

A Political ideology of the Roman Empire was to over glorify their leaders in order to maintain peace and stability. These public monuments send a strong propaganda message of the emperor's worth to gain the respect and therefore support of the general public. They are used to establish the leader's power as a political strategy,

- ② with emphasis on the power and wealth the emperor's reign and victories has brought them. Source D states that *"there is no doubt about the generally eulogistic character of the reliefs, despite their subtleties; they confront the viewer with a spectacle of ideal imperial actions."* For example the Trajan column, reliefs depict the emperor in various situations that display desirable leadership qualities to defeat the Dacians e.g. Sacrificing, addressing the troops, overseeing operations, receiving envoys and gracefully accepting victory (1). *"By devices such as these, Trajan is linking himself to his exploits to the glorious history of Rome."*[Source C].
- ② Through the architecture, the emperors took the opportunity to gain support from the roman public by emphasising their own leadership skills through achievements. However this also creates the probability of the events and greatness of the emperor shown through the monuments to be exaggerated creating bias of the sources. The Ara Pacis is an exception as it focuses mainly not on the Emperor but the peace and stability he has brought to Rome *"there is no dramatic concentration upon the emperor... the personality cult is already with us but has not yet been carried to the melodramatic extremes of later centuries... [unlike the arch of Titus where] the emperor is glorified above even the victory who crowns him"* Mortimer wheeler refers to the personality cult as the culture of enhancing the emperors greatness and achievements through exaggeration. An important idea throughout the empire was also the concept of Romans as a whole being superior to other societies. They believed that all others were unsophisticated and 'barbaric'. This is shown through the various reliefs throughout the monuments. The Trajan column depicts multiple scenes in which the Dacians (non-Romans) are surrendering. The Dacians are on a lower level, pleading for mercy from Trajan and his army.
- ① Whereas the Romans wear their sleek armour and are clean shaven, the Dacians have scraggly beard and clothes including a felt hat. This contrast in appearance and the Romans dominance emphasises their lack of sophistication. All four monuments are in celebration of a military victory. The conquest of others often meant death, slavery and rape and so thinking of the other societies as barbaric also allowed justification of war for the roman public. However source G states that *"despite the artists emphasis on the superiority of the roman army, the enemy is treated with distinct respect"* referring to the scene at which the Dacian commander Decebalus commits suicide against a tree. The Romans somewhat respected his bravery and thought the Dacians, although barbaric still 'worthy of being defeated by the Romans'. This enhances the idea of the roman self-worth as it shows they believe they are superior regardless of characteristics they admire, they still only see others as 'barbaric'.

Through the monuments there is a recurring theme of the Emperors being supported by the divinities. Allegorical styled reliefs are intermingled with literal representations of scenes in all monuments showing how respect for the gods is considered a normal part of life. In Trajan's column, the emperor is seen making deity and sacrificing to the gods, in his arch, Titus is being crowned by the goddess Roma and is also seen in the vault on the back of an eagle which Peter Stewart refers to as *"deified Titus being carried to heaven"* In the arch of Constantine a winged figure accompanies the army in battle. The presence of these religious figures shows that the roman society held much respect for the gods and felt it important that their leaders held the same views and had divine support. The Ara Pacis in particular had much divine representation *"this relief therefore reminds the viewer of Aeneas' piety, his connection to the city of troy through the penates, the foundation of Rome and the fact that Augustus himself was linked to the legendary founder and as such had divine ancestry"*. The idea of the leader being supported by the gods is also important for the public as they must be inspired by the emperor to continue to support him. By emphasising that the emperor is 'loved by the divinities' the public will respect and follow him to a greater extent, which is necessary for warfare.