

# The Buildings and the Images of the Imperial Cult



X The Antonines

## Antoninus Pius (86 – 161)

- married Faustina the Elder, had 4 children, 3 died, Faustina the Younger survived
- adopted Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus
- was *pious* to his ancestor, the Senate and family
- after the death of his wife – The Temple of Faustina on the Roman Forum

### Cult:

- insisted on deifying Hadrian (difficult relationship with the Senate after his reign dedicated to Greece and Eastern part of the empire)
- attitude to his own cult – not expressed in the works of historians, but watched closely so that Hadrian and Faustina were deified
- after his death – deified immediately and joined Faustina in her temple in the Roman Forum



## Lucius Verus (130 – 169 AD)

- his father was a first adopted son of Hadrian, died before him
- a co-ruler with Marcus Aurelius (adopted by Antoninus Pius)
- spent much time abroad
- married Lucilla (daughter of Marcus Aurelius)
- deified by the Roman Senate after death
- not interested in a cult, a commander



## Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180)

- married Faustina the Younger (his adopted sister)
  - at least 13 children, one of them Commodus
  - little is known about his cult – not interested in it, a Stoic philosopher
- little about Marcus' cult in his writings – wrote to the *boule* of Athens in 179 to modify its offer of gold and silver statues as honors more suited to the gods, accepting bronze busts
- the context of the modest reply to the *boule* is unknown (harks back to Julio-Claudian precedents – possibly intended to reflect on the good character of the new Augustus, Commodus)



## Commodus (161 – 192)

- married Bruttia Crispina, no children
- Saoterus, Cleander – main advisors
- as a sole ruler – not considerate at all
- his identification as god is quite common – Roman Hercules
- adorned himself with a lion-skin head-dress and carried a club, paraded through Rome as Hercules
- wanted to show his “divine powers” in the amphitheatre on 1<sup>st</sup> January 193 (but murdered on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 192 AD)



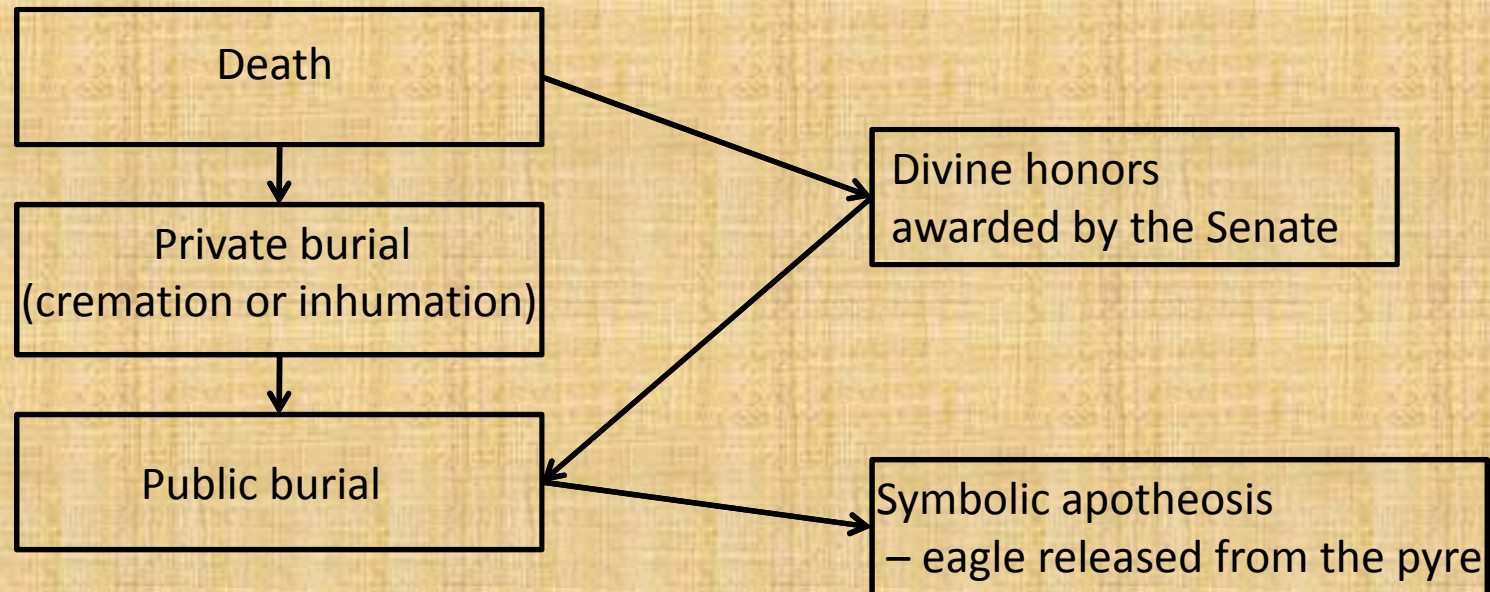
## Funeral and apotheosis

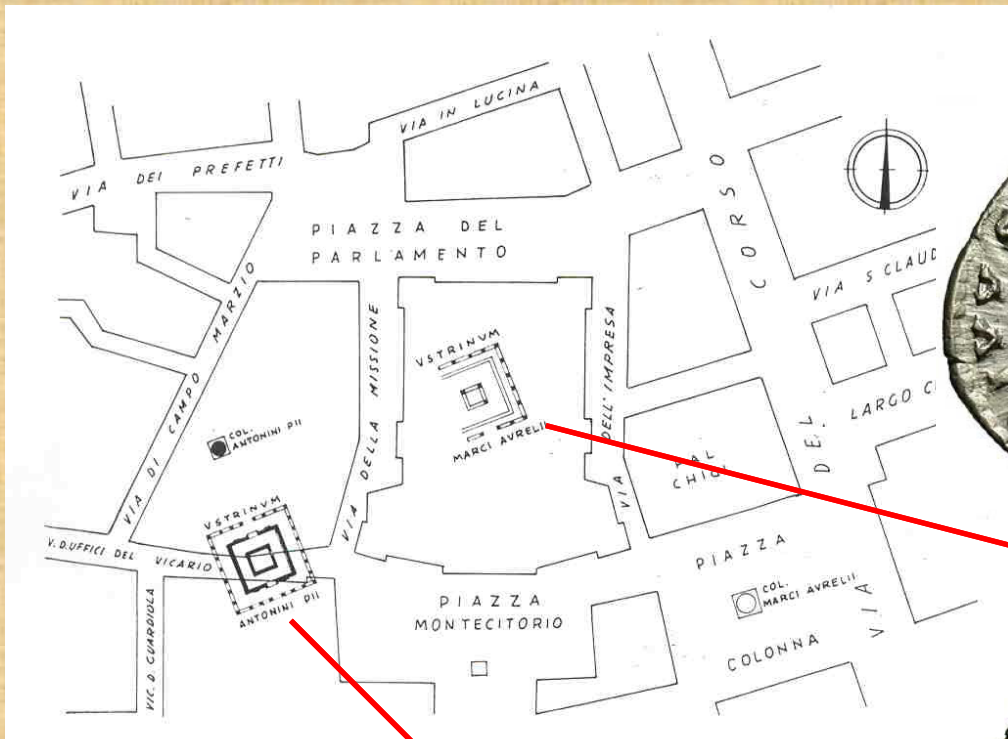
- emperors – two funerals:

a) shortly after death – cremation or inhumation, deposition in the family tomb

b) after the senatorial deification – public, spectacular event, a wax effigy of the emperor was burned and an eagle was released

- what caused this change – unknown, the place of deaths?





**ROME**



## The Column of Antoninus Pius

- Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus honoring Antoninus Pius and Faustina
- red granite column and a marble base with an inscription on one side, figural sculpture on the other 3 sides
- Antoninus Pius and Faustina Elder – buried in the mausoleum of Hadrian
- location: Campus Martius, the place of Antoninus *ustrinum*
- two panels – *decursio* – in honor of the deceased emperor, counterclockwise, circling the funeral pyre, one led by Marcus Aurelis the other by Lucius Verus
- dedicatory inscription



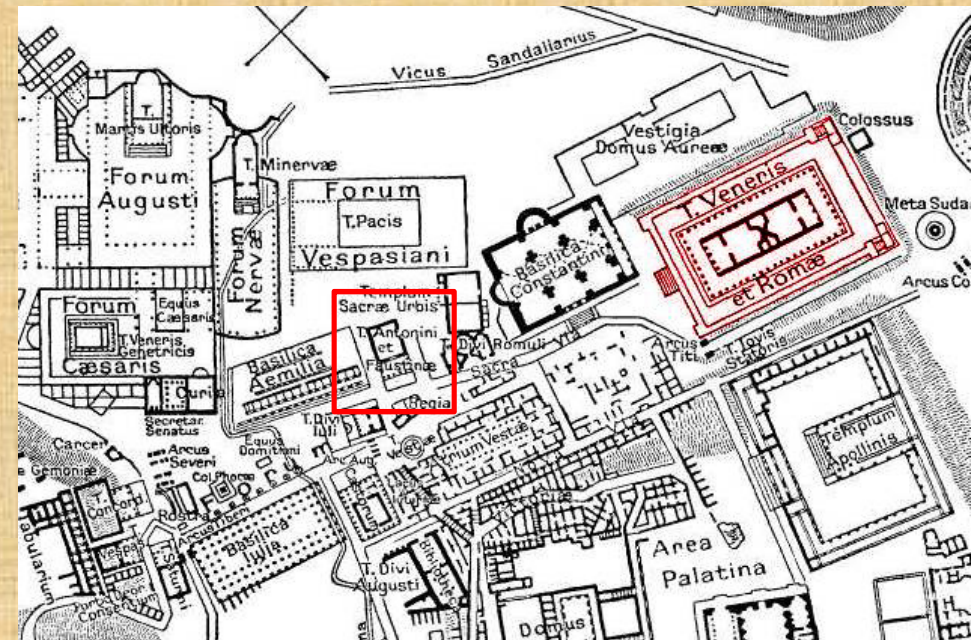
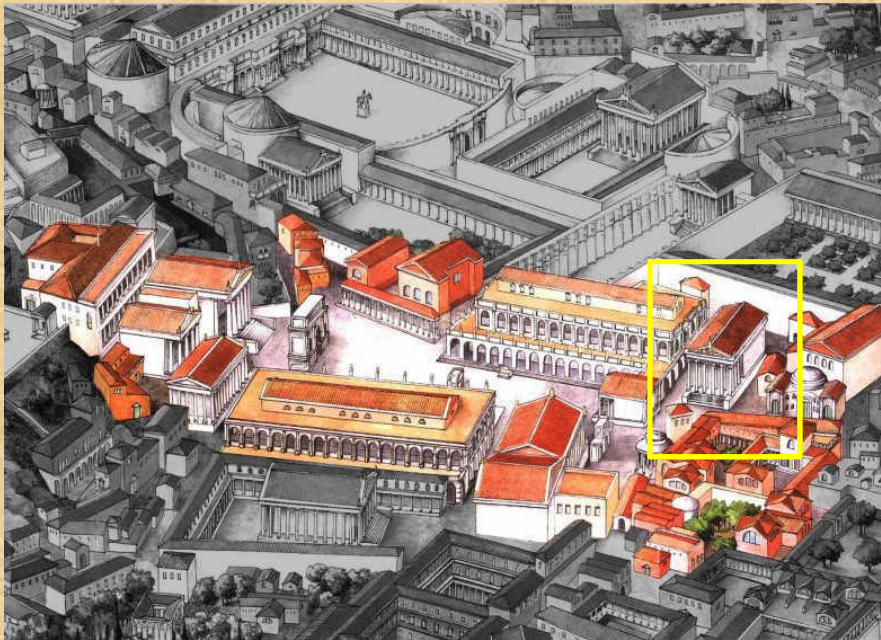
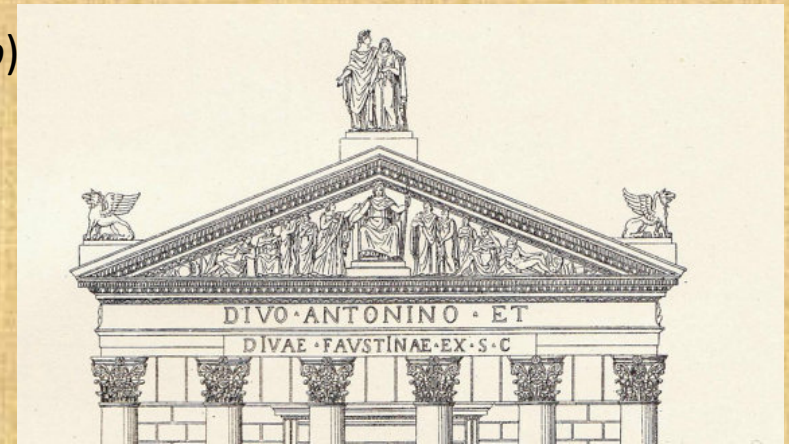
## The Column of Antoninus Pius - apotheosis

- similar to Sabina from the Arco di Portogallo
- the scene in *Campus Martius* – personification of it reclining, seminude, holding an obelisk
- on the right – Roma in Amazon costume and wearing a helmet sits on a pile of armor and weapons, in the shield – Romulus, Remus, the she –wolf
- genius of the *saeculum aereium* (Golden Age) – transports the deceased on his back, grasps a globe
- Antoninus Pius – carries a scepter crowned by an eagle – Jupiter’s attribute
- Faustina Elder – Juno, the veil
- flanked by two eagles – symbols of their souls
- classicizing style – stylistically the same as Sabina’s apotheosis

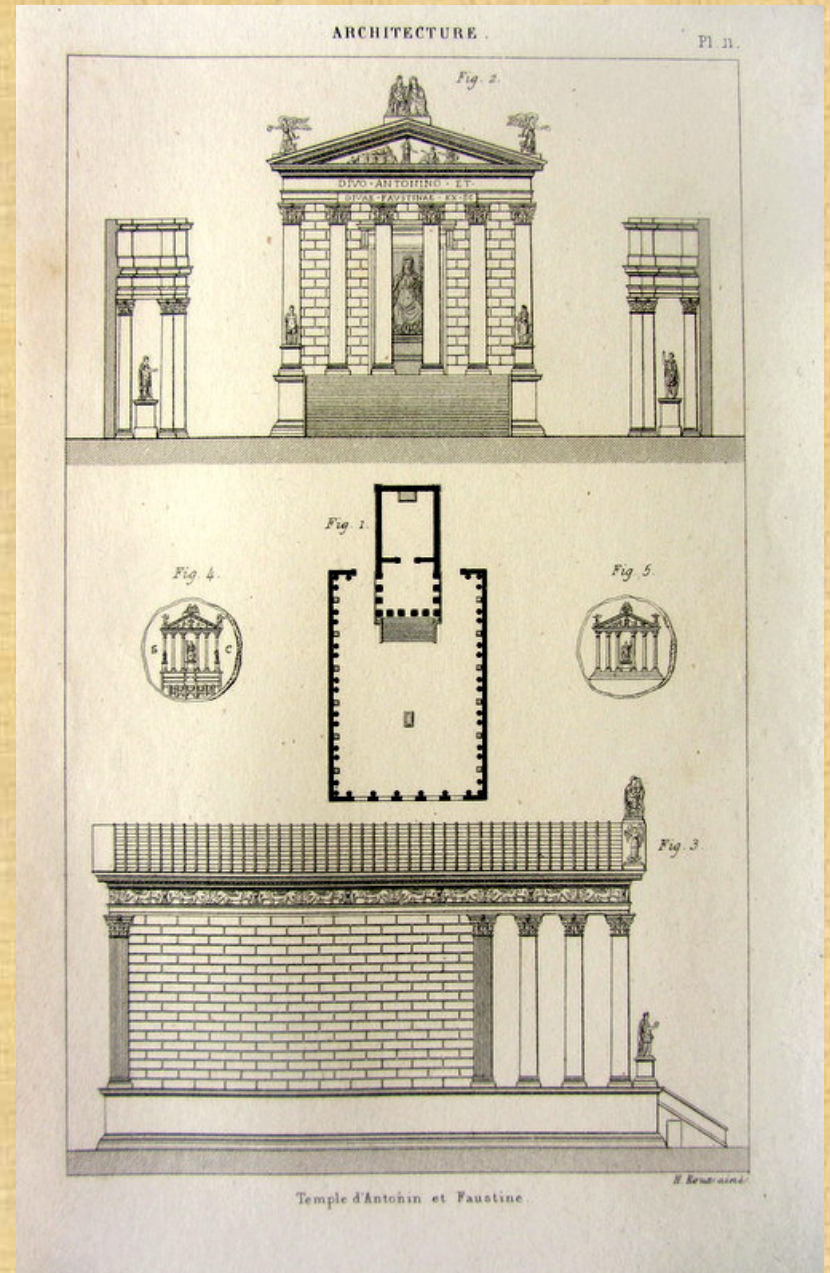


## The temple of Antoninus and Faustina

- north of the Regia, church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda was later incorporated
- identified by an inscription:  
*Divo Antonino et / Divae Faustinae ex S(enatus) c(onsulto)*
- 141 AD – by Antoninus Pius in honor of his wife Faustina
- at the death of the emperor – temple also dedicated to him (the first line of the inscription was added)



- the temple: large podium, a front stairway, remains of the brick altar, façade – 6 columns of cipollino (Euboea), Corinthian capitals in white marble
- the cella: peperino, *opus quadratum*, marble frieze – two long sides – facing griffins set amid a vegetal motif in heraldic fashion
- cold, classicizing manner of the Antonine period, exterior – clad with marble
- statues: on the podium beyond the columns



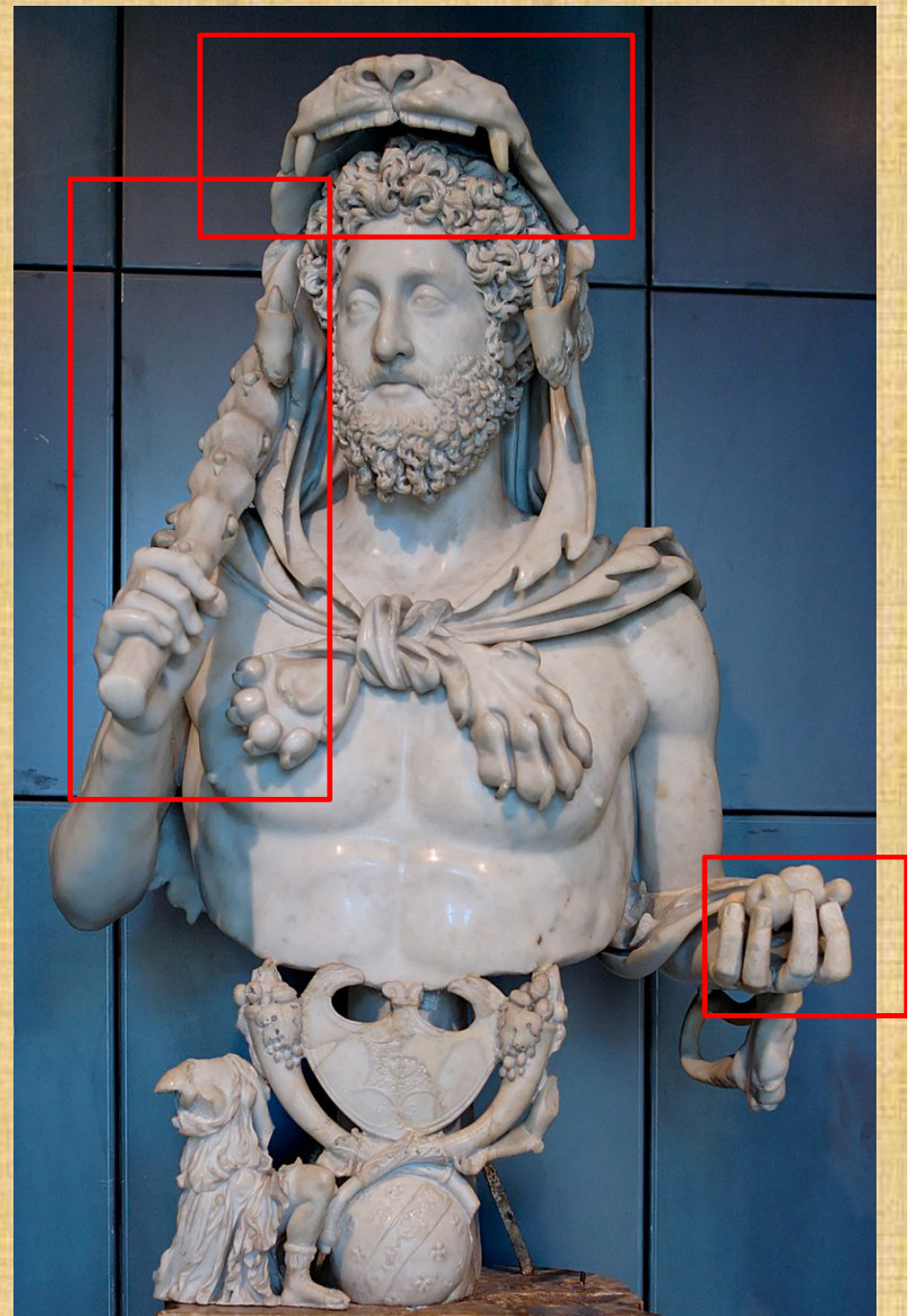
- grooves: cut across the high part of the columns – to fix the ropes – attempt to pull the building down, monolithic shafts – greater resistance than was foreseen
- the central column on the left – drawings representing Hercules and the Nemean Lion (among other subjects), may have been inspired by statues visible from there





## Commodus as Hercules

- discovered on the Esquiline (1874)
- a portrait type known from about 12 other copies – 191 – 192 AD
- bare chest including arms and hands: right hand – club, left hand – apples of the Hesperides
- crowned with a lion-skin headdress of Hercules, the paws are tied across his chest



-the bust rests on an Amazon *pelta* above  
crossed *cornucopiae* and an orb

- on the left – kneeling Amazon – now  
headless, originally balanced by a  
counterpart

- Herculanean subject underscored by 3 signs  
of the Zodiac – the bull, Capricorn, Scorpion –  
on the orb

-all of them refer to the month October –  
number of important events in the life of the  
emperor

- *pelta* and kneeling Amazon – Rome's  
enemies – over which Commodus has  
triumphed

- has brought peace and prosperity

- *cornucopiae* – to the empire (orb)





- the bust originally flanked by 2 tritons, who held a *parapetasma* (curtain) above his head – known from contemporary sarcophagi
- original position – not known – likely a public place



**PROVINCES**

## Characteristics:

- about 35 cities – *neokoroi* for the temples of emperors (11 temples known from its ruins)

## Temples:

- temples always free standing – interesting, the only Etruscan temple – Sebasteion
- large, prominently placed, when newly built, Corinthian, followed Hellenistic rather than contemporary Roman models, conservative in their decorative program, multiple columns, aediculated façade of the marble style
- even more temples appear on coins – many of them don't exist anymore
  
- 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD – explosion in the number of temples in Asia

## Statues:

- standard statues, colossal size, acrolithic – wooden core, only head, hands, legs and feet of marble, clothing
  
- moving the statue of an emperor (or emperors) into a standing temple – common practice since the mid. 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD

## **Koinon**

- association of cities of similar ethnic background within a region, borders didn't conform to those of Roman provinces
- also several *koina* within one province
- no administrative or governmental capabilities, only an association to govern the cult of emperors (an association joining the *neokoroia*)
- in the West – *concilia*
- no *neokoroi* - Crete, Cyprus, Lycaonia, Syria – but had *koina*

## Officials:

- *chief priest* – presided imperial temples and their ceremonies, wore an imperial portrait busts on his crown, 1 chief priest per year (*agonothetes*, *hierophantes*, or “the chief priest of ...”)
- *hymmodoi* – sang emperor's praises, 40 men
- *theologoi* – celebrated imperial gods in prose
- *thesmodoi* – deliverers of precepts or oracles
- *grammateis* – secretaries
- *neopoioi* – in charge of temple's fabric, oversaw funds



Sardis, Lydia

Laodikeia, Phrygia (Lydia or Caria?)

Amaseia, Pontus

Sagalassos, Pisidia

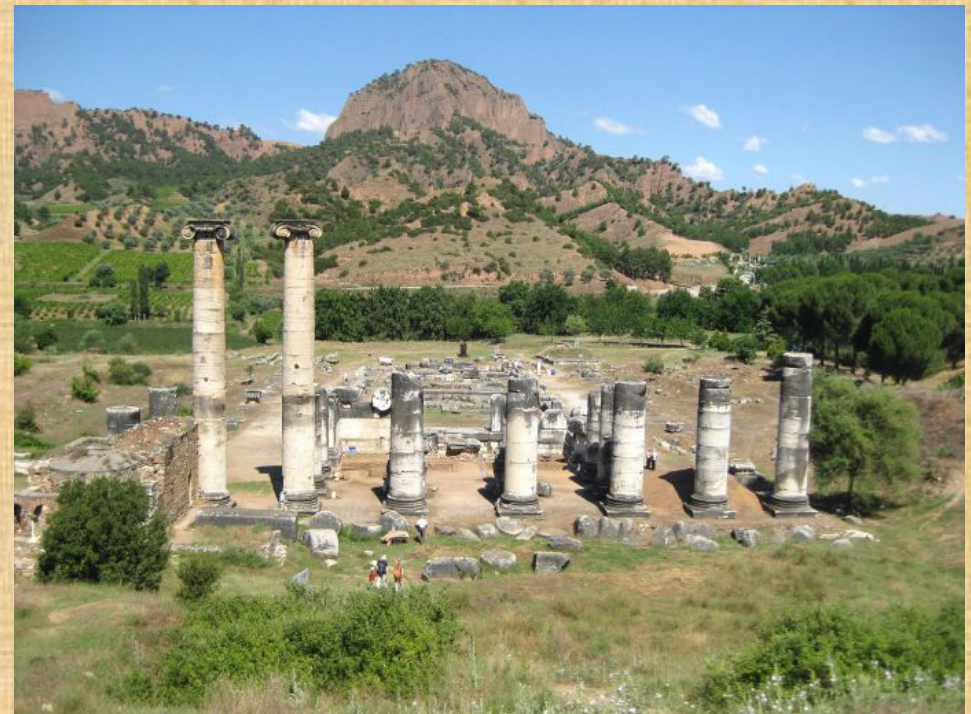
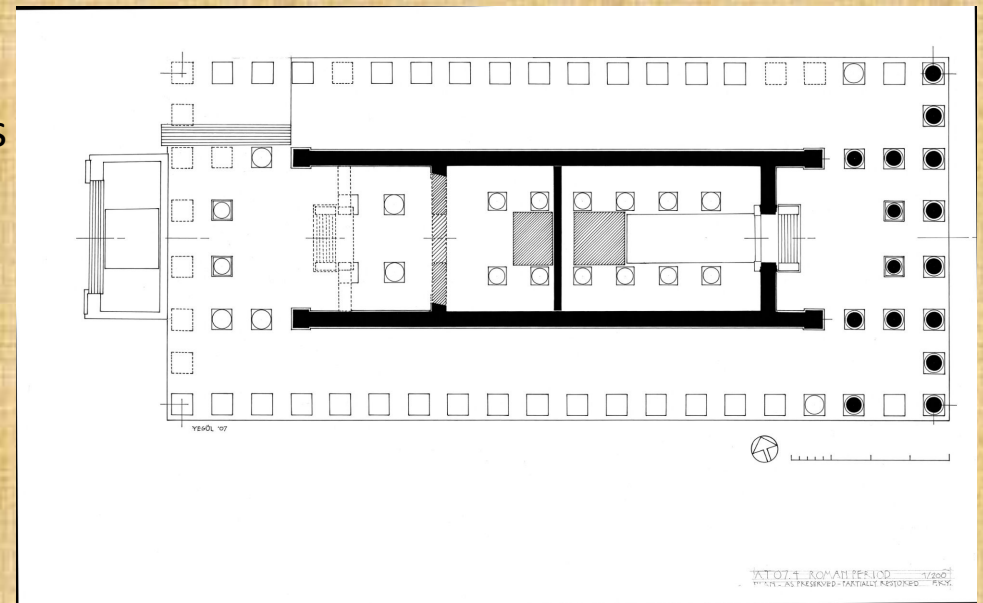
Nikomedia, Bithynia

## Sardis – The temple of Artemis

- Antoninus Pius
- previously: a provincial temple of Tiberius, his mother and the Senate
- Antoninus Pius – neokoros 2<sup>nd</sup> time – in the the temple of Artemis
- 1882 – a colossal statue head of Faustina found in ruins, later lower part of Antoninus' head, together 3 male and 3 female colossal statues
- two deities worshipped – Artemis and the Antonines

### The temple

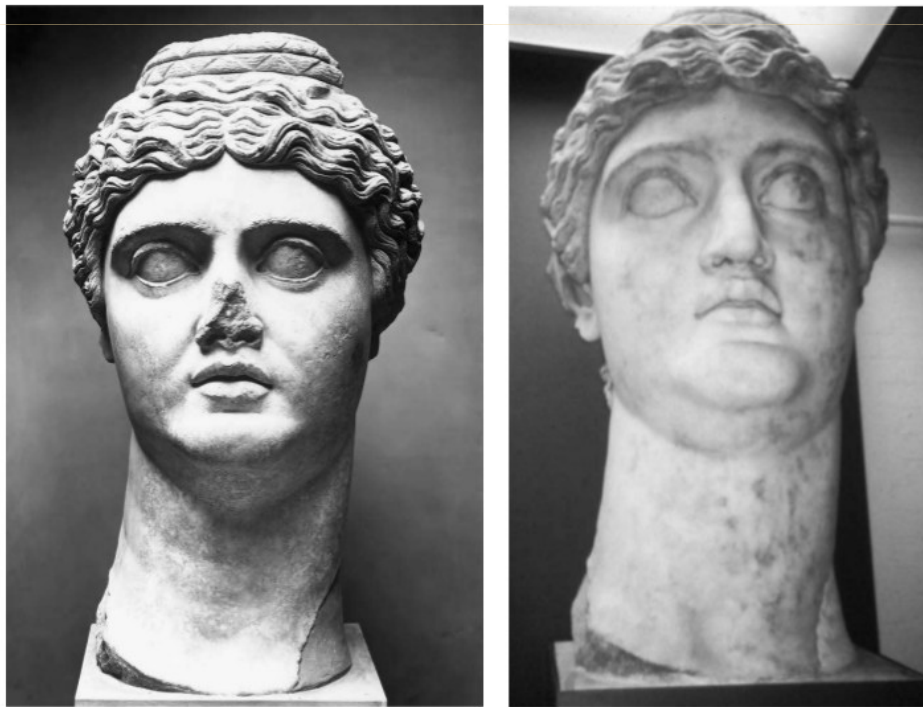
- 8 x 20 columns, *pseudodipteros*
- ionic order
- began in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – introduction of the cult of Zeus
- opened to the west
- later the *cella* divided by a long wall in half and a door in eastern wall of *opisthodomos* – two back to back *cellas*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD – to accommodate the provincial imperial cult (*opisthodomos*)



## The statues:

### *Antoninus Pius*

- 4 times life-size, nude, seated, likely held a scepter or a spear in his left hand, head strongly turned to the left
- recalls Zeus, also called Olympios in Sardis
- not a known portrait type

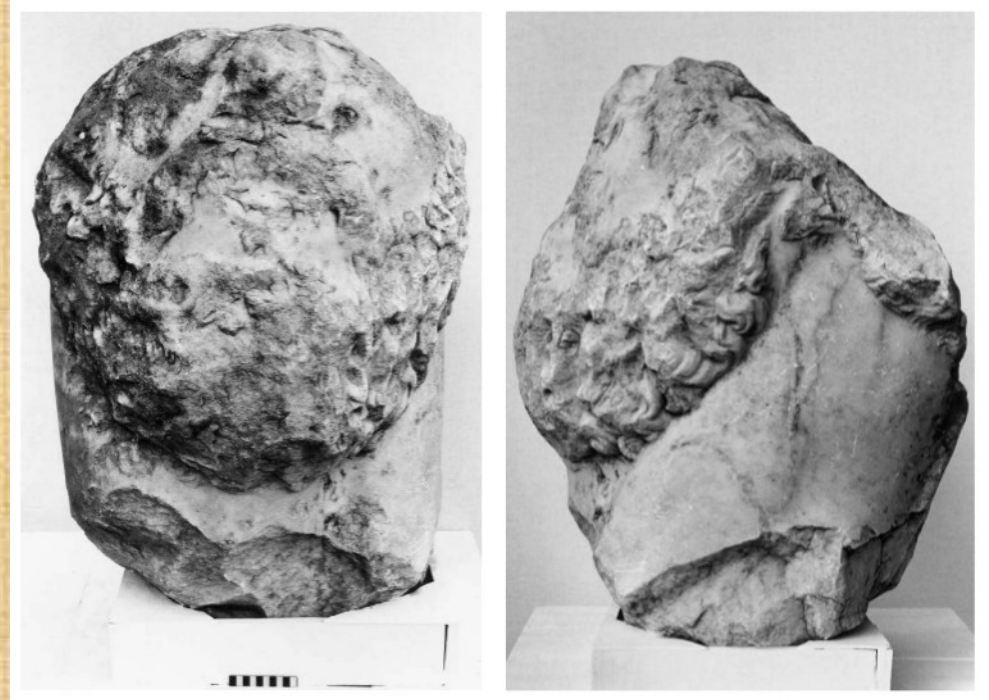


### *Faustina the Elder*

- acrolithic head – characteristic Faustina’s posthumous portrait type known from coins
- similar to Hera – a perfect match for the “Zeus”
- head turned slightly to her right, exaggerated eyes
- 3 - 3.5 life-size

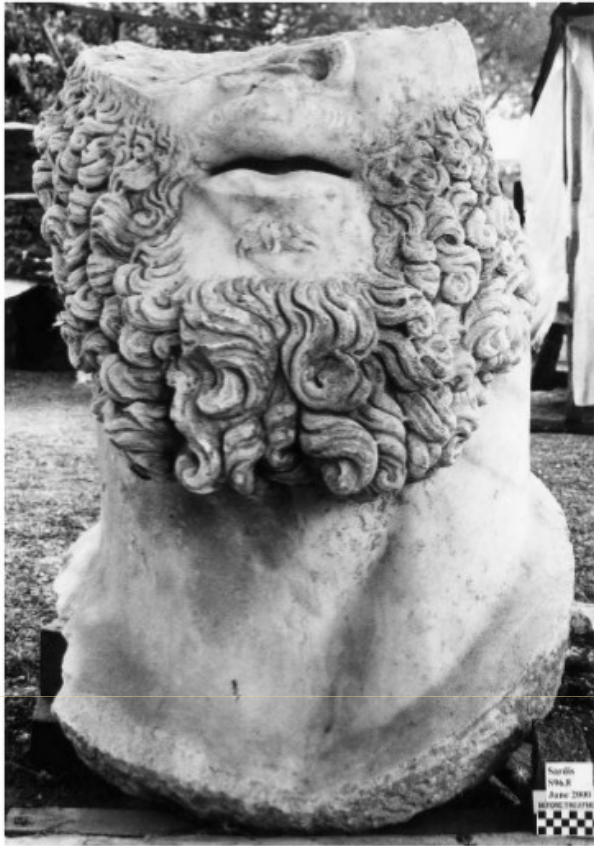
*Marcus Aurelius*

- 4 times life-size, three separate locks starting under the lower lip
- other fragments of the head and a hand curved as if holding a scepter
- thought to be Hellenistic – chisel work/drill



*Faustina the Younger*



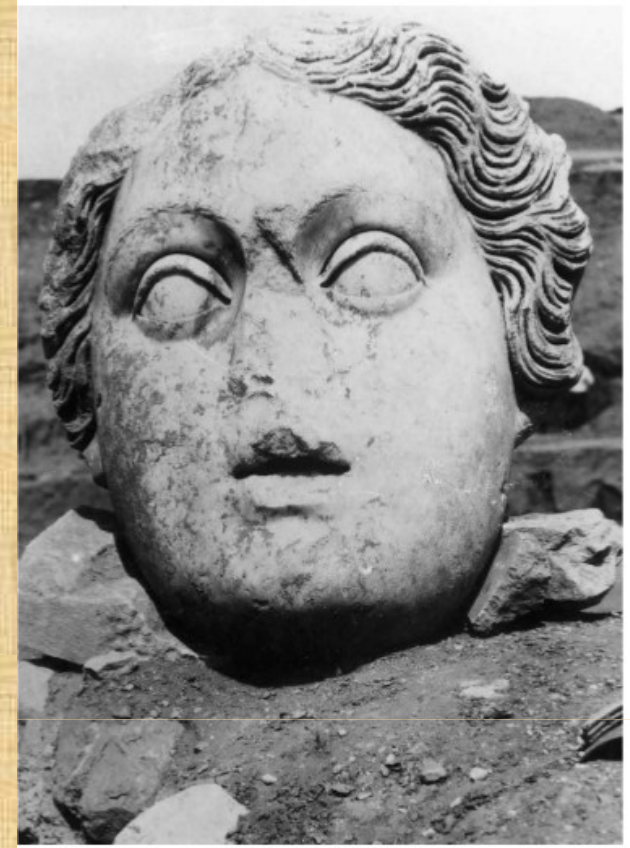


*Lucius Verus (or Commodus?)*

- 4 times life-size
- curling beard
- co-emperor

*Lucilla*

- broad, square, plump face
- eyes are unnaturally wide
- not possible to identify the hairstyle



organization: in pairs, scale differs – 1. males, 2. senior woman, 3. junior women, probably seated male statues and standing female

1. male statues – western part of the temple, female statues – eastern part, with Artemis
2. male and female statues together, placed in pairs

## Sagalassos (Pisidia)

- excavation campaigns 2003-2004, Belgium, Turkey
- the temple of divine Hadrian and Antoninus Pius
- the construction started during the reign of Hadrian
- top of the bedrock – phases of settlement pre-dating the sanctuary – early imperial period - Tiberius
- 500 AD – an earthquake – collapse of the temple
- occupation until the 11<sup>th</sup> c. AD



- the temple stood on a large *temenos*: 82 x 60 m, ionic porticoes on 4 sides, entrance through a *propylon*
- paved courtyard
- the temple was Corinthian, 6 x 11 columns, rich vegetal ornament
- *pronaos* almost as deep as the *cella*
- inscription on the architrave
- no trace of an altar – removed completely in the Byzantine period
- ritual waste deposit – related to the festivities connected with the cult



## Amaseia (Pontus)

- Marcus Aurelius
- capital of Pontic kingdom
- 1<sup>st</sup> *neokoros* – Trajan (coins) – temple similar to the one in Pergamon
- also 161/162 AD – *neokoros* – Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus – coins – no temple but refer to the concord of the two rulers



## Nikomedia (Bithynia)

- Saoterus of Nikomedia (180 – 182), Commodus' chamberlain – very influential
- Saoterus (officially Commodus and the Senate) gave the right to build a temple of Commodus (Cassius Dio), withdrew at Saoterus' fall
- citizens asked for festival and the temple (soon cancelled)
- no sign it was ever celebrated, the temple was built but later used as the temple of the imperial cult, not the temple of Commodus

## Laodikeia (Phrygia)

- Commodus made Laodikeia *neokoros*-inscriptions
- the same reason as Nikomedia – but through Cleander
- early in his reign, but *damnatio memoriae*
- rehabilitated by Septimius Severus (festivals) and Caracalla (*neokoria*)
- 1993 – 1999 – a survey – large colonnaded *temenos* near the city's eastern gate
- low podium at the back wall – monumental building
- probably a temple with spiral-fluted columns set on square bases (no excavations done there)
- only measures – the temple 30 x 65 m, mid. 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD (unsure until the excavations)
- how many times *neokoros*? – Commodus, Caracalla, Elagabalus

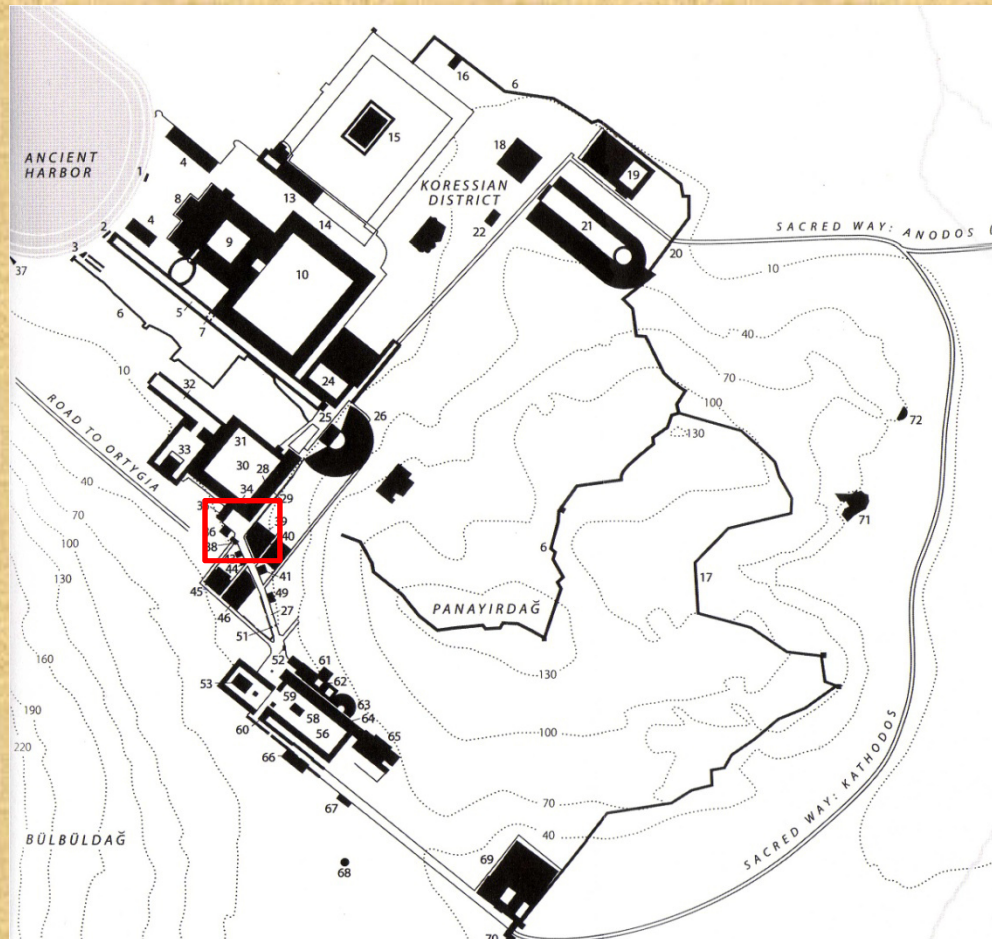


## The Great Antonine Altar at Ephesus

- location: in the centre of ancient Ephesus – near the Library of Celsus
- later reused as fronts for a later fountain basin
- now in Vienna
- date: highly controversial

140 – to glorify Hadrian and his adopted family

**169 – death of Lucius Verus** – celebrates his life – from adoption to *apotheosis* - later date preferable – mature head of Lucius Verus (being crowned by Victory, sitting among other gods and goddesses)



- U-shaped altar based on Hellenistic prototypes (Great Altar of Zeus in Pergamon)

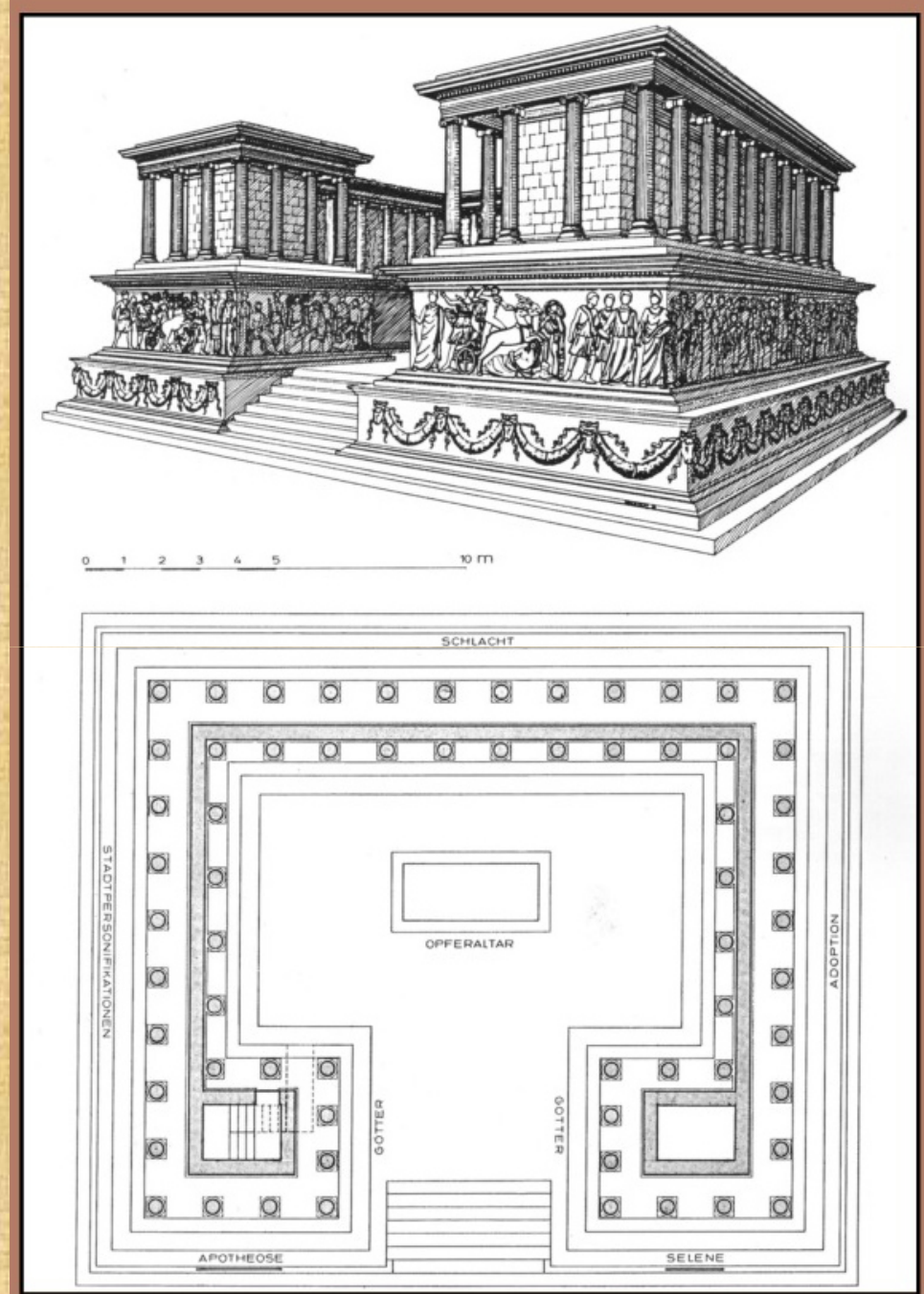
- slabs: 2 m high, about 31 m long frieze  
- the order cannot be reconstructed certainly - 3 sets of letters on the slabs - probably used as guidelines to set them up

- dimensions were altered when they were reused

- also the chronology of events could help to reconstruct the order

- styles: motionless, active

- two decorated podia - garlands and *bucrania* in the lower part, figural frieze around the whole structure







## Topics:

1. *Lucius Verus – adoption*
2. *Campaign in Parthia in 163 – 166 AD*
3. *Apotheosis of Lucius Verus*
4. *Divine sphere*

### 1. Lucius Verus – adoption

- 8 years old, a dynastic scene
- frontal depiction of the Antonine dynasty – seriousness of the event – as if posing for a formal portrait
- priestesses and the other figures – taking part in the ceremony – also frontally placed, motionless





- near the adoption scene – sacrifice (only a part of it survives) – 2 attendants flank the sacrificial bull, musicians in the background
- Sabina, Faustina the Elder – frontal – standing to the right of the sacrifice
- attendants – profile, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  view

## 2. Parthian campaign

-163-166 AD, accomplishments of the commander in the campaign, got a joined triumph with Marcus Aurelius

- scenes of combat – fight, dying barbarians, active scenes

a) several panels – two heroic Roman legionnaires walk beside three defeated Parthians (one kneels pulling an arrow from his back, the other slumped over the saddle)



b) Roman soldier in a tunic, helmet and a sword in hand raising right arm across his body – about to kill kneeling Parthian (even though holding a weapon, has a shield, helpless to defend himself), horse in the background – additional dramatic aspect



c) the combat continues – heroic suicide, death and destruction



d) personifications of cities of the empire – east and west – accompanied by river gods (depicted from the waist up), cities –  $\frac{3}{4}$ , blank background, similar to Hadrianeum, little movement



### 3. Apotheosis

- Lucius Verus – cuirass, stepping with the help of Victory into a chariot drawn by 2 horses and led by Helios and Virtus
- Tellus holding a *cornucopia*, and a child with fruits in its cloak (one of the seasons?)



#### 4. Divine sphere

- Olympian gods – Athena, Poseidon, Lucius Verus crowned by Victory

