

**Notes:** (For conflicting analyses of the evidence concerning fig-trees in the ancient Forum, see Richardson, 150–1, and *LTUR* 2.248–9).

## 24. The Shrine of Janus Geminus

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### COMMENTARY

Although the precise location of this little temple is not known, Livy's passage locates it in the "lower Argiletum," a street which entered the Forum between the Senate House and the Basilica Aemilia/Paulli. This was the most important of the several cult sites to Janus in Rome, an important and very Roman god who still makes his mark on the modern imagination. Janus was the god of gates (*ianua*) and passages, whether such passages are conceived spatially as crossing some important boundary, temporally as connecting past and future (hence "January"), or as a connector of differing states and conditions (from peace to war, or from the human to the divine). As such, Janus was commonly represented as a two-faced god, and his shrines seem to have been in the form of a covered passage-way, fitted with a gate at each end. It is possible that the shrine here was also originally a bridge over the open canal of the Cloaca Maxima.

### SOURCES

**24.1** Numa Pompilius [715–673 BC], invested by the augurs with kingship over a city founded by the force of arms, prepared to found Rome anew on justice, laws, and morality. Perceiving that such reforms could not be successfully promoted during wars, which rather promote ferocity, Numa thought to tame his fierce people by weaning them from their weapons. To this end, he built the Janus shrine at the bottom of the Argiletum to signify whether Rome was at peace or at war: its doors stood open when the city was in arms, and were closed when all Rome's neighbors had been pacified. Since Numa's reign, the shrine has been shut twice: once after the First Punic War in the consulship of Titus Manlius [in 235 BC], and again, as granted by the gods in our own day, when peace was established on land and sea by the emperor Caesar Augustus after the battle of Actium [in 31 BC].

*Livy, History* 1.19.1–3

**24.2** The shrine of Janus Quirinus, which in all of recorded memory since the founding of Rome was only closed twice before my birth (in accordance with our ancestors wishes that it be closed only when peace through victory reigned throughout the entire empire on land and sea) was ordered by the Senate to be closed three times during my rule.

*Augustus, Achievements* 13



**24.3** The great antiquity of the art of sculpture in Italy is demonstrated by the statue of Janus Geminus dedicated by the king Numa. Janus is worshipped as the signifier of peace and war; the fingers on the statue are arranged to indicate the number 365, showing that he is also the god of passages of time.

Pliny the Elder, *Encyclopedia* 34. 33

**24.4** But how do I describe you, Janus of the double face?

For Greece has no divinity with the same domain.

...

Janus, holding a staff in his right hand, a key in the other,

[Revealed himself, and answered all my questions.]

Why," I wondered, "whenever I appease the other gods,

Do I first bring an offering of wine and incense to you?"

"So that through me you gain the passage," Janus answered,

"To whatever gods you wish, whose thresholds I control."

"And why, when so many passage-ways [*jani*] exist, do you stand

Worshiped only in one, at your temple next to two forums?"

["Because I stopped the Sabines here with a gush of noxious water]

An altar was consecrated to me in a little shrine,

Where the flames consume your offerings of sacrificial cake."

"But why do you hide during times of peace, and open in war?"

Without a moment's delay, Janus gave me the reason:

"So the way of return lies open to the men who go out in armies

My doorways open wide in war, with the bolts drawn back.

But I close my doors on Peace, to prevent her from leaving;

Long will I be shut, through the godly will of Augustus.

Ovid, *Fasti* 1.89–282, selections

**Notes:** In Pliny's passage [24.3], how did the god's fingers represent the number 365? Perhaps three were extended on the one hand, and all five on the other to represent the Roman numerals III, VI, and V).

## 25. The Black Stone (*Niger Lapis*)

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### COMMENTARY

One of the more curious remains in the Roman Forum is a small area, surrounded now by a metal railing, of grayish limestone slabs visible in the pavement of the Forum near the Arch of Severus today and originally alongside the Republican Rostra. The level of this pavement can be dated to the C1 BC, and was originally surrounded by a *pluteus*, an enclosure formed by waist-high stones. These darker slabs of limestone pavers are probably the Niger Lapis, or "Black Stone," referred to by Festus in the passage below.



## 24. The Shrine of Janus Geminus

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### 24.1 Livy 1.19.1–3

[Numa Pompilius] regno ita potitus urbem novam, conditam vi et armis, iure eam legibusque ac moribus de integro condere parat. Quibus cum inter bella adsuescere videret non posse, quippe efferari militia animos, mitigandum ferocem populum armorum desuetudine ratus, Ianum ad infimum Argiletum indicem pacis bellique fecit, apertus ut in armis esse civitatem, clausus pacatos circa omnes populos significaret. Bis deinde post Numae regnum clausus fuit, semel T. Manlio consule post Punicum primum perfectum bellum, iterum, quod nostrae aetati di dederunt ut videremus, post bellum Actiacum ab imperatore Caesare Augusto pace terra marique parta.

### 24.2 Augustus, *Res Gestae* 13

Ianum Quirinum, quem clausum esse maiores nostri voluerunt cum per totum imperium populi Romani terra marique esset parta victoriis pax, cum, priusquam nascerer, a condita urbe bis omnino clausum fuisse prodatur memoriae, ter me principe senatus claudendum esse censuit.

### 24.3 Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 34. 33

Fuisse autem statuariam artem familiarem Italiae quoque et vetustam, indicant [alia et] ... Ianus Geminus a Numa rege dicatus, qui pacis bellique argumento colitur digitis ita figuratis, ut CCCLXV dierum nota et aevi esse deum indicent.

### 24.4 Ovid, *Fasti* 1 (*selections*)

Quem tamen esse deum te dicam, Iane biformis?

Nam tibi par nullum Graecia numen habet. 89–90

...

Ille tenens baculum dextra clavemque sinistra. 99

...

"Cur, quamvis aliorum numina placem,  
Iane, tibi primum tura merumque fero?"

"Ut possis aditum per me, qui limina servo,  
ad quoscumque voles" inquit "habere deos." 171–174

"Cum tot sint iani, cur stas sacratus in uno,  
hic ubi iuncta foris templa duobus habes?" 257–8

...

"Ara mihi posita est parvo coniuncta sacello:  
haec adolet flammis cum strue farra suis."

"At cur pace lates motisque recluderis armis?"

Nec mora, quaesiti reddita causa mihi est:

"Ut populo reditus pateant ad bella profecto,

tota patet dempta ianua nostra sera.  
 Pace fores obdo, ne qua discedere possit;  
 Caesareoque diu numine clausus ero." 275–82

## 25. The Black Stone (Niger Lapis)

### 25.1 Festus 184 L

Niger lapis in Comitio locum funestum significat: ut alii, Romuli morti destinatum, sed non usu ob[venisse ut ibi sepeliretur, sed Fau]stulum nutri[ci]um eius, ut alii dicunt Hos]tilium avum Tu[lli Hostili, Romanorum regis].

[Note: The bracketed text by Festus is variously constructed, but the variations yield much the same meaning]

### 25.2 ILS 4913 = CIL 6.36840 (excerpt)

QUOI HO [...] [...] SAKROS ES ... (perhaps as in classical Latin formula: QUI HU[nc locum violaverit, manibus] SACER SIT ...)

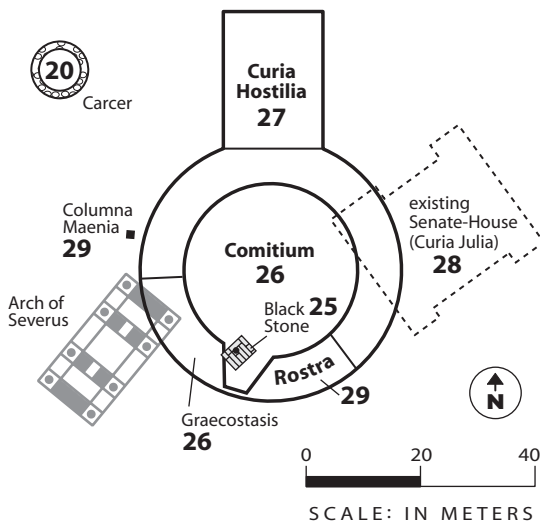


Fig. 21 Republican Senate House, Comitium, and Rostra (after Coarelli)

## 26. Curia, Comitium, and Rostra (Fig. 21)

### 26.1 Varrro, *Lingua Latina* 5.155

Comitium ab eo quod coibant eo comitiis curiatis et litium causa. Curiae duorum generum: nam et ubi curarent sacerdotes res divinas, ut Curiae Veteres, et ubi senatus humanas, ut Curia Hostilia, quod primus aedificavit Hostilius rex. Ante hanc Rostra;