



Cistophorus of Domitian representing the temple of Capitoline Jupiter (82 CE)

Cistophorus of Domitian.jpg



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Cistophorus of Domitian representing the temple of Capitoline Jupiter (82 CE)

Denomination:

cistophorus

Date: 82 CE

Date: 1st CE

Material:

silver

Mint:

Mint of Rome for Asia

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): American Numismatic Society; id: 1955.21.11

Name of Ruler:

Domitian

Obverse (Image and Inscription):

Head of Domitian laureate, looking right; IMP CAES DOMITIAN AVG P M COS VIII

Reverse (Image and Inscription):

Front view of tetrastyle temple enclosing figures of Juno, seated Jupiter and Minerva; on pediment, quadriga in center, statues at corners; CAPIT(olium) RESTIT(utum)

Diameter (mm): 26.00mm

Weight (g): 10.56g

Commentary:

RIC II/1², Domitian, n° 841, p. 329; RPC II/1, 864, p. 132.



This coin is a cistophoric tetradrachm minted in 82 CE. Even if there is no direct evidence for the mint of this issue, the authors of the RIC and of the RPC suggest that these cistophori may have been produced at Rome and would have then circulated in Asia (RIC II/1², 841, p. 329; RPC II/1, p. 132). It depicts on the obverse the head of Domitian, mentioned as imperator, Caesar, Augustus, *pontifex maximus* and consul for the eighth time. On the reverse, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus is set on three-tiered base and sustained by four thin columns, an element which proves that it is a simplified representation of the temple which was usually represented with six columns. It contains statues of Juno, Jupiter, and Minerva. Jupiter is the only one represented seated on a throne. A *quadriga* sits on the temple's gable and two *bigae*, two-horses chariot, on the two edges of the roof. Due to the poor preservation of the obverse's design, specialists debate on the pediment's decoration. The best-preserved coins (see RPC II/2, pl. 35, n°867) show that an anguipede monster may be represented on the pediment. This monster is identified as the giant Typhon or Summanus, the god of nocturnal thunder (Bastien, "Vitellius et le temple," p. 196-197). Such a representation is quite specific of the cistophori of the "Capitoline Temple's type" minted in 81-82 CE. Actually, coins minted in Rome between 71 and 78 CE, showing the temple reconstructed by Vespasian, as well as the Trajanic relief of the palazzo dei Conservatori represent Jupiter standing in the centre of the pediment (Bastien, "Vitellius et le temple," p. 192-202). This particularity of the cistophori has not yet been explained.

The inscription CAPIT(olium) RESTIT(utum) on the reverse shows that this cistophorus was minted for the reconstruction of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in 82 CE, but there is still a debate to know if 82 CE was the date of the completion of the monument or not (Darwall-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture*, p. 106-108). Under the Flavian dynasty, this temple was destroyed twice: in 69 CE during the civil war after Nero's assassination, and in a fire in 80 CE. This second restoration was first led by Titus, as proven by a first issue of cistophori of the "CAPIT REST" type, probably minted at Rome in 80-81 CE (RPC II/1, p. 131; see coin n° 860, p. 133), and was continued by Domitian after Titus's death (for the sources see De Angeli, "Iuppiter," p. 151). The restoration of this prestigious temple enabled Domitian to justify his accession to power through dynastic claims: he acted as the worthy heir of his brother, whose main exploit had been to defeat the Jews. The dedication of the triumphal arch of Titus in 81 CE took part in the same policy. Thus, Domitian completed the Flavian propaganda about the Jewish war and finalized the remodelling of the Roman civic centre to reflect the victory in Judea (Goodman, "The Fiscus Iudaicus," p. 171). The temple of Jupiter Capitolinus was indirectly connected to this Flavian policy as its reconstruction in 70-71 CE was funded, from now on, by the money gathered by the *fiscus Iudaicus* – money which used to be, before 70 CE, the annual offering of the Jews to the Jerusalem Temple (**Josephus, Jewish war VII.218**; [Cassius Dio, Roman History LXV.7.2](#) [4]). After the fire of 80 CE, the reconstruction of the most important temple of the Empire which also symbolized the subjugation of the Jews and their God to Rome, was considered as a political necessity by the imperial power.

This coin is interesting for two reasons. First, it was minted just after the dedication of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. It was one of the first medium used to commemorate this major event. Second, even if it was minted at Rome, many of the coins of this issue circulated in the province of Asia. It is difficult to appreciate how this coin – especially the iconography on its reverse – was received by the local populations, especially by the Jews and the Christians. Marius Heemstra writes: "For Jewish taxpayers in Asia, this must have been a very intimidating coin that was directly related to the presumably hated tax. For Jewish Christians like John, who were probably not registered for the tax in the first place, this coin must have been the representation of taxpayers' submissiveness to Rome, since the pagan temple had been restored for a second time with money paid by Jews" (Heemstra, *The Fiscus Iudaicus*, p. 126). Marius Heemstra's interpretation is seductive but is highly hypothetical as there is no Christian or Jewish account of this event. In addition, even if the tax taken from the Jews of the Empire and supplying the *fiscus Iudaicus* under Vespasian was still perceived under Domitian (in that perspective see [Martial, Epigrams VII.55](#) [5]; [Suetonius, Life of Domitian XII.2](#) [6]), it is however impossible to affirm that the money of the *fiscus Iudaicus* was still used in 80 CE in order to fund the reconstruction of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Of course if it was true, the circulation, in the provinces of Asia, of these cistophori representing the shrine twice restored under the Flavians thanks to a tax symbolizing the defeat of the Jews of 70 CE, would have been something very painful for some Jews established in these regions. In addition, the fact the minting of this issue of these cistophori of the Capitoline Temple type continued for a while after Titus's death, may have been motivated by the idea to affirm the hegemony of Rome and the legitimacy of Domitian to rule since he followed the policy of Vespasian and Titus.

The news of the restoration of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus spread quickly across the Empire, even in eastern provinces. This event became a central theme of Domitian's ideology which was praised throughout his reign, even a long time after the dedication of 82 CE. For instance, Statius praised Domitian several times as the restorer



of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus (see [Stattius, *Silvae* I.6.85-102](#) [7] of 89 CE; [Stattius, *Silvae* IV.3.123-163](#) [8] of 95 CE). Even in the last year of his reign, Domitian continued to use the image of the temple thanks to an issue of *denarii* (RIC II/1², 815-816, p. 325-326, see [Denarius of Domitian depicting the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, 95-96 CE](#) [9]).

Keywords in the original language:

- [Capitolium](#) [10]
- [Domitianus](#) [11]

Thematic keywords:

- [Domitian](#) [12]
- [Flavians](#) [13]
- [Capitoline Temple](#) [14]
- [Capitoline Triad](#) [15]
- [restoration](#) [16]
- [Jewish tax](#) [17]
- [Roman hegemony](#) [18]

Bibliographical references: Bastien, Pierre, "[Vitellius et le temple de Jupiter Capitolin: un as inédit.](#)" [19], *Numismatica e antichità classiche* 7 (1978) : 181-202

Heemstra, Marius, [The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways](#) [20] (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010)

De Angeli, Stefano, "[Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, aedes \(fasi tardo-republicane e di età imperiale\).](#)" [21], in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (ed. Eva Steinby; Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 1996), 148-153

Darwall-Smith, Robin H., [Emperors and Architecture: A Study of Flavian Rome](#) [22] (Brussels: Latomus. Revue des Études Latines, 1992)

Goodman, Martin, "[The Fiscus Judaicus and Gentile Attitudes to Judaism in Flavian Rome](#)" [23], in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, James Rives; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167-177

Other sources connected with this document: Text

[Stattius, *Silvae* IV.3.123-163](#) [8]

Sibyl's speech ending a poem commemorating the *via Domitiana*

- [Read more about Stattius, *Silvae* IV.3.123-163](#) [8]

Text

[Stattius, *Silvae* I.6.85-102](#) [7]

Poem describing the *Saturnalia*, probably in December 89 CE

- [Read more about Stattius, *Silvae* I.6.85-102](#) [7]

Numismatic item



[Denarius of Domitian depicting the temple of Capitoline Jupiter \(95-96 CE\) \[9\]](#)

- [Read more about Denarius of Domitian depicting the temple of Capitoline Jupiter \(95-96 CE\) \[9\]](#)

Text

[Martial, *Epigrams* VII.55 \[5\]](#)

Circumcised Jews' liability to the Jewish tax.

- [Read more about Martial, *Epigrams* VII.55 \[5\]](#)

Text

[Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* XII.1-2 \[6\]](#)

Domitian's harsh policy towards the Jews

- [Read more about Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* XII.1-2 \[6\]](#)

Text

[Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXV.7.2 \[4\]](#)

The instauration of the Jewish tax

- [Read more about Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXV.7.2 \[4\]](#)

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[5] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/martial-epigrams%C2%A0vii55>



- [6] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/suetonius-life-domitian%C2%A0xii1-2>
- [7] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/statius-silvae-i685-102>
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- [9] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/denarius-domitian-depicting-temple-capitoline-jupiter-95-96%C2%A0ce>
- [10] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/capitolium>
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- [19] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/%E2%80%9Cvitellius-et-le-temple-de-jupiter-capitolin-un-in%C3%A9dit%E2%80%9D>
- [20] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/fiscus-judaicus-and-parting-ways>
- [21] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/%E2%80%9Ciuppiter-optimus-maximus-capitolinus-aedes-fasi-tardo-republicane-e-di-et%C3%A0-imperiale%E2%80%9D>
- [22] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/emperors-and-architecture-study-flavian-rome>
- [23] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/%E2%80%9Cfiscus-iudaicus-and-gentile-attitudes-judaism-flavian-rome%E2%80%9D>
- [24] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/erc-team/marie-roux>