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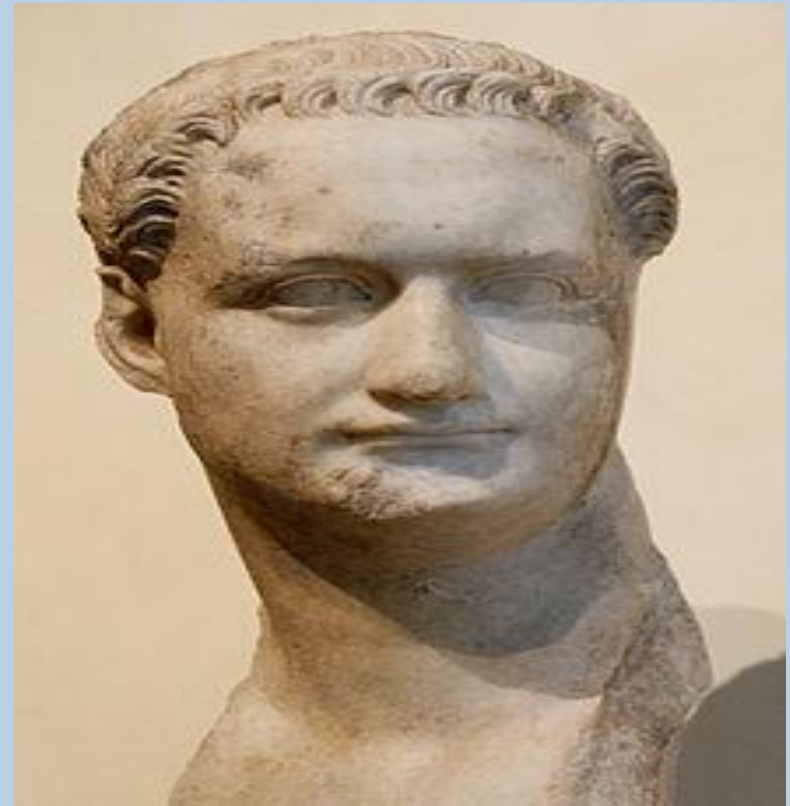
**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

Domitian (AD 81-96)

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Part 1: Domitian

- **Titus Flavius Domitianus.**
- Born on 24th of October AD 51.
- Besieged with his uncle Flavius Sabinus in Rome during December AD 69, he escaped but his uncle dies.
- Supposed marginalisation of Domitian – 5 of 6 consulships (prior to his reign) suffer.
- Reign begins 14th of September AD 81 - ends 18th of September AD 96.



“Emerging after Vitellius’ death, Domitian was hailed as Caesar and accepted the appointment of city praetor with consular powers... the lawlessness with which he exploited the position of emperor’s son clearly showed... he had distributed more than twenty appointments at home and abroad in the course of a single day, Vespasian murmured, ‘I wonder he did not name my successor while he was about it!’”. – **Suetonius *Domitian* 1.**

Presentation of Domitian's Character

“Domitian was not only bold and quick to anger but also treacherous and secretive; and so, deriving from these two characteristics impulsiveness on the one hand and craftiness on the other, he would often attack people with the sudden violence of a thunderbolt and again would often injure them as the result of careful deliberation.” – **Dio Cassius 67.1.1.**

“For a while he governed in an uneven fashion: that is to say, his vices were at first balanced by his virtues. Later he transformed his virtues into vices too – for I am inclined to believe that, above and beyond his natural inclinations, lack of funds made him greedy, and fear of assassination made him cruel.” – **Suetonius *Domitian* 3.**

“The worst of our torments under Domitian was to see him with eyes fixed upon us. Every sigh was registered against us; and when we all turned pale, he did not scruple to make us marked men by a glance of his savage countenance – that blood-red countenance which saved him from ever being seen to blush with shame.” – **Tacitus *Agricola* 45.**

Consulship and Censorship

- Holds consulship 10 times during his reign (15 years).
 - AD 84/85 becomes *censor perpetuus* – can control senatorial enrolment.
- “For he even insisted upon being regarded as a god and took vast pride in being called "master" and "god." These titles were used not merely in speech but also in written documents.” – **Dio Cassius 67.4.7.**



Domitian Denarius AD 85. IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM P M TR P IIII, laureate bust right, aegis on chest / IMP VIII **COS XI CENSORIA POTESTAT** P P, Germania seated right on shield in mourning posture, broken spear below. - **RSC 183.**

Building Programme

Arch of Titus

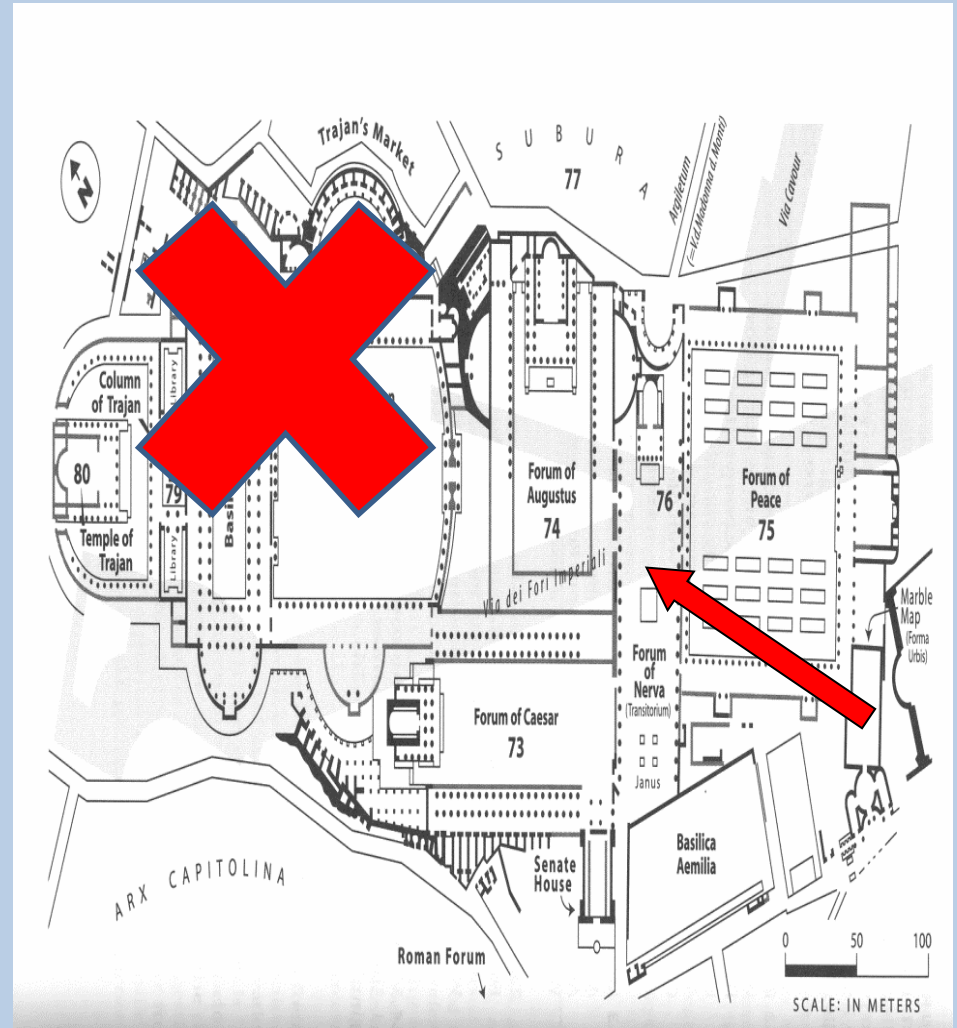
“...afterwards he granted him no recognition at all beyond approving his deification. In fact he often slighted Titus’ memory by the use of ambiguous terms in speeches and edicts.” – **Suetonius *Domitian* 2.3.**

“The Senate and People of Rome dedicate this arch to the deified Titus Augustus, son of the deified Vespasian.” – ***ILS* 265 = *CIL* 6.945.**



Forum of Nerva / Forum Transitorium

- Forum built by Domitian, though dedicated by Nerva in early AD 97.
- Occupies space between Forum of Augustus and Temple of Peace.
- Contains a temple to Minerva.



Palace of Domitian

- Imperial complex on the Palatine constructed over various periods.
 - Most of remains that survive are the work of Domitian.
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- **A** – entrance hall.
 - **B** – courtyard.
 - **E** – great banquet hall.
 - **I** – gardens (**J** late antique theatre).
 - **M** – aqueduct extension.

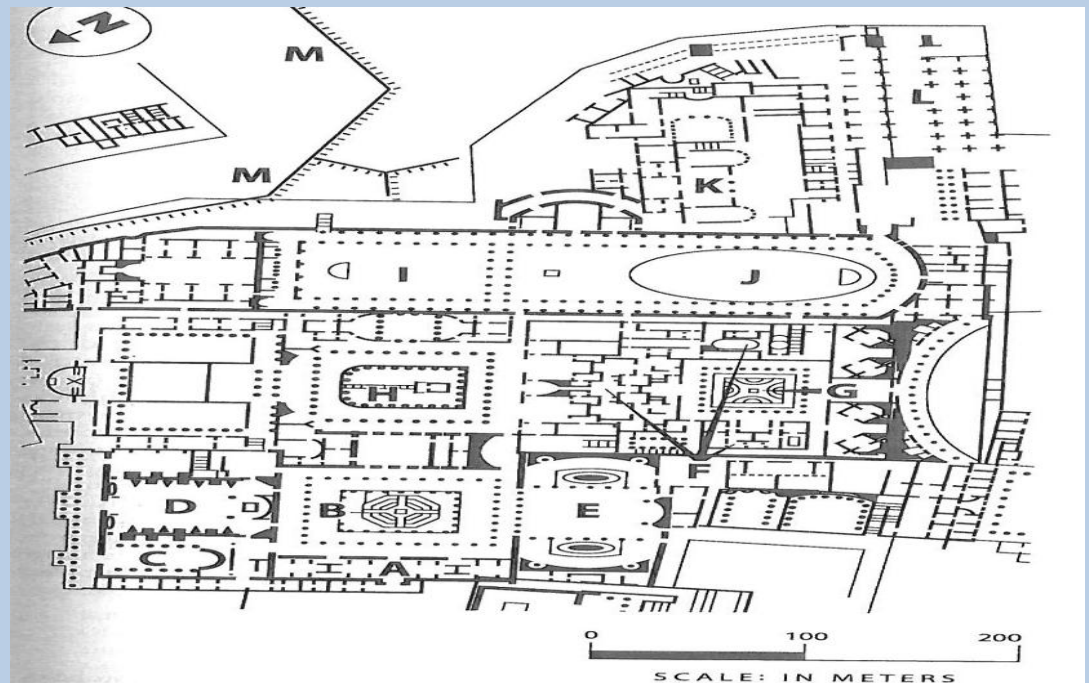


Image from Aicher (2004).

Military Campaigns

Campaigns in Germany

- Domitian leads two retaliatory expeditions against the Chatti near the middle Rhine in AD 83 and 89.
- By end of Domitian's reign the *limes* (frontier road) ran from area of Bonn, eastwards along Taunus Mountains down to Neckar valley (north of the Danube).
- Domitian transfers two of the eight Rhine legions to the Danube region.

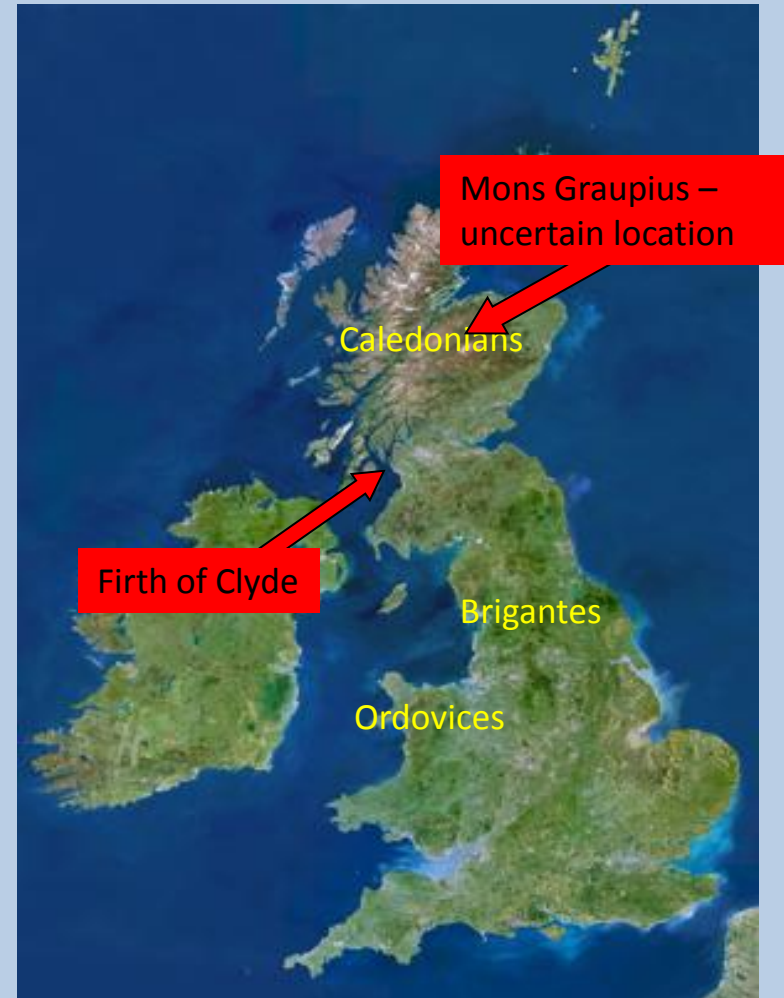
Campaigns in Britain

Titus

- Gn. Julius Agrippa made governor in AD 78.
- Campaigns against Ordovices and captures Mona (Anglesey).
- Brigantia over-run in AD 79.
- AD 80 lowland Scotland captured, by AD 81 forts built by Firth of Clyde.

Domitian

- AD 82 further campaigning in south-western Scotland.
- Advance into northern Scotland in AD 83.
- Caledonians defeated at Mons Graupius – AD 84.
- Agricola recalled in AD 84.
- AD 86/87 Legio II Adiutrix is removed to Moesia – northern Scotland abandoned.



Campaigns in Dacia

- Dacian king Decebalus trains his army in Roman style.
- AD 85 Decians attack Moesia.
- Domitian invades Dacia, Fuscus the Praetorian Prefect leads Roman forces into a military disaster (AD 86).
- Tettius Julianus invades Dacia again in AD 88, defeats Decebalus at Tapae.
- Invasion halted due to revolt of L. Antonius Saturnius – peace with Decebalus (AD 89).
- Invasion of lazyges, Marcomanni and Quadi into Pannonia.

“One after another, armies were lost in Moesia and Dacia, in Germany and Pannonia, through the rash folly and cowardice of their generals... it was not longer the frontier and the Danube that was threatened, but the permanent quarters of the legion and the maintenance of the Empire.
– **Tacitus *Agricola* 41.**

Increase in Army Pay

“...he increased the soldiers' pay, perhaps on account of this victory, commanding that four hundred sesterces [**denarii**] should be given to each man in place of the three hundred that he had been receiving. Later he thought better of it, but, instead of diminishing the amount of their pay, he reduced the number of soldiers. Both changes entailed great injury to the State; for he made its defenders too few in number and yet at the same time very expensive to maintain.” – **Dio Cassius 3.5.**

Autocracy and Opposition

“Reign of Terror”

- AD 88/89 – Lucius Antonius Saturnius commander of Germania Superior (two legions at Mainz) reported to have tried to revolt against Domitian.
 - Period between AD 93-96 increasing number of senators are condemned.
- “Domitian put many senators to death, Civica Cerealis, Salvideinus Orfitus and Acilius Glabrio, he accused of conspiracy... others were killed for the most trivial reasons... Mettius Pompusianus because he was said to have an imperial horoscope...” – **Suetonius *Domitian* 10.2.**

“Agricola did not live to see the Senate-House under siege, the senators surrounded by a cordon of troops, and that one fell stroke which sent so many consulars to their death, so many noble ladies into banishment or exile... But before long we senators led Helvidius to prison, watched in shame the suffering of Mauricus and Rusticus, and stained ourselves with Senecio’s innocent blood. Even Nero used to avert his eyes, though he ordered abominations, forbore to witness them.” – **Tacitus *Agricola* 45.**

Assassination

“... the conspirators were spending time debating whether... to murder Domitian in his bath or at dinner, Stephanus, his niece Domitilla’s steward, who... stood accused of embezzlement offered his services... he feigned an injury and went around for several days in woollen bandages... just before the appointed time, he slipped a dagger; he then claimed to have discovered a plot, and was admitted to Domitian’s bedroom; he produced a list of names, and then suddenly stabbed Domitian in the groin... Domitian put up a good fight, but succumbed to seven further stabs, his assailants being a subaltern named Clodianus, Parthenius’ freedman Maximus, and the head chamberlain Satur, and one of the imperial gladiators. The boy who was as usual attending to the household gods in the bedroom witnessed the murder and later described it in some detail... Domitian grabbed Stephanus and pulled him to the ground, and after cutting his own fingers in a prolonged effort to disarm him he began clawing at his eyes.” – **Suetonius *Domitian* 17.1.**

Damnatio Memoriae

“Though the general public greeted the news of Domitian’s fate with indifference, it deeply affected the troops, who at once began to speak of him as *Divus* – they would have avenged him had anyone given them a lead – and insisted that his assassins should be brought to justice. The senators on the other hand were delighted and thronged to denounce Domitian in the Senate House with bitter and insulting cries. The sending for ladders, they had his images and the votive shield engraved with his likeness brought smashing down, and ended by decreeing that all inscriptions referring to him must be effaced and all records of his reigned obliterated.” – **Suetonius *Domitian* 23.**

Cancellaria Reliefs – Vatican Museum

- Seven surviving slabs, wholly or in part from two friezes.
- Domitian's head has been re-sculpted to look like Nerva.



Tacitus and Domitian

- Tacitus member of the senate – lived under Domitian.
- Portrays final days of Domitian in very negative light – AD 96-96 “reign of terror”.
- Agricola – Tacitus’ father-in-law – Tacitus’ writers the *Agricola* in his honour.
- Tacitus’ use of innuendo to blacken the image of earlier emperors, notably Tiberius.

Useful Reading

- Cary, M. and Scullard, H. H. (1975) *A History of Rome down to the Reign of Constantine* (Basingstoke: Palgrave). – read chapter 36.
- Von Fritz, K. (1957) 'Tacitus, Agricola, Domitian, and the Problem of the Principate', *Classical Philology* 52 (2): 73-97.
- Mellor, R. (1993) *Tacitus* (New York: Routledge).