

## Egypt: School of Empire, *Clastrum Imperii*

In the second book of his *Annals*, Tacitus writes that Germanicus embarked upon a Mediterranean tour that mixed business with pleasure. Fresh off his chariot victory at the Olympic games in Greece, Germanicus spent time reflecting upon the accomplishments of his great-uncle Augustus and his grandfather Antony at Actium before making stops at Troy, Armenia, and Syria. In 19 C.E., continuing his tour, Germanicus arrived at Alexandria in Egypt (Tacitus, *Annales*, 2.59): *M. Silano L. Norbano consulibus Germanicus Aegyptum proficiscitur cognoscendae antiquitatis. Sed cura provinciae praetendebatur* (“With M. Silanus and L. Norbanus as consuls, Germanicus departed for Egypt to become acquainted with antiquity. But his pretext was concern for the province”). Germanicus’ participation in the Olympic games and his visits to Actium and Troy demonstrate his awareness of the historical significance of the events that had taken place at those locations. Modern scholars, however, have scrutinized Tacitus’ presentation of Germanicus’ activities and itinerary in Egypt (Shotter, 1966). Particularly, Tacitus neglects to mention one stop that Germanicus made during his tour of Egypt. While both Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, and later Ammianus Marcellinus in his *Res Gestae*, attest that Germanicus consulted the Apis Bull in Memphis while conducting his Egyptian tour (Pliny, HN, 8.185; Amm. Marc. 22.14.8.), Tacitus curiously omits this detail, even though modern scholars have asserted that he would have certainly been aware of Germanicus’ detour to Memphis (Girdvainyte, 2015).

By comparing Tacitus’ account of Germanicus’ Egyptian tour against earlier ancient accounts of the travels of Scipio Aemilianus, Octavian, and Vespasian through Egypt, this paper will demonstrate how these earlier accounts of Roman visitations to Egypt collectively showcase

Egypt as both a spectacle for the Romans to behold and as a school of empire. These accounts demonstrate that a precedent for how a powerful Roman should conduct himself within the Egyptian province had already long been established before Germanicus arrived in Egypt. This precedent forbid Roman leaders from making any acknowledgment of the remnants of Ptolemaic rule, such as the Apis Bull. Finally, this paper suggests that by visiting the Apis Bull during his Egyptian tour, Germanicus broke the precedent established by both Scipio Aemilianus and Octavian, an act which may have contributed to Tacitus' decision to omit the account of Germanicus' consultation with the Apis Bull from his *Annals*.

#### Works Cited

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