

Lecture 22

Nero and the Year of the Four Emperors

Basic chronology

- 54 Accession of Nero, aged sixteen
The Parthians invade Armenia
- 55 Death of Britannicus, Claudius' son
- 55-60 Campaign of Cn. Domitius Corbulo in Armenia; a pro-Roman king, Tigranes, is appointed
- 59 Murder of Agrippina
- 60 Institution of the *Neronia*
- 61-66 New Parthian invasion; Armenia ends up with a Parthian king, Tiridates, who then goes to Rome and declares his loyalty to Nero
- 61-62 Boudicca revolt in Britain
- 62 First trials for treason under Nero
Nero repudiates Octavia and marries Poppaea
Death of Burrus; retirement of Seneca; rise of Tigellinus
July: great fire at Rome; two-thirds of the city were burnt down
- 63-64 Major public works in Rome; the *Domus Aurea* is built
- 65 Conspiracy of the Pisones (named after C. Calpurnius Piso); harsh repression; death of Seneca and Petronius
- 66 Revolt of the Jews in Palestine; T. Flavius Vespasianus is entrusted with the repression
- 67 Nero declares Greece free in a solemn ceremony at Corinth
- 68 Revolt of C. Julius Vindex in Gallia Lugdunensis; soon joined by Servius Sulpicius Galba, governor of Hispania Tarraconensis
2 April: Galba proclaims himself representative of the Roman Senate and people
Senate and praetorian guard support Galba
Nero is declared public enemy shortly before setting off to the East, and he is compelled to commit suicide
End of the Julio-Claudian dynasty
Galba is proclaimed emperor by the Senate and the praetorians as he is still in Spain
Autumn: Galba arrives to Rome
- 69 January: the legions on the Rhine refuse to swear their loyalty to the emperor; the newly appointed governor of Lower Rhine, Aulus Vitellius, is proclaimed emperor
15 January: Galba is killed in Rome by the praetorians; Otho is proclaimed emperor by Senate and praetorians
War between Otho and Vitellius
April 69: Vitellius' troops prevail in the battle of Bedriacum (Po Valley) and Otho commits suicide
July: Vitellius arrives to Rome

Discontent among the legions in the Eastern provinces; Vespasian, then governor of Syria, takes the lead and is acclaimed emperor
 Vespasian invades Egypt, while his associates Mucianus and M. Antonius Primus invade Italy
 October: second battle of Bedriacum. Victory of Vespasian's supporters
 December: Antonius Primus enters Rome; Vitellius is captured and killed;
 Vespasian's son Domitian is proclaimed Caesar
 Vespasian is sole ruler; beginning of the Flavian era

Essential primary sources

Tacitus, *Annales*, Books 12-16; *Historiae*, Books 1-3
 Suetonius, *Lives* of Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and The Deified Vespasian
 Cassius Dio, *History of Rome*, Books 62-65.
Laus Pisonis (Praise of Piso)

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