

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

**Augustus and the
Establishment of the Principate**

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Principatus - first place, pre-eminence
(Anglicised Principate).

Princeps - first, foremost (root of our word
prince).

Imperium - the power and right to issue
commands.

Imperator - commander, leader (the root for our
word Emperor).

Auctoritas - influence, authority, prestige.

Potestas – power, control.

Major Sources for the Augustan Period

- **Augustus *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*** – Augustus presentation of his major achievements, set up posthumously.
- **Tacitus *Annals*** – the early part of book 1 deals with the transition of power from Augustus to Tiberius.
- **Suetonius *Divus Augustus*** – biography of his life.
- **Dio Cassius** - Books 52-56.
- **Velleius Paterculus *Historiae Romanae*** – a compendium of Roman history from Romulus to AD 30 (though the earliest parts of the work are missing).

Important Issues in the Augustan Period

- Establishing the nature of Augustus' powers and “restoring the Republic”.
- Maintenance and distribution of military forces.
- Internal pacification and expanding of borders.
- Social legislation.
- Dynastic succession.

Constitutional Settlements and Military Disposition

Perspectives on the Augustan System (1)

- **Tacitus *Annals* 1.1** - “Augustus; who, when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of ‘Prince’...”
- **Strabo *Geography* 6.4** - “But it were a difficult thing to administer so great a dominion otherwise than by turning it over to one man, **as to a father**... from the time he assumed the **absolute authority**...”

Perspectives on the Augustan System (2)

- **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 28** – Augustus twice thought about restoring the republic but felt it was unsafe to do so.
- **Dio Cassius 53.7** – “Through this process the power both of the people and of the Senate was wholly transferred into the hands of Augustus, and it was from this time that a monarchy, strictly speaking, was established. **It would certainly be most truthful to describe it as a monarchy.**”

Augustan Presentation – *Res Gestae*

“At the age of nineteen [44 BC] on my own responsibility and at my own expense I raised an army, with which I **successfully championed the liberty of the republic when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction.**” (1).

“In my sixth and seventh consulships [28-27 BC], after I had extinguished civil wars, and at a time when with universal consent I was in complete control of affairs, I **transferred the republic from my power to the dominion of the senate and people of Rome.**” (34.1).

Constitutional Settlement – 27 BC

- **29 BC:** Augustus and Agrippa become Censors, reduce number of senators (had reached c.1000).
 - In **27 BC**, Octavian lays down powers to Senate, this is rejected and Octavian is granted title of Augustus (reverent, majestic, consecrated).
 - Division of senatorial and imperial provinces – the majority of military forces within imperial provinces.
- “Those who believed he had spoken the truth could not openly show their pleasure: those who were in favour of his decision were prevented by their fears...” - **Dio Cassius 53.11.**

“At any rate, when his ten-year period of office expired, another five years was voted to him, then another five, after that ten, and then ten for the fifth time. Thus through this succession of ten-year periods he remained sole ruler for life. It was for this reason that later emperors, although they were no longer appointed for a limited period but for their entire lives – once and for all – nevertheless always celebrated their reign every ten years, as if they were once more renewing their sovereignty, and this practice continues to the present day.” – **Dio Cassius 53.16.**

Second Constitutional Settlement – 23 BC

- No longer holds Consulship (except in 5 BC and 2 BC), Augustus had held it continuously from 31-23 BC.
- Granted *imperium maius proconsulare* throughout empire.
- Granted *tribunica potestas*.
- Refuses offer of Dictatorship and lifelong consulship in 22 BC - ***Res Gestae Divi Augusti 5.***

Distribution of Provinces



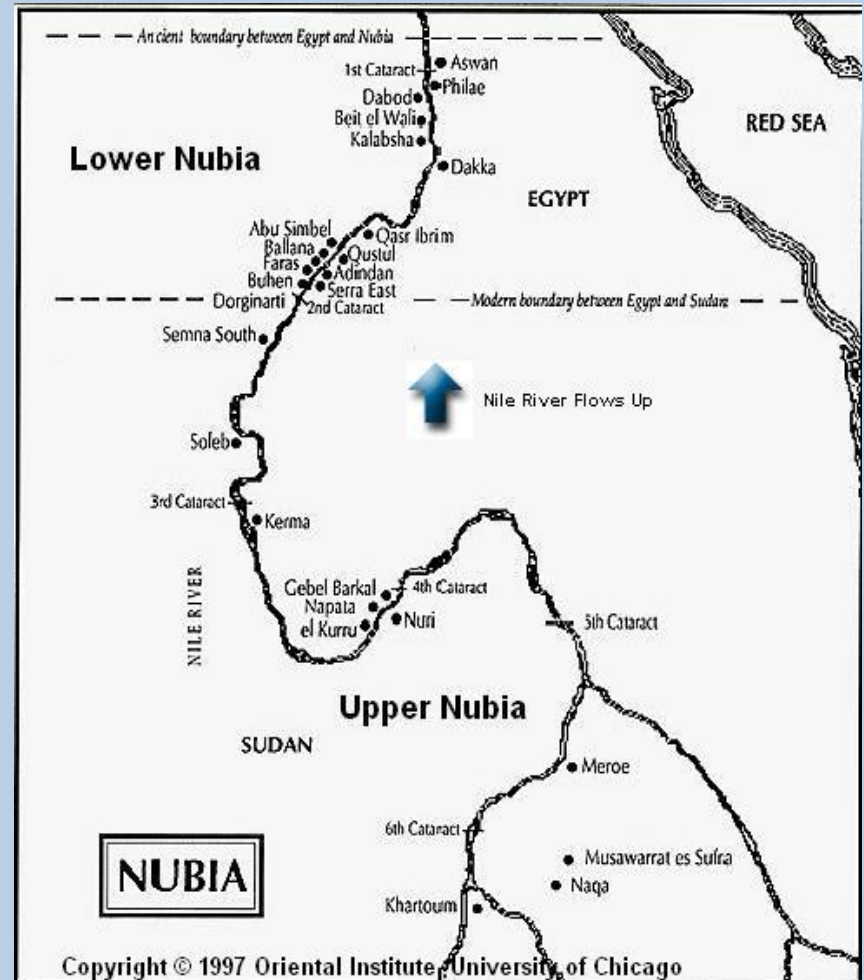
Reform of the Army

- Augustus inherits force of 60 legions after Actium, reduces this to 28 legions (three lost in AD 9).
- 300,000 thousand soldiers settled in colonies.
- Term of service – initially 16 years with 4 years as a veteran – later changes this to 20 years with 5 years as a veteran.
- Command structure standardised.
- Continued practice of decimation.
- Land distributed to veterans – Augustus claims 600,000,000 sesterces paid for lands in Italy, and about 260,000,000 disbursed for provincial lands (*RG 16*).
- Money paid to soldiers on completion of service – Augustus claims this totalled 400,000,000 sesterces (*RG 16*).
- Praetorian guards stationed outside Rome. Three units on duty in Rome at any one time.

Internal Pacification and Expanding of Borders

The Border of Egypt

- Cornelius Gallus pushes frontier to First Cataract - Trilingual inscription (Latin, Greek, Hieroglyphs) – *ILS 8995*.
- Queen (“Candace”) of Meroe attacks Roman border and carries off booty.
- Punitive expedition led by Gaius Petronius.
- Peace treaty in 22 BC – some land south of First Cataract ceded by “Candace”.



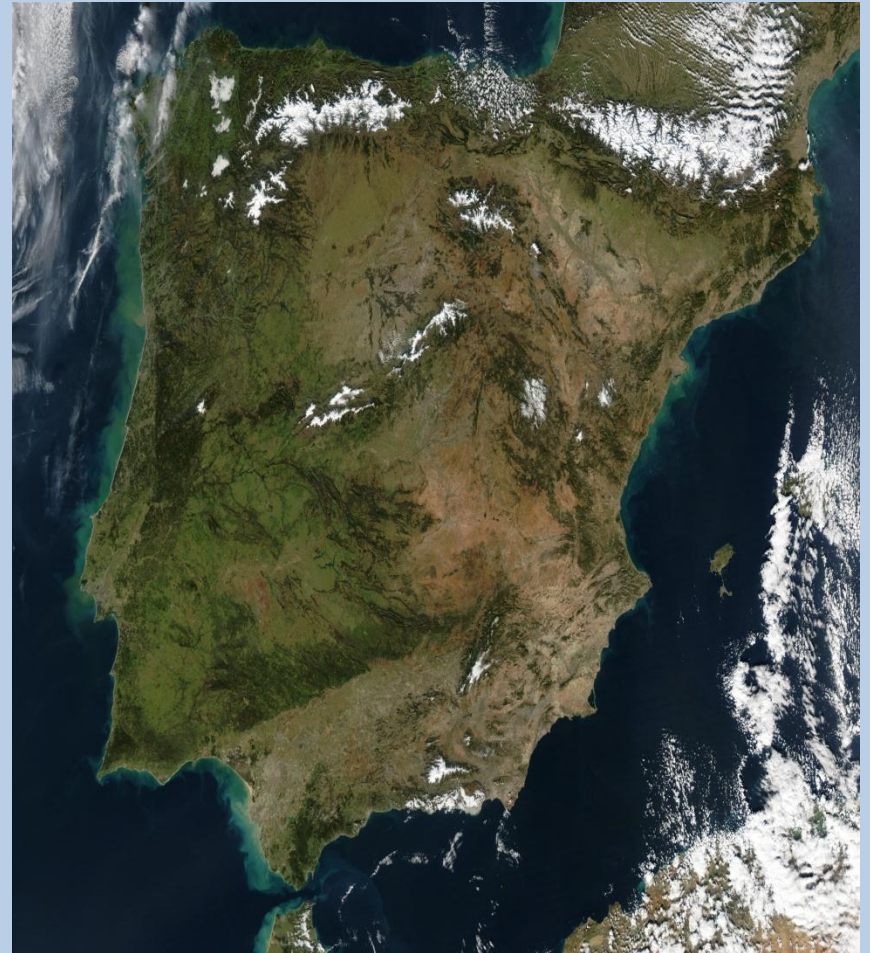
Expedition to Arabia Felix

- Arabia Felix (“Happy Arabia”) – broadly corresponds to Yemen.
 - Military expedition lead by Aelius Gallus in 26-25 BC, purposes of booty and conquest.
 - Logistical problems and disease force retreat.
- **Strabo *Geography* 16.4.22-24.**



Pacifying Spain

- Peoples of the north and northwestern mountainous regions needed subduing (Cantabri and Astures).
- Campaigns lasted from 26 to 19 BC.
- Augustus in Spain during 26-24 BC.



Peace in the East

- Tiberius sent with a military force to place Roman candidate Tigranes on Armenian throne – 20 BC.
- Roman prisoners and military standards captured by Parthians are restored by diplomatic means.



Armour of the Prima Porta Augustus

Germany

- Campaigns into western Germany from 12 to 9 BC under Drusus (who passes away in 9 BC).
- Further subsequent campaigning under leadership of Tiberius and other generals.
- Three Roman legions under Varus defeated at Teutoburg Forest in AD 9.

“...three legions with their general and officers and auxiliaries were massacred to a man... Indeed, it is said that he took the disaster so deeply to heart... he would often beat his head on a door, shouting ‘Quinctilius Varus, give me back my legions!’...” – **Suetonius**
Divus Augustus 23.

The Danubian Lands

- Moesia and Thrace brought under Roman authority in 29-28 BC (the latter made a client kingdom, the former made a province c. AD 6).
- Noricum brought under Roman authority in 16 BC.
- Campaigns in 15 BC under Tiberius and Drusus lead to the creation of the province of Raetia.
- Pannonia conquered under leadership of Tiberius from 12-9 BC. Rebellion between AD 6-9 crushed.

“The Pannonian peoples, whom the army of the Roman people never approached before I was the leading citizen, were conquered through the agency of Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson and legate; I brought them into the empire of the Roman people, and extended the frontier of Illyricum to the banks of the Danube.” – ***Res Gestae* 30.1.**



Roman territory at death of Julius Caesar



Roman territory at death of Augustus

Social Legislation

Adultery and Marriage

- *Lex Iulia de maritandis* and *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* (18 BC) – legislation on adultery, imposing banishment.
- *Lex Papia Poppaea* (AD 9) – marriage legislation, designed to discourage celibacy and promote the rearing of children.
- Augustus banishes his daughter (Julia the elder) and granddaughter (Julia the younger) – **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 65.**

“His marriage law being more rigorously framed than others, he found himself unable to make it effective because of open revolt against several of its clauses. He was therefore obliged to withdraw or amend certain penalties exacted for a failure to marry, to increase rewards he offered for large families, and to allow a widow or widower three years’ grace before having to marry again. Even this did not satisfy the knights, who demonstrated against the law at public entertainment, demanding its repeal.” – **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 34.**

Manumission

- *Lex Fufia Caninia* (2 BC) - Legislation designed to stop the indiscriminate freeing of slaves. Limits place on the amount of slaves that could be freed in wills.
- *Lex Aelia Sentia* (AD 4) – limits on the freeing of slaves during ones life time (*inter vivos*) – limits on the age at which a slave could be freed. Some limits on citizenship status.

Dynastic succession

Heirs - Marcellus

Gaius Claudius
Marcellus the
elder

=

Octavia the elder

Marcellus

Scribonia

=

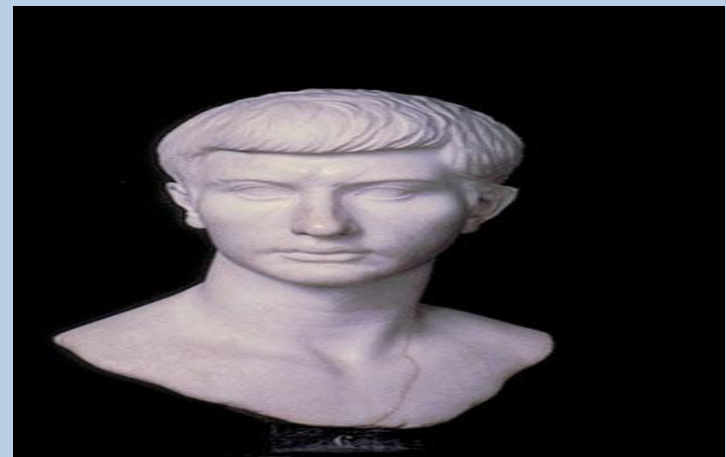
AUGUSTUS

Marcellus
(m. 25BC)

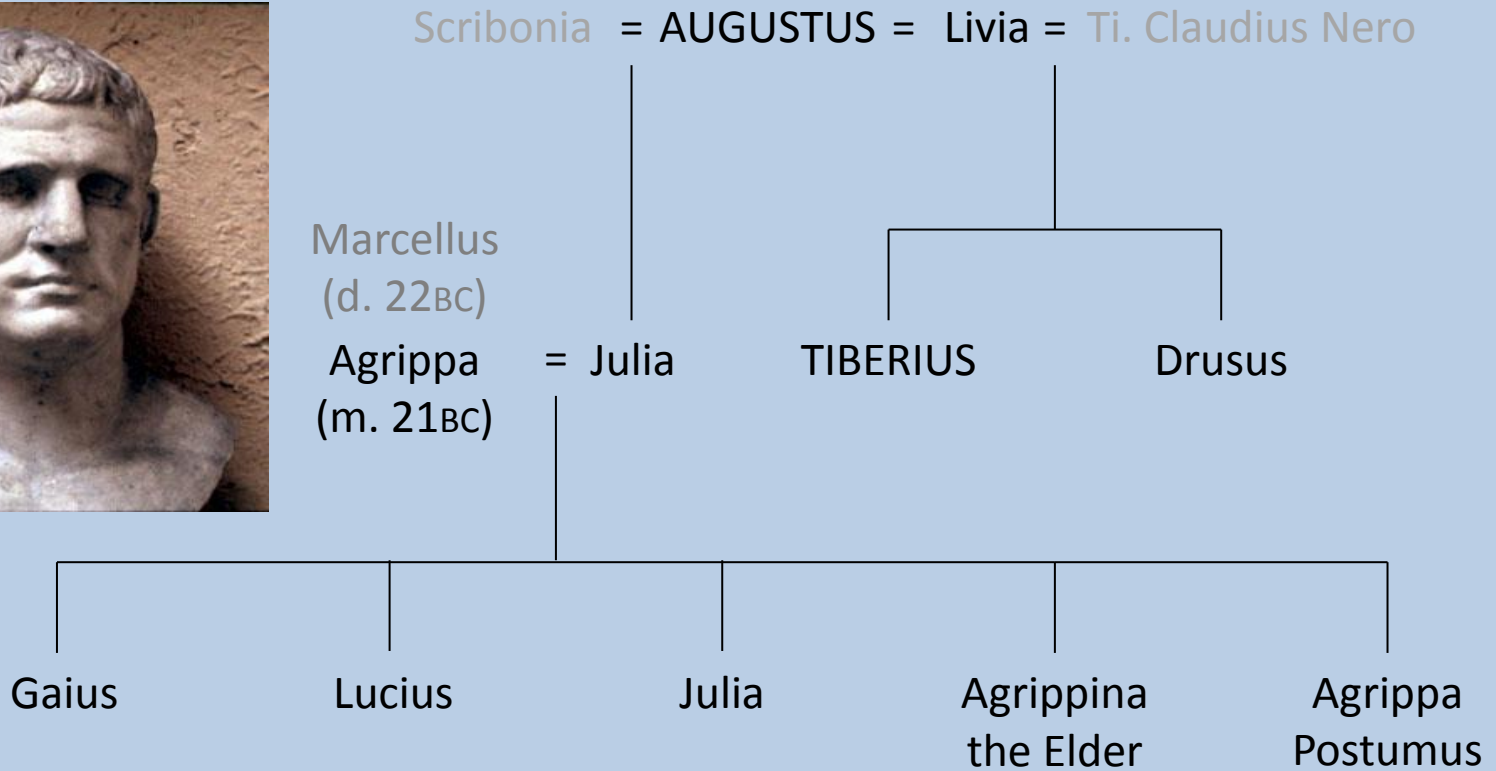
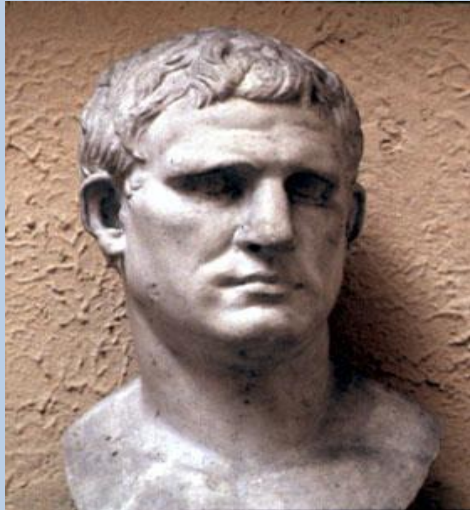
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Julia the elder

- Augustus marries Marcellus (his nephew) to his daughter Julia the Elder in 25 BC.
- Marcellus dies in 23 BC.

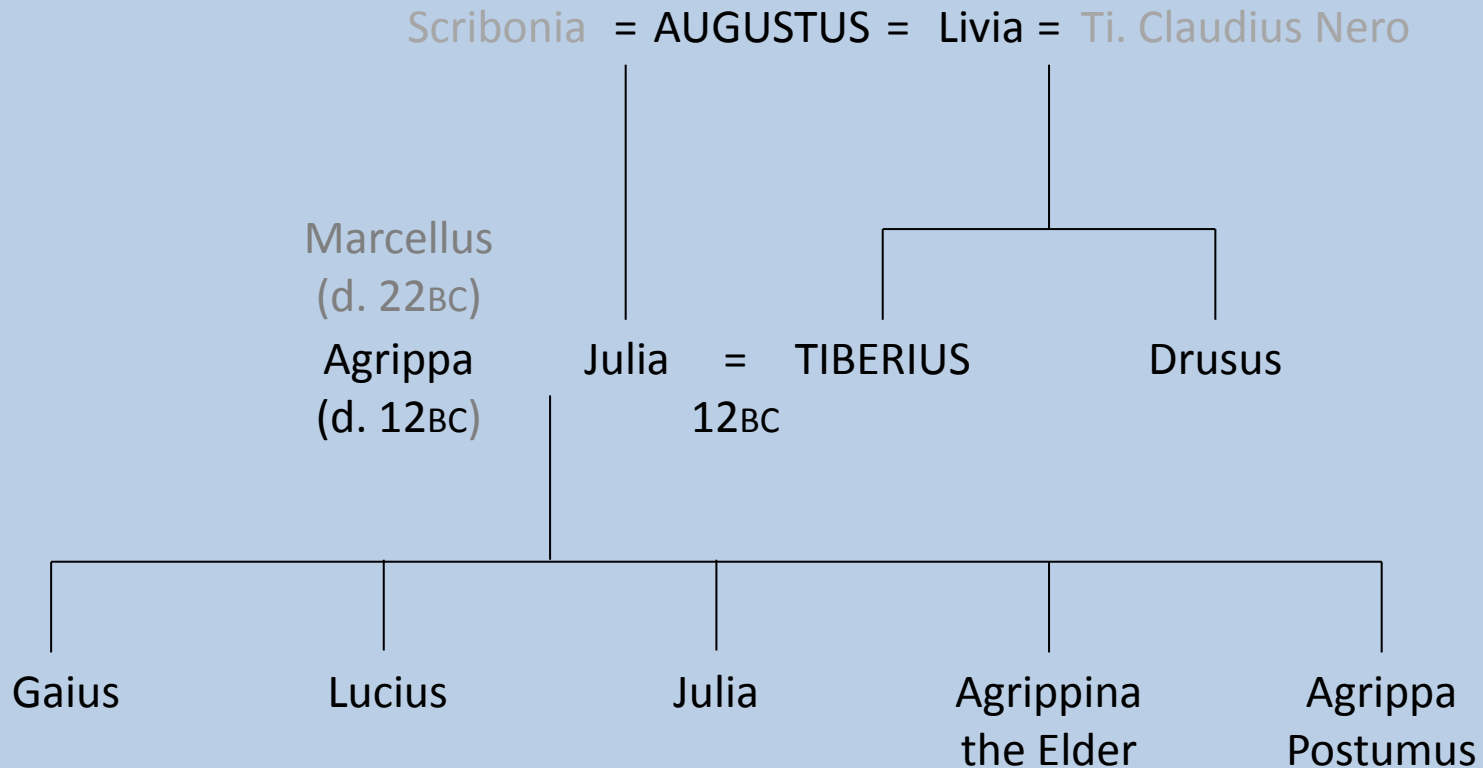


Heirs - Agrippa



- Close friend and advisor to Augustus.
- Marries Julia the Elder in 21 BC.
- Agrippa receives Tribunician Powers in 18 BC and Imperium Maius in 13 BC (making him virtually co-emperor).
- 12 BC death of Agrippa.
- Children of Julia and Agrippa – Gaius, Lucius and Postumus.

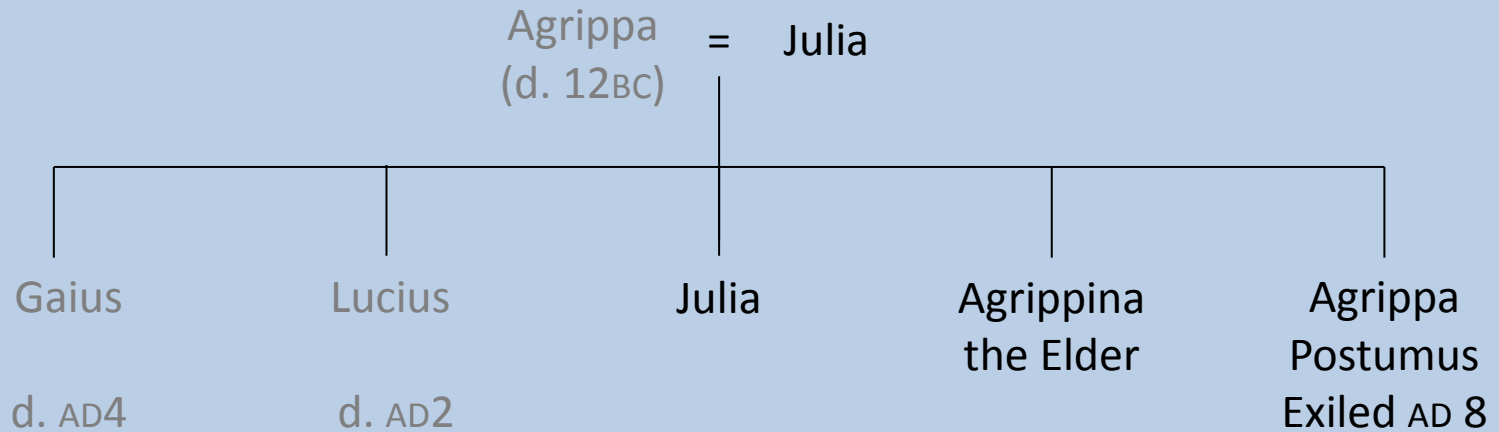
Heirs – Gaius and Lucius Caesar



Gaius Caesar AR Denarius. RIC 540, Cohen 2, BMC 684

- Sons of Agrippa and Julia the Elder.
- Adopted by Augustus in 17 BC.
- Death of Lucius Caesar in 2 BC (died of illness in Massalia).
- Death of Gaius Caesar in AD 4 (wounded campaigning in Armenia).

Heirs – Agrippa Postumus



- Agrippa Postumus – grandson of Augustus who had been formally adopted in AD 4 – in AD 8 or 9 he is banished to island of Planasia by Augustus (Tiberius (or Augustus?) later had him killed).
- Suetonius (***Tiberius* 22**) states it unclear whether Augustus or Tiberius issued with order for his death in AD 14. Tacitus (***Annals* 1.6**) doubts it was Augustus.



Heirs - Tiberius

- Augustus forces his stepson Tiberius to divorce his wife Vipsania (daughter of Agrippa and Marcella (a niece of Augustus)) to marry Augustus' daughter Julia (Agrippa's widow).
- AD 4 – After death of Gaius Caesar Tiberius adopted by Augustus and Germanicus is adopted by Tiberius.
- Agrippa Postumus – banished in AD 8 or 9 –later killed by Augustus or Tiberius.
- Tiberius had been invested with *imperium* since AD 12.



Useful Reading

- Potter, D. (2009) *Rome in the Ancient World* (London: Thames & Hudson) pages 165-180.
- Goodman, M. (1997) *The Roman World 44 BC-AD 180* (Routledge). – chapter 12, The Image of the Emperor.
- Gabba, E. (1984) 'The Historians and Augustus', in F. Millar & E. Segal (eds.), *Caesar Augustus : seven aspects* (Oxford).