

A look into the Julio-Claudian Dynasty and the relationship between Nero and the Claudians’.

Britannicus: As Claudius biological son, Britannicus was essentially the Heir until Nero was introduced by Agrippina.

From what is known about Britannicus relationship with Agrippina, it can be assumed it was quite rocky and this would have been worse after his father’s death



Nero: In the early years in Nero’s and Britannicus’s brotherhood, Nero was shown off as the public heir. This could have caused hostilities, which as known throughout history, resulting in the assassination of Britannicus by the poisoned cup of Nero.



Claudius: The Emperor of Rome, Claudius marriage to Agrippina the younger paves the way for Nero to becoming the chief authority.

It is said that Agrippina became Claudius’ wife, through the use of her feminine wiles and the potential to increase the Julian family blood.

It can be assumed that Claudius had a positive relationship with young Nero as her allowed him a marriage with his daughter Octavia and allowed him to be joint heir with Britannicus.



Agrippina: was one of the most important figures within this time-span as it was due to Agrippina that Nero was allowed into power.

Her relationship with Claudius near the end of his reign was waning as Claudius planned to have Nero removed from heirship, only to be assassinated.



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Bible Odyssey, n.d. *Nero and Agrippina, Aphrodisias Museum*. [image] Available at: <<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/image-gallery/1-9/666-nero>> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

Wikimedia, n.d. *Bust of Agrippina the Younger*. [image] Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rome_Agrippina_Minor.jpg> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

Research

- (1)Her ingenuity supplied a potion, administered by the eunuch Halotus, whose regular duty was to bring in and taste the dishes. Tacitus *The Annales* 12 66)
- (2)In the consulate of Tiberius Claudius, = A.D. 51 fifth term, and of Servius Cornelius, the manly toga was prematurely¹ conferred on Nero, so that he should appear qualified for a political career. The Caesar yielded with pleasure to the sycophancies of the senate, which desired Nero to assume the consulship in the twentieth year of his age Tacitus *The Annales* 12 41)
- (3)Britannicus rode past in the juvenile white and purple, Nero in the robes of triumph. Tacitus *The Annales* 12 41)
- (4) that Britannicus was now of full age, he who was the true and worthy heir of his father's sovereignty, which a son, by mere admission and adoption, was abusing in outrages on his mother. She shrank not from an utter exposure of the wickedness of that ill-starred house, of her own marriage, to begin with, and of her poisoner's craft. All that the gods and she herself had taken care of was that her stepson was yet alive; with him she would go to the camp, where on one side should be heard the daughter of Germanicus; on the other, the crippled Burrus and the exile Seneca, claiming, forsooth, with disfigured hand, and a pedant's tongue, the government of the world. Tacitus, *The Annales*, 13.14
- (5) It was the regular custom that the children of the emperors should take their meals in sight of their relatives,³⁹ seated with other nobles of their age at a more frugal table of their own. There Britannicus dined; and, as his food, solid and liquid, was tried by a taster chosen from his attendants, the following expedient was discovered, to avoid either changing the rule or betraying the plot by killing both master and man. A drink, still harmless, very hot, and already tasted, was handed to Britannicus; then, when he declined it as too warm, cold water was poured in, and with it the poison; which ran so effectively through his whole system that he lost simultaneously both voice and breath. There was a startled movement in the company seated around, and the more obtuse began to disperse; those who could read more clearly sat motionless, their eyes riveted on Nero. He, without changing his recumbent attitude or his pose of unconsciousness, observed that this was a usual incident, due to the epilepsy with which Britannicus had been inflicted from his earliest infancy: sight and sensation would return by degrees. But from Agrippina, in spite of her control over her features, came a flash of such terror and mental anguish that it was obvious she had been as completely in the dark as the prince's sister Octavia. She saw, in fact, that her last hope had been taken — that the precedent for matricide had been set. Octavia, too, youth and inexperience notwithstanding, had learned to hide her griefs, her affections, her every emotion. Consequently, after a short silence, the amenities of the banquet were resumed. Tacitus, *The Annales*, 13.16
- (6) The same night saw the murder of Britannicus and his pyre, the funeral apparatus — modest enough — having been provided in advance. Still, his ashes were buried in the Field of Mars, under such a tempest of rain that the crowd believed it to foreshadow the anger of the gods against a crime which, even among men,⁴¹ was condoned by the many who took into account the ancient instances of brotherly hatred and the fact that autocracy knows no partnership. The assertion is made by many contemporary authors that, for days before the murder, the worst of all outrages had been offered by Nero to the boyish years of Britannicus: in which case, it ceases to be possible to regard his death as either premature or cruel, though it was amid the sanctities of the table, without even a respite allowed in which to embrace his sister, and under the eyes of his enemy, that the hurried doom fell on this last scion of the Claudian house, upon whom lust had done its unclean work before the poison. The hastiness of the funeral was vindicated in an edict of the Caesar, who called to mind that "it was a national tradition to withdraw these untimely obsequies from the public gaze and not to detain it by panegyrics and processions. However, now that he had lost the aid of his brother, not only were his remaining hopes centered in the state, but the senate and people themselves must so much the more cherish their prince as the one survivor of a family⁴² born to the heights of power." Tacitus, *The Annales*, 13.17

(Source of Interest) With the succession vested in Britannicus, the emperor’s person was safe; but the stepmother’s plot aimed at overthrowing the whole imperial house—a darker scandal than would have resulted, if he had held his peace about the infidelities of her predecessor. Tacitus *The Annales* 12 65