

Introduction

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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 Cesare 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 Imperial Acclamation", a re-examination of the moot question of the date of Germanicus' first imperial 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 Faszczka'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.

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