Triumphal arch of Arausio (Orange)_ Architecture

Triumphal arch of Orange (1)

[1]

Triumphal Arch of Orange (2) [2]

[3]

Triumphal Arch of Orange (3) [4]

[5]

Triumphal Arch of Orange: side view (1) [6]

[7]

Triumphal Arch of Orange: side view (2) [8]

[9]

Patron/Sponsor: Augustus; Tiberius
Original Location/Place:
Arausio (Orange)

Actual Location (Collection/Museum):
In loco

Original Inscription/Graffito:
A first reading was proposed in 1862 by Pierre Hebert.

IMP CAIO I CÆ AVGVSTO DIVI I FIL ÆGYPT TRP XI COMAT TRIBVT GERMANIA VICTA COH XXXIII VOLVNT COLONIA ARAVS I SECVNDAN HVNC ARC DED PVBLICE

Imp(eratori) Caio I(ulio) Cæ(sari) Augusto divi I(ulii) fil(io) Ægypt(o) Tr(ibunicia) P(otestate) XI comat(a) tribut(aria) Germania victaCoh(ors) XXXIII volunt(ariorum) (et) colonia Araus(io) I(ulia) secundan(orum) hunc arc(um) ded(icavit) publice

To the son of Iulius Caesar, to the emperor Caius Iulius Caesar Augustus, exercising the tribunician power for the eleventh time, the 36th cohors of volunteers and the city of Arausio Iulia, colony of the second legion, in remembrance of Egypt, Gallia Comata and defeated Germany, submitted to the payment of the tribute, elevated and dedicated this arch in the name of the whole country.

Pierre Hebert dated the arch to 12 CE.

Actual reading

TI • CAESAR • DIVI • AVGVSTI • F • DIVI • IVLI • NEPOTI • AVGVSTO • PONTIFICI • MAXIPOTESTATE • XXVIII • IMPERATORI • IIX • COS • IIII • RESTITVIT • R • P • COLONIAE (or RESTITVTORI • COLONIAE)

Ti(berio) Caesar(i), divi Augusti f(ilio), divi Iuli nepoti, Augusto, Pontifici Maximo, [Tribunicia]Potestate XXVIII Imperatori IIX Co(n)s(uli) IIII restituit R(es) P(ublica) coloniae (or : restitutori coloniae)

To Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, grandson of the divine Iulius, Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, exercising tribunician power for the twenty eighth time, *imperator* for the eighth time, consul for the fourth time, given back to him by the administration of the colony (or refounder of the colony).

The inscription is then dated to 26/27 CE.

Material:
Marble

Measurements:
Length: 19.57 meters; width: 8.40 meters; height: 19.21 meters

Building Typology:
Triumphal arch

Description:
The arch was originally constructed using large unmortared limestone blocks. It has three arches, the central one being larger than the flanking ones. The entire structure measures 19.57 meters long by 8.40 meters wide, standing to a height of 19.21 meters. Each façade is framed by four semi-engaged Corinthian columns. The arch is decorated with various reliefs of military themes, including naval battles, spoils of war, and Romans battling Germans and Gauls. The arch contains an inscription dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius in 26/27 CE. On the northern (outward-facing) facade, the architrave and cornice have been cut back and a bronze inscription inserted, which is now lost.

Commentary:
Arausio was originally a Celtic *oppidum*. The name Arausio originated in the name of the Celtic water god. A major battle was fought there in 105 BCE, between two Roman armies and the Cimbri and Teutones tribes. In 35 BCE, the veterans of the Second Legion Augusta founded a colony, the *Colonia Iulia Firma Secundanorum Arausio*. The city was surrounded by walls and included a forum as well as a theatre. According to an inscription, the triumphal arch of Orange was first erected during the rule of Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE). It was later reconstructed by Tiberius to celebrate the victories of Germanicus over the German tribes in the Rhineland. Attempts at

reconstructing its text from the placement of cramp holes for the projecting tines of its letters have not been successful. A first reading was proposed in 1862 by Pierre Hebert: "To the son of Julius Caesar, to the emperor Caius Julius Caesar Augustus, exerting the tribunician power for the eleventh time, the 36th cohors of volunteers and the city of Arausio Iulia, colony of the second legion, in remembrance of Egypt, Gallia Comata and defeated Germany, submitted to the payment of the tribute, elevated and dedicated this arch in the name of the whole country". Thus, Pierre Hebert dated the arch to 12 CE. The reading of the inscription proposed by contemporary scholars is very different: "To Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, grandson of the divine Julius, Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, exercising tribunician power for the twenty-eighth time, emperor for the eighth time, consul for the fourth time, given back to him by the administration of the colony (or refounder of the colony)". The inscription is dated from 26/27 CE. The arch was inserted into the town's walling during the Middle Ages to guard the northern entry. The arch is the oldest surviving example of a design that was used later in Rome itself, for the Arch of Septimius Severus and the Arch of Constantine. This triumphal arch celebrated probably the successful campaigns of Augustus and various members of the Julio-Claudian family in Gaul and in Germany. Thus Augustus's army campaigned in Gaul and Germany in 30-29 BCE against the Morini, Treviri, and Suebi. Nero Claudius Drusus waged a long campaign against the Frisii, Sigambri, the Chauci, and the Marcomanni between 12 and 9 BCE, while his brother Tiberius fought in Germania from 12 to 6 BCE. Last but not least Germanicus waged a successful series of campaigns against the Marsii and the Bructerii, under the leadership of Arminius, in the wake of the disaster of the Forest of Teutoburg, from 14 to 16 CE. Imperial propaganda therefore celebrated the victories of the Roman army and the victorious campaigns waged by members of the imperial family. In fact military victory was the most important benefit that the emperor could bestow on his subjects. However, the triumphal arch, located in a province far away from Rome, relatively near the battlefields, also served as a warning against the provincials who craved to rebel against Roman rule.

Thematic keywords:

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- Gallia [11]
- Gauls [12]
- Roman army [13]
- triumphal arch [14]
- triumph [15]
- victory [16]
- Germania [17]
- Germans [18]

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 Ward-Perkins, John Bryan, *Roman Imperial Architecture* [20] (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981)
 Zanker, Paul, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* [21] (Ann Arbor (Mich.): University of Michigan Press, 1990)
Other sources connected with this document: Relief / Sculpture

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