

The Emperor Augustus Commissioned Which Of The Following? (2 Points) Ara Pacis Basilica Ulpia Colosseum Pantheon

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The era of Emperor Augustus, the first Roman emperor, marked a transformative period in Roman history characterized by significant architectural, political, and cultural achievements. One of the most notable aspects of Augustus's reign was his dedication to monumental architecture, which served both political propaganda and cultural enrichment. Among the many structures attributed to or commissioned by Augustus, some of the most prominent include the Ara Pacis, Basilica Ulpia, Colosseum, and Pantheon. This article explores these architectural marvels, focusing particularly on which of these Augustus commissioned, their historical significance, and their enduring legacy.

Understanding Augustus and His Architectural Patronage

The Significance of Augustus's Reign

Augustus, born Gaius Octavius, rose to power after Julius Caesar's assassination, eventually establishing the Roman Empire. His reign (27 BCE – AD 14) was marked by a focus on stability, prosperity, and cultural grandeur. To legitimize his rule and promote Roman virtues, Augustus invested heavily in building projects that reflected Rome's imperial power and cultural identity.

Architectural Strategies as Political Propaganda

Augustus used architecture as a tool to narrate his political achievements and divine favor. By commissioning impressive structures, he aimed to demonstrate Rome's glory, connect himself with divine authority, and leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

The Key Architectural Commissions of Augustus

Among the structures associated with Augustus, a few stand out due to their historical records and scholarly consensus regarding his involvement in their commissioning.

Ara Pacis: The Altar of Peace

The Ara Pacis Augustae, or Altar of Augustan Peace, is perhaps the most iconic monument associated with Augustus's efforts to promote peace and prosperity. Constructed between 13 and 9 BCE, this

altar was dedicated to Pax, the Roman goddess of peace, and symbolizes Augustus's successful efforts to bring stability after years of civil war.

Basilica Ulpia: The Great Basilica

Located in the Forum of Trajan, the Basilica Ulpia was built during Trajan's reign, not Augustus's. Therefore, Augustus did not commission this structure. It is important to distinguish structures from different periods to avoid historical inaccuracies.

Colosseum: The Flavian Amphitheatre

The Colosseum, also known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, was commissioned by Emperor Vespasian around AD 70-72 and completed by his son Titus. Since it was built after Augustus's death, he did not commission this iconic monument.

Pantheon: The Temple of All Gods

The Pantheon, as it stands today, was rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian around AD 118-128. The original structure was commissioned by Marcus Agrippa during Augustus's reign, but the existing building is a reconstruction from Hadrian's time. Therefore, Augustus did not commission the current Pantheon, although its origins trace back to his period.

Detailed Examination of Each Structure

The Ara Pacis Augustae

The Ara Pacis was designed to celebrate Augustus's establishment of peace throughout the Roman Empire. Its elaborate marble reliefs depict scenes of Roman mythology, imperial family members, and allegories of peace and prosperity. The altar's location near the Campus Martius allowed it to be a focal point for public ceremonies.

Key Features:

- Marble relief sculptures depicting mythological and historical scenes
- An ornate marble enclosure or precinct
- Symbolism emphasizing Augustus's role as peace-bringer

Historical Significance:

The Ara Pacis embodies Augustus's political message that his rule ushered in a new era of peace (Pax Romana). It also served as a propaganda tool to reinforce his divine authority and familial lineage.

The Basilica Ulpia

While the Basilica Ulpia was a grand architectural achievement, it was constructed during the reign of Emperor Trajan, roughly a century after Augustus's time. It was used for legal proceedings and public

gatherings, reflecting Roman civic architecture but not directly connected to Augustus.

The Colosseum

Commissioned by Emperor Vespasian, the Colosseum is a symbol of Roman engineering prowess and entertainment culture. Its construction aimed to placate the populace with public spectacles, but it has no direct link to Augustus's patronage.

The Pantheon

Originally built by Marcus Agrippa during Augustus's era, the Pantheon has undergone several reconstructions. The version we see today was rebuilt under Hadrian, but its initial foundation and dedication relate back to the early imperial period.

Conclusion: Which Structure Did Augustus Commission?

Given the detailed examination of each structure, the most accurate answer to the question, "The Emperor Augustus commissioned which of the following?" is Ara Pacis. This monument was explicitly built during his reign, with inscriptions and artistic programs emphasizing his role in securing peace and prosperity across Rome. The Ara Pacis remains a powerful symbol of Augustus's political and cultural legacy.

Summary:

- Ara Pacis: Commissioned by Augustus, symbolizing peace and prosperity
- Basilica Ulpia: Built during Trajan's reign, not Augustus's
- Colosseum: Initiated by Vespasian, after Augustus's death
- Pantheon: Originally commissioned by Agrippa, reconstructed later

Legacy of Augustus's Architectural Patronage

Augustus's architectural projects set a precedent for imperial propaganda and civic pride that influenced subsequent Roman emperors. The Ara Pacis, in particular, remains a testament to his political messaging and artistic patronage. Its preservation and scholarly study continue to inform our understanding of Augustan Rome.

Final Thoughts

Understanding which structures Augustus commissioned helps appreciate the broader context of Roman imperial architecture as a reflection of political authority, cultural identity, and artistic achievement. The Ara Pacis stands out as the quintessential monument of his reign, encapsulating his vision of a peaceful and prosperous Rome.

Keywords: Augustus, Ara Pacis, Roman architecture, imperial propaganda, Roman monuments, ancient Rome, Roman history, Augustus commissions, Roman peace, architecture in Rome

Frequently Asked Questions

Which monument did Emperor Augustus commission that served as a ceremonial altar dedicated to Pax, the Roman goddess of peace?

Ara Pacis

Among the listed structures, which did Augustus commission as a grand public basilica in Rome?

Basilica Ulpia

What famous Roman amphitheater, commissioned by Augustus, was used for gladiatorial games and public spectacles?

Colosseum

Which iconic Roman temple, often called the 'Temple of All Gods,' was commissioned by Augustus and completed during his reign?

Pantheon

The Ara Pacis, commissioned by Emperor Augustus, symbolizes which aspect of his reign?

Peace and prosperity

Which of the following structures was primarily a political and administrative building designed by Augustus?

Basilica Ulpia

The Colosseum, associated with Augustus' era, was primarily used for what purpose?

Public spectacles and gladiatorial contests

Which of these structures reflects Augustus' emphasis on

religious and cultural grandeur in Rome?

Pantheon

Did Augustus commission the Pantheon during his reign?

No, the current Pantheon was rebuilt by Hadrian after Augustus' time, but it is associated with Augustan architecture.

Which of these monuments is most directly associated with Augustus' propaganda promoting peace and stability?

Ara Pacis

Additional Resources

The Emperor Augustus Commissioned Which Of The Following?

In the grand tapestry of Roman history, few figures loom as large as Emperor Augustus, the first emperor of Rome and architect of the Empire's enduring legacy. His reign, marked by political stability, military expansion, and cultural patronage, left behind an array of monumental structures and artworks that continue to captivate historians and visitors alike. Central to understanding Augustus's legacy is recognizing the specific projects he commissioned—works that not only served practical purposes but also projected imperial power, divine authority, and Roman virtues. Among these, four prominent constructions and artworks are often discussed: Ara Pacis, Basilica Ulpia, Colosseum, and Pantheon.

This article delves into each of these, with a particular focus on which one Augustus commissioned, exploring their significance, architectural features, and historical context. By the end, you'll have a clearer understanding of Augustus's architectural and artistic legacy and the key projects associated with his reign.

Understanding Augustus and His Patronage

Before examining each structure, it's essential to understand Augustus's motivations for commissioning such works. Augustus, born Gaius Octavius, rose to power after the tumultuous period of Julius Caesar's assassination and the subsequent civil wars. His reign, beginning in 27 BCE and lasting until 14 CE, aimed to stabilize Rome and project an image of divine authority rooted in traditional Roman virtues.

Augustus's patronage of architecture and art served several purposes:

- Legitimizing Power: By associating himself with Rome's glorious past and divine favor, Augustus reinforced his authority.

- Public Morality and Propaganda: Monuments communicated messages about Roman virtues like piety, peace, and prosperity.
- Urban Renewal: He transformed Rome into a city befitting its imperial status, constructing monumental public buildings and religious sites.

With this context, let's explore the specific projects he commissioned.

The Ara Pacis: The Altar of Peace

Overview and Significance

The Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) is perhaps the most iconic monument directly associated with Augustus. Completed in 9 BCE, it symbolizes the peace and prosperity ushered in by Augustus after years of civil war. The altar was dedicated to Pax, the Roman goddess of peace, and functioned as a site for sacrifices and public ceremonies.

This monument exemplifies Augustus's use of religious symbolism to promote his political message: that his rule brought stability and divine favor to Rome. It also underscores his desire to connect his reign with traditional Roman religious practices.

Architectural Features

- Design: The altar is a rectangular marble structure, approximately 11 meters long and 6 meters wide.
- Decorative Reliefs: The most remarkable aspect is the detailed friezes and panels depicting mythological scenes, historical processions, and allegories of peace.
- Sculptural Program: The reliefs include imperial family members, gods, and personifications, emphasizing continuity and divine endorsement.

Historical Impact and Restoration

The Ara Pacis was buried under layers of earth during the Middle Ages and was rediscovered in the 16th century. Major restoration efforts in the 20th century, especially under Mussolini's regime, aimed to preserve and display it as a symbol of Roman imperial grandeur.

Why It Matters

The Ara Pacis stands as a testament to Augustus's propaganda strategy—using religious symbolism and artistic grandeur to legitimize his rule and declare a new era of peace. Its detailed reliefs also

offer invaluable insights into Roman life, fashion, and religious practices.

The Basilica Ulpia: A Center of Imperial Administration

Overview and Significance

The Basilica Ulpia was a massive public building located in the Forum of Trajan (built during Trajan's reign, but its planning and conceptualization are linked to the imperial tradition Augustus helped establish). While Augustus did not commission this basilica directly, the architectural tradition of grand basilicas as symbols of imperial authority was initiated during his reign.

Architectural Features

- Dimensions: It measured approximately 300 meters in length and 70 meters in width.
- Design Elements: The basilica featured a central nave with side aisles, clerestory windows for natural light, and an apse at the end.
- Materials: Constructed primarily of marble and concrete, showcasing advanced Roman engineering.

Role and Function

- Served as a venue for administrative and judicial proceedings.
- Acted as a symbol of Roman civitas and imperial power.
- Hosted imperial court functions and public gatherings.

Connection to Augustus's Legacy

Although the Basilica Ulpia was built after Augustus's death, it exemplifies the architectural and political traditions he helped establish—using monumental architecture to showcase the strength and stability of the Roman state.

The Colosseum: The Flavian Amphitheatre

Overview and Significance

The Colosseum (also known as the Flavian Amphitheatre) is perhaps the most famous Roman monument worldwide. However, it was not commissioned by Augustus but by Emperor Vespasian and completed under his son Titus around 80 CE. While not a direct product of Augustus's patronage, it reflects the evolution of imperial architecture that Augustus helped initiate—public entertainment as a tool of imperial propaganda.

Architectural Features

- Design: An elliptical amphitheater capable of seating approximately 50,000 spectators.
- Materials: Primarily concrete and stone, showcasing Roman engineering prowess.
- Innovations: Use of arches, vaults, and complex underground passages (hypogeum).

Purpose and Cultural Impact

- Hosted gladiatorial games, animal hunts, and public spectacles.
- Demonstrated imperial beneficence and the power to entertain.
- Served as a unifying space for Roman citizens.

Relation to Augustan Foundations

While the Colosseum was not an Augustus project, its grand scale and purpose as a public spectacle echo the imperial ideals that Augustus promoted—strengthening social cohesion and projecting imperial might through monumental architecture.

The Pantheon: A Masterpiece of Imperial Architecture

Overview and Significance

The Pantheon in Rome is renowned for its massive dome and oculus, representing the pinnacle of Roman engineering. The existing structure was rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian around 126 CE, but the original was commissioned during Augustus's reign.

Architectural Features

- Design: A rotunda with a portico, topped by a monumental dome.

- Innovations: Use of coffered ceilings to reduce weight; the oculus provides natural light and a symbolic connection to the heavens.
- Materials: Concrete with marble and other decorative elements.

Religious and Political Significance

- Originally a temple dedicated to all gods ("Pantheon" meaning "all gods").
- Later converted into a Christian church.
- Demonstrates the Roman mastery in architecture, blending religious symbolism with imperial authority.

Connection to Augustus's Reign

Although the current Pantheon predates Hadrian's reconstruction, the original commission during Augustus's time set the stage for Rome's architectural innovation and religious integration—traits Augustus fostered during his rule.

Summary: Which Structure Did Augustus Commission?

Having examined the four options—Ara Pacis, Basilica Ulpia, Colosseum, and Pantheon—it is clear that the monument most directly commissioned by Augustus is the Ara Pacis.

Key reasons:

- Historical record: The Ara Pacis was explicitly commissioned by Augustus as a symbol of peace and stability following his military victories.
- Date of completion: 9 BCE, during Augustus's reign.
- Explicit dedication: It was dedicated to Pax, the Roman goddess of peace, aligning directly with Augustus's propaganda themes.
- Political symbolism: It embodied Augustus's message of divine favor and the restoration of Roman traditions.

While other structures like the Basilica Ulpia, Colosseum, and Pantheon are monumental and associated with imperial ideology, they were built after Augustus's death or under subsequent emperors. The Basilica Ulpia and Pantheon, though rooted in the imperial architectural tradition, were not directly commissioned by Augustus. The Colosseum, initiated by Vespasian, is even further removed from Augustus's direct patronage.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, the Ara Pacis stands out as the quintessential project directly commissioned by Emperor Augustus. It encapsulates his political messaging, religious devotion, and artistic patronage. As a masterpiece of Roman imperial propaganda, it exemplifies how Augustus used architecture and art to craft his legacy—one of peace, divine favor, and Roman virtue. Understanding this monument provides invaluable insight into the broader scope of Augustus's influence on Roman architecture and cultural identity.

In essence: The correct answer to the question "The Emperor Augustus commissioned which of the following?" is the Ara Pacis.

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