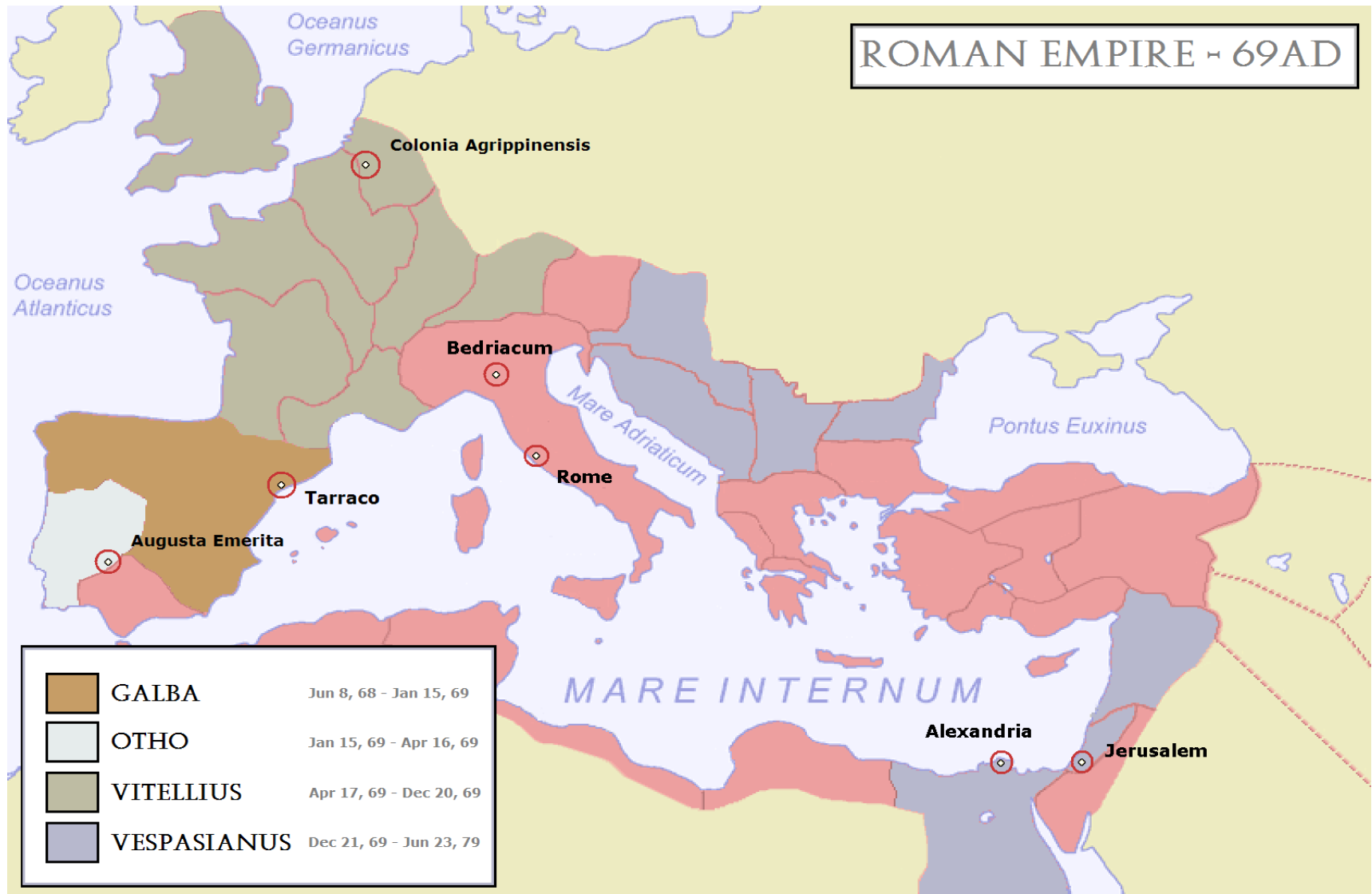




Lecture 23

The Year of the Four Emperors and the Flavians

AD 69



Vespasian. Early career

- **AD 9.** V. was born at Falacrina near Sabine Reate. Son of T. Flavius Sabinus, a banker, and Vespasia Polla. Member of an equestrian family.
- He followed a senatorial career, holding a military tribunate in Thrace, and a quaestorship in Crece-Cyrene, the office of aedile and praetor under Caligula.
- After the death of Gaius in 41, Vespasian secured the favour of emperor Claudius.
- **42-43:** Vespasian becomes *legatus legionis II Augustae*, settled in Argentoratum (Strasbourg), in order to prepare the invasion of Britain. Vespasian takes part at the battle of Medway in 43.
- He made some successful campaigns in the south, conquering the island of Wight. He received the *ornamenta triumphalia* and two priesthoods from Claudius for his exploits in Britain.
- **51:** Vespasian becomes consul. He withdraw at this point.
- **63-64:** Proconsul of Africa.
- **65-66:** He returns to Rome and becomes part of the senate. Influential role in the court. He takes part in Nero's journey to Greece.

Judaea and the accession to Power

- Riots in Caesarea and Jerusalem.
- **66**: Special command in the East is granted to Vespasian with the object of settling the revolt in Judaea.
- By **spring A.D. 67**, with 60,000 legionaries, auxiliaries, and allies under his control, Vespasian set out to subdue **Galilee** and then to cut off **Jerusalem**.
(events narrated by Flavius Josephus, BJ 4.366-376, 414)

Judaea and the accession to Power

- **Spring 69: Vitellius** assumed power
- Vespasian met on the border of Judaea and Syria with **Gaius Licinius Mucianus**, governor of Syria. The two decided to revolt.
- **On July 1**, at the urging of **Tiberius Alexander**, prefect of Egypt, the legions of Alexandria declared for Vespasian, as did the legions of Judaea two days later.
- **By August** all of Syria and the Danube legions had done likewise. Vespasian next dispatched **Mucianus** to Italy with 20,000 troops, while he set out from Syria to Alexandria in order to control grain shipments for the purpose of starving Italy into submission.
- The siege of Jerusalem he placed in the hands of his son Titus.
- Summer 70: Arrival in Rome

Vespasian in Egypt, Flavius Josephus *BJ* 4.605 ff

605] “So upon the exhortations of Mucianus, and the other commanders, that he would accept of the empire, and upon that of the rest of the army, who cried out that they were willing to be led against all his opposers, he was in the first place intent upon gaining the dominion over Alexandria, as knowing that Egypt was of the greatest consequence, in order to obtain the entire government, because of its supplying of corn [to Rome]; which corn, if he could be master of, he hoped to dethrone Vitellius, supposing he should aim to keep the empire by force (for he would not be able to support himself, if the multitude at Rome should once be in want of food); and because he was desirous to join the two legions that were at Alexandria to the other legions that were with him. He also considered with himself, that he should then have that country for a defense to himself against the uncertainty of fortune; for Egypt is hard to be entered by land, and hath no good havens by sea.”

Chronology of Events

- Meanwhile, the Danubian legions, unwilling to wait for Mucianus' arrival, began their march against Vitellius' forces. The latter army, was defeated at **Cremona** in late October.
- **By mid-December** the Flavian forces had reached **Carsulae**, 95 kilometers north of Rome on the Flaminian Road, where the Vitellians, with no further hope of reinforcements, soon surrendered.
- On the morning of December 20 the Flavian army entered Rome. By that afternoon, the emperor was dead.
- Tacitus records that by December **22, A.D. 69**, Vespasian had been given all the honors and privileges usually granted to emperors.
- The ***lex de imperio Vespasiani*** conferred powers, privileges, and exemptions, most with Julio-Claudian precedents, on the new emperor. The *lex* sanctioned all that Vespasian had done up to its passing and gave him authority to act as he saw fit on behalf of the Roman people.
- Legitimacy and dynastic succession.
- **Titus** succeeded his father in **A.D. 79**.

Vespasian in Syria.

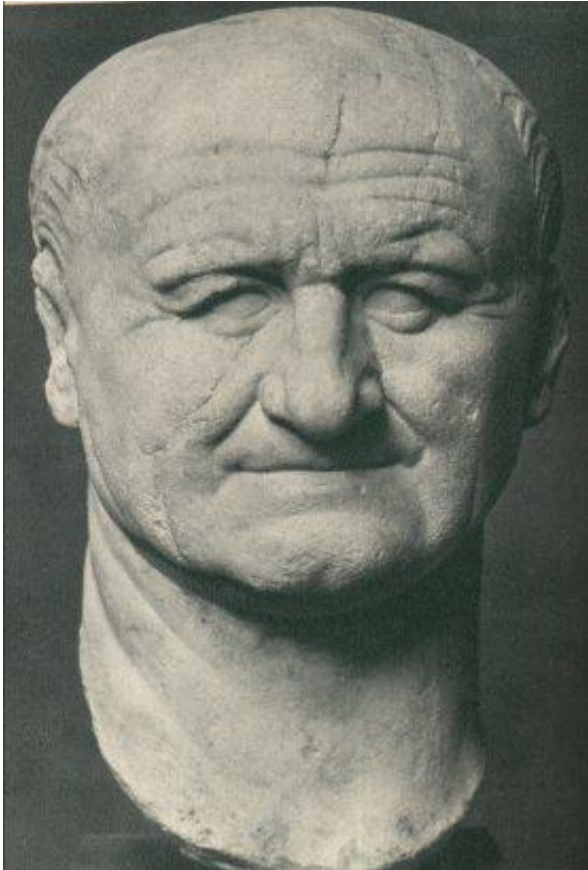
Tacitus, *Histories* 74

“As for Vespasian, he now began to reflect on the possibilities of war and armed combat and to review the strength of the forces near and far. His own soldiers were so ready that when he administered the oath and made vows for the success of Vitellius, they listened in complete silence. The sentiments of Mucianus were not hostile to him and indeed were favourable to Titus; Tiberius Alexander, the prefect of Egypt, had already cast his lot with his side; he could count on the loyalty of the Third legion, which had been transferred from Syria to Moesia; and he had hopes that the legions in Illyricum would follow the Third. There was reason for this expectation, for all the eastern forces had been fired with rage over the arrogance of the soldiers of Vitellius who came to them, because though savage in appearance and barbarous in speech, they constantly mocked at all the others as their inferiors.”

Tacitus, *Historiae* 4, 3

- “While things were in this state, while there was division in the Senate, resentment among the conquered, no real authority in the conquerors, and in the country at large no laws and no Emperor.”

Flavius Vespasianus (69-79)



A shrewd emperor

- Careful definition of his powers (*lex de imperio Vespasiani*)
- Good working relationship with the Senate
- Financial reorganisation (census, tax collection system)
- Promotion of a military elite to the senatorial rank
- A new municipal law: *lex Flavia municipalis*
- Tolerance towards Christianity
- Building activity in Italy and in the provinces

Challenges

- Revolt in Batavian Gaul
- Revolt in Britain
- Campaigns in Germany
- Continuation of the Jewish War

Arch of Titus



Arch of Titus



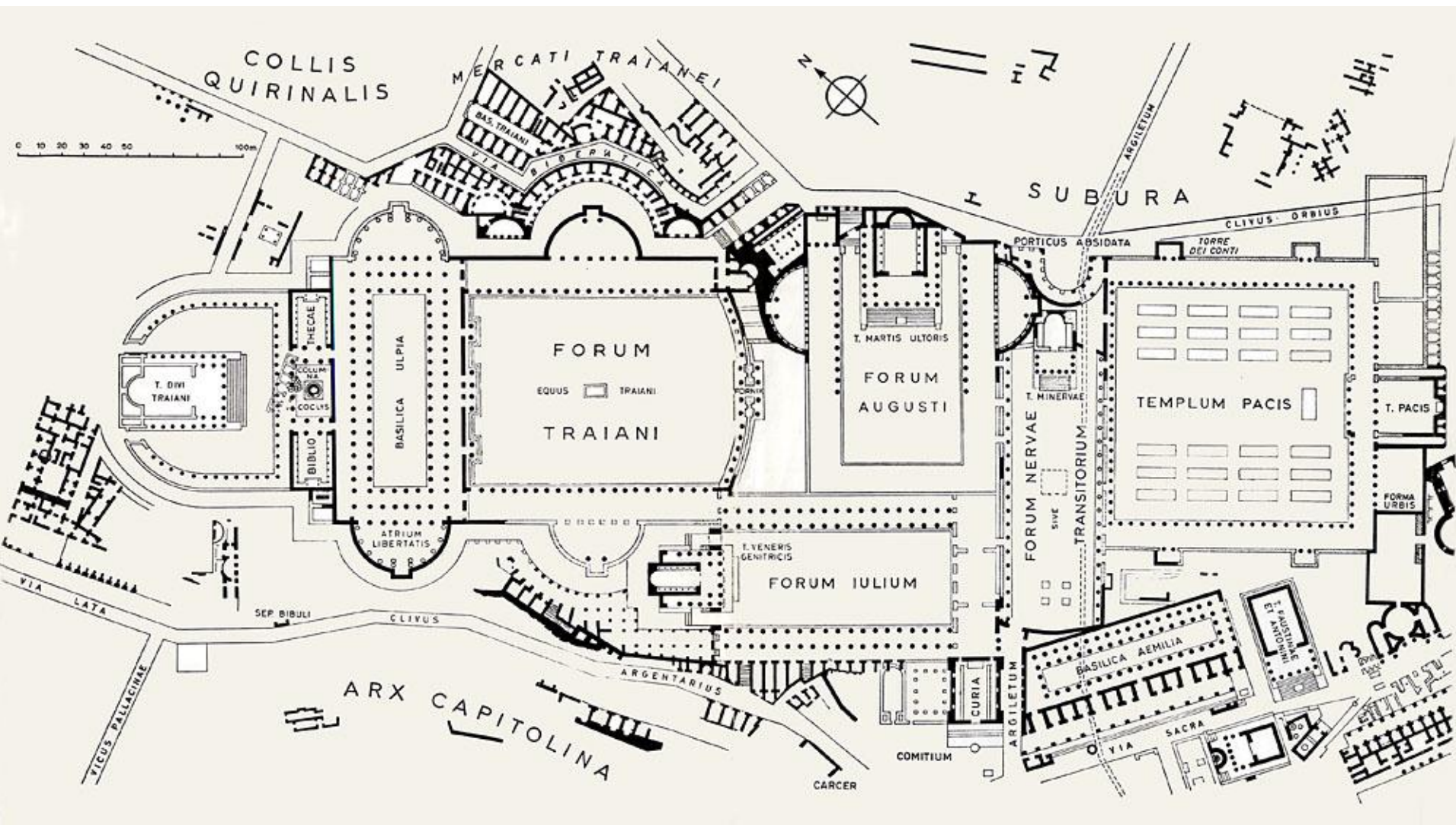
Arch of Titus



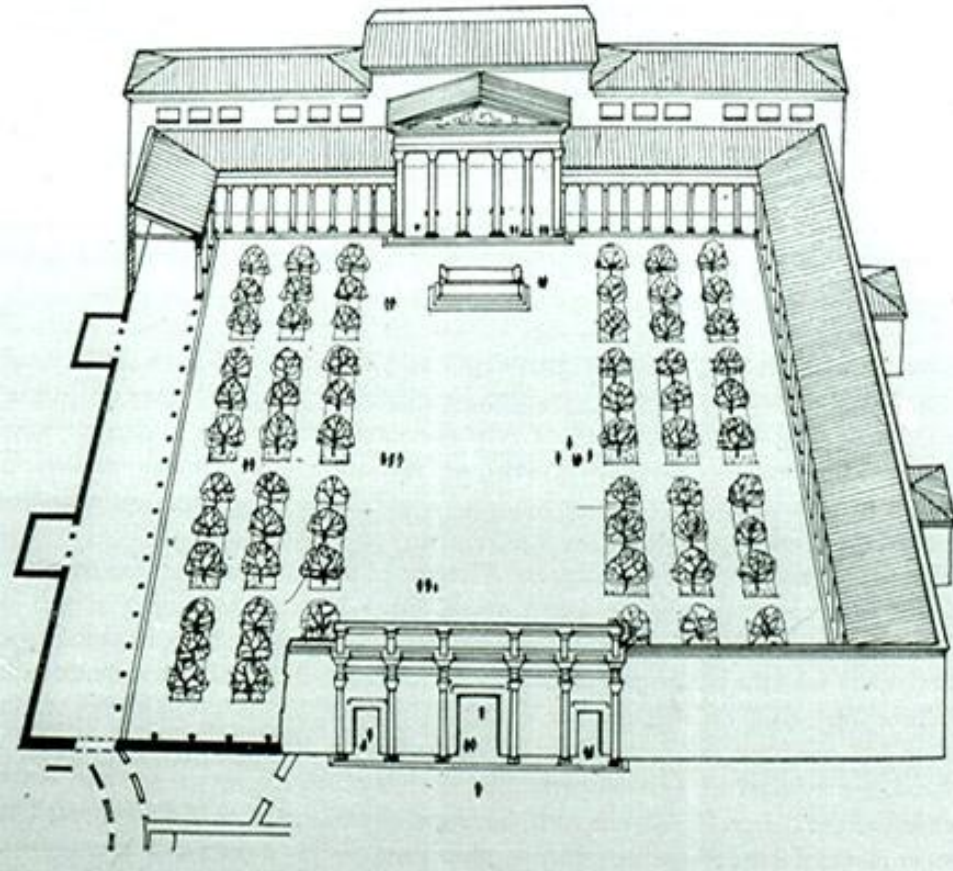
**Senatus Populusque Romanus Divo Tito Divi Vespasiani
F(ilio) Vespasiano Augusto**

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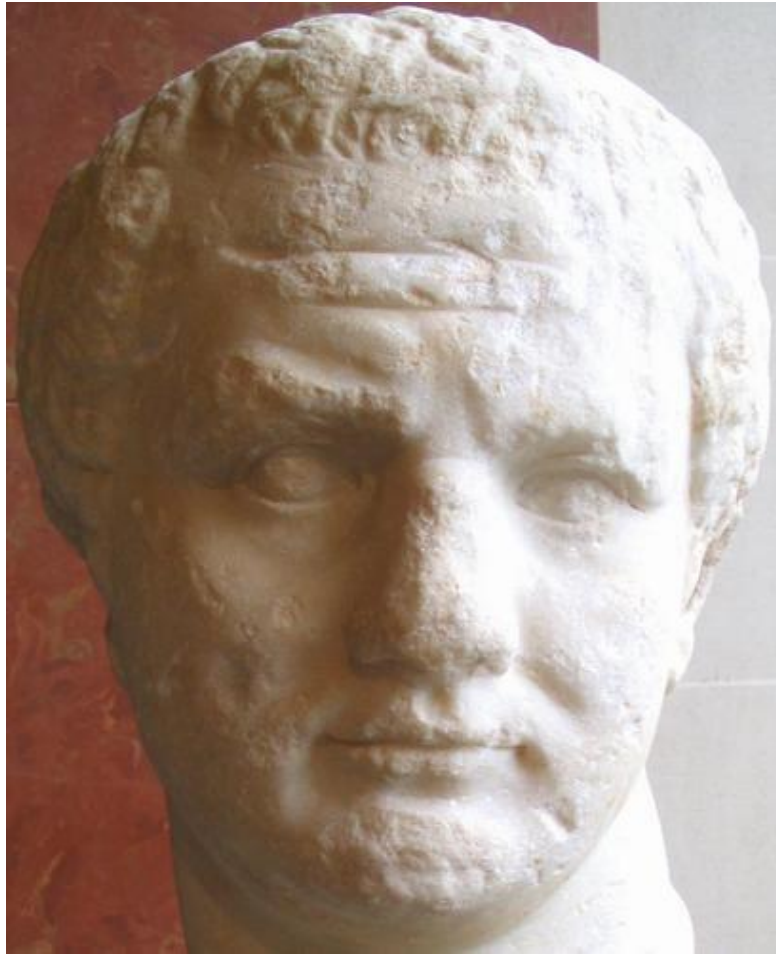




Forum and Templum Pacis



Titus (79-81)



Titus' brief reign

- Long experience in government before his accession
- A brief reign, marked by tragic events
- Evidence for administrative ability
- Inauguration of the Colosseum
- Personal intervention in the aftermath of the Vesuvius eruption in 79
- Dies prematurely in 81

Triumphal Titus

Titus. As Caesar, Denarius. 72-73 AD. T CAES
IMP VESP PON TR POT, laureate & draped
bust right / Titus standing in triumphal quadriga
right. RSC 395.

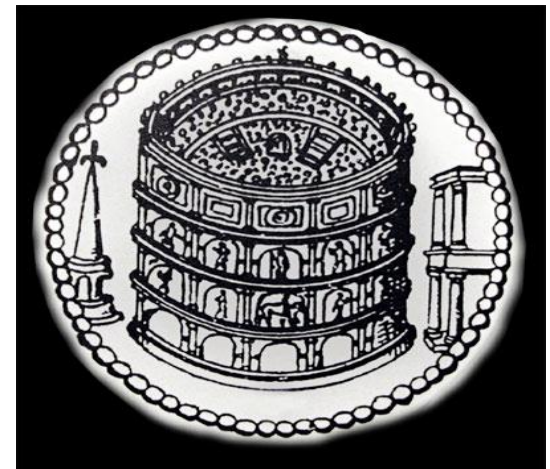


Still the Jewish victory?

Titus, as Augustus, AR Denarius. June-July 79 AD. IMP T CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, laureate head right / TR POT VIII COS VII, Jewish captive kneeling right in front of trophy of arms. RSC 334a.



Colosseum



Pax Flavia?

Titus, As Caesar, AV Aureus. 73 AD. T CAES IMP VESP CEN laureate head right / PAX AVG, Pax standing left, leaning on column to right, holding winged caduceus over tripod and olive-branch. Calico 744.



Titus and Vesta

Titus, AE AS, struck under Vespasian, 73 AD. T CAES IMP PON TR P COS II CENS, laureate head right / VESTA SC, round tetrastyle temple of Vesta containing statue. RIC 639; BMC 674.

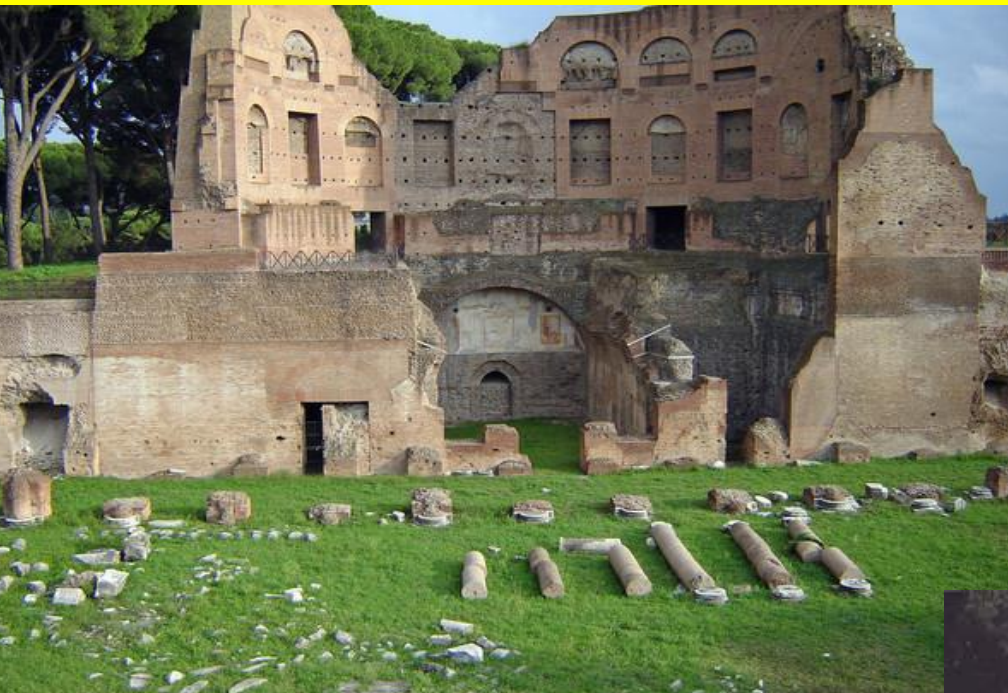


Titus and Vesta

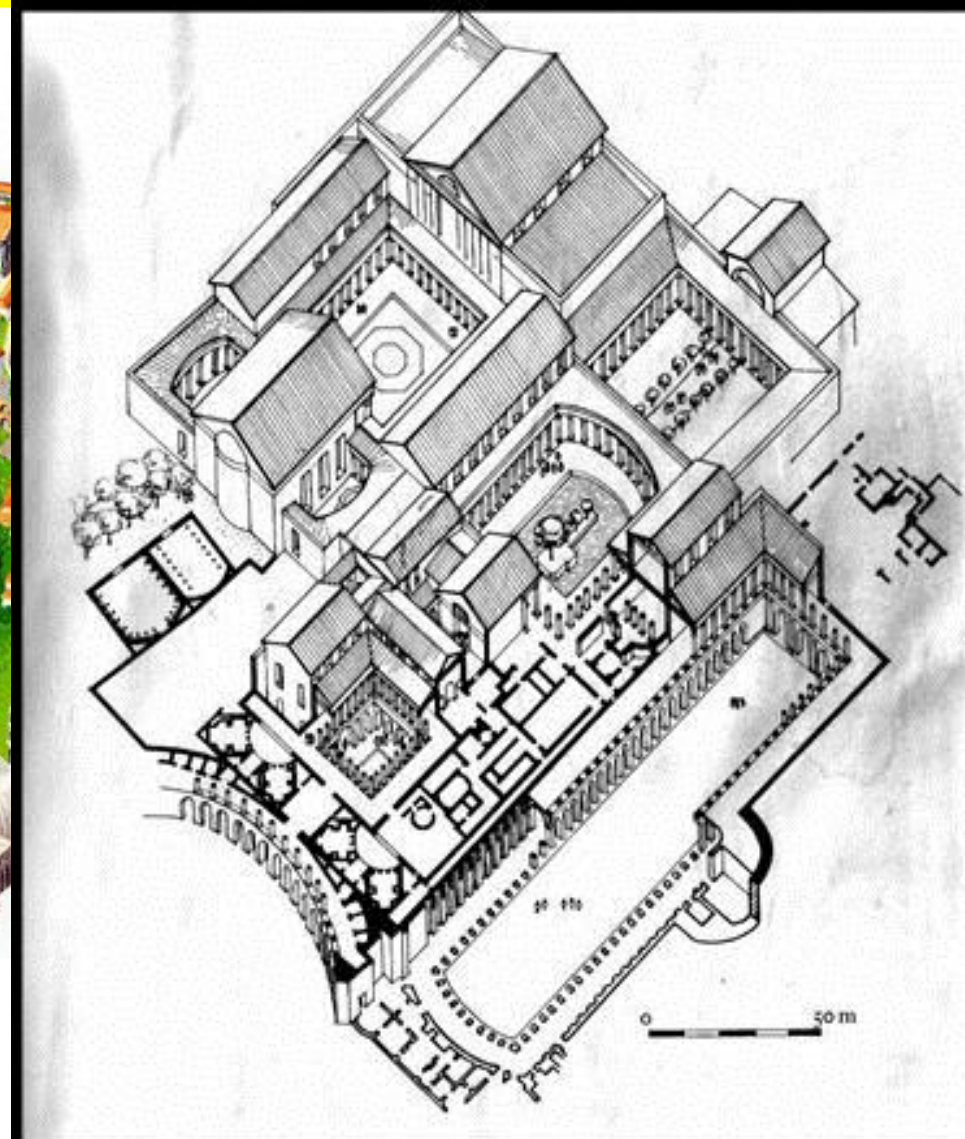
Titus, as Caesar, AV Aureus. 74 AD.
TI.CAESAR IMP.VESPASIAN, laureate
head right / VESTA, circular shrine of
Vesta. Calicó 793



Imperial Palace on the Palatine



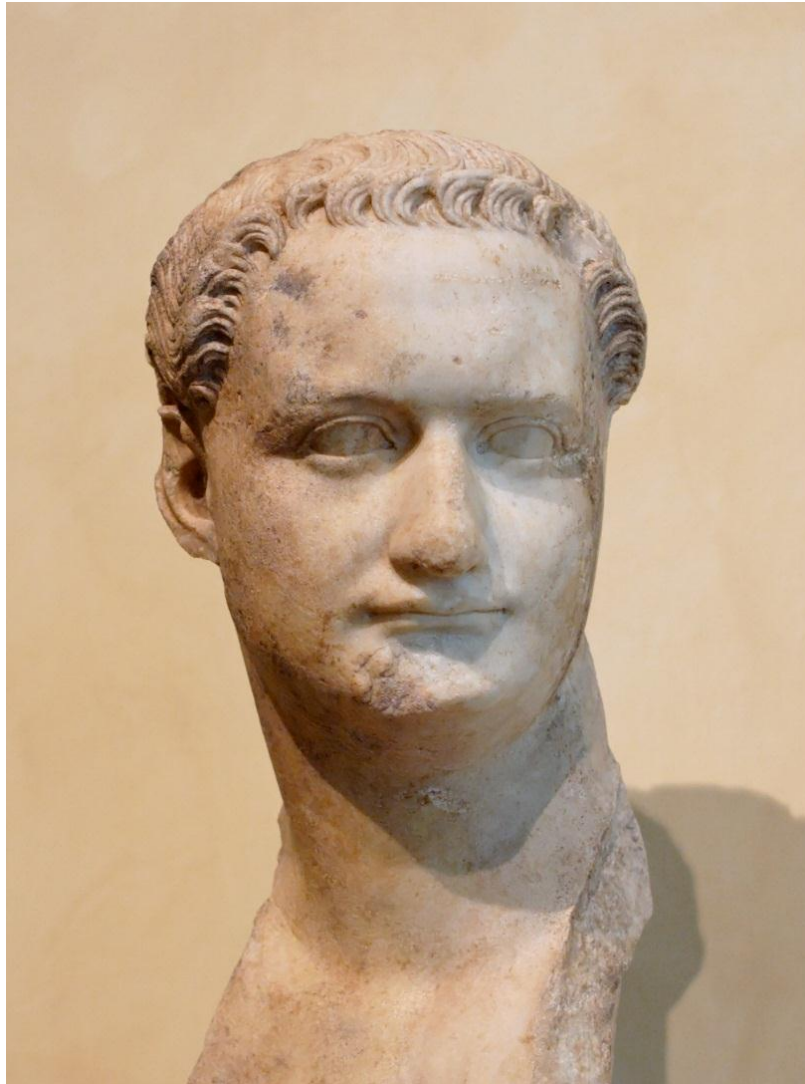
Domus Flavia on the Palatine



Alma-Tadema. The Triumph of Titus



Domitian (81-96)



An undeserved bad reputation?

- Autocracy – personal monarchy
- Refuses to cooperate with the Senate
- Creation of a 'Stoic' opposition within the Senate (Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus)
- Personal involvement in military campaigns
- Evidence of military and administrative ability

Military campaigns

- War against the Chatti, in Germany
- Dacian campaigns: an unsatisfactory agreement with King Decebalus
- Agricola's operations in Britain

Continuity?

Domitian, as Caesar, AV Aureus. 73 AD. CAESAR AVG F
DOMIT COS II, laureate head right / VESTA, the Temple of
Vesta: statue of Vesta standing left within tetrastyle
belvedere, two other smaller statues of minor goddesses to
left and right. Calicó 940, Cohen 614v.



Continuity?

Domitian AE As. 85 AD. IMP CAES DOMITIAN AVG GERM COS XI, laureate bust right, wearing aegis / SALVTI AVGVSTI above and below facade of the altar-enclosure of the Ara Salutis Augusti with detailed double-paneled door & horns above, S-C across fields. Cohen 417.



Suetonius, Life of Domitian

- 7 He made many innovations also in common customs. He did away with the distribution of food to the people and revived that of formal dinners. ...Once upon the occasion of a plentiful wine crop, attended with a scarcity of grain, thinking that the fields were neglected through too much attention to the vineyards, he made an edict forbidding anyone to plant more vines in Italy and ordering that the vineyards in the provinces be cut down, or but half of them at most be left standing; but he did not persist in carrying out the measure.

Suetonius, Life of Domitian

- 7. He opened some of the most important offices of the court to freedmen and Roman knights. He prohibited the uniting of two legions in one camp and the deposit of more than a thousand sesterces by any one soldier at headquarters, because it was clear that Lucius Antonius had been especially led to attempt a revolution by the amount of such deposits in the combined winter quarters of two legions. He increased the pay of the soldiers one fourth, by the addition of three gold pieces each year.

Domitian and Peace

- Domitian Denarius.
Ephesus mint, 71
AD.
DOMITIANVS CAES
ARAVGF, draped &
cuirassed bust right
/ PACI ORB TERR
AVG, turreted,
draped female bust
right, EFE in ex.
RSC 227



Crisis and fall

- Deterioration of the relationship with the Senate in the late Eighties
- Persecutions of numerous senators
- A season of 'terror'
- Religious persecutions, which affected the Christians
- Late summer 96: agreement between the new praetorian prefects, Petronius Secundus and Norbanus, and the Senate to depose Domitian
- 18 September 96: murder of Domitian and proclamation of Nerva

Senatorial and Imperial Provinces

