

**CLAH4006**

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

**Tiberius AD 14-37**

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# Death of Augustus

- Augustus dies at Nola on 19<sup>th</sup> August AD 14.
- Tacitus (***Annals** 1.5*) reports rumour of supposed foul-play by Livia (reported visit of Augustus to Agrippa Postumus).
- Tiberius reads will of Augustus to Senate – Augustus declared a god on 17<sup>th</sup> of September AD 14.

# Apotheosis of Augustus

“At the same time the Senate declared Augustus to be immortal, assigned to him sacred rites and priests to perform them, and appointed Livia, who had already been named Julia and Augusta, to be priestess. They also authorized her to be attended by a lictor whenever she exercised her sacred office. For her part she presented a certain Numerius Atticus, a senator and former praetor, with 1,000,000 sesterces, because he testified on oath that he had seen Augustus ascending to heaven in the same way, as tradition had it, as occurred in the case of Proculus and Romulus.” – **Dio Cassius 56.46**

# Succession of Tiberius

- Tiberius Claudius Nero becomes princeps (subsequently Tiberius Caesar Augustus) after a display of reluctance in the Senate – (**Tac. *Ann.* 1.13; Suet. *Tib.* 24**).
  - Had been invested with *imperium* since AD 12.
- “The preamble to the will ran as follows: Since fate has cruelly carried off my sons Gaius and Lucius, Tiberius Caesar is to inherit two thirds of my property.’ This wording strengthened the suspicion that Augustus had nominated Tiberius as his successor only for want of any better choice.” – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 23**.

# Will of Augustus

“With regard to the three codicils (*volumina*) before mentioned, in one of them he gave orders about his funeral; another contained a summary of his acts (*Res Gestae*), which he intended should be inscribed on brazen plates, and placed in front of his mausoleum; in the third he had drawn up a concise account of the state of the empire (*tertio breviarium totius imperii*); the number of troops enrolled, what money there was in the treasury (*quantum pecuniae in aerario*), the revenue, and arrears of taxes; to which were added the names of the freedmen and slaves from whom the several accounts might be taken.” – **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 101.4.**

# Tiberius Accepts the Succession

“Finally, exhausted by the general outcry and individual entreaties, he gradually gave way- not to the extent of admitting that he had accepted the throne, but at least to the point of ceasing to be urged and refuse.” – **Tacitus *Annals* 1.13.**

“Finally, with a great show of reluctance, and complaints that they were forcing him to become a miserable and overworked slave, Tiberius accepted the principate...” – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 24.**

# Sources for the Period

- Tacitus *Annals* books 1-6.
- Suetonius *Tiberius*.
- Cassius Dio *Roman History* books 57-58.
- Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome* 2.94-131.

# Mutiny on the Rhine and Danube

- Mutiny in Pannonia (4 legions) and Germania (8 legions).
- AD 14 – revolt over issue of pay and conditions.
- Germanicus sent to Germania, and Drusus to Pannonia.
- Germanicus crosses Rhine, conducts skirmishes and retrieves bones of those fallen under Varus. Tiberius stops these forays, but gives Germanicus a triumph (AD 17)



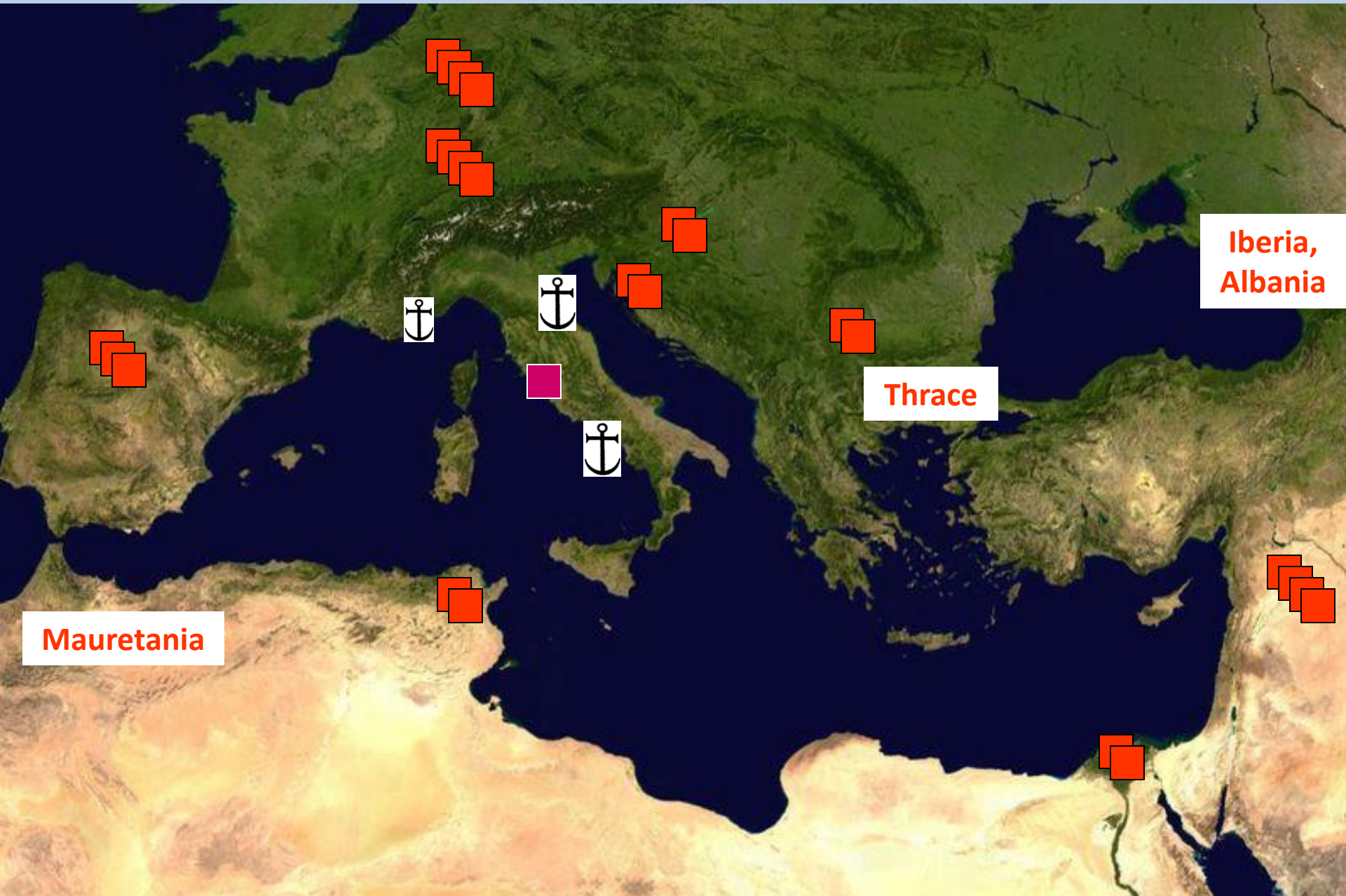
# Early-Middle Years

- Sejanus made joint prefect of Praetorian Guards – AD 14.
- In AD 15 Tiberius transfers the election of magistrates from popular assemblies to the Senate.
- AD 16 – Marcus Scribonius Libo accused of treason, commits suicide. His great-aunt had been Scribonia had been the second wife of Augustus.
- Death of Germanicus in Antioch. Tiberius expels the Egyptians from Rome and deports 4,000 Jews from Sicily – AD 19.
- Building of Castra Praetoria in Rome AD 22.
- Discussion of imposition of new sumptuary legislation (not undertaken) – AD 22.
- Earthquakes in Asia Minor – AD 17, 22 (also 34) – provides remission of taxation and relief.

# Collegial Government

- “...Tiberius accepted the rule without further dissimulation, and exercised it, so long as Germanicus lived, in the way I am about to describe...” – **Dio Cassius 57.7.**
- Takes account of the opinions of the senators and discusses all matters with them.
- Takes on advisors in the manner of Augustus.
- Encourages free speech.
- Did not allow himself to be called master by freemen or imperator by anyone except the soldiers.
- Does not take title Augustus or Father of the Country.
- Discourages divine associations.

# The Empire's forces in AD 23 (Tac. *Ann.* 4.5)



- Cappadocia is made a province after the death of the client king.
- Commange is made a province after the death of the client king.
- Cilicia is incorporated in the province of Syria.



# **Germanicus and Drusus**

# Germanicus

- Germanicus Julius Caesar (15 BC-AD 19) - Son of Drusus (son of Livia) and Antonia the younger (daughter of Octavia).
- Adopted by Tiberius in AD 4.
- Supposed fear of Germanicus' popularity by Tiberius, causes latter's restraint - **Dio Cassius 57.13.6; cf. Tacitus *Annals* 6.50).**



# Murder of Germanicus?

- AD 17 – receives *imperium* and sent to handle affairs in the East.
- AD 19 enters Egypt then returns to Syria.
- Hostility between Germanicus and Calpurnius Piso.
- “The cruel virulence of the disease was intensified by the patient's belief that Piso had given him poison...” – **Tacitus *Annals* 2.69.**
- Tacitus (***Ann.* 3.16**) reports rumours of Tiberius’ alleged “orders”.

# Memory of Germanicus

“His funeral, devoid of ancestral effigies or procession, was distinguished by eulogies and recollections of his virtues. There were those who, considering his personal appearance, his early age, and the circumstances of his death, — to which they added the proximity of the region where he perished, — compared with that of Alexander the Great.” – **Tacitus *Annals* 2.73.**

# Drusus the Younger

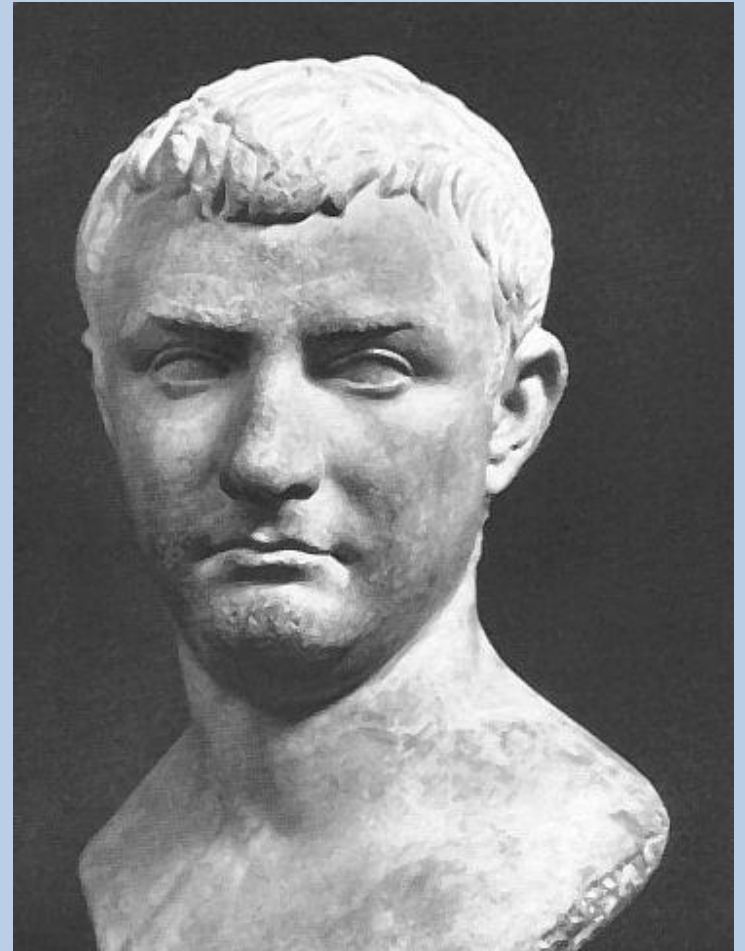
- Drusus Julius Caesar (13 BC-AD 23)
  - Only son of Tiberius and Vipsania.
- Married to Livillia (daughter of the elder Drusus), by whom he has a son Tiberius Gemelus (“the twin”).
- “On eventually discovering that his son Drusus had died, not as the result of illness and overindulgence, as he had believed, but from the poison of administered by his wife Livilla in partnership with Sejanus, Tiberius grew enraged and redoubled his cruelties until nobody was safe from torture and death.” – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 62.**



# **Rise and Fall of Sejanus**

# Sejanus

- L. Aelius Sejanus (20 BC-AD 31).
- Made joint prefect of the Praetorian Guard with his father, L. Seius Strabo in AD 14, sole prefect in AD 16.
- Denied in his request to marry Livillia in AD 25.
- Saves Tiberius' life in AD 26, after cave in (**Tac. *Ann.* 4.59.**



# Tiberius Retires to Capreae

“Tiberius left Rome at this time [AD 26] and never again returned to the city...” – **Dio Cassius 58.1.**

- Development of *Maiestas* (treason) trials.
- Agrippina the Elder and Nero Caesar banished in AD 29 on orders of Tiberius.
- Sejanus imprisons Drusus Caesar in AD 30 (not released and dies in AD 33).



“On his return to Capri he let all affairs of state slide: neither filling vacancies that occurred in the equestrian order, nor making new appointments to senior military posts, or the governorships of any province. Spain and Syria were left without their governors of consular rank for several years. He allowed the Parthians to overrun Armenia; the Dacians and Sarmatians to ravage Moesia; and the Germans to invade Gaul – a negligence as dangerous to the empire as it was dishonourable. But having found seclusion at last, and no longer feeling himself under public scrutiny, he rapidly succumbed to all the vicious passions which he had for a long time tried, not very successfully, to disguise.” – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 41-42.**

# Fall of Sejanus

- Sejanus is made pro-consul.
  - Satorius Macro secretly appointed to succeed Sejanus as Praetorian Prefect – secures the support of the *Vigiles*.
  - Sejanus denounced in the Senate in a letter written by Tiberius.
  - Arrested and killed along with members of his family.
  - Partisans of Sejanus also condemned.
- “In the meantime the letter was read. It was a long one, and contained no wholesale denunciation of Sejanus, but first some other matter, then a slight censure of his conduct, then something else, and after that some further objection to him; and at the close it said that the two senators who were among his intimate associates must be punished and that he himself must be kept under guard.” – **Dio Cassius 58.10.**

# **Middle-Later Years of Tiberius' Reign**

# Overview

- Pontius Pilate appointed as prefect of Judaea in AD 26 (Tiberius retires to Capreae)
- Death of Livia in AD 29.
- Sejanus executed AD 31 – denouncement of his supporters.
- Caligula removed to Capreae, banishment and deaths of Agrippina the elder, Nero Caesar, and Drusus Caesar.
- Credit crisis of AD 33 – shortage of money and collapsing prices for land.
- Major fire in Rome (AD 34) – Tiberius appoints four *progeneri Caesaris* (“sons-in law of Caesar”) to supervise distribution of relief aid – provides 100 million sesterces.

# Tiberius' Life on Capreae

- Reports of sexual depravity with young girls and boys – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 43-44.**
- Also reports of cruel executions and sadism -  
“In Capreae they still show the place at the cliff top where Tiberius used to watch his victims being thrown into the sea after prolonged and intricate tortures.” - **Suetonius *Tiberius* 62.**

# Gaius “Caligula” on Capreae

- Summoned to live with Tiberius on Capreae when he was 19 years old (AD 31).



“He not only failed to show any interest in the murder of his relatives, but affected an amazing indifference to his own ill treatment ... some one said of him, Never was there a better slave, or a worse master.” – **Suetonius *Gaius Caligula* 10.**

“Yet even in those days he could not control his natural brutality. He loved watching tortures and executions... Tiberius was ready enough to indulge a passion which Gaius had for theatrical dancing and singing, on the grounds that it might have a civilizing influence on him...

[Tiberius] had exactly gauged the young man's vicious inclinations... “I am nursing a viper in Rome's bosom,” he once said; I am educating a Phaethon [son of Helios] for the whole world.”

– **Suetonius *Gaius Caligula* 11.**

# Death of Tiberius

- Tiberius died at the age of 77 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March AD 37 – reigning for roughly 23 years.
- Various rumours about Gaius' and Macro's involvement in this death – (**Dio 58.28.3; Suet. *Tib.* 73, *Calig.* 12).**



“The first news of his death caused such joy at Rome that some people ran about yelling “To the Tiber with Tiberius” and others offered prayers to Mother Earth and the Di Manes [gods of the underworld] to give him no home below except among the impious.” – **Suetonius**  
***Tiberius 75.***

# Lack of Posthumous Deification

“He even demanded that Tiberius, whom he called grandfather, should receive from the Senate the same honours as Augustus, but when these were not immediately voted (for the senators could not, on the one hand bring themselves to honour him, nor yet on the other hand make bold to dishonour him...) ... [Gaius] bestowed upon him no mark of distinction other than a public funeral.” – **Dio Cassius 59.3.7.**



Divus Tiberius As, struck by Titus, 80-81 AD. TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVST IMP VIII, bare head left / IMP T CAES DIVI VESP F AVG REST around large SC. Cohen 73.

# **Tiberius Reign – An Overview**

“His character, too, had its different stages. While he was a private citizen or holding commands under Augustus, his life was blameless; and so was his reputation. While Germanicus and Drusus still lived, he concealed his real self, cunningly affecting virtuous qualities. However, until his mother died there was good in Tiberius as well as evil. Again, as long as he favoured (or feared) Sejanus, the cruelty of Tiberius was detested, but his perversions unrevealed. Then fear vanished, and with it shame. Thereafter he expressed only his own personality by unrestrained crime and infamy.” – **Tacitus *Annals* 6.50.**

# Causes of Unpopularity

- Failure to engage in major construction projects – **Suetonius *Tiberius* 47.**
- Purportedly banned hunting spectacles from the city – **Dio Cassius 58.1.**
- Removes elections for magistrates from popular assemblies – AD 15 – removes need for competition to gain public support.
- Perceived to be morose, in-direct, and capricious in character.
- Neglectful of affairs while on Capreae; also meant delegations had to leave Rome to visit him.
- Hostility of Agrippina the Elder.
- Failure to sufficiently suppress denunciations.

# Useful Reading

- Potter, D. (2009) *Rome in the Ancient World* (London: Thames & Hudson) - pages 180-183.
- Scullard, H. H. (1959) *From the Gracchi to Nero* (London: Routledge) – pages 226-38.