

# RESEARCH NOTE

## Work in Progress: The Spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus: A Reinvestigation

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On the well-known relief of the spoils on the Arch of Titus (south wall of the passageway) four kinds of ritual objects are depicted as carried in the Flavian triumph of A.D. 71: a seven-branched lampstand or *menorah*, a ceremonial table, two receptacles (on the table), and two trumpets (likewise attached to the table) – all vessels from the Temple of Jerusalem.

The classic and in several respects unsurpassed study here is still, more than two and a half centuries after its appearance, A. Reland's *De spoliis templi hierosolymitani in Arcu Titiano conspicuis*, published at Utrecht in 1716. In this work Reland not only collected and critically evaluated almost all then available ancient and mediaeval evidence in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, but above all based his exposition on measurements and drawings which through the intermediary of his friends were especially prepared for him at Rome – of the lampstand by the Papal architect in 1710/11, and of the table with receptacles and trumpets by a lesser hand some time later.

Since then much has of course been written about the relief, not least of the *menorah*, but whereas some of Reland's remarks and conclusions have become a subject of seemingly unceasing controversy, others, by no means less important, have fallen into complete oblivion. Moreover, apart from casual measurements taken in the first years of the present century, nobody has ever cared to recheck the original drawings, let alone to take detailed captions of the various componental parts of the *menorah*

and other vessels: a point of no small importance, since a number of ornamental and structural features, largely intact at the time of Reland, are hardly more discernible on available standard photographs, although still traceable on the relief. That under these circumstances no reliable reconstructions have been possible – Reland himself, unable to investigate the relief in person, wisely abstained from it – is not surprising.

It is against this background of a long overdue reinvestigation that a comprehensive survey of the relief *in situ* was conducted by the author in Summer 1975 jointly with the Div. of Photogrammetry, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm.

Its three principal objectives have been as follows:

1. To establish the precise appearance of the vessels as they were at the time of the survey (June 1975), thereby providing a firm base for future comparisons, incl. the possibility of making a replica.

2. To gain as near as possible a notion of the vessels' original appearance on the relief, i.e. at the time of its completion, and to present the results in reliable reconstructions.

3. To check the original appearance of the vessels (reconstructions, point 2 above) against extant literary and archaeological evidence in order to ascertain their authenticity.

The study is now in the final stages of elaboration and will be published in the near future.