
In AD 357, the emperor Constantius II, son of Constantine the Great, entered Rome as part of a magnificent *adventus* (arrival) in the manner of late antiquity. His reaction to Trajan's Forum, preserved in the words of Ammianus Marcellinus (16.10.13-14), indicates the overwhelming grandeur of the monumental complex:

> When he had come to the Rostra, the most renowned Forum of ancient dominion, he stood amazed; and on every side on which his eyes rested he was dazzled by the array of marvellous sights ... [among which were] the exalted columns which rise with platforms to which one may mount, and bear the likenesses of former emperors [i.e. the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius] ... But when he came to the Forum of Trajan, a construction unique under the heavens, as we believe, and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of all the gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, beggaring description and never again to be imitated by mortal men. (trans. Rolfe)

According to Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 13.25.1-3),

> All along the roof of the colonnades of Trajan's Forum are placed gilded statues of horses and representations of military standards, and underneath is written 'from the spoils of war' (*ex manubiis*).

Alas, the ravages of man and time have reduced the once magnificent area to ruins, and a significant part of it still remains buried under the accretions of later centuries. Given its present ruined state, it is hard for modern students and scholars to imagine what Constantius saw. We should, therefore, be extremely grateful for the scholarship of James
E. Packer of Northwestern University, Illinois. Packer has done more
than anyone to reconstruct the ruined Forum of Trajan. Many will be
aware of his painstaking research methods. He has compiled surviving
literary references and excavation reports, taken thousands of high quality
photographs, meticulously measured large numbers of fragments,
accumulated a massive number of excellent drawings, plans and maps of
the site and its buildings, assessed and supervised architectural
reconstructions and sections, collaborated with archaeologists,
geographers, architects and experts in computer-assisted graphic design
from various countries, and made an enduring commitment to accuracy.
The Getty Museum’s virtual reconstructions of Trajan’s Forum are based
firmly on Packer’s work.

In 1997 the University of California Press did justice to both
Packer’s scholarship and to the forum itself with its publication of The
Forum of Trajan in Rome: a Study of the Monuments. The three volumes
of this immense work immediately became indispensable for those
working in the fields of imperial architecture and Trajanic studies, though
of course it was a work that only institutional libraries could realistically
afford. Now we have a more affordable, abridged edition, shorn of the
supporting footnotes and appendices of the original, along with certain
drawings and technical photographs, and the individual sheets of the new
archaeological map of the site (the ‘Getty Plan’). This edition is,
however, supported by illustrations from the first volume of the original
(in the original order) and with thirteen new colour figures of revised
computer reconstructions of the forum’s buildings made since 1997. The
‘Getty Plan’ of the original has become a large fold-out map of the site,
which illustrates in detail the excavated areas.

There are eight chapters divided into three parts. Part I contains
chs.1-4. The first chapter (2-17) deals with the construction and history of
Trajan’s Forum from antiquity to the eighteenth century. Chapter 2 (18-
51) covers archaeological investigations of the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries. Our debt to French scholars of the nineteenth century is
systematically described, and Packer outlines with equal care the main
results of succeeding excavations, notably those conducted during the
Fascist period which preceded construction of the Via dei Fori Imperiali
and were not fully published afterwards. Chapters 3 (52-69) and 4 (70-
85) look at lesser monuments, the former investigating monuments south of the Basilica Ulpia and ch.4 examining monuments north of it, including Trajan's Column and the Peristyle which once surrounded it. The East Colonnade and Hemicycle and the West Library are fully excavated, but it is sobering to note that many of the monuments we take for granted are either being excavated as we speak or remain buried some five metres below the modern street level. These include the three triumphal arches at the south end, the equestrian statue of Trajan that stood in the forum square, most of the West Colonnade and Hemicycle and the East Library. For the unexcavated buildings, Packer marshals new evidence, especially unpublished documents and drawings. For the excavated buildings, the book's marvellous reconstructions are based on the architectural drawings of Italo Gismondi and on the new Getty photographs, plans and sections of the ruins. Each page serves to enhance the impression of authority.

Part II is entitled 'Restoring the Basilica Ulpia'. The separate treatment accorded to this showpiece building is a tribute to the amount of attention it has received from scholars, particularly of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter 5 (86-143) surveys architectural studies conducted during those centuries. Once again, Packer analyzes their merits fairly, identifies recurring problems and proposes his own solutions (esp. 141-3). Chapter 6 (144-63) offers a new restoration based on depictions of the Basilica on the Forma Urbis (fig. 130) and Trajanic coins (figs. 131, 132), on detailed analysis of the parts of the Basilica cleared during the Fascist excavations of the 1930s, on architectural fragments discovered then, and on new comparative evidence from the East Colonnade and Hemicycle and the West Library. The appearance of the south-east (forum) façade remains conjectural in places, but Packer's ridge height of one hundred feet is surely preferable to some of the improbably tall restorations of the past, such as that of Carla Amici.

Part III ('Conclusions') opens with ch.7 (164-71), which looks at the techniques employed in building the forum. It becomes plain that Packer is not interested in providing a comparative or historical perspective. He does not attempt to review the history of the basilica as an architectural type, or place the forum in the wider context of Trajanic building projects, or treat provincial precedents and echoes. His focus is upon the site itself and the detail involved in accurate reconstruction. Chapter 8 (172-91) looks at 'Concept and Meaning' in the forum's
architecture. It considers the proportions of the plan, the characteristics of the architecture, and the design and significance of the complex as a whole. The propaganda value of the forum is considered from the perspective of an ancient visitor at pages 187-91. An 'Afterword' (192-217) introduces the UCLA/Getty Museum Computer Model and discusses some 'rough spots' and 'problem areas' where modifications have been made in a new computer model executed in 1998-99 by New York architect John Burge. A selected bibliography with abbreviations (218-25) and a comprehensive index (226-35) follow.

Proofreading is of the highest order but it is a shame that each chapter opens with an axonometric reconstruction of the forum accompanied by the caption, 'Color indicates the areas discussed in this chapter'. In the 1997 three-volume edition, various parts of these reconstructions were coloured red to indicate the areas discussed in the accompanying chapter. This time, unfortunately, the colour has not come out, so that a significant aid to understanding has been lost.

Inevitably, we still have much to learn about the forum. Packer cautions that even meticulous mathematical comparisons cannot help us to assign all surviving fragments to their original position (xviii), and we still lack a comprehensive catalogue of all the fragments preserved in the various storerooms on the site, the largest of which lies under the park (the 'Esedra Arborea') that borders the east side of the Via dei Fori Imperiali (135-7, figs. 1-2). Furthermore, ongoing excavations at the site have already modified Packer's conclusions. For a start, the equestrian statue of Trajan, which, according to Packer, stood in the centre of the forum square, has been assigned recently to a spot some twenty metres south.

More disconcertingly, the question of the site of the Temple of Trajan has been thrown wide open. Recent excavations by the Italian archaeologist Roberto Meneghini have led him to conclude that the Temple was not at the north end of the forum, where it has always been assumed to lie, though he does not believe that it was at the south end either, as some have conjectured. He feels that the remains of a row of columns under the Palazzo Valentini to the north of the forum are not after all from the Temple façade but from a propylon. Packer is unconvinced, as he makes clear in a spirited addendum to the Lexicon Topographicum.
Urbis Romae, but it is plain that new discoveries are pressuring his ideas about the importance of axiality for the design of the forum. Meneghini proposes a couple of sites east of the Palazzo Valentini as possible locations for the Temple (see 'Templum Divi Traiani', Bulletino della Commissione archeologica communale di Roma 97, 1996, 47-88; 'L'architettura del Foro di Traiano', Römische Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 105, 1998, 127-48; with Packer's reply in E.M. Steinby, ed., Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae V, Roma, 1999, 260-1; see also E. La Rocca in J. Gonzalez, ed., Trajano, Roma, 2000, 251-85). Meneghini also questions Packer's reconstruction of the south-east (forum) façade of the Basilica Ulpia. It seems that all monuments are subject to the ravages of man and time, whether they be buildings or authoritative publications.

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