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The Political Power of Roman Empress Julia Domna, 193-217 C.E.

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Abstract

This research paper aims to analyze the extent of Roman Empress Julia Domna's political power and how her power would have influenced the Roman empire. Roman women faced many limitations in the political world, including being unable to be elected to public office; however, Roman imperial women were in the unique position of being able to take up space in the political world. Empress Julia Domna's role was symbolic and active, putting her nearly in equal standing to her husband, Emperor Septimius Severus, and her son, Emperor Caracalla. When considering the political limitations of Roman women, analyzing the extent of Empress Julia Domna's political power provides a solid foundation and background for continuing and adding to the discussion of how Roman women worked around their limitations to effect change within the Roman empire. Throughout this paper, I will analyze the works of Cassius Dio and the works of scholars such as Riccardo Bertolazzi to provide context and examples of how far Empress Julia Domna's power stretched. From accompanying her husband on his military campaigns to becoming a personal secretary for her son during his reign, Empress Julia Domna no doubt proves she was politically powerful in her own right.

Introduction

In 27 B.C.E, the Roman empire was created as Caesar Augustus, formerly Gaius Octavius, took on the title, *Princeps Civitatis*¹. Caesar Augustus was then able to act as emperor of the newly constructed Roman empire. Following his death in 14 C.E., "Augustus" became a title by which all Roman emperors became known. Similarly, "Augusta" became a title given to the emperors' wives, with Livia Augusta being the first to be named in such a way. As the wife of the first Roman emperor, Livia Augusta set the foundation for the duties of an emperor's wife.

¹ First Citizen.

She often held banquets for the noble women, which would have provided a way to exchange crucial information which Livia Augusta would use to inform Emperor Augustus of any rumors or seditious sentiments². The death of Maximus around 14 C.E. is evidence of Livia Augusta consulting with Augustus regarding rumors when Maximus' wife, Marcia, relayed to Livia Augusta a supposed false rumor that Maximus began about Augustus³. From Livia Augusta's example, future wives of Roman emperors learned to utilize their position to take action in the political world and push forward their husband's agenda, or even their own.

One imperial wife, in particular, was given the title that even Livia Augusta sought, but was not granted: *Mater Castrorum*⁴. Her name was Julia Domna, wife of Emperor Septimius Severus and mother of Emperors Caracalla and Geta. She was born in 170 C.E. in a Roman province in Syria to Julius Bassianus, a high priest of Elagabal, a Syrian deity of the sun. Rumors had begun that her horoscope read that she would marry a king, explaining Septimius Severus' interest in her⁵. Whether or not this rumor was true, it provides a look into how imperial women were used as propaganda in the Roman Empire to establish the emperor's rule. With Julia Domna having been destined to marry a king, it would make sense at that time to believe that Septimius Severus was the rightful Roman emperor to succeed Emperor Commodus in 193 C.E., due to his marriage to Julia Domna in 187 C.E. In fact, it is not a far stretch to claim that Julia Domna, a woman, helped to cement Severus' place on the throne.

As *Mater Castrorum*, Julia Domna sometimes accompanied Emperor Septimius Severus on his military campaigns. This is reminiscent of Agrippina the Elder, granddaughter of Emperor Augustus and mother of Emperor Caligula, who would accompany her husband, Germanicus, on

² Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131.

³ Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals: The Reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero*, trans. John Yardley, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

⁴ Mother of the Camps - in reference to the Roman army

⁵ Ulrich W. Hiesinger, "Julia Domna: Two Portraits in Bronze," *American Journal of Archaeology* 73, no. 1 (January 1, 1969): 40, <https://doi.org/10.2307/503372>.

most if not all of his military campaigns. According to Tacitus, a Roman historian, “[Agrippina] already had greater influence with the armies than legates and generals did . . .”⁶ Tacitus even credits Agrippina the Elder with stopping a mutiny in 14 C.E. within one of the military camps, which was something Emperor Tiberius nor Germanicus were able to do at the time. In contrast, there is not much evidence of a similar incident involving Julia Domna. While it may be easy to deduce that Julia Domna did not have that much political power, especially when compared to someone like Agrippina the Elder, I argue instead that Julia Domna did have an extensive amount of political power and influence, even if it was displayed differently from Agrippina.

In 211 C.E. Emperors Caracalla and Geta succeeded their father, Septimius Severus. Later that year, Emperor Caracalla murdered his brother, Geta, to be the Roman Empire's sole ruler⁷. During Emperor Caracalla's reign, Julia Domna was put in charge of her son's correspondence, which not only included letters to the Emperor but also petitions as well⁸. While the most important or urgent were given directly to Emperor Caracalla, Julia Domna still had power over which letters or petitions should be sent over to her son. This suggests that more often than not, Emperor Caracalla may have listened to his mother's advice on matters concerning petitions as well as other topics brought up in the letters. Julia Domna thus exercised her political power through her everyday duties as she aided her son as his secretary and right hand. This, however, was not the only way she demonstrated the range of her political influence. Her imagery of motherhood, her duties as an empress, and her deification also revealed the large extent of Julia Domna's political power.

⁶ Tacitus, *The Annals*, 43.

⁷ Cassius Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio (Illustrated) (Delphi Ancient Classics Book 36)*, trans. Herbert B. Foster (Delphi Classics, 2014): 1232, Kindle edition.

⁸ Riccardo Bertolazzi, “THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA BY CASSIUS DIO:,” *Repository of the Academy's Library*, December 31, 2014: 422, <https://doi.org/10.1556/068.2015.55.1-4.28>.

Historiography

Throughout this paper, I will be referring to various secondary and primary sources. One of the main primary sources used in this paper will be Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. His book, *Roman History*, covers the events beginning from the founding of Rome (around 753 B.C.E.) to the first half of Emperor Severus Alexander's reign (222-229 C.E.)⁹. It is important to note, however, that *Roman History* may not provide a completely accurate portrayal of historical figures, including Julia Domna, due to Dio's personal biases against Julia Domna and her sons, which he may have integrated into his works. In spite of this, Dio's *Roman History* provides a detailed historical background for the beginning of the Severan dynasty as well as the cultural context that I will use in this paper. Additionally, Dio's work also reveals how Julia Domna may have been perceived by an educated historian and political figure in what was a patriarchal society. The two other primary sources I will be using in this paper are Cornelius Tacitus' *The Annals* and a letter from Flavius Philostratus, a Greek philosopher, to Julia Domna. *The Annals* cover the reigns of the first five Roman emperors, which provides me with a background of how the first imperial women of Rome exerted their own political influence, and how it compares and contrasts with Julia Domna. The letter from Philostratus to Julia Domna also provides insight into how well-educated Empress Julia Domna was and her influence over literary circles.

Of the secondary sources, the main one I will be using is Charmaine Gorrie's "Julia Domna's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation." This journal article focuses on monuments built or restored either under the patronage of the Severan family or Julia Domna alone. Gorrie also argues how the depictions of Julia Domna on the monuments and coinage reveal what values Julia Domna embodied, including modesty, chastity, and motherhood. The article also discusses the many comparisons

⁹ Emperor Severus Alexander reigned from 222 C.E. to 235 C.E. He was assassinated in 235 C.E.

made between Julia Domna and various Roman goddesses, which was often common when depicting imagery of the Roman imperial family. Gorrie's arguments are echoed by other scholars in their works, such as Ulrich W. Hiesinger and James H. Oliver, as they analyze different evidence indicating the magnitude of Julia Domna's general influence. In this paper, I will use Gorrie's article and other secondary sources to better understand how far Julia Domna's political power reached. However, the number of sources I was able to access is relatively thin and spans from 1940 to 2014. The lack of research on Julia Domna's influence during her husband and son's reign marks a substantial gap in the history of the Severan dynasty, which I aim to fill with my research. Bringing attention to Empress Julia Domna can also help us better understand the influence of other Roman women who have been looked over in favor of men.

Mother of an Empire

In the wake of the civil war in 193 C.E., which became known as the Year of the Five Emperors, Emperor Septimius Severus sought to re-establish Augustan values, focusing on the family, in order to reassure the Roman people that his dynasty would bring about stability and renewal in the Roman Empire. The Year of the Five Emperors was caused by the assassination of Emperor Commodus in 192 C.E. which led to five men declaring themselves emperor. Pertinax succeeded Commodus but was later assassinated by the Praetorian Guard 87 days after being proclaimed the Roman emperor. Following his assassination, Didius Julianus bought the title of emperor from the Praetorian Guard but was himself then overthrown and executed by Septimius Severus after 66 days. Following Julianus' death, a short civil war followed between Septimius Severus, Pescennius Niger, and Clodius Albinus, all of whom wanted to be the next Roman emperor. Septimius Severus later formed an alliance with Clodius Albinus by naming him

co-emperor alongside him. This allowed Severus to focus on the war against Niger which resulted in Severus' victory. Septimius Severus then got rid of Albinus in 197 C.E. after reducing his importance as co-emperor¹⁰.

As emperor, Septimius Severus demonstrated his rule in many ways to prove he was the rightful successor to be the Roman emperor. One of these ways involved promoting family life to reflect the return of Augustan values, thus gaining favor among the Roman people who wanted those same values to return to the Roman empire. When it came to promoting family life in the Roman empire, Julia Domna became a symbol for Roman wives and mothers. She was active in ceremonies alongside the Vestal Virgins in prayers to Juno Regina and in ritual banquets for Juno and Diana¹¹. Juno was the Roman goddess of marriage and queen of the gods while Diana was



*Image of Roman coin depicting Julia Domna on the one side (left) and Isis holding Horus on the reverse side (right)
Courtesy of © The Trustees of the British Museum*

the goddess of maidenhood and childbirth. For Julia Domna to publicly worship these two goddesses alongside the highly venerated priestesses, the Vestal Virgins, implied her intention to embody the values of the two goddesses.

Like Juno, Julia Domna was an empress of the Roman people and had a duty to

display a successful marriage to Septimius Severus in order to show unity in the imperial household. In Roman coinage, Julia Domna was often depicted on one side, with a goddess representing family, motherhood, and harmony on the other. One gold coin produced between 196-202 C.E. under Emperor Septimius Severus depicts Julia Domna with her hair in a large bun

¹⁰ Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1171-1205.

¹¹ Charmaine Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 53, no. 1 (2004): 63, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4436715>.

on one side, while the other depicts Isis, the Egyptian goddess of magic, healing, and fertility, holding her son, Horus.

Julia Domna's pictorial comparisons to goddesses symbolizing fertility, family, and motherhood are reflective of the various titles bestowed upon her throughout the reign of her husband and son, which strengthens her public image of being equal to a goddess. Titles such as *Mater Augusti*, *Mater Caesaris*, and *Mater Augustorum*¹², given to her by her husband, emphasized her role as a mother to two emperors — Caracalla and Geta. During the reign of her son, Emperor Caracalla, she was also given the titles *Mater Senatus* and *Mater Patriae*¹³ by the Senate of Rome, presenting her not only as a mother of emperors but as a mother to the Roman Empire. The bestowal of these titles on Julia Domna signified how well respected she was during her time as a wife and mother to emperors. Her financial assistance in restoring buildings — such as the Aedes Vestae, the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris, and a building dedicated to married upper-class women — also increased her reputation among the Romans, possibly establishing the popularity of the Severan family.

Her choice to restore a building dedicated to the *matronae*, or married upper-class women, mirrored Livia Augusta's action of hosting celebratory banquets for the noble women. Livia Augusta's banquets presented a perfect opportunity for backdoor dealing among the wives of powerful political figures, especially for Livia to assert her husband's authority as the emperor of the newly created Roman Empire. With the restoration of the *matronae* building, Julia Domna does the same by providing a space for upper-class women to meet for religious purposes and festivals. As the Roman Empress and wife of the *pontifex maximus*¹⁴, Julia Domna would be

¹² Gorrie, *Julia Domna's Building Patronage*, 64.

¹³ Bertolazzi, *THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA*, 416.

¹⁴ Chief high priest. The title was held by the Roman emperors since Augustus until Emperor Gratian in 375 C.E.

“acting as patroness of this assembly . . .”¹⁵ and would have had the same opportunity as Livia Augusta to assert Septimius Severus’ authority and to observe the sentiments of the noble class towards her husband. According to Riccardo Bertolazzi, “it is highly probable that the figure of Livia was a source of inspiration for Domna,”¹⁶ suggesting that Julia Domna used similar tactics as Livia Augusta to exert her influence and aid her husband and sons in keeping their title as emperor. Discussions with upper-class women and the utilization of her symbolic imagery to her advantage showed how her political influence extended to the noble class and the everyday people of Rome.

Second-in-Command

With Septimius Severus’ death in 211 C.E., both Caracalla and Geta succeeded their father as co-emperors. Later that year, Caracalla assassinated his brother, Geta, by tricking his mother, Julia Domna, into persuading Geta to meet with him at her house¹⁷. There Geta died in his mother’s lap after being stabbed by Caracalla’s guards. Of Julia Domna’s reaction of the death of her son by her other son, Cassius Dio wrote:

“She might neither mourn nor weep for her son . . . on the contrary, she was compelled to rejoice and laugh as though enjoying some great piece of luck. All her words, gestures, and changes of color were watched with the utmost narrowness. She alone, Augusta, wife of the emperor, mother of emperors, was not permitted to shed tears in private over so great a calamity.”¹⁸

This passage from Dio indicates the delicate situation in which Julia Domna found herself in as she silently mourned for one of her sons. Had she displayed any sign of grief, it would have been

¹⁵ Gorrie, *Julia Domna’s Building Patronage*, 71–72.

¹⁶ Bertolazzi, *THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA*, 431.

¹⁷ Cassius Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1232.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1232.

enough for the Roman people to overthrow Caracalla from power or even for another civil war to begin between supporters of Caracalla and those who opposed him. In order to keep her remaining son alive and in power, Julia Domna could only show joy at his becoming emperor. Once again, as she did for her husband, Julia Domna helped to secure another emperor's place on the throne.

During the reign of Emperor Caracalla, Julia Domna's "power and influence grew greater than ever."¹⁹ One of the most significant ways her power grew was through her appointment by her son as supervisor of his correspondence. This allowed her access to all letters and petitions addressed to the emperor, with the exception of those deemed urgent²⁰. As a supervisor, Julia Domna had the power to bring the Emperor's attention to any petitions or letters along with her advice on how to address these matters. In fact, Bertolazzi discusses in his article an inscription that displays Julia Domna's response to a petition from the city of Ephesus, a Roman province. The inscription reveals how Julia Domna first stated her own position regarding the petition, agreeing that the people of Ephesus should receive what they asked for, then reports the emperor's favorable decision regarding their petition²¹. Bertolazzi claims that due to the positioning of her name before the emperor's in the letter, it is likely that the inhabitants of Ephesus sent their petition directly to her, who then deemed the matter deserving of Caracalla's attention. Considering Julia Domna's appointment as supervisor of her son's correspondence, it would not have been surprising for the Roman people to send letters and petitions directly to Empress Julia Domna seeing as she had the power to decide which matters were to be brought to her son's attention.

¹⁹ Hiesinger, *Two Portraits in Bronze*, 40.

²⁰ Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1244.

²¹ Bertolazzi, *THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA*, 422.

When Caracalla went abroad on military campaigns, he had all correspondence be directed to his mother, so he would not be distracted while at war²². The implications of this reveal Julia Domna's political power under the reign of her son. According to Cassius Dio, Emperor Caracalla would even sign his letters to the Senate to include his mother's name alongside his own and his armies, stating that she was safe. Dio also noted that Julia Domna would often meet with prominent men in the same manner as Emperor Caracalla²³. All of this suggests that Empress Julia Domna was not just an empress in name, but in action as well. There is no doubt that the Empress was a co-ruler of the Roman Empire alongside her son. After her son's death in 217 C.E., she even tried to become the sole ruler of the Roman Empire and started seeking out supporters before realizing her efforts would not produce the results she intended²⁴.

While he was still alive, Emperor Caracalla was known for spending money and passing policies deemed irresponsible by the Senate. Empress Julia Domna tried to advise her son on gaining favor within the Senate and on financial matters, but more often than not, he would ignore her advice. Caracalla tried to arrogantly reassure his mother that for as long as Roman Empire expanded, there would be no need to worry about money²⁵. Hence, it is no surprise that the Senate viewed Julia Domna as the "only element of supervision and moderation" regarding her son's "anti-senatorial policies."²⁶ Since the Roman Empire was patriarchal, no Roman man would acknowledge a woman as the primary ruler of the empire, nor would they have been able to imagine such a thing. However, between Emperor Caracalla and Empress Julia Domna, most looked towards Julia Domna to influence Caracalla's decisions in their favor. This in itself shows how Julia Domna's political power was nearly equal to that of an emperor.

²² Bertolazzi, THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA, 422.

²³ Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1244.

²⁴ Ibid, 1264.

²⁵ Ibid, 1236.

²⁶ Bertolazzi, THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA, 417.

Julia Domna, Goddess

In the Roman Empire, it was common for the emperor to deify past emperors or even empresses. Emperor Augustus was the first emperor to be deified after his death by Emperor Tiberius²⁷. Using this power, Emperor Elagabalus, Julia Domna's nephew, deified his aunt, Empress Julia Domna, after her death in 217 C.E.²⁸. Becoming deified established Julia Domna's legacy as one of the most politically powerful empresses in the history of the Roman Empire. However, Julia Domna's legacy as one of the most politically influential empresses was already established in Greece when she was given divine honors while she was still alive. In fact, these divine honors granted to her in Greece happened during the early years of her husband's reign²⁹, foreshadowing the powerful figure she would grow to become throughout the reigns of her husband and her sons.

The inscription on a stele of Pentelic marble in Athens declared divine honors were to be granted to Julia Domna and called for sacrifices in her honor, as well as the construction of a cult statue in her image to be placed in the Parthenon. James H. Oliver points out, however, when referring to the sacrifices, the inscription states, the priestesses were to “make their inaugural offerings [. . .] to Athena Polias.”³⁰ Since the inscription states that sacrifices were to be made in Julia Domna's honor, it is interesting that instead of writing the name “Julia Domna,” the Athenians instead wrote “Athena Polias,” who was at the time seen as a patron goddess of the city of Athens. The inscription later details the planning of a festival for Julia Domna, using Julia Domna's name instead of Athena Polias’: “. . . when these things are done our piety toward Julia

²⁷ Osgood, *Turia*, 132.

²⁸ Hiesinger, *Two Portraits in Bronze*, 40.

²⁹ Oliver, *JULIA DOMNA AS ATHENA POLIAS*, 526.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 524.

Athena Polias = Athena, Protectress of the City

Domna the savior of Athens may be apparent.”³¹ The use of both names would mean that the inscription was declaring Julia Domna to be worshipped in addition to Athena Polias, however, Oliver argues that the Athenians actually meant for Julia Domna to be seen *as* Athena Polias due to the interchangeability of Julia Domna’s name with the name “Athena Polias.” The inscription did not proclaim that Athena Polias and Julia Domna were to be worshipped separately, but instead declared Julia Domna to be worshipped as one aspect or identity of Athena Polias,³² as if Julia Domna herself was the goddess in mortal form.

Athena was a powerful figure to be identified with. In Greek mythology, she was the



*Image of a coin depicting the bust Julia Domna on one side (left) and Athena Promachos - Athena who fights on the front line - on the other (right)
Courtesy of © President and Fellows of Harvard College*

goddess of wisdom and battle strategy and was often depicted with armor, a spear, and the fearsome shield Aegis, sometimes described to have the head of Medusa on top. Being identified with Athena Polias reveals that whatever Julia Domna did for Athens was of great importance, leading her to be known as the protector of the city of Athens. One of the

scholars who translated the inscription, known to Oliver as A. von Premerstein, suggested that Julia Domna most likely curbed Septimius Severus’ anger at the Athenians for their poor treatment of him before he became emperor, saving the Athenians from what would be the increased presence of the Roman military leading to many deaths in Athens³³. As evidenced by the previous sections in this paper, it is not difficult to envision Julia Domna doing such a thing. Furthermore, it is extremely likely Empress Julia Domna was deified in other cities within the

³¹ Oliver, JULIA DOMNA AS ATHENA POLIAS, 524.

³² Ibid, 525.

³³ Ibid, 526.

confines of the Roman Empire, as was commonly done with other former Roman imperial women, only their decrees may have been lost over time. Her deification in Athens, however — and perhaps in other cities as well — further discloses how immense her political influence was in the Roman Empire.

Conclusion

In 217 C.E., Julia Domna died from voluntary starvation, in response to the death of her remaining son, and breast cancer³⁴. Her sister, Julia Maesa, herself a grandmother of two emperors (Emperors Elagabalus and Severus Alexander), had her sister's bones along with those of her sons buried in the Mausoleum of Hadrian, now known today as Castel Sant'Angelo. While Julia Domna had secured her legacy as one of the most politically powerful empresses in Roman history, it would be negligent to not also mention her influence within literary circles and Roman culture. Julia Domna often engaged in the study of philosophy and was even the head of the literary circle, of which Philostratus, a Greek philosopher, was a member. In a letter to Julia Domna, Philostratus discussed the beliefs of the Sophists and countered their critics³⁵, which suggests that the Roman Empress was highly educated in the study of philosophy. This education in philosophy would have been useful in navigating the political world of Rome, and being the head of the literary circle would also have provided her the chance to increase her network of supporters.

As a Syrian, Julia Domna would have brought some of her culture to Rome. Hiesinger notes two different bronze busts of Julia Domna with different hairstyles. On one bronze bust, it shows a signature hairstyle using a wig that was common among the women in Syria, which

³⁴ Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1265.

³⁵ Flavius Philostratus, "To Julia Augusta," n.d.

soon became popular in Rome when Julia Domna continued to style her hair in this way³⁶. This was significant because Julia Domna not only managed to continue practicing some aspects of her culture but also turned it into a political statement to display her influence as empress. Dio records an instance in which Julia Domna used her culture as a political tool. In 202 C.E., Julia Domna organized a wedding banquet for her son, Caracalla, and his new wife, Plautilla, daughter of Plautianus, Julia Domna's greatest political rival. Since Plautianus held Septimius Severus' favor, there was little she could have done, until Caracalla became emperor, to dispose of Plautianus, but she used every opportunity to flaunt her political power. For the wedding banquet in 202 C.E., Julia Domna added Syrian elements to the banquet which Dio described as "barbarian fashion"³⁷ since the origins came from outside of Rome. According to Bertolazzi, the wedding banquet decorated in both Roman and Syrian fashion was a statement from Empress Julia Domna to Plautianus to show she held more power³⁸. The integration of Syrian cultural aspects into Roman culture continued under the reigns of her nephews, Emperors Elagabalus and Severus Alexander.

The importance of Julia Domna in Roman history needs to be researched further. Revision of history is critical in making sure *all* voices are heard. Roman emperors have long been studied by historians and many of their accomplishments and failures are well-known. However, while the research of Roman history has expanded to include women, there are still spaces to be filled in terms of recognizing women's achievements. Imperial women especially had the unique position of being in close proximity to the emperor, which allowed them to influence changes within the Roman Empire and in the lines of succession. Empress Julia Domna, above all, is a prime example of how imperial women used their position to acquire and

³⁶ Hiesinger, *Two Portraits in Bronze*, 41-42.

³⁷ Dio, *Delphi Complete Works of Cassius Dio*, 1216.

³⁸ Bertolazzi, *THE DEPICTION OF LIVIA AND JULIA DOMNA*, 430.

exert political power. As a Roman empress, she worked around her limitations of being a woman in a patriarchal society to gain political power. She embraced the values of harmony, purity, and modesty which were assigned to Roman women as seen by her public depictions to secure support from the people of Rome. Julia Domna also advised Emperor Caracalla on political matters as she supervised petitions and letters addressed to him, which gave her power to decide which matters to bring to Caracalla's attention. The deifications during her life and after her death cemented how strong her political influence was in the Roman empire and even beyond, as observed by the inscription in Athens. Julia Domna proved that being Empress may have been a title, but that title comes with its own duties and responsibilities as she helped Emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla lead the Roman empire.

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