



## Germanicus: The Magnificent Life and Mysterious Death of Rome's Most Popular General

By Lindsay Powell

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### Germanicus: The Magnificent Life and Mysterious Death of Rome's Most Popular General By Lindsay Powell

GERMANICUS (a.k.a. Germanicus Iulius Caesar) was regarded by many Romans as a hero in the mould of Alexander the Great. His untimely death, in suspicious circumstances, ended the possibility of a return to a more open republic and ambitions for the outright conquest of Germania Magna (Germany and The Netherlands). This, the first modern biography of Germanicus Caesar, is in parts a growing-up story, a history of war, a tale of political intrigue and a murder mystery. It is a natural sequel to the author's acclaimed book, *EAGER FOR GLORY*, which, for the first time, discussed the life of Germanicus' birth father, Nero Claudius Drusus. Born in 16 BC, Germanicus grew up to be a skilled diplomat and a bold general, but also a formidable courtroom advocate, poet and playwright. Marked out to be a successor to Augustus, he married Agrippina, the first emperor's granddaughter by whom he fathered nine children, including the future Emperor Caligula. His reputation and popularity were immense. He put down a mutiny of the Rhine legions, was responsible for avenging Rome's humiliating defeat at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest through victory at Idistaviso (AD 16), and the recovery of two of the three lost legionary eagle standards. Recognizing his achievements, the Emperor Tiberius – his adoptive father – granted him a full triumph, but refused to let him complete the reconquest of Germania, sending him instead to command the provinces in the East. Did Tiberius feel jealous and threatened? Germanicus' good fortune waned when he fell out with one of Tiberius' gubernatorial appointees, the arrogant patrician Calpurnius Piso. Germanicus' death in Syria under mysterious circumstances, aged 34, brought great outpourings of public grief and anger, with many suspecting murder on the orders of Tiberius. As Romans demanded justice Piso was put on trial, but he committed suicide – or was he murdered? – before the senate could reach a verdict. In this highly readable, fast paced account, historical detective Lindsay Powell details Germanicus' campaigns and battles in Illyricum and Germania; tracks him on his epic tour of the Eastern Mediterranean to Armenia and down the Nile; evaluates the possible causes of his death; and reports on the cruel fate his wife Agrippina and their children suffered at the hands of Praetorian Guard commander, and Tiberius' infamous deputy, Aelius Seianus.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

'Biographies of Germanicus Caesar – arguably one of Rome's finest generals – are few and far between, sadly. When one is published, therefore, it gives cause for celebration – particularly when it's as good as the volume penned by Lindsay Powell. Meticulously researched, absorbing and well written, this is no dusty, academic tome, but a 'must have' text for any reader with an interest in Rome. Powell knows his subject matter inside out, and is to be highly commended on a most welcome addition to the biographies of Rome's most famous sons.' (*Ben Kane, The Forgotten Legion Chronicles and Spartacus series.*)

'GERMANICUS brings the reader face to bloody face with serious history and tells the story of a Roman emperor that might have been - principled, courageous and, above all else, sane! Excellent fare, and highly recommended.' (*Anthony Riches, Empire series.*)

"A modern, impartial study of the life of Germanicus is not only timely but overdue. For, apart from the enduring mystery of his death, Germanicus did come as close as anyone in the attempt to re-establish Roman rule from the Rhine to the Elbe. Had he succeeded, the history of the Roman Empire - and therefore of subsequent ages - would have been greatly different. It is worth examining how and why the attempt failed, and learning more about the man who made it." (*Philip Matyszak, author of The Sons of Caesar and Legionary: The Roman Soldier's Handbook*)

"The story of a Roman Emperor that might have been, Germanicus is a thorough, unbiased account of a man who is often overlooked despite the great impact he made on Ancient Rome. It is a fascinating study and well worth reading if you have an interest in the Roman Empire." (*Fighting Times*)

"...both meticulously scholarly and absorbing to read as it delves into a great man's life marked by military glory, political intrigue and a murder mystery." (*Toy Soldier and Model figure Magazine*)

What the author has achieved here [in GERMANICUS] is to describe not only a personality, but to carefully place that individual within the context of his time.... We learn not only about the man and his deeds, but his influence in history, literature, and art. It also happens to be a well written account and a good read, which means I now face an agonizing decision on which volume to discard on my bookshelf to make way for it. (*UNRV*)

"I particularly like Powell's narrative style. It is extremely readable, providing an educational narrative on a fascinating period of history. ... Powell has done an exemplary job of shedding light upon the character and accomplishments of this noteworthy Roman. I strongly recommend this book" -- (*Major Chris Buckham, Ancient Warfare, issue VIII.4*)

...gives us a comprehensive account of the life, character, campaigns, and curious death of Germanicus (15 BC-AD 19), son of the great Drusus, the subject of one of Powell's earlier books, and adoptive son of his uncle the Emperor Tiberius. Today primarily remembered as the talented father of the maniacal Emperor Caligula and his sisters of dubious character or as the elder brother of the Emperor Claudius, Germanicus was among the more successful of Roman generals of all times, but is not well represented in the literature; this seems to be the first ever English biography. But Powell has not just given us a book about one man. He uses the life of Germanicus as a way of telling the story of Roman campaigns against the Germans during the

reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. He sets the life of Germanicus fully within the framework of the politics and society of the early empire. While Powell is perhaps overly enthusiastic about his subject, rather glossing over some of Germanicus's major blunders, he does refute some traditional views of the man's life. For example, he argues that the hostility of Tiberius toward Germanicus, his adoptive son and heir, which constitutes the central theme of the ancient historian Suetonius which was picked up by Robert Graves in his novel *I, Claudius* is probably very overstated. He also offers some interesting thoughts on the curious death of Germanicus. *Germanicus* is an excellent read for anyone interested in the Roman Empire, (*Strategy Page*)

#### About the Author

LINDSAY POWELL writes for *Ancient Warfare* magazine and his articles have also appeared in *Military Heritage* and *Strategy and Tactics*. He is author of the highly acclaimed *Marcus Agrippa: Right-Hand Man of Caesar Augustus*, *Germanicus: The Magnificent Life and Mysterious Death of Rome's Most Popular General* and *Eager for Glory: The Untold Story of Drusus the Elder, Conqueror of Germania*, all published by Pen & Sword Books. His appearances include BBC Radio, British Forces Broadcasting Service and History Channel. He divides his time between Austin, Texas and Wokingham, England.

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