

Lecture 26 The Antonines

Essential chronology

- AD 121 Birth of Marcus, in Rome. His grandfather Annius Verus is consul for the second time and prefect of the city.
- 127 Marcus enrolled in the equestrian order, aged six.
- 128 Marcus co-opted in the college of the Salii, aged 7. His elementary education begins.
- 136 Marcus assumes the *toga virilis* (= 'the manly toga').
He is betrothed to Ceionia Fabia, daughter of L. Commodus, consul that year.
L. Commodus, adopted by Hadrian, becomes Aelius Caesar.
- 138 January: Aelius Caesar dies.
February: Marcus' maternal uncle T. Aurelius Antoninus is adopted by Hadrian. Marcus, aged sixteen, is adopted by Antoninus. Antoninus designated consul for 139; Marcus designated quaestor for 138.
July: Hadrian dies; Antoninus become Augustus and is given name Pius.
- 139 Pius consul, Marcus quaestor, aged seventeen. Marcus designated consul for 140; co-opted into the major colleges of priests. His higher education begins.
- 147 1 December: Marcus becomes M. Aurelius Caesar, and he is given an impressive set of powers by Antoninus. Virtual co-rulership. Faustina receives the title of Augusta
- 148 900th anniversary of the foundation of Rome; Marcus in Rome
- 153 Lucius holds the quaestorship
- 154 Lucius holds the consulship (nine years before the minimum age)
- 161 Marcus and Lucius joint consuls
March: Antoninus Pius dies
Marcus asks the Senate to confer equal powers to him and to Lucius.
Marcus becomes Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus.
Lucius becomes Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Augustus.
Equal rulers, but Marcus has more *auctoritas*
Deification of Antoninus.
The Parthian king Vologaeses III invades Armenia, topples the pro-Roman king and appoints a new one, Pacorus, a member of his family.
Unsuccessful reaction of the governor of Cappadocia Sedatius Severianus
- 162 Lucius takes charge of the campaign to Armenia, supported by an experienced staff; Marcus stays in Rome
- 163 Statius Priscus conquers Artaxata, the capital of Armenia
The Parthians react by conquering Osrhoene
Lucius spends most of his time at Antioch
- 165 Great victories of Avidius Cassius in Mesopotamia. Conquest of the Parthian capital Ctesiphon; destruction of Seleucia
- 166 Further victories in Mesopotamia; possible Roman 'embassy' to China
August (?): Lucius is back to Rome
12 October: triumph

Late 166-early 167	The Chatti invade Pannonia; Marcus cannot take part in the counteroffensive because of the plague
Spring 168	Marcus and Lucius Verus set off to the north
Winter 168-169	The emperors station in Aquileia; organisation of Northern Italy in preparation for the campaign; new appointments in the provinces (Violent?) death of Lucius Verus on the way back to Rome Funerals in Rome, presided over by Marcus
169	Financial crisis Recruitment crisis
Summer 169	New departure from Rome
170	Offensive across the Danube Counteroffensive of the Chatti; siege of Aquileia [date uncertain] Attack on the Balkans
172	Offensive into enemy territory 'Rain Miracle' 15 October: Commodus receives the title 'Germanicus'
173	Marcus is still in Carnuntum; build-up of the Sarmatian phase of the conflict
174	Campaign against the Quadi and the Jazyges; Marcus moves his headquarters to Sirmium Military success; imperial acclamation
175	A new attack against the Sarmatian populations; plan to create a province beyond the Danube Avidius Cassius starts a revolt in the Eastern part of the Empire and is proclaimed emperor; Marcus must change his plans and face the crisis
175	20 January: Commodus is admitted to the higher priestly colleges 3 May: Avidius Cassius proclaimed Emperor in Egypt 19 May: Commodus leaves Rome 7 July: Commodus is enrolled among the citizens and declared <i>princeps iuventutis</i> (= 'prince of the youth') July: Avidius Cassius is killed; his correspondence is burnt 28 July: Egypt recognises Marcus' authority end of July: beginning of a tour of the Eastern provinces late summer: death of Faustina journey to Egypt
176	journey to Asia Minor and Athens late autumn: return to Rome
177	1 January: Commodus becomes de facto co-ruler Evidence for significant legal activity Evidence for active persecution of the Christians, especially in Gaul
178	Earthquake at Smyrna New problems on the Danube; Marcus and Commodus go to the front (3 August)
178-180	Active campaigning; the project of creating two new provinces is revived

180	17 March: Marcus dies, one month before his fifty-ninth birthday
181	Commodus is back in Rome; increasing influence of the praefecti of the praetorium Tarrutenius Paternus and Tigridius Perennis
182	The conspiracy of Lucilla is foiled
184	Invasion of the Caledonians into Britain, contained by the legate Ulpus Marcellus
185	Mutiny of the legions in Britain; Helvius Pertinax represses it
185-189	Commodus' courtier Cleander, a freedman, becomes increasingly influential
	Evidence for freedmen admitted into the Senate
188	New plague epidemic in Rome
	Fire on the Capitol
190	Commodus orders the killing of Cleander
	Lack of food supplies in Rome
192	Execution of eight senators
	New fire in Rome
	Commodus launches a reconstruction plan and envisages a new Rome called <i>Colonia Commodiana</i>
	31 December: Commodus is killed by a palace plot
	The praetorians proclaim a new emperor: Helvius Pertinax

Essential primary sources

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (esp. book 1)
 Correspondence between Marcus and Fronto
 Galenus
 Aelius Aristides
 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, Books 71-73.
 Herodian, *History of the Empire after Marcus Aurelius*.
Historia Augusta: Life of Marcus, Life of Verus, Life of Avidius Cassius, Life of Commodus

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