

The Buildings and the Images of the Imperial Cult



III Julio-Claudian dynasty

Acta Fratrum Arvalum (Arval Acta)

The Arval Brothers – a college of priests dedicated to the worship of Dea Dia, it became prominent under Augustus (started to undertake also imperial sacrifice), kept record until mid. 3rd century AD, 12 members elected for life, emperors themselves belonged to them

- earliest surviving record – 55 AD – sacrifice of a bull – early in the reign of Nero (previous mentions, scarce, during the reign of Claudius)
- important for studying the development of the imperial cult
- main literary source for the period of Julio – Claudian dynasty

1. TIBERIUS (Tiberius Claudius Nero)

Born: November 16th , 42 BC

Died: March 16th , 37 AD

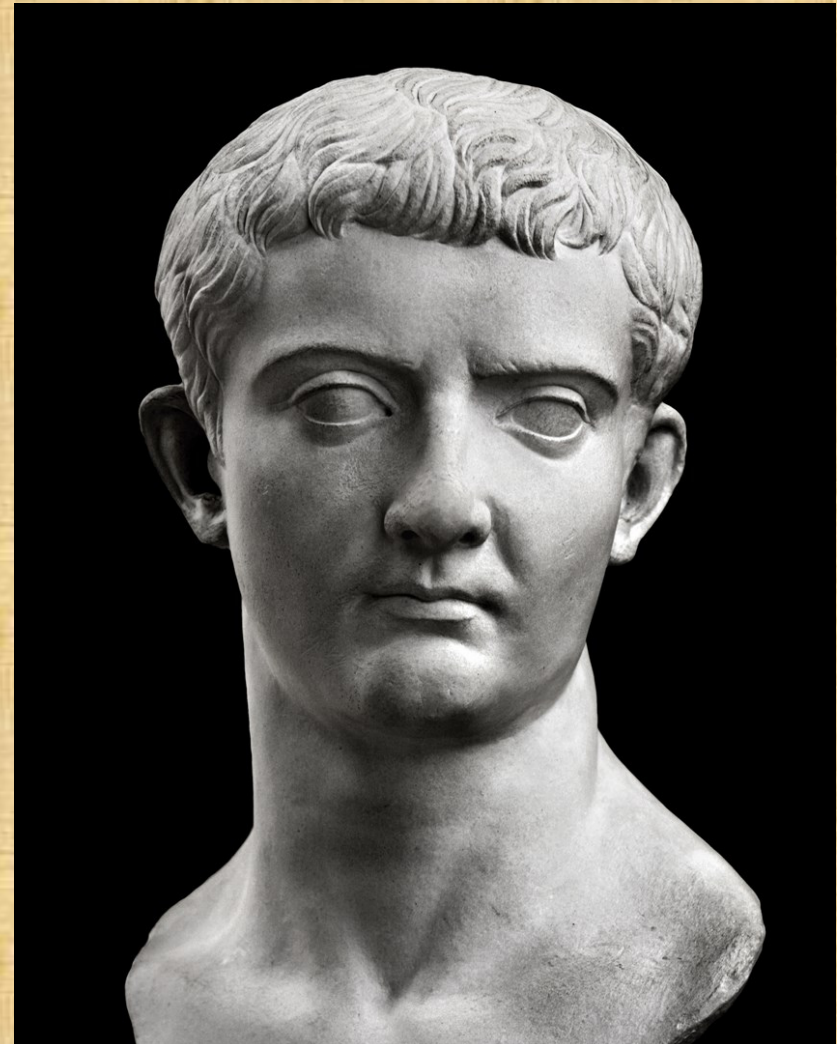
Parents: Livia, Tiberius Claudius Nero

Accession: Augustus, 4 AD (the fourth choice after Agrippa, Lucius and Gaius)

- succeeded Augustus by formal powers, by his adoption and Augustus' will – the main heir
- conservative, 23 years of reign
- completely loyal to Augustus' domestic and foreign policies

Reign:

- always extremely cautious and deferential in his formal dealings with the Senate, never accepted honors
- forbade the setting up of his portraits without permission and banned completely the erection of his portraits among the cult images of the gods – so forbade any formal divine worship to himself
- final establishing of the cult – the cult of Divus Augustus, not himself or his Genius





IMAGES

Posthumous portrait – a seated statue of the emperor **Tiberius as Jupiter** – Cerveteri
- set up by Claudius, dated ca. 45-50 AD
- Vatican Museums
- a group of eight related statues found in Cerveteri in the 1840s.

Grand Camée

- eight-layer sardonyx: white the upper, brown the lower.
- irregular shape (not the original)
- appears to be complete
- the largest ancient surviving cameo (H. 31 cm; w. 26.5 cm) in Paris,
- 23-29 AD, Tiberius, or after 50 AD Claudius (different interpretations)
- a lot of reworked faces – some figures are hard to identify

Subject: Enthroned Tiberius is surrounded by various members of the Julio-Claudian family (living and deceased).

- three levels of scenes, instead of two like in the Gemma Augustea
- in the lowest one there are northern and eastern defeated barbarians



-more interesting part is between the middle and the highest registers
- corresponding to an earthly dimension (living members of the family at the moment of production and the celestial (dead members of the clan, at the same moment)

1 – Tiberius as Jupiter, holding *lituus*, wearing laurel wreath (not a *corona civica*)
2 - Julia (Augustus' daughter) but the marriage ended up quickly, never married again, so this is Livia (mother), stressing his succession rights

3 – Nero Germanici,

4 - Julia Drusi, Nero Germanici's wife

5 - Slightly older boy behind Livia – Drusus Caesar, with a trophy

6 - Agrippina Maior, Germanicus' widow

7 - Gaius Caesar

8 - Claudia Livilla, Germanicus' sister and widow of Drusus the Younger

3, 5, and 7 – brothers - sons of Germanicus and Agrippina

9 – Augustus, 10 - Drusus the Younger, 11 – Germanicus, 12 – Eros, 13 – Mithras (Aion – eternal time, Marc Anthony, Alexander the Great, Iulus Ascanius)



Boscoreale cup

triumph (awarded in 8 BC and celebrated in 7 BC) of Tiberius



The *triumphus de Germanis* of Tiberius, who after his brother's Drusus' death in 9 BC led the campaign to Germany

Tiberius – *triumphator* with *servus publicus*

The triumphal chariot is carefully detailed. The decoration of the chariot was formed by a trophy flanked by two winged Victories putting other weapons on the trophy. Behind Victory there is a wingless female personification.



The other side:

The scene of sacrifice in front of the the Temple of Jupiter Capitoline – probably before leaving Rome

- attendants – two groups: walking behind the chariot and by the horses.
- by the horses: a slave is guiding the horses, whose heads were originally in full relief and are lost now (the same as Tiberius' head and chest), four *lictors* on the far side of the horses with rods over their shoulders
- behind the chariot: the four behind the *quadriga* wear tunics and ankle-length boots, the two foremost bearing laurel branches (high-ranking officers), the figure just behind the chariot wheel wears smooth torques with swollen ends, another young officer walks between the reins loped up before Tiberius in a place of honour. He wears *tunica ad paludamentum*
- the right side - the scene of the victim group - a massive bull with two attendants.
- the bull wears a *dorsuale* and a triangular *fastigium* (head plaque), from which a garland is hanging; it is decorated with an eagle on a globe



2 CALIGULA (Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus)

Born: August 31st , 12 AD

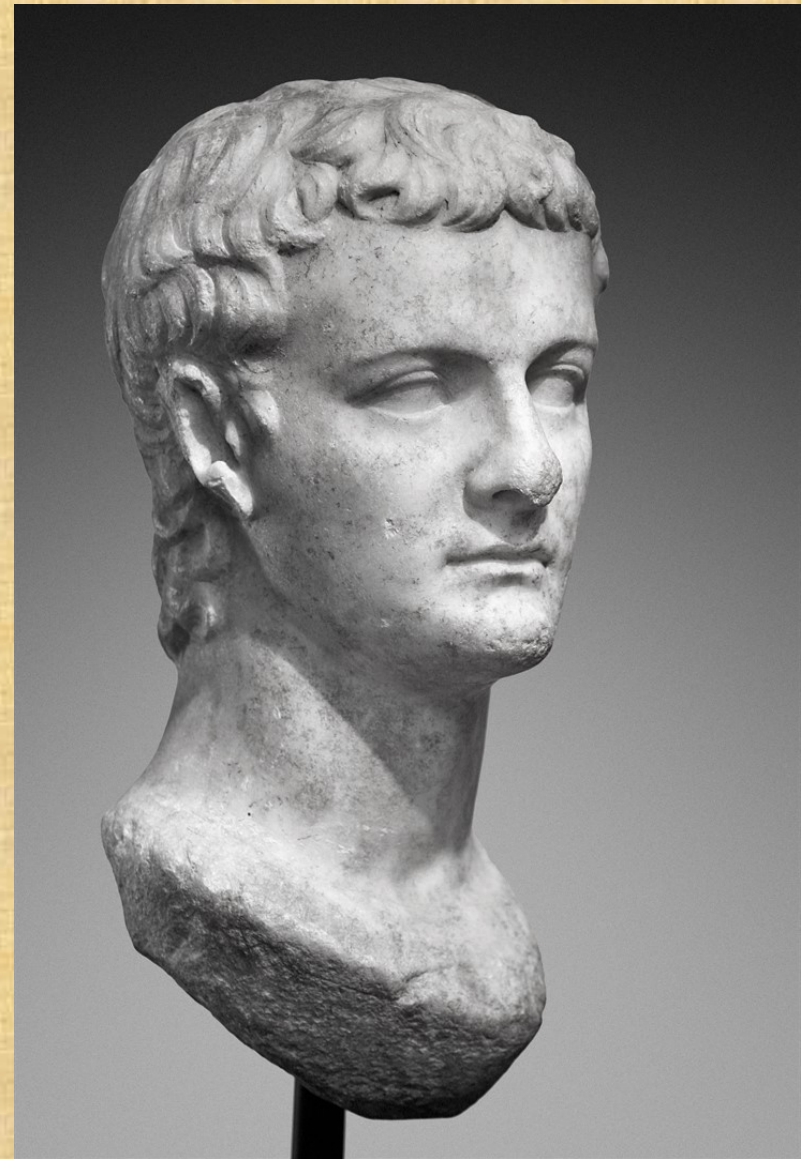
Died: January 24th , 41 AD (stabbed 30 times)

Parents: Germanicus, Agrippina the Elder

Accession: Germanicus (father) adopted by Tiberius (died before him), Tiberius had two heirs – Caligula and Tiberius Gemellus (grandson)
- not so clear succession, the Senate claimed the will invalid and chose Caligula as the only heir
- he couldn't claim the *principate* by *auctoritas*
- the Senate gave him imperial powers (probably by a decree) – so the *principate* was firstly identified as an office (the right moment to define *principate* as an office with absolute powers)

Reign:

- the beginnings of his reign quite peaceful and in the agreement with the Senate
- senate's decree ordering sacrifices to Caligula's Genius – the emperor vetoed (modesty? fear?)
- then humiliated this body, emphasized his limitless power, the Senate duly cooperated – personal fear



THE STATE CULT

Literary sources - deified while alive, but no epigraphical (no change in his title), nor archaeological sources

problematic nature: Suetonius – sensationalist

Dio – no critical ability

(a habit to generalize from single incident),

Seneca – hatred of the emperor

Jewish writes Philo and Josephus – Caligula's conflict with Jews,
no other aspects

- Caligula's personality does not depend on his craving for divine honors
- Dio – divine honors were paid to Caligula and he was called by divine titles (Jupiter, deus, divus), but no official decree

The opinion of public deification during his life based on his hobby of dressing up:

- impersonating different gods:

a) in the beginning - part men-part gods: Hercules, the Dioscuri

b) continued with full-blown gods: Mercury, Apollo and Mars (Jupiter is not included, strange)

- Suetonius and Cassius Dio – his behavior is the sign of madness
- the emperors dress should have been the same as the senators – through this he showed them his absolute power and monarchical position
- the dress used as an emblematic dress to define position without courting death (the state deification would have) - the emperor could, however, dress up as anything he liked without affecting his formal role in the Roman constitution

-the senators never refused the priesthood (not popular, costly) – the higher the emperor the higher was the relative placement of the senators

- instead Caligula developed the system in **the private sphere** (Augustus and Tiberius were worshipped in private cults), encouraged the phenomenon

- Caligula's cult – far less sensational than might be expected

- a disaster emperor, but no reason to assume that his cult or flirtation with divinity caused his murder – but his general incompetence and singular ability to insult everybody

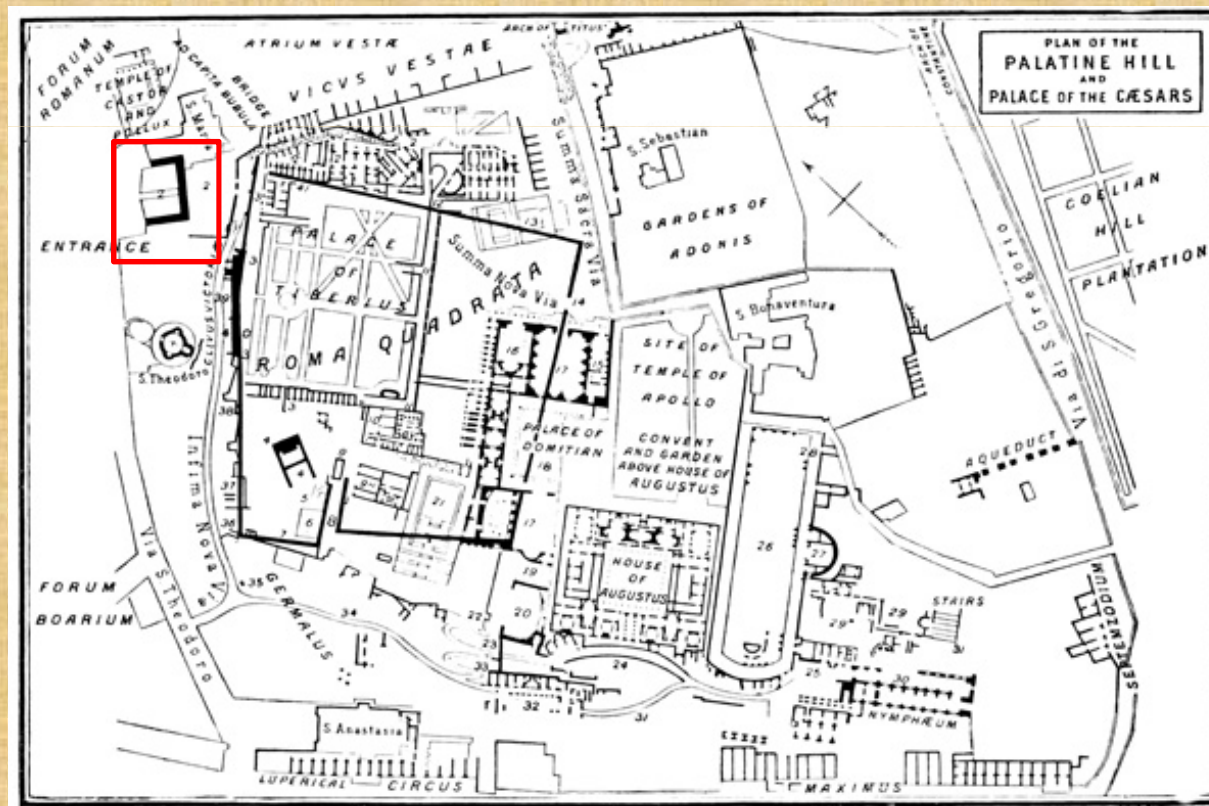
- behavioral pattern was something for emperors to avoid in general - emperors were more anxious to avoid any too obvious and active flirt with the divinity – public or private

- **he never received state deification or divine worship in the Roman state**

BUILDINGS

The palace of Caligula (Suetonius describes it as a *domus*)

- the northern side of the Palatine, built in a series of terraces against the Palatine Hill, the construction showing work of Caligula, Trajan, and Septimius Severus, discovered in 2003
- the lowest level - chambers warmed by *hypocaustum*, containing fragments of statuary
- the terrace above - there is an arcade paved with blocks of *silex*, and on one side shops
- a flight of travertine steps conducts to some small chambers above with mosaic pavements and frescoes (Caligula - frescoes, Hadrian – mosaics on the pavement)
- the side walls and vaults are decorated with frescoes of the time of Hadrian
- connected with the House of Tiberius by a vaulted portico



- a massive brick construction from the period of Domitian and Hadrian, under this – traces of earlier buildings behind the temple of Dioscuri, probably an impressive atrium
- east of the remains – large piscine with an inscription to Caligula from a statue base confirms his palace extension, a room projecting from its south side and placed on its central axis (tablinum?) could have housed Caligula's cult image
- Dioscurii as gatekeepers – the Temple of Castor and Polux included to the complex as an entrance - implies a close physical connection between their temple and his own sanctuary, Caligula would have received the worshippers in the propylon, standing between Castor and Polux – appearing as Jupiter, their father
- recent excavations – the temple of Dioscuri couldn't have been incorporated into these buildings – the atrium is not aligned with the temple, no alternations were made to it in this period – no walls, doorway, no alternations to the base, but certainly a close relation of the temple and the palace



Problem with the buildings:

Building (palace) – situated behind the temple of Dioscuri - incorporated into it (literary sources)

- close proximity of the temple and palace could have caused mixing the two cults,
- Dio - Claudius restored the temple to Castor and Pollux – probably only removed Caligula's statue



3 CLAUDIUS (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus)

Born: August 1st , 10 BC

Died: October 13th , 54 AD

Parents: Drusus the Elder, Antonia the Younger

Accession: after Caligula's murder, he was chosen to be the emperor by the guardsmen (who killed the former emperor)

- title's permanent place - a formal definition of powers and *auctoritas*
- under Tiberius – served as an Augustan priest

Reign:

- early part of his reign – he wanted to accommodate the leading senators
- distanced himself from the absolutist pretensions
- modest as well as legitimate
- prevented to dishonor Caligula, made the senate divinize Livia (against her will, 17 years after her death)
- Vestal Virgins – duty to offer proper sacrifice to Augustus and Livia
- ordered women to use Livia's name in taking oaths
- forbade sacrifice and worship of himself



THE STATE CULT

- huge changes in the state cult, the most important time in the development of the role of the Genius
- provinces – worshiped – temples of Claudius at Cos, Priene, ...
- the right person to start with the worship development – Caligula not a good example, he wasn't a "good emperor"
- chronological order - Claudius received the title of *pater patriae*, Livia's deification - Claudius Genius included in the ritual
- clear limit- did not receive a cult statue in the temple and a temple in Rome – minimized provocation
- **emperor's Genius joined the state pantheon of Rome**
- beginnings – Claudius wanted to stress himself as the heir of Augustus
- state worship – position of the emperor in the state clearly expressed – *paterfamilias* for the whole people (*pater patriae* only a honorary title)
- senators became his clients, having a servile position

Archaeological evidence:

The Frieze of the Vicomagistri

- the name: after the four ministry
- a part of a rectangular monument or a statue base
- an early stage of depicting religious state ceremonies, the iconographic vocabulary has not yet frozen into the stock depiction of the emperor sacrificing - well known from later representations
- the monument stood indoors, placed about 1 m above the ground - probably on a statue base in a temple

Found: Campo Marzio under the Palazzo Cancelleria in 1937-39 together with the Cancelleria relief panes (Domitian) – a secondary sculptor's workshop

Depiction: religious procession with togati, musicians, attendants and sacrificial animals

Height: 1.05 m, a third is occupied by sculptured frieze, top and bottom – border

Length: 4.74 (but a piece is missing (probably two half figures in foreground, another background figure) – 5.05m



The togate figures

- “magistri” – only four of them depicted in compital cults
- here 9 - only four of them depicted in a more prominent position
- these not on an equal footing as in compital cults
- on the very left – three-quarters profile behind the three more prominent ones, the three left ones, the one in the middle is the only one frontal, the other two looking at him and he is taller
- the one is the emperor Claudius - depicted in the same manner on Villa Medici reliefs



The *ministri* – four – coincidence, in state cult not termed *ministri*, but performing the same functions

- two groups: *publici* (public slaves) and *pueri ingenui patrimi et matrimi* (senators' young sons), who will one day function as priests
- the number four – The Arval Brothers also had four – probably a standard number
- the four boys occupy a prominent position, especially the ones carrying the statuettes – almost frontally
- carry statuettes of the emperor's Genius and Lares
- bring forward the importance of the images they carry, further attention – they are pointing at them with their free hand,
- the youth heading the group is less prominent, the object has broken off



- the right edge – lion's paw – part of the hind leg of a throne, the front leg remains and a part of the left side on the bottom
 - two almost frontal *togati*, three *lictors*, two tunicate figures, presumably *camilli*, three hornblowers, three bovine victims – a bull, a steer and a young heifer each pulled by a *victimarius*, group of musicians, part is missing
 - The two *togati* – *sodales Augustales* – priestly college established in 14 to worship *Divus Augustus*. The *sodales* were 21 plus the members of the imperial family, that's why Claudius among them
 - the two small *togate leaders* – *magistri* of the college for this particular year, three *lictors* (strange number - *sodales augustales* headed by three annual *magistri*, that's why three lictors, one magister missing)
- The background – crowded with several minor figures, e.g. a *victimarius* carrying a tray, other carrying a cauldron,



Claudius – problems claiming legitimacy as an emperor, the first Augustus' successor who did not descend from the first emperor, Livia was his grandmother by blood, to stress this connection – divinization

- the size and quality of the monuments points to a state monument, but which cult?
- to answer – victims, their nature and order (Rome was a strictly hierarchical society confirmed by the *Arval Acta*, rank of each god worshipped is strictly codified, e.g. Capitoline Triad – always Jupiter, Juno, Minerva)

Bull – the highest rank – Jupiter or the living emperor's Genius

Steer – male and infertile gods – underworld (but why to sacrifice to infertility?), male *Divi*, gods of underworld inappropriate in connection with the living emperor's Genius (till 54 AD – only 1 *Divus Augustus*)

Heifer – below *Divus* – *Diva* – deceased and deified empress

- Arval brothers worshipped all *Divi* together, the fact that we have one *divus* and one *diva* allows dating:

Claudius deified Livia as *Diva Augusta* in 42 AD, in 54 AD he was himself deified as *Divus Claudius* – the monument antedates his deification

- the scene: consecration of Livia and the procession to the temple of *Divus Augustus* with her statue (the part of the throne) and rededication of the temple to both of them
- the frieze placed on the base of a new cult statue of *Divus Augustus* and *Diva Livia*

- **Genius of the living emperor included in the state cult for the first time!**

Deification

- died in 54 AD – Agrippina was an active participant in the funeral – priestess of Claudius

Two changes:

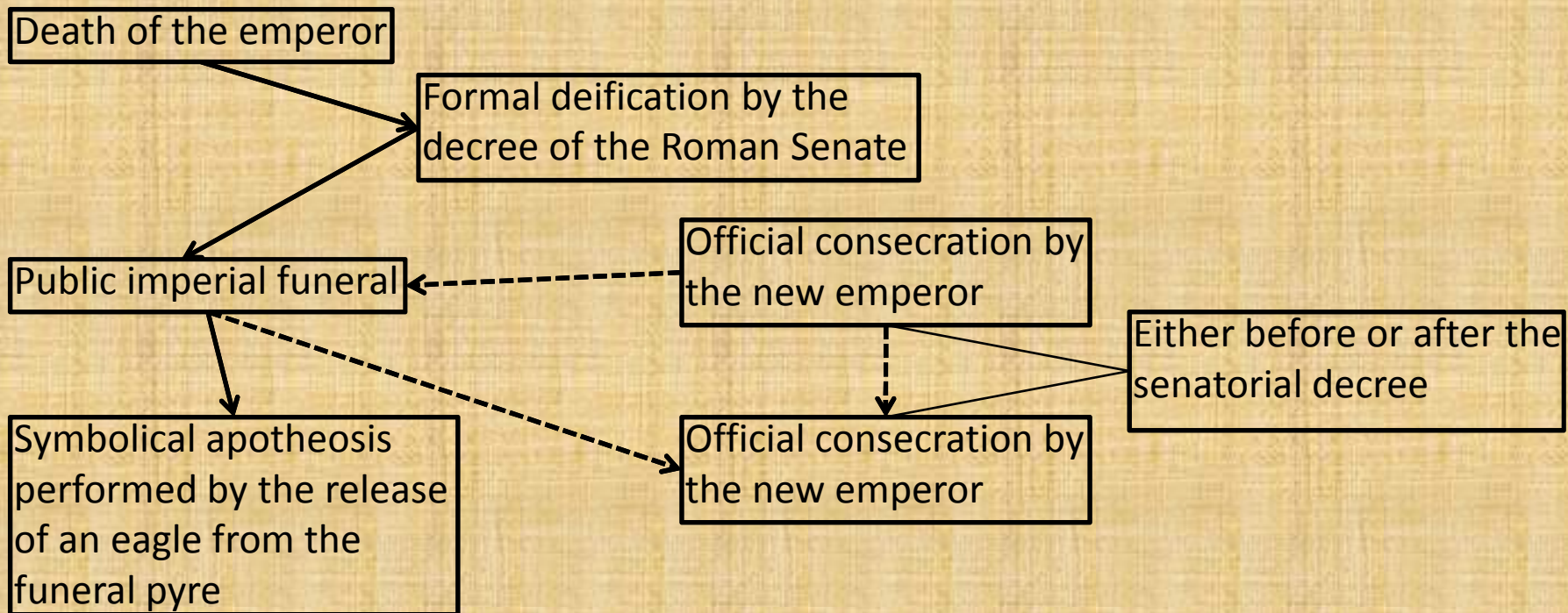
a) conflicting version of achieving his apotheosis:

I senatorial decree (senatorial deification), then the funeral (Tacitus, Seneca)

II the funeral and then senatorial decree (senatorial deification) (tradition, Suetonius - testimony)

a) no eyewitness - the custom fell into disuse, symbolically performed by the release of an eagle from the pyre shortly after it was set on fire during the funeral

- valid until Antonine dynasty



BUILDINGS

Temple of Divus Claudius – Caelian hill (peripheral site), side of Claudius' private domus

- 54 AD died – wife Agrippina began the construction
- excavated in 1880
- partially preserved:

W side: within the bell tower in the Convent of Sancti Giovanni e Paolo

- Constructed immediately after the death

- the oldest phase - interconnecting rooms, two floors high, travertine blocks

- piers – Doric pilasters, only capitals are finished, heavy architrave

- radial walls – bricks, ceiling vaulted

S side: fewer has remained

N side: little has survived – row of rooms built against a brick wall

- a large cascading fountain – during the reign of Nero – large marble fountain head in the form of ship's prow with a boar's head

E side: the most monumental and best preserved, Nero's modification of the building

Large brick wall with a series of niches and a larger chamber in the middle – enormous *nymphaeum*

- colonnaded *porticus*



- no trace of the temple above the platform foundations - Severan Marble Plan – prostyle, hexastyle, 3 columns on the sides
- the rest of the area – garden





IMAGES

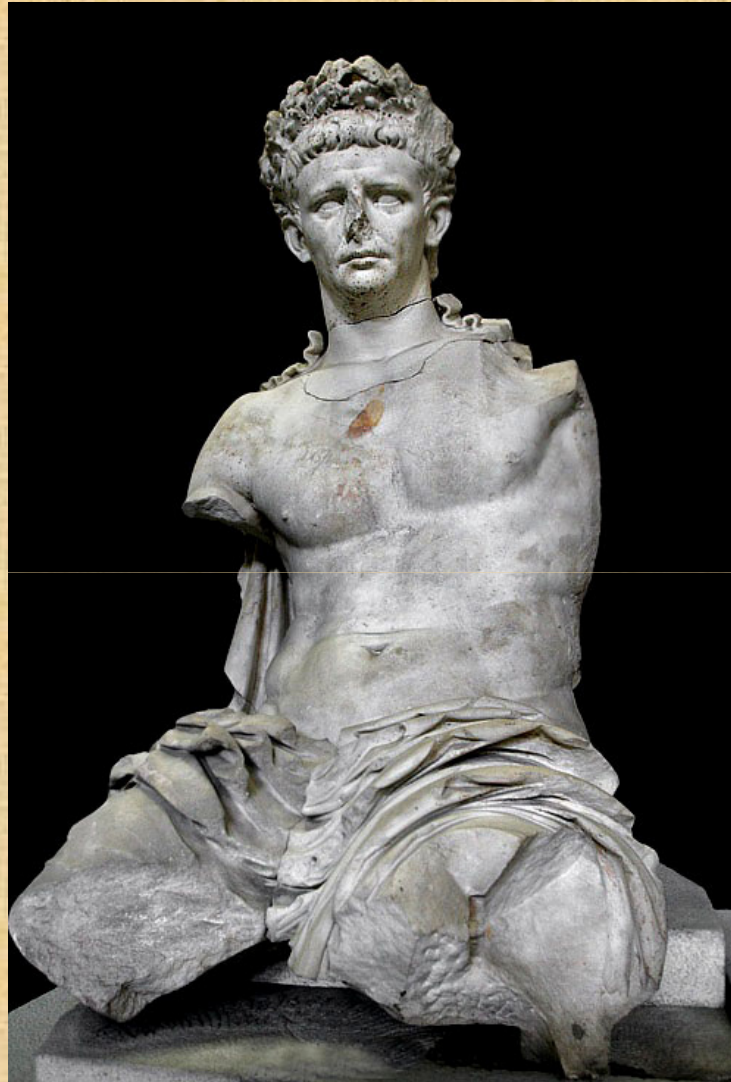
Portrait from Lanuvium

- dedicatory inscription found near the piece (today lost) – the statue was erected in honor of Claudius by the Senate and the people of Lanuvium
- Claudius shown with a Julio-Claudian cap of layered hair with comma shaped locks parted near the center, brushed to either side, broad cranium, tapering chin
- represented not youthful – in his fifties, bags under eyes, sagging jowls, furrows on his forehead
- idealized body type, stands in *contraposto*, a scepter in his left hand *patera* in the right
- next to his leg – an eagle with outstretched wings
- an eagle and a scepter – attributes of Jupiter
- the same bronze prototype had also the statue of the emperor from the Metroon in Olympia



Seated statue from Cerveteri as Jupiter

- a part of a Claudian dynastic group – Claudius, **Tiberius**, Agrippina, Britannicus



Cameos

Grand Camée

- 1 Tiberius
 - 2 Livia
 - 3 Germanicus
 - 4 Agrippina the Elder (in front of Tiberius)
 - 5 Claudius – behind Tiberius
 - 6 Agrippina Younger – Claudius' wife and niece at the same time
 - 7 The child on the left – Nero
 - 8 Behind Nero – *Providentia Augusti*
 - 9 Augustus in the middle, up
 - 10 Drusus the Younger – on the left of Augustus
 - 11 Drusus the Elder – on the right of Augustus (died falling of the horse)
 - 12 Eros
 - 13 Mithra/Sol Invictus – Nero was born on the 15th December, close to Mithra's birthday – Nero loved himself showing as Sol, astrological reference to the birth (similar to *Gemma Augustea*)
- Seated oriental figure - Ti. Claudius Balbillus – a personal counsellor of Nero – oriental origin, living on the court, connection to the Claudians



Claudius apotheosis, mid 1st century AD, four layers, sardonyx



The Ravenna Relief (Claudian date between 45-50 AD)

Two marble relief fragments from a Claudian monument, possibly an altar honoring the imperial family

The smaller fragment – sacrifice in honor of the imperial cult, a bull is being sacrificed

The bigger fragment – a series of frontally positioned imperial figures against a blank background

- Augustus – distinctive coiffure and characteristic facial features, wearing *corona civica*, hole in forehead for a bronze star, left foot on a globe with the signs of zodiac, in the guise of *Mars Ultor* with a short sword and a spear
 - Livia – assimilated to Venus, with Eros on her left shoulder, wears a tiara, posture and drapery based on *Venus Genetrix*
 - Julio-Claudian youth – a full cap of layered hair, bare chest and mantle draped over the lower part of his body, like Augustus – bronze star – Germanicus
 - Older man in cuirass and *paludamentum* – originally held a sword and a spear – Drusus the Elder
- Seated draped, headless woman – Claudius' mother – Antonia (or *Pietas*)



**NERO (Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, Claudius
Caesar Augustus Germanicus or Nero
Claudius Drusus Germanicus)**

Born: December 15th , 37 AD

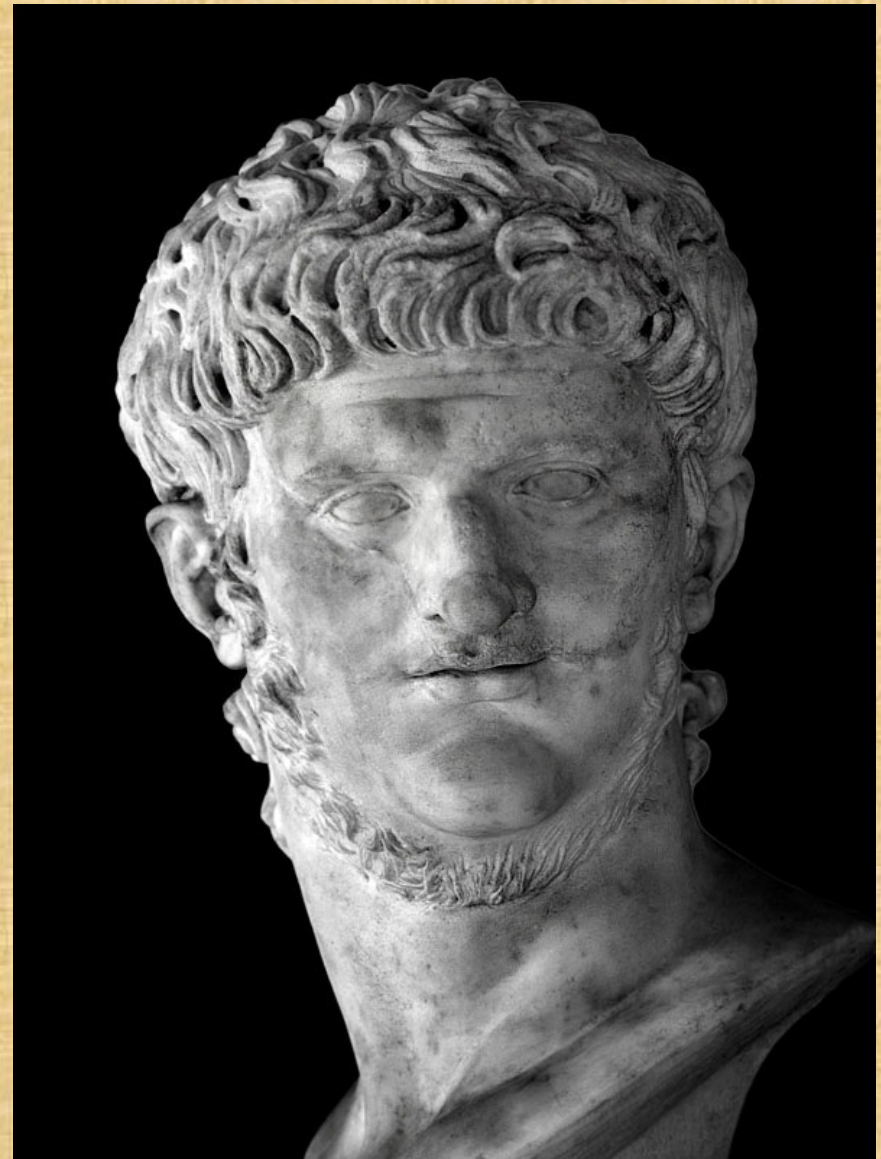
Died: June 9th , 98 AD

Parents: Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, Agrippina
the Younger

Accession: adopted by Claudius
- the last julio-claudian emperor

Reign:

- early part of his reign – influenced by his mother, Seneca and Burrus (Praetorian commander)
- an oath formula by Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Divi and the Genius – became standard, the official state oath (archive in Pompeii)
- later – independent ruler – cruel
- persecuted Christians
- committed an “assisted” suicide



STATE CULT

- the worship of Genius continued – The Arval Acta – even more frequent – *dies natalis, dies imperii*, even when he recovered from a sorethroat! (also more frequent during Galba, Otho and Vitellius)
(not a togate one as Genius Augusti)
- change of iconography – The god depicted as *Genius populi romani* - semi-nude heroic form, evidence – coins
- reason of the change: difficult to distinguish the Genius of emperor and every other man.

The ***Colossus Neronis*** 30 m bronze statue, in the vestibule of his Domus Aurea.

- resembling himself and the Roman sun god, Sol
- holds a rudder on the globe which is a symbolic gesture of his power over land and sea.
- modified by Nero's successors into a statue of the sun god Sol (only), moved to a spot outside the Flavian Amphitheatre
- last mentioned in the 4th century AD



PRIVATE CULT

- the sources fail – texts and monuments created for the public eye, private cults had a well informed insiders – no need of explanatory monuments
- literary sources ignore private life (only eccentric aberrations)
- there is hardly any archaeological evidence of emperor worship in the *domus* – mosaics and wall paintings never refer to emperor, but why would they? – emperors weren't permanent, they changed quite fast and the imperial honors focused on the ruling emperor rather than on the *Divi* (the emperor was the one who could change something in their lives, not the dead ones)
- Pompeian wall painting – scene of fantasy architecture or mythology, specific cults only in *lararia*
- portraits in private homes – only temporary, not elaborate ones, modest character (Fronto to his imperial pupil Marcus Aurelius – images painted on the wooden panels – no chance they are preserved even in Pompey)
- sculptured miniature portraits – Herculaneum – two busts of Augustus, Livia in The Villa dei Misterii in Pompeii, another villa – young Julian prince in a back room, a life-size silver bust of Galba in Herculaneum, a collection of imperial Julio-Claudian bronze portraits...
- literary evidence – Ovid – Augustus, Vitellius father of the emperor – golden image of Claudius, Marcus Aurelius – golden portraits of his teachers, Hadrian – bronze miniature bust of Augustus – all the text one in common – represent exceptions

Imperial libation before private banquets

- to the living emperor
- 30BC after the conquest of Egypt – the Senatorial Decree – a libation poured to the emperor, not to his Genius, at all banquets, public and private
- no evidence it was ever performed before public banquets
- private: Ovid, Horace, Petronius in connection with ceremonies with *lares* – but libation to the emperor himself, the idea of the *Genius* – later
- a wall painting from Pompeii – a libation performed to the Genius, in the garden of a private house, small *lararium*, it was destroyed many years ago, no photo or other reproduction
- before the meal, or between two courses