

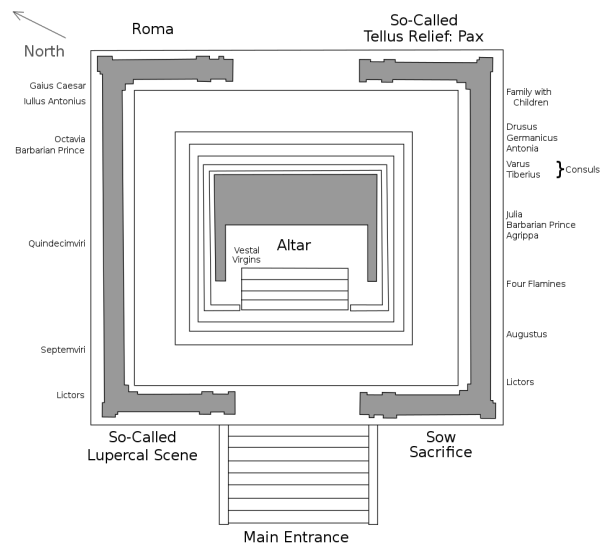
# Rome: City of an Empire

## Part II: The Ara Pacis

### Augustus

- Augustus was born in 59 B.C. He was born Gaius Octavius and his mother was a niece of Julius Caesar.
- 46 B.C. He accompanied his adopted father and granduncle, Julius Caesar, on a triumph of Africa.
- 44 B.C. Caesar is murdered, Octavius returns as Caesar's heir and establishes his right to inherit.
- 43 B.C. Octavius reaches an agreement with Mark Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus who were initially his main rivals. Octavius had in fact gathered an army to move against them. But they agreed to pool their power and created the 2<sup>nd</sup> triumvirate and dominate the Roman political landscape.
- 42 B.C. Octavius and the 2<sup>nd</sup> triumvirate move against the assassins of Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, who have gathered an army in the east and Greece. They defeat Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi.
- 38-36 B.C. Octavian marries Livia Drusilla – who was previously married and has sons of her own Drusus and Tiberius. The 2<sup>nd</sup> triumvirate is renewed but Lepidus is eventually stripped of his powers.
- 32-30 B.C. after several years of building tension between Octavian and Mark Antony, who has been commanding the east of the empire and living with Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, war breaks out between the last surviving triumvirs. Octavian and his second in command, Agrippa, defeat Antony and Cleopatra at Actium who soon after commit suicide.
- 28 B.C. the senate is reduced and Octavian is proclaimed princeps (first person of the senate).
- 27 B.C. Octavian is proclaimed Augustus ("the exalted one"), he is given many honours: *imperium* (command of an army), tribunician powers (power to veto a law and protect religious – sacrosanct), censor (power to decide who is a senator). He doesn't have himself declared consul or dictator, which would be dangerous. He uses soft power in the right places to retain power but allow the idea of the republic to continue.
- 2 B.C. Augustus exiles his own daughter Julia to a remote island. She had been forced to marry Tiberius, who was in turn forced to divorce a wife he loved. She was exiled because of infidelity.
- 16 B.C. – 9 A.D. Augustus begins military expansion campaigns in Germania, and along the Danube using his adopted sons, Tiberius and Drusus. They have some success but also suffer great defeats.
- 12 A.D. He takes on the role of Pontifex Maximus (head-priest of Jupiter).
- 14 A.D. He dies in Naples. After his death he would be proclaimed a god. He was succeeded by his least favourite stepson, Tiberius.

## Design



- The monument consists of a traditional open-air altar at its centre surrounded by precinct walls which are pierced on the eastern and western ends (so called today because of the modern layout) by openings and elaborately and finely sculpted entirely in Luna marble.
- Within the enclosing precinct walls, the altar itself was carved with images illustrating the *lex aria* (the law governing the ritual performed at the altar). The sacrificial procession depicts animals being led to sacrifice. What remains of the altar is otherwise fragmentary, but it appears to have been largely functional with less emphasis on art and decoration.



- The interior of the precinct walls are carved with *bucrania* (ox skulls) from which carved garlands hang. The garlands bear fruits from various types of plants, all displayed on a single garland as allegorical representations of plenty and abundance. The ox skulls in turn evoke the idea of sacrificial piety (religious duty), appropriate motifs for the interior of the altar.

## Exterior Decoration

- The exterior walls of the Ara Pacis are divided between allegorical and mythology/historical relief panels on the upper part while the lower part comprises scenes of nature: harmonic, intertwined vines that contain wildlife and connote nature under control.
- The upper part of the northern and southern walls depict scenes of the emperor, his family, and members of the regime in the act of processing to or performing a sacrifice. Various figures in togas are shown with their heads covered (*capite velato*), signifying their religious roles. Other figures wear laurel crowns, traditional Roman symbols of victory. Members of individual priestly colleges are depicted in traditional garb appropriate to their office, while lictors can be identified by their iconographic *fascēs*. Women and children are also included among the procession; the depiction of children in Roman sculpture would have been novel at the time of the Altar's construction, evoking themes of moral and familial piety. However, despite the emphasis on family values, the anonymity of many of the women depicted enforces the male retention of power within this new age of peace.



- The western and eastern walls are both pierced by entryways to the altar, although the interior would only have been accessed by a stairway on the western side. The entryways were flanked by panels depicting allegorical or mythological scenes evocative of peace, piety and tradition. On the eastern wall, panels depicted the seated figures of Roma and Pax, while the western side depicts the discovery of the twins and she-wolf and the sacrifice of a figure traditionally identified as Aeneas. The identity of these various figures has been a point of some controversy over the years, relying heavily on interpretation of fragmentary remains, discussed below.



- The sculpture of the Ara Pacis is primarily symbolic rather than decorative, and its symbolism has several levels of significance. Studies of the Ara Pacis and similar public Roman monuments traditionally address the potent political symbolism of their decorative programs; they are usually studied as a form of imperial **propaganda**. The Ara Pacis is seen to embody without conscious effort the deep-rooted ideological connections among emperors, military force, and fertility – connections which are attested in early Roman culture. The Altar's imagery of the Golden Age (time before Jupiter when man lived in harmony with nature)



appealed to a significant component of the Roman populace. The program of the Ara Pacis addressed this group's very real fears of cyclical history, and promised that the rule of Augustus would avert the destruction of the world.

***East and West Walls:***

The East and West walls each contain two panels, one well preserved and one represented only in fragments.

- The East Wall contains a badly preserved scene of a female warrior, possibly Roma, apparently sitting on a pile of weapons confiscated from the enemy, thus forcing peace upon them by rendering them unable to make war.



- The other panel is more controversial in its subject, but far better preserved. A goddess sits amid a scene of fertility and prosperity with twins on her lap. Scholars have variously suggested that the goddess is Italia, Tellus (Earth), Venus Genetrix or Pax (Peace); although other views also circulate. Due to the widespread depiction around the sculpture of scenes of peace, and because the altar is named for "peace", the favoured conclusion is that the goddess is Pax.



- The West Wall also contains two panels. The fragmentary "Lupercal Panel" apparently preserves the moment when Romulus and Remus were discovered by Faustulus the shepherd, while Mars looks on.



- The better preserved scene depicts the sacrifice of a pig (the standard sacrifice when Romans made a peace treaty) by an old priest and two attendants. This has been identified as either Aeneas – the Trojan Hero who came to Italy and whose ancestors, Romulus and Remus, would found Troy – or Numa Pompilius one of the Roman Kings.



#### ***Lower Part: Depictions of Nature***







***Other Images***



