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On the Chronology of the Fronto Correspondence

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ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FRONTO CORRESPONDENCE.

OWING to the illegibility of parts of the Fronto palimpsest and the carelessness of its first editor, Cardinal Mai, it was impossible, even after the critical labours of Niebuhr and his colleagues, to come to any satisfactory conclusion as to the chronology of the Letters. But the edition of S. A. Naber in 1867, which had the advantage of a fresh collation of the MS. by G. N. Du Rieu, further reinforced subsequently by a new examination of the Codex due to W. Studemund, held out a better prospect of success. The labours of C. Brakman in the same direction, published in 1902, have also thrown fresh light upon the subject. Yet the critical world has long been awaiting the appearance of the authoritative recension by Professor E. Hauler of Vienna, who has spent infinite pains over a further, and what may well be a final, inspection of the Codex. A great desideratum, which it is much to be hoped that the new edition will supply, is an exact indication, as far as may be, of the extent of each lacuna in pages, lines, words, or letters. A knowledge of how much is lost in each case is essential for the true understanding of the sequence of thought and time in what remains.

The question of the chronology of the Letters has been discussed by Naber in the *Prolegomena* to his edition, by Mommsen in *Hermes* VIII. (1874) pp. 198 sqq., by Brakman in his *Frontoniana*, and, incidentally, by the writer of the article on Annius Verus in Pauly-Wissowa's *Real-Encyclopädie*. But the last word has not yet been said, by any means, upon this difficult subject.

Only two letters out of the whole number supply us with an actual date. In *Ad Caes.* I. 8 (Nab. p. 23) Fronto speaks of Marcus as twenty-two years old, and in *Ad Caes.* IV. 13 (Nab. p. 75) Marcus 'blushes at the thought that, though twenty-five years old, his mind has made its own nothing in the way of true convictions and nobler principles of life.' Marcus was born on 26 April, 121, and therefore these two letters must have been written, the one between 26 April, 143, and 26 April, 144, and the other, similarly, between 146 and 147.

With these two dates as incidental props our whole scheme of chronology for that part of the correspondence which precedes the accession of Marcus will be found to depend largely upon the dates which can be fixed for two events, Fronto's consulship and the marriage of Marcus. The former of these has been satisfactorily determined. Fronto was *consul suffectus* during the

months of July and August, 143, giving Ausonius a handle for his jesting allusion to 'the consuls in whose consulship Fronto was consul,' one of these very consuls being the famous Herodes Atticus, himself a teacher of Marcus. Some of the earlier letters are concerned with the trial of Herodes, and the date of his consulship is not without its bearing on these.

About the second date above mentioned, the date of the marriage of Marcus, there has been some difference of opinion. Naber, followed by P. B. Watson in his *Life of Marcus Aurelius*, puts the marriage in 140, when Marcus was only nineteen. But the evidence for a later date is really overwhelming. The only doubt is whether the marriage took place in 146, as Schiller and others hold, or, as Klebs and the writer in Pauly-Wissowa's *Encyclopädie*, in 145. As the accurate fixing of this date is very important for our purpose, some space must be devoted to it and to the births of the children that were born to Marcus and Faustina.

Marcus was consul for the second time in 145, and Capitolinus (*Vit. Mar.* VI. 6) seems to imply that the marriage *followed* the consulship, and he associates the bestowal of the *Trib. Pot.* with the birth of a daughter as the first product of the union. The tribunician power of Marcus dates probably from 10 December, 146, though some fix the date as 1 January, 147, or even 25 February, 147. We know by an inscription found at Smyrna (*C. I. G.* 3176) that Marcus had a son, probably Titus Aelius Antoninus (Dessau II. 8803), born early in 147, who died before 28 March of that year. If therefore Capitolinus is correct in making Marcus's first child to be a daughter (Lacour-Gayet in his *Life of Pius* thinks *filia* should be *filio*), the marriage of Marcus must have taken place early in 145, and the daughter been born at the end of that year or the beginning of 146. With this agrees a coin of Ephesus (Mionnet, *Ionia*, 321) struck between the spring of 145 and the spring of 146, which bears the heads of Marcus and Faustina (here styled Augusta). Certain Roman coins, inscribed *Vota Publica* (Cohen 808, Eckhel VII. 46), dated in the second consulship of Marcus (not as Hobler in the first), confirm the same view. On them we see Marcus holding a roll in his left hand and Faustina with his right, while Juno Pronuba stands behind.

Twelve or thirteen children, six girls and the rest boys, a very large number for those days, were born before 167. But it is scarcely possible to give their dates of birth and the order in which they arrived. We have seen that a son was born and died early in 147. The daughter spoken of by Capitolinus as the first child was probably Annia Galeria Faustina, and we find her mentioned in *Ad Caes.* IV. 11 as *paruola nostra Faustina*. She was evidently a delicate child, and probably the *domnula mea*, who is mentioned as being ill in V. 24, refers to her. She is alluded to again in V. 19, but with a little sister, and seems to have died about 149. The sister must be Annia Lucilla (see also V. 30 and 33), who was married to Lucius Verus in 164, and most likely born in 148.

At the other end of the list we know that Commodus and his twin brother

Antoninus Geminus were born on 31 August, 161 (*Ad Ant.* I. 1, 3, 4); that the latter died in 164; that M. Annius Verus (or Severus) was born 162/3 and died 169/170, after being named Caesar with Commodus on 12 October, 166; and lastly that Vibia Aurelia Sabina, the youngest child, was born in 166, as we gather from Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* II. 559), who tells us that a daughter of Marcus was aged three at the time of the trial of Herodes, which took place about 170.

Consequently between 148 and 161 we must find room for the birth of Arria Fadilla, who probably came next to Lucilla (see *paruolae nostrae* in V. 35, and *matronae nostrae* in V. 42); of Titus Aelius Aurelius and Titus Aurelius Antoninus, both of whom died in infancy; of Domitia Faustina, who died before 161; of Cornificia, who is mentioned in *Ad Ant.* I. 1; and of Hadrianus (*C.I.G.* 3709), though it is possible that he may be identical with Antoninus Geminus.

A minor point, that requires a passing mention, is the application of the term *Domina* in these letters. It could be used of Faustina the Elder, wife of Pius, of Domitia Lucilla, mother of Marcus, or of Faustina the Younger, his wife. But the elder Faustina died between 10 July, 140, and 10 July, 141. Lucilla did not die till about 156, and Faustina the Younger survived Fronto. They all lived together as members of the Imperial household. The word *Domina* often has *mater* attached to it, and then of course its reference is clear, but *Domina* alone may be either Lucilla or Faustina. In the second book, where however two-thirds of the letters are mutilated at the end and so lack the customary salutations, the word does not appear. In Book III. *Domina* always stands for Lucilla. In the first book the word occurs but once, *mea domina parens tua* (I. 3). It is only in the fifth book that any real difficulty is met with. Here, in the twenty-four cases of its use, Faustina seems to be meant twice as often as Lucilla.

Mommsen, who upheld the arrangement of the letters as being generally chronological, says that the earliest letters are not preserved, meaning apparently all before the year 143. It is clear that the letters in the first two books are arranged approximately in chronological order, and together with *Epist. Graec.* 1-3 and *Ad Pium* 1, 2 belong to the year 143. But the last two letters of Book II. (16, 17) are out of place, and, in spite of Naber's advocacy of the earlier date, must be referred to the year 162. These two letters with *Ad Amic.* I. 14 are on the subject of Matidia's will, and in the first of them mention is made of Faustina and her daughters. As we have seen, Faustina was not married till 145 at the earliest, and so these letters cannot belong to the years 143, as their position would lead us to expect. Moreover, as Matidia is mentioned in *Ad Ant.* II. 1, she could not have died till 161 or 162.

During the two months of Fronto's consulship were written the letters from I. 8 (which should be II. 1) to II. 11, the Greek letters to Lucilla, and *Ad Pium* I. 1, 2.

The only real crux in the first two books is the assumption of the title *Imperator* by Marcus in *Ad Caes.* I. 2. It is not easy to see how this could be correct before he was invested with the proconsular imperium in 147.

One would naturally take the letters in Books III. and IV. from their position to be later than 143, and as IV. 13, the last letter of that book, was certainly written between 146 and 147, to fall between 143 and 147. But many things militate against this supposition. The letters III. 2-6 relate to a trial of Herodes on serious charges connected with his conduct at Athens, and he could hardly have been elected consul with such charges hanging over his head. Consequently it must have been before 143 that he was arraigned, and most likely soon after arriving in Rome from Greece. The consulship would then naturally be the seal of his acquittal. Attempts have been made to connect this trial with the later and similar one in 169 or 170. The same accusers appear in both. But owing to the long interval between the two trials it would seem impossible to affiliate them. Philostratus in his account of Herodes (*Vit. Soph.* II. 549) tells us that the Athenians were much incensed against him at his sharp practice towards them in connexion with his father's legacy to the citizens of Athens. The words in Fronto (*Ad Caes.* III. 3) *dicendum est de filio impio et precum paternarum immemore* are generally taken of the son of Herodes, but apart from the difficulty of identifying this son, the words would be making a point in favour of Herodes himself as trying to restrain that son from his excesses. But that is contrary to the whole tenor of Fronto's remarks. Why then should not the expression *filio impio* mean Herodes himself, who disregarded his father's last wishes in respect to the legacy?

One or two considerations point to an early date for this batch of letters. For instance in III. 2 Marcus speaks of himself as an *audax puerulus*. Again Fronto seems not to have known that Herodes was a friend of Marcus and had even been brought up at his grandfather's house. Fronto must surely have been aware of this by 143, when Herodes and he were both consuls in the same year. So we may safely date these letters about 141-2.

Still earlier would appear to be the two Latin letters inserted among the *Epist. Graec.* (6 and 7) and the Ἑρωτικὸς λόγος (No. 8). The mention of his 'Caesar-speech' by Marcus fixes the date of these as 139 or 140. The early date of the letters at the beginning of Book III. is further indicated by the fact that *Epist. Graec.* 6, which we have just spoken of as most probably one of the earliest of all, is placed after III. 8 as well as among the Greek letters at the end of the work. But the first letter in Book III. presents a difficulty. The words, *tu cum in senatu uel in contione populi dicendum fuit, nullo uerbo remotiore usus es, nulla figura obscura aut insolenti*, point to a date when Marcus would be much more familiar with public speaking than he could have been in 140-142. As the letter is so fragmentary, dogmatism is out of the question, but perhaps this letter, like the two that precede it, has become misplaced.

In III. 7, 8, we find allusions to a speech of thanks by Marcus to Pius

which could hardly be anything except his speech as consul in 140. The twelfth letter of this same book, unfortunately mutilated, is an answer to two letters from Fronto. One of these is certainly III. 11, and the other would seem to be IV. 3, a long letter on the niceties of oratory, for Fronto writing in 162 (*Ad Ant. I. 2*) says: *Meministin eius orationis tuae quam uixdum pueritiam egressus in Senatu habuisti . . . meque primam illam longiusculam ad te epistulam scripsisse, qua id augurabar, magni ingeni signum esse ad eiusmodi sententiarum pericula audaciter adgredi?* Now IV. 3 is just such a lengthy epistle, and has that very recommendation of *audacia*. So in spite of Naber's view that the letter referred to by Fronto has been lost (see Nab. p. 97, note 2), it is extremely probable that he is referring to the third letter of Book IV. The writer on Annii Verus in Pauly-Wissowa would make the speech referred to Marcus's acknowledgment of the quaestorship in 138, but it is difficult to carry the correspondence between Fronto and Marcus so far back as that. If the view here put forward be correct, this letter (IV. 3) must be one of the earliest. As to the rest of Book III., viz. letters 13 to 21, they would naturally fall between 140 and 143, but one sentence in 13, *cum clam tot negotiis, quot officiis, quot rescribendis per prouincias litteris destringerere*, scarcely suits so early a stage in his pupil's career.

For Book IV. we have the *terminus ad quem* in its last letter, written when Marcus was twenty-five years old (146-147). The third letter of this book was, as we have seen, most probably a very early letter. So we may suppose the three which precede it to belong to the period before 143. Those that follow (4-10) may reasonably be dated between 143 and 147. The reference to the little Faustina in 11 throws that letter and 12, which is the answer to it, to the very end of 145 or the beginning of 146. The *paruola nostra Faustina* will be the Annia Galeria mentioned above.

With Book V., as Mommsen has already noted, the character of the correspondence changes. The letters are mostly much shorter, some being the briefest possible notifications of Fronto's aches and pains.

The distaste for the insincerities of oratory, of which there are traces in Marcus's previous letters (see *Ad Caes. III. 15*), shews itself in a more pronounced form in IV. 13, where we find him hankering after the *puriores rationes* of philosophy. Fronto must have felt this defection of his favourite pupil deeply, and perhaps it tended to abridge their correspondence. Moreover Marcus, virtually now co-ruler with Pius, was becoming more and more occupied with affairs of state, while Fronto, who as he tells us himself (*Ad Amic. I. 18*) was a poor correspondent, must have found his power of letter-writing gradually curtailed by the burdens of age and increasing ill-health.

Book V. opens with the reference to a speech by Marcus, which can hardly be other than his speech of thanks for the *Trib. Pot.* in 147. In the index-title to a lost letter, V. (7), we find the first mention of Faustina by name. The name indeed occurs in II. 16, 17, but, as we have already seen, these two letters are certainly misplaced and belong to a later period when Marcus had

succeeded Pius. The mention in letter 19 of *paruolae nostrae* dates that letter as not earlier than 148, and it is most probable that Annia Lucilla was born in that year, her sister Annia Galeria being between two and three years old.

It is possible that letters 22-29 are misplaced, and belong to a period two years earlier. At all events 26 and 27 seem to be connected with IV. 13. Fronto had sent a theme on which he wished Marcus to compose speeches both for and against. This is exactly what Marcus in IV. 13 demurs to doing—*nam eadem de re diuersa tueri, numquam prosus ita dormiet Aristo, ut permittat*. Epistle 28 may be sequent to this episode, since it contains a request for an epideictic or 'show' thesis instead of a previous forensic one.

On reaching IV. 32, 33 we find only one daughter mentioned, so if the order is here chronological, we must conclude that Annia Galeria had died between V. 19 and V. 32. In V. 35 however a fresh reference to *paruolae nostrae* indicates the presence of a second little daughter. This would be most probably Arria Fadilla, whose birth we may put about 149.

Fronto's proconsulship is alluded to in V. 36, and as at this period the proconsulship followed the consulship after an interval, generally speaking, of twelve to fifteen years, we reach a date about 155. The succeeding letters, V. 38, 39, mention a speech of L. Verus, which would most naturally be his speech of thanks for the consulship in 154. The *matronae nostrae* of V. 42 are again, no doubt, Lucilla and Fadilla. The mother of Marcus died probably in 156, and we find in V. 45 that her health, when that letter was written, was causing Marcus great anxiety. At the same time Faustina was near her delivery, and the child born (V. 52) was possibly Domitia Faustina. The rest of this book falls between 155 and 161, except the last letter, which from its different superscription and its mention of *γνώμαι*—an early feature in Fronto's educational scheme—would appear to belong to the period before 143.

The correspondence with Pius, apart from the first two letters, which have been already dealt with, gives no indication of date, but belongs to the period 145-161. The fourth letter is to Marcus, and is concerned, like *Ad Pium* 3 and 7, with the will of Niger Censorius, but we know nothing of this Niger. The will contained strictures against Gavius Maximus, who was *praef. praet.* to Pius from 140 till 157, in which year we may presume that he died. The letters would therefore not be later than that year.

The two books of letters *Ad Antoninum* seem in themselves to be arranged more or less in chronological order. To the letters in Book I. should be *Ad Caes.* added II. 16, 17. They come under the years 161-3, while Book II. covers the period between 162-6, though Mommsen would transfer Epistles 3, 4, 5 to the end of the book, and date them somewhat later.

The letters to Verus cover the years 161-166, but are not so chronologically arranged as those to Antoninus. For I. 2 mentions Apolaustus, who was only brought from Syria by Lucius in 166, and II. 6, 7 undoubtedly refer to the illness of Lucius at Canusium, when he had set out for Syria (*Capit. Vit. Ver.* VI. 7), and therefore cannot be later than 162.

Very few of the letters *Ad Amicos* admit of being accurately dated, but together with *Epist. Graec.* 4, 5 they appear to lie between the years 159 and 165.

The letters *De Feriis Alsicensibus* belong to 161, the *De Eloquentia* and *De Bello Parthico* to 162, the *Principia Historiae* to 164, the *De Nepote Amissio* to 165, and the *De Orationibus* to 166. The *Arion* and the three *Laudes* were early publications, and may perhaps be placed about 140.

Everything points to the fact that Fronto died before 169. As he was born at the end of Domitian's reign, he would be over seventy at that date, and his health was very precarious for many years at the end of his life, as we see from abundant evidence in his correspondence. There is nothing to be found in the letters that necessitates a later date for Fronto's death. There is indeed a reference in the *De Orationibus* to Commodus—*non malim mihi nummum Antonini aut Commodi aut Pii*, and Mommsen, who takes this to refer to Commodus after his association in the Empire with Marcus in 177, is thus compelled to prolong Fronto's life till that year at least; but this seems less likely than to consider Commodus here to mean Commodus as Caesar only. He was named Caesar 12 October, 166. How indeed could Fronto have written to Marcus so late as 177 in these words, *dicas fortasse, quid in orationibus meis nouicium, quid crispulum, quid luscum . . . ? nondum quicquam ; sed uereor. . . . Not yet*, when Marcus was fifty-six, and had reigned sixteen years, and Fronto would have been eighty!

For the convenience of the reader I here subjoin a table grouping the letters under approximate dates but not determining the exact order of each letter or group.

SYNOPSIS OF CORRESPONDENCE ARRANGED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE IN
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

Year.		
139-140 ...	...	<i>Epistulae Graecae</i> 6-8.
140-3 ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> IV. 1-3.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> III. (1) 2-12.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> V. 59.
„ ...	...	<i>Arion</i> and <i>Laudes</i> .
143 till June ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> I. 1-5.
143, July, August		<i>Ad Caesarem</i> I. 6-8.
„ „		<i>Ad Caesarem</i> II. 1-11.
„ „		<i>Epistulae Graecae</i> 1-3.
„ „		<i>Ad Pium</i> 1, 2.
143, after August		<i>Ad Caesarem</i> II. 12-15.
144-7 ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> IV. 4-13.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> III. (13) 14-21.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> V. 22-29.
147-161 ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> V. 1-21.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> V. 30-58.

Year.		
147-161 ...	...	<i>Ad Pium</i> 3-9 (<i>Ad Pium</i> 7 = <i>Ad Amic.</i> II. 5).
„ ...	...	<i>Epistulae Graecae</i> 4, 5.
157-161 ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> I. 1-5.
161 ...	...	<i>De Feriis Alsiensibus</i> 1-4.
161-2 ...	...	<i>Ad Antoninum</i> II. 1-4.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> II. 1-4.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Antoninum</i> I. 1-5 (6-10).
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Verum</i> I. 13, 4.
„ ...	...	<i>De Bello Parthico, ad Marcum.</i>
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> I. 7-14.
162 ...	...	<i>Ad Caesarem</i> II. 16, 17.
„ ...	...	<i>De Eloquentia, ad Marcum</i> 1-4.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Verum</i> II. 6.
163-4 ...	...	<i>Ad Antoninum</i> II. 3-6.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Verum</i> II. 1, 2, 7.
163-6 ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> I. 15-25.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> II. 6-11.
165-6 ...	...	<i>Ad Verum</i> II. 3-5, 8-10.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> I. 6.
„ ...	...	<i>Principia Historiae, ad Verum.</i>
„ ...	...	<i>De Nepote Amisso ad Marcum</i> 1, 2.
„ ...	...	<i>De Orationibus ad Marcum.</i>
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Verum</i> I. 2.
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Antoninum</i> II. 7, 8 (9).
„ ...	...	<i>Ad Amicos</i> I. 6.

Nothing is known of the history of this book of Fronto's correspondence, or who compiled it. It must have been a relation or friend, who perhaps had access also to the domestic documents of the Imperial House. That Fronto kept copies of his letters may perhaps be inferred from a reference in *Ad Ant.* I. 2 (quoted above), where he recalls a letter which he wrote twenty years before. But we can hardly suppose that he kept copies of such trivial notes as V. 12, 14, 17, etc., and, if not, these must have been recovered from the royal archives. If Fronto did not himself collect his letters for publication, the most likely person to have done so was Victorinus, his son-in-law, and the school-friend of Marcus (*Capit. Vit. Mar.* III. 10). As the letters are not placed entirely in chronological order, it would seem that the editor did not know their exact dates, but he was evidently well acquainted with the general circumstances of the correspondence.

The Codex, which we have in palimpsest condition, consisted originally of three volumes, of which the central one has been lost. Of the 680 pages which composed the whole work, 388 alone remain. The lost portion may have contained more letters of the later period when Marcus was Emperor, and if so their loss is the more to be deplored. Or, as some think, the

speeches of Fronto may have been in the missing part. These we would gladly have recovered, for at present, besides the notorious passage on the Christians preserved by Minucius Felix, we have only one specimen of Fronto's oratory—namely, the long passage copied by Marcus (*Ad Caes.* I. 6). The late Professor Robinson Ellis in his address on Fronto, and more recently Miss Brock, however, state that no fragment of Fronto's speeches remains.

But even allowing for the loss of so great a part of the MS., we cannot help feeling surprised at the comparative meagreness of the collection, more especially in the section of letters to and from friends. Victorinus, though he was certainly away from Rome for a considerable time as *legatus* in Germany about 161 A.D., only appears four times. Letters between Fronto and L. Verus before the latter's association in the Empire would have been valuable as throwing light upon his position under Pius. It would have been interesting too to have the letters which Fronto wrote to his friends abroad about his proconsulship (see *Ad Pium* 8). It is disappointing to find Pius so poorly represented; and letters from Herodes, one of the best letter-writers of his time, would have been well worth having. But what has survived of the correspondence will repay study, and greater familiarity with it tends to correct the very disparaging estimate at first formed of its value.

C. R. HAINES.

GODALMING.