



As depicting the head of Nero and the Ara Pacis (66 CE)

As depicting the head of Nero and the Ara Pacis (66 CE).jpg



[1]

Denomination:

As

Date: 66 CE

Material:

Bronze

Mint:

Lugdunum

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): British Museum collection [2]: [R.10067](#) [3]

Name of Ruler:

Nero

Obverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Bare head of Nero looking right, globe at point of bust

Inscription: IMP NERO CAESAR AVG P M TR POT P P

Reverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Frontal view of the Ara Pacis

Inscription: ARA PACIS - S-C

Weight (g): 9.37g

Commentary:

RIC I², Nero, no. 526, p. 181.

This as, minted around 66 CE at Lugdunum, depicts on the obverse the head of Nero. The reverse depicts the *Ara Pacis*, or *Ara Pacis Augustae*, an altar dedicated to *Pax*, the Roman goddess of Peace. It was commissioned by the Roman Senate in 13 BCE to honor Augustus, and was consecrated in 9 BCE. The altar, together with the *Horologium Solare Augusti* and the *Mausoleum Augusti*, formed a complex erected near the Campus Martius (see [Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Architecture](#) [4]; [Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Reliefs](#) [5]). Although the *Ara Pacis* is not recorded in the ancient sources, it appears on coins of Nero, as in this case, and of Domitian. The structure depicted on the coins is, however, schematic.

Why did Nero decide to depict the *Ara Pacis* on the obverse of the coin? The most obvious answer is that by celebrating the achievements of Augustus, Nero could also associate himself with the first emperor. Yet, the question is more complicated. A possible interpretation is that offered by Anton von Domaszewski in an article published in 1903. This German scholar suggested that the last family on the Southern Wall of the *Ara Pacis* is that of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, the father of Nero (see Domaszewski, "Die Familie"). This identification remains widely accepted today. While Ronald Syme accepted Domaszewski's suggestion that the figures depicted are members of the *gens Domitia*, however, he identifies the boy not as Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus himself - as he argues that he was born after the completion of the monument -, but as another unknown member of the family, possibly an elder unknown brother of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus (Syme, "Neglected Children"; Syme's



interpretation has been contested in Pollini, "Ahenobarbi, Appuleii," p. 454-456, who still defends the hypothesis that the young boy no. S-41 on the Southern Wall of the *Ara Pacis* is Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus).

Leaving aside this debate, it is possible that Nero chose to depict the *Ara Pacis* because there was a visible bond between the Augustan monument and his family, and therefore it was an occasion for Nero to claim a further connection between himself and Augustus (this idea is confirmed by the numerous echoes to Augustean motifs and themes in the coinage produced under Nero's reign, see Grau, "Néron").

Keywords in the original language:

- [senatus consultum](#) [6]
- [pater patriae](#) [7]
- [tribunicia potestas](#) [8]
- [pontifex maximus](#) [9]
- [ara](#) [10]
- [pax](#) [11]

Thematic keywords:

- [peace](#) [12]
- [altar](#) [13]
- [Nero](#) [14]
- [Rome \(city\)](#) [15]
- [legitimacy](#) [16]
- [Augustus](#) [17]
- [Julio-Claudian dynasty](#) [18]

Bibliographical references: Griffin, Miriam, [Nero: the End of a Dynasty](#) [19] (New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press, 1985)

Syme, Ronald, ["Neglected Children on the Ara Pacis"](#) [20], *American Journal of Archaeology* 88 (1984) : 583-589

Domaszewski, Alfred von, ["Die Familie des Augustus auf der Ara Pacis"](#) [21], *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien* 6 (1903) : 57 - 66

Pollini, John , ["Ahenobarbi, Appuleii and Some Others on the Ara Pacis"](#) [22], *American Journal of Archaeology* 90/4 (1986) : 453-460

Grau, Donatien, ["Néron, héritier d'Auguste : perspectives numismatiques"](#) [23], *Revue numismatique*, 6e série 165 (2009) : 129-152

Other sources connected with this document: Architecture

[Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\)_Architecture](#) [4]

[Reconstruction of the Ara Pacis](#) [24]





[Ara Pacis: frontal view \[25\]](#)



[Ara Pacis: side view \[26\]](#)



[Ara Pacis: side view \[27\]](#)



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Relief / Sculpture

[Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Reliefs \[5\]](#)

- [Read more about Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Reliefs \[5\]](#)

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- [3] <http://collection.britishmuseum.org/id/object/CGR102224>
- [4] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/ara-pacis-13-9-bcearchitecture>
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