

Trajan's Column: Propaganda, Purpose and Meaning



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Abstract

The imposing column which still stands in Rome today has inspired and enthralled people the world over, and has many secrets not visible to a casual eye. The two millenia old structure has been studied by many people over the years, and this dissertation seeks to draw together these perspectives and find the answer to the question, ‘what is the column for?’. Conceived with one purpose, changed even before it was built, and gaining others as history grew around it, Trajan’s Column had many purposes for the Romans.

Trajan’s column has many purposes and messages to convey and is part of the ideological statement portrayed in the architecture of the wider context of the forum complex. It is a monument with a multi-layered meaning, rather than a simple purpose. The most visible message is one of grandeur, expressing imperial power and the ability of the Roman army, linking them to Trajan as a soldier-emperor, and securing its association to him in its use as his tomb. The conclusions drawn in this study aim to provide a new understanding of Trajan’s column as a multipurpose object.

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Introduction to the Column

*‘And he set up in the Forum an enormous column, to serve at
once as a monument to himself and as a memorial of the
work in the Forum.’*

*Cassius Dio*¹

The column of Trajan is an unique object reflecting complex communication of roman ideology. It is a freestanding column almost 40 metres tall², erected in A.D. 113 in the forum of Trajan in Rome. Two millennia later, it still stands there.

Trajan’s column was a special contribution by the Senate to the forum of Trajan, as laid out in the dedicatory inscription, *ILS 294 = CIL VI.960*. Trajan’s Column itself remain in place in Rome, but there is a copy of the Column in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.³ A fragment of the *Fasti Ostienses* dates the column's dedication to May 12th, A.D. 113.⁴ It is believed that the architect Apollodorus, who built the forum of Trajan, also built the Column.

¹ Dio Cass. 68.16.3

² Hinz and Bourdon, 2006

³ Victoria and Albert Museum, 2018

⁴ Dudley, 1967: 136

The History of Monumental Columns

Monumental columns are separated from the traditional architectural context of a column, and crowned by one or more sculptures. They are free standing, although some are grouped together in rows. The high visibility of the column, alongside the extreme elevation, emphasises the object on top of the capital. The first monumental columns emerged in Greece, used to carry votive offerings, like the sixth century sphinx columns of Delphi and Aegina, or for funerary monuments, as in the necropolis of Assus, also from the sixth century BC. Votive columns are an early form of monumental column.⁵

Monumental columns were still employed as funerary monuments in the early Roman Republic but became increasingly a means of personal representation, as honorary monuments or victory monuments. The 439 BC Columna Minucia, 338 BC Columna Maenia, 255 BC Columna M. Aemilii Paulli are all Republican examples, but there are examples of this in the Imperial Period, such as the 36 BC Columnae Rostratae Augusti.⁶

Trajan's column was the first of the Imperial columns- Trajan's, Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius in the second century A.D. These imitate Trajan's column with a spiral relief rising to a statue of the emperor in bronze. Trajan's column inspired

⁵ Höcker, 2006b

⁶ Höcker, 2006b

other imperial columns, in Rome for the emperors Antoninus Pius (A.D. 161) and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 192), in Constantinople for Theodosius in A.D. 393 and Arcadius in A.D. 421.⁷

Monumental columns continued into late antiquity, and became popular in sixteenth century Europe following Pope Sixtus V's 1587-8 replacement of the absent statue of Trajan on top of his Column by a sculpture of a saint. Both Nelson's Column and the Monument in London are products of this popularity; the Monument was built in 1671 and Nelson's Column was built in 1840-1843.⁸

Trajan's Column itself

The most notable feature of the column is the decoration, a spiralling 200-metre-long frieze depicting images from the Dacian war.⁹ The unusual narrative of the frieze has been covered best by Richmond. This work will not analyse the frieze nor cover it in any detail, but rather focus on the purpose and meaning of the column itself.

How can we understand and interpret Trajan's column? Trajan's column has traditionally been described as a triumphal column, with its primary purpose being the commemoration of victory in the Dacian wars. It is perhaps most commonly studied for its frieze, unique in both style and content. However, they are by no

⁷ Hinz and Bourdon, 2006

⁸ Höcker, 2006b

⁹ Fear, 2015: 239

means the only ways to interpret the Column; it has a subtler purpose as a tomb, as well as a more easily understood aspect in glorifying the Emperor. The Column is often understood on its own, but to interpret its true purposes it must be thought of as part of a whole within its surroundings in Trajan's forum.

What is it for? Scholars disagree about the purpose of the column, and thus the context of the Column- especially the flanking Libraries, and how visible the Column would be from their upper stories. There are some issues with the translation of the inscription which gives the Column's official purpose, which are considered below.

The column is both art and architecture, memorial and grave marker. Very few of these purposes were conceived when the Column was first proposed, and they do not all come from the same originator. The Column was proposed by the Senate, built by Apollodorus, and designed to fit into a public space orchestrated by Trajan. These all play a part in the purpose of the column as built, and even after that the purpose grew; the frieze was designed, deliberately different from its surrounding imagery, the inside was possibly made accessible to the public, and the image of the column was spread around the empire on coins to symbolise the triumph of Trajan and the building done at his command. Then, at the death of the emperor, repurposed or realising a concealed earlier purpose, the column was made into Trajan's tomb.

This study aims to explore the many purposes and messages of Trajan's column and to demonstrate that it is a multipurpose monument and part of the ideological statement portrayed in the architecture of the wider context of the forum complex.

Hadrian's Column of Trajan?

There are three separate reasons for the Column being connected to Hadrian. None of them hold much water. The first is simple misunderstanding. Due to the concealment of the inscription on the column's base during its use as one wall of a church, Trajan's Column spent more than a century being called the Column of Hadrian. The Column was used as a bell tower until the church was destroyed in 1536.¹⁰

Fear notes that the column has sometimes been thought to be an afterthought to the forum, added by Hadrian in a similar way to the Temple of Trajan and Plotina. Fear cites Claridge 1993, but notes that Lepper and Frere's 1988 counterarguments hold strong.¹¹

There is a theory that the frieze on the column was added under Hadrian, but the only explanation for the absence of images of the Parthian war on the frieze is that it was completed prior to that war. Coins of A.D. 113 show the frieze, demonstrating that it was complete at the time the column was dedicated.¹²

¹⁰ Packer, 2001: 7, 11

¹¹ Fear, 2015: 239

¹² Beckmann, 2011: 221

Literary review

Modern

The multiple purposes of Trajan's column have not always been easily identifiable.

The work of Boni has been essential for confirming that Trajan's column was a tomb. Boni's archaeological report on Trajan's Column brought physical evidence to light. This confirmed previous theories that Trajan was interred below the column, and showed that he was not the only one- his wife was interred beside him, which Cassius Dio does not mention. Boni's archaeological report has been invaluable in this research for providing the details that confirm this use of the Column.

The artistic aspects of Trajan's Column are very much linked to its purposes as a war memorial and a propaganda piece. Richmond's analysis of the Column from an artistic perspective is unique. Richmond establishes how unusual the style of art on the column is, and places it in the context of Roman literature and illustration. The concept of the Column as an accurate or semi accurate depiction of everyday military life is where Richmond's work is invaluable. Richmond's argument that the frieze was not originally designed for the column allows the purposes of the column to be ordered chronologically, with the frieze and its inherent meanings coming later in the conception of the column. Richmond combines historical and art-historical approaches in his work on Trajan's column. His intent was to test the accuracy of the images depicted on the frieze, and his work has been corroborated by discoveries made since it was published.¹³

¹³ Richmond, 1982: 1

Ancient

There are few contemporary literary sources on the emperor Trajan. The contemporary writers Suetonius and Tacitus, do not cover this point in time, which leaves only Pliny and Trajan himself as contemporary literary sources. Of Trajan's work, only five words of the *Dacica* and selected letters to Pliny survive, and none of those refer to the Column. Thus, coinage, inscriptions and archaeological evidence play a key role in reconstructing history in this period.

Pliny the Younger's Panegyricus is a rare piece of contemporary literary evidence of Trajan, although naturally biased due to being composed as an homage and flattery piece. It was based on a speech given on the 1st of September A.D. 100, with the purpose of thanking Trajan as Pliny took up office as Consul. It predates the Column, being written shortly before the Dacian Wars began in A.D. 101. It is visibly and clearly designed to flatter Trajan, and thus demonstrates the ways in which he wished to be perceived, and the public image Trajan wanted. The Panygericus is important to this research as it provides a contemporary literary account of Trajanic propaganda to consider when discussing to the propagandistic purpose of the Column. Pliny writes before the establishment of the column, and so is not a source for the Column itself. The descriptions and flattery of Trajan as a modest and practical man, acclaimed for the accomplishments of his architects in Pliny's speech, are mirrored in the choice of scenes depicted on the column, which frame the war in practical and quotidian imagery.

There are few records as to what the Romans understood the column to have as its purpose. Cassius Dio is important to the research as contemporary source for many of the Column's purposes. He provides evidence for the column's purpose as a

monument to Trajan, a marker of the work in the forum and the height of the hill removed, as well as the use of Trajan's column as his tomb. Cassius Dio is also a valuable source for the near contemporary Roman opinion of Trajan; Dio was born about 50 years after Trajan's death, and wrote his 'Roman History' in the two decades following A.D. 200.

Aulus Gellius mentions Trajan's forum briefly in his writings. He describes the appearance of the forum, and quotes an inscription on the colonnade of the forum. His words allow the extent to which the nature of the Forum was a war trophy, built from the spoils of the Dacian wars, to be understood.¹⁴

Pseudo-Aurelius Victor wrote in the fourth century A.D., but due to the anonymity of the source not much is known about its creation. It is likely that this source received its information from earlier histories, which have not survived.

The one compulsory source text for Trajan's Column is the column's own dedicatory inscription. This explicitly says that the Column was given to Trajan by the Senate and People of Rome, to demonstrate the height of hill excavated for these works. This is invaluable to understand the official and declared purpose for the column, which can then be compared to the subtler purposes the Column also demonstrates. However, there is debate about the meaning and translation of the stated purpose of the column; see below.

The image of the column depicted on coins minted by Trajan and sent out across the empire spread the news of Trajan's beneficence. The most widespread propaganda imagery in Roman times is found on coins; as such, numismatics can tell us much

¹⁴ Gell. NA 13.25

about how the image of the Column spread its influence. This is used in this research to understand the propaganda purposes of the column on a wider stage, and to consider the column apart from its usual context.

Coverage

This dissertation is composed of two sections. The first section the purposes of the column already proposed, in both ancient sources and modern scholarship. This progresses from the physical purposes of height marker, viewpoint and tomb to the more ideological purposes of the column as a war memorial and as propaganda. The second section places the Column in context in Trajan's forum, considering its purpose as affected by that context, and considering how the celebratory purpose of the forum ties into the column's own imagery. The finances and resources claimed from Trajan's conquest of Dacia made the construction possible. Incorporated and portrayed in the structure are links to Trajan's predecessors (the Imperial forum is arguably a display initiated by Augustus, or perhaps Julius Caesar), one of the ways in which it conveys the image of Trajan as the great, good and powerful.

The nature and features of the column, and analysis of messages and the multiple purposes.



Figure 1: Southeast face of the Pedestal (with entrance and dedicatory inscription). Cichorius, 1896-1900 Plate II:

Analysing the Inscription on Trajan's Column

Fear notes that the dedicatory inscription above the door of the cella would be clearer to view than the carvings on the column. He is mistaken in supposing that the

dedication could have been from the emperor; he was not the giver of the monument, but the recipient, as the dedication makes clear.¹⁵

The translation of the dedicatory inscription on Trajan's Column is a subject of debate, as the wording of the line declaring the Column's purpose is not clear. It is, however, clearly a dedicatory inscription and not a funerary inscription or epitaph.

The two problems with the inscription are the *mons* question and the *tantis* question. The first is usually interpreted as a reference to the hills affected by the construction project (see below, Trajan's Column as a Height Marker) but Dudley records another option for the *mons* in question: the pile of marble and precious stones used for the building project. Dudley proposes that the use of 'mons' is the same term as that used by Juvenal to refer to materials 'probably' transported for the building of Trajan's Forum.¹⁶

The *tantis* question refers to part of the inscription which was damaged and is no longer readable. Settis¹⁷ and Packer¹⁸ discuss the precise meaning of CIL VI.960, and Stucchi¹⁹ inspects previous approaches to the missing letters.

The ILS gives the inscription in Appendix 1.1, but does not mark omissions as the EDCS does in Appendix 1.2, or EDR in Appendix 1.3. These, as well as expanding the abbreviations on the inscription, mark the letters between 'tant' and 'ibus' as a restoration of damaged text. In Appendix 1.2 and Appendix 1.3 the text is restored as

¹⁵ Fear, 2015: 243

¹⁶ Dudley, 1967: 136-7; Juv. Satires. III 254-61

¹⁷ Settis 1988.49

¹⁸ Packer 1997.117

¹⁹ Stucchi 1989.239-51

‘tantis operibus’, which is widely accepted. However, Stucchi (1989) proposes an alternate restoration, ‘tantis viribus’, which changes the meaning relatively little. Operibus, from opera, is a particularly versatile word covering effort, work, deed, and service.²⁰ Viribus, from vis (uis), is an equally versatile word meaning force, physical effort, violence, power, authority, ability, strength, resources.²¹ Beckmann gives the difference in meaning as ‘with such great labours’, rather than ‘for these great works’.²²

²⁰ Glare, 1976: 1251

²¹ Glare, 1982: 2074-6

²² Beckmann, 2011: 221

Trajan's Column as a Tomb

He was enrolled among the gods, and was the only one of all the emperors that was buried within the city. His bones, contained in a golden urn, lie in the forum which he himself built, under a pillar whose height is a hundred and forty-four feet.

Eutropius²³

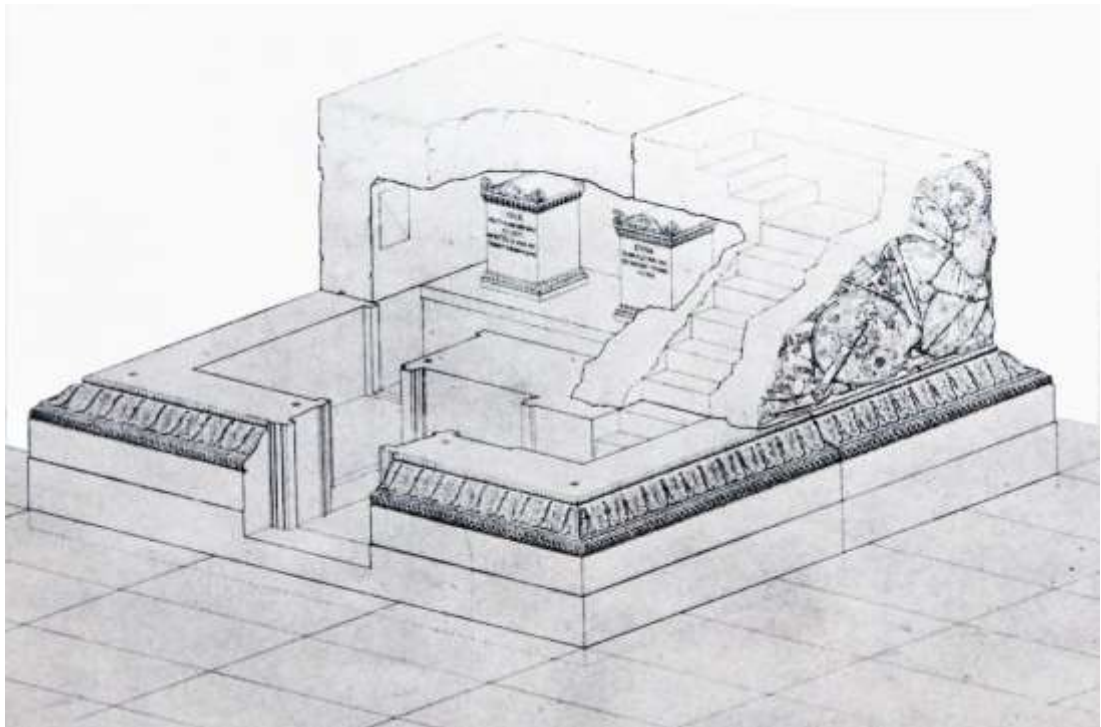


Figure 2: The Interior of The Pedestal, Boni 1907:5

²³ Eutr. 8.5

Trajan died in Cilicia in August A.D. 117, and his ashes were brought home by his wife. They were interred in the pedestal of Trajan's Column after a posthumous triumph. The ashes of his wife Pompeia Plotina, titled Augusta, were placed there after her death in A.D. 123.²⁴

The funerary function is attested by literary sources including Cassius Dio, Aurelius Victor and Eutropius. The sources addressing the use of Trajan's column as his and his wife's tomb from the ancient period are primarily Cassius Dio, in his Roman History. He wrote some 50 years after the fact, and may have received this information from the official archives of the emperor. Dio does not refer to the Column as a tomb, which suggests that was not the primary purpose even at the point of interment.

The bones of Trajan were deposited in his Column, and the Parthian Games, as they were called, continued for a number of years; but at a later date even this observance, like many others, was abolished.

Cassius Dio²⁵

'The ashes of his cremated body were borne back to Rome and interred in the Forum of Trajan under his column, and an image was placed above it, just as triumphators are

²⁴ Temporini-Gräfin Vitzthum, 2006.

Eck et al, 2006

²⁵ Dio Cass. 69.2.3

*accustomed to do, entering the city, with the senate
preceding and the army'*

Pseudo-Aurelius Victor ²⁶

It is not known whether the funerary purpose was a later addition or an original facet, but the later addition theory is the more likely of the two. This is because the fashion of the time and of the emperors was to create specific and elaborate tombs, like Augustus mausoleum, and to identify the deceased and their life achievements in an inscription on their grave marker. While the column does celebrate some of Trajan's achievements, it is by no means all of them, and the inscription on the column makes no reference to Trajan's death. This use of the Column was in keeping with the Roman tradition of funerary monuments. A funerary monument and a tomb were usually quite different. One of the better known Roman tombs would be the Mausoleum of Augustus.

Archaeological examination

The archaeologist Giacomo Boni examined the inside chamber of Trajan's column to determine whether this theory could be supported, and consequently found anchors in the stone walls where two urns would have been secured. Boni's 1907 archaeological analysis reported indications of fittings for two urns inside the column. Boni examined a door which had been plastered over in the second half of

²⁶ Epit. de Caes. 13.11

the eighteenth-century A.D. Uncovered, this led to an atrium and funerary chamber.²⁷

Boni found traces of a large funerary table, attributing its removal to the need for space during the Column's stint as a bell tower for the church of St Nicola de Columna. The holes drilled in the wall above the funerary chamber indicated to Boni that two urns had been kept in place on the table, which he believed to be those of Trajan and Plotina. Figure 4 shows Boni's reconstruction of what this may have looked like. The nearby presence of a temple in honour of Trajan and Plotina may corroborate that, as per the Roman custom of erecting a temple by a sepulchral monument. Boni concludes from this that the main purpose of the column was its use as a tomb.²⁸

Modern scholarship discussing the use of the column as a tomb does so primarily in passing; see Fear, who uses it to support his argument that the column is a monument to Trajan himself.

The cella below the shaft of the column was decorated with the spolia of the defeated enemy, a standard roman practice seen so clearly at Adamklissi, for the same victory. Fear argues that this has its focus clearly on the victorious Emperor. Fear cites the preparation of the cella within Trajan's lifetime as showing that the emperor wished his own commemoration to be entwined with his victories. There is no clear evidence showing that the cella was prepared as a tomb site during Trajan's lifetime,

²⁷ Boni. 1907: 2-3

²⁸ Boni. 1907: 3

and indeed its lack of tombstone, epigraph, or resemblance to the imperial tradition of grand mausoleums suggests otherwise.²⁹

Eck writes ‘His ashes were brought to Rome, and following a posthumous triumph they were entombed in the pedestal of the Trajan's Column’.³⁰ Scarre reports that the base of Trajan’s column contained several rooms, of which the innermost was Trajan’s tomb chamber, where his wife was also buried.³¹ Pompeia Plotina received the title Augusta in A.D. 105 or earlier, and in A.D. 106 Plotinopolis in Thrace was named after her. She was deified after, and associated with her nephew and adoptive son Hadrian as his *diva mater*.³² Scarre also reports that an urn of gold containing Trajan’s ashes was placed in the base of the column.³³

It is not known what happened to the urns of Trajan and Plotina. It is entirely possible that the urn chamber was sealed soon after the placement of the urns. Depending on rites which require access to the memorial, which could plausibly have been done in the main chamber of the column or outside the column, the urn chamber may have been sealed away to secure and protect its contents. This would indicate that the contents were removed later, and the chamber resealed.

The urns may have been removed at some point for safekeeping, they may have been reinterred at a separate gravesite, or they may have been stolen, as a pair of

²⁹ Fear, 2015: 243

³⁰ Eck 2006

³¹ Scarre, 1995: 92-93

³² Temporini-Gräfin Vitzthum, 2006

³³ Scarre, 1995: 97

golden urns would be an attractive target for thieves. They may have been removed during the switch to Christianity under Constantine, or as part of the repurposing of the Column by the Church. It is worth noting that Trajan was allegedly brought into the Christian heaven. Whatever happened to them, they were not in the chamber when it was unsealed and opened, and there is no mention in ancient sources of them having been removed. If they were removed for their own safety or for a political purpose, this may have been mentioned in writings of that time.

An unusual choice

The choice of the Column instead of a mausoleum is unusual, as most of the previous emperors were buried in the Mausoleum of Augustus.³⁴ The inscription on the pedestal of the column is a dedication, the lack of funerary inscription on the column suggests it was not originally intended to be a tomb. The practice of funerary inscriptions was highly important to the Romans, especially in this period, when a long and flattering rendition of the deceased's life achievements was expected. Nerva was the last emperor buried in the Mausoleum Augusti, which puts Trajan as the start of the change.³⁵ Boni translates Dio 69.2 differently, explicitly attributing the placement of Trajan's bones in the Column as an action of Hadrian.³⁶ As Hadrian is generally credited with burying Trajan's ashes in the column, it is likely the change is his doing. It may be an attempt for precedent in emperors having singular tombs,

³⁴ Höcker, 2006a

³⁵ Elver and Eck, 2006

³⁶ Boni. 1907: 2

as Hadrian built his own mausoleum later. The Mausoleum Augusti was built in A.D. 28 and the Mausoleum Hadriani in A.D.

It is notable that Trajan's death was announced shortly after the announcement of Hadrian's adoption. Scarre discusses the belief that Trajan's wife Plotina either orchestrated the adoption or faked it.³⁷ As such, a clear and visible show of filial piety would have been necessary for Hadrian. The Forum would be the most visible place in Rome, which may explain why the Column was used as a tomb. That does not, however, explain the further divergence of tradition that is any burial within Roman city limits.

Burial inside the bounds of Rome

Trajan's ashes were placed in his column, which stood inside the Pomerium, the sacred city boundary within which burial was banned. Previously, imperial cremations and burials took place outside the Pomerium, in the Campus Martius. Even Julius Caesar, who while he lived was voted the privilege of a tomb inside the pomerium, was buried outside that line, in his family tomb. This was this was supposedly justified by the traditional right of those who have had triumphs to be buried within the city.³⁸ This right, however, is implausible; why else would Julius Caesar, himself one who had held a triumph, need to be explicitly voted that right? Gesemann contends that the pomerium at the time excluded both the column and

³⁷ Scarre, 1995: 98-99

³⁸ Beard et al., 2002: 180-1

Basilica Ulpia, and that Eutropius is both unaware of the pomerium's exact course and speaking more for effect than for technical detail.³⁹

³⁹ Beckmann, 2011: 221

Trajan's Column as a Height Marker

*'For that entire section had been hilly and he had cut it down
for a distance equal to the height of the column, thus making
the Forum level'*

Cassius Dio ⁴⁰

The height marker commemorates the ingenuity of Rome, and the prowess of its technology and engineers. The visual reminder of the conquest of the landscape is imposing even before this purpose is mentioned, but this adds another level of understanding to that awe. The visualisation of the sheer mass of land removed would impose an understanding of the capabilities of Rome, its people and its emperor. This is achieved by combining the experienced height of the tower with the information given in its inscription, and cannot be understood without that context. In this way, it allows the awe of the column to be experienced a second time; once when it is first seen, and a second time when it is understood in its context.

The column was originally intended as a marker for the creation of the forum of Trajan, which demonstrates how intrinsic to the context it is. Richmond believes that it was intended to illustrate the specific height of the hill that was removed to create the forum. The inscription on Trajan's column refers to this feat as decreed by the Roman senate, and Cassius Dio also gives this as an original purpose of the column. The remaining part of the hill was shored up by the tiered structure of Trajan's markets, in a feat of engineering not previously demonstrated in Rome. This is part

⁴⁰ Dio Cass. 68.16.3

of a tradition of altering the landscape to express power, whether deliberately or as a side effect of using that power.

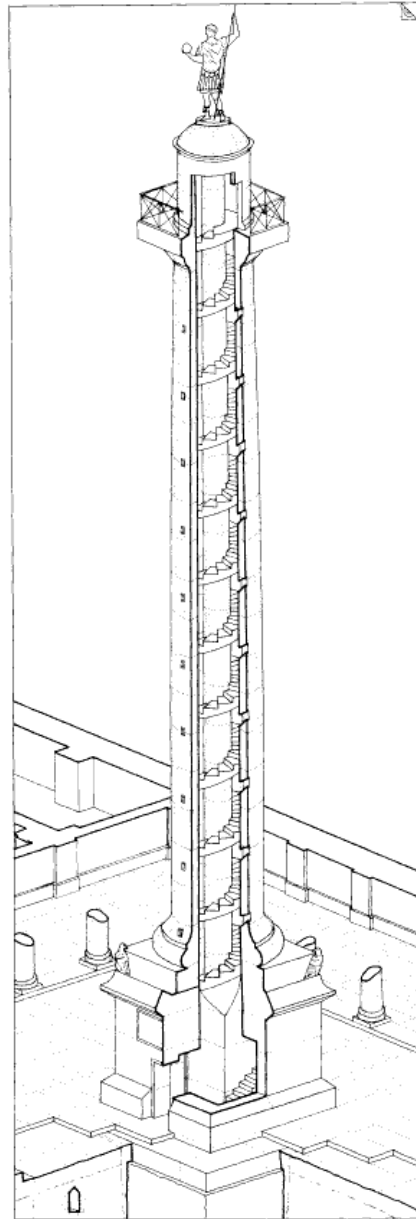


Figure 3: Cutaway drawing of Trajan's Column. Lancaster, 1999:425

Eck theorises that the height refers to the saddle of two hills which met where Trajan's forum now is; he identifies these as the Quirinal and Capitol hills.⁴¹

This function gave shape to the column; without the intent to mark a set height, the other purposes of the column do not require a specific shape, and an arch or other memorial shape would have been as suited to purpose as the column. Without the height requirement, this object would have been neither as awe inspiring or as technically challenging. Tall structures were rare in the ancient world and did not come in such narrow shapes; visually it would have seemed unsupported. The libraries either side of the column would have been tall and sturdy buildings, one or two stories tall.⁴² The top of Trajan's column would have reached above them, adding a visual contrast which would have emphasised the column's height.

Boni's archaeological explorations led him to conclude that there was no great hill at the point of the Column, in agreement with ancient sources which imply enough space at that point to encamp armies. He cites both Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus at this point.⁴³ Boni analyses the inscription on the column and concludes that it refers not to a hill removed, but to 'how much in elevation the hill...had been raised up'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Höcker, C. et al. 2006

⁴² Lancaster, 1999

⁴³ Boni. 1907: 4

⁴⁴ Boni. 1907: 6. See Appendix 2.3.

Trajan's Column as a viewpoint

*'He ... raised in the Forum a large column ... to show from
above the work done in order to build the Forum.'*

Cassius Dio⁴⁵



Figure 4: Coin 359, depicting Trajan's Column. Cohen 1882:56

There is a spiral staircase inside the column, leading to the apex; it would have given a fantastic view over the forum complex, and the city of Rome too. IT is believed that, like the Column of Marcus Aurelius, Trajan's Column was used as a viewing tower by pilgrims in the 12th century.⁴⁶ Boni believes that the staircase was made for

⁴⁵ Dio. Cass. 68.16.3, per the translation in Boni, 1907:1

⁴⁶ Hinz and Bourdon, 2006

the purpose of obtaining a view of the city.⁴⁷ Boni translates Dio's account of the Column differently, giving what is usually rendered as 'to show' or 'to declare' as 'to show from above the work done in order to build the forum'.⁴⁸ This is the only purpose of the column that requires physical interaction with it.

The staircase was carved into the marble blocks, which were ridiculously well planned and an example of how elegant and brilliant Roman engineering could be. There are small windows carved through the marble, allowing light to reach the staircase. It's not clear how often this function was used, nor who could use it.

Trajan's column as a viewpoint is not a commonly addressed aspect. Ancient sources do not often mention it, so we must assume it was not commonly accessible as a viewpoint in ancient times either. Modern sources discussing this are similarly brief; Lancaster mentions it in passing as part of the discussion of the architectural design of the stairs.

The staircase inside the tower is a rare example of a spiral staircase in Roman times. As Lancaster notes, the spiral staircase was more popular in provincial areas and places where space needed to be conserved or there was little available. This generally implied a less expensive home. The stairs leading up to the viewpoint were made in an unusual degree division, which as Lancaster notes was a much more difficult architectural achievement than the more usual division.⁴⁹ The stairs were cut into the marble drums which formed the column and the margin for error was

⁴⁷ Boni. 1907:4.

⁴⁸ Boni. 1907:1,6

⁴⁹ Lancaster, 1999

minuscule. The light to climb by was supplied by the sun; tiny windows were cut through the marble to the outside, carefully concealed in the carvings. This suggests that the windows and the stairs they lit were conceived prior to the carved frieze- and that the frieze was designed to accommodate these slits. Thus, the purpose of the column as a viewpoint precedes its use as a carrier for these images.

It is entirely possible that the staircase was intended merely as a maintenance route, but several factors indicate otherwise. Firstly, the architectural nuance in the design of the stairs would have been significantly more difficult than building the stairs to a common plan, which indicates that there was purpose or benefit in following the technically elaborate plan and that it would be seen and experienced in a context where that skill could be appreciated. Secondly, if the stairs were primarily for rare maintenance use they would not need to be impressively lit. The benefit for the maintenance worker would not have been worth the skilled work to make the windows, or the effort needed to design the frieze around them. Thirdly, the statue of Trajan at the top was more impressive when viewed up close, according to Lancaster. From the distance of a ground bound viewer, a seven-foot statue so far above the ground would look similarly unimpressive as a person stood on top of the column. They would be admirable more for their lofty position than any detail evident in their appearance. That the statue would be far more impressive up close suggests that it was intended to be viewed by a relatively nearby audience.⁵⁰

Fear states that visitors could walk up the spiral staircase inside the column to the viewpoint carried at the summit of the column, emerging to a view of the forum

⁵⁰ Lancaster 1999

complex, itself a victory monument, which Fear notes resembled the headquarters building of a Roman legionary fortress.⁵¹

The top of the column would have granted a bird's eye view of the forum of Trajan, and possibly the nearby Markets of Trajan. It may have granted a view of further Rome. While it probably allowed a viewer to see the parts of Rome on the hills around it, it is not possible to reconstruct how far that vision may have gone; the extent as to which nearby buildings would have impeded the view is not known.

Access

The view from the top of the column would have been a rare one, especially in terms of who could access it. The staircase was wide enough to fit two people abreast, and as it was situated in the biggest forum of the city plenty of people would have come by the column each day. It is unclear how easy it was to gain access however.

According to Packer, the entrance was originally fitted with a pair of bronze doors.⁵² In modern times, the column is sealed with a metal gate, although in the 1800s it was in regular use as a viewpoint. While the open access to the viewpoint is a possibility, no graffiti or other signs of heavy use are noted inside the column and the stairs themselves do not show heavy wear.

If the use of the column as a funerary monument was open, it may have affected access to the viewpoint. The stairs leading up to the top of the tower are accessed

⁵¹ Fear, 2015: 244

⁵² Packer 2001:11

from the base, and open access to them could have posed a security risk to the ashes in their golden urns, and any funerary or religious items kept with them.

This may have resulted in restrictions to access, if access to the interior of the column automatically resulted in access to the tomb, or access to the viewpoint may have been granted only to those who were permitted to visit the tomb, which changes the meaning of the viewpoint slightly; the bird's eye view of the city and of Trajan's forum being granted only to those who came to pay respects to him, or barred entirely from visit upon the death of its commissioning emperor.

The effect of the viewpoint would be to inspire awe in the viewer, to impress with the vision of Rome stretching out before them. It would allow a view of the whole of the Trajan's forum complex and its interconnected aesthetics. The viewer would be impressed with an understanding of the height of the column and other features of its ingenuity and technical complexity and thus the skill and power that Rome had exerted to build it. The elevated position would also have invoked a view comparable to that of the gods, and placed a statue of Trajan in key position to see and rule over Rome; a strong and potent display of the Emperor's power.

An Eagle on top of the Column?

Whether the column was topped by an eagle or a statue is a debated matter, but the statue is far more probable. Richmond describes the column as 'crowned by an eagle'.⁵³ Fear dismisses the idea that the column was surmounted by an eagle, and

⁵³ Richmond, 1982: p2

suggests that the capping statue of Trajan proves that it was designed to celebrate primarily the emperor's achievements, rather than Rome's.⁵⁴ Packer reports workmen who placed the bronze St Paul atop the Column discovered the feet of the statue of Trajan still up there, and the head of the statue in fill not far from the base of the monument.⁵⁵

The eagle depicted atop the column on some coins is strange, but it is possible the column was topped with an eagle statue prior to the Emperor's death. Cohen's *Medailles Imperiales* has many depictions of Trajan's column on coinage topped by eagles. Number 359, however, depicts the column with clear base ornaments and spiral markings, topped with a statue.⁵⁶ This suggests that the use of an eagle is meant to connect Trajan and the eagle, which appears on military standards. This in turn may connect to the column's placement; Höcker et al. believe the column was erected where the standards would be in a military camp.

The statue of Trajan may have been connected to the image of Trajan reported by Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, which was carried in his posthumous triumph.⁵⁷ Garzetti believes that Trajan 'accepted only two statues'⁵⁸ which agrees with the concept that the bronze statue of Trajan atop the Column was not added at Trajan's behest and perhaps not during his lifetime. On the other hand, Garzetti believes that Trajan

⁵⁴ Fear, 2015 243

⁵⁵ Packer, 2001: 14

⁵⁶ Cohen 1882:55

⁵⁷ Epit. de Caes. 13.11

⁵⁸ Garzetti, 1974: 312.

denied 'tributes of homage in the Senate', and what is Pliny's *Panegyricus* if not that? And that we know is the transcript of a speech Pliny the Younger gave in the Senate. As such, this may be a matter of appearance and not of reality, a show of modesty rather than a statement to obey.

Trajan's Column as a War Memorial

*'and even if he did delight in war, nevertheless he was
satisfied when success had been achieved, a most bitter foe
overthrown and his countrymen exalted'*

Cassius Dio ⁵⁹

Trajan's Column as a War Memorial is a purpose which appears often in modern scholarship, but rarely in ancient sources. It does however act as a record of the Dacian Wars. The column was very innovative in both form and subject, and it has had a major and lasting effect on the presentation of warfare in public art. Fear quotes Jon Coulston as saying the column is the most influential and published single monument in Roman art and architecture.⁶⁰

Richmond asserts that the scenes were not applied to the monument until after the wars were over and the column had already been voted for a different purpose, and that purpose was not as a war memorial.⁶¹ Richmond states that the scroll, the spiral frieze, was not originally designed for the column. He believes that the scenes are unconnected to the original designed purpose of the column, which was to indicate the height of earth removed to build Trajan's forum, where the column stood.

Richmond points out that they are intimately connected to the second and third conceived purposes of the column, which he puts as a War memorial 'crowned by an

⁵⁹ Dio Cass. 68.7.5

⁶⁰ Fear, 2015: 239-240

⁶¹ Richmond, 1982: 4

eagle' and the third when the chamber at the base of the column was set to hold the ashes of the emperor and his wife.⁶²

Fear believes that the original message intended by the creators of the column has been distorted over time by later audiences. The column has been regarded as a definitive statement as to how war should be commemorated, as seen in many later imitations. Fear argues that the original purpose of the column was to celebrate Trajan's victories in Dacia, commissioned as part of a far wider Imperial propaganda display. Fear believes this focused on glorifying the person and conquests of the emperor.⁶³ Fear is insistent that the Column's frieze is a monument to Imperial glory above all - but rather, it should be understood as a monument to the glory of the Roman Empire.⁶⁴

The scroll gives continuity to the artwork, and the scenes are composed from sketches made in the war area, as demonstrated by the precision of the details of both hosts and the objects around them.⁶⁵

Richmond argues that the images on the frieze are copies of sketches made by a war artist. Richmond compares the scenes on Trajan's columns with pictures done by journalist-artists or war artists, and criticises the transfer of the flat image to the three dimensional stone.⁶⁶ Fear criticises Richmond's theory that the images on the column

⁶² Richmond, 1982: 2

⁶³ Fear, 2015: 240

⁶⁴ Fear, 2015: 245

⁶⁵ Richmond, 1982: 3-4

⁶⁶ Richmond, 1982: p5

came from a war-artist's work as 'a fanciful and anachronistic notion' and is clear in saying that minor details in the spiral show that the creator of the spiral 'was not familiar with minutiae of the Roman army'.⁶⁷ I would note that these may well be the minor errors Richmond attributes to miscomprehension between the sculptor and the original sketches.

The spiral nature of this decoration is unusual, as Richmond points out. Horizontal bands of mages upon columns are common, but spirals are not. The arrangement of the relief is not the most telling narrative that could have been composed, but the effect it has may have been familiar to Romans from illustrated books- and the column was sandwiched between two libraries. Richmond compares the column to the effect of Juvenal's *Satires* and Petronius' *Cena Trimalchius*, for their composition of a series of disconnected scenes. The minor, everyday scenes on the column place the glory in its own context, and by sheer weight of numbers give rationality and common sense to the glory. Understanding the original audience of the column, their perspectives and their reactions, is highly important. Fear believes this also highlights deliberate decisions in presentation of war and the commanding emperor.⁶⁸

The form of a frieze as a scroll presents a narrative, with Roman troops always depicted as marching up the scroll, carrying the viewer's eyes with them, left to right, the same direction they would read. This also conveyed a narrative of progress 'towards a fixed and triumphant goal'. The narrative, Fear believes, is most likely to

⁶⁷ Fear, 2015: 242

⁶⁸ Richmond, 1982: 2-3. and Fear, 2015: 240

be Trajan's Dacica, the emperor's own account of these wars, now sadly lost. Fear believes this was due to Imperial vanity and authority over the complex.⁶⁹ On the frieze, Trajan is depicted repeatedly, blessing his troops and all pervasive. Fear compares this identification of the emperor with his troops as unusual, but not novel, comparing it with depictions of Caesar's Gallic Wars, which Trajan's Dacica is speculated to have echoed heavily and deliberately.⁷⁰

Trajan's column combines the victory with the hard work which made it possible, and portrays the Emperor as a responsible Commander in Chief. The column's role as a memorial to that army is achieved in recording their labour, and the 'patient devotion to everyday duty' which formed the ideal of Imperial responsibility.

Rather than the traditional approach of glorying heroism through specific incidents, most of the scenes on the column depict the army's mundane activities, offering quotidian military life to be memorialised. The most visible part of the column depicts the crossing of the Danube, an address by Trajan, and a fort building scene. Even this begins over six metres above ground level, making detail viewing difficult. The carvings on the column are also both shallow and highly detailed, adding to the difficulty of close inspection.⁷¹

The Column of Trajan differs strongly from the Column of Marcus Aurelius, which portrays more of 'the tumult and horror of war than the methods by which it was

⁶⁹ Fear, 2015: 240-241

⁷⁰ Fear, 2015: 244

⁷¹ Fear, 2015 241-2

waged.⁷² Trajan's column shows war and grandeur, contrasting with the later Column's focus on death and misery, as well as the contrast between the classicising style of the first and the realistic, graphic style of the second.⁷³

The Column's unheroic, unusual style may have been designed to present the army as the hero of the campaign, Fear cites Richmond, but Fear remains unconvinced that the ancient column was 'not primarily designed to glorify the emperor'.⁷⁴ Fear is ignoring the heavy association of Trajan with the army; it is not unreasonable to suppose that glorifying Trajan's army brought glory an Emperor who had risen to power through the army.

Fear notes that the column's portrayal of sustained success does not convey the difficulties and the perhaps-failure of the first Dacian war. Fear speculates that the column may be meant to express Trajan's concern for his troops, in the vein of his predecessor Domitian, popular with the troops, who made the foundation of Trajan's own power. Fear clarifies that this purpose is carefully curated, balancing the demonstration of Trajan's close relationship with his troops with the careful judgement of senatorial mood, and swaying of senatorial opinion which Trajan did so astutely.⁷⁵

The depiction of mundane activities familiar to the citizen audience of the Column, being done by the army, would have helped them identify with the army, restoring 'a

⁷² Richmond, 1982: 5

⁷³ Dudley, 1967: 192

⁷⁴ Richmond, 1982: 1; Fear, 2015: 243

⁷⁵ Fear, 2015 244-5

sense of identity between soldier and civilian, which was gradually being eroded.’ These also help reinforce the Emperor’s identity as not a tyrant or a dictator, removing some of the sense of alienation between the groups.⁷⁶ The repeated emphasis on everyday labour in the column also fosters the sense of all work contributing to the grandeur of Rome, and emotionally connecting the viewer to the Dacian victories. Fear makes the point that by the time the column was erected, legionaries would have lived and been recruited far from Rome. Most of the audience would have little contact with the army, although some form of military service remained customary in the *cursus honorum*. Fear presents this information to support his argument that the Column would have allowed viewers to vicariously participate in the conquest.⁷⁷ Scenes on Trajan’s column depict Roman soldiers enacting a distinctively Roman ritual of military sacrifice far from the city, which displays the frontier as distinctly Roman.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Fear, 2015: 245

⁷⁷ Fear, 2015: 243

⁷⁸ Beard et al., 2002: 327

Trajan's Column as Propaganda

*'When it comes to public building,
you do it on a grand scale'*
Pliny ⁷⁹

Trajan was remembered as 'the best of princes', hailed by the Roman Senate as *Optimus Princeps*. The superlative '*optimus*' was previously recorded only for Jupiter himself.⁸⁰ Scarre notes that as far as the fourth century A.D., the Senate still prayed that new emperors might be 'more fortunate than Augustus and better than Trajan'.⁸¹ This serves to illustrate Trajan's reputation and fame.

Trajan was attentive to his public image. Pliny celebrates Trajan as 'sparing in building (*parcus in aedificando*), but liberal in public magnificence'.⁸² The virtue of publica magnificentia, building for the state and public good, is distinct from aedificatio, the pursuit of building for its own sake, a type of self-indulgence.⁸³

⁷⁹ Plin. Pan. 51

⁸⁰ Dudley, 1967: 136

⁸¹ Scarre, 1995: 97

⁸² Thomas 29; Plin. Pan. 51

⁸³ Thomas, 2007: 29

Garzetti describes Trajan as an 'Emperor particularly sensitive to the demands of contemporary opinion'.⁸⁴

Trajan ruled from A.D. 98 to A.D. 117. Garnsey and Saller quote Pliny to emphasise the difference between Trajan's Principate and the recent 'dominatio' of Domitian, but use this to contrast the image with the reality; Garnsey et al 'Trajan's senate had no more authority or influence than Domitian's and was given no weightier matters to discuss'.⁸⁵ Garnsey et al describe Trajan as 'delicately paternalistic' in dealing with the senate, to contrast with Domitian's 'openly autocratic'.⁸⁶ Cassius Dio says 'he was loved by all and dreaded by none save the enemy'.⁸⁷

Garzetti describes Trajan as an 'autocrat of the Augustan model', especially in his dealings with the Senate, which Garzetti describes as 'gracious concessions'.⁸⁸

Trajan controlled his image in the same way Augustus did, making sure his actions appeared to adhere to 'the tradition, basically unchanged, of the Principate', as

⁸⁴ Garzetti, 1974: 309

⁸⁵ Garnsey and Saller, 1982: 5; Plin. Pan. 45

⁸⁶ Garnsey and Saller, 1982: 5

⁸⁷ Dio Cass. 68.7.3

⁸⁸ Garzetti, 1974: 309

Garzetti calls it.⁸⁹ Trajan's principal public works were done in Augustan style austere classicism.⁹⁰

Trajan's own career was a typical progression of the *Cursus Honorem* and as such was a drastic contrast to Augustus' highly unusual early career; as Octavian, he almost delighted in bending the strict prerequisites of Roman ranks.⁹¹ Trajan as a soldier; Garzetti covers his career in brief. Garzetti describes Trajan's 'modest behaviour', remarking that the Emperor 'behaved almost as if he were on par with the commanders of the legions'.⁹² Scarre discusses Trajan's apparent 'willingness to bear hardship and danger along with the soldiers under his command'⁹³

Garnsey describes Trajan as 'a genuine soldier-emperor' and later describes Augustus as 'discreetly asserting the inseparability of emperor and state', which is a fitting description of Trajan's image propagated here.⁹⁴

Ideologically, the column associates the strength, power and skill used to build this with the power and reputation of empire and emperor, using that power to supplement the power of the empire in the viewer's imagination.

⁸⁹ Garzetti, 1974: 311

⁹⁰ Thomas, 2007: 32

⁹¹ Garzetti, 1974: 310-1

⁹² Garzetti, 1974: 311

⁹³ Scarre, 1995. 95

⁹⁴ Garnsey and Saller, 1982: 10, 12

The ideology of war and conquest in the column and in the forum relates to Augustus' claim to have subdued the world (*orbis terrarum*) as recounted in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* and Virgil's description of '*imperium sine fine*', an Empire without bounds. Garnsey reports that the ideal of world dominion was both traditional and Republican, tied in with the Republican virtue of '*gloria*', which became solely the domain of the Emperors in later periods.⁹⁵

Scholars generally agree that Trajan's public image and victories are extremely remarkable. 'Among [Augustus'] successors only Trajan waged wars of conquest on anything approaching a comparable scale'⁹⁶ 'One of the greatest and most renowned of Roman emperors' 'pushed the frontiers of Rome to their widest extent'⁹⁷ 'warfare was something at which Trajan excelled'⁹⁸. This is due to careful management of his image and deliberate links with his predecessors.

Trajan's own account of the Dacian wars did not survive. Only five words survive, but it is believed that it would have been the literary equivalent of Trajan's Column, a practical and quotidian account. It is believed to have been based on Trajan's daily journal, and may have been inspired by Julius Caesar's account of the Gallic Wars.

⁹⁵ Garnsey and Saller, 1982:9

⁹⁶ Garnsey and Saller, 1982: 8

⁹⁷ Scarre, 1995: 90

⁹⁸ Scarre, 1995: 95

Placing Trajan's Column in the context of Trajan's Forum

*'Buildings which suit your eternity as much as your fame and
will have as much utility as beauty'*

Pliny⁹⁹

Trajan's forum was the last and largest Imperial forum built in Rome. In many ways, it is a beautiful piece of propaganda and marketing, celebrating and elevating the Roman Emperor Trajan. He was successfully remembered as an ideal emperor for many, many centuries. Trajan's Forum comprises the forum itself, the Basilica Ulpia, two libraries, Trajan's Column, and the forum temple. The Markets of Trajan are attached to one side, and the other Imperial fora connect to it. The Forum complex was completed in 112BC, and was built by the architect Apollodorus. Its construction involved the removal of half of a hill and was an extremely large undertaking, even by the standards of Imperial construction.

Trajan's column existed as a piece of monumental architecture within its context as part of Trajan's forum. The Column in its original setting was part of a wider message. The Column and the Forum reinforce each other's messages. Propaganda, military memorial for the Dacian war, ideological statement celebrating the strength and unity of the empire. Displays of beneficence, Roman conspicuous charity and largesse. Höcker et al. believe the column stood at the place where the standards

⁹⁹ Plin. Ep. 10.41

would be, following the comparison of the layout of the forum to a Roman military camp centre.

The column was dedicated May A.D. 113, the forum 1 Jan 112, which suggests that the column was not originally an intrinsic part of the Forum. Dudley describes the front court of the Forum as 'an improved version of the Forum of Augustus'.¹⁰⁰ Dudley describes this forum as 'virtually a city centre in itself'.

The exact layout of the forum, and the reconstruction of the buildings around the column, is a matter of debate, but the column was definitely situated between the two buildings of Trajan's library.

Fear believes that the column originally formed a minor part of the larger commemorative complex of Trajan's Forum, commemorating the Dacian wars of A.D. 102-109 and A.D. 105-106. The column in its original surroundings would have been part of a shared iconography illustrating the Dacian wars.¹⁰¹ Scarre notes that the iconography of the Forum is continued on the column, in a 'single grand pictorial scheme'¹⁰²

Fear mentions that in its original time, the column would have 'perhaps' been viewed from points in the two flanking libraries, and suggests that the original colouring would have aided comprehension, but this does not survive today. Fear clarifies that there would be no way to follow the spiralling frieze from ground level,

¹⁰⁰ Dudley, 1967: 136

¹⁰¹ Fear, 2015: 239

¹⁰² Scarre, 1995 92-93

and there was no continuous viewpoint at a higher level.¹⁰³ Scarre reports that the Column and frieze were designed to be seen from the upper floors of buildings around it.

The spoils from Dacia, as well as restoring the Empire's finances from the damage done by Domitian, paid for projects including the Column of Trajan, the Forum Traianii, Trajan's Markets, the Baths of Trajan, the Aqua Traiana, and the Naumachia Traiani, a sea battle amphitheatre.¹⁰⁴ The imagery of the Dacian wars and the victorious emperor and empire resonate through all of them.

Aulus Gellius described the roof of the colonnade of Trajan's forum as covered in images of military standards and gilded horse statues, below which the message 'from the spoils of war' was inscribed. This brings a spectator's attention to the benefits the conquests have provided for the population.

Dudley describes the Forum of Trajan as 'the supreme achievement of city-planning in Rome', the last of the imperial fora integrated with its predecessors. The differences lie in scale, and in plan. The focal point of the temple is abandoned, as the Temple of Trajan is a Hadrianic addition.¹⁰⁵ The colossal temple added on to Trajan's forum by Hadrian celebrated the deified Plotina and Trajan, in the tradition of temples to deified Emperors.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Fear, 2015: 242

¹⁰⁴ Scarre, 1995: 92-93

¹⁰⁵ Dudley, 1967: 135

¹⁰⁶ Beard et al., 2002: 253

Trajan's forum was heavily visited, and after the destruction of the library of Alexandria the Bibliotheca Ulpia was considered the greatest library in the world; this was the library around the Column, and as such the column would be associated with both learning and the great civilised and literary achievements of Rome. As of 600 A.D., the libraries were still used for public recitals. Packer speculates that the eventual destruction of the forum of Trajan was due to an earthquake on April 25th A.D. 801.¹⁰⁷

The Great Trajanic Frieze

The Great Trajanic Frieze was the over thirty-metre-long sculpture mounted on the rear wall of the Basilica Ulpia, facing onto the plaza the column stood in. The only surviving fragments of this are some carved captive Dacians, and a depiction of the emperor riding in battle, recalling Alexander the Great. This frieze would have been far more easily visible to the audience and thus more prominent in their minds.¹⁰⁸

The Great Frieze and the column are drastically different in their depiction of the Dacian Wars, and the visual contrast would have emphasised to the viewer both the glory of the empire and the effort and power of the Roman military.

¹⁰⁷ Packer, 2001: 2, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Fear, 2015: 241

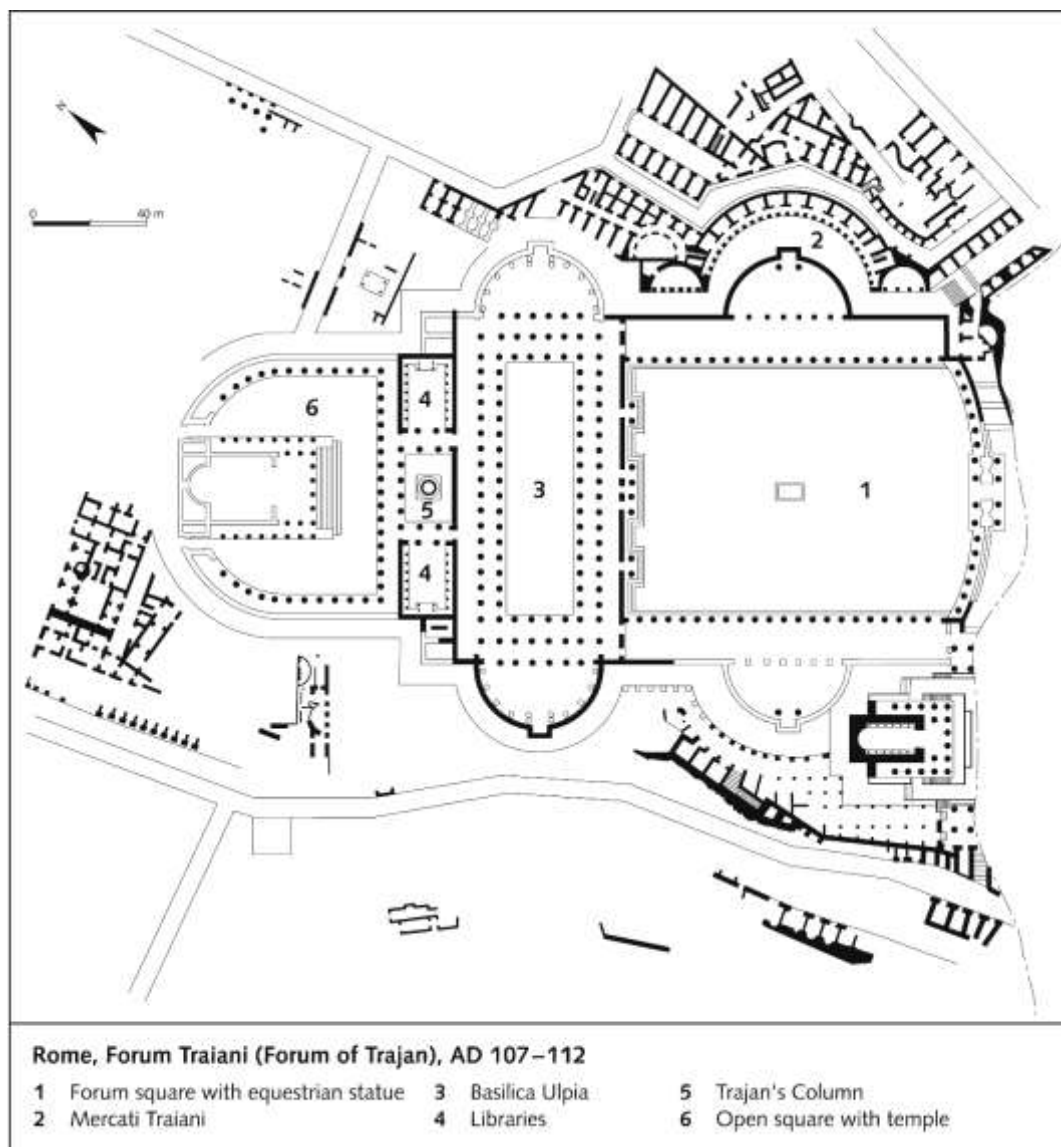


Figure 5: Plan of the Forum of Trajan. Höcker et al. 2006

In Conclusion: What is the primary message and purpose of the Column?

The conclusions drawn in this study provide a new understanding of Trajan's column as a multipurpose object, but are limited by the decision to omit detailed explorations of the ideology in the frieze of Trajan's Column.

Trajan's column has many purposes and messages to convey and is part of the ideological statement portrayed in the architecture of the wider context of the forum complex. It is a monument with a multi-layered meaning, rather than a simple purpose. The most visible message is one of grandeur, expressing imperial power and the ability of the Roman army, linking them to Trajan as a soldier-emperor, and securing its association to him in its use as his tomb. I do not agree that it has a primary function as a war memorial, although that is certainly a strong element. The true primary purpose of the column is laid out in the inscription, and ties together all the purposes discussed here.

Trajan's Column was built to celebrate the work done in making the Forum of Trajan; not only the physical changes, but the wars that financed it, the power of Rome to make that possible and the Emperor who led it. The aspect of propaganda shows the power of Rome, Emperor and the victory in the Dacian Wars; the war aspect shows the achievements of the Roman army and their soldier-emperor; the height marker is a physical representation of the construction of the forum; the viewpoint allows the forum to be seen in whole, displaying it and the city that

surrounds it; lastly, the forum surrounding it reflects its imagery back on the Column and magnifies the message.

Future research possibilities in this direction include the comparison of Trajan and Augustus as propaganda figures. This would involve considering questions such as: How far does Trajan's public image parallel Augustus? What lessons does Trajan draw from Augustus? Comparing the Princeps and the Optimus Princeps would be illuminating, as the two best-remembered Emperors in Rome have similar propaganda strategies and public faces.

Another route would be exploring Trajan's column in the context of ideological architecture. This could involve comparing the Forum of Trajan to Augustus' forum, and the Column of Trajan's relation to the Adamklissi monument in Dacia. The Ara Pacis or the Column of Marcus Aurelius are comparable to Trajan's Column for complexity of meaning in ideological architecture.

Appendices

Appendix 1: CIL VII 960

Appendix 1.1: Latin inscription on Trajan's Column, ILS 294 Dessau, 1892:77

senatus populusque Romanus | imp. Caesari divi Nervae f.
Nervae | Traiano Aug. Germ. Dacico, pontif. | maximo, trib.
pot. XVII, imp. VI, cos. VI p.p. | ad declarandum, quantae
altitudinis | mons et locus tantis operibus sit egestus.

Appendix 1.2: Latin inscription on Trajan's Column, EDCS Epigraphik-Datenbank
Clauss / Slaby

Senatus populusque Romanus / Imp(eratori) Caesari divi
Nervae f(ilio) Nervae / Traiano Aug(usto) Germ(anico)
Dacico pontif(ici) / maximo trib(unicia) pot(estate) XVII
imp(eratori) VI co(n)s(uli) VI p(atri) p(atriae) / ad
declarandum quantae altitudinis / mons et locus tant[is
oper]ibus sit egestus

Appendix 1.3: Latin inscription on Trajan's Column. EDR-EDR/ EAGLE

Senatus populusque Romanus
Imp(eratori) Caesari divi Nervae f(ilio) Nervae
Traiano Aug(usto) Germ(anico) Dacico, pontif(ici)

maximo, trib(unicia) pot(estate) $\overline{XVII}$, imp(eratori) $\overline{VI}$,
co(n)s(uli) $\overline{VI}$, p(atri) p(atriae),

5 ad declarandum, quanta^e altitudinis

mons et locus tant[is oper]ibus sit egestus.

Appendix 1.4: Latin inscription on Trajan's Column. Parker 2001:75

SENATVS • POPVLVSQVE • ROMANVS

IMP • CAESARI • DIVI • NERVAE • F • NERVAE

TRAIANO • AVG • GERM • DACICO • PONTIF

MAXIMO • TRIB • POT • XVII • IMP • VI • COS • VI • P • P

ADDECLARANDVM • QVANTAE • ALTITVDINIS

MONS • ET • LOCVS • TAN[tis oper]IBVS • SIT •

EGESTUS

Appendix 2: English Translations of CIL VII 960

Appendix 2.1: Packer's translation of the inscription on Trajan's Column. Packer
2001: 75

‘The Senate and Roman People [dedicate this column] to the
emperor Caesar, son of the deified Nerva, Nerva Trajan,
Augustus, Germanicus, Dacicus, Pontifex Maximus with
tribunician power for the seventeenth time, commander-in-
chief for the sixth time, consul for the sixth time, father of his
country in order to declare how deep were the rock and earth
excavated for these great works.’

Appendix 2.2: Boatwright's translation of the inscription on Trajan's Column.
Boatwright, 1987:82-83

‘The senate and people of Rome to the Emperor Trajan,
pontifex maximus, with tribunician power for the seventeenth
time, acclaimed Imperator for the sixth time, consul for the
sixth time, father of his country, to declare how high a hill
and area was removed for [or by] such great works.’

Appendix 3.3: Boni's translation of the last two lines of the inscription on Trajan's
Column. Boni, 1907:1

In order to make visible (that is from the summit of the
column, one hundred feet above the sepulchre of Trajan) how

much in elevation the hill (slope of Quirinal) and the site (of
the Forum Ulpium) had been raised up by such noble works
of art.'

Appendix 2.4: Dudley's translation of the inscription on Trajan's Column. Dudley,
1967:134

The Senate and the People of Rome to the Emperor, Caesar
Nerva, son of the deified Nerva, Traianus Augustus,
Germanicus, Dacicus, Pontifex Maximus, etc. etc. to
demonstrate how lofty a hill and (what area of) ground was
carried away for these mighty works.

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