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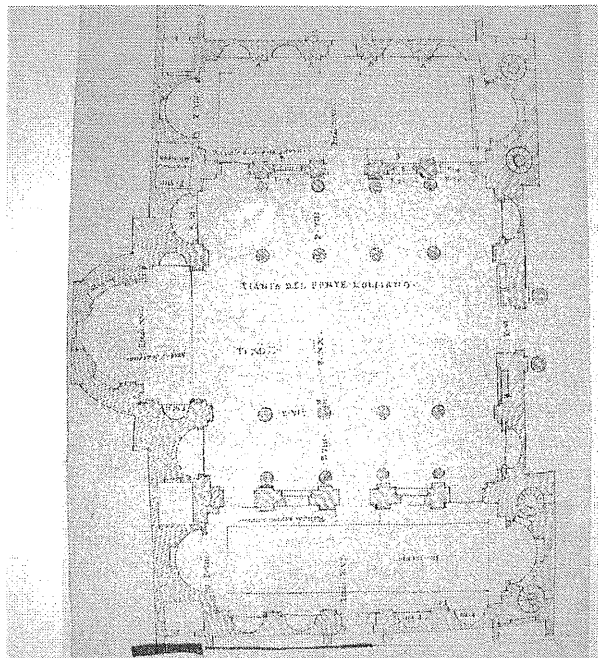
REVIEW ARTICLE

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND RECENT WORK ON THE HOUSE OF AUGUSTUS ON THE PALATINE AND THE LOCATION OF THE LUPERCAL

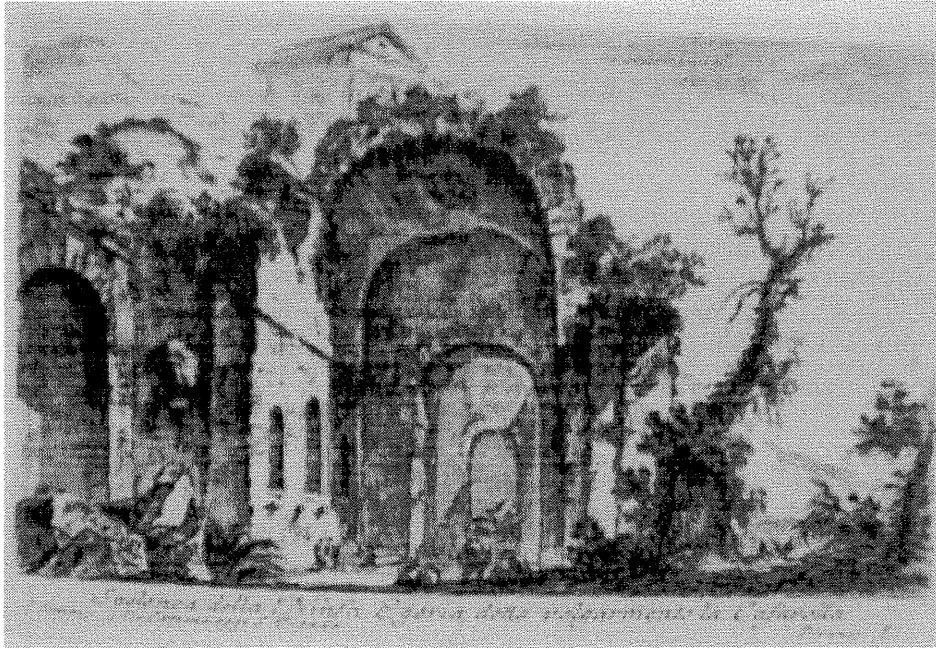
Andrea Carandini and Daniela Bruno (2008) *La Casa di Augusto. Dai 'Lupercalia' al Natale* Bari: Laterza; Irene Iacopi (2008) *The House of Augustus: Wall Paintings*, Milan: Mondadori Electa.

Andrea Carandini and Daniela Bruno's new book revolutionises our conception of how the South West corner of the Palatine looked in the age of Augustus. It is the most important book on the subject to date, and is likely to be translated into English very quickly. Its publication in Italian was only in July 2008. I will try to explain what it contains to alert an Australian audience to its importance.

Some sense of recent archaeological work on the Palatine filtered through the international press early in 2008 when word surfaced that the true location of the Lupercal had been discovered. Already Rodolfo Lanciani had suggested in 1897 that this locale - known to be important to Augustus (see *Res Gestae* 19, where he claims to have built the Lupercal) - should be located deep under the church of S. Anastasia - an important church on the Palatine, and one of the earliest churches in Rome. The church is thought to date from the age of Constantine and to have been erected in AD 325 or 326 to honour his sister Anastasia, and so was part of the process of conversion of the Roman populace to Christianity. A probe in 2008 provided contemporary pictures of a shrine alleged to be the Lupercal, deep beneath the church, and part of the elaborate reconstruction of the entire site undertaken in the triumviral and early Augustan period. The shrine if correctly identified as the Lupercal has been thought similar in general contours to the shrine of the Camenae in the grove of Egeria, near the beginning of the Via Appia, at the base of the Caelian hill, which in turn resembles a later shrine of the Lupercal on the Cispan hill.



A drawing of the shrine of the Camenae by Pirro Ligorio has survived from the time of that shrine's discovery in 1558, and this copy is taken from R. Lanciani, *Storia degli Scavi di Roma III* (reprint 1990) 226. The grotto was visible until 1888, according to Rodolfo Lanciani (*Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome* [1897] 47, and had been drawn by Giovanni Piranesi in the 18th century. I include here these pictures which may help to understand the world Augustus was creating as part of his palace complex, and also reminds us of the importance of documentary sources from the Renaissance and later in studying Roman topography and history.



In 42 BC Octavian made a decision to build a house on the Palatine facing the Aventine. He was at this stage barely 22. Later aged 35 in 28 BC he decided to bury the earlier house and to build a new house incorporating a sanctuary which would enable him to cohabit with Apollo and Vesta. Other general advantages of the site included the presence on the right of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, and the temple of Diana opposite on the Aventine.

The Palatine was an important location which laid claim to some of the oldest myths in Latium, those of Picus, Faunus and the Lupercal. Octavian had also placed a claim on the Aeneas myth, through the family of the Julii who claimed descent from the Alban kings. Octavian had been testamentarily adopted by Julius Caesar, but had gone to a lot of trouble during his consulship in 43 BC to have this upgraded and formalised as a full adoption.

The Palatine was thus a key symbol in Roman history and remained so in the 4th century AD when important changes took place because of the advent of Christianity. At this stage the dynasty of Constantine built the basilica of S. Anastasia on the *maenianum* (balcony) facing the Circus Maximus, in honour of Constantine's sister, and the first Christmas in Rome was celebrated there on 25 December 325 or 326. Soon after this, in AD 363, the temple of Apollo was burned down, and fell into decay.

In modern times the house of Augustus has been a mystery. In the sixties, Carettoni began the process of investigation; the house of Octavian was discovered to be in a good state of preservation for reasons which were not immediately apparent. In 2006 it was realised by the Soprintendenza that there was not one house, but two, one atop the other. The house of Octavian had been buried in order to build a more elaborate successor, which was to include the temple of Apollo, the god who had helped the emperor to defeat Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC. At this stage at a great depth was discovered a round *nymphaeum* with decorated cupola. It had already been discovered and recorded in 1534, but was afterwards lost beneath the Palatine. It was proposed to recognise this as the Lupercal, an idea that had already been floated in the 19th century by Rodolfo Lanciani, *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome* [1897] 131; approved in theory by F. Coarelli in 1996 in the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* s.v. Lupercal.

The book investigates the house of Octavian on the Palatine and shows how its location was strategically chosen on the grounds of its relationship to the *Casa Romuli*. It was a luxurious house made possible by the confiscations of elite property in the triumviral period.

The house of Augustus was a development of this, and relatively few traces have survived. Nevertheless it is possible to reconstruct the way in which Augustus transformed the triumviral house into a palace that made possible his idea of the emperor sharing residence with Apollo and

Vesta. This house also included many other features, both a *domus privata* and a *domus publica*. The *domus publica* included the Portico of the Danaids and the Palatine library which was designed so that it could also serve as a place to hold meetings of the senate. Moreover, the whole house was organised so that it had a prominent balcony, a *maenium*, facing the Circus Maximus. This was another clear advantage of the site, with its manifest opportunities for imperial interaction with the populace.

This had all been obscured deliberately by later development on the site. The church of Anastasia was founded on top of the site in AD 325/326, and as part of the transformation, the epiphany of Romulus was equated with that of Christ. The actual shrine of the Lupercal either fell into disuse at this stage or was Christianised. More will be known after excavation.

The second half of the book, by Daniela Bruno, goes into further detail on some of the main controversies. She answers in detail objections to the identification of the shrine at the base of the Palatine with the Lupercal, addressing weaknesses in the site currently identified as the locale. There are in fact two competing sites only 66 metres apart, near the temples Magna Mater and Victoria, and separated by the *Scalae Caci*.

In regard to the house of Octavian, there is a discussion of the proprietors dispossessed by Octavian's project. The house itself can be reconstructed with reasonable certainty since the bulk of it was buried to form a substructure for the later house of Augustus. The house had 2 peristyles, part of the inheritance from the Republican houses it superseded, and this study reconstructs the remains, and makes parallels with comparable Hellenistic palaces. Finally there is consideration of the obliteration of the house by the later phases.

The house of Augustus was more elaborate, and divided into public and private spaces. Its façade and vestibule are items of obvious interest, and the presence of an arch commemorating the emperor's father, Cn. Octavius, with Apollo and Artemis on a *quadriga* in the attic is surely an engaging topic. Overall the remains of this more recent house are quite scanty and much conjecture is involved in the reconstruction. There is discussion of the cult of the *Lares* in the *domus privata*, and the cult of Vesta in the *domus publica*.

The sanctuary of the temple of Apollo and its interaction with the portico of the Danaids is carefully analysed as well as the arrangement of the *curia*/library. Other important features are the wood in the *area Apollinis* and the altar of *Roma Quadrata*.

The *maenianum* and the area facing the Circus Maximus underwent developments under later emperors, and these continued in phases under the Julio-Claudians, Flavians, Severans and well into the 3rd century. When the basilica of Anastasia was built in AD 325/326 there was a partial destruction of the *maenianum*, and there were further modifications up to the time of Theoderic.

The whole book is well illustrated and includes as a frontispiece a virtual reality reconstruction of the whole complex. While many of the detailed interpretations will no doubt be challenged, the reader comes away with a completely new perspective on the area.

The second book I am considering here provides a splendid set of reproductions of wall paintings from the house of Octavian. Octavian had acquired the house of Hortensius and probably others in the confiscations in 42 BC after the proscriptions (Suet. *Aug.* 72.1). According to Velleius he purchased in 36 BC through intermediaries several other houses so that he could extend this relatively modest house (Vell. 2.81.3). All this is reviewed in Carandini and Bruno. It is this house rather than the house of Augustus built in about 28 BC on a higher level which provides the outstanding wall paintings which grace Iacopi's pages. Few extant Roman wall paintings are of this quality, and so well preserved. Her study is a great complement to the work of her colleagues and now in late 2008, we can truly say that we have some feel for the contours and style of the principal residence of the first Roman emperor.

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