

# High Politics: From the Flavians to the Severans

# Year of the Four Emperors, AD 69

- Galba Spanish Legions / Praetorians
- Otho Praetorians
- Vitellius German Legions
- Vespasian Eastern Legions

# Cassius Dio on AD 69 (64.9)

‘They (the Senate) hated him (Otho) most of all, however, because he had shown that the imperial office was for sale and had put the City in the power of the boldest spies; also because he held the senate and the people in slight esteem, and had convinced the soldiers of the fact that they could both kill and create a Caesar.’

From *Cassius Dio: Roman History*. Translated by Earnest Cary.  
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# Plutarch on AD 69 (*Galba* 1.6)

‘But the Roman Empire was a prey to convulsions and disasters like those caused by the Titans of mythology, being torn into many fragments, and again in many places collapsing upon itself, not so much through the ambition of those who were proclaimed emperors, as through the greed and licence of the soldiery, which drove out one commander with another as nail drives out nail.’

From *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin.  
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# The Flavians



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Vespasian 69-79



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Titus 79-81



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Domitian 81-96



# DOMITIAN

‘Dominus et Deus’

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# M. Cocceius NERVA

## 96-98



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# The Adoptive Emperors

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Nerva           | 96 – 98   |
| Trajan          | 98 – 117  |
| Hadrian         | 117 – 138 |
| Antoninus Pius  | 138 – 161 |
| Marcus Aurelius | 161 – 180 |



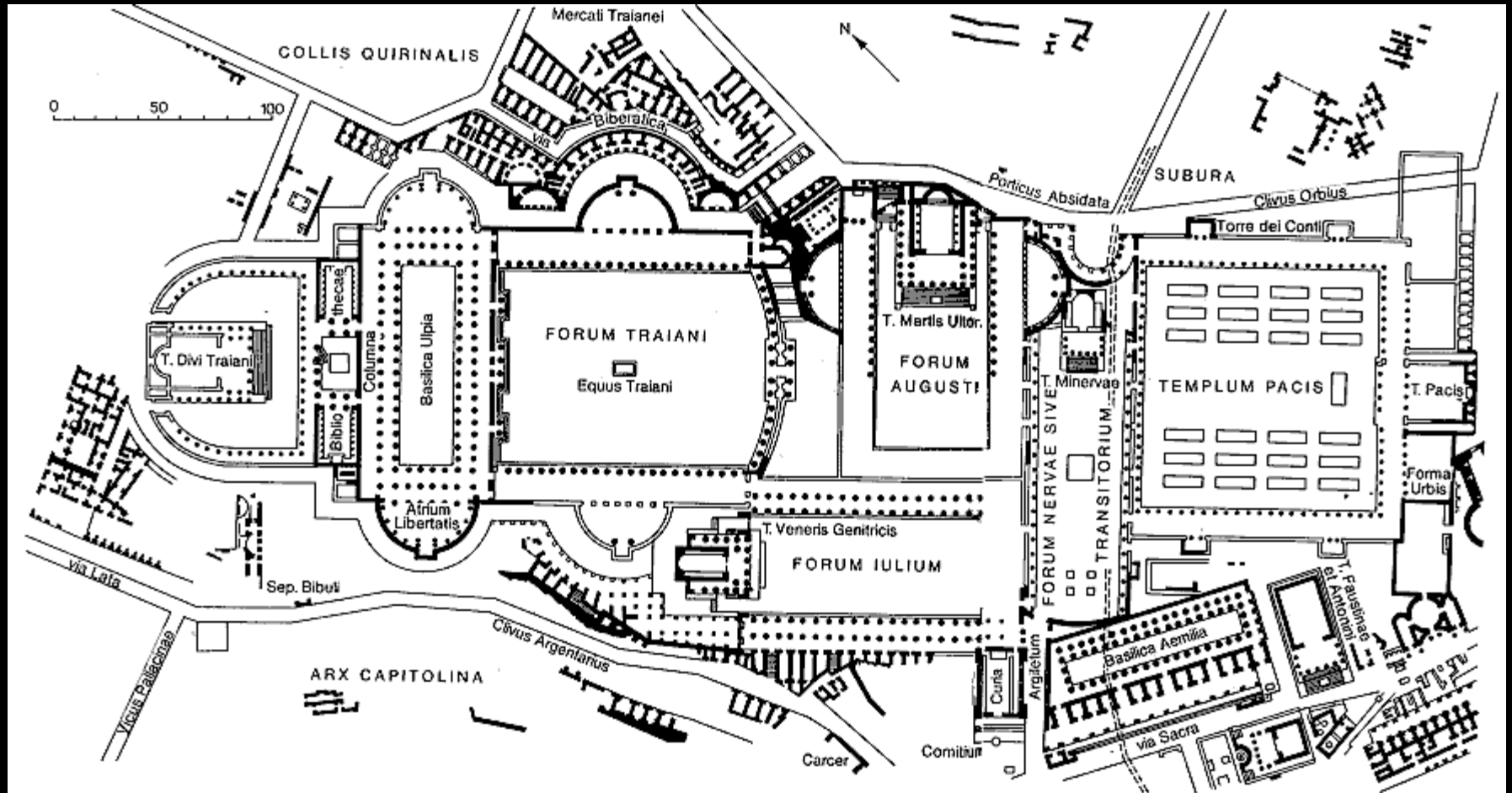
# Trajan 98-117



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# Forum of Trajan

## Dedicated AD 112 (column in 113)



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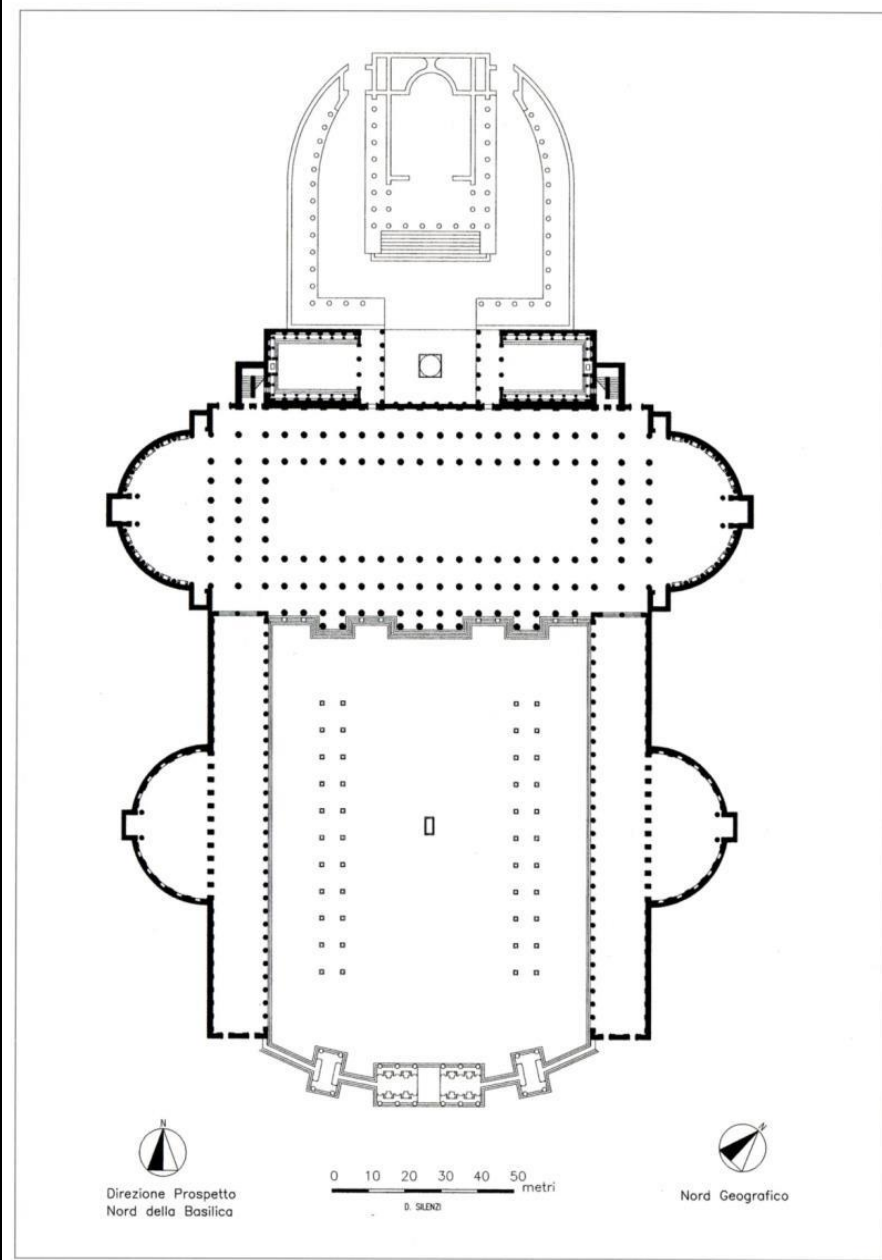


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Packer, James E. *The Forum of Trajan in Rome: A Study of the Monuments in Brief*. University of California Press, 2001. © University of California Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.



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# Hadrian 117-138



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# Antoninus Pius 138-161



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# Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus



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161 - 180



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161 - 169

# Tacitus, *Histories* 1.16

“If the mighty structure of the empire could stand in even poise without a ruler, it were proper that a republic should begin with me. But as it is, we have long reached such a pass that my old age cannot give more to the Roman people than a good successor, or your youth more than a good emperor. Under Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius, we Romans were the heritage, so to speak, of one family; the fact that we emperors are now beginning to be chosen will be for all a kind of liberty; and since the houses of the Julii and the Claudii are ended, adoption will select only the best; for to be begotten and born of princes is mere chance, and is not reckoned higher, but the judgment displayed in adoption is unhampered; and if one wishes to make a choice, common consent points out the individual.”



# Commodus, AD 177-192



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...as Hercules

# Chaos after Commodus, AD 193

- P. Helvius Pertinax      Senate/Praetorians
- Didius Julianus      Praetorians
- Septimius Severus      Pannonian Legions
- Pescennius Niger      Syrian Legions
- Clodius Albinus      British Legions

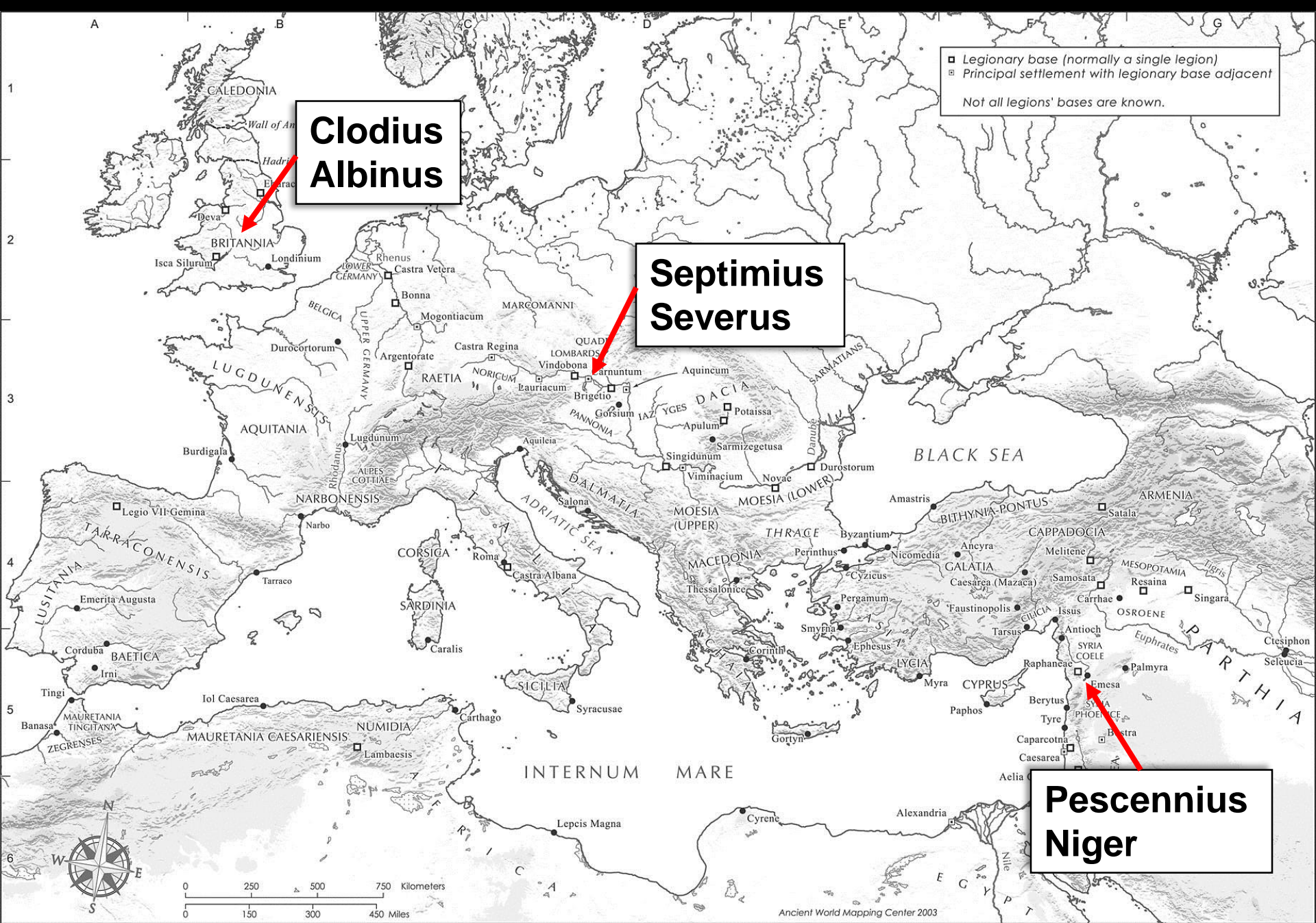
# The 'Auction' of 193

Sulpicianus

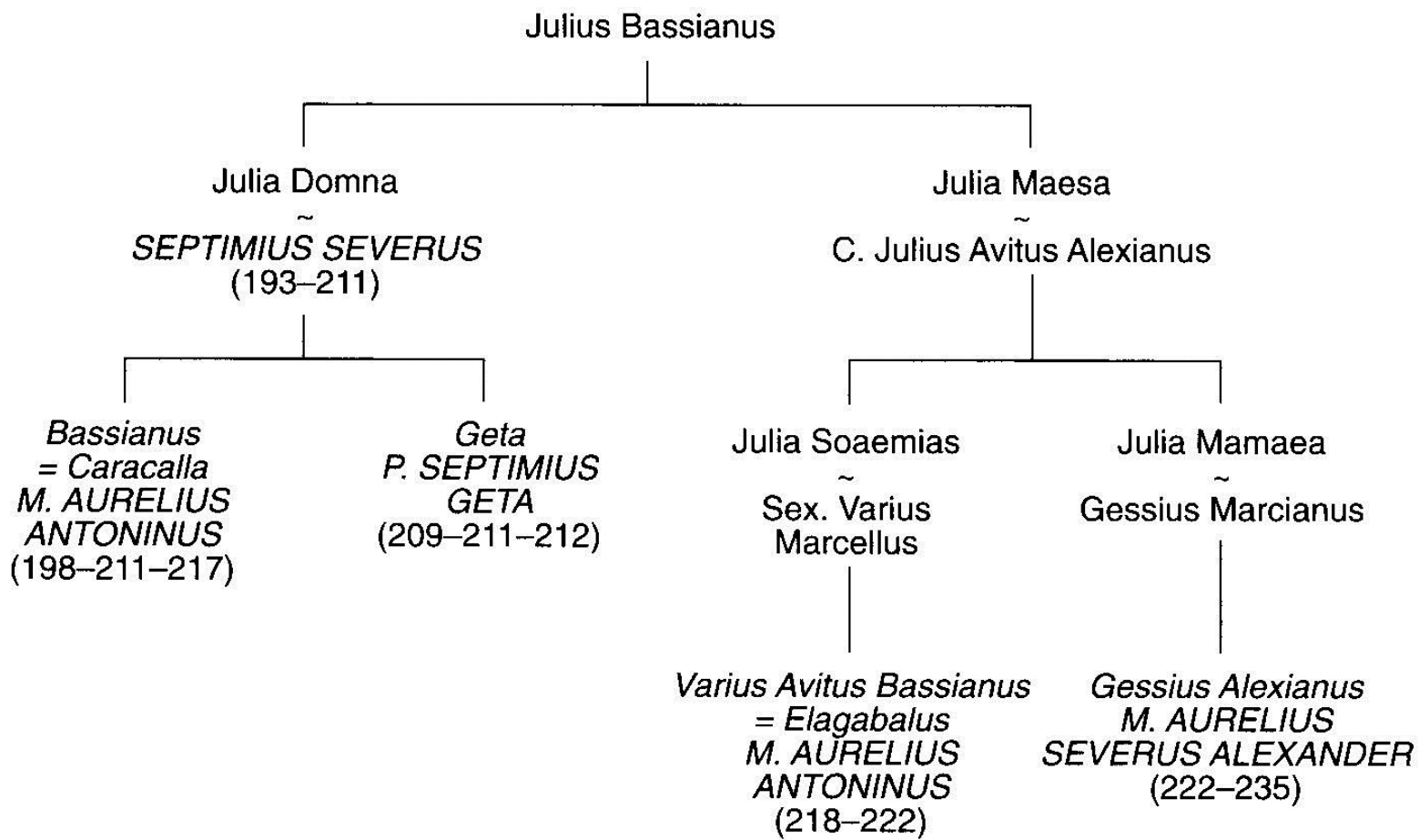
vs

Didius Julianus

- 25,000 sesterces per Praetorian
  - = 5 years' pay



**Table 12.2** The dynasty of Septimius Severus





# Septimius Severus

## AD 193 - 211



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# Arch of Septimius Severus AD 203



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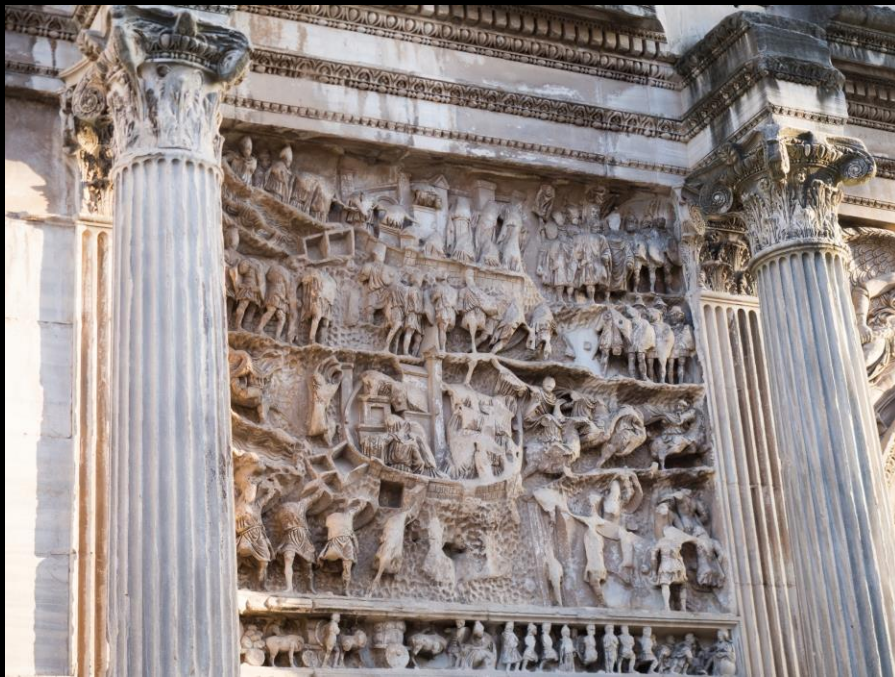
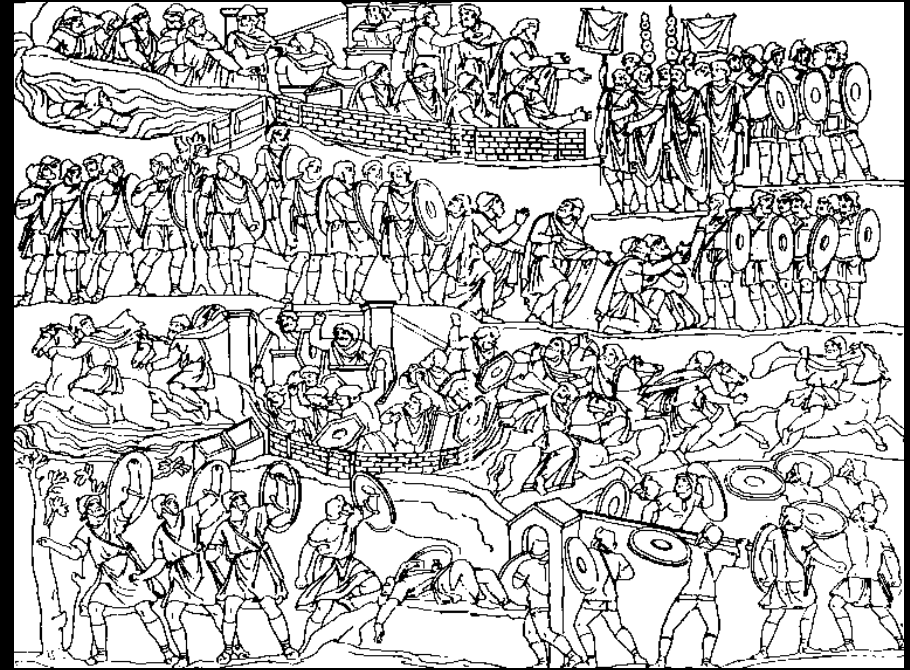


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# Septimius Severus's last words?

“Be harmonious, enrich the soldiers,  
and scorn all other men.”

Cassius Dio 77.15

From *Cassius Dio: Roman History*. Translated by Earnest Cary. This material is in the public domain.





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‘...and to the most noble Caesar P. Septimius Geta...’

changed to

‘...excellent and strongest principes...’

# Caracalla

198-209

w/ Severus

209-211

w/ Severus & Geta

211-217

alone



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# Legionary pay

- Under Augustus                      225 denarii = 900 sest.
- By Septimius Severus              600 denarii = 2,400 sest.
- Caracalla                              900 denarii = 3,600 sest.



# Macrinus, 217-218



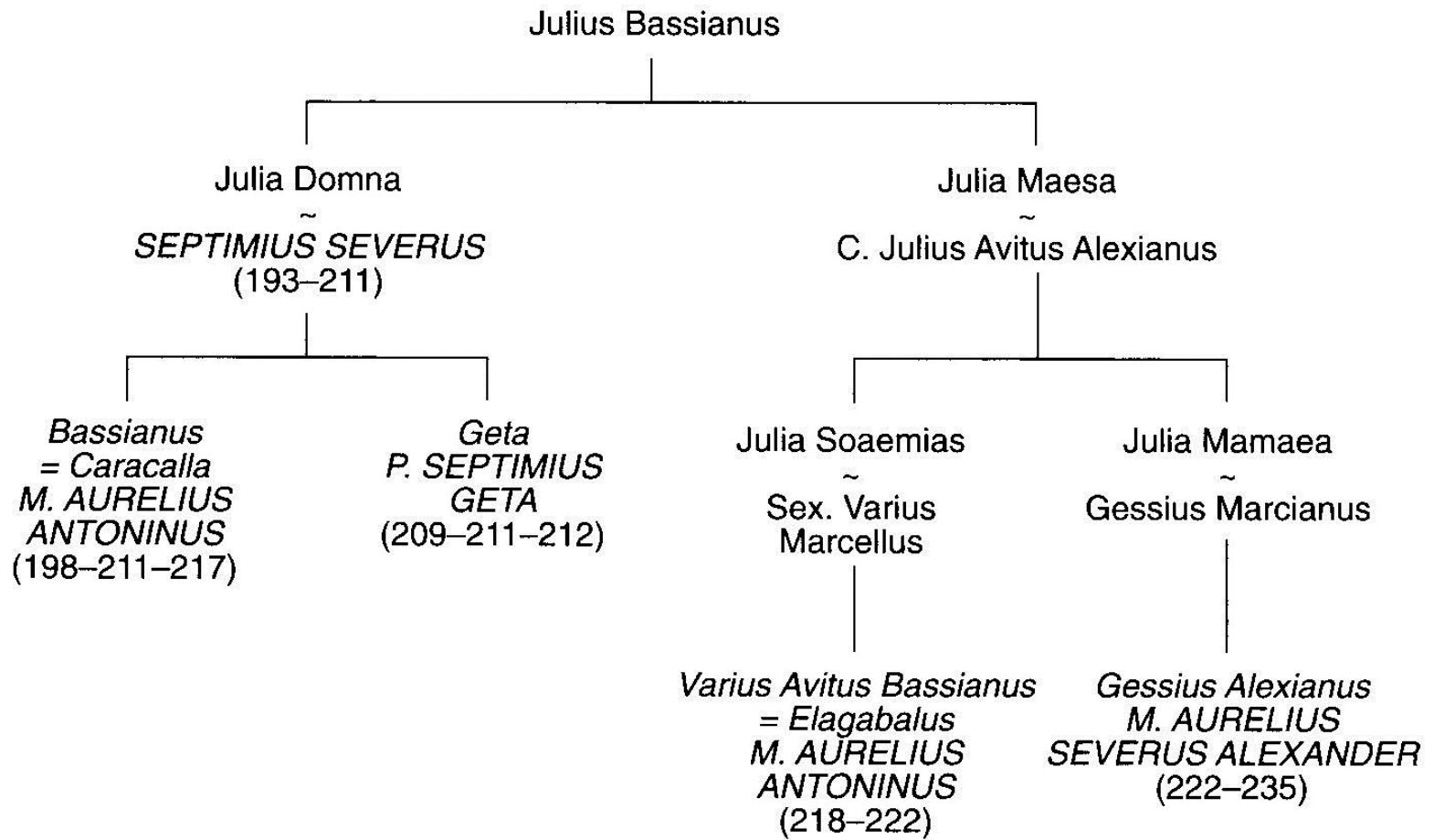
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# Julia Maesa



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**Table 12.2** The dynasty of Septimius Severus





# Elagabalus, AD 218-222



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# Severus Alexander, AD 222-235



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