

To what extent are our sources fair in their presentation of Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus  
Germanicus?

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### **Abstract**

Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus was the third Roman Emperor after Augustus and Tiberius. His reign as emperor lasted four years, from 37-41 AD. Caligula was taken in by Tiberius as an adoptive grandson to the emperor on the island of Capri where Tiberius had moved half a decade earlier. Upon the death of Tiberius in 37 AD, Caligula succeeded his grandfather and became the third emperor of Rome. Caligula died on the twenty-fourth day of January, 41 AD after a brief reign of four years. There are a few sources that describe Caligula's reign as one that was unpredictable and vicious. He is, however, broadly describes as a ruler who was both noble and moderate in the first two of years of his rule. Thereafter, these sources focus on his vices of cruelty, sexual perversity, extravagance, and tyranny. Although there is not much information on the nature of his rule, the sources give detailed but inconsistent accounts of his reign. Most of his attention was focused on notoriously luxurious and ambitious projects of personal satisfaction. He, however, had some good accounts to his name. This paper focused on how the sources described the emperor and also gives a definite personal thought of the author on the topic. It looks at both the good and bad deeds of the emperor.

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## Introduction

Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus was born on the Thirty-first day of August, 12 AD at Antium. He was the third Roman Emperor after Augustus and Tiberius. His reign as emperor lasted four years 37-41 AD, (Barnes 2013). Caligula was a known member of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. His father Germanicus was one of Rome's most decorated generals and a beloved public figure. His father was the adopted son and also a nephew of Tiberius. The term Caligula was a nickname forged by Gaius' father soldiers to mean a little soldier's boots. This was during their march to campaigns in Germania. Upon the death of his father, his mother Agrippina moved together with her six children to Rome. There she had severe disagreements with Tiberius which led to the destruction of her entire family. However, Caligula survived as the only male surviving descendant. Caligula was taken in by Tiberius as an adoptive grandson to the emperor. He moved to the island of Capri where Tiberius had moved half a decade earlier. Upon the death of Tiberius in 37 AD, Caligula succeeded his grandfather and became the third emperor of Rome (Pitcher, 2009).

There are quite a few sources that describe Caligula's reign that are surviving. He is, however, broadly describes as a ruler who was both noble and moderate in the first couple of years of his rule. Thereafter, these sources are focused on his vices of cruelty, sexual perversity, extravagance, and tyranny. Although there is not much information on the nature of his rule and the sources give detailed yet inconsistent accounts of his reign (Pickard 2013). One thing that is for sure is that there is an account on the emperor working tirelessly to increase the personal powers of an emperor. This was opposed to delegating the powers to the principate. Most of his attention was focused on construction projects that were notoriously luxurious and ambitious. The constructions projects were as personal presents to himself. He however also built to new

aqueducts in Rome. He also annexed the kingdom of Mauretania and made it one of the empire's provinces (Barnes 2013).

In 41 AD, Caligula became the first emperor to be assassinated. This happened following a conspiracy involving officers of the Praetorian Guard, members of the imperial court and the roman senate. It was done in an attempt to restore the roman public but was thwarted simultaneously as the Praetorian Guard named Claudius emperor. Claudius was Caligula's uncle and ruled thirteen years. He was emperor at the times of Jesus Christ. Caligula died on the twenty-fourth day of January, 41 AD after a brief reign of four years (Philo of Alexandria, 1962).

### **Many Different Representations**

People who perceive Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (Caligula) today review occurrences of torment and sheer cruelty. They likely will neither be capable of describing any of his accomplishments nor tell precisely who the originators of such striking, negative stories (Barnes 2013). Some of the assumptions of the evils associated with Caligula are ordinarily experienced in the disentangled way people today recall authentic figures. Obviously, Caligula is not exceptional amongst the various Roman sovereigns. He does not appear as a person who is dependable and true. For some individuals today, Nero right away evokes dreams relating to Christian mistreatments. Commodus is frequently recognized as a conveying disgrace to his father, Marcus Aurelius, for his gathered offenses. Such assumptions frequently affect the chronicled record and can bring about issues while remaking the stories in essential sources. It is hence basic to reproduce these accounts effectively (Potter 2009). Thus, the emperors all have a common way that people perceive them.

### **Modern presentation of Caligula**

Maybe there is no other quality associated with Caligula's character more than that of madness. Being rationally precarious could clarify why the ruler conferred a significant number of the barbarities. This is according to the testaments of several authors. Deciding precisely how rationally or physically unfit Caligula was is to some degree, troublesome. Suetonius mentions that Augustus was sufficiently concerned about Caligula's wellbeing in AD 14. As a result, he appointed two specialists to take care of his epileptic seizures. The sources additionally guarantee that he had a sleeping disorder. He also experienced bad dreams. He stowed away under his bed in the event of electrical storms and had different afflictions. These cases, however, show up in different records on the ruler. Additionally, it is stressed that such stories

were regularly described by scholars within the nineteenth century (Pitcher 2009). The scholars at that time saw Caligula simply as a maniac, debased and pitiless. This was a perspective that originated from the abstract sources themselves. These scientists raised questions on the way that the sources portray how Caligula would drink a mixture (elixirs) arranged by Caesonia (his wife) that made him rationally precarious. Barrett (1996) recommends that this case can be disregarded. However, there are different Romans who have gotten distraught from drinking elixirs. Tragically, these early researchers kept on influencing how present day mainstream cultures visualize Caligula.

Scientists these days tend to move far from the thought of straightforward frantiness. Rather they try to analyze his individual mental ability. Albert Esser (1950), after an extensive examination of Caligula's practices, reasoned that the emperor was schizophrenic. As indicated by the DSM-IV<sup>12</sup>, however, a man must meet two out of the five criteria in its records to be considered clinically schizophrenic. In spite of the fact that Caligula seems to match a portion of the criteria, it appears to be both profoundly amateurish and incomprehensible. These days, to use current science to name somebody from two thousand years earlier to having a strong mental issue is vague. Another researcher, Joseph Lucas (1958), observed Caligula be "schizoid" while experiencing psychopathy. Once more, the DSM-IV indicates conditions that a man must meet so as to be named having a "Schizoid Personality Disorder", and Caligula, as per the abstract records, does not appear to fall under this class either.

Psychopathy can be said to be a case of withdrawn identity issue (Pitcher 2009). It is conceivable that Caligula experienced the indications connected with it. However, he did not experience the ill effects of the greater part of the manifestations. There are different people from

classical times who were noted to have suffered the same effects, or more, as did Caligula (Barnes 2013)

At long last, famous specialist Elizabeth Ford clinically determined Caligula to have bipolar identity issues. Bipolar is identified with delayed times of craziness and discouragement. This was the most conceivable determination based on the depth of the analysis of his activities as a ruler. However, the diagnosis fails to mention why the emperor was said to be talking to divine beings or even demanding people to respect his horse (Barrett 1996)

As Barrett (1996) notes, the scholars' methodology was a questionable one. Even in the best clinical conditions, therapy is a mind boggling and troublesome technique. Further, the author noted that it would be exceptionally unscientific to diagnose a patient through side effects. More so, the side effects were acquired from old literary sources in an era with no advanced medical knowledge. Thus, present day analysts are diagnosing Caligula based upon the manifestations given in the artistic records. The records themselves are said to be conceivably polluted with one-sided and overstated points of interest (Barrett 1996).

### **What Ancient Authors wrote about Caligula?**

The old records of the rule of Caligula concur that he was a man brimming with disgusting qualities. There are, nonetheless, several sources most importantly of other people who appear to give the most inside and out portrayal of his life's achievements and violations: Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus and Claudius Cassius Dio (Barrett 1996). There are different impediments confronting specialists who need to ascribe Caligula's repulsive activities to his emotional well-being. For example, Seneca knew Caligula personally and was consequently composing contemporaneously about him. The author says literally nothing that could be

ascribed as frantic. Rather deciding on words that portray his presumption and stupid conduct. Another contemporary creator of Caligula is Philo. Philo also did not falter to call Caligula a lunatic. Caligula would, obviously, give the idea of being a lunatic to a religious Jew like Philo mainly due to their religious (Barnes 2013).

Barrett (1996) proposes that Philo is the best source researchers have for Caligula's actual psychological well-being. This is due to the fact that he actually met with Caligula before his passing in AD 40. Despite the fact that he keeps on naming the sovereign as insane, his "last impression is not of a crazy person". Philo describes Caligula as an "arrogant, impolite and flighty youthful ruler... with a sharp comical inclination" (Philo of Alexandria 1962).

Likewise, it is prudent to specify that there is an issue in calling somebody maniacal when actually what he is simply being always amusing. Could Caligula's mocking and humorous nature have impacted the creators' records? Helicon got to be companions with Caligula due to his excessively snide and witty comments. Taken further, maybe Helicon's jokes impacted what Caligula himself said and were accordingly composed down for what was to come. At long last, it is exceptionally testing to analyze Caligula as crazy since he had been raised with Eastern conventions. He was, all things considered, a man "fixated by oriental thoughts and traditions"(Dio 1924).

Cutting edge analysts, then, should be to a great degree watchful in naming somebody's unpredictable practices as crazy. Particularly when it is difficult to know both whether he was clinically crazy and, all the more significantly, how unprejudiced the sources are. Caligula had managed numerous troublesome blows throughout his life. Despite the fact that there are singular contrasts in how strong a man is as to adapting to life's tragedies, Caligula still turned into a

mainstream and adored ruler. Thus Barrett (1996) pronounces, "While Caligula's conduct appears to have brought on misery among the calm individuals from the honorability, it did not meet with general dissatisfaction." As indicated by Dio, "the general population really delighted in the indecency."

Quickly, it is advantageous to point out a few cases throughout Caligula's life that show that the head could administer reasonably. It is prudent to note that the determination could consequently bring up the issue of how precise the scholars were to his psychological wellness. As one case, in AD 38 there was a flame in the Aemilian region, and Caligula offered his help. This highlighting that he was capable of care and thoughtful to other individuals. Both Dio and the *Fasti Ostienses* relate the occasion (Barrett 1996). Besides, in AD 39 Caligula designated authorities to different regions, for example, Galba and Petronius, who were equipped for doing their assignments well. This was verification that he could settle on essential choices if the need emerged. At the influencing of Herod Agrippa, Caligula additionally chose to change his position of profaning the Temple at Jerusalem by raising a statue of himself. Here he demonstrated that he was willing to acknowledge other people groups' thoughts on certain essential matters. As the last case, he had the monetary records distributed and he lifted the restriction. These were deeds that a man who is always portrayed as rationally sick and wretched likely would not have done. This was relative to an event that he was not in any event and to some degree equipped and sympathetic (Pickard 2013).

With respect to the greater part of Suetonius' works, no definite dates of the piece are known. He makes numerous lone assumptions in exemplifications, references, and sections. Researchers keep on questioning whether what has been asserted as Suetonius' bona fide works are truly just rewords or are they inaccurate references on the emperor's life? Also, researchers

have considered why Suetonius decided to not talk about every one of the Roman Emperors in equivalent length. Most modern researchers trust that his affirmed offensive behavior separated him from different works and sources. Furthermore, he composed from records, not utilizing post-mortem examination or individual meeting. The writings he used were frequently "odd, peculiar, and not the kind of thing that antiquarians would utilize (Pitcher 2009).

Every one of the emperors is talked about in the same three ways, despite the fact that the points of interest are distinctive. The sections are life before turning into a ruler, the sovereign's rule, and the head's demise. At last, Suetonius classifies the insights about the sovereigns according to their ideals and indecencies. The unwavering quality of his accounts, obviously, should be addressed intensely. For example, Suetonius composed his accounts, (for example, Caligula's) at a later date than when the rulers themselves were administering while depending on composed sources that might not have been reliable (Pitcher 2009). It is conceivable that he added mystery and creative ability to his segments relating to the prior heads. Likewise, he regularly did not refer to his sources, making it hard to contrast his validity and different journalists. He just needed to compose accessibly, as his unmistakable and compact composition style appears. At long last, his incorporation of distinctive subtle elements induces the cutting edge readers to trust the occasions in the account all the more effortlessly. This is regardless of the possibility that it is not by any stretch of the imagination truthful (Barrett 1996).

Dio's work, Roman History, gives a point by point data about individuals and occasions from the establishing of Rome to AD 229. It is not exactly clear precisely who Dio's sources were, but rather it is likely that he drew from a comparable source as Suetonius. There are, however, issues with taking Dio Cassius' compositions on Caligula at face esteem. One critical trademark found in Dio's records is his inclination to utilize review projection. He tends to

commit errors in point of interest in which he misguidedly portrays the past in light of his own time. As Boyd notes (1999), this inclination alone makes it troublesome for cutting edge researchers to precisely comprehend the progressive move from Augustus to the third century. Additionally, there are unmistakably sections in his content that his insight is missing like the Roman republican organizations. Besides, he was intrigued with crystal insight and dream translation, using these gadgets as "bureaus of science" for forming his works. Dio is likewise known not overstate the records in his works in some point of interest.

Caligula was notorious for having perverted sexual desires. He occasionally had sex with his sisters as noted by Josephus (1965), a Greek historian. "... he took a fancy to anything he tolerated no opposition to any command that he gave. Hence he even had sexual intercourse with his own sister: this conduct was the source from which the citizens' hatred of him grew fiercer and fiercer" (Josephus 1965).

Forty years later, Suetonius wrote of the same "He lived in habitual incest with all his sisters, and at a large banquet he placed each of them in turn below him, while his wife reclined above" (Suetonius 1993).

Dio Cassius also ascertains this claim and wrote that "Drusilla was married to Marcus Lepidus, at once the favorite and lover of the emperor, but Gaius also treated her as a concubine" (Dio 1924)

There is an off chance that Caligula was not really involved in shocking sexual practices with his sisters. It is likely that both Philo and Seneca, who frequently talk about the ruler's revelries, would have specified something about the charges of familial lust. Accusing the ruler of a yearning to be with their mothers was regular amongst the scholarly sources. As one case,

the Julio-Claudian head Nero's name likewise conveys negative intentions with it. It is reflected by Suetonius as being depraved with his mom Agrippina. One hypothesis is that since the mother of the sovereign was not accessible to fill the part of perverted mate, as for Caligula's situation, the charge was moved towards the sisters. Barrett (1996) notes that any ruler could be the objective of such babble. This chronicled record of Passienus, if valid, is vital on the grounds that it does not propose that Caligula was truly forbidden. Rather, it is seen that a portion of the overstated stories encompassing Caligula maybe emerged from humorous comments. What the researchers underline, then, is that the creators' different records must not be fully trusted. There are true reasons in the matter as to why people should not fully infer that Caligula may not have been perverted with Drusilla or his other two sisters (Pitcher 2009).

Caligula stretched out amazing privileges to numerous individuals from his family, for example, Augustus. Barrett (1996) clarifies that Caligula, in his rule, imitated Augustus. Maybe one of his most essential deeds in regarding his awesome granddad was authoritatively devoting the Temple of Divus Augustus. This was an occasion which occurred on in the last days of August in AD 37. Moreover, Caligula permitted Claudius to have his spot as an individual from the promoted majestic family. At the age forty-six, Claudius imparted the consulship of AD 37 to Caligula. Claudius, obviously, "up to that time had been treated with much hatred and scorn, and had been kept out of sight" (Dio 1924). Also, Caligula conceded excellent rituals to Antonia, his grandmother. At last, Caligula voyaged to Pontia and Pandateria to recover the fiery debris of his sibling, Nero, and his mom, Agrippina. This was so as to store them in the tomb of Augustus with his dad Germanicus. Caligula regarded his family in these courses for a few reasons. He felt a solid association with his family, and he realized that Tiberius was censured brutally for not

respecting past relatives. He himself needed to accentuate his conspicuousness over his ancestor (Josephus 1965).

The scholarly sources regularly specify Caligula as a devilish head who would declare himself a god on earth. One method for isolating himself from mortals, as per the sources, was to take on the appearance of the divinities themselves. He would do this with the goal that he could claim to be one of them. To start with, the Jewish author Philo takes note of the fact about Caligula's arrangement to show up in the garments and images of divine beings. Philo postulates that Caligula as far as anyone knows did not copy the clothing of real divine beings. However, he began imitating minor divine beings first. He gradually worked his way up to the real divine beings. Once more, Philo demonstrates Caligula's propensity to transparently dress as divinities. This was by both wearing the attire of the significant divine beings and carrying on unequivocally as they did. At last, as indicated by Philo, Caligula stated why heads ought not unequivocally carry on as divine beings. This was particularly when they were not fit to do their assignments suitably (Philo of Alexandria 1962).

Josephus' record of Caligula demonstrates that the ruler had climbed past the lesser divine beings and now asserted to be the sibling of Jupiter. For Josephus, the emperor's wild practices highlight his frenzy and his desire to end up a divine being on earth. Drusilla, Caligula's daughter with Caesonia, was seen as the posterity of both Zeus and the sovereign himself. Josephus' record of this double parentage is reminiscent of the myth of Hercules who likewise had two deities as parents. A couple of decades later, Suetonius incorporates into his memoir a segment in which he depicts a greater amount of Caligula's gathered crazy practices. After highlighting Caligula's deeds, Suetonius dives into the sovereign's transgressions, first highlighting his yearning to run alone over everybody. In the wake of portraying the sovereign's yearning mainly,

Suetonius indicates that Caligula was wishing to wind up a divinity while alive, pretty much as Philo and Josephus had officially expressed (Josephus 1965).

### **Talking Points**

Noting precisely who Caligula was is not a simple assignment. Nonetheless, the composition of history can help with unmasking him. The different records from ancient history are to a great degree agreeable to peruse, yet there are numerous issues confronting somebody who needs a precise depiction of an occurrence or individual's character. As one case, there are now and again unlucky deficiencies and ambiguities in the writings; not all that matters might be incorporated into the abstract sources' accounts. Modern interpreters may attempt to alter these issues either by skirting the occasions or supplementing their thoughts too great. A hefty portion of the records is in parts and embodiments where the content is hard to see plainly (Barrett 1996).

Likewise, old writers did not generally lay out their techniques as much of the time and compactly as contemporary students of history do. Moreover, the antiquated writers regularly esteemed works more for style and good substance than for objectivity. When all is said and done, an essayist may take a more established account and rework it as per his own particular style. While just perusing a couple of parallel stories of the same episode an author then would put the record in his own particular rendition, while often making utilization of the first source. Additionally, antiquated writers were known not to overstate reality, adjust the story to fit their needs, or inside and out lie about events. Therefore, it is not generally simple to happen upon autonomous declarations that show how precise the statements of the old writers really were (Pitcher 2009).

Another issue, as per Pitcher (2009), happens when the old history specialist's content does not oblige whatever "methodological standards he has expressed." While there are different issues in describing the abstract records, the general picture is that trusting the records as target truth can be a grave slip-up. On account of these issues, it is essential to approach the antiquated sources basically and not generally take what they say at face esteem. Luckily, there are techniques for touching base at the recorded truth. One critical strategy includes paying consideration on when the antiquated creators cite their sources. If a creator says another source in his work, it is conceivable to support the two records.

Obliging this thought, if a writer specifies a student of history in his work alongside that individual's deeds in life, it might be conceivable to contrast the writer's rendition and the antiquarian's genuine writings. One of the best apparatuses a specialist can utilize is researching parallel records: when there is a nonappearance of a clear reference, it is conceivable to take a gander at different records that are exceptionally commonplace regarding style, sentence structure, and/or semantics. The specialist then can contrast it and other old records, demonstrating the implausibility that the records emerged freely of each other (Pickard 2013).

Also, parallel reference permits specialists to perceive how the stories have changed after some time. Concerning the examination of Caligula, parallel reference is greatly valuable. This is despite the fact that there are not very many sources inside and out to look at. Therefore, true to life insights about the ruler's life are likely lost. Researchers in some cases depend all alone impulses, as well. Case in point, one way he or she can do this is by paying consideration to the "subtle elements and striking quality" that the essential source utilizes as a part of his record;

along these lines, it is felt that the creator is portraying an occasion that he himself saw. At long last, cutting edge history specialists in some cases take a look at cases of post-mortem. This is when the old writer himself physically witnesses the matter he is composing about. Using a blend of these strategies, however, may turn out to be most exact and helpful. It is still basic to understand that the artistic sources cannot generally be fully trusted totally (Potter 2009).

### **Opinion**

The surviving verifiable sources, rather than exhibiting authentic truth, relate genuine predicaments concerning reality about Caligula's life. It is basic for history specialists to endeavor to reveal reality so that future understudies and instructors can reveal insight into all parts of the ruler's life as opposed to just his vices. In spite of the fact that there are a few scenes of Caligula's life that can be examined further, one can take a look at and talk about the life of Caligula (Barrett 1996).

It can thus be noted that majority of past scholars and writers were in a way biased in their writings. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, Seneca, and Claudius Cassius Dio all gave a history that was either inaccurate or biased. Dio, for example, used a creative style to discuss Caligula. As such, some of the quotes in his works may be poetic rather than pointlessly accurate. Seneca is an author who knew Caligula at a personal level. It is thus expected that he would give a very accurate and non-biased account on the life of Caligula. However, the writer takes his interest in addressing the vices of Caligula's tenure as emperor. Seneca fails to adequately point out the good deeds that the emperor did (Pitcher 2009).

Dio and Philo give a better account of the ruler's good deeds. In fact, it is Dio who insists that Caligula's first couple of years as an emperor were highly productive. Dio also notes the

vices that Caligula possessed during the same time. Dio gives the good deeds of Caligula in the last years of his reign. Philo gave a more accurate account noting that the reign of Caligula was not entirely negative. Additionally, Philo has personally met with Caligula and gave a better description of the man, Caligula. Despite sharing different extremes in religion, Philo indicates that Caligula was more arrogant than being a lunatic (Potter 2009).

Based on the above observations, it would be unfair to term Caligula as lunatic who has no sound mind. It has been observed that there many good deeds that the emperor did for his people. He is also indicated through some of his decisions to be a rational and caring ruler to his subjects. He made some decisions that a madman cannot comprehend doing. It, however, has to be noted that his cruel activities have also been documented. It is conclusively correct to say that the ancient scholars unfairly presented Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus as a cruel man and as a lunatic.

### **Conclusion**

From the details of the life of the renowned Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, scholars have painted his a mad man. This, they say, is due to his cruel and selfish deeds during his reign as the third Roman Emperor. Coupled with medical indications that he was taking axillar, the scholars hastily concluded that he was a lunatic. However according to what is indicated most of the information is not accurate. Some scholars like Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus and Claudius Cassius Dio did not have accurate sources for their data on Caligula. Also, Dio wrote his work later after the emperor had died and did not have accurate and verifiable sources for his information. Other writers like Seneca knew the emperor personally but failed to highlight the good deeds the emperor did to his people. Philo was of a different opinion

and seems to be the only scholar who portrayed the true picture of the emperor as he was. He noted to the emperor to be arrogant rather than being a lunatic. He is also one the writers who had also met with the emperor personally.

To what extent are our sources fair in their presentation of Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus? Based on the above observations, it would be unfair to term Caligula as lunatic who has no sound mind. It has been observed that there many good deeds that the emperor did for his people. He is also indicated through some of his decisions to be a rational and caring ruler to his subjects. He made some decisions that a madman cannot comprehend doing. It, however, has to be noted that his cruel activities have also been documented. It is conclusively correct to say that the ancient scholars unfairly presented Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus as a cruel man and as a lunatic.

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## **Appendix**

### **EMPERORS OF ROME**

EMPEROR	BORN	DIED
Augustus	63 BC	14 AD
Tiberius	42 BC	37 AD
Gaius (Caligula)	12 AD	41 AD
Claudius	10 BC	54 AD
Nero	37 AD	68 AD
Galba	3 BC	69 AD
Otho	32 AD	69 AD
Vitellius	12 AD	69 AD
Vespasian	9 AD	79 AD
Titus	39 AD	79 AD
Domitian	51 AD	96 AD