

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

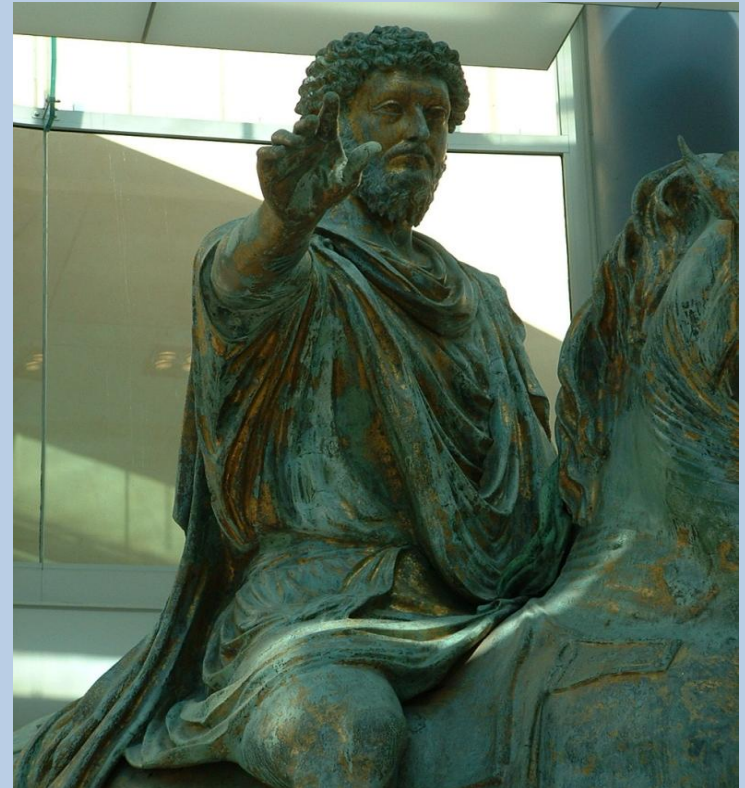
**Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180)
and Lucius Verus (AD 161-168)**

Matthew Cobb



Lucius Verus

- Lucius Ceionius Aulies Commodus Verus Antoninus.
- Born in AD 130.
- Hadrian requested Antoninus adopt Lucius after the death of his father L. Aelius.
- Marries Marcus' daughter Lucilla in AD 164.



Marcus Aurelius

- Marcus Aelius Aurelius Verus.
- Born 26th April AD 121.
- Seems to have been favoured from Hadrian at a young age.
- Marries Antoninus' daughter Faustina the Younger (his cousin).

“When Pius died, Marcus bestowed all honours upon Verus, even granting him a share in the imperial power; he made him his colleague, moreover, when the senate had presented the sovereignty to him alone.” – *SHA Lucius Verus* 3.8.



Marcus Aurelius Denarius. IMP CAES M AVREL ANTONINVS AVG, bare head right / CONCORDIAE AVGVSTOR TR P XV COS III, Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus standing facing each other with clasped hands; one holds roll. – AD 161 – RIC 8.

Equal Partners?

“After investing him the sovereignty, then, and installing him in the tribunician power, and after rendering him the further honour of the consulship, Marcus gave instructions that he be named Verus, transferring his own name to him, whereas previously he had been called Commodus. In return for this, Verus obeyed Marcus, whenever he entered upon any undertaking, as a lieutenant obeys a proconsul or a governor obeys the emperor. For, at the beginning, he addressed the soldiers in his brother's behalf as well as his own, and in consideration of the joint rule he conducted himself with dignity and observed the moral standard that Marcus had set up.” – ***SHA Lucius Verus 4.1-3.***

Marcus Aurelius

The Philosopher Emperor

“Marcus Antoninus, devoted to philosophy as long as he lived and pre-eminent among emperors in purity of life... He studied philosophy with ardour, even as a youth. For when he was twelve years old he adopted the dress and, a little later, the hardiness of a philosopher, pursuing his studies clad in a rough Greek cloak and sleeping on the ground – **SHA**
Marcus Aurelius 1.1, 2.6.

- Prominent adherent to the philosophy of Stoicism.
- Reported to be interested in philosophy from his youth and to attend lectures on it.
- Also educated by notable figures like Herodes Atticus and Cornelius Fronto.
- Wrote a stoical work known as the ***Meditations***.

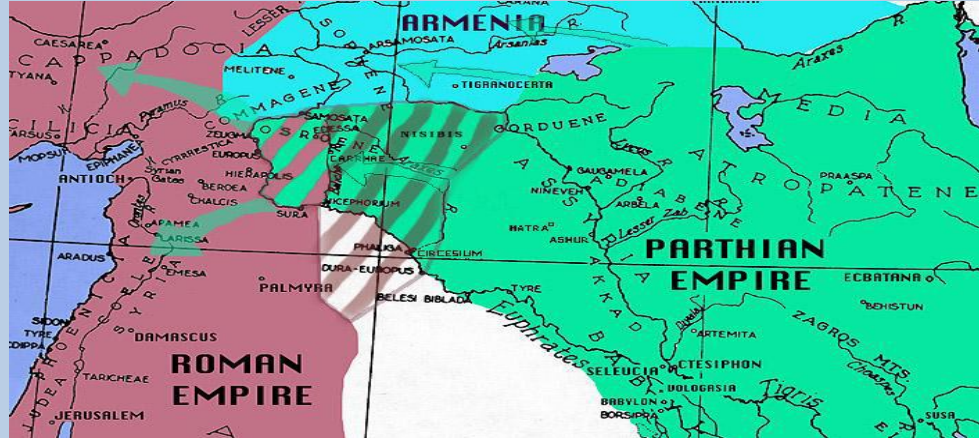
“The soul of man harms itself firstly when it becomes an abscess and, as it were, a tumour on the universe, so far as it can. For to be troubled by anything which happens is a separation of ourselves from nature, in some part of which the natures of all other things are contained. In the next place, the soul does harms itself when it turns away from any man, or even moves towards him with the intention of injuring, such as are the souls of those who are angry. In the third place, the soul harms itself when it is overpowered by pleasure or by pain. Fourthly, when it plays a part, and does or says anything insincerely and untruthful. Fifthly, when it allows any act of its own and any movement to be aimless, and does anything thoughtlessly and without considering what it is, it being right that even the smallest things be done with an end in mind; and the end of rational animals is to follow the reason and the law of the most ancient city and polity.” – **Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 2.**

Lucius Verus – Debauchee?

“He was fond of circus-games no less than of gladiatorial spectacles. And although he was weakened by such follies of debauchery and extravagance, nevertheless Pius retained him as a son... When he set out for Syria, however, his name was smirched not only by the licence of an unbridled life, but also by adulteries and by love-affairs with young men. Besides, he is said to have been so depraved as to install a cook-shop in his home after he returned from Syria, and to retire there after Marcus' banquets and have all manner of foul persons serve him. It is said, moreover, that he used to gamble the whole night through, after he had taken up that vice in Syria, and that he so rivalled Caligula, Nero, and Vitellius in their vices as to wander about at night through taverns and brothels with only a common travelling-cap for a head-covering, revel with various rowdies, and engage in brawls, concealing his identity the while; and often, they say, when he returned, his face was beaten black and blue, and once he was recognised in a tavern even though he had hidden himself. It was his wont also to hurl large coins into the cook-shops and thus smash the cups. He was very fond also of charioteers, favouring the "Greens". He held gladiatorial bouts rather frequently at his banquets, and after continuing the meal far into the night he would fall asleep on the banqueting-couch, so that he had to be lifted up along with the covers and carried to his bedroom. He never needed much sleep, however; and his digestion was excellent. ” – ***SHA Lucius Verus 3.6, 4.4-10.***

Frontiers and Provinces

War with Parthia



- Vologeses king of Parthia installs the Arsacid prince Pacorus onto the throne of Armenia – AD 161.
 - Vologeses defeats the governors of Cappadocia and Syria.
 - A large army under the command of Lucius Verus invades Armenia and Mesopotamia – AD 163-64.
- “Marcus... sent him [Lucius Verus] to conduct the war against the Parthians...” – **Dio Cassius 71.1.3.**
- “His generals, meanwhile, Statius Priscus, Avidius Cassius, and Martius Verus for four years conducted the war until they advanced to Babylon and Media, and recovered Armenia.” – **SHA Lucius Verus 7.1.**

- AD 163 – Priscus captures and burns Artaxata.
- AD 165 - Cassius defeats the Parthians at Dura Europos.
- Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and Ctesiphon are sacked in AD 165-66.
- Further raid into Media in AD 166.
- Peace restored and Sohaemus (Arsacid, but Roman hostage) was installed in Armenia.



Troubles in the Danube

- M. Aurelius raises money for the campaign by selling of treasure in the Forum of Trajan.
- AD 168 – M. Aurelius and L. Verus set out for Danubian front.
- Fragmentary literary accounts of events.
- M. Aurelius continues to campaign in this region with varying intensity up to AD 180.

“While the Parthian war was still in progress, the Marcomannic war broke out, after having been postponed for a long time by the diplomacy of the men who were in charge there, in order that the Marcomannic war might not be waged until Rome was done with the war in the East... and when his brother returned after five years' service, he brought the matter up in the senate, saying that both emperors were needed for the German war” - **SHA Marcus Aurelius 12.13-14.**

Death of Lucius Verus – AD 168

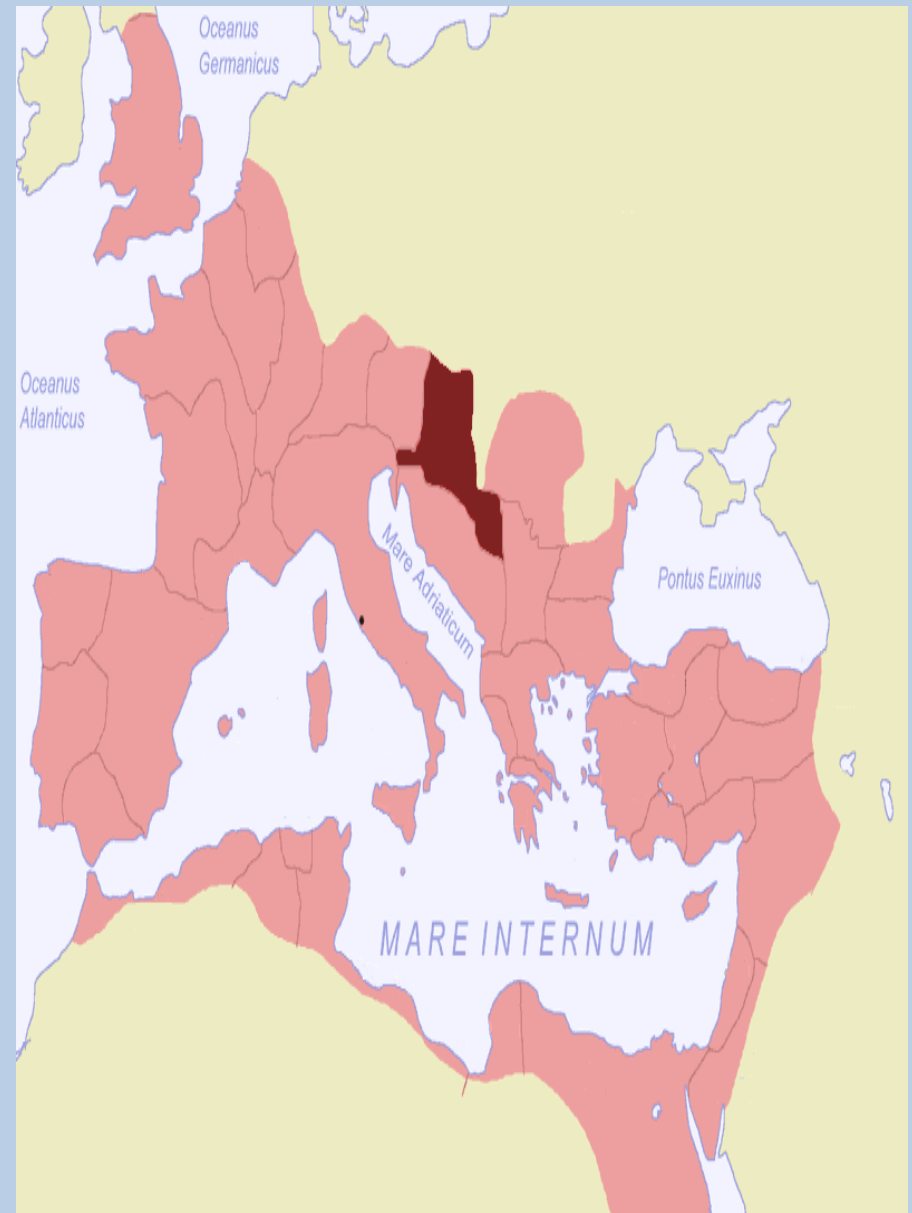
“But not far from Altinum, Lucius, while in his carriage, was suddenly stricken with the sickness which they call apoplexy, and after he had been set down from his carriage and bled, he was taken to Altinum, and here he died, after living for three days unable to speak.” - **SHA Lucius Verus 9.11.**



Divus Lucius Verus Denarius. 169 AD. DIVVS VERVS, bare head right / CONSECRATIO, eagle standing right, head left. - **RIC 596a; RSC 55.**

“And so, by crushing the Marcomanni, the Sarmatians, the Vandals, and even the Quadi, he freed the Pannonias from bondage, and with Commodus his son, whom he had previously named Caesar, triumphed at Rome, as we told above...” - **SHA Marcus Aurelius 17.3.**

“Many of the Germans, too, from across the Rhine, advanced as far Italy and inflicted many injuries upon the Romans. They were in turn attacked by Marcus, who opposed to them his lieutenants Pompeianus and Pertinax; and Pertinax (who later became emperor) greatly distinguished himself.” – **Dio Cassius 71.3.2.**



The Column of Marcus Aurelius

- Dedicated in honour of his victories over the Marcomanni and Sarmathians – AD 172-175.
- Completed by at least AD 193 – ***CIL* 6.1585 = *ILS* 5920.**
- Column itself is 100 Roman feet tall.
- Internal staircase.
- Images on the column narrating events of the campaign.

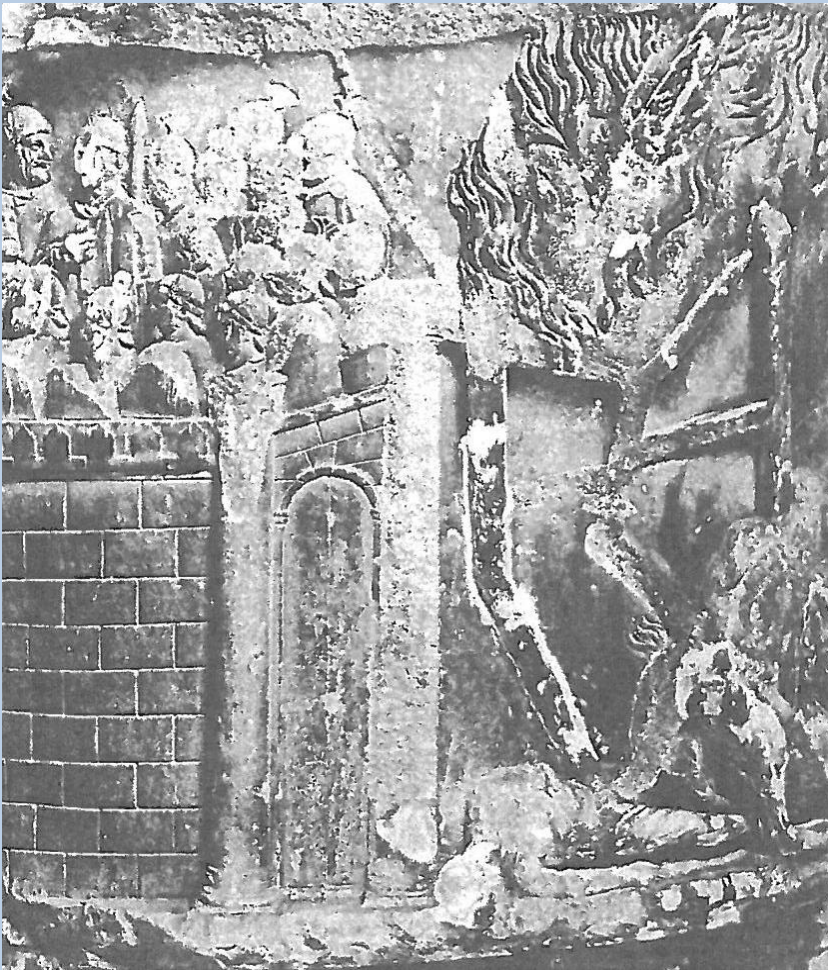


Miracle of the Rain



“A great war against the people called the Quadi also fell to his lot and it was his good fortune to win an unexpected victory... the Romans were in peril in the course of the battle, the divine power saved them in a most unexpected manner...the barbarians ceased fighting, expecting to capture them easily as the result of the heat and their thirst... hemmed them in to prevent their getting water anywhere... when suddenly many clouds gathered and a mighty rain, not without divine interposition, burst upon them. Indeed, there is a story to the effect that Arnuphis, an Egyptian magician, who was a companion of Marcus, had invoked by means of enchantments various deities and in particular Mercury, the god of the air, and by this means attracted the rain.” – **Dio Cassius 72.8.**

Miracle of the Thunderbolt

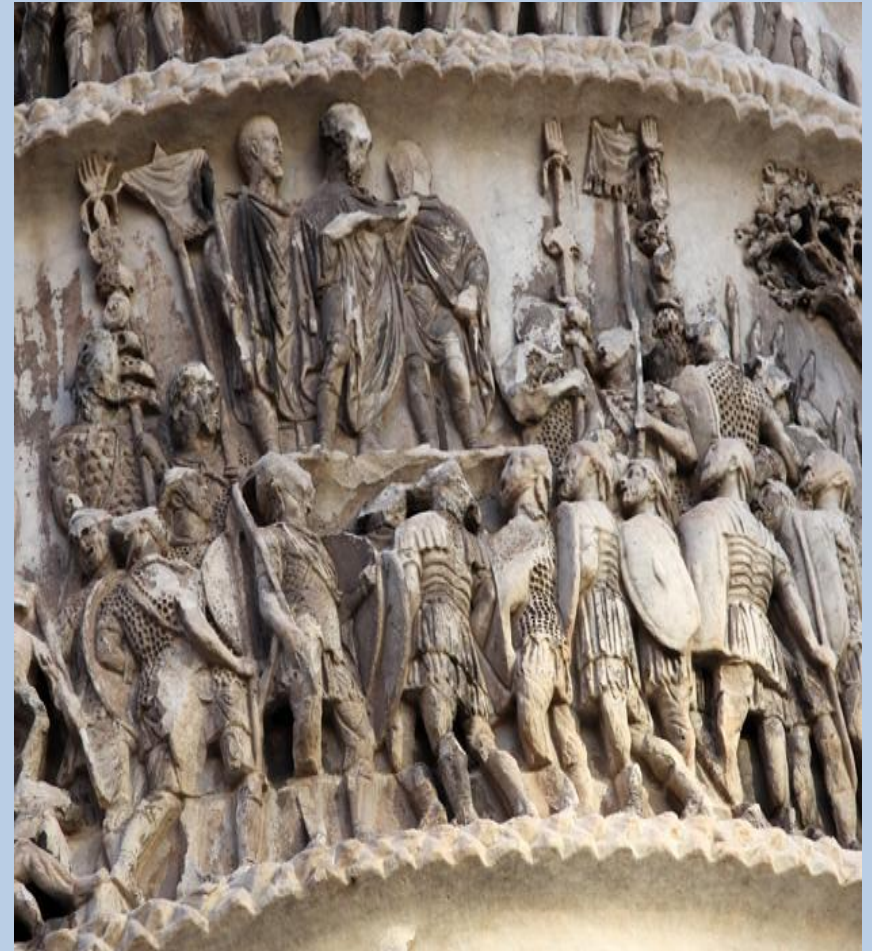


“By his prayers he summoned a thunderbolt from heaven against a war-engine of the enemy, and successfully besought rain for his men when they were suffering from thirst.” – ***SHA Marcus Aurelius 24.4.***

- Use of the column as a historical source?

Change in Artistic Style

- Change from classical realism to *Stilwandel*.
- Change in imperial art – reflecting increasing autocratic powers of emperor?
- Individual influences of sculptures – sacrophagi carvers.



Revolt of Avidius Cassius

- Revolt of Avidius Cassius in AD 175.

“He wished to make a province of Marcomannia and likewise of Sarmatia, and he would have done so had not Avidius Cassius just then raised a rebellion in the East. This man proclaimed himself emperor, some say, at the wish of Faustina, who was now in despair over her husband's death; others, however, say that Cassius proclaimed himself emperor after spreading false rumours of Antoninus' [i.e. Marcus Aurelius] death, and indeed he had called him the Deified... The Emperor, then, abandoning the Sarmatian and Marcomannic wars, set out against him. At Rome there was a panic for fear that Cassius would arrive during Antoninus' absence; but he was speedily slain and his head was brought to Antoninus.” - ***SHA Marcus Aurelius 25.1-2.***

The “Antonine Plague”

Outbreak of Pandemic – AD 165/66

- Galen identifies symptoms including - fever, vomiting, rank breath, ulcers in throat and lungs.
- Small-pox, bubonic plague, typhus?
- Various estimates possibly up to quarter of the population killed.

“It was his [Lucius Verus] fate to seem to bring a pestilence with him to whatever provinces he traversed on his return, and finally even to Rome. It is believed that this pestilence originated in Babylonia...” - ***SHA Lucius Verus 8.1-2.***

“A plague infected nearly all my
neighbours... my servants grew sick...
one after the other... both young and
old... The livestock too became sick.
And if anyone attempted to move he
right away lay dead at the door...
Everything was filled with
hopelessness, and howling and
groans...” – **Aelius Aristides *Oration***
48.38.

Impact of the Plague

- Decrease in number of military diplomas issued from AD 165 – Verus' army particularly suffered.
- Apparent population decrease in Egypt – impact on farming and wages.
- Reduction in tax intake for the treasury – possible evidence of decrease in grain taxes in Fayum (AD 185) – problems with lacuna in text – **P.Oxy. LXVI 4527.**

The Final Years

Commodus as Caesar

- Commodus effectively made co-ruler in AD 177.
- “And so, by crushing the Marcomanni, the Sarmatians, the Vandals, and even the Quadi, he freed the Pannonias from bondage, and with Commodus his son, whom he had previously named Caesar, triumphed at Rome...” - ***SHA Marcus Aurelius 17.3.***



Marcus Aurelius & Commodus Denarius. M ANTONINVS AVG GERM TR P XXIX, laureate head right / COMMODVS CAES AVG FIL GERM, bare-headed, draped (and cuirassed?) bust of Commodus right – **RIC 336a; RSC 1c; BMC 625.**

Death of Marcus Aurelius

“Now if Marcus had lived longer, he would have subdued that entire region; but as it was, he passed away on the seventeenth of March, not as a result of the disease from which he still suffered, but by the act of his physicians, as I have been plainly told, who wished to do Commodus a favour. When now he was at the point of death, he commended his son to the protection of the soldiers (for he did not wish his death to appear to be due to Commodus), and to the military tribune who asked him for the watchword he said: "Go to the rising sun; I am already setting." After his death he received many marks of honour; among other things a gold statue of him was set up in the senate-house itself. This then was the manner of Marcus' death.” – **Dio Cassius 72.33.**

Deification

“Although people were sceptical about Romulus’ apotheosis, everyone assumed without debate that Marcus Aurelius had been received among the gods, and in his honour, temples, columns, and many other monuments were decreed.” – **Aurelius Victor 16.14.**



Marcus Aurelius Denarius, memorial issue by Commodus. DIVVS M ANTONINVS, bare head right / CONSECRATIO, Eagle standing left, head right, wings open. – **RIC 266.**

Useful Reading

- Goodman, M. (2012) *The Roman World 44 BC-AD 180* (London: Routledge). Read pages 80-86.
- Littman, R. J., and Littman, M. L. (1973) 'Galen and the Antonine Plague', *The American Journal of Philology* 94 (3): 243-255.