Moreover, while leaving many of Domitian's measures intact – for example, professional informers still received some encouragement – Nerva also embarked on the task of turning public opinion against the previous régime. Men whom Domitian had banished were brought back, their confiscated property was restored to them, and they were allowed to avenge themselves on those who had supported his régime; while every assistance was given to the blackening of the late emperor's memory. As for the army, it was courted by an accession bonus, recorded by coins which display the unmilitary Nerva addressing them in person (ADLOCVT*io* AVG*usti*). Another phrase, however, which appeared on the coinage, 'The Harmony of the Armies' (CONCORDIA EXERCITVVM), could not conceal the fact that the soldiers still felt a considerable lack of affection for the new emperor. There was an incipient mutiny at a camp on the Danube; the loyalty of the governor of Syria, commander of a large garrison, was called into question; and it was probably with army backing that the aristocratic Gaius Calpurnius Crassus Frugi Licinianus (related to Galba's heir Piso) reportedly considered forming a plot against Nerva.

The worst trouble arose, however, among the praetorian guard. Pressure from the guardsmen had compelled Nerva to remove their joint prefects, Secundus and Norbanus, because of the part they had played in Domitian's death. But his choice of a partisan and former prefect of Domitian, Casperius Aelianus, to succeed the dismissed prefects was unfortunate, because the new commander associated himself strongly with his soldiers' demand that Secundus and the late emperor's chamberlain, who had likewise been a party to the murder, should be handed over to the guard for execution. When the demonstrators broke into the palace Nerva barred their way; but he was forcibly brushed aside, and the two officials were seized and put to death. Nerva was actually forced to thank the praetorians, in public, for this execution of his friends and supporters. Pliny the younger, an admirer of Nerva who was appalled by these anarchic and humiliating events, felt convinced that the Empire was falling apart, and that the disastrous events of the Year of the Four Emperors (from 68–9) were on the point of being re-enacted.

Nerva also recalled these same events by the measure he took to confront the situation, for, passing over his own well-connected relations, he decided to adopt a man from outside his family as his son and heir. GALBA had done the same; but whereas Galba's nominee Piso had been, except in terms of birth, a nonentity, Nerva selected TRAJAN, the governor of Upper Germany, the most distinguished soldier of the day, giving him powers almost equal to his own. That was in September 97; and in January 98, the emperor died. He had failed to stand up to the army. Yet, on the other hand, he had successfully inaugurated the system of adopting 'the best man' as his heir, a precedent which Galba had tried but failed to institute; and this was the decisive

achievement of Nerva's reign. For the four next rulers too, whose remarkable tenures of the imperial office extended over the following eighty years, were peacefully appointed, in every case, by the same means. True, the idea of imperial heredity, as a principle, was not abandoned; but the fortunate chance that one after another of these successive emperors were childless, or were predeceased by their children, meant that the question did not arise.

TRAJAN
98–117

TRAJAN (Marcius Ulpius Trajanus) (98–117) belonged to a family which originally came from Tuder in Umbria, but his ancestors had settled at Italica in Romanized Baetica (southern Spain). His father Marcus Ulpius Trajanus, the first known senator in the family, reached the office of consul, and was governor of Asia and Syria. Nothing is known about the background of the emperor's mother Marcia.

Born probably in about 53, he spent a number of years (as many as ten according to the younger Pliny), as a military tribune (*tribunus militum*), serving in Syria when his father was provincial governor in about 75. After holding the praetorship he commanded a legion, and led it to deal with Saturninus, who had rebelled against DOMITIAN around the year 88; but Trajan's force arrived after the revolt had been put down. Consul in 91, he was governor of Upper Germany in 97 when he learnt of his adoption by NERVA. The choice was likely to be popular with the soldiers, and no doubt enjoyed senatorial and other support at Rome. Nerva died in January 98, and Trajan succeeded to the throne without trouble, duly arranging for divinity to be conferred on his adoptive father.

It was probably soon after his accession that he took certain steps towards evolving a military secret service with the aim of protecting his régime and his person. In particular, the corps of *frumentarii* (couriers in connexion with the grain supply) began to develop significant intelligence duties, operating from a camp (the Castra Peregrinorum) on the Caelian Hill at Rome, and occupying

checkpoints on the network of imperial roads far outside the city. Trajan also created a new bodyguard, consisting of mounted soldiers known as the *equites singulares*. Five hundred strong, and later increased to a thousand, they were carefully picked men: mainly Germans and Pannonians from the auxiliary cavalry regiments. Trajan was showing, by this new institution, that he trusted auxiliaries and foreigners no less than he relied upon the mainly Italian praetorian guardsmen.

But these were just preliminary adjustments before he set out on what he believed to be his life's work, the prosecution of conquests that would excel his hero Julius Caesar himself. In the first place, he was determined to go far beyond Domitian's compromise arrangement with King Decebalus of Dacia. Rejecting this sort of peaceful solution, Trajan renewed the war against Decebalus, and in two successive series of operations (101–2 and 105–6) he overran the whole of Dacia and made it into a new province of the Empire. He thus achieved the last major conquest in the history of ancient Rome; and in the process he laid hands on an enormous quantity of plunder, including a great deal of gold.

His troops in action during the campaigns are shown in meticulous detail upon the reliefs spiralling upwards on the Column of Trajan in his Forum at Rome. The imperial army was perhaps 400,000 strong. It included some 180,000 legionaries, forming 30 legions (each larger in size than in earlier times), which were no longer predominantly Italian but consisted almost entirely of conscripted provincials. The auxiliaries were even more numerous, exceeding a total of 200,000. There were also perhaps some 11,000 men in irregular or semi-regular troops, drawn from various nations of the Empire and organized in companies about 300 strong. The creation of these *numeri* (units) or *symmachiarii* (allies), as they were called, represented an attempt to make use of the specialist skills and qualities of particular national groups.

In the east, Trajan rounded off the frontier in 106–12 by creating a new province of Arabia, with its capital at Petra, now in Jordan. But although his contemporary Arrian declared that he at first sought a peaceful solution with Parthia, his overriding purpose was to finish off, once and for all, the problem that country had presented for so long, by nothing short of its total destruction and annexation. In 114 he successfully invaded Armenia and upper (northern) Mesopotamia, and in the following year captured the Parthian capital Ctesiphon and marched on southwards as far as the mouth of the River Tigris on the Persian Gulf. But in 116 the Jews of the Dispersion broke into a wholly unprecedented violent insurrection at a number of centres throughout the near and middle eastern world. In addition to local discontents, Messianic yearnings were a factor, intensified by memories of TITUS' destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Moreover, many of the eastern Jews resented the general tax on their communities (the *fiscus Judaicus*), and sympathized with Parthia (under whose rule many of them lived), believing that its eclipse at the

hands of the Romans would disrupt their trade. Apparently, however, the initial outbreak occurred among the large Jewish community of Cyrenaica, under a certain Andreas Lukuas (the Lycian?), who first fought the local Greeks and then turned against Roman rule. His rebellion was savagely stamped out, but meanwhile hostilities on a scale that had never before been seen broke out between Greeks and Jews in Egypt as well. A leading general, Quintus Marcius Turbo, who had been sent with a substantial force to crush these disturbances, had to deal, in addition, with a fierce upheaval in Cyprus, where a Jewish leader, Artemion, devastated Salamis. A rising seems also to have started in Judaea itself, though it was quickly and harshly suppressed by Rome's foremost cavalry commander, Lusius Quietus, a Mauretanian.

Meanwhile in the vast, all too sketchily annexed territories of Mesopotamia, Trajan had encountered further and even more serious trouble. In 116 the southern part of the country rose in general revolt. At the same time the Parthian forces rallied, and attacked the Roman base-lines in the north of Mesopotamia, as well as in Adiabene and Armenia. Trajan's lines of communication were menaced and attacked at numerous points. He succeeded, to some extent, in reasserting control, and even set up a puppet Parthian monarch in the palace at Ctesiphon, though this pretender proved unable to establish himself. Before his failure became clear, however, Trajan had set out towards home. But when he had got only as far as Selinus in Cilicia (south-eastern Asia Minor), he became immobilized by dropsy complicated by a stroke, and suddenly died.

During the pauses between his wars he had found time to become an effective civilian administrator. He adhered to traditional constitutional forms and staunchly confirmed the privileges of the senate. The material needs of the people also received his devoted attention. The grain supply was safeguarded and free distributions continued, with more numerous recipients than before. Another of Trajan's achievements was the institution (developed from earlier beginnings) of the *alimenta*, a system of financial subsidies for poor children. Accession gifts, such as Rome's subjects had been obliged to present to previous emperors, were no longer required, and the burden of taxation in the provinces was lightened. Governors of provinces were chosen with particular care – though provincial and local finances, which had in certain areas got out of control, were sometimes entrusted to specially appointed administrators, such as Sextus Quinctilius Valerius Maximus in Achaea, and Pliny the younger in Bithynia. A series of Pliny's surviving letters addressed to the emperor, together with his replies, displays Trajan's humane care for the welfare of the provincials; but this was combined with a suspicious pre-occupation with internal security, and a paternalistic tendency to interfere in the unsatisfactory affairs of the ostensibly self-governing cities. In one of these letters, Pliny enquired how to deal with the sect of the Christians. 'They are not to be hunted out,' Trajan answered. 'Any who are accused and convicted

should be punished, with the proviso that if a man says he is not a Christian and makes it obvious by his actual conduct – namely by worshipping our gods – then, however suspect he may have been with regard to the past, he should gain pardon from his repentance.' This reply, tempering firmness with a distaste for excessive severity, shows that he was concerned to cool the temperature rather than add to its heat.

Throughout his reign there was an ever-increasing programme of public works, including a great network of roads and bridges throughout the Empire. His colony founded in 100 for ex-soldiers at Thamugadi in Numidia, designed on camp lines with senate-house, basilica and Forum at the intersection of the two provincial streets, provides the most complete Roman remains to be seen anywhere in Africa. In Italy, his imposing Aqua Trajana, the last of the aqueducts serving the capital, substantially increased its inhabitants' daily supply of water. Fed by springs in the region of Lake Sabatinus, the aqueduct extended to the city's Janiculum Hill, driving the industrial mills in the area, and then passed to the other bank of the river and ended, as recent discoveries have shown, on the Esquiline Hill.

The Esquiline was also the location of Trajan's Baths, built on top of the main residential wing of Nero's Golden House and inaugurated in 109, two days before the Aqua Trajana. Although not much can be seen of the Baths now, their plan can be approximately reconstructed. It is clear that in sheer bulk they exceeded anything that had been seen before; that is to say, they were the earliest of the city's really extensive thermal establishments, of which eleven were eventually constructed. The bathing accommodation which formed the nucleus of Trajan's edifice, adjusted for a variety of different air and water temperatures, was three times the size of the adjoining Baths of Titus. It centred upon an enormous cross-vaulted central hall, surrounded by an outer precinct which housed the manifold social activities of a community centre. This massive, up-to-date, utilitarian and monumental *tour de force* was the work of Trajan's architect Apollodorus of Damascus, a master of the contemporary medium of concrete which made it possible for these soaring arches, apses and vaults to be constructed with such confidence.

Apollodorus was also the planner of the Forum of Trajan, the latest, most complex and most magnificent of the Fora added to the original Forum Romanum by a series of emperors. It occupied an approximate rectangle (182 by 120 yards), created by deeply cutting back the entire lower slopes of the Quirinal Hill. Trajan's Forum included Greek and Latin libraries, which, like most of the Forum, are no longer to be seen. The Column which was erected between the two libraries to celebrate the conquest of Dacia, however, still stands. Nearby was the apsed, colonnaded Hall of the Basilica Ulpia; and the extensive colonnaded open space of the Forum, flanked to north and south by semi-circular recesses, contained an equestrian statue of the emperor himself.

The northern recess formed the curved façade of the Markets of Trajan

which lay beyond and above. Covering three levels of terraces, and comprising more than a hundred and fifty shops and offices, the markets were built of concrete faced with durable, kiln-baked, heat-resistant brick, which was now allowed to show itself, uncovered by marble or stone, as the decorative outer surface of the building. The focal point of the precinct was a market hall, consisting of a single cross-vaulted rectangular space, twenty-eight yards long and ten across.

Numerous slogans on Trajan's coins, and the *Panegyricus* written by the younger Pliny, echo the emperor's desire to be the servant and benefactor of humankind, the earthly vicegerent of heaven. His aim was to rule not as *dominus* or lord but as *princeps*, the appellation devised by AUGUSTUS; and the term is united with his special title 'Optimus' (the best) – reminiscent of Jupiter himself, who was known as *Optimus Maximus* – on a great series of coins issued from 103 onwards. His military policy, in the end, had scarcely fulfilled the highest hopes; nonetheless, senators of the later Empire felt justified in voicing the desire that new emperors should be 'more fortunate than Augustus, better than Trajan' (*felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*). Indeed Eutropius, who relates this, makes it clear that he even ranks Trajan *above* Augustus, admiring him particularly because he respected the prerogatives of the senate. Another historian, Florus, regards his reign as a miracle of Roman rebirth.

Trajan was a tall and well-built man, with an air of serious dignity enhanced by early greyness. 'He was most conspicuous', pronounced Dio Cassius,

> for his justice, for his bravery, and for the simplicity of his habits. . . . He did not envy or slay any one, but honoured and exalted all good men without exception, and hence he neither feared nor hated any of them. To slanders he paid very little heed, and he was no slave of anger. He refrained from taking other people's money, and from unjust murders. He expended vast sums on wars and vast sums on works of peace; and while making very many urgently needed repairs to roads and harbours and public buildings, he drained no one's blood in any of these undertakings. . . . He joined others in the chase and in banquets, as well as in their labours and plans and jests. . . . He would enter the houses of citizens, sometimes even without a guard, and enjoy himself there. Education in the strict sense he lacked, when it came to speaking, but its substance he both knew and applied. I know, of course, that he was devoted to boys and to wine. And if he had ever committed or endured any base or wicked action as the result of these practices, he would have incurred censure. As it was, however, he drank all the wine he wanted, yet remained sober. And in his relation with boys he harmed no one.

Trajan and his family exemplified the rise of the provincial element within the ruling class. His austere-looking wife Pompeia Plotina, who was related to him – and who attended his death-bed – came from Nemausus in southern Gaul (which was as Romanized as his own Spanish homeland, or more so). She and the emperor's sister Ulpia Marciana were both made Augusta in about 105; and when Marciana died later in the year she was deified, and her

daughter Matidia (who died in 119) received the title of Augusta in her place. Deification was also conferred on Trajan's father.

HADRIAN
117–38

HADRIAN (Publius Aelius Hadrianus) (117–38) was born in 76 – probably at Rome, though his family lived in Italica in Baetica, to which they had originally come from Picenum in north-eastern Italy. He was the son of Publius Aelius Hadrianus Afer (meaning 'African', perhaps recalling official service in Mauretania) and of Domitia Paulina of Gades; his father's father, a member of the Roman senate, had married TRAJAN's aunt Ulpia. After Hadrian's father had died in 85, he was entrusted to the care of two guardians, Publius Acilius Attianus and the future emperor Trajan himself, whose childless household he joined.

Enrolling in the army, he served as military tribune (*tribunus militum*) of legions stationed in Lower Pannonia, Lower Moesia and Upper Germany. Then, following Trajan's accession, Hadrian accompanied him to Rome, where in 100 he married Vibia Sabina, the daughter of Trajan's niece Matidia Augusta. Next he served as quaestor, staff officer, legionary commander and praetor in the First and Second Dacian Wars respectively, subsequently becoming governor of Lower Pannonia and, in 108, consul. He was appointed governor of Syria during the Parthian War of the following decade, and in 117 was designated for a second consulship to take effect the following year.

Trajan died at Selinus on 8 August; on the 9th it was announced at Antioch that he had adopted Hadrian as his son and successor; but it was not until the 11th that Trajan's death was reported. His widow Pompeia Plotina endorsed the adoption, but there were grave doubts as to whether the dying emperor had ever performed it – doubts not resolved by coinages which were immediately issued to proclaim the event, including one describing Hadrian as Caesar but not yet Augustus (HADRIANO TRAIANO CAESARI).

Whether he had in fact been adopted or not, the army hailed him as emperor, and the senate (although some of its members felt that they themselves possessed superior qualifications) had no option but to do likewise.

Hadrian addressed the senators with respectful tact, swearing that he would never put any of them to death and requesting the deification of his predecessor. Then, however, he struck out on his own, putting into effect an eastern military policy in direct contrast to Trajan's. He was convinced by the recent widespread Mesopotamian disturbances that his predecessor's aggressive endeavours had outrun the Empire's financial and human resources; so he abruptly abandoned Trajan's expansionist ambitions, renouncing his newly created provinces and leaving their territories (insofar as Roman authority prevailed there any longer) in the hands of client-kings. On the northern frontiers, however, to which he next proceeded in person to suppress the Roxolani and other Sarmatian peoples (who were of Iranian origin), he confirmed Trajan's annexation of Dacia, which was subdivided into two provinces and then into three.

Even before his intentions about the eastern frontier were fully known, there had been signs of dangerous internal opposition to his régime. His former guardian Attianus, now praetorian prefect, warned him of three powerful figures who might well become seditious. One of them, Gaius Calpurnius Crassus – who had also been no friend of Trajan's – met his death, it was claimed, without instructions from Hadrian. As for the other two possible conspirators, the emperor preferred to ignore them; but in 118 there were reports of a far more serious plot, which caused Hadrian, spending the winter at Nicomedia in Bithynia, to hasten to Rome. By then, however, the senate itself had dealt with the matter by executing four eminent ex-consuls who had been intimate with Trajan, including the military man Lusius Quietus (removed by Hadrian from Judaea) and the wealthy and well-connected Gaius Avidius Nigrinus, who had been considered a possible successor to Hadrian. It is probable that this group had objected strongly to the new emperor's frontier retreat. Hadrian asserted, once again, that he had never sanctioned or known of their deaths, and put the blame on Attianus, who was replaced but promoted to consular rank. The senators remained sceptical and unforgiving, in the belief that Hadrian had broken his promise never to execute any of their number.

Before long Hadrian began to make journeys round the Empire, and he continued to do so, becoming the greatest of all imperial travellers. Between 121 and 132 he spent an enormous amount of time personally touring the length and breadth of the provinces, discovering the problems of their populations at first hand, gaining their confidence and satisfying their needs and requests. Then, during the next year or so, he issued a varied and unparalleled series of coinages celebrating all these regions of the Roman world by name, and distinguishing them by different designs that personified