



Aureus depicting the head of Domitian and the personification of Germania mourning (88-89 CE)

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[1]

Denomination:

Aureus

Date: 88 CE to 89 CE

Material:

Gold

Mint:

Rome

Name of Ruler:

Domitian

Obverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Laureate head of Domitian looking right

Inscription: DOMITIANVS AVGVSTVS

Reverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Germania seated right on shield, mourning; broken spear below

Inscription: GERMANICVS COS XIII

Commentary:

(RIC II, Domitian no. 127, p. 169)

This aureus, minted in Rome between 88 and 89 CE, depicts on the obverse the head of Domitian, and on the reverse a female figure, the personification of Germania, mourning. The inscription on the obverse, DOMITIANVS AVGVSTVS, refers to Domitian as Augustus, with the inscription on the reverse adding the title GERMANICVS, "Germanicus," and recording that he was consul for the fourteenth time (COS XIII). Domitian is pictured crowned with a laurel wreath, a common symbol of victory and honour. After he came to power, one of the first acts of the young emperor was to acquire military glory, largely to match the achievements of his father and his brother, Vespasian and Titus (on which see further below). The occasion for this was given by the Chatti, a major Germanic tribe which raided Roman territory. Domitian's triumph over the Chatti led him to receive the name "Germanicus" in 83 CE (see Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, p. 128-131), although the final victory over the Chatti may only have occurred at the end of 84 CE (see Southern, *Domitian*, p. 85). Either way, from 83 CE onwards Domitian moulded his public image into one which was very much associated with martial ideology, the commemoration of his victories over the Germans being absolutely central in this. This aureus, then, can be viewed as part of this propaganda effort. Incidentally, neither Suetonius nor Tacitus thought much of this imperial campaign. Suetonius labelled it as "uncalled for" (Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* 6), and Tacitus called the triumph following the victory in Germany a "mocked triumph" (Tacitus, *Life of Agricola* 39). However, in 86/87 CE Martial wrote his second *Epigram*, which supports Domitian's ideological program which continued up until the end of his reign. Martial



compares the victories in Judea by Vespasian and Titus with that of Domitian in Germany (see the commentary on [Martial, Epigrams II.2](#) [2]; on the martial image which Domitian adopted after his victory over the Chatti, see also Statius, *Silvae* I.1.22-55, which describes his equestrian statue; and [Sestertius depicting a bust and an equestrian statue of Domitian \(95-96 CE\)](#) [3]).

Indeed, arguably one of the most notable results of the campaign was that Domitian minted coins depicting the victory in Germany, known as the “Germania Capta” type, which steadily replaced the *Iudaea Capta* series minted by Vespasian and Titus, which were minted by both Vespasian and Titus in order to celebrate their victory over the Jewish people in the First Jewish Revolt of 70 CE (e.g. [Denarius depicting the head of Titus and a kneeling captive \(79 CE\)](#) [4]; on the *Iudaea Capta* series, see Cody, “Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins,” p. 107-113). Moreover, Brian Jones has argued that as neither Vespasian nor Titus took the title *Iudaicus* after their victories in Judea, the fact that Domitian adopted the title *Germanicus* indicates that he sought to portray himself as superior to them, and that his imitation of the *Iudaea Capta* series of coins served to emphasise that he was capable of great military successes himself, and was not overshadowed by their glory (Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, p. 129). However, on the present aureus we do not have a German captive represented (for an example of such an issue which celebrated Domitian’s German campaign, see [Sestertius depicting the head of Domitian and a trophy with German captives \(85 CE\)](#) [5], which depicts on the reverse a trophy, with two German prisoners next to it, a woman kneeling and a man standing, accompanied by the legend “Germania capta,” or “Germany captured”). Rather, on this issue it is the female personification of Germania that is represented in a mournful pose, partly nude, with her head bowed and resting in her left hand, sitting on top of the shield that has failed to protect against the Roman forces. Moreover, the utter defeat that Germany has suffered at the hands of Rome’s army is emphasised by the broken spear which sits beneath Germania. The picture, then, is one of submission to Rome’s power.

Keywords in the original language:

- [Augustus](#) [6]
- [consul](#) [7]
- [Germanicus](#) [8]

Thematic keywords:

- [Germania](#) [9]
- [Germans](#) [10]
- [victory](#) [11]
- [triumph](#) [12]
- [province](#) [13]
- [war](#) [14]
- [Roman army](#) [15]
- [Chatti](#) [16]
- [submission](#) [17]
- [mourning](#) [18]
- [Roman power](#) [19]
- [Domitian](#) [20]
- [shield](#) [21]
- [spear](#) [22]

Bibliographical references:

[“Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins”](#) [23]

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“Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins”
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[The Emperor Domitian](#) [24]



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[Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power \[25\]](#)

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[Domitian: Tragic Tyrant \[26\]](#)

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Other sources connected with this document: Text

[Martial, *Epigrams* II.2 \[27\]](#)

Comparison between Domitian's victory in Germania and the successes of Vespasian and Titus in Judea.

- [Read more about Martial, *Epigrams* II.2 \[27\]](#)

Numismatic item

[Sestertius depicting a bust and an equestrian statue of Domitian \(95-96 CE\) \[28\]](#)

- [Read more about Sestertius depicting a bust and an equestrian statue of Domitian \(95-96 CE\) \[28\]](#)

Numismatic item

[Denarius depicting the head of Titus and a kneeling captive \(79 CE\) \[29\]](#)

- [Read more about Denarius depicting the head of Titus and a kneeling captive \(79 CE\) \[29\]](#)

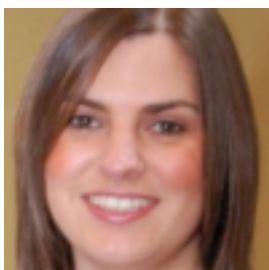
Numismatic item

[Sestertius depicting the head of Domitian and a trophy with German captives \(85 CE\) \[30\]](#)

- [Read more about Sestertius depicting the head of Domitian and a trophy with German captives \(85 CE\) \[30\]](#)

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- [2] <http://judaism-and-rome.cnrs.fr/martial-epigrams%C2%A0ii2>
- [3] <http://judaism-and-rome.cnrs.fr/sestertius-depicting-bust-and-equestrian-statue-domitian-95-96%C2%A0ce>
- [4] <http://judaism-and-rome.cnrs.fr/denarius-depicting-head-titus-and-kneeling-captive-79-ce>
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- [25] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/imperial-ideals-roman-west-representation-circulation-power>
- [26] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/domitian-tragic-tyrant>
- [27] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/martial-epigrams%C2%A0ii2>
- [28] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sestertius-depicting-bust-and-equestrian-statue-domitian-95-96%C2%A0ce>
- [29] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/denarius-depicting-head-titus-and-kneeling-captive-79-ce>
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