

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau = Revue suisse de numismatique = Rivista svizzera di numismatica
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft
Band: 68 (1989)

Artikel: A Vespasianic monument to the Senate and Roman people
Autor: Kleiner, Fred S.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-175180>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 03.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

FRED S. KLEINER

A VESPASIANIC MONUMENT TO THE SENATE
AND ROMAN PEOPLE

Plates 7-8

A rare issue of Vespasianic sestertii, struck in Rome from a single reverse die in A.D. 71, is known in only a handful of specimens:

Obv. IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M TR P P P COS III

Head of Vespasian, laureate, r.

Rev. VICTORIA AVG S C Vespasian, togate, standing l., with patera in r. hand sacrificing over altar in front of an arch; behind him Victory, draped, standing l., holding palm in l. hand, with r. placing wreath on his head.

Berlin, inv. 852/1910, 27.35 g (pl. 7, Fig. 1)

London, BMCRE 576, 23.68 g

Naples, cat. 5599

Oxford, 23.94 g

Paris

Rome

F. A. Walters Coll. ex Glendining 1951 (Ryan), 2370 and Hess Lucerne, 6 May 1932, 553 (BMCRE II, pl. 22.10)¹

The reverse legend, VICTORIA AVG(usti), is consistent with those of other contemporary coins from the mint of Rome celebrating Vespasian's military success in Judaea (IVDAEA CAPTA, DEVICTA IVDAEA, MARS VICTOR, ROMA VICTRIX), while the pictorial message is a familiar one, that victory brings peace, security, and liberty, for Victory is not crowning an armed Vespasian on the battlefield but a togate emperor safely back in Rome offering a solemn sacrifice (cf. the

¹ I am grateful to H.-D. Schultz (Berlin), A. M. Burnett (London), C. J. Howgego (Oxford), and M. Amandry (Paris) for supplying me with casts or photographs of the specimens in their cabinets, and to D. E. E. Kleiner (New Haven) and M. Milhous (Boston) for their comments on a draft of this article. The research for this study was completed during a leave of absence granted by the Trustees of Boston University while I was a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and I am pleased to acknowledge the support of both institutions.

contemporary legends PAX AVGVSTI, PAX P ROMANI, SECVRITAS P ROMANI, LIBERTAS RESTITVTA, LIBERTAS PVBLICA)².

Behind Vespasian is a monument that, because of the poor state of preservation of the known specimens, has been described in various ways. Cohen, citing the Paris piece, called it «un temple ou un arc de triomphe»³; Bernhart, who knew three specimens in Rome, Berlin, and Paris, did not identify the structure at all⁴; Fiorelli described it as «la porta di una città»⁵; in RIC the building is called a temple⁶; and in BMCRE Mattingly describes it as «a double trimphal arch surmounted by a quadriga (?)»⁷. The structure is, in fact, a «double arch,» i.e. a *quadrifrons*, seen in a three-quarter view, with the arcuated passageways of the front and left side visible and with the statuary decoration above filling the width of the facade of the monument.

This arch has never, so far as I can tell, been discussed in the literature on Roman arches and is omitted from the comprehensive lists of such monuments compiled by Frothingham⁸, Kähler⁹ and Pallottino¹⁰, as well as from the recent monograph by De Maria on the arches of Rome and Italy¹¹. This is understandable because the arch is not the type itself, as is the case on so many other coins before and after, but just a background structure which, as we have seen, has not always been recognized as an arch. Moreover, there was little that could be said about the monument since its only distinguishing feature, the statuary group on the attic, was obliterated by wear on the only published example (the Walters piece) as well as on almost all of the other known specimens. The sole attempt to identify the group above the arch was Mattingly's: «a quadriga (?)» Fiorelli, more accurately, described the statues as «due figure virili» but did not give them names¹². Walters suggested to Mattingly «that the arch is the same as that figured on a posthumous sestertius of Galba ... [and that] Vespasian is offering

² On the coinage of Vespasian see H. Mattingly, *The mints of Vespasian*, NC 1921, 187–255; id, BMCRE II xxvii–lxix. H.-G. Simon, *Historische Interpretationen zur Reichsprägung der Kaiser Vespasian und Titus* (Diss. Marburg 1952). A. S. Robertson, *Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet* (London 1962) cxii–cxl. E. Bianco, *Indirizzi programmatici e propagandistici nella monetazione di Vespasiano*, RIN 70, 1968, 145–224. T. V. Buttrey, *Vespasian as moneyer*, NC 1972, 89–109. G. G. Belloni, ANRW II.1 (1974) 1060–66. C. M. Kraay, *The bronze coinage of Vespasian: classification and attribution*, *Scripta Nummaria Romana. Essays presented to Humphrey Sutherland* (London 1978), 47–57. R. Pera, *Cultura e politica di Vespasiano riflesse nelle sue monete*, *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Vespasiane* (Rieti 1981) II, 505–14.

³ Cohen 414, no. 589.

⁴ M. Bernhart, *Römische Kaisermünzen* (n.p. n.d.) I, 213, no. 1088.

⁵ G. Fiorelli, *Catalogo del Museo Nazionale di Napoli. Medagliere II. Monete romane* (Naples 1870) 99, no. 5599.

⁶ H. Mattingly – E. A. Sydenham, RIC II (London 1926) 71, no. 463.

⁷ BMCRE II, 124, no. 576.

⁸ A. L. Frothingham, Jr., *A revised list of Roman memorial and triumphal arches*, AJA 8, 1904, 1–34.

⁹ H. Kähler, RE VII, A,1 (1939) 373–493, s.v. *Triumphbogen* (*Ehrenbogen*).

¹⁰ M. Pallottino, *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica, classica e orientale* 1 (1958) 588–99, s.v. *Arco onorario e trionfale*.

¹¹ S. De Maria, *Gli archi onorari di Roma e dell'Italia romana* (Rome 1988).

¹² Above note 5.

an atoning sacrifice to the spirit of his murdered predecessor»¹³. This identification was justifiably rejected by Simon, who thought the sestertius reverse constituted «den frühesten Beleg für das Aussehen der Porta triumphalis»¹⁴. The Porta Triumphalis was, however, a Republican gate in Rome's city wall circuit¹⁵ and the structure on the coin is not only a freestanding arch but, as shall be demonstrated below, a new Vespa-sianic monument.

A relatively well-preserved specimen in Berlin, illustrated here for the first time (pl. 7, Fig. 1), reveals that the attic of the arch was not crowned by the typical quadriga postulated by Walters and Mattingly but rather by two standing male figures, as Fio-relli observed. The correct identification of these figures will, I believe, establish this arch as unique among attested Roman honorary arches and consequently of the high-est interest.

The figure to the right on the attic of the arch is a youth who stands in a posture similar to that of Vespasian. He is, however, nude, save for a mantle draped over his left forearm and around his hips. In his left hand he carries a cornucopia. The object he holds in his extended right hand is obliterated, but by analogy to other depictions of the same figure it should be a patera, like that held by Vespasian below. This is the canonical Roman representation of the *Genius Populi Romani*¹⁶, who appears in this exact posture sacrificing at an altar on a denarius struck during the civil wars of A.D. 68 and labelled GENIO P R¹⁷. The same type, but without the altar, is used on the reverses of Vespasianic denarii struck in 69/70 in Illyricum; on these coins the legend accompanying the youth with the patera and cornucopia is GENIVM P R¹⁸. A similar figure placing a wreath on Roma's head appears – unlabelled but holding a cornu-copia in his left hand – on a denarius of the early first century B.C.¹⁹ and – with both patera and cornucopia – on a silver cup from Boscoreale datable to the Augustan or Tiberian period²⁰. The type was thus firmly established by A.D. 71 and an almost identical labelled figure had appeared twice on Roman coins in the previous few years. The identification of this statue on the arch is secure.

¹³ BMCRE II, xlvii. The coin of Galba, thought by Mattingly to be a posthumous issue of Vespasian is, in fact, a lifetime emission of the emperor. See note 19 below.

¹⁴ Simon (supra n. 2) 97–98.

¹⁵ On the Porta Triumphalis, see M. Pfanner, Codex Coburgensis Nr. 88: Die Entdeckung der Porta Triumphalis, RM 87, 1980, 327–34. F. Coarelli, Il Foro Boario (Rome 1988) 363–437, with previous bibliography. F. S. Kleiner, The study of Roman triumphal and hon-orary arches 50 years after Kähler, Journal of Roman Archaeology 2, 1989, in press.

¹⁶ H. Kunckel, Der römische Genius, Röm. Mitt. Ergänzungsheft 20 (Heidelberg 1974), 33–37, 40–42, 49–52. J. Béranger, Der «Genius populi Romani» in der Kaiserpolitik, BonnJbb 165, 1965, 72–87. E. Rink, Die bildlichen Darstellungen des römischen Genius (Giessen 1933), 41–47.

¹⁷ Kunckel 33, 116 no. M I,7. BMCRE I, 288 note *. P.-H. Martin, Die anonymen Münzen des Jahres 68 nach Christus (Mainz 1974) 70, no. 11. E. P. Nicolas, De Néron à Vespasien (Paris 1979) 1416f., no. 10. C. H. V. Sutherland, RIC² I, 209, no. 1.

¹⁸ Kunckel 116 no. M I,8. BMCRE II, 85, nos. 417–18. Béranger (above note 16) 75.

¹⁹ Kunckel 33, 112 no. M III,1. BMCRR I, 233, no. 1705.

²⁰ Kunckel 33–34, 79 no. P1. A. Héron de Villefosse, Le trésor de Boscoreale, Monuments et mémoires publiés par l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, Fondation Piot 5, 1889, 134 no. 103.

The figure with which the *Genius Populi Romani* is paired does not carry any visible attributes. He stands in right profile and extends his right hand toward the youth. In contrast to the nude Genius of the Roman People this man wears a toga. He appears to have long hair and possibly a beard, although these details cannot be clearly discerned, even under magnification. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt about the identity of this *togatus*: he is the *Genius Senatus*. The Senate so personified has a much shorter history in Roman art²¹. He appears as a long-haired, bearded, *togatus* for the first time on a sestertius struck by Galba late in A.D. 68, where he places a wreath on the emperor's head; the legend is SENATVS PIETATI AVGVSTI²². The same type is used again by Vespasian on sestertii struck in Rome in 71 with the legend CONCORDIA SENATIVI S C²³.

Given the recent codification of the type of the *Genius Senatus*, it is not surprising that the Senate and the Roman People appear together in Roman art for the first time under the Flavian emperors. Their earliest appearance as a pair (although the identification has been questioned by some) is on the panel relief depicting the triumph of Titus in the passageway of the arch erected in his honor on the Velia by Domitian after Titus's death in A.D. 81²⁴. The paired Senate and Roman People, securely identifiable, are among the personified figures greeting Vespasian upon his entry to Rome and sending Domitian off to war on the two great Domitianic friezes found beneath the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome²⁵.

In the second century the *Genius Populi Romani* and *Genius Senatus* appear together frequently. On the lower left pier of the city facade of the Arch of Trajan at Benevento the two *genii* stand facing each other in a scene of the adventus of Trajan (pl. 8, Fig. 2)²⁶. The postures of the two figures are almost identical to those of the statues above the arch on the Vespasianic sestertius (pl. 7, Fig. 1). In fact, the same grouping of figures – but with an altar between them – is used on the reverses of aurei of Trajan and Hadrian, where the legends read P M TR P COS VI P P S P Q R VOTA SVSCEPTA (Trajan, pl. 7, Fig. 3)²⁷, P M TR P COS III V S PRO RED (Hadrian)²⁸, and VOT PVB (Hadrian)²⁹, i.e. on coin issues commemorating the *Adventus Augusti*, as on the Arch at Benevento.

²¹ Kunckel 37–42, 49–52, 67–69.

²² Kunckel 38, 130 no. M VIII, 1. BMCRE I, 359, no. 260a. C. M. Kraay, *The Aes Coinage of Galba*, NNM 133 (New York 1956) 43–44, no. 364. RIC² I, 230, 255 no. 489.

²³ Kunckel 38, 130 no. M VIII, 2. BMCRE II, 113.

²⁴ Kunckel 37, 79 no. P8, 81 no. S1. M. Pfanner, *Der Titusbogen* (Mainz 1983) 70–71. De Maria (supra n. 11) 120, 287 no. 74.

²⁵ Kunckel 40–41, 79f. nos. P9–10, 80f. nos. S2–3. F. Magi, *I rilievi flavi del Palazzo della Cancelleria* (Rome 1945). J. Béranger, *Les Génies du Sénat et du Peuple romain et les reliefs flaviens de la Cancelleria*, *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Brussels 1964) 76–88. G. Koepfel, *Profectio und Adventus*, *BonnJbb* 169, 1969, 138–44, 172–74.

²⁶ Kunckel 41, 80 no. P11, 81 no. S4. J. Hassel, *Der Trajansbogen in Benevent* (Mainz 1960), who identifies the building behind the *Genius Senatus* and the *Genius Populi Romani* as the Temple of Vespasian in Rome. Koepfel (supra n. 25) 161–66.

²⁷ Kunckel 39, 130 nos. M VIII, 7–8. BMCRE III, 115, no. 587; 120, no. 612.

²⁸ Kunckel 39, 130 no. M VIII, 9. BMCRE III, 280, no. 323.

²⁹ Kunckel 39, 130 no. M VIII, 11. BMCRE III, 337, no. 775.

These comparisons suggest the following conclusions: 1) that because the pairing of the *genii* of the Senate and of the Roman People seems to be a Flavian innovation, the arch on the Vespasianic sestertii is a Vespasianic monument and not an earlier landmark in the capital; 2) that because of the striking formal similarities, the representations of the facing Senate and Roman People on the Arch of Benevento and the Trajanic and Hadrianic aurei are modelled on the lost Vespasianic statues crowning this arch; and 3) that because this configuration of the paired Senate and Roman People uniformly appears in scenes of the *adventus Augusti*, the arch on the sestertii of A.D. 71 commemorates the *adventus* of Vespasian after the victory in Judaea, as underscored by the explanatory legend VICTORIA AVG³⁰.

I suggest then that the statuary on the arch depicted on the Vespasianic sestertii not only served as the model for second-century representations of the Senate and Roman People awaiting the imperial *adventus*, but that the arch was one of those that Cassius Dio tells us were erected by order of the Senate in A.D. 70 to commemorate the great Judaeian victory of Vespasian and Titus and the emperor's homecoming: «In consequence of this success both generals received the title of *Imperator*, but neither got that of *Judaicus*, although all the other honours that were fitting on the occasion of so magnificent a victory, including triumphal arches [ἄψιδες τροπαιοφόροι], were voted to them.»³¹ As for the *adventus* itself, Josephus paints a colorful picture of the joy with which the Senate and Roman People greeted Vespasian upon his return from the East.³²

The arch erected at this time and reproduced on the sestertii of A.D. 71 is therefore patently a monument in honor of the emperor himself. It differs, however, in one important respect from all other known honorary arches erected by Augustus and his successors in the capital: the crowning statuary group does not include Vespasian nor indeed any mortal, but only the *Genius Senatus* and the *Genius Populi Romani*. This places the Vespasianic monument in the votive tradition of the earliest recorded *for-nices* of the Roman Republic rather than in the company of the self-aggrandizing honorary arches of the early Empire³³.

Vespasian's arch is a – probably deliberate – revival of the type of pious votive monument erected by some of the great figures of the Republic and recalls the three *for-nices* set up in the Forum Boarium and in front of the Temples of Fortuna and Mater

³⁰ On Vespasian's *adventus* and the history of this period see H. C. Newton, *The Epigraphical Evidence for the Reigns of Vespasian and Titus* (Ithaca 1901). P. Weyand, *RE* VI,2 (1909) 2623–95, s.v. Flavius (206). W. Weber, *Josephus und Vespasian* (Berlin 1921). H. R. Graf, *Kaiser Vespasian* (Stuttgart 1937). L. Homo, *Vespasien, l'empereur du bon sens* (Paris 1949). G. Vanella, *L'Adventus di Vespasiano nei suoi aspetti mistico-religiosi e giuridico-costituzionali* (Naples 1965). M. A. Levi, *I Flavi*, *ANRW* II.2 (1975) 185–97. J. Nicols, *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae* (Wiesbaden 1978). H. Bengtson, *Die Flavii* (Munich 1979) 43–112. *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Vespasiani*, Rieti settembre 1979 (Rieti 1981).

³¹ Dio 65.7.2. E. Cary, transl., Loeb ed. (1925).

³² Joseph., *Bellum Iudaicum* 7.63–74.

³³ On the arches of the Roman Republic see Kähler (supra n. 9) 467, 474–75. G. A. Mansuelli, *El arco honorífico en el desarrollo de la arquitectura romana*, *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 27, 1954, 93–94, 103. L. Crema, *L'architettura romana* (Turin 1959) 100–104. F. S. Kleiner, *The Arch of Nero in Rome* (Rome 1985) 11–19. De Maria (supra n. 11) 31–53.

Matuta by Lucius Stertinius upon his return from Spain in 196 B.C., *fornices* that supported *signa aurata*, among which were undoubtedly statues of Fortuna and Mater Matuta³⁴. The Vespasianic *quadrifrons* is also reminiscent of the *fornix* erected by Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus in 190 B.C. beside the *clivus Capitolinus*. This monument supported nine *signa* of which two were horses, suggesting to Kähler that two of the others represented the Dioscuri³⁵. The last recorded arch in this Republican tradition is that put up on the Palatine Hill by Octavian, probably shortly after his victory at Actium, in honor of his natural father Gaius Octavius and crowned not by a portrait of the deceased but by a Greek statuary group of Apollo and Diana in a quadriga.³⁶ All the other known arches in Rome of the Republic and early Empire supported statues either of illustrious ancestors or of the builder and/or members of his family.

Vespasian's arch surmounted by statues of the Senate and Roman People is thus an anomaly, a monument in the old-fashioned and modest tradition of the votive *fornices* of the Republic. The arch is not, however, anomalous in other respects. Its republicanism is consistent with the preference for verism in the portraits of Vespasian³⁷ and with the emperor's well-documented efforts to show respect for the Senate and Roman People after the tyrannical behavior of Nero and the chaos of the civil wars.³⁸ A passage in Dio's Roman History is instructive in this context: «He received anybody who desired to see him, not only senators but also people in general ... He regularly attended the meetings of the senate, whose members he consulted on all matters ... Whatever messages he was prevented by old age from reading and whatever communications he sent to the senate when unable to be present, he usually caused to be read by his sons, thus showing honour to that body even in this detail. Every day he made many of the senators and others his guests at table ... In short, he was looked upon as

³⁴ Liv. 33.27. Kähler (supra n. 9) 377, nos. I.1-3. I. Calabi Limentani, I fornices di Stertino e di Scipione nel racconto di Livio, *Contributi dell'Istituto di Storia Antica* (Milano) 8, 1982, 125-35. Kleiner (supra n. 33) 14-15. De Maria (supra n. 11) 47-51, 262 nos. 49-50.

³⁵ Liv. 37.3. Kähler (supra n. 9) 377-78, no. I.4. G. Spano, L'arco trionfale di P. Cornelio Scipione Africano, *Memorie della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* VIII,3, 1950, 173-205. Calabi Limentani (supra n. 34). Kleiner (supra n. 33) 15-16. De Maria (supra n. 11) 47-51, 263 no. 52.

³⁶ Plin., HN 36.36. Kähler (supra n. 9) 381-82, no. I.11. G. A. Mansuelli, Aedicula columnis adornata, *Rivista di Studi Liguri* 36, 1970, 103-109. Kleiner (supra n. 33) 22-23. De Maria (supra n. 11) 103-105, 268-69 no. 57. F. S. Kleiner, The Arch in Honor of C. Octavius and the Fathers of Augustus, *Historia* 37, 1988, 347-57.

³⁷ G. Förschner, Das Porträt Vespasians auf römischen Münzen, *Berliner Numismatische Zeitschrift* 25, 1959, 3-10; 26, 1960, 25-32. G. Daltrop - U. Hausmann - M. Wegner, *Die Flavii, Das römische Herrscherbild* II,1 (Berlin 1966) 9-17, 72-84. G. Paladini, Tradizione e intenzione nel ritratto di Vespasiano, *ANRW* II.12.2 (1981) 612-22. M. Bergmann - P. Zanker, Zu den Bildnissen Vespasians, *JdI* 96, 1981, 332-49.

³⁸ E. Kornemann, Das Prinzipat des Tiberius und der «Genius Senatus», *Sitzungsberichte, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, München 1947:1, 20-21. B. Grenzheuser, Kaiser und Senat in der Zeit von Nero bis Nerva (Münster 1964) 76-86. See also supra note 30.

emperor only by reason of his oversight of the public business, whereas in all other respects he was democratic and lived on a footing of equality with his subjects.»³⁹

This respect for the Roman People and especially for the Senate is, as others have noted, reflected in Vespasian's coin types and above all in the extraordinary sestertius issue of A.D. 71 where the *Genius Senatus* places a wreath on the head of the cuirassed Vespasian who holds Victory in his right hand. The legend, CONCORDIA SENATVI S C, underscores the new harmony between emperor and senate⁴⁰. The most eloquent testimonies to the new state of affairs have, however, not been recognized until now: the arch erected by Vespasian in A.D. 70 in honor of the Senate and People of Rome in the venerable but long-outmoded tradition of the Republic, and the sestertii of A.D. 71 that show Vespasian piously sacrificing in front of it.

Prof. Dr. Fred S. Kleiner
Art History Department
Boston University
725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215 USA

Key to plates 7-8

- Fig. 1 Vespasia, Sestertius (Berlin), BMC 576. (3:1)
- Fig. 2 Benevento, Arch. (detail)
- Fig. 3 Trajan, Aureus, BMC 587. (3:1)

³⁹ Dio 65.10.4-6. E. Cary, transl., Loeb ed. (1925).

⁴⁰ Supra note 23.



Fig. 1



Fig. 1 (detail)

Fred S. Kleiner, A Vespasianic Monument

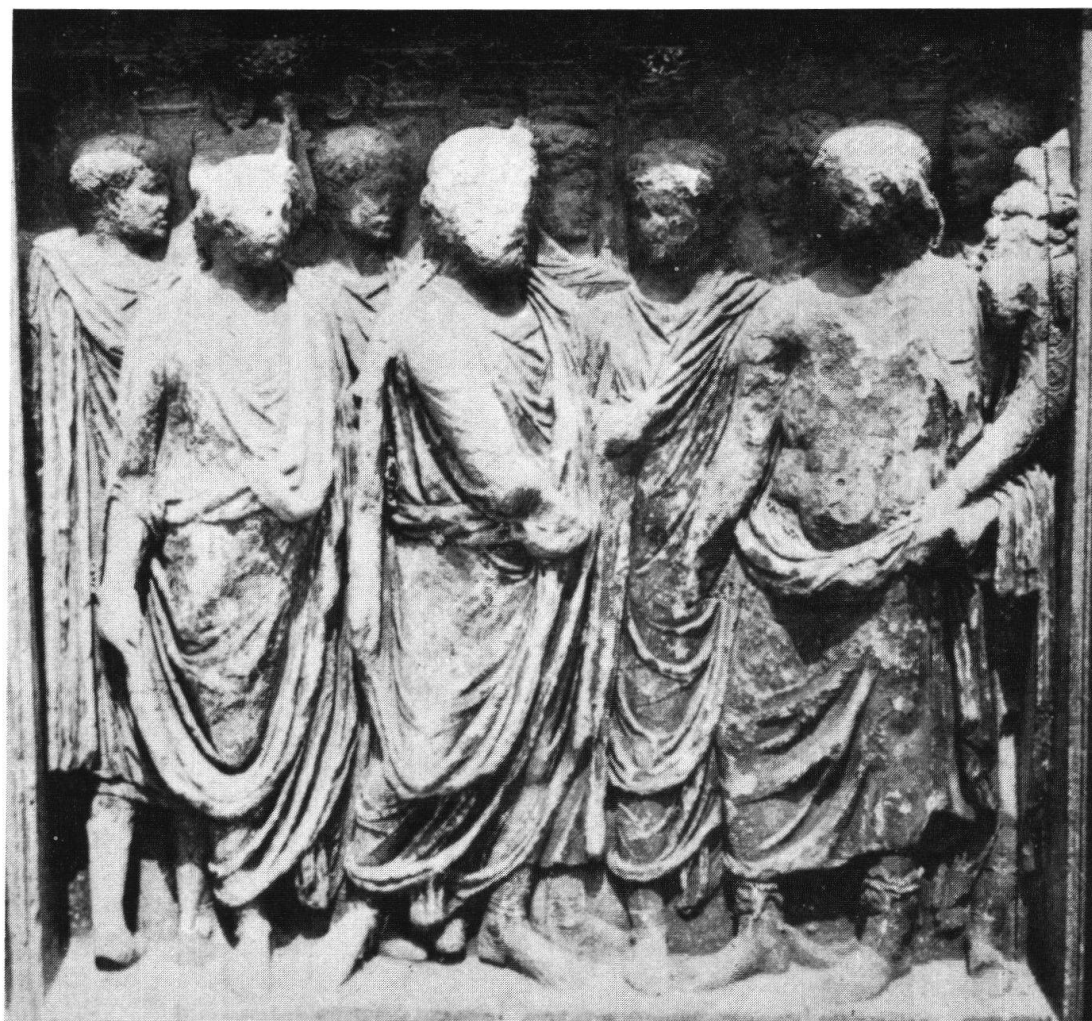


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fred S. Kleiner, *A Vespasianic Monument*

