Studies in Ancient Monarchies

Germanicus Caesar

History and Memory

Edited by Paweł Sawiński and Adam Ziółkowski

Ancient History

Franz Steiner Verlag







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Edited by
ULRICH GOTTER (Konstanz), MATTHIAS HAAKE (Bonn),
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Volume 8

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Umschlagabbildungen:
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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

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© Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2023
www.steiner-verlag.de
Layout und Herstellung durch den Verlag
Satz: DTP + TEXT Eva Burri, Stuttgart
Druck: Beltz Grafische Betriebe, Bad Langensalza
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.
Printed in Germany.
ISBN 978-3-515-13440-8 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-515-13446-0 (E-Book)

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Introduction

ADAM ZIÓŁKOWSKI

An unwritten law of historical writing dictates that great historical anniversaries engender conferences, colloquia and, ultimately, floods of publications. As far as the Roman history is concerned, the first two decades of this century were under this aspect dominated by grand jubilees linked with two greatest revolutionaries in purple, Augustus and Constantine, the occasions being, respectively, the bimillenaries of the Teutoburg disaster (2009)[1] and of the death of the first emperor (2014),[2] and the one-thousand seven-hundredth anniversaries of Constantine's ascent to power (2006)[3] and of the legendary Edict of Milan (2013).[4] In 2019, another similar occasion presented itself with the bimillenary of the death of a historical person that, although of much lesser stature, is one of the best recognizable figures of the Empire, Germanicus Iulius Caesar.[5]

Germanicus is easily the principal might-have-been of the Roman history. Untimely demise at the age of thirty-three prevented him from reaching the imperial power and in the long run signed the death-warrant for his wife and two eldest sons; yet their murderer was forced to resign himself to be succeeded by the surviving son, and when that son, the last of the Iulii Caesares, succumbed to the assassins' blades, the imperial power fell ineluctably to Germanicus' brother, a half-wit till then considered unqualified for holding public offices, let alone reigning. How would the early principate evolve had Germanicus outlived Tiberius and been succeeded by sons grown up in relatively normal conditions, not by Caligula, gone mad from the horrible experiences of his youth, and the feeble-minded Claudius? The *manqué* reconqueror of Germania, according to Tacitus deprived by his jealous adoptive father of conclusive victory when the rebellious tribes were on the verge of giving up resistance, wouldn't he be allowed,

1 Varusschlacht (2009); Baltrush et al. (2012).
2 Goodman (2018).
3 Demandt/Engemann (2007); Van Dam (2011).
4 Melloni et al. (2013); Cuscito (2014).
5 Anniversary conferences of Germanicus' death (The Roman Society – London – 12 X 2019); Germanico Caesare a un passo dall'impero (Museo Archeologico e Pinacoteca – Amelia – 24–25 V 2019); Germanico, l'imperatore mancato (Roma/Lucus Feroniae – 11–12 X 2019).

or could he be prohibited, to continue the war till the enemies' final defeat if he had not twice committed the same blunder of exposing, with disastrous results, his Mediterranean-type fleet to the storms of the North Sea? He was credited by Suetonius and Tacitus with all the positive traits which Tiberius and later emperors so sadly lacked (including the old Roman persistence in extending the empire), becoming under their pens a paragon of princely virtues (Suet. *Caius* 4; Tac. *Ann.* 2.73, 3.4); exaggeratedly, perhaps, but his exceptional position in the Romans' historical memory two hundred years after his death and a hundred years after the said historians had written their laudations is corroborated by a *supplicatio* in his memory in the *Feriale Duranum*, his being the only thus honoured deceased person in the calendar who did not become emperor and/or was not divinized.[6] On top of all that, epigraphic discoveries of the last decades of the previous century, *Tabula Siarensis* and *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*, have given us not only new data on Germanicus, especially on his death and status in the *domus Augusta*, but also a precious insight into the working methods and reliability of Tacitus, our main source for the post-Augustan Principate. Germanicus may not have been a historical giant like his adoptive grandfather, but his figure lends itself like few others as the starting point for (re-)examining various aspects of the Roman history and historical memory during the first phase of the imperial régime.

The present volume has its origin in the conference "Germanicus: history and memory", held in the Kalisz branch of the University of Poznań on 6 December 2019. Its guiding idea, reflected in the title, was that Germanicus – the last hero of Rome's uninterrupted external expansion, in spite of having never reached the imperial power the key member of the first imperial dynasty as, respectively, father, elder brother and grandfather of the subsequent Julio-Claudian emperors, an embodiment of the ideal of a "good" imperial heir apparent, unspoiled by his unique position – was memorable in the literal sense of the word, i. e. worthy of remembrance, by later generations of educated Romans. The memory of his person was expressed in so many ways that to realize the concept in full our volume hosts papers by representatives not only of the classical quartet – history, classical philology, art history/archaeology and numismatics – but of Egyptology and Roman law as well.

The first strictly historical contribution, Paweł Sawiński's "Proconsul of Augustus or of Tiberius? Some Remarks on the Nature of Germanicus' imperium and his First Imperatorial Acclamation", a re-examination of the moot question of the date of Germanicus' first imperatorial acclamation, concerns the mainstay of the new régime, the total subordination to the *princeps* of the Roman army, sworn in his name, paid by him and commanded by his lieutenants of varying grades and in varying positions. All that, however, as became an autocracy which would not admit being one, had to

6 I am sceptical about restoring the name of the person in col.1.11–12 as Lucius Aelius Caesar (i. e. Hadrian's first designated heir) instead of Robert Fink's reading Lucius Seius Caesar (i. e. Severus Alexander's father-in-law), now defended by Iovine (2018), 65–78.

be expressed in and run with old Republican terms and procedures which inevitably were acquiring a new meaning in the process. The terms which probably underwent greatest change in spite of remaining ostensibly the same as before were *imperium* and *imperator*. In consequence, to defend his date of the event, the author had first to inquire into the equally debatable question of Germanicus' status as commander on the Rhine, which in turn raised such issues as the reliability of the contemporary evidence, i. e. essentially poems and inscriptions set up by low-ranking officers, in reflecting fine points of the Augustan arrangement.

As the title indicates, the second historical chapter, "The Egyptian voyage of Germanicus: an Egyptological perspective" by Filip Taterka, is the work of an Egyptologist, not a classical historian. Some of the questions his contribution deals with are those scholars usually ask with regard to Germanicus' visit to Egypt: his motives for going there, his alleged transgression of Augustus' *dominationis arcanum* which prohibited senators and high-ranking *equites* from entering the province without the emperor's permission, the peculiarities of Tacitus' account; what sets it apart is the posit, defence of which fills more than a half of the chapter, that Germanicus went to Egypt in search of hidden lore. An argument like this unavoidably requires assumptions and interpretations which will not necessarily be shared by every reader; some might also think that the author, like almost all those who have tackled this particular point, assumes too easily the historicity of Germanicus' visit to the oracle of Apis, not mentioned by Tacitus. He is, however, fully aware of the hypothetical character of the argument, and disarms the reader with an opening notification: "the following lines are not supposed to present an indisputably certain reconstruction of the events, but rather they should be treated as an attempt to revisit the question from a different perspective".

The last strictly historical chapter, "Rome's aims in Germania in AD 14: Tacitus, *Annales* 1.3.6. An attempt to appraise a queer statement" by Adam Ziółkowski, is a comment on a sentence from the beginning of the *Annales* (a follow-on of the report that in AD 13 Germanicus had been put at the head of eight legions on the Rhine), in which we read that at the time of Augustus' death the Germanic war was being waged but to wipe out the ignominy of the Teutoburg disaster, not for conquest or other "worthy benefits". This statement, unlike the other, ostensibly corresponding in substance, that Augustus added to his will a counsel that the empire should be kept within its present limits (*Ann.* 1.11.4), has attracted little attention of modern scholars. The author argues, by setting it against the rest of Tacitean narrative and other reports on the same subject-matter, that it does not reflect the attitude of Augustus at the time of his death, but presages the position of his successor, which would prevail barely two years later with the recall of Germanicus.

Every text on Germanicus is of necessity a Tacitean undertaking, but the chapter "*Ad spes Germanici coercendas*: Germanicus and Piso in the second book of Tacitus' *Annals*" by Jakub Pigoń, is so to the utmost degree. Tacitus' unsurpassed mastery in the art of insinuation and of building up an atmosphere of impending doom has been the favourite theme for students of the literary aspects of his works. Our author concen-

trates on Tacitus' depiction of the clash between Germanicus and his alleged murderer Piso; he identifies and analyses the wide range of sophisticated literary devices with which the historian on the one hand magisterially recreates the atmosphere of doubt, suspicion and helpless anger which surrounded, in Rome as well as in Antioch, the news of Germanicus' illness and demise, and on the other leads his reader from Germanicus' triumph to death in such a way as to make the prince's deathbed accusation of Piso and Plancina as his murderers most compelling, with Tiberius and Livia looming in the background as accomplices.

As the title proclaims, Michał Faszcza's "Roman Military Discipline and Germanicus' Political Position: a note on D. 49.16.4.13" is strictly speaking a note on a passage in *Digesta* by the Severan jurist Arrius Menander, which mentions Germanicus' issuing edicts which affected the status of the legionaries, i. e. Roman citizens. An apparently simple question of when, in what circumstances and on what basis Germanicus could engage in an activity which, as far as we know, was the exclusive prerogative of the ruling emperors, set in the context of what we know about the Roman military law (an "invention" of the Augustan reign) during the early Principate, leads to important conclusions about the nature and scope of one of the most characteristic features of the period that was the granting of extraordinary *imperium* to members of the imperial family, of whom Germanicus is a paragon.

In "Germanicus in Roman numismatic memory" Agata Kluczek discusses the presence of Germanicus in the Imperial coinage from the perspective of the coins' issuers. Although almost all the issues on which he was represented were struck well after his death, they were still being minted after the demise of his last descendant, in numbers whose total approached those of some emperors and exceeded by far those which commemorated other non-rulers. The author examines motives which led imperial and provincial authorities to issue coins depicting him and the influence the types which referred to his achievements had, certainly or probably, on the imagery of coins of the same categories commemorating later emperors, with the following summing up: "Germanicus, not an emperor, was present in the numismatic memory of the later generations of the Romans as if he had been one".

In the last chapter, "The secret life of things: the *statua loricata* from Ameria", Lechosław Olszewski proposes a new reconstruction of the history of the monumental bronze statue found in 1963 in Amelia (ancient Ameria) in Umbria. The statue's identification has never been in doubt, as its head belongs unmistakably to Germanicus' "Gabii" type; since, however, it does not match well the torso, it is pretty obvious that the original depicted a different member of the imperial family. Now, on the assumption that in those days only statues of those whose memory had been condemned (*memoria damnata*) were being reused, it is thought that the original depicted Caligula, whose head was replaced after his posthumous disgrace by that of his father. The author observes that in reality the reasons for the practice were varied and that it was often meant to honour further the person to whom the transformed statue was to be

dedicated, thanks to positive associations which the original honoree brought up. An analysis of the iconography of the statue, especially of its armour, leads him to the conclusion that the person whom it originally depicted was most probably Caius Caesar, Augustus' eldest adoptive son.

In the end, it is worth asking in what direction the papers here presented go with regard to the question of what principally kept Germanicus' memory alive in the minds of the Romans of later generations. In theory, we are faced with an alternative: the victorious commander and paradigmatic triumphator of the imperial era or the crucial link in the chain of descendancy in the first imperial family. A second look shows a clear preponderance of the dynastic aspect. Even in "military" Chapters One, Three and Five the argumentation always returns to, or revolves around, the key point that is his extraordinary status, bestowed on him thanks to his position in Augustus' scheme of imperial succession. In Chapters Two and Four, this extraordinary status, familial and so official, is the starting point of the demonstration: Germanicus does what he does thanks to it, and dies as he dies because of it. Chapters Six and Seven, dealing with material objects and so more "objective" (at least in popular perception) than written sources, tell the same story, but even more clearly. Germanicus mattered not for the *signa recepta*, but as the embodiment of the dynastic principle, crucial for the Roman Empire as much as for any other monarchy, but in constant need of being recalled, probably as much to neutralise the republican heritage with its "choice of the best" (whether by the senate or the people in arms) alternative as to make up for the failure of successive imperial families to establish long-lasting dynasties.

***

The publication of this volume was financially supported by the Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts in Kalisz, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (ID-UB nº 59), the Faculty of Humanities and the Institute of History, University of Silesia in Katowice, the Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies and the Research Discipline Council for Literary Studies, University of Wrocław, and Excellence Initiative – Research University, University of Warsaw.

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Proconsul of Augustus or of Tiberius? *Some Remarks on the Nature of Germanicus'* imperium *and his First Imperatorial Acclamation*

PAWEŁ SAWIŃSKI

Keywords: Germanicus' independent imperium, imperium proconsulare, imperatorial salutation, domus Augusta

Germanicus' adoption by Tiberius, who had himself been adopted by Augustus, fundamentally changed his standing in the imperial family, as he then became the second candidate, after Tiberius, to succession from Augustus, which crucially influenced the course of his political career.[1] A few years after the adoption he began a spectacular career in the army, holding various military functions *ex mandatis Augusti*. In AD 7, he was dispatched to Pannonia and Dalmatia to help Tiberius suppress the great anti-Roman uprising of the tribes there which had broken out the previous year;[2] there he remained active until the year 9, most likely as a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, receiving his first military decoration, the *ornamenta triumphalia*, for his service in the province.[3] Another area of Germanicus' military activity was Germania, where he was first sent with Tiberius in AD 11 and again in 13, to take command of eight legions stationed on the Rhine.[4] In this paper, I focus on two issues. The first concerns Germanicus' legal status during the campaign in Germania in the years 11 and 13–16, and the closely related question of when he was first granted an independent *imperium*. The second issue is connected with the dating of Germanicus' first imperatorial salutation. Considering the contradictory and terse nature of our sources, both these problems have occasioned heated debate among the scholars.

1 On Germanicus' place in Augustus' succession plans, see Sawiński (2018), 86–91.
2 Cass. Dio 55.31.1.
3 Cass. Dio 56.17.2. See also Hurlet (1997), 167; Kienast et al. (2017), 73.
4 Cass. Dio 56.25.2; Tac. *Ann*. 1.31.1–2.

I will start my analysis with the issue of status, as it is relevant to establishing the date of Germanicus' imperatorial salutation, since holding independent *imperium* was surely a prerequisite for each and every award of this kind; it bears emphasising that no member of the *domus Augusta* had earlier acceded to that honour without holding independent *imperium* first.[5] Generally, there are two opinions among the scholars. Some maintain Germanicus was granted his first independent *imperium* during Augustus' reign, whereas others think it only happened after Tiberius had come into power. The discussion results from disagreement between our two main sources, Cassius Dio and Tacitus – the only two authors to mention Germanicus receiving these prerogatives. Whereas Dio writes that Germanicus was granted *imperium proconsulare* in AD 11, before he was sent to Germania with Tiberius, Tacitus mentions him receiving those powers in September of AD 14, that is, after Augustus' death.

> Μάρκου δὲ Αἰμιλίου μετὰ Στατιλίου Ταύρου ὑπατεύσαντος, Τιβέριος μὲν καὶ Γερμανικὸς ἀντὶ ὑπατου ἄρχων ἔς τε τὴν Κελτικὴν ἐσέβαλον.[6]
>
> In the consulship of Marcus Aemilius and Statilius Taurus, Tiberius and Germanicus, the latter acting as proconsul, invaded Germany. (transl. by E. Cary)
>
> *at Germanico Caesari proconsulare imperium petivit, missique legati qui deferrent.*[7]
>
> but he [Tiberius] asked proconsular powers for Germanicus Caesar, and a commission was sent out to confer them. (transl. by C. H. Moore, J. Jackson)

F. Hurlet, P. M. Swan, and Y. Rivière accept Dio's chronology.[8] For Hurlet, the crucial argument is Germanicus' first imperatorial acclamation, which he dates to AD 13 or early AD 14, resting his reasoning on the correct assumption that independent *imperi-*

5 In 10 or 9 BC, Drusus the Elder and Tiberius won their first imperatorial salutations for successes in Germania and Pannonia. See Syme (1979), 310–314; Rich (1999), 549. Both held *imperium proconsulare*, which they had been granted in 11 BC. See Cass. Dio 54.33.5; 34.3. *Contra* Vervaet (2020), 152 f., who argues that Drusus and Tiberius had the *imperium proconsulare* from as early as 12 BC, so from the very beginning of their activity in Germania and Pannonia. This thesis is debatable. We know they led campaigns there in the rank of *legati Augusti* in the years 12–11. Augustus' stepsons were both hailed *imperatores* by the army, but the emperor did not confirm those salutations. See Syme (1979), 310; Rich (1990), 213; Dalla Rosa (2014), 238. Then towards the end of AD 3 or at the beginning of 4, the title of *imperator* was given to Gaius Caesar, Augustus' son, for his successes during the campaign in Armenia. See Cass. Dio 55.10a. 7; CIL 5.6416; Syme (1979), 315; Faoro (2016), 208, 212. Also in that case Cassius Dio (55.10.18) confirms that Gaius had an independent *imperium*, one he had received in 1 BC for his mission in the East.

6 Cass. Dio 56.25.2.

7 Tac. *Ann*. 1.14.3. The interpretation of that passage by Koestermann (1963), 115, who maintains that the *imperium* then granted to Germanicus was *proconsulare maius*, is quite groundless, as it is common knowledge that he only received such powers in AD 17 for the mission in the East. See Tac. *Ann*. 2.43.1; *SCPP*, ll. 34–35.

8 Hurlet (1997), 168 f.; Swan (2004), 278; Rivière (2016), 133.

um was a prerequisite for being awarded this honour. In his opinion, Tacitus' text does not mention Germanicus receiving independent *imperium* for the first time, because the commander had had such prerogatives since AD 11. Unfortunately, Hurlet does not clarify how in that case the passage in Tacitus should be understood.[9] Y. Rivière has expressed a similar view, although he also thinks that Germanicus' *imperium* was lesser (*minus*) than the *imperium* Tiberius held when he was sent to Germania in the year 11.[10] However, as far as the formal aspect of the matter is considered, his assumption does not seem justified. If, following Dio, we take Germanicus to have been granted *imperium proconsulare* that year, then *de iure* his status in Germania was the same as Tiberius'. The superiority of his adoptive father stemmed in that case primarily from Tiberius' greater military experience and *auctoritas*, owing to which it was he who held the high command in Germania at the time. The informal hierarchy between them is reflected in Ovid's choice of words, when the poet, referring to the campaigns of AD 10–11, calls Tiberius dux and Germanicus proximus duci.[11]

P. Brunt and R. Syme, in their turn, accept the content of Cassius Dio's account while rejecting his chronology and believe that Dio made a mistake with his dating of Germanicus' first *imperium*. They argue that since Tiberius was then the high commander of the Rhine army, and Germanicus necessarily fought under his command, the latter is unlikely to have been granted the status of a proconsul during the same time. For that reason, they suggest that the date of the event should be moved to AD 13, when Germanicus replaced Tiberius as the commander of the legions stationed on the Rhine.[12] I do not find their argument convincing. As I have indicated above, Germanicus' having had the same proconsular standing as Tiberius did not rule out the latter's being in fact the supreme commander in Germania.

In yet another view, K. Bringmann assumes, drawing on Tacitus, that Germanicus first received independent *imperium* only after Augustus' death and on Tiberius' clear orders. Consequently, he decidedly rejects Dio's account, believing that either the author or a copyist made a mistake. He thinks, instead, that until the death of the first princeps, Germanicus conducted military operations in Germania in the rank of *legatus Augusti,*[13] a view I am convinced is completely unfounded, as Germanicus could

9 Hurlet (1997), 168 f., 171.

10 Rivière (2016), 133.

11 Ovid. *Tr.* 4.2.28. The word *proximus* is used in a similar sense by Velleius Paterculus (2.71.1; 127.1) to refer to Messalla Corvinus as being the closest in rank to Brutus and Cassius in the Republican camp, and to refer to Statilius Taurus, whom he describes as Augustus' second-closest aide (*adiutor*) after Agrippa.

12 Brunt (1974), 180, 185; Syme (1978), 57 f., 63; Syme (1979), 320.

13 Bringmann (1977), 227; in a similar vein, Lebek (1991), 122. With some reservations, also D. Kienast accepts Germanicus had the status of *legatus Augusti pro praetore* until Augustus' death. See Kienast et al. (2017), 73 f.

hardly have assumed command of the eight legions stationed in Germania as a mere imperial legate after his consulship of AD 12.[14]

To summarize, I do not believe that there are grounds for rejecting the version of Cassius Dio, who dates Germanicus' being granted his first independent *imperium* to the year 11. An argument in favour of that date might be Germanicus' first imperatorial acclamation, which most likely took place in the final years of Augustus' reign (see below), thus making it legitimate to suppose that Germanicus obtained his first independent *imperium* before the first princeps died. Additionally, P. Swan rightly points out that the earlier careers of members of the *domus Augusta* show they tended to be granted *imperium proconsulare* before attaining consulship, as the careers of Drusus the Elder (Germanicus' natural father) and Gaius Caesar (Augustus' son) indicate.[15] I see no reasons to suppose that Germanicus' *cursus honorum* was different.[16]

How then is one to interpret Tacitus account? Th. Mommsen tried to reconcile the two narratives: he thought the mention in Cassius Dio referred to Augustus conferring on Germanicus proconsular powers in AD 11, while Tacitus took note of the senate renewing that *imperium* after the first emperor's death, which in Mommsen's opinion automatically made Germanicus' prerogatives expire.[17] However, his view has been criticized by many scholars[18] who chiefly point out that, in Tiberius' case, Augustus' death did not require his *imperium* to be renewed; why then should such an extension be necessary for Germanicus?[19] Still, their counter-argument is disputable, seeing that Tiberius' *imperium* thoroughly differed from Germanicus' in its nature, and that the two men had different standing in the imperial family. In AD 13 Tiberius had his *tribunicia potestas* extended for another ten years, and a decree of the senate, sanctioned by the people, granted him *imperium aequum* to that of Augustus in all the provinces of the Empire, which was meant to ensure his smooth succession.[20] Therefore his *imperium* as Augustus' co-ruler and designated successor could hardly have required any renewal after the first princeps died. In contrast, Germanicus held a command in Germania *ex mandatis Augusti*, and in my opinion his position needed to be defined anew after Tiberius came into power, so the senate granted him *imperium proconsulare* at the new emperor's express bidding. From that moment on, therefore, Germanicus commanded the legions

14 From Tacitus (*Ann*. 1.31.2) we also know there were at the time two *legati Augusti pro praetore* under Germanicus' command, C. Silius and A. Caecina. That constitutes another argument against the claim that Germanicus was just an imperial legate then.

15 Drusus the Elder was granted *imperium proconsulare* in the year 11 and assumed consulship in 9, whereas Gaius Caesar received *imperium proconsulare* in 1 BC and held his consulship in the following year. See Kienast et al. (2017), 61, 67.

16 See Swan (2004), 278.

17 Mommsen (1887), 1158 (n3).

18 See esp. Goodyear (1972), 191; Brunt (1974), 179 f.; Syme (1978), 57.

19 Brunt (1974), 179 f.; Syme (1978), 57 (n2).

20 See Sawiński (2018), 108 f.