

Lecture 24. Nerva and Trajan



Senatorial and Imperial Provinces



The rise of Nerva (96-98)

- Distinguished senator, former consul (born AD 30)
- Member of a family of the Republican nobility
- Once close to Nero, persecuted by Domitian
- Supported by the Senate and the praetorian guard
- His age was a factor in the choice
- General consensus to avoid a new civil war

Adoption of Trajan

- October 97: Nerva solemnly announces the adoption of M. Ulpius Traianus (born 53) and proclaims him 'Caesar'
- Trajan is later proclaimed *imperator* and receives the *tribunica potestas*
- Trajan is Nerva's colleague for the consulship of 98
- A move not agreed with the Senate

Adoption of Trajan

- October 97: Nerva solemnly announces the adoption of M. Ulpius Traianus (born 53) and proclaims him 'Caesar'
- Trajan is later proclaimed *imperator* and receives the *tribunica potestas*
- Trajan is Nerva's colleague for the consulship of 98
- A move not agreed with the Senate

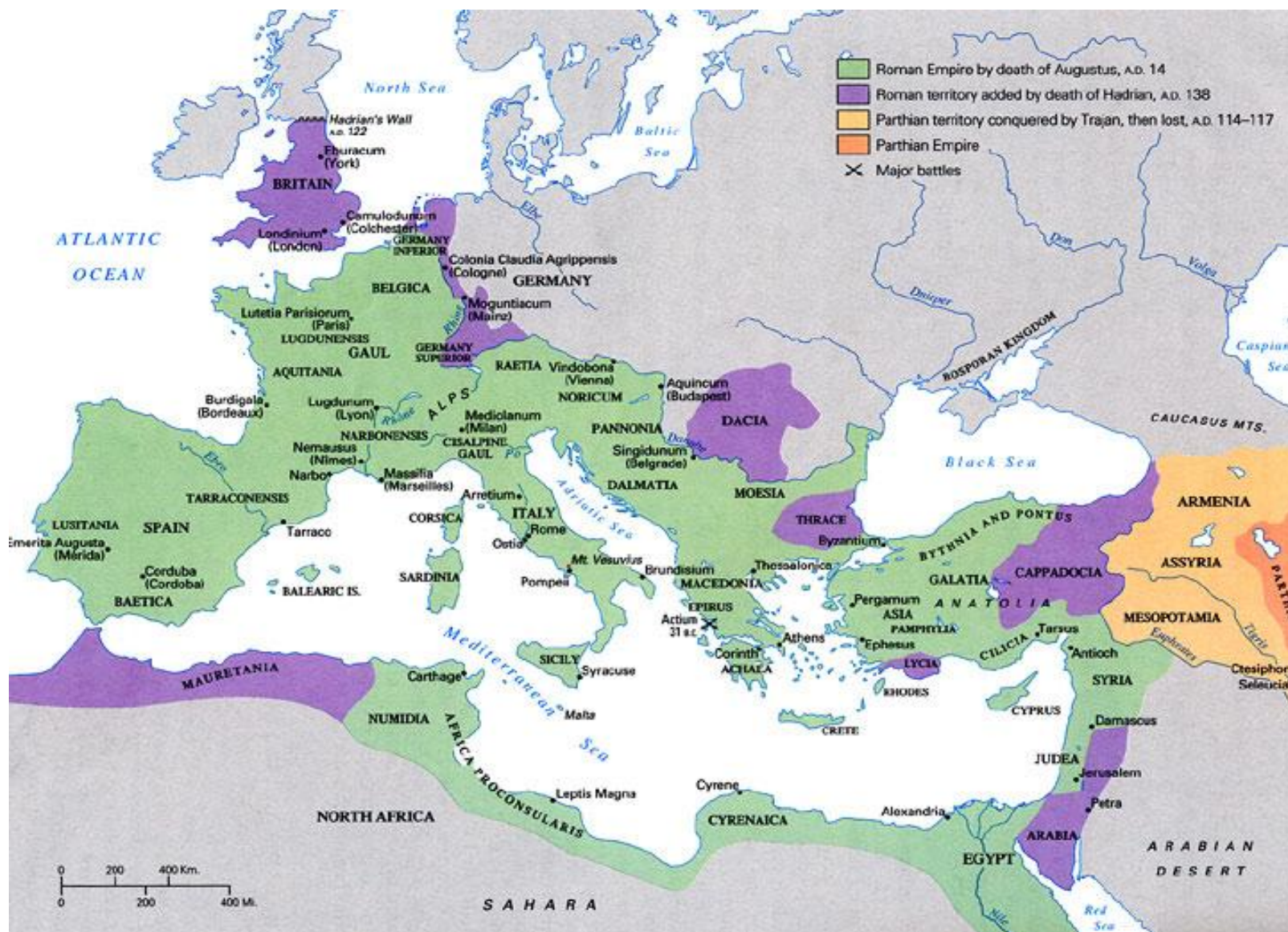
The rise of Trajan

- Nerva dies suddenly in January 98
- Trajan is not in Rome, and will not arrive there until spring or summer of 99; his position is very solid
- Priorities: organisation of the donatives to the soldiers and of the corn supply of the city of Rome
- Same set of powers between Trajan and his colleagues at the consulship.

Trajan (98-117)



**Marcus Ulpius Nerva
Traianus**, (18 September
53 – 8 August 117)..
Born as **Marcus Ulpius
Traianus** in the Baetica.
Military experience in
Syria, consul in 91,
propraetor of Germania
Superior in 96



Foreign policy: Dacian Wars (101-106)

- The King Decebalus has skirmishes with Roman forces on the Danuvian frontier
- Summer 101: after careful preparation, Trajan starts his campaign on the Danuvius
- A long military commitment
- Two campaigns
- Outcome: defeat of Decebalus, creation of the province of Dacia, control over the gold mines

Dacian Wars. Visual propaganda



The Dacian Wars on visual propaganda



Trajan, the Dacians and the Bridge over the Danuvius

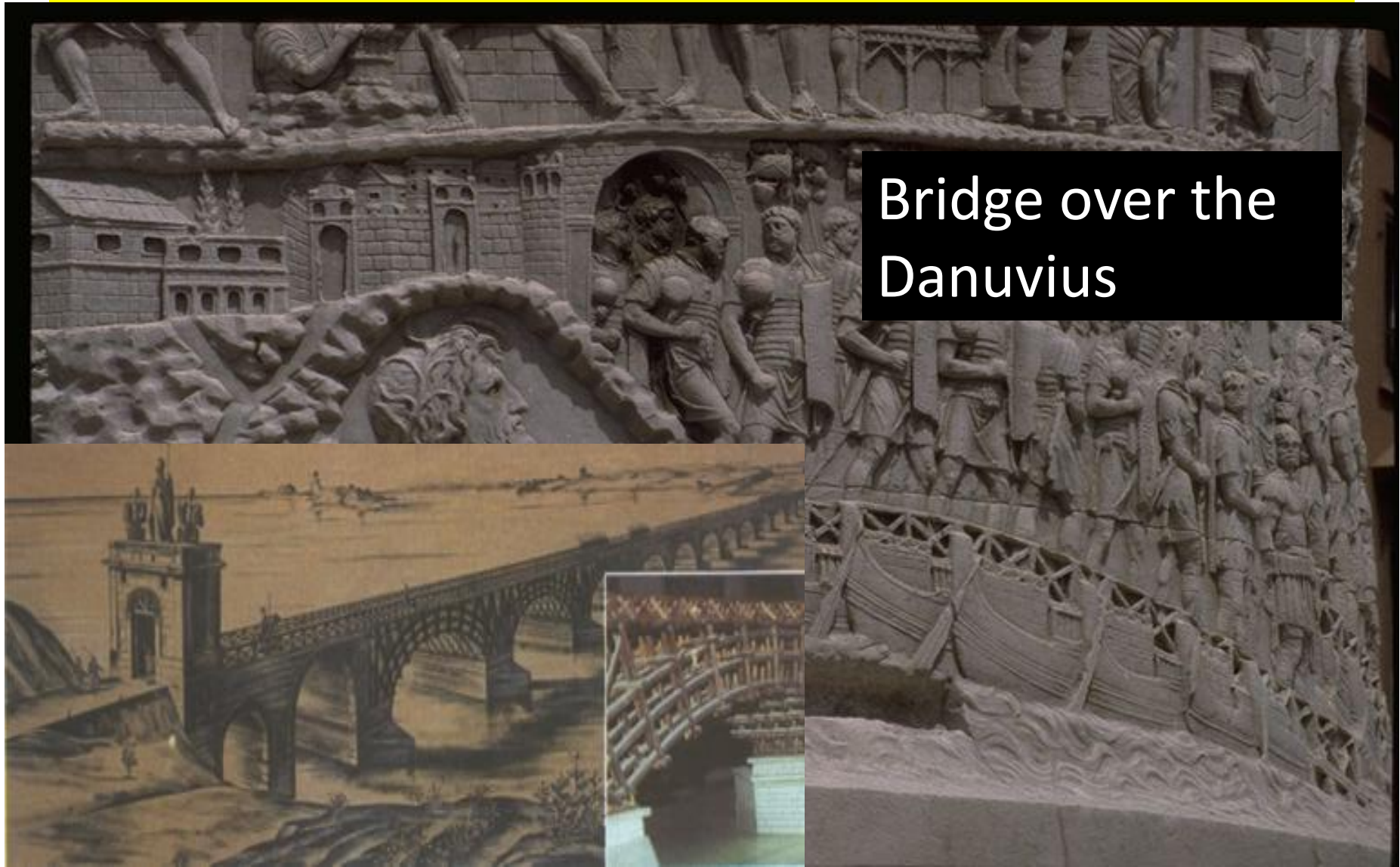


IMP. CAESAR. DIVI. NERVAE. F
NERVA TRAIANVS. AVG. GERM
PONTIF MAXIMUS TRIB POT IIII
PATER PATRIAE COS III
MONTIBVUS EXCISI(s) ANCO(ni)BVS
SVBLAT(i)S VIA(m) F(ecit)

(Emperor Nerva son of the divine Nerva, Nerva Trajan, the Augustus, Germanicus, Pontifex Maximus, invested for the fourth time as Tribune, Father of the Fatherland, Consul for the third time, excavating mountain rocks and using wood beams has made this road.)



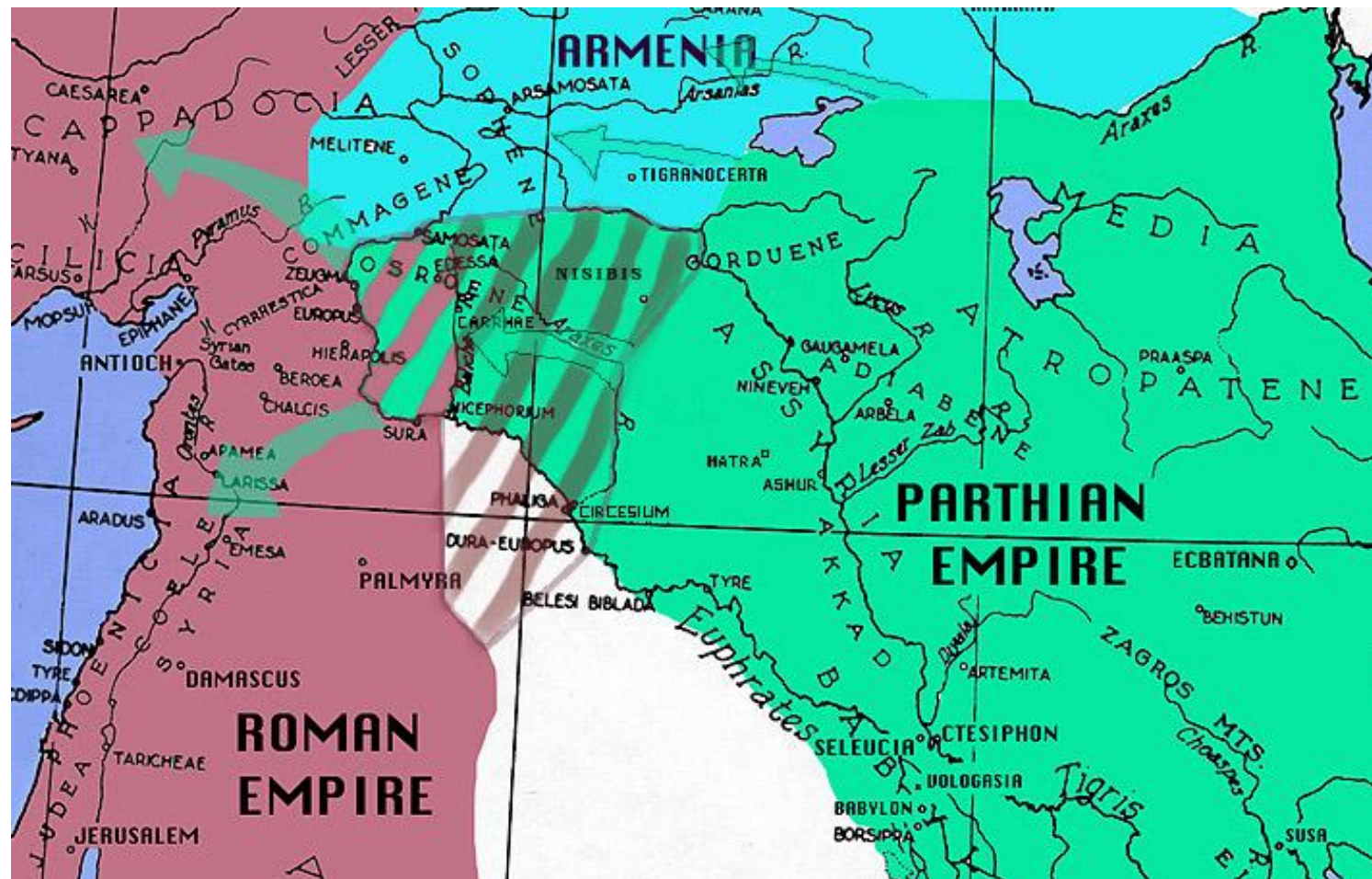
The column of Trajan and the Dacian Wars



Foreign policy: Trajan's Eastern campaigns. Parthia (AD 113-117)

- Lack of clarity about the motives: 'desire for glory'?
- Ambition to establish control on the kingdom of Parthia and possibly on Arabia
- Carefully planned attack
- Outcome: creation of a client kingdom instead of annexation; attempted annexation of Babylon
- Was Trajan's ill health a factor?

The Parthian Kingdom



Trajan and the Parthian Kings



Cassius Dio and Trajan's campaign in the East.

Ctesiphon. Epit. 68.

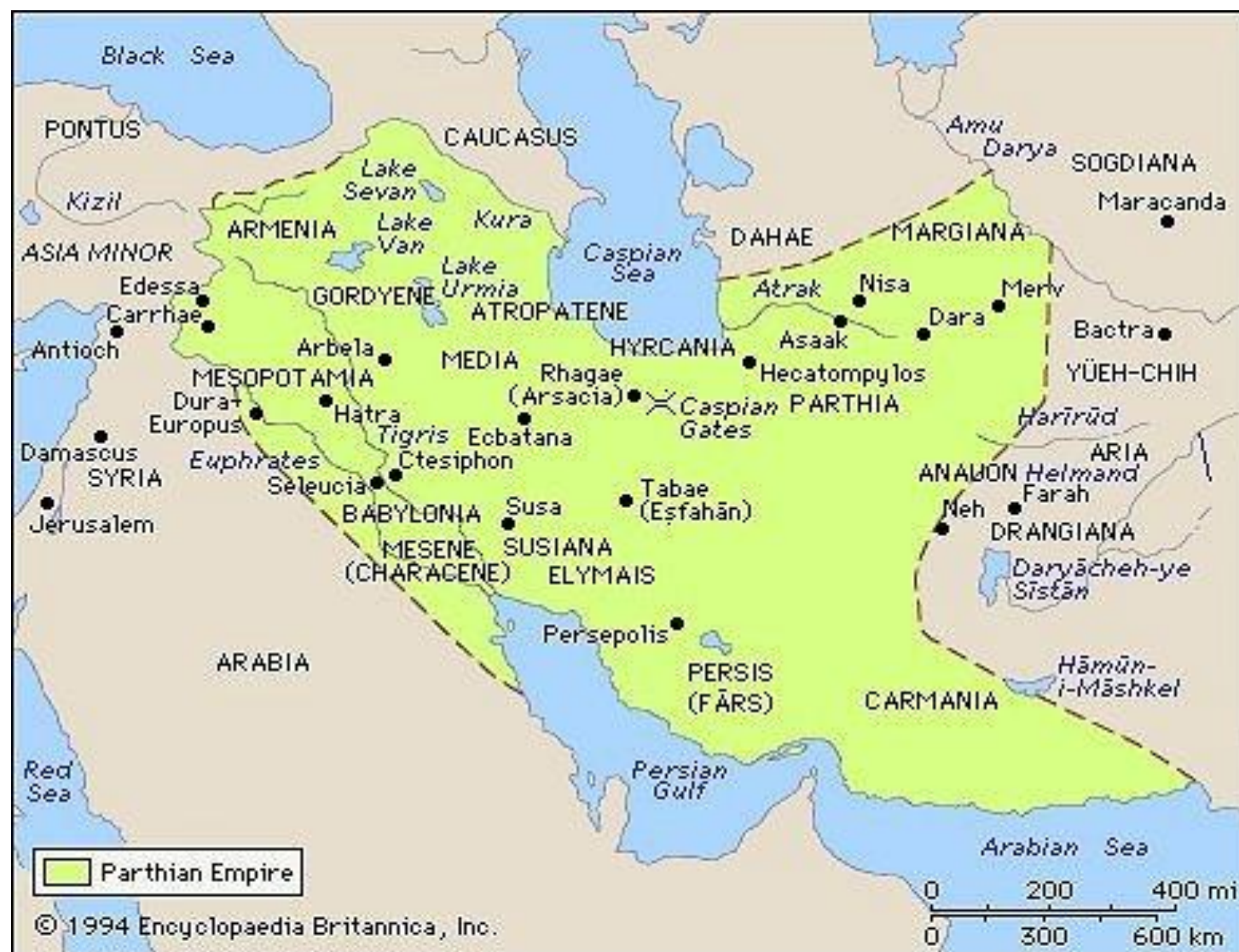
- 28 “Trajan had planned to conduct the Euphrates through a canal into the Tigris, in order that he might take his boats down by this route and use them to make a bridge. But learning that this river has a much higher elevation than the Tigris, he did not do so, fearing that the water might rush down in a flood and render the Euphrates unnavigable. 2 So he used hauling-engines to drag the boats across the very narrow space that separates the two rivers (the whole stream of the Euphrates empties into a marsh and from there somehow joins the Tigris); then he crossed the Tigris and entered Ctesiphon. When he had taken possession of this place he was saluted imperator and established his right to the title of Parthicus.”

Ctesiphon. Capital of Parthia



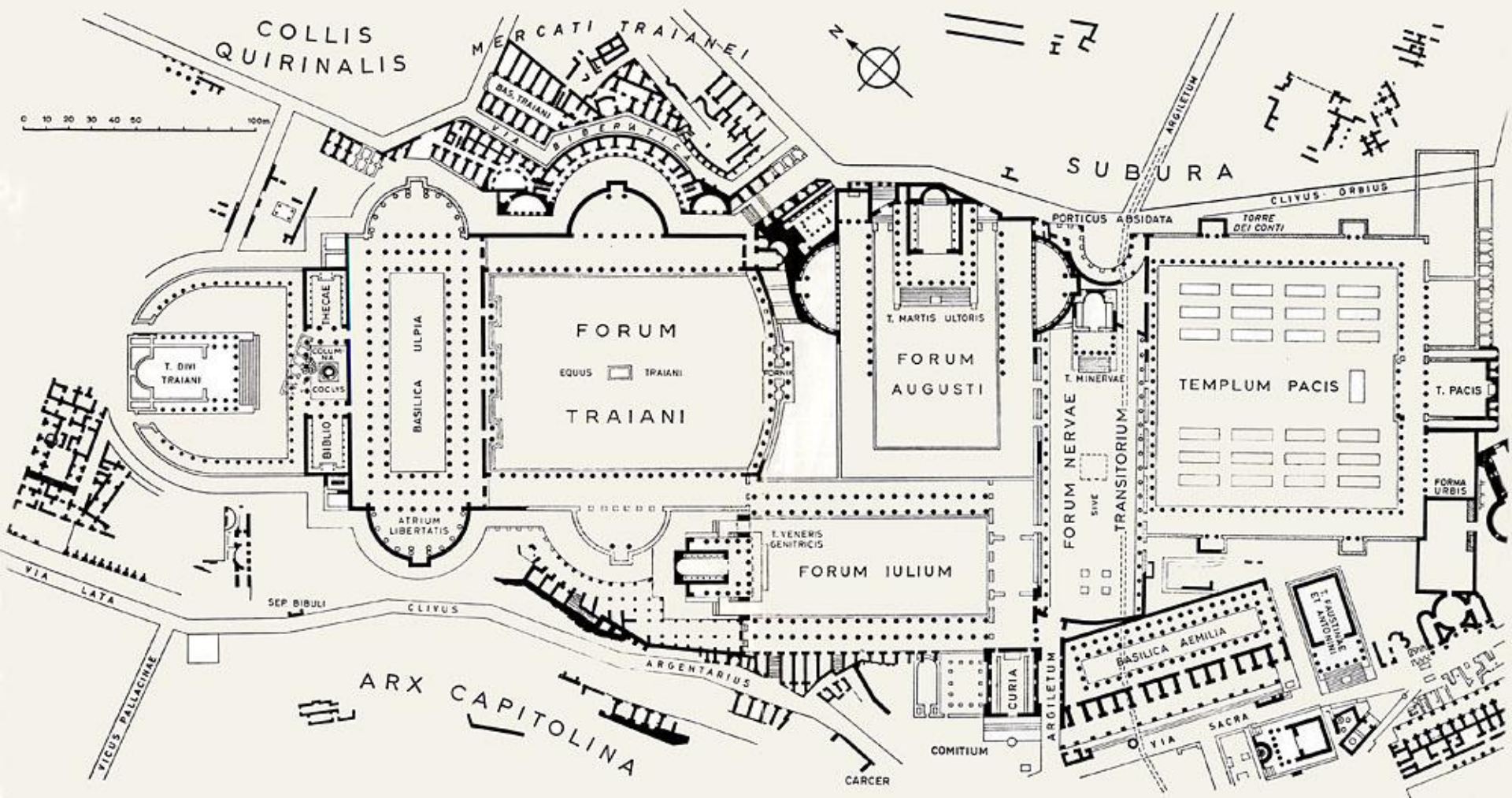
Trajan in the Ocean Cassius Dio, epit. 68

29 “Then he came to the ocean itself, and when he had learned its nature and had seen a ship sailing to India, he said: "I should certainly have crossed over to the Indi, too, if I were still young." For he began to think about the Indi and was curious about their affairs, and he counted Alexander a lucky man. Yet he would declare that he himself had advanced farther than Alexander, and would so write to the senate, although he was unable to preserve even the territory that he had subdued.”



Trajan's policies

- Public works in Rome: forum; Trajan's market; aqueducts; new system of canals around Rome
- Significant building activity in Italy; road-building
- Promotion of local autonomy and municipal administration
- Support among the local propertied elites
- Food programme in Italy: *alimenta*



Trajan's *alimenta*

- Social policy
- Impulse of demography in Italy
- Impulse of municipal evergetism
- Imperial propaganda
- Public economic intervention in private economy
- Improvement of the agricultural production
- Improvement of the financial economy

Alimenta according to Pliny the Younger's Panegyricus of Trajan, 26-27

- 27. Above all, you are a prince whose reign makes it both pleasure and profit to rear children. No father now need fear more for his son than the hazards of human frailty – among fatal illnesses he need not count his emperor's wrath. There is indeed great encouragement to have children in the promise of allowances and donations, but greater still when there is hope of security and freedom from fear. It may be that a ruler gives nothing, supports no one, but so long as he neither takes nor destroys he will not lack subjects to desire sons

Alimenta on coins

- *Aurus,*
CO[n]S[ul] V P[ater]
P[atriae] S[enatus]
P[opulus]Q[ue]
R[omanus] OPTIMO
PRINC[ipi] | ALIM[enta]
ITAL[iae]. Minted in Rome,
103-111 CE. Berlin,
Pergamon Museum.



Veleia. Tabula Alimentaria



Trajan's Arch at Beneventum



Plotina



Trajan and Hadrian: Succession



