

Julia Domna: The Most Powerful Woman Who Ever Lived Silver Denarius



All coins in each set are protected in an archival capsule and beautifully displayed in a mahogany-like box. The box set is accompanied with a story card, certificate of authenticity, and a black gift box.

The best-known names of ancient Rome are invariably male, and in the 500 years between the reigns of Caesar Augustus and Justinian I, not a single woman held the Roman throne—not even during the chaotic Crisis of the Third Century, when new emperors claimed the throne every other year.

This does not mean that women were not vital to the greatest empire the world has ever known. Indeed, much of the time, the real wielders of imperial might were the wives, sisters, and mothers of the emperors. Never was this more true than during the reign of Septimius Severus, when Julia Domna—his wife, his Augusta, and his primary advisor—working in a patriarchal system that officially excluded them from assuming absolute power, nevertheless managed to have her way.

Our story begins in Emesa, capital of the Roman client kingdom of Syria, in the year 187 CE. The 42-year-old widower Septimius Severus, a tribune of the plebs, had been told by astrologers that he would find his future wife in the province. He met with Julius Bassianus, the pagan high priest and aristocrat, who introduced him to his brilliant 17-year-old daughter, Julia Domna, a prodigy who was well versed in philosophy—and a great beauty. The two wed the following year.

It did not take long for Julia Domna to acclimate to her new life. She was instrumental in guiding her husband through the perilous Year of the Five Emperors, which began with the murder of Commodus on New Year's Eve, 192, and saw four rival claimants to the throne: Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger, and Clodius Albinus. It took four years to eliminate his rivals, but by 197, Septimius Severus was the unquestioned emperor of all Rome—and Julia Domna, his de facto chief of staff.

Unlike her predecessors, Julia Domna accompanied her husband on his military campaigns, and was known as the Lady of the Camp. The troops adored her, and she dispensed sage military advice. She bore Septimius two sons, Geta and Caracalla, who became co-emperors upon Septimius' death in 211. After Geta was assassinated by his brother's agents, Julia Domna served

as Caracalla's advisor until his own assassination in 217. When his enemy Macrinus became emperor, Julia Domna was unable to bear not being in control. Rather than surrender to the new emperor, she committed suicide by starvation.

This is a genuine silver Roman coin featuring Julia Domna. Portrait and legend are on the obverse; reverses vary, but tend to feature various personifications or religious themes.



Ruler	Julia Domna
Year of issue	196-211 AD
Country	Rome
Denomination	Denarius
Material	Silver
Weight	2.5-3.5 g
Diameter	18-19.8 mm
Obverse	Portrait and legend
Reverse	Various personifications or military themes

Box data:

Box measures: 3.87" x 3.87" x 1.25"

Order code: JULIADOMNABOX

Image shows typical coin, not to scale