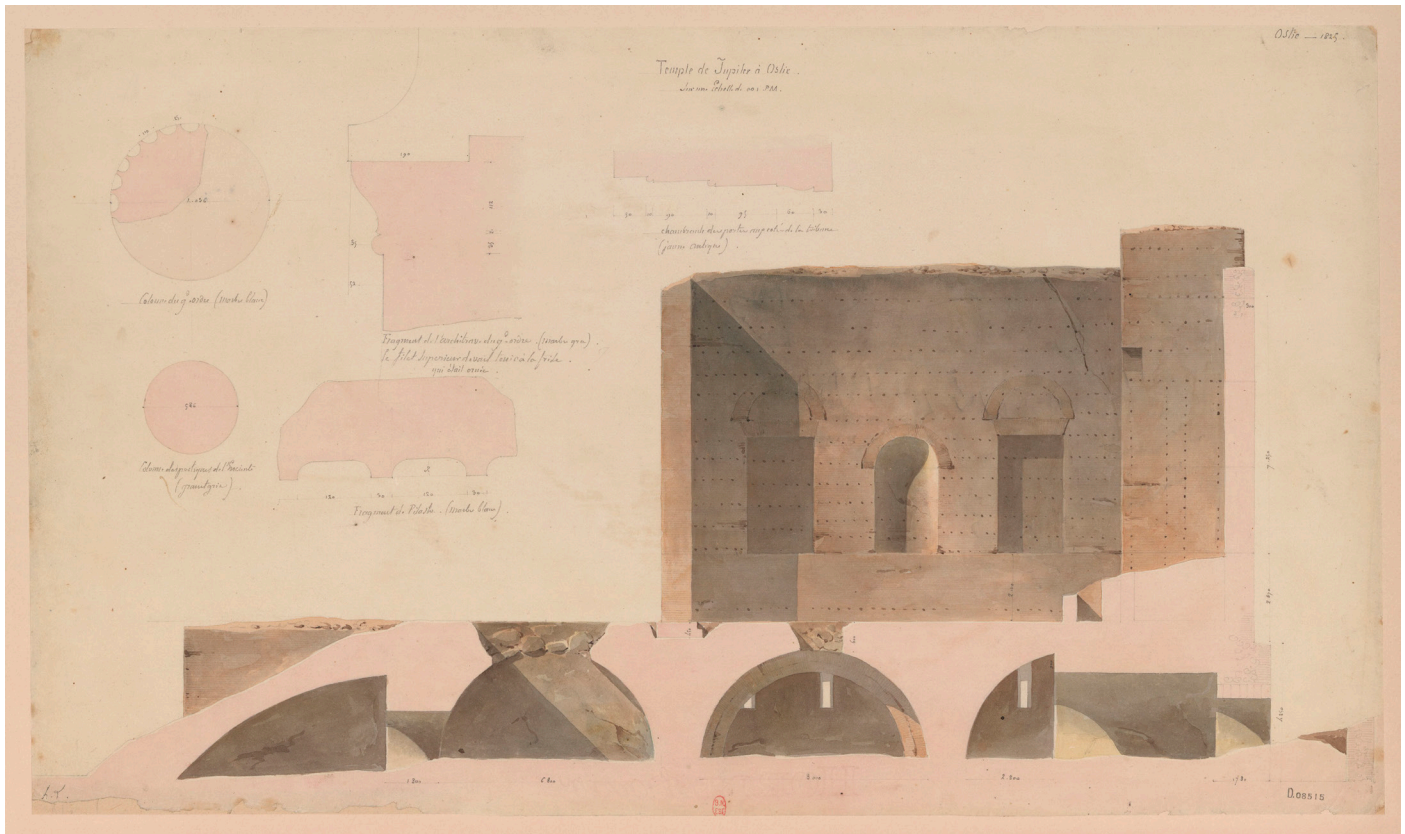
Scan of a heliography after Gilbert's drawings from source: comp. here Note 8. Owned by the author.

Gering interprets the fact that in the documents of the excavations from 1802-1804 late antique statues aren't mentioned as a lack of knowledge regarding the interpretation of the finds and points to some records in Paschetto's catalog, which are called like *„unknown imperial portrait“* etc.; and in fact, it seems strange that late antique statues were found in the excavations between 1911 and 1924<sup>12</sup>.

According to Paschetto were on the other hand in 1802-1804 a lot of statues and portraits discovered. Some of

dict/topics/excavations/excavations09.htm (26.11.2020). This depiction turned out to be very precise. It is possible to recognise the pieces of the cornice, which remained visible in Ostia as parts of the reconstructed temple's cornice. Further more there are a lot of early and old photographs clearly supporting this observation.

<sup>12</sup> Gering 2018, 217–219



Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, FOL-VZ-1030 (9) : Drawing by Henri Labrousse, Ostia 1825. Source: <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42779743s>.

those sculptures mentioned by Pensabene<sup>13</sup> and Gering<sup>14</sup> seem to evoke an idea of an imperial portrait gallery, which was displayed in the area of the Forum with a focus on imperial portraits from the second century. This suggestion is to be looked at critically.

A major problem of course is lying in the finds catalog<sup>15</sup>. Where there are sometimes more or less clear references to finding spots, they are missing on the pages 519-524, where Paschetto is quoting the "*elenco ritrovati durante il periodo 1802-04*". In this section we have to deal with the by Paschetto before told fact, that he is quoting Petrini's "*elenco*", which is distinguished in groups by material or type<sup>16</sup>. Although Holl's map of 1804 is indicating the areas of excavation 1803 and 1804 (Numbers 1 and 6 besides the individual indicated locations), there is not really a chronological sequence to be reconstructed because Paschetto is already mentioning the finds beforehand for the known locations. Secondly, the areas in Holl's plan indicated with Number 6 include several (at that time) not completely known buildings. In general, for Petrini's „*elenco*“ can be observed, that the Capitolium always served as a point of orientation. From this it can be derived that even when a location is called „*dietro il tempio detto di Vulcano*“ the find's location must not be in the immediate vicinity.

For example, the sculptures with the numbers 96-98 were found "*dietro il tempio detto di Vulcano, verso la riva del*

<sup>13</sup> Pensabene 2007, 268.

<sup>14</sup> Gering 2018, 217.

<sup>15</sup> This means the 'finds list' originally made by Petrini while during and after the excavations from 1802-1804 and in 1912 published by Paschetto (see also Marini 2000). - Catalog numbers and pages are referring in the next section to Paschetto 1912.

<sup>16</sup> Paschetto 1912, 506-507.

*Tevere*“. Paschetto/Petrini also refers to No. 13 on Holl's map from 1804. There, No. 13 is referring to a building directly on the Tiber, which is today buried in the dam of the Tiber. So really, it lay on the northern end of the *cardo*. That the sculptures were found there seems to be logical, as the structures of the later Porticus di Pio IX weren't excavated far at that time and therefore these sculptures must have been found in a high levelled layer<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, to confuse the situation even more, we can probably identify and thus approximately relocate some finds from the section without finding locations: the numbers from 260-285 in 1804 were already in Rome<sup>18</sup>. I propose to identify No. 275 „*un capitello stragrande*“ with a capital seen by Du Rieu in the time around 1860 in the Galleria Lapidaria of the Vatican (the capital is, as far as I know, still not identified and relocated). Du Rieu describes it as coming from the temple in Ostia and being there for some time already<sup>19</sup>. In No. 280 „*una testa di leone di marmo*“ I would identify the lionshead-waterspout coming from the Terme del Foro and very probably belonging to the interior decoration of the bath and not to the Capitolium's roof as Guattani proposed it<sup>20</sup>. For the three „*tegole antiche di marmo*“, No 281, I would propose three marble antefixes belonging to the Capitolium: first of course the known one from Guattani<sup>21</sup> (Vatican Inv. 9610) and two recently in the Vatican discovered ones<sup>22</sup> (Vatican Inv. 9612 and Vatican Inv. 9704). This hypothesis concerning the identification of finds from Petrini's catalog without provenience is pointing to a possible existence of statuary finds from the Forum without proper record, as well as showing that there is no order in this „*elenco*“ regarding the find's spots. As there is proof of maintenance and renovation during late antiquity for the Forum<sup>23</sup>, as well as the fact that the Terme del Foro contained at least several *spolia*, both places could explain high quantities of sculptural finds and, at the same time, we can be sure of statuary display in the Tempio Rotondo which was also excavated in that time<sup>24</sup>.

17 Both of Holl's plans are indicating this clearly. The photograph of Pope Pius IX while visiting the excavation is showing him inside the freshly excavated Portico behind the Capitolium in the 1860's. The vast amount of earth around the structures (also the Capitolium) is still there (see. SO I, Tav. I, 1).

18 Marini-Recchia already traced several fragments and pieces in the Vatican Museum, which are coming from Ostia and which seem to be partly able to be identified by the given entries at Paschetto (comp. Marini 2000, 106-109).

19 Du Rieu 1802, 36: „Het voorportaal van dezen tempel was met 6 gegleufde wit-marmeren Corinthische zuilen versierd: een van de zes kapiteelen was reeds voor jaren opgedolven en prijkt in de Galleria lapidaria van het Vatikaan“ (thankfully reference to J.T. Bakker, who translated parts of Du Rieu's text on his homepage: <https://www.ostia-antica.org/fulltext/durieu/durieu.htm> (27.11.2020). - Eventhough it is from Paschetto delivered to be at a stone mason's place on Campo Vaccino in 1804 (Paschetto 1912, 524, note 2), I would imagine the capital to be there for restorations or something similar.

20 Guattani 1805, CIX-CX; Tav. XXIII - Marini 2000, 78 already states the waterspout coming from there as there was a second one found during the excavations in 1938 (SO XI, 154 (Marinucci)). - I also would doubt the provenience from the Capitolium only because of the stylistic features of the lionshead.

21 Guattani 1805, CVIII-CIX; Tav. XXIII

22 Arachne 1108850 (Damgaard) - Von Hesberg also found a corner piece of the cornice of the Capitolium (Arachne 635840) and identified it with the drawn piece on the picture showing Pope Pius VII and Carlo Fea in 1802 (<https://www.ostia-antica.org/dict/topics/excavations/excavations09.htm> (26.11.2020)). This should be the piece drawn by Holl (Guattani 1805, Tav. XXIII) and is still in 1903 testified in the Galleria Lapidaria (Galleria Lapidaria 1903, 277, Kat. 147a (Amelung)). The cornice piece shown by Albo (Albo 2002, 386, Fig. 18) and Marini Recchia (Marini 2000, 83, Fig. 10) with Inv. 16174 isn't the same. - At some point there have also been marble revetment plaques of the temple in the Galleria Lapidaria (Sculptures des musées du Vatican 1869, 35, Cat. 218; 221).

23 Gering 2018, 188-233

24 From Guattani's publication, I would also expect the mention of sculptural finds from the Capitolium and the surrounding porticos. And also for Petrini/Paschetto, I would postulate the same, as the Capitolium was identified as a/the major building of

The missing evidence of late antique findings may also be attributed to a continuous usage of the Forum as a vivid plaza. On the north side of the Forum was, so to speak, not a strong raise of the walking levels from Hadrianic times onwards to be observed as long as marble was used as pavement<sup>25</sup>. As a consequence, we have to think about the cleaning out of old material and on the other hand, an easy accessible area after the abandonment of the city or at least of the Forum's area. The research of A. Gering and the OFP has brought to light, that the Temple of Roma and Augustus (TRA) was planned and the Forum's south side pavement levelled over until today's remaining fundaments of the temple<sup>26</sup>. The last paved walking level of the *cardo* seemed to be on 2.60m above sea level (a.s.l.) and the upper edge of the fundament of the Roma and Augustus temple close to 3.60m a.s.l. This level raise is not enough to cover the stairs of the Capitolium – the podium raises up to roughly 7m above sea level. But in regards to the backdoor, better said the entrance to the *aerarium* or the basement of the temple it would be of particular importance. The threshold lies on 2.20m a.s.l., which is already 70cm under the level of the Forum's north side porticos (2.90m a.s.l.) and their last traceable repair in the second half of the 5th century. The French architects's drawings are showing us in 1826 still lots of earth inside the basement. And when it was emptied in 1864, precious ornaments of the temple were found in big numbers, as well as fragments of donations/dedications and a fragment of a figure made of green basalt in an Egyptian style<sup>27</sup>. While thinking of a deposition and maybe closure of the cultic activities, we can think at first of more or less the same phenomenon as concerning the Temple of Roma and Augustus; secondly, of the fact that many objects related to the cult of Isis were found in the Porticus di Pio IX in a stratum obviously more to the ground, because the finds all seem to come from the last part of the excavations (in 1860-1862) in that area behind the Capitolium on the *cardo* leading to the Tiber, which already was begun within the first papal campaign<sup>28</sup>. It actually seems impossible to answer the question of when this closure of the temple should have taken place but in regard to the Temple of Roma and Augustus, the middle of the 5th century seems probable. However, the finds from inside the cella are not leading further than the middle of the 3rd century<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand, Guattani is writing that they found the colossal foot of a female deity in or on the podium for the statues<sup>30</sup>. If we also take in to account that at least parts of the pavement inside the cella, outside in

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Ostia. I also want to point out that the Tempio Rotondo was built in much later times and its ground level is much higher than the Forum's (see Pensabene 2007, 296-315; Gering 2018, 226-233).

25 Gering 2018, 211-219. In the porticos we have for the pavement level 2.90 a.s.l. from Hadrianic times until the last repair in the second half of the 5th century.

26 Gering 2018, 195-199; 162 – A very interesting observation here seems to be that the equestrian statue base of Manilius Rusticianus (according to a photograph from times of the excavation of the TRA) is standing just besides the temple's fundament (west side) and not on the place where it is standing today. But Calza's assistant Finelli mentions, that even at that place, a fundament for the heavy equestrian statue is missing (see. Gering 2018, 204-205).

27 Paschetto 1912, 552-553, No. 440-442

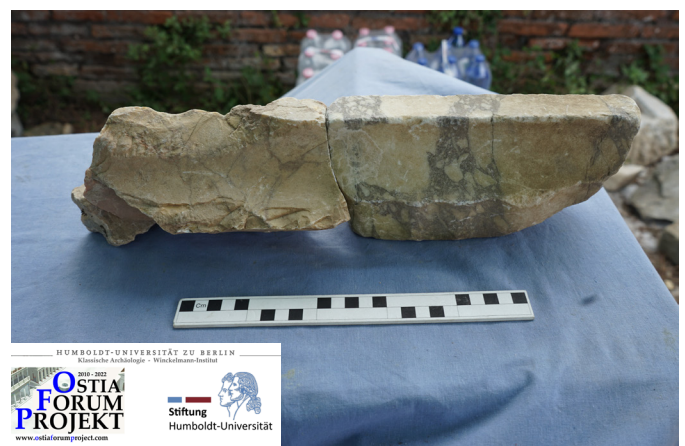
28 Paschetto 1912, No. 405-416; 394-397. Holl Plan 1804, No. 13. - We also have to take in to account here, that the ground level in the Domus di Giove e Ganimede was already on 3.30m a.s.l. in 128-138 AD (DeLaine / Wilkinson 1998, 77-79). - In 1865/66 the excavators removed earth from the street and maybe from a portico behind the Capitolium, but there is no find recorded (Paschetto 1912, 554-557).

29 A medallion of Philippus Arabs (we have to trust in Petrini in that case. - see Paschetto 1912, No 144)

30 Guattani 1805, CVII

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the *pronaos* and on the stairs were visible, and that the finds of cornices from the order inside the temple as well as from the big cornice from the outside of the temple lying on the stairs at Guattani's time<sup>31</sup>, then it also seems possible that the temple wasn't easily accessible, maybe through a collapsed roof. There it also fits that only *imbreces* from the Capitolium were found as reused material in the city. It is left to consider if the temple got buried as far as possible and the life around it continued and formed a new usage horizon<sup>32</sup>. That could even contain an ongoing execution of cultic activity on top of a collapsed roof and maybe with a wooden roof above the temple, as we have to assume for the last monumental phase of the Forum itself<sup>33</sup>. Everything above this layer was easier to access in later times and Ostia was known early on as „*calcara*“ with plundering already in early medieval and late antique times<sup>34</sup>. The Forum itself was in any case in use, converted and maintained in the middle of the 5th century. So far, there were surprisingly few observations about possible restorations or a change in use of the Capi-



Photographs by the author. - **Both pictures above** are showing the patches of Giallo Antico (JT\_011) and Pavonazzetto (JT\_012). At first view they seem to be connectable to one another, but the curvature is not following the same degree and also the fillet isn't connectable in the same angle. This is pointing to a standardized working procedure.

The **picture to the left** shows the cutout in a remaining column fragment of the Capitolium.

tolium<sup>35</sup> and many inscriptions were found in the porticos – and

<sup>31</sup> Guattani 1805, CVII, No. 8. Holl Plan 1804, No. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Vaglieri (NSc 1913, 237): the famous *cippus* CIL XIV 4721 was found on the Forum and proves it to be still used as a Forum in the 2nd half of the 4th century.

<sup>33</sup> At least in MEE it seems that there were no columns any more (Gering 2018, 207).

<sup>34</sup> Paschetto, 1912, 94–115. Traces of late antique lime kilns, deposits and recycling were found and researched by Gering and the OFP. – The lime kiln managed by Vitelli (see Nibby) was then filled with material and burned, which the early excavation made accessible. Also Bignamini 2001, 42: find of the statue base for Ragonius Vincentius Celsus (CIL XIV 139) coming from excavations in 1696 and one year later a Gamala-base (CIL XIV 409), which then would maybe indicate a deeper stratum. Recycling is proven from the second half of the 5th century on and shows the reuse of ornamental pieces from temples, but only roof tiles of the Capitolium on the big plazas (FSE, Forum) (Gering 2018, 202–203). Also, Vaglieri is telling us, that in an area attached to the *decumanus* between theater and Forum, but „*presso il tempio di Vulcano*“ certain doors were blocked off with marble and roof tile fragments. In one case they even found a piece of statue of Neptun (NSc 1913, 230). During the same section of excavation, he also identified traces of a mid 16th century plundering (Note 1).

<sup>35</sup> Holl's plan of the cella's interior (Guattani 1805, Tav. XXII) is showing the structure of the podium for the cult statue(s) cutting into the marble pavement; Albo (2002, 372; 389) is referring to that fact while pointing out cracks in the brickwork of the temple



Photo by the author: East wall of the Capitolium's Cella (right side). The wall of the statue podium was clearly set in afterwards and thus built around the old pedestal zone of the *incrustation*.

for the statues seems to be constructed in the form as it appears today in at least two relatively separated building phases. The interpretation of this points towards an enlargement of the podium, as the wall of the second phase is clearly intruding into the mortar of the *incrustation*. Associated with this is the observation of different mortars and the usage of heterogeneous bricks in contrast to the brickwork of the Capitolium.

The podium is not on a single point connected by bricks with the cella walls and the last phase's wall was placed on the pavement, which is partly still preserved under the wall and consists here of slate. The question then emerges, if the complete structure of the statue's podium is from a later phase than the surrounding brick body.

also that single one coming from the front of the Capitolium CIL XIV 94<sup>36</sup> – dating to the second century. Maintenance regarding the Capitolium though is clearly visible: I found repair pieces for the big columns made of Pavonazzetto and luckily, one of the preserved fragments of the columns is showing a chiseled out whole fitting the observed patching technique. Both the prepared cutout in the column and the insert are showing repeatedly rounded (waved) sides with a rejuvenated form in to the deep. Additionally, a dowel is inserted to fix the patch in the cutout. Surprisingly, I also found a column patch made of Giallo Antico fitting the size of the fillet of the big Capitolium columns and was directly reminded of Guattani's and Holl's account of columns made of Giallo Antico<sup>37</sup>. A mixture of columns consisting of Pavonazzetto and Giallo Antico isn't impossible as a thought of consequence. Further observations concern the inside of the cella. The podium



Photograph by the author. Later set in wall of the statue podium on top of the pavement. At this point made of slate. The old pavement is underneath the complete wall traceable.

and later made brick arches to gain more stability in the temple's basement. Also, Guattani is emphasising this observation in his legend of Holl's drawing. Damgaard (2018, 192) is attributing the P2-Type Coppo to the Capitolium's marble roof, pointing out the fact, that these coppo were found as reused material in secondary context of late antique dating.

<sup>36</sup> Guattani 1805, CX

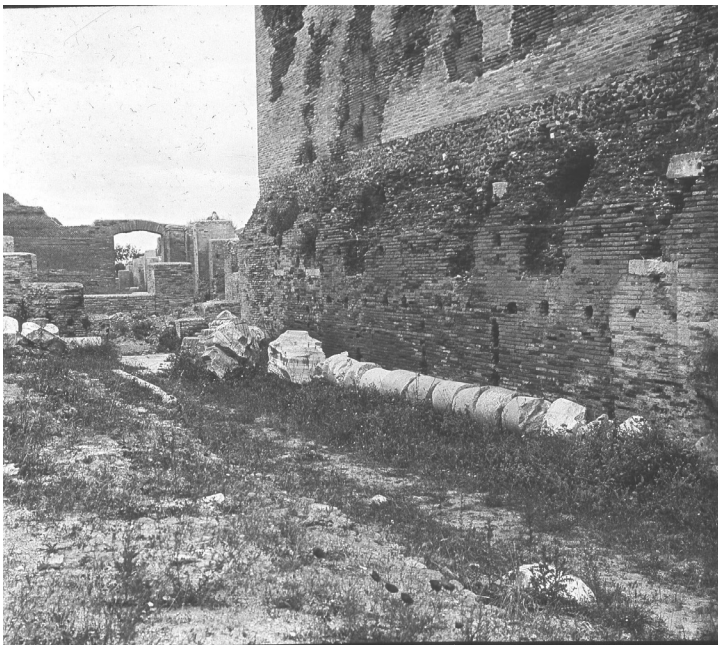
<sup>37</sup> Holl Plan, 1804, No. 11; Guattani 1805, CVII



**Orthography and frontal view** out of an orthogonal 3D-modell (made by S. Götz and the author) of the statue podium inside the cella of the Capitulum: **turquoise** is marking the podium, originally constructed with vaults. The dowl holes are clearly pointing away from a three partied podium surface. In comparison to other Capitolia it is to point out, that only the inside of the podium had three sections. **Blue**: this wall is blended frontal on the podium and intrudes into the former pedestal zone of the *incrustation* (**red**). Under the frontal wall (**green**) is still old pavement made of slate. There are no traces on the east end of the wall, that the structure was closed as Holl is drawing it. Also this wall is asymmetrical orientated regarding the cella and the podium. Possibly it is a third building phase. - Of course here is more investigation necessary, which was in early 2020 due to Covid and vegetation not doable. - **Photo below** (by the author) shows a later closed window of the basement of the Capitulum (west side).



Another detail in this topic is referring to the temple's outer appearance and the mentioned discharging arches in the basement of the temple. As the structures from those relatively later set in brick arches are blocking of some windows, it can be seen that these windows were closed with similar sized and homogenous bricks, which might indicate that this modification occurred shortly after the construction of the temple. The window lintels made of travertine also seem to belong to the same repair. Those travertine blocks are even set in spots where there were no windows were and very probable come from the preceding temple; they were also attested to have been placed in the originally with plaster covered inside of the basement as



Zoomed in **photo to the left** (Stereoscopic photography on glass plate. Source: <https://bibliothèque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/14003> (06.12.2020)) by Collinet-Guerin, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet: shows the west side of the temple without restorations.

**Photo above** (digitized slide (Dia). Source: Winckelmann-Institut, Berlin K\_TP141\_DIA\_TP1775\_d\_D): the Capitulum after certain restorations, but without reconstructed stairs. Still visible the huge amount of missing mortar on the podium's structure and parts of the brick core or so to say the supporting brick walls reaching out of the *caementitium*, thus indicating the single compartments of the basement.

**Photo to the left below** by John Henry Parker captured between 1864-1877 (Source: [bibliothèque-numerique.inha.fr/idviewer/26732/122](https://bibliothèque-numerique.inha.fr/idviewer/26732/122) (06.12.2020)) as content of: <https://bibliothèque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/26732> (06.12.2020); Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet): the threshold is completely freed from mortar. The breakthroughs in the niches aren't closed.

**Photograph below** by the author: the black layer of bitumen inside the restoration of the podium in a view on the west side.

building material<sup>38</sup>.

In regard of a late antique, medieval or even later use of the Capitulum it is to mention that all of the six niches, for certain in their intended function for

statuary display, got broken through. This may indicate a windowlike intention and is in a consequence leading to a hypothesis of a (provisionally) roof.

Nevertheless, none of these observations can be linked to a dating clue at this moment.



<sup>38</sup> Vaglieri (1914, 91) mentions this already

### Further missing links.

The enrichment of Gilbert's drawings should really not be underestimated.

As already said, he also drew lots of architectural fragments, which he believed to belong to the Capitolium or



Photograph by the author: fragment of a pilaster capital of the Capitolium (own catalog: JT\_009; see also SO VII, 64, Cat. 248 (Pensabene).



Zoomed in view of a photograph by Collinet-Guerin showing the winged Victoria fragment inside the cella of the Capitolium. For source see here Note 41.

which he saw still in their original place. Thus, it also proves that not everything was documented in Holl's drawings. Gilbert and Labrousse found a piece of a marble three fascia door jamb in its original context: it was decorating the western entrance to the cult statue's podium in the temple's cella. Besides that they also documented pieces of the between 1804 and 1825 ripped out marble pavement and its left over impression. Gilbert drew a small breakthrough into the basement inside the cella and a huge one in the *pronaos*. From the outside of the temple it is not possible to check on that account, because the later conservation measures obviously were including a layer of bitumen (most probably

to protect against the intrusion of water) under the levelling layer of mortar, which forms today's pavement in the *pronaos* and cella. In general, Gilbert's drawings are very precise and therefore seem free from invention and thus, can be seen as reliable.

He also confirms Paschetto's anecdote of someone who got captured by the attempt to steal the massive threshold<sup>39</sup>, which didn't went of without traces in the floor. Gilbert and Labrousse also captured fragments of the pilaster/lisene capitals<sup>40</sup> on paper several times.

It must be absolutely emphasised, that their measurements and observations are confirmed the fragment which can be found still laying in the Forum - with the difference that the architects saw a bigger fragment than the one preserved.

Beyond that, Gilbert drew a fragment of the temple frieze showing a winged Victoria<sup>41</sup>. This fragment was still visible inside the temple's cella on a photo from around 1910<sup>42</sup>, but didn't find its way in the reconstruction

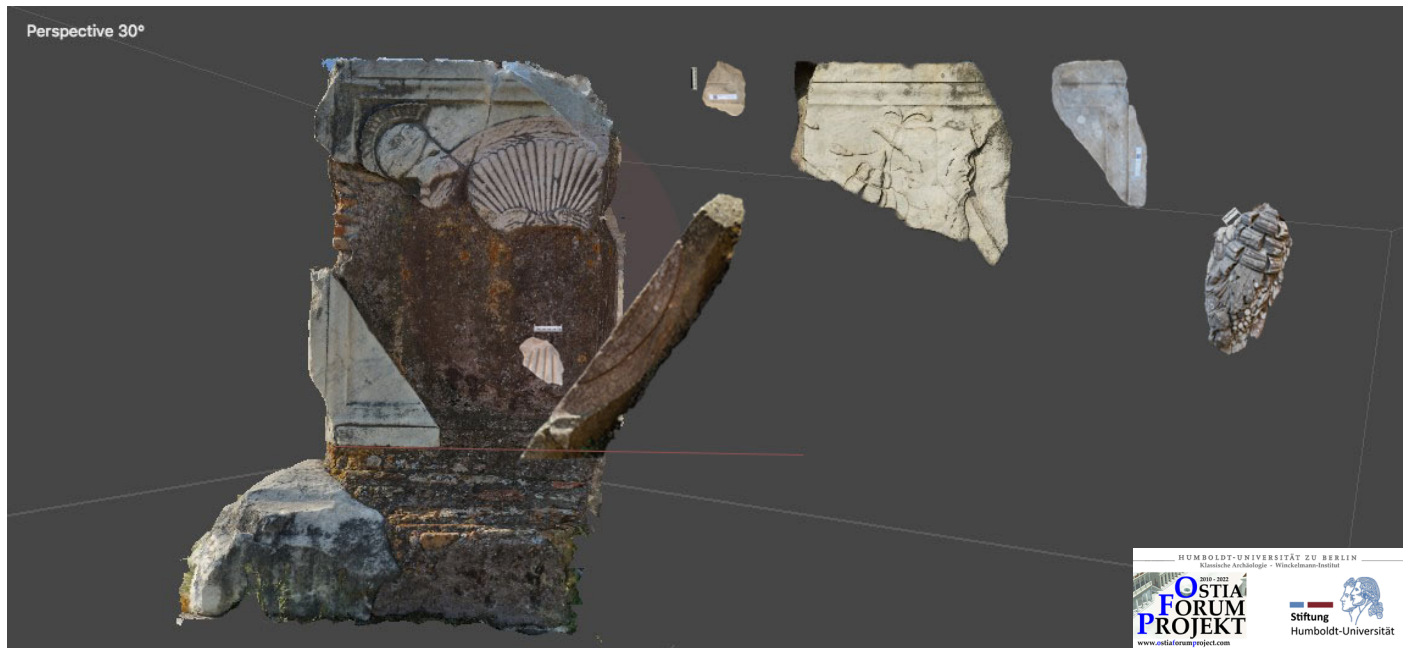
<sup>39</sup> Paschetto 1912, 114 - Photographs from the late 19th century are showing the Capitolium in a disastrous condition. The threshold was completely freed from its surrounding mortar. The mortarbedding of the *pronaos* and the stairs was heavily damaged and the marble steps were missing completely. The modern reconstruction of the stairs is thus not based on archaeological remains/facts. The drawings of Gilbert already shows no traces of stairs anymore...

<sup>40</sup> I would from a point of terminology call it a pilaster capital, because with its body the capital was placed with about 30cm on the brick crown of the Capitolium, which convinces me of static function, but the columns were executed as blended on revetment slabs on the brickwork of the temple.

<sup>41</sup> Italia antiqua 2002, 392, Fig. 10 - This drawing shows of course more unknown fragments probably from the temple. All drawings from Gilbert and their depicted fragments will be the subject of a further publication.

<sup>42</sup> Stereoscopic Photograph on a glass plate by Collinet-Guerin, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet (<https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/14004> (06.02.2020)).

13 JOHANNES TROCKELS - OSTIA FORUM PROJECT - INTERIM REPORT DEC. 2020  
of the temple - except for Gilbert's proposal<sup>43</sup>. A simple measurement with a ruler on the published drawing, which is showing the Victoria in relation to a part of the cornice from the temple, brought me a result of 54 cm from the frieze fragment whilst allowing 97cm for the cornice.



Photomerge based on 3D-modells (by the author) of fragments found during several campaigns of the Ostia Forum Project brought into loose connection with the so called Altar and the Bucranion-fragment under compliance of the same scale.

This fragment nourished my existing doubts on the identification of the fragment showing a Bucranion as part of the temple's frieze<sup>44</sup>. Of course we have historic texts telling us about Bucrania being the content of the frieze<sup>45</sup>, but the only one mentioning garlands is Du Rieu<sup>46</sup>. Furthermore, we are dealing with a fragment which is already of the size that Albo is calculating as an average measurement for the height of a complete frieze<sup>47</sup>. We have to calculate with a lot bigger size when reconstructing the existing piece, only by taking in to account the size of the edge profile (undecorated kymation) with 7.4 cm (= 1/4 Roman foot). The comparison to contemporary temples in Rome doesn't show such big friezes in relation to the supposed parameters

<sup>43</sup> Italia antiqua 2002, 389, Fig. 7 – The determination of the complete motif isn't possible here. It reminds of depictions of Victorias in spandrels of arch-monuments and there usually shown as flying. On the whole Victorias are known in specific variations on architectonical friezes, often in sacrificial scenes. Therefore it seems also considerable to reconstruct the motif as a *tauroctonia*, but indeed the waving robe and its shape aren't making this probable. But, under certain circumstances, the fragment would then be connectable to a piece lying not far away from the Capitolium, showing the legs of a bull getting sacrificed (Ostia Inv. 30923; own catalog: JT\_015; Pensabene 2007, 246, tav. 72, 2). This fragment is adorned on its bottom side with an *anthemion*, which is pointing more into the Flavian-Trajanic period. But the Capitolium's marble ornaments were always mentioned as being very close to the style of Trajan's Forum's. And further more I see parallels between the Capitol's antefixes and this *anthemion*. This has of course to be further investigated.

<sup>44</sup> See for example: Albo 2002; Pensabene 2007, 255-257; Paschetto (1912, 360-361, Fig. 102) is the first one as far as I know mentioning this particular Bucranion-fragment as piece of the frieze. I would suggest this piece to be found already early, as maybe Du Rieu is mentioning it (see here Note 45).

<sup>45</sup> Nibby, 1819, 324. But he is also mentioning an *aspergillo* with more than one Bucranion (he is using plural) and is not talking of Garlands. As far as my comparisons went, an *aspergillo* on a frieze is mostly shown in a row with sacrificial tools and not with garlands. But this has to be studied further.

<sup>46</sup> Du Rieu 1862, 35

<sup>47</sup> Albo 2002, 386

of the rest of the building.

Another point which seems to be more striking for me is the similarity between the Bucranion-fragment and the fragments of the so called Altar, which is clearly showing the weapons of Athena<sup>48</sup> accompanied by an eagle. The size of the edge profile is exactly the same and the marble is of the same kind (lunesian).

At the same time, the altar itself becomes unclear as a monument. The fragment showing the wing of an eagle close to the border of the shield, which continues on the set up reconstruction, wasn't incorporated into this reconstruction for unknown reasons<sup>49</sup>. If we add this eagle-fragment to the rest, the altar receives a rectangular shape by postulating a balanced or symmetrical composition of the depiction. Motif-wise, the Bucranion-fragment is no problem in such a relief. It wouldn't also be a problem to place it on the sides. As far as there are (currently and from the published material) no known fundamentals for this altar, its place in front of the Capitolium is to be set in question marks. Even with this far more rectangular shape, it would be possible to place the altar with a theoretical breadth of 3m on the stairs of the temple. In addition, it should be noted that Guattani is already pointing out the discharging arches right under the stairs and is even talking of traces for two statue bases on the foot of the stairs<sup>50</sup>. One of those traces is connected to the inscription mentioning Hadrian<sup>51</sup>, because the fragment was found right there<sup>52</sup>. The placement of altars and statue bases finds comparisons, for example, in the Capitolium of Pompei or the temple for the deified Antoninus Pius and Faustina. Furthermore, we also can think of these fragments not as an altar but a monument possibly similar to the personifications of the provinces connected to the Hadrianeum on the Mars Field in Rome. At the same time, we always have to take into account for the Forum in Ostia that we have no proof of fundamentals for such monuments at any location. For a theoretical placement in an attic zone (the porticos had two stories), the relief seems to be too big and there are also fragments preserved, which prove at least two sides by preserved cornerpieces.

### Summarising thoughts and comments

As already mentioned, this little report is to be understood as a work in progress, and thus in some aspects incomplete with additions or changes likely probable in future.

Certainly, the observations gathered from old/historic materials connected to the actual archaeological insights and research are bringing a slightly new perspective on the interpretation of the material.

The usage of the Forum (until at least the second half of the 5th century) in relation to a minor rise of the walking level are making it probable that the statuary was removed or replaced and remained easily accessible for later plundering. But, by way of an originally reported rich find of architectural elements of the Capito-

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48 Already pointed out by Pensabene (2007, 255)

49 Even though it was found together with the fragment depicting the rest of the medusa's head inscribed in the shield in 1913 in the western portico (see NSc 1913, 238-239; Fig. 11 (Vaglieri)).

50 Guattani 1805, CVII; Tav. XXI

51 CIL XIV 94

52 Guattani 1805, CX

lium, we seem to have proof of a sealed layer in late antiquity which saved the finds until the excavations in the 19th century. On the other hand, we have practically no architectural elements of the porticos except for a high amount of columns. This evokes the idea of a paved late antique Forum after the second half of the 5th century, where we would speculate on a continuously paved Forum on a minimum of 2.90m a.s.l., where stairs of the porticos would then have been covered by earth and architectural elements to achieve an homogenous walking level. At the same time we have strong recycling activities on the Forum. Of course, what happened after the abandonment of the Forum remains unclear. But the Capitolium always visible as ruin, for certain, attracted people to search for marble and treasures.

Although it still seems possible to (re)find some of the architectural elements and documentation as the history of the Forum and its main temple also can be adjusted. I already have/had a lot more sources on my desk, which aren't incorporated in this interim.

But the drawings of the French architects brought (and still bring) more input into the analysis of the Capitolium's reconstruction, as I hope to find in the OFP's material (marble fragments from the former excavations stored near to the Forum and in the depots) pieces from the inner and outer decoration of the temple. There were still in 1825 and 1826 several fragments documented, which were brought into connection with the Capitolium.

At this point I can also state already, that I was able to find pieces drawn by Gilbert and Labrousse that weren't so far considered as belonging to the Capitolium nor published. This may explain further more, why I'm proposing changes or adjustments on the actual reconstruction.

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