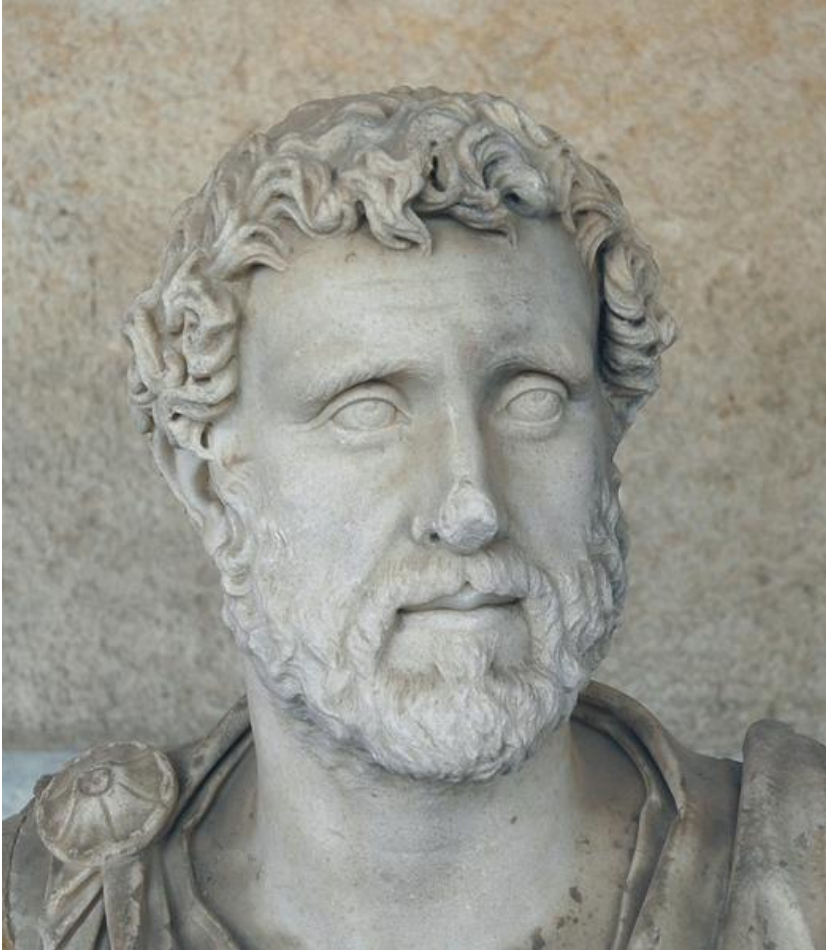




Lecture 26. The Antonines

Antoninus Pius



**Titus Aurelius Fulvus
Boionius Arrius
Antoninus** (19
September 86 – 7
March 161), generally
as **Antoninus Pius**,
emperor from 138 to
161.

Hadrian and the adoption of Antoninus

- On his 62nd birthday (24 January AD 138) Hadrian, by now of failing health, announced he was to adopt Antoninus Pius.
- In adopting Antoninus, Hadrian secured the immediate future of the empire. But 51 years old at the time and childless, Antoninus was not to be the main aim of Hadrian's intentions.
- The ceremony revealed that Hadrian's plans for the empire went beyond this election.
- The adoption of Antoninus implied simultaneously that Antoninus adopted Marcus Annius Verus (Marcus Aurelius), Hadrian's young nephew, and Lucius Ceionius Commodus, young son of the deceased Lucius Ceionius Commodus, who had been Hadrian's first choice as heir.

Antoninus Pius (138-161)

- He spent almost all his reign in Rome
- Cooperation with the Senate
- Emphasis on administration and jurisdiction
- No relevant military undertakings
- Emphasis on the imperial cult (Faustina)
- The empire seems to have attained its final shape
- Involvement of Marcus Aurelius in government

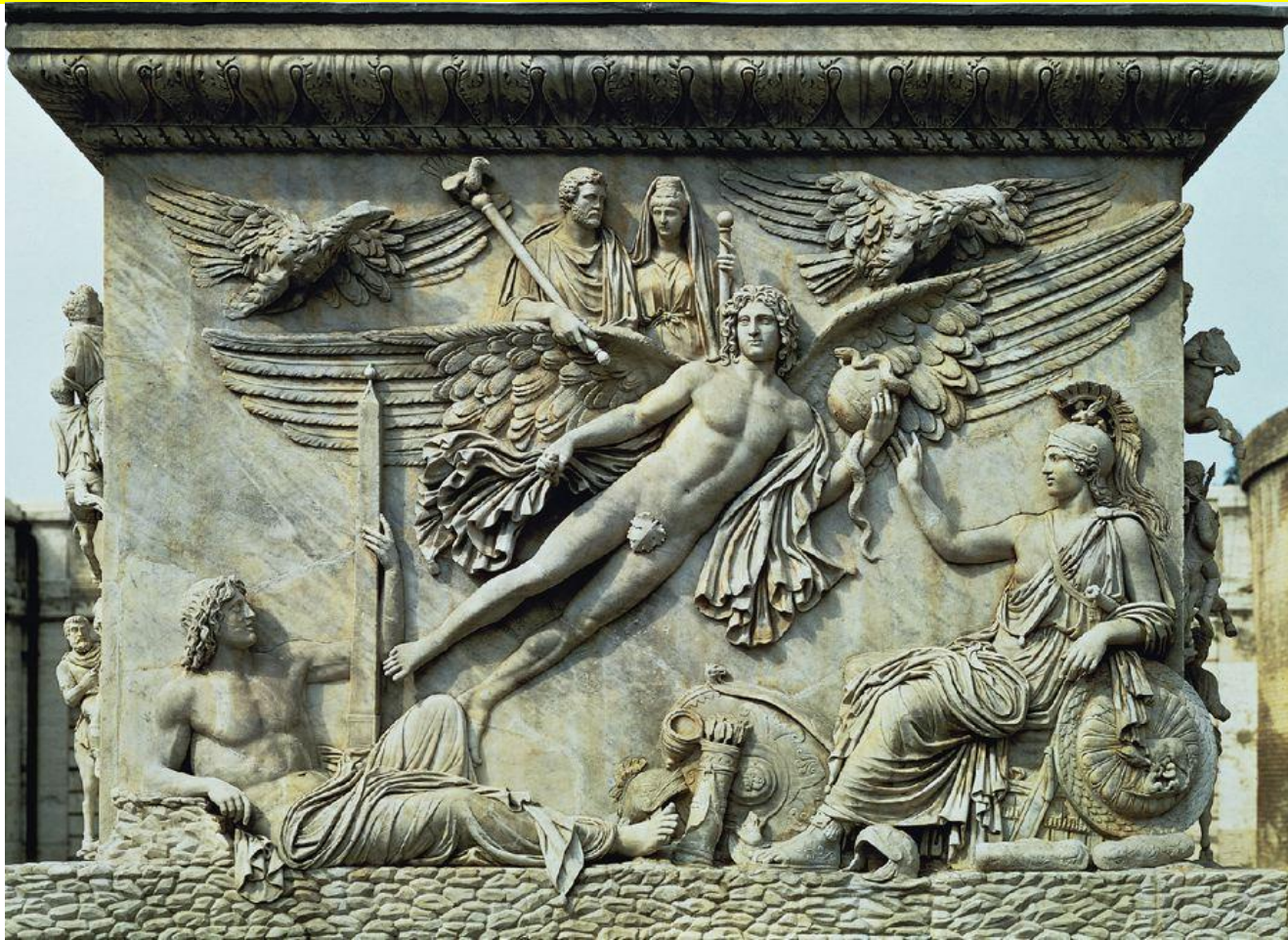
Historia Augusta, Life of Antoninus Pius, 2

- He was given the name of Pius by the senate, either because, when his father-in-law was old and weak, he lent him a supporting hand in his attendance at the senate (which act, indeed, is not sufficient as a token of great dutifulness, since a man were rather undutiful who did not perform this service than dutiful if he did), or because he spared those men whom Hadrian in his ill-health had condemned to death, or because after Hadrian's death he had unbounded and extraordinary honours decreed for him in spite of opposition from all, or because, when Hadrian wished to make away with himself, by great care and watchfulness he prevented him from so doing, or because he was in fact very kindly by nature and did no harsh deed in his own time.

Foreign policy: main events

- Southern Scotland was conquered, with Hadrian's wall being abandoned and a new defence - the Antonine Wall - being built ca. 40 miles further north.
- Brigands caused trouble in Mauretania (AD 150),
- Conflicts in Germany, an uprising took place in Egypt (AD 154), rebellions flared up in Judaea and Greece.
- Another rebellion arose in Dacia (AD 158) and conflicts ensued with the Alans.
- Status quo with the Parthians because of Armenia.

Consecratio of Antoninus and Faustina Maior



Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, from the base of the Column of Antoninus Pius, Campus Martius, Rome, Antonine period, after 161 A.D.

Young Marcus Aurelius



Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus
(26 April 121 – 17 March 180), emperor from 161 to his death in 180. He ruled with Lucius Verus as co-emperor from 161 until Lucius' death in 169.

Marcus Aurelius

- Chosen by Hadrian; adopted by Antoninus
- A first-class education
- Culture: Fronto and Herodes Atticus
- Deep intellectual interests: Stoicism and the *Meditations*
- Virtually co-ruler since 147
- An obvious choice for the succession in 161

Marcus Aurelius

- Chooses Lucius Verus as co-ruler in 161
- Emphasis on administration
- Military issues:
 - a) The Eastern front: Armenia and Parthia
 - b) Britain
 - c) Mauretania
 - d) The Northern frontier

Young Marcus Aurelius



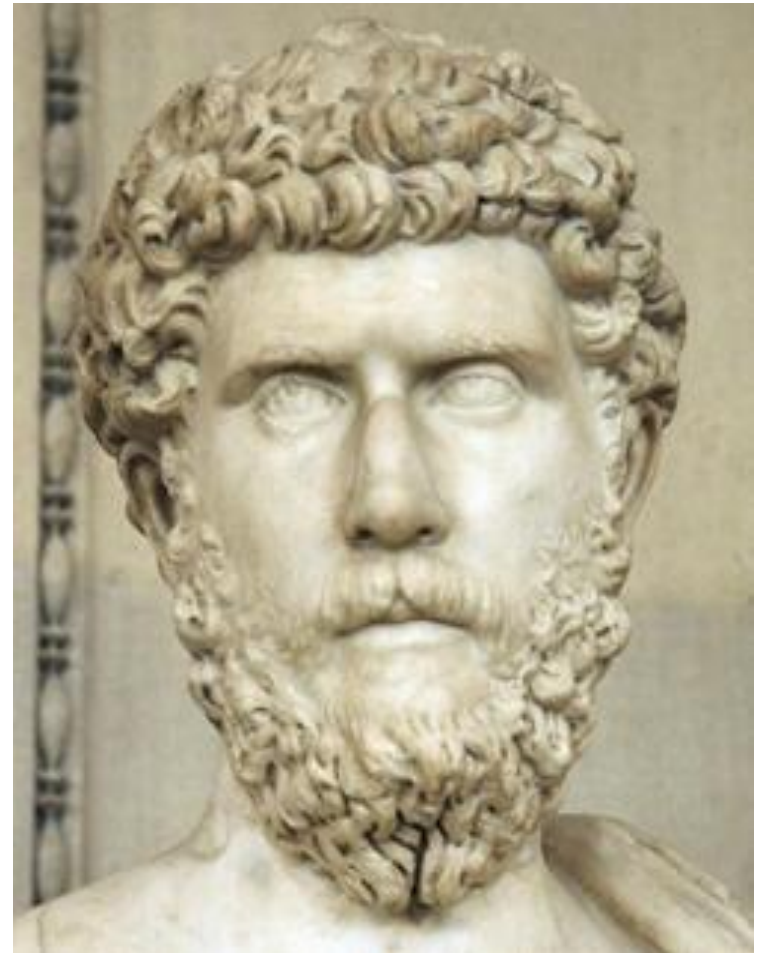
RIC 449 as Caesar under
Antoninus Pius

Lucius Verus



Lucius Aurelius Verus
Augustus; (130 – 169), co-emperor from 161 until his death.

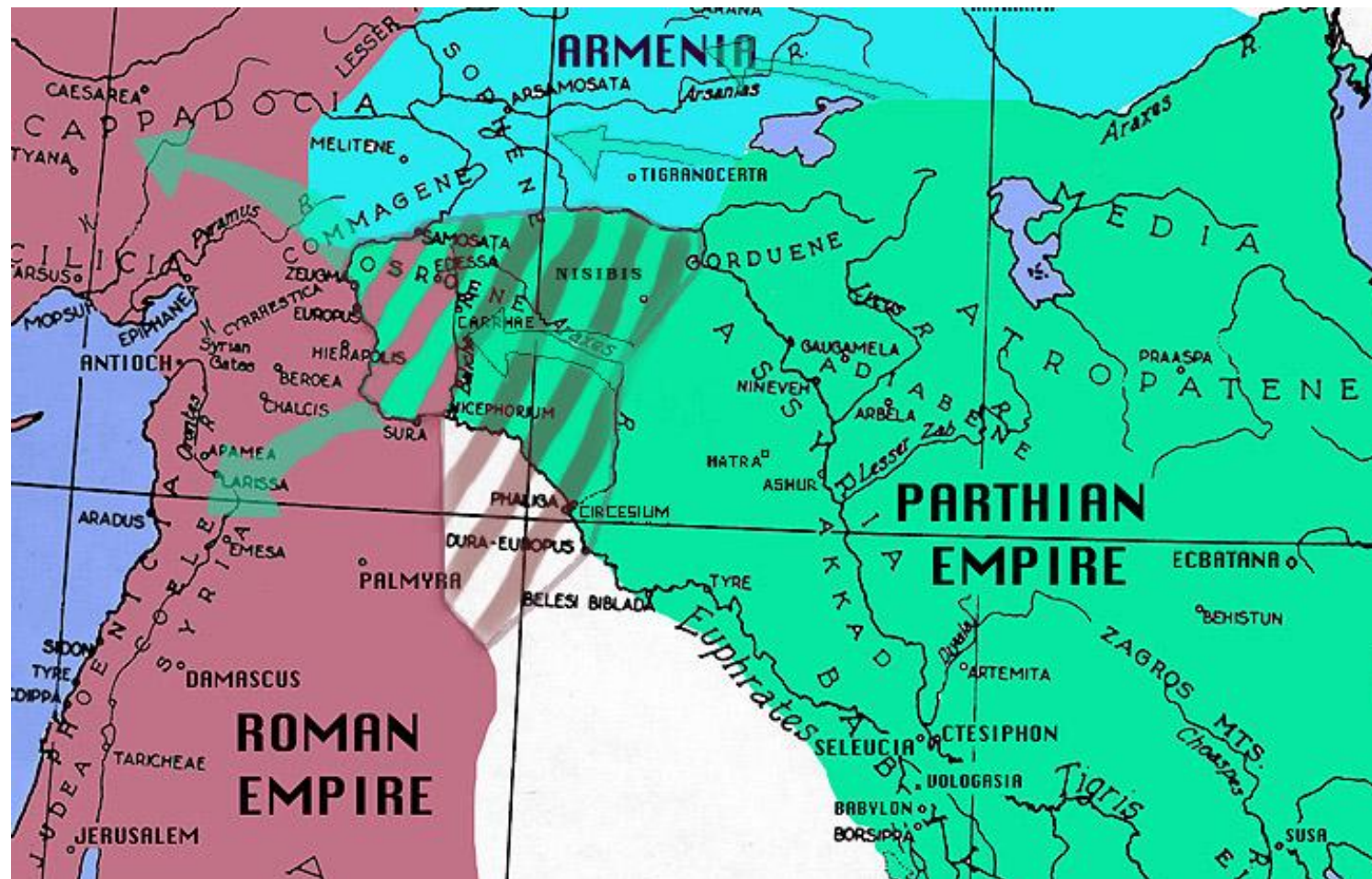
Lucius Verus (130-169)



The Eastern campaign (162-166)

- Lucius Verus is sent to the front, Marcus stays in Rome
- Armenia is the battleground of Rome and Parthia
- Some competent Roman officials save the day: Statius Priscus and Avidius Cassius
- Avidius Cassius conquers Ctesiphon, the capital of the Parthian kingdom

The Parthian invasion



Lucius Verus and Armenia



- Lucius Verus AV aureus. 164 AD. L VERVS AVG ARMENIACVS, bare head right / REX ARMEN DAT TR P IIII IMP II COS II, Verus, flanked by lictor shouldering fasces & another standing attendant, seated left on camp chair on platform, extending his right hand to crown Armenian king who stands left before platform, raising his right hand to guide the crown onto his head. Cohen 158., *RIC* 512

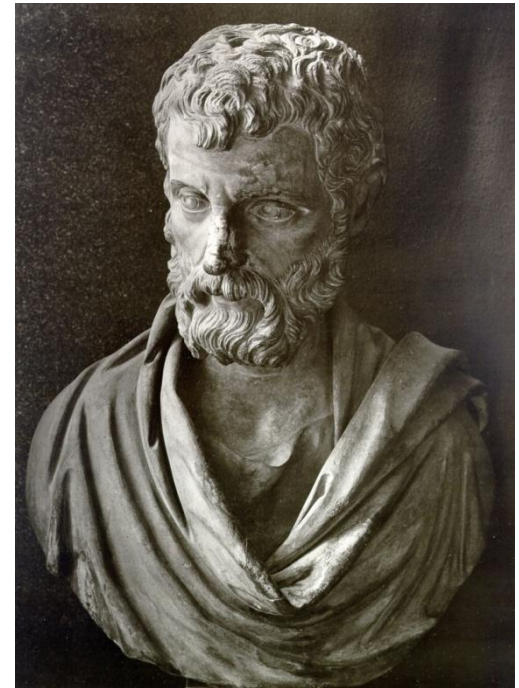
Faustina Augusta (Minor)



Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, On the virtues of Antoninus Pius 1, 16

- “Remember Antoninus Pius' constancy in things that were done by him in accordance with reason, his equability in all things; how he would never give over a matter until he understood the whole state of it fully and plainly; and how patiently and without any resentment he would bear with them that did unjustly condemn him; how he would never be overhasty in anything, nor give ear to slanders or false accusations, but examine and observe with the best diligence the several actions and dispositions of men. He would easily be content with a few things---mere lodgings, bedding, the ordinary food and attendance. He bore with those who opposed his opinions and even rejoiced if any man could better advise him, and finally he was exceedingly religious without superstition.”

Philhellenism: Theatre of Herodes Atticus in Athens



Celebration of the Triumph over the Parthians



Marcomannic Wars. The Northern campaign (166-175)

- Two fronts: Pannonia and the Danubian areas
- Two enemies: Germanic populations (esp. the Chatti) and Sarmatic populations (esp. the Iazyges)
- 'Barbaric' incursions into Roman territory: they were intended to create a stable presence, not simply to loot and plunder
- Robust military response of the Romans; the emperor takes part in the operations

Marcus Aurelius Column and the Marcomanic Wars



The revolt of Avidius Cassius (175)

- The final part of the campaign is interrupted by the insurgency in the Eastern provinces
- Avidius Cassius dies shortly after being proclaimed emperor
- Marcus travels extensively in the Eastern provinces
- Clear signs of ill health

Marcus' final years

- Return to Rome
- Commodus is made co-ruler in 177
- New crisis on the Danubian front
- The two emperors leave Rome
- New Roman success
- Marcus dies in March 180
- Commodus returns to Rome a few months later, leaving the job unfinished

Commodus



Lucius Aurelius Commodus Antoninus (31 August 161 – 31 December 192). He ruled from 180 to 192 (also with his father, Marcus Aurelius, from 177 until 180).

Young Commodus

- Commodus, as Caesar, AV Aureus. 175-176 AD. COMMODO CAES AVG FIL GERM SARM, bare headed, draped and cuirassed bust right, seen from behind / ADVENTVS CAES, Commodus on horseback right, right hand raised. Cohen 1.



Young Commodus



Commodus (180-192)

- A very bad reputation in the literary sources, particularly the Historia Augusta, Cassius Dio and Herodian.
- Attempt to introduce the cult of the living emperor (Commodus as Hercules)
- Problems in the city of Rome: food shortage, fires
- Problems in the provinces: Britain, North Africa

Why Commodus failed

- An autocratic model (cf. Nero and Domitian)
- The imperial court becomes more powerful at the expense of the Senate
- Freedmen in senior positions
- Persecution of senators
- A number of plots to assassinate him are foiled; he is killed in December 192
- *Damnatio memoriae*
- A new phase of instability begins

Commodus performing imperial generosity



Commodus as Caesar AE Sestertius. 177 AD. IMP CAES L AVREL COMMODVS GERM SARM, laureate, draped & cuirassed bust right / TR P II COS S-C, Aurelius & Commodus seated left on high platform, soldier at right, Liberalitas standing to left with coin dispenser & cornucopiae, citizen before holding open his toga to catch coins, LIBERALITAS AVG in ex. Cohen 295, RIC 1559

Commodus and the Food-supply



Commodus Denarius. 184 AD. M COMM ANTON AVG PIVS BRIT, laureate head right / P M TR P VIII IMP VII COS III P P, modius with protruding corn ears. RSC 468, RIC 94.

Commodus' military propaganda



Commodus AE Sestertius. 177 AD. IMP L AVREL COMMODVS AVG GERM SARM, laureate, draped, & cuirassed bust right / TR P II COS P P S-C, pile of captured arms, DE GERMANIS in ex. Cohen 79, RIC 1570

Commodus and Hercules



Commodus Denarius. 191-192 AD. L AEL AVREL
COMM AVG P FEL, head right wearing lion's skin
/ HERC VLI RO MANO AVG, four lines separated
by a club. RSC 191, RIC 252

Commodus and Hercules



Commodus AV Aureus. L·AEL·AVREL·COMM·AVG P FEL, laureate, draped, & cuirassed bust right / HERCVLI·ROMANO·AVG, Hercules standing left with club & lion skin, crowning trophy. Cohen 201, RIC 254b