

## Reading History Forward: Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and the Will of Hadrian

Sam Caldis, [sam\\_caldis@brown.edu](mailto:sam_caldis@brown.edu), 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of CAMWS (2019, Lincoln, NE)

### [1] Timeline

Summer 136	Hadrian adopts Lucius Ceionius Commodus as his successor. Lucius becomes Aelius Caesar. Lucius Verus added to imperial household. Marcus Aurelius engaged to Ceionia Fabia.
Fall 136	Aelius departs to tour Roman dispositions on Danube.
Late 137	Aelius returns to Rome.
1 January 138	Aelius dies.
25 Feb. 138	Hadrian adopts Antoninus. Antoninus adopts Marcus and Lucius. Lucius engaged to Faustina II

[2] οὕτω μὲν ὁ Ἀντωνῖνος αὐτοκράτωρ ἐγένετο· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν ἄπαις ἀρρένων παίδων, τὸν τε Κομμόδου υἱὸν Κόμμοδον ἐσεποίησεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἔτι πρὸς τούτῳ Μάρκον Ἄννιον Οὐῆρον, βουλευθεὶς ἐπὶ πλείστον καὶ τοὺς μετὰ ταῦτα ἀταρχήσοντας ἀποδείξει... καὶ ἀμφοτέρους μὲν ἐσποίησασθαι τῷ Ἀντωνίνῳ ἐκέλευε, προετίμησε δὲ τὸν Οὐῆρον διὰ τε τὴν συγγένειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν, καὶ ὅτι φύσιν ψυχῆς ἔρρωμενστάτην ἤδη ὑπέφαινε· ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Οὐῆρίσσιμον αὐτόν, πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Ῥωμαϊκοῦ ῥήματος ἔννοιαν κομψευόμενος, ἀπεκάλει. (Cassius Dio, 69.21.1-2)

Thus Antoninus became emperor. And since he had no sons, Hadrian adopted for him Commodus the son of Commodus and in addition to him, Marcus Annius Verus, for he desired to appoint those who were afterwards to be emperors for as long a time to come as possible. And although he ordered Antoninus to adopt both of them, still he preferred Verus because of his kinship and his age and because he already showed his exceptional strength of character. This had led him to called the young man ‘Verissimus,’ playing on the meaning of the Latin word.

[3] *Educatus est in Hadriani gremio, qui illum, ut supra diximus, Verissimum nominabat et qui ei honorem equi publici sexenni detulit, octavo aetatis anno in saliorum collegium rettulit... Virilem togam sumpsit quinto decimo aetatis anno, statimque ei Lucii Ceionii Commodi filia desponsata est ex Hadriani voluntate. (HA Vita Marci 4.1-2, 5-6)*

[Marcus] was raised under the eye of Hadrian, who called him Verissimus, as we have already said, and who gave him the honor of enrolling him in the equestrian order when he was six years old and appointed him to the college of the Salii in his eighth year of age... He assumed the *toga virilis* in the fifteenth year of his life and immediately the daughter of Lucius Ceionius Commodus was betrothed to him by the will of Hadrian.

[4] *His ita se habentibus cum post obitum Lucii Caesaris Hadrianus successorem imperii quaereret, nec idoneus, utpote decem et octo annos agens, Marcus haberetur, amitae Marci virum Antoninum Pium Hadrianus ea lege in adoptionem legit, ut sibi Marcum Pium adoptaret, ita tamen ut et Marcus sibi Lucium Commodum adoptaret (HA Vita Marci, 5.1)*

Such was his character when, after the death of Lucius Caesar, Hadrian sought a successor for the throne. Marcus did not seem suitable, in as much as he was eighteen years old. Hadrian selected, in adoption, Antoninus Pius, the husband of Marcus’s aunt, with his provision: that Pius would adopt Marcus, and that Marcus would adopt Lucius Commodus.

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[5] *Et mortuo Aelio Vero Caesare Hadrianus ingruente tristissima valetudine adoptavit Arrium Antoninum, qui postea Pius dictus est, et ea quidem lege, ut ille sibi duos adoptaret, Annium Verum et Marcum Antoninum.* (HA Vita Hadriani, 24.1)

And after the death of Aelius Verus Caesar, Hadrian, being attacked by a very severe illness, adopted Arrius Antoninus who afterwards was called 'Pius,' imposing upon him the condition that he adopt two sons, Annius Verus and Marcus Antoninus.

[6] *Cui conditionem addidit, ut ipse sibi Marcum et Verum Antoninus adoptaret filiamque suam Vero, non Marco daret.* (HA Vita Aelii, 6.9)

[Hadrian] imposed this condition on [Antoninus], that Antoninus should adopt Marcus and Verus and give his daughter to Verus, not Marcus.

[7] *Adoptionis lex huiusmodi data est, ut quemadmodum Antoninus ab Hadriano adoptabatur, ita sibi ille adoptaret M. Antoninum, fratris uxoris suae filium, et L. Verum, Aelii Veri, qui ab Hadriano adoptatus fuerat, filium, qui postea Verus Antoninus est dictus.* (HA Vita Antonini, 4.4-5)

This condition was attached to the adoption, that as Antoninus was adopted by Hadrian, thus he should adopt Marcus Antoninus, the son of his wife's brother, and Lucius Verus, the son of Aelius Verus who had been adopted by Hadrian, as his son who afterward was called Verus Antoninus.

[8] *A quo Aurelio datus est adoptandus, cum sibi ille Pium filium, Marcum nepotem esse voluisset posteritati satis providens, et ea quidem lege, ut filiam Pii Verus acciperet, quae data est Marco idcirco....* (HA Vita Veri, 2.2-3)

[Lucius] was given by Hadrian in adoption to Aurelius, when Hadrian, making sufficient provision for the future, desired to make Pius his son and Marcus his grandson, and he was given on this condition, that he should become engaged to the daughter of Pius, who was later given to Marcus...

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