The Peace of the Ara Pacis

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THE PEACE OF THE ARA PACIS

Pax Romana is a simple formula for propaganda, but a difficult subject for research. It summarizes centuries of development during which indigenous Italian ideas were gradually interwoven with Greek and Oriental conceptions. The Ara Pacis Augustae is a mere episode in this history. Yet, because it was an attempt to produce a synthesis of contemporary aspirations, it calls for special attention. A synthesis, as it is obvious, seldom includes all the elements present in the contemporary culture. The purpose of this note is to ascertain which elements Augustus, with his (Roman) advisers and his (Greek) artists, did in fact include in the monument.

The best authority on the history of the ideal of peace in antiquity, H. Fuchs, wrote that the Ara Pacis represents the Greek ideal of peace.1 He had been preceded by A. Dieterich2 and is followed by L. Berlinger.3 On the other hand W. Weber relates the ideal of the Ara to Vergil's Fourth Eclogue and W. Nestle to Aeneid VI, 852—hardly illuminating suggestions.4 The comparison with the "Carmen Saeculare" is commonly made, but only partly justified. Other scholars (most recently F. Altheim)5 make the much more sensible comparison with the contemporary Carn. IV, 15; but do not go further. The position of the Ara Pacis in the cross-currents of the ideals of peace has never been closely studied.6

Fortunately, the figures of the Ara can speak eloquently for themselves. On one side of the entrance we have Aeneas and the Penates and a scene depicting Mars and the Twins; on the opposite side Terra Mater1 and probably Rome—if so, victorious Rome as shown in the Carthage altar.2 The tradition of Rome based on strength (Mars) and pietas (Penates) is as much present as are the renewed fecondity of Earth (future generations) and the Majesty of Rome: together they delimit the space for the procession of Romans led by Augustus. Such is the peace of the Ara: serene men piously following a leader within the frame of a past which is present, because divine, and of a future which

2 As the controversy on the interpretation of the Terra Mater slab is not yet closed, I should perhaps state my reasons for following the traditional view in opposition to A. W. van Buren's suggestion that the central figure is Italia (JRS 3, 1913, p. 134):

(a) The type of the central figure is that of Terra Mater (E. Strong, JRS 27, 1937, p. 114; cf. J. Tournelle, Hadriam School, p. 140 ff.). The cornucopia is absent, for instance, also in the patera of Aquileia. For Italia in republican coins see J. W. Croux, Corella Curtius, 1937, p. 224.

(b) The central figure is accompanied by an Aura and a Nereid (not by two Auri; cf. L. Curtius, "Der Astragal des Sotades," Sitz. Heid. Ak. 1923, p. 11, n. 3)—by Air and Sea, which suggests one of the cosmic representations usual in Augustan art (E. Strong, loc. cit.).

N.B.—The Carthage relief which replaces Aura and Nereis by a sort of sky-divinity and a Triton (E. Loewy, Atti I Congresso Studi Romani I, 1929, p. 104; G. Mazuza, "Les bronzes antiques du canton de Neuchâtel," Recueil de travaux par la Faculté des Lettres, Neuchâtel, fasc. 12, 1928) seems, therefore, to interpret the central figure as Terra. The argument holds good, if one prefers to believe that the Carthage slab and the Ara Pacis depend on a common source.

(c) Hellenistic art is usually much more definite, when it represents a specified country. What L. Curtius, op. cit., I. c., has to say on this point is also a good argument against the topographical interpretation of the Carthage relief by van Buren, I. c., and Ch. Picard, "Melanges Masspero," Mem. de l'Inst. d'Archéol. Orient. 67, 1931-37, p. 313. See also the Antioch mosaic, where Egypt and Earth are side by side: Antioch on the Orontes II, The excavations 1933-36, p. 205 ff., and M. Rostovtseff, Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World, 1, p. 181.

(d) The presence of Terra Mater is perhaps made plausible by the very theme of Peace. On the other hand, I do not know of any typological reason in favour of Italia.


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1 Augustin und der antike Friedensgedanke, 1926, p. 131, n. 2.
2 Mutter Erde, 1905, p. 80.
6 Except perhaps in H. Wagenvoort's speech, Pax Augusto, Gedachten over Wereldrede in het Augusteinsch jubileum, Groningen 1930, which, to my great regret, I have never seen and the content of which I have been unable to ascertain exactly. The allusion in the Dutch Museum 39, 1932, p. 151 seems to hint at a different problem.
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is certain and, therefore, again, present. No fleeting truce, but security.¹

Horace Carm. IV, 15 and Velleius Paterculus ii, 89 substantially describe the same thing. Horace needs no quotation; he has even "cum prole matronisque nostris." Velleius is no less striking: "Caesar autem reversus in Italian atque urbem, quo occurrerit, quo favere omnium honorem, aetatem, ordinum et cetera sit . . . redit cultus agris, sacris honos, securitas hominibus, certa cuique rerum suarum possessa." The Carmen Saeculare is akin, but has something more and something less: more of imperialism and reform of customs, less of the 'princes.'

Anecd. I, 291 ff. lays a similar stress upon Roman tradition, but is one-sided in its treatment of this motive and touches also on 'messianic' hopes ("Remo cum fratres Quirinus"). The Ara Pacis has nothing to do with Messianism and, generally, with millennial ideas.

The conception of the Ara Pacis is more complex than the ideal of peace as prosperity and fecundity — εἰς γὰρ περιποιησίαν — which from Homer² and Hesiod³ to Isyllos⁴ and the inscription for Zeus Sospolis⁵ dominates the Greek mind both in its simplest form and in the myth of the Golden Age. Tibullus,⁶ Propertius,⁷ Ovid,⁸ speak of peace in Greek terms: obviously Greek is the spirit of the epigram on the battle of Actium, Anth. VI, 256. The Golden Age of Aeneid VIII, 319 and Metamorph. I, 86 is also plainly Greek. Pax (or Eirene) is represented with Greek symbols on Augustan coins.⁹ The tetra-

¹ It may be observed that the Ara Pacis does not seem to allude to libertas. A connection between peace and liberty is implicit in the Res gestae and explicit in the Ephesus coin of 28 B.C., discussed below, in Brit. Mus. Pap. CCLVI (below, p. 238, n. 7) and Philo, Leg. ad Gaium 147. But the procession of free men before Augustus is more than an allusion. It is obvious that the Ara assumes a freely chosen leadership.

² Od. 24. For the περιποιησία type cf. also B. Schweitzer, ELABEYIA ROYFOTPOG02, Festgabe zur Winckelmannfeier des Arch. Sem. Leipzig, 1933.


⁵ Hom. I. II, 1; III. 1, 17; IV. 6.

⁶ Fast. I, 701 (and with some Roman touches Metam. XV, 839 ff.).


⁹ BMC Roman Empire II, 202.

¹⁰ F.-W. s. v. Eirene, col. 2132.


¹⁶ Polyb. 18, 37, 7 (cf. Liv. 33, 12, 9); M. Gelzer, Hermes 68, 1933, p. 164.

¹⁷ De officiis I, 11, 35.
It is even more significant that the pax of the Ara is not the simple fruit of victory by land and sea which seems to have been the most famous Augustan formula, the "terra marique parta victoris pax," as expressed in the Res Gestae, in the inscription of the statue of 36 B.C.,¹ in Livy I, 19, 3 and in other evidence.² This formula had probably already been used by Pompey³ and may even be earlier.⁴ Obviously, it owed much of its success to the expression 'terra marique' which had a long tradition in military, diplomatic and religious language. But its traditionalism was merely verbal: it affirmed the existence of peace in traditional words; it did not emphasize the presence of traditional virtues necessary to peace.

The peace of the Ara includes Augustus and requires his presence or, more precisely, his return—hence the importance of establishing that the procession of the frieze represents the ceremony of 13 B.C.⁵ Yet the peace is not given by Augustus ex mihilo. Augustus by his presence recalls Roman tradition. Therefore, it is obvious, and has, indeed, been many times observed,⁶ that it differs especially from those Eastern formulations in which peace is a cosmic creation of Augustus.⁷ The most remarkable point is perhaps that the Ara Pacis differs also from the interpretation of the Ara itself which is given by Ovid, Fasti I, 711 ff.:

Frendibus Actiaeis comptos redimita capillos,
Pax, aedes et tota mihi in orbis mane.
Dum desit hostes, desit quaque causa triumphi:
tu ducebus bello gloriac major eris.
Sola gerat miles, quis arma coeccoat, arma,
cantetque fera nil nisi poma tua.
Horreat Aeneadas et primus et ultimus orbis:
si quia parum Romam terrae timebat, arriet.

These lines seem to make some allusion to the actual symbolism of the Ara. In the Ara there are the 'pompa,' the 'Aeneadae' and the Earth, and there was very probably Rome. But Ovid lays an emphasis which does not exist in the Ara on the relation between urbs and orbis. The Ara is not concerned with the subjects of Rome. With its blend of Greek prosperity and Roman 'mores maiorum' the Ara is certainly far from being isolated, yet it does not represent the most common contemporary ideas of peace. It does not centre either in the person of the emperor (East) or in the victorious rule over Land and Water (West)—nor does it follow the literary and iconographical tradition of Greek origin. The name, Pax Augusta, covers several different ideas, which P. L. Strack has not been able to reduce to a unity.¹ Nevertheless, we feel justified in saying that the Ara Pacis is the most genuine document of the Augustan conception of peace, because it emphasizes the value of moral and religious tradition which Augustus understood.

The forces which neglected or fought tradition were at work in the very sphere of the idea of peace. Peace was often conceived in Greek terms or was related to Victory without stressing the presence either of Roman gods or of Roman virtues. This is so insignificant a fact in the history of the Augustan age. The symbolism of the Ara Pacis did not set a pattern. One has only to compare the Ara Pacis of Flavian (?) times published by L. Deubner,⁸ very well by E. Strong, CAG X. p. 548.

¹ Appian, Bell. cti. V, 130, 541-2.
² Ameth Epigr. 1928, n. 13; Propertius IV, 6, 39; Suet. Dom. Aug. 22; Seneca Apoc. 10, 2. The formula has been studied in a masterly way by J. Gage, Med. Ec. Roma 53, 1936, p. 70. The altar of the "gens Augusta" at Carthage also conceives of the peace as victory: cf. G. Rodenwald, Die Antike 13, 1937, p. 171; also A. Alföldi, Röm. Mitt. 50, 1935, p. 36.
⁵ See Appendix. On this conception cf. Cæs. De domo sua 7, 17: "Itaque sine hunc di immortalis
fructum mei redimus populo Romano tribuant, ut
quem ad modum discesser nobis frugum inopia, fames,
vastitas, caedes, incendia, rapinae, scelerum
impunitas, fuga, foris, discordia frustus, sic redimus
ubertas agrorum, frugum copia, spes oti, tranquili-
atarum animorum, iudicia, leges, concordia populi,
dotes auctoritas mecum simul reducta videantur,
sive etc.
⁶ Very well by E. Strong, CAG X. p. 548.
⁸ Untersuchungen zur römischan Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts p. 154.
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APPENDIX

There were two dates of the Ara Pacis celebrated in the Roman Calendar, the 'constitutio aerae' of 4 July 13 B.C. and the 'dedicatio' of 30 January 9 B.C.—and consequently the frieze of the Ara must represent one of the two ceremonies. E. Loewy's third hypothesis ('Jahres., Oest. Inst. 23, 1926, p. 53 ff.) that the procession is entirely ideal, although it has found approval in some quarters (for instance J. Sieveking, Phil. Woch. 1937, pp. 655-68), may surely be dismissed. K. Hanell '?'Zur Diskussion über die Ara Pacis," Bull. Soc. Royale Lund 1935-36, pp. 191-202) with the help of some old arguments by G. Wissowa ('Hermes, 39, 1904, p. 156 ff.) made a strong case for the representation of the 'dedicatio' of 9 B.C. He maintained that the 'constitutio aerae' was a simple Senatus Consultum authorizing the Ara, not an actual ceremony: the 'anniversarium sacrificium' of which the Res gestae speaks would have been performed for the first time in January 9 B.C. Clever as this argument is, E. Welin has now disposed of it ('Die beiden Festtage der Ara Pacis Augustae' in ΑΡΑΓΜΑ M. P. Nilsson dedicatum, 1939, p. 500 ff.). He shows that in the case of the Ara Fortunae Reducis, which had two feasts in the Calendar, like the Ara Pacis, the Res gestae leaves no doubt that the principal anniversary was that of the 'constitutio' and included a full-dress sacrifice. On the strength of this analogy, it is therefore possible to return to the traditional and natural view that the Res gestae alludes to, and that the frieze of the Ara represents, the ceremony in honour of the home-coming emperor in 13 B.C. The ideological interpretation is confirmed: the return of the emperor is the condition of the peace.

The other objections to the date of 13 B.C. are not decisive. That the Flamines represented in the Ara are four, when we know that the Flamen Dialis was reintroduced only in 11 B.C., is an easily understandable anachronism; and as far as the position of the Pontifex Maximus Lepidus in 13 B.C. is concerned, our ignorance is neither increased nor diminished by the hopeless efforts at identifying or excluding him on the Ara (bibliography in G. Monaco, Bull. Arch. Com. 62, 1934, p. 17 ff.).

Welin's essay is timely for a reason which he has apparently not perceived. The discoveries of the latest excavations must now be examined in the light of his argument. As far as we have been able to ascertain, only one part has been published in sufficient detail, the portion of the frieze with the body of Augustus, two Flamines and among others, two people, whom G. Moretti has proposed to identify with the consuls of 13 B.C., Tiberius and Quintilius Varus (see Not. d. Scavi 1937, p. 37 ff.). We have not yet seen any satisfactory publication of the left wind-screen of the altar itself ('fiancata sinistra') containing two bands of figures in small size, the outer one of which represents preparations for the sacrifice, while the inner one (half destroyed) contains six women and three men. Yet a reproduction is given in the Itinerario by G. Moretti ('L'Ara pacis augustae, Roma, La Libreria dello Stato, 1938, pp. 15 and 37 plates), who adds a summary description and a theory of his own not to be overlooked. Moretti thinks that, while the external frieze represents the 'constitutio' of 13 B.C., the 'fiancata' of the altar reproduces the ceremony of January 9 B.C. Evidently, Sopraintendente Moretti has tried to reconcile K. Hanell's opinion with the traditional view. Having seen that a sacrifice must be presupposed in 13 B.C., we incline to disagree and to suggest that the decoration of the altar completes the description of the ceremony of 13 B.C. Moretti says that the six women of the half-destroyed inner band are Vestals. We dare not judge from a very small photograph. But if they are Vestals, we begin to understand why the Vestals are not represented in the great frieze, although Augustus in the Res gestae emphasizes their participation in the ceremony. Moretti, however, has a strong argument for his own thesis in the fact that some figures of the outer band of the altar (at least one Flamen) seem to repeat individuals in the frieze; but I do not feel that the argument is decisive. So much may be said, until we have further information, that Welin has made it practically certain that the external frieze represents the ceremony of 13 B.C., but the relation between this frieze and the decoration of the altar has now become a new problem.

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