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DOMITIAN'S DACIAN WAR
DOMİTİAN'IN DAÇYA SAVAŞI

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ABSTRACT

Domitian, who was one of the most vilified Roman emperors, had suffered *damnatio memoriae* by the senate after his assassination in 96. Senator historians Tacitus and Cassius Dio ignored and criticized many of Domitian's accomplishments, including the Dacian campaign. Despite initial setbacks in 86 and 87, Domitian managed to push the invading Dacians into the Dacian territory and even approached to the Dacian capital in 88. However, the Saturninus revolt and instability in the Chatti and Pannonia in 89 prevented Domitian from concluding the campaign. The peace treaty stopped the Dacian incursions and made Dacia a dependent state. It is consistent with Domitian's non-expansionist imperial policy. This peace treaty stabilized a hostile area and turned Dacia a client kingdom. After dealing with various threats, he strengthened the auxiliary forces in Dacia, stabilizing the Dacian frontier. Domitian's these new endeavors opened the way of the area's total subjugation by Trajan in 106.

Keywords: Domitian, Roman Empire, Dacia, Decebalus, security

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ÖZ

Domitian 96 yılında düzenlenen suikast sonucunda hakkında senato tarafından ‘hatırası lanetlenen’ ve hakkında en çok karalama yapılan Roma imparatorlarından birisidir. Senatör tarihçilerden olan Tacitus ve Cassius Dio, Domitian’ın bir çok başarısını görmezden gelmiş ve eleştirmiştir. Domitian’ın Daçya seferi bunlardan birisidir. 86 ve 87 yıllarındaki askeri başarısızlıklara karşın, Domitian savaşı Daçya topraklarına taşımış ve Daçya başkentine giden yolu açmıştır. Fakat 89 yılındaki Saturninus isyanı, Çatti ve Panonia’daki huzursuzluklar seferi sonuçlandırmasına engel olmuştur. Buna rağmen yapılan barış anlaşması Daçya akınlarını sona erdirmiş ve Daçya’yı bağımlı devlet haline getirmiştir. Bu anlaşma Domitian’ın genel olarak takip ettiği genişlememeci politik anlayışa da uygundur. Birçok tehditle uğraştıktan sonra, Domitian Daçya’daki birlikleri güçlendirmiş ve Daçya sınırını istikrarlı hale getirmiştir. Domitian’ın bu çabaları 106 yılında Trajan’ın bölgeyi tamamen kontrol altına alması yolunda önemli destek sağlamıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Domitian, Roma İmparatorluğu, Daçya, Decebalus, güvenlik.

Introduction

Titus Flavius Domitian was born on 24 September 51 A.D. in Rome. In the year of the four emperor 69 A.D. during the war with Vitellius in Rome he represented his father Vespasian’s bid to the throne. He escaped from Vitellius’ assassins by concealing himself as a priest of Isis. After the success over Vitellius, he acted on his father’s behalf until Vespasian came to Rome from eastern provinces (Suet. Dom. I.).² Despite his contribution to his father’s cause, during the reigns of his father Vespasian and Titus, he held mainly ceremonial posts. When his brother Titus died, he became Roman emperor on 14 September 81

2- According to Suetonius, during this time Domitian demonstrated the signs of his future tyrannical behaviors such as forcing Aelius Lamia to divorce his wife Domitia Longina so that Domitian could marry with her and showing so much discretion in appointing men to the posts that Vespasian expressed that he was surprised to see that Domitian did not appoint the emperor’s successor (Suet. Dom. I.). Convincing a husband to divorce his wife was not uncommon practice in the upper layer of the Roman society. Augustus had forced Claudius Nero to divorce Livia. As *Caesar*, Domitian practiced a common tradition in order to marry Domitia Longina, who was the daughter of the prominent general Corbulo. Corbulo was a famous victim of the disgraced emperor Nero. This marriage provided opportunity for the Flavian family to distance itself from Nero’s regime. To respond Suetonius’ claims concerning the appointments, it was Vespasian, who delegated his imperial authority to Domitian while he was not in Rome. Vespasian’s witty comment on Domitian’s active involvement in the appointments, thus, should be attributed to his humorous character.

A.D. His rule is mainly depicted by the antagonism between princeps and senate. His rule ended when he was assassinated on 18 September 96 A.D. After his assassination, the senate passed the decree of *damnatio memoriae* (condemnation of memory) which involved the erasure of his name and abolishment of his memory (Varner 2004: 111).

During Domitian's rule, the northern frontier of the Roman Empire reached to Scotland; the southern frontier laid along the Sahara Desert in the North Africa; the eastern frontiers faced the Parthian Empire. Although the Rhine river delimited the Roman *limes*³ and Germania, the frontiers in this region were dynamic. The main Roman expeditions during Domitian's principate took place in Chatti on the right side of the Rhine in 83 A.D., in Dacia in 85 A.D. to 89 A.D., and on the Danube in 90 A.D. (Lutwak 2016: 58). The map below demonstrates the Roman borders during Domitian's rule.



Map 1. "Europe 88 AD"⁴

The status of the senate, which had been depreciating after the initiation of the principate in 27 A.D., further marginalized during Domitian's rule. Domitian was less subtle than his predecessors in acknowledging the loss of the status of the senate (Jones 1993: 22). The crisis such as social troubles in the Eastern

- 3- The term *limes* refers to "a system of military roads constructed throughout the region, to allow movement of army units in newly invaded land, not a single fortified line meant to prevent foreigners from entering a peaceful area" (Isaac 1988: 126). This definition captures the dynamic feature of the defense of the Roman Empire.
- 4- <https://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/880829/>. (Date of accession: 2020.06.18).

provinces, tension between the rich and the poor, the opposition to Roman rule in the East emanated partially from Vespasian's anti-Hellenic feelings, over-production of wine required Domitian to play a strong man role. Domitian's lack of tactfulness prevented him from maintaining an illusory that the senate has equal responsibility in ruling the empire (Pleket 1961: 299–300).

The principle historical sources for Domitian's life are characterized by strong senatorial bias. Tacitus and Cassius Dio both belonged to senatorial class. Although Suetonius was not a member of senatorial class, he was associated with its leading members. Domitian's failure in pleasing the senate arose the hostility in their writings (Waters 1964: 50). Among these writers, Cassius Dio describes Domitian as: *“not only bold and quick to anger but also treacherous and secretive; and so, deriving from these characteristics impulsiveness on the one hand and craftiness on the other, he would often attack people with sudden violence of a thunderbolt and again would often injure them as the result of careful deliberation”* (LXVII.1.1.). Tacitus also depicts Domitian as a violent and secretive man (Ag. 42.). Suetonius even puts forward a ridiculous accusation against Domitian that in seclusion Domitian catches flies and stabs them (Dom. III.). The Christian writer Orosius continues hostile tradition concerning Domitian. He notes that Domitian arrogantly wanted to be addressed as Lord and God. According to Orosius, Domitian issued the bloodiest persecutions against the Christians and killed many noble senators due to his envy and greed (7.10.).⁵ These statements demonstrate their hostile attitude to Domitian.

This article's scope does not respond the validity of their claims on Domitian's works or character, but it tries to cover his strategy on the Dacian war. Although these authors portray the Dacian war as a failure for Domitian (Cass. Dio. LXVII.7.4.; Suet. Dom.VI), the fact is much more complex. Domitian's Dacian war is not a total military success because the revolt instigated by Saturninus, who was the governor of Upper Germania prevented Domitian from completing his campaign in Dacia (Southern 1997: 101). The tribes' aggression towards the Roman forces on the Danube also complicated Domitian's Dacian campaign. While encountering military rebellion in the empire and facing oth-

5- Jones suggests that Domitian tried to acquire the senate's support, but his attempts were rebuked. He mostly selected his consuls from the opposition to reach even to the radical segments of the opposition (1973: 83). His assumption of perpetual censorship might have offended the senate because it gives Domitian the power to adlect people to the senate, but it was not uncommon among emperors. Vespasian and Titus had done it before (Jones 1993: 162).

er threats from other tribes, Domitian subtly turned this politically disadvantageous position into financially and politically suitable treaty for the Roman empire. This treaty allowed him to strengthen the Danube frontier. In his final years, Domitian reinforced Moesia Superior located in Dacian front with a strong auxiliary force (Matei-Popescu 2006-2007: 31). This force helped to stabilize and secure the Dacian frontier.

Domitian was assassinated on 18 September 96 A.D.⁶ Almost a year later his successor Nerva was pressured by a group from the army to adopt Trajan in 97 A.D., who was one of Domitian's trusted generals (Berriman-Todd et al. 2001: 312).⁷ Trajan succeeded in subduing Dacian region and annexing it by 106 A.D. The total subjugation by of Dacia by Trajan was thanks to the strengthened frontier and strong finance left by Domitian (Wheeler 2011: 213; Syme 1930: 56).

1. Domitian's Expeditions in A General Perspective

Before assessing Domitian's success in Dacian war, the general characterization of Domitian's imperial policy must be given. The most important feature was that instead of imperial expansion Domitian focused on protecting existing borders of the Roman Empire. The famous historian Anthony Birley summarized Domitian's general policy as rejecting expansionism and considering it as anachronistic and contrary to the empire's interest⁸ (Jones, 1993: 127).

The deposition of Agricola in Britain was one of the indicators of this policy. Gnaeus Julius Agricola was a governor of Britain between 77 A.D.-83 A.D. He was appointed by Vespasian, who wanted to conquer the remaining British Isles. In line with this aggressive policy, Agricola conducted three main military expeditions during Vespasian's rule, conquering Wales and the northern England. Vespasian died in 79 A.D. and his son Titus came to power. Agricola's fourth and fifth campaigns under the new campaigns focused on consolidation of the conquered territory rather than new conquests. Agricola's final campaign took place in 83 A.D. which brought victory against Caledonians at the Battle of Mons Graupius.⁹ However, after this victory, Agricola was recalled to Rome

6- Domitian's steward Stephanus carried out the assassination with the help of Domitian's chamberlain Parthenius and other participants. Although Domitian put up a good fight and managed to kill Stephanus, he was overpowered by other assassins (Southern 1997: 118).

7- Berriman-Todd et al. argue that the palace revolution in 97 A.D. was a planned coup executed by Domitian's generals to avenge Domitian's death and make Trajan emperor (2001: 326-327).

8- This statement is quoted by Jones from Birley

9- The name Caledonians refers to confederation of tribes in the Northern Scotland (Hanson 2004: 155).

(Shotter 2004: 29-34). Tacitus comments that: “*Britain subdued and immediately let go*” (Hist. I.II.). He attributes Domitian’s this decision of recalling Agricola to the emperor’s jealousy emanated from Agricola’s successes in Britain. “*Harassed with these anxieties, and the wholly absorbed in his secret - a symptom that murderous schemes were afoot - he decided that it was best for the present to put his hatred in cold storage until the first burst of popularity and the applause of the army should die down; for Agricola was still master of Britain*” (Tac. Ag. 30). Thus, in these publications, Tacitus presented Domitian as whimsical and capricious ruler, whose foreign policy decisions were affected by his personal feelings such as envy and jealousy.

On the other hand, another interpretation offered by the Greek historian Appian, who lived in 2nd century, is less biased: “*Crossing the Northern ocean to Britain, which is an island greater than a large continent, they have taken possession of the better and larger part, not caring for the remainder. Indeed the part they do hold is not very profitable to them*” (Preface. 5). This statement reflects the fact that the cost of further expansion in Britain do not offset the benefits. The Roman presence in Britain led the tribes to forget their differences and combine their forces against Roman enemy (Syme 1936: 156). Even if the further expansion had brought glory, it would have been economically and strategically unsound. The focus was given to preserve the Roman gains in Britain in a less costly way rather than completely abandoning Britain as Tacitus suggested. In 87 A.D. the territories gained by Agricola’s conquest were abandoned. In the south of Scotland, new fortresses were built. Attention was diverted to upgrading the infrastructure around these fortresses to supply the army. Furthermore, industrial sites were founded, and manufacturing was encouraged in the towns (Shotter 2004: 37). These measures indicate the endeavors in the consolidation of territories already conquered in Britain instead of further conquest. It should also be remembered that the subsequent Roman emperors continued Domitian’s policy. Hadrian went as far as to build the namesake wall to stop Roman expansion and demarcate Roman borders in Britain more clearly.¹⁰

Although Domitian showed his reticence for waging costly military campaigns, he was vigorous in dealing with security threats against the Roman frontier. He expelled the Chatti tribe in Upper Germania. Suetonius evaluates that the war “*against Chatti was uncalled for*” (Dom. VI.). Tacitus calls Domitian’s

10- The constant conflicts in Britannia convinced Hadrian to build a wall 80 miles long to separate barbarians and the Romans in Britannia (Fields-Spedaliere 2003: 11). The wall asserted a clear demarcation between the area conquered in Britannia and the further conquest was renounced (Stevens 1955: 388).

victory against the Chatti as “*the laughing-stock*” (Ag. 39.). These statements aimed at diminishing the value of the victory. Despite these judgements, Tacitus himself describes the Chatti as:

They elect magistrates and listen to the man elected; know their place in the ranks and recognize opportunities; reserve their attack; have a time for everything; entrench at night; distrust luck, but rely on courage; and- the rarest thing of all, which only Roman discipline has been permitted to attain- depend on the initiative of the general rather than on that of the soldier. Their whole strength lies in their infantry, who they load with iron tools and baggage, in addition to their arms: other Germans may be seen going to battle, but the Chatti go to war (Ger. 30.).

In this passage, Tacitus noted that Chatti was not just a Germanic tribe consisted of unskilled warriors, but an organized and disciplined armed force. Their level of discipline was equated even with the Romans. The settlements of the Chatti began with Hercynian forest, covering the territory of Hessen-Nassau (Syme 1936: 132). The map below shows the territory of Chatti:



Map 2. The Chatti Tribe¹¹

11- The map has been taken from Luttwak (2016: 112).

As it can be seen on the map, the Chatti were the immediate neighbors of the Roman territories located on the left side of the Rhine. Frontinus reports that the Chatti were already in arms in 83 A.D. (Str. 1.I.8.). Therefore, the Chatti posed a clear and present danger to the Roman security. The state's security was at stake due to the presence of an organized and armed tribe just next to its territories. Being aware of this danger, Domitian led an expedition to the Chatti territory in 83 A.D. In order to prevent an ambush from the woods, he advanced the frontier along a stretch of 120 miles. This action changed the nature of the war by depriving the enemies of the hiding places (Frontin. Str..1.III.10.). This main logic of the annexed territory area was to set up "*a frontier on the crest of the Taunus Mountains, which dominate — could now protect—the fertile Wetterau*" (Luttwak 2016: 103). To check the Chatti in the future the strong measures were taken. A chain of patrols, which would check the annexed area was established; wooden watchtowers were erected; forts were set up; and a network of roads were built to connect these forts (Syme 1936: 164). Domitian succeeded his aim of advancing and securing the Roman frontier by pushing the Chatti from the Rhine frontier through creating a buffer zone which include a fertile Mainz area. Once this aim was accomplished, Domitian halted the advance of the Roman army (Evans 1974: 57). Luttwak evaluates this expedition as an engineering campaign left behind an organized frontier, revealing a careful and systematic planning (2016: 103).

This war also provided an opportunity to Domitian to know his troops and be known by them (Syme 1936: 162). This can hardly be evaluated as an ambition of pursuing a personal glory. As an emperor, Domitian's power rests on his legions. His personal participation into the campaign demonstrates the value that he attaches to the legions. It also should be remembered that Domitian had already been emperor for two years before the war against the Chatti started. If Domitian had had an ambition to seek personal glory, he would have started a haste attack against a much weaker enemy immediately after he became the emperor in 81 A.D. Concerning the Chatti case, he responded the armed preparation of a strong tribe which threatened the security of the Roman territories. With careful planning and execution, the Roman frontier was expanded to respond the future threats of the Chatti. That was the war, which was ridiculed by Tacitus.

These two examples offer insight about Domitian's foreign policy. Personal glory or imperial expansion were not Domitian's primary concerns in pur-

suing the Roman Empire's foreign policy. Instead, the security of the existing borders was the top priority. In Britain, the costly expedition was abandoned by withdrawing the frontier to the south, so that it could be defended in a less costly and easier manner. In Germania, when the Chatti endangered the security of the Roman territories, Domitian responded by expanding the frontier to deprive enemy of the opportunity of ambush. When the security was provided, he did not advance further. This understanding in Domitian's management of the empire will help us to evaluate Domitian's successes or failures in Dacian wars.

2. Dacian Campaigns

Strabo describes the Dacian territory in the first century as:

As for the southern part of Germany beyond the Albis, the portion which is just contiguous to that river is occupied by the Suevi; then immediately adjoining this is the land of the Getae, which, though narrow at first, stretching as it does along the Ister on its southern side and on the opposite side along the mountain-side of the Hercynian Forest (for the land of the Getae also embraces a part of the mountains), afterwards broadens out towards the north as far as the Tyregetae (7.3.1).

Ancient Dacia corresponds to modern Romania as well as the adjacent territory. It was located inside and outside the Carpathian Mountains, which shielded the Transylvania plateau. The Dacians claimed the ownership of the Danube River, considering all the land around it to be theirs. This claim extends from the Pannonian fields to Vindobona, which encompassed modern Vienna (Grumeza 2009: 11).

Hence, the Roman expansion towards central Europe led to the confrontation with the Dacian tribes. They had posed threat to the Roman Empire's security long before Domitian's reign. If the serious military engagements between the Romans and the Dacians are examined, it is seen that the unification of the tribes under one strong man boosted the Dacian aggression towards the Romans. During Julius Caesar's era, Boerebistas set himself as the head of the tribes and turned them into a formidable military force. He subjugated many neighboring tribes and even threatened the Rome by setting up raids to the Thrace. His ouster by his own men prevented a Roman expedition (Strab. 7.3.11.). During Augustus' reign, the conflict renewed. Cassius Dio reports that the uprisings of the tribes neighboring Moesia required Caecina Severus to march against them

(LV.30.4.). During Tiberius' reign Moesia was laid waste by the Dacians and the Sarmatians (Suet. Tib. XLI).¹²

From Jordanes' writings, it can be deduced that the truce between the Dacians and the Romans had been established until Domitian's reign. According to Jordanes, the fear emanated from the emperor's avarice led to break of the truce. Under Dorpaneus command, the Dacians conquered and plundered the Roman cities and killed the Roman governor Oppius Sabinus¹³ (XIII.). Pat Southern, on the other hand, labels Jordanes' accusations against Domitian ridiculous. She speculates that the Dacians might have been felt threatening due to the Roman war against the Chatti. The Dacians might have thought they were the next Roman target so they made first strike (1997: 92).¹⁴ This event was the catalyst of Domitian's decision to set military expedition to Dacia. Even Suetonius, who accuses of Domitian of waging unnecessary war against the Chatti, justifies the Dacian expedition (Dom. VI.).

Cassius Dio reports that the Dacians made peace overtures, but Domitian refused. He appointed Cornelius Fuscus¹⁵ as the leader of the campaign (LX-VII.6.3-5.). His use of Fuscus as the leader of the campaign indicates that Domitian actually cared about the professional approach. As a person with a limited military experience and knowledge, he delegated the running of the campaign to an experienced general while supervising the operation in the nearest Roman province. Fuscus pushed back the Dacians from Moesia. After this success, Domitian returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph (Jones 1993: 139).

The exact date of Domitian's first campaign is source of contention. According to Jordanes, Domitian hastened its response to the Dacians (XIII.).¹⁶ Syme also takes Jordanes' this statement as a reference point and determines

12- The incursion must have happened between 26-37 A.D. because Suetonius mentions the Dacian incursion in the context of the general decline of security situation after Tiberius retreated to Capri (Suet. Tib. XLI.).

13- Oppius Sabinus was a former consul (Suet. Dom. VI.).

14- On the other hand, Dio reports that many tribes revolted in the empire because "contributions of money were forcibly extorted from them" (Cass. Dio. LXVII. 5.6.). The date of these revolts corresponds the date of start of the revolt in Dacia. It is possible that once united in one king, the Dacians might have felt they were strong enough to resist the empire's attempts of collecting tribute.

15- Cornelius Fuscus was prefect of the praetorian guard (Suet. Dom. VI.).

16- Jordanes claims that the Romans were defeated when they crossed the Danube (Jordanes. XII.), but he does not mention the initial success of the Roman army, which pushed the Dacians back. The events concerning Fuscus' demise occurred after Domitian returned to Rome. Jordanes, therefore, overlooks the time frame between the initial Roman victory and destruction of Fuscus' forces.

that in 85 A.D. “*summoning reinforcements from different provinces Domitian marched at one with the Guard and its prefect, Cornelius Fuscus, to the seat of war*” (1936: 168). On the other hand, Cassius Dio names Decebalus as the king during this expedition, who tried to dissuade Domitian from waging an expedition (LXVII.6.3.). Dio’s account is probably mistaken because according his statement, the first campaign must have started in 87 A.D. This is highly improbable considering that after the Dacians were pushed backed to the Danube, Domitian returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph in 85 A.D. or 86 A.D. (Southern 1997: 95; Jones 1993: 139). Besides, Jordanes (XIII.) mentioned that Dorpaneus caused the outbreak of the war by plundering the Roman territories and killing Oppius Sabinus. Domitian’s hastened respond heavily suggests that Dorpaneus was still in the command at the initial stage of the war. Hence, Brian Jones mentions the date of the First Dacian War as 84/85 A.D. (1993: 138). Taking into account two imperial salutations were celebrated in September and October in 85 A.D., it is highly probable that the Dacians were pushed back by October 85 A.D. (Southern 1997: 95). Suetonius accounts that as a result of victories against the Chatti and the Dacians, Domitian celebrated two triumphs in 86 A.D. (Dom.VI.). According to Jones (1993: 139), the second triumph celebrated in May 86 A.D. was the celebration of Domitian’s victory over the Dacians.

To solidify military gains of the first campaign, Domitian took administrative and military measures. He divided Moesia into two regions: Lower Moesia and Upper Moesia. The exact date of this measure is again open to debate. The division was put into effect either in 84/85 A.D. or 85/86 A.D. (Southern 1997: 94). Jones reports that Domitian ordered the relocation of these new legions to Moesia before returning to Rome in late 86 A.D. (1993: 141). Therefore, it is almost certain that the implementation of this measure completed by the end of 86 A.D. Moreover, Domitian enlisted Legio IV Flavia Felix from Dalmatia and called for the new legions (Evans 1974: 89).

Moesia province was thought to be a base where the Roman incursions into the Danube would be coordinated. Besides securing stability in the Roman province, Domitian decided to set punitive raids across the Danube. Therefore, even though Domitian returned to Rome, Fuscus remained (Syme 1936: 170).¹⁷

17- Suetonius reports that Domitian was an ardent reader of Tiberius’ letters, speeches, and memoirs (Dom. XX.). When Augustus sent Tiberius to the Rhine frontier after the disaster in the Teutoburg Forest whe-

This punitive expedition was a smart consideration because it would aimed at reminding the Roman might and depriving the war capabilities of the Dacian tribes.

The Dacians came under the rule of another strongman called Decebalus. Cassius Dio describes him as:

This man was shrewd in his understanding of warfare and shrewd also in the waging of war; he judged well when to attack and chose the right moment to retreat; he was an expert in ambushes and a master in pitched battles; and he knew not only how to follow up a victory well, but also how to manage well a defeat. Hence he showed himself a worthy antagonist of the Romans for a long time (LXVII.6.1.).

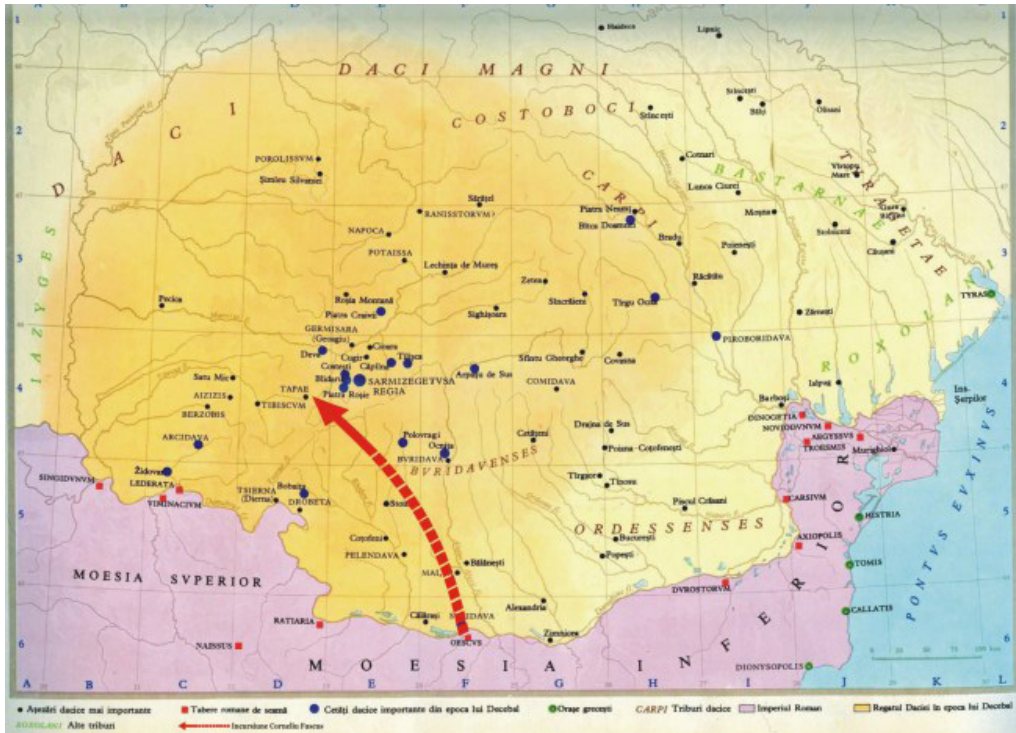
Thus, the Dacians were united under one king, whose military and political skills were acknowledged even by the Roman historian. Fuscus did not behave with the utmost care required for this new circumstance. After Domitian's return to Rome with his impetuous behavior, Fuscus decided to avenge the death of Sabinus and penetrated further into Dacian region. Decebalus used his cunningness in drawing Roman legions into a warfare area, which was more suitable to Dacian soldiers and ambushed them, killing Fuscus and annihilating Legio V Alaudae. (Schmitz 2019: 82). Syme contends that the forests¹⁸ and mountains of Dacia provided suitable environment for an ambush. When the Roman tried to retreat, they encountered further losses (1936: 171).¹⁹ The forestry and mountainous area led to scattering of the Roman forces, making them target for ambush. When the legions advanced 75 kilometers toward Transylvania, the roads became reduced to forest paths and the units were spread dangerously thin. The

re Varus' three legions were destroyed by Arminius in 9 A.D., Tiberius garrisoned the Rhine frontier, preventing the Germans from crossing the Rhine (Cass. Dio. LVI.24.1.). But he did not cross it (Cass. Dio. LVI.24.6). The next year with Germanicus he crossed the Rhine but did not engage in any war (Cass. Dio. LVI.25.1). Tiberius must have aimed at reminding the German tribes that the Roman army was present on the Rhine frontier and ready to cross whenever necessary. It is possible that Domitian might have tried to emulate Tiberius' tactic on the Rhine frontier to stabilize the Dacian frontier.

18- While narrating the history of Dacia, Grumeza describes the Dacian land as “a land of dense and impenetrable forests in which the Greek, Macedonian, and Roman armies were not stationed, and for which no precise military maps were available” (2009: 7). This description shows that the Dacians took advantage of their land's wooded areas to increase their defense in that forests of the Dacian territory made the armies' movements and camping difficult.

19- This defeat reminds the ambush in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 A.D. Overconfidently, Varus led three legions into the deeper Germania, crossing the Rhine. The German tribes led by charismatic Arminius ambushed and destroyed three legions in a hospitable environment of Germania (Cass. Dio. LVI.20.4-5.).

actual place of the ambush was around the gorges of the Bistra River, which is the right tributary of Timis River (Grumeza 2009: 159). William-Henderson also contends that Fuscus approached the Dacian capital Sarmizegetusa through crossing the Danube near Drobeta. He pushed northwards by the Teregova Keys down to the valley of Timis River, turning east to Tapae (1927: 162).²⁰



Map 3. “The Wars Won by Decebalus”²¹

Domitian was hardly responsible for this defeat. The Dacian expedition was a defensive military campaign, which aimed at pacifying the Dacian incursions into Moesia instead of annexing Dacian territory. The main reason why Fuscus remained in Moesia was to organize punitive raids, not a dashing expedition. The result of Fuscus’ rashness was heavy. Tacitus reports that: “*Numerous armies in Moesia, Dacia, Germany, and Pannonia lost by rashness or supineness of their generals; numerous officers with numerous battalions stormed and*

20- Tapae was located at the entrance to the Iron Gate Pass, which defends Sarmizegetusa (William-Henderson 1927: 251).

21- http://www.encyclopedia-dacica.ro/?operatie=subject&locatie=razboaiele_dacilor&fisier=Razboaiele-3-Decebal, (Date of accession: 2020.06.21).

captured” (Tac. Ag. 41). The incursion of Fuscus was risky and reckless, which led to the destruction of the Roman legion in the region. Still, the losses must also have been harsh on Decebalus’ side because there was no renewed Dacian attack on Moesia even after the destruction of Fuscus’ legion (Evans 1974: 91).

The demise of Fuscus must have occurred in the mid-summer 86 A.D. Domitian held the Capitoline Games from May to June. It was during this time Fuscus crossed the Danube and his legions were wiped out (Southern 1997: 98). Jones (1993) also concurs that Domitian was present in Rome during the Capitoline Games. While he was absent from the frontier, Fuscus decided to cross the Danube to invade it himself (141). Syme also writes that Fuscus’ crossing dated to the early summer of 86 A.D. (1936: 170). When Domitian heard the annihilation of Fuscus’ legion, he immediately arrived Moesia in August and remained there until the end of the year (Southern 1997: 98). Since there were no military expeditions immediately, Jones claims that Domitian divided Moesia into two during this period. Besides this administrative reform, Domitian appointed an experienced commanders Nigrinus and Vettonianus to Lower and Higher Moesia, respectively. He also moved three additional legions to the frontier: IV Flavia from Dalmatia to Upper Moesia; I Adiutrix from Germany to Brigetio or Sirmium; II Adiutrix from Britain to Sirmium, later Aquincum (1993: 141). Besides administrative and military measures, Domitian resorted to diplomatic moves. Domitian endeavored to encircle and isolate Decebalus to deprive him of the support of his neighbors. He established diplomatic contacts with the Sarmatae Iazyges. It is not certain, however, whether their active participation or neutrality was bought (Syme 1936: 172).²² This demonstrates that Domitian was aware of the severity of the situation. Instead of a haste attack which might have brought another disaster, he ensured the necessary preparations were made before the main military expedition.

After spending a year preparing revenge against Fuscus’ death. He appointed Tettius Julianus,²³ who was an experienced soldier served in Dalmatia

22- Cassius Dio, on the other hand, depicts Domitian’s stay in Moesia as “he remained in one of the cities of Moesia, indulging in riotous living, as way his wont” (LXVII.6.3.) Southern (1997: 98) speculates that this period told by Dio might correspond to the period of Domitian’s stay in Moesia after Fuscus’ demise in 86 A.D. If Dio describes this period, this evaluation itself demonstrates Dio’s biased approach towards Domitian’s endeavors.

23- Tettius Julianus was legate of VII Claudia and responsible for quelling the attack of the Roxolani in 69 (Southern 1997: 99). His preparation of war was also praised by Cassius Dio (LXVII.10.1.).

and had a reputation of a disciplinarian commander, to the governorship in Upper Moesia. The Roman forces attacked Viminacium and marched to the Iron Gates to reach Dacian capital Sarmizegetusa Regia. At Tapae the Dacian army was defeated. Further assaults were planned for the subsequent year (Evans 1974: 92). Vezinas, the high-ranking member of the Dacians, feigned his death in the field and managed to escape. Decebalus retreated his royal residence. He cut down the trees and put them armors, making them look like soldiers to frighten the Roman army (Cass. Dio. LXVII.10.2-3.). Decebalus' this measure demonstrates that the Dacians lost considerable men power at Tapae. He even resorted to this desperate measure to produce fake soldiers. Thus, the Roman campaign in 88 A.D. was remarkably effective and successful.²⁴

Domitian did not forget to honor of the memory of the fallen soldiers of Fuscus at Tapae. He erected a large statue of the altar on the scene of the disaster. The inscription contained the names and regiments of the soldiers killed with the prefect's name, title, and colony. Although Fuscus' own name is lost, 70 names of his men, praetorians, and soldiers are preserved. The archeologists suggest that the entire list must have contained 2800 and 3800 names (William-Henderson 1927: 163). This commemoration of the memories of the soldiers, who perished in 86 A.D., allowed Domitian to claim his victory publicly. Martial recites that: "*That guardian of a sacred life, of Mars in the civil gown, he to whom our great captain's camp was given in trust, here Fuscus lies. This, Fortune, may we confess: this stone fears no longer a foeman's threat. The Dacian has taken on his bowed neck our might yoke, and the victor ghost holds in fee the subject grove*" (VI. LXXVI.).

The Roman army even pushed backed Dacian forces to their own capital, waiting to capture the capital and Decebalus. As a result of this success, Domitian received two imperial salutations in 88 A.D.(Southern 1997: 100). Statius praises Domitian's achievements in Germany and Dacia: "*O Germanicus*²⁵, *in such guise as Rhine of late beheld thee reigning thy steed, and the astounded Dacian's arduous home*" (Theb. 1.5.). Yet, the final victory could not

24- Julianus thought it wouldn't be prudent to follow enemy in a hostile territory in winter, so he planned to continue in spring (Southern 1997: 100). Syme invokes another reason. It was difficult to approach through the Iron Gates so Julianus remained occupation in winter and prepared to continue the campaign through another route possibly through Sarmizegetusa (Syme 1936: 172).

25- After his victory against the Chatti, Domitian claimed the title of Germanicus in 83 A.D. (Jones 1993: 129).

be achieved because the events in Germania and Pannonia shifted Domitian's military focus.

3. Rebellions in Germany

In January 89 A.D., Antonius Saturninus, who was the governor of the Upper Germany, instigated a revolt against Domitian. In addition to his own forces, he apparently reached an agreement with the Germanic tribes, including the Chatti. The commander of Lower Germany Lappius Maximus moved quickly and suppressed the revolt. Trajan was called from Spain with the legion VII Gemina and Domitian continued his march from Rome with his guards (Jones 1993: 144).²⁶ This revolt was threatening to the heart of Domitian's regime. From Upper Germany, Saturninus had easy and rapid access to Rome. The precedent had already been set by Vitellius in 69 A.D.²⁷ (Southern 1997: 101). In case of the defection of Lower Germany to the conspirators, Domitian considered to retreat to the Danube with his Praetorian Guards (Syme 1936: 173). The threat of the full-scale civil war would have been a real possibility if the legions in Lower Germany had defected to the revolt. This demonstrates the reality of the threat posed by this rebellion.

After suppressing the revolt, rewards were distributed to loyalists. The legions I Minervia, VI Victrix, X Gemina, and XII Primigenia, and the auxiliary regiments and the Rhine fleet were awarded with the title *pia fidelis Domitiana* (Syme 1936: 174). The severe punishments were also imposed. The number of executions were unknown. Domitian sent their heads including the head of Saturninus to Rome to be exposed in the Forum. He even ordered the conspirators' names to be erased from public recordings (Cass. Dio. LXVII.11.3.).²⁸ Besides executions, Domitian limited the sum of money at the legions' headquarters and abolished double camps (Syme 1936: 174). XXI Rapax, one of the rebellious

26- Syme notes that Maximus won the victory against great odds, saving the Emperor and the Empire (1936: 173-174). Dio praises Maximus for burning Antonius' private papers which might implicate other conspirators (Cass. Dio. LXVII.11.2.). However, Maximus was later awarded with consulship (Syme 1936: 174). Therefore, his disloyalty to Domitian is questionable.

27- In the year of four emperors, the Roman armies swore their loyalties to Vitellius when Otho was emperor in Rome (Suet. Otho. VIII.). From Germany Vitellius invaded Rome became the third emperor in 69 A.D. before Vespasian.

28- Southern also acknowledges in this case Domitian might have ordered the executions without examining the evidence too closely but notes that the names of the executed senators were recorded meticulously. Sallustius Lucullus and Civica Cerialis were among the executed ones (1997: 104). Therefore, Dio's claims of wiping out names from the public records appears extravagant.

legions, was transferred to Pannonia (Syme 1928: 44). Domitian's punishments can be justified because Saturninus not only instigated a revolt, which might have caused a larger scale civil war, but collaborated with the enemies of the Roman Empire.

Another problem that must be dealt with was the Chatti tribe, which proved its troublesome character again with its collaboration with Saturninus. It should be remembered that according to Tacitus the Chatti tribe was more severe threat than a being simple barbaric tribe in Germany. There is evidence that the Chatti started to invade Roman territory. The watch towers, bath houses, and forts on the Rhine frontier were destroyed (Syme 1936: 175). Lappius Maximus, sent by Domitian, defeated the Chatti easily, securing German borders (Schmitz 2019: 85). The Chatti agreed to respect the Roman frontier (Syme 1936: 174). After quelling rebellions in Germany, however, the unrest on the Danube front called for Domitian's attention. This threat actually brought about the treaty between Domitian and Decebalus.

While Domitian was in Mainz, two Suebian German tribes Marcomanni and Quadi²⁹ came into conflict with the Roman Empire. Although the actual reasons are not known, the conflict resulted in the defeat of Domitian's forces (Schmitz 2019: 85).³⁰ This outcome prompted Domitian to seek peace with Decebalus even if the Roman forces had almost conquered the capital city of the Dacians as waging war in two fronts would not be strategically wise decision.

The peace was also desirable for the Dacians. The Roman army penetrated in the heartland of the Dacian territory. Furthermore, Marcomanni, Quadi, and other tribes would be threatening for the Dacians when they get stronger. Thus, Domitian and Decebalus entered into negotiations and concluded a treaty (Evans 1974: 98).³¹

4. Peace Treaty and Reactions

As a result of the developments discussed in the previous chapter, Domitian sought peace with the Dacian king Decebalus. He placed diadem on the head of Decebalus' representative Diegis. Domitian also gave large sums of

29- Tacitus describes the fame and strength of Marcomanni and Quadi as outstanding (Tac. Ag. 42.).

30- Dio accuses of Domitian for initiating the war. According to Dio, Domitian wanted to punish these tribes for not assisting him in the Dacian expedition (Cass. Dio. LXVII. 7.1.).

31- Eutropius also states that: "A further defeat in A.D. 89 by the Sarmatian Iazyges, Marcomanni and Quadi compelled Domitian to make peace with the Dacians" (Eutr. 7.51.).

money and artisans. He promised to keep his subsidies in future (Cass. Dio. LXVII. 7.2-5.).³² Domitian returned to Rome and celebrated two triumphs to celebrate his victories over the Chatti and the Dacians (Syme 1936: 176). Dio accuses Domitian of staging a fake victory by sending emissaries from Decebalus and a letter of king, presumably forged, to confirm Domitian's victory. He also claims that the exhibits staged on the triumph came from the imperial storage (Cass. Dio. LXVII.7.4-5.). Orosius cynically comments that Domitian celebrated his loss of legions instead of conquered enemy in his triumphs (Oros. 7. 10.). Suetonius also evaluates Domitian's Chatti and Dacian campaigns as varying success (Suet. Dom. VI.).

Despite these cynical comments of these authors, Domitian achieved his primary aim in this expedition. The foremost goal of Domitian's expedition was to stabilize Dacian frontier by preventing the Dacians from attacking the Roman province Moesia. Domitian secured Dacian frontier, effectively turning Dacia into a client kingdom. Thus, it can be considered as a success in strategical sense. Once the Dacians were pacified, the Romans could concentrate their forces against the troublesome tribes in Pannonia. Furthermore, establishing ties with the Dacians would be useful as the Dacians were the enemies of the Marcomanni and Quadi tribes, which caused problems for the Roman Empire on the Danube (Evans 1974: 102). The money provided to Decebalus and other technical assistances helped Decebalus to establish hegemony over other tribe leaders. If the client-king status granted to Decebalus included Decebalus' suzerainty over other Dacian tribe leaders, the pacification of Decebalus also meant pacification of other Dacian tribe leaders. From this angle, Domitian wanted to use Decebalus to pacify Dacia and the region (Wheeler 2011: 210–11). Syme also argues that a strong Dacia with a strong king could keep his subjects in order and prevent them from attacking the Roman Empire. It could also check other tribes. Therefore, a strong Dacia became an important part of the Roman defense on the Danube frontier (1936: 185).

In return for Domitian's recognition to Decebalus' status as the king of the Dacians, Decebalus also recognized Domitian's authority. Martial, the famous poet who lived during Domitian's rule, remarks that the emperor as a living

32- Cassius Dio acknowledges that placing diadem on the head of Diegis signifies Domitian's conqueror status as this act suggests he can appoint anyone he wishes to the king of the Dacians (Cass. Dio. LXVII 7.3.).

god was worshipped in Dacia. Even Decebalus offered sacrifices to Domitian (Scott 1975: 99). Martial recites: “*A dweller, Germanicus, on the bank that is now our own, Diegis who come to thee from Ister’s subject waves, with joy and wonder saw of the late the Governor of the world, and addressed- so ‘tis said- his company “Prouder is my lot than my brother’s; I may behold so near the god whom he worships so far”* (V. III).³³ Whether Decebalus really worshipped to Domitian or not, Decebalus respected the Roman authority after Domitian’s campaign. The Dacians did not cross the Danube frontier for the rest of Domitian’s reign. Until Trajan declared war on the Dacians, the conflict froze (Evans 1974: 102).

The subsequent years of Domitian witnessed the attempts of pacification of Pannonia, leading to a series of the wars. It was important to ensure that the Dacians would not cause trouble for the Empire while dealing with tribes in Pannonia. Domitian furthered his attempts to isolate the Marcomanni and Quadi. He engaged in diplomatic overtures with other German tribes. “*Masyus, king of the Semnones, and Ganna, a virgin who was priestess in Germany, having succeeded Veleda, came to Domitian and after being honoured by him returned home*” (Cass. Dio. LXVII.12.5.3).³⁴ He sent aid to the tribes who fought against the Suebi. “*In Moesia the Lygians, having become involved in war with some of the Suebi, sent envoys asking Domitian for aid. And they obtained a force that was strong, not in numbers, but in dignity; for a hundred knights alone were sent to help them*” (Cass. Dio. LXVII.12.5.2.). The loyalty of the Hermunduri tribe, which lived next to the Marcomanni and the Quadi was maintained (Tac. Ag. 42.). These efforts testify a series of diplomatic endeavors to isolate the Marcomanni and Quadi. The pacification of the Dacians should also be evaluated in the context of isolating the immediate danger that the Marcomanni and Quadi posed. With the peace treaty with the Dacians, Domitian ensured that the Dacians would not be the part of coalition of the Marcomanni and Quadi against the Romans.

Another angle, which we must look at was this treaty’s financial sensibility. Although the total amount of money given to Decebalus is unknown, the

33- Southern calls Martian’s telling of events as “*sickeningly sycophantic*” (1997: 107).

34- Syme notes that Semnones had primacy among the Suebic tribes, rooted by antiquity and religion (1936: 177). Therefore, this diplomatic endeavor was very important to divide the Suebic tribes and isolate the Marcomanni and Quadi.

historian Perry Rogers calculates the amount based on Decebalus' first demand after he won the battle against Fuscus. Citing Dio, Rogers states that Decebalus demanded two obols for each Roman. In 89 A.D. he was in a much more disadvantageous position vis-a-vis the Roman Empire. If Tacitus' figure of 6.000.000 Roman citizens is used in this calculation, the estimated amount of money that Decebalus received might be 8.000.000 sesterces. This amount corresponds half of one percent of annual revenues of the Roman Empire. It also should be taken into account that Nero offered 200.000.000 sesterces to Tritades to place him to Armenian throne (1984: 67–68). Thus, this treaty was financially and strategically sound agreement for the Roman side as it officially pacified a troublesome region and turned this region into a client kingdom in return for a small amount of compensation.

However, this accomplishment was achieved by paying money to Decebalus and bestowing honors on him. This aspect was not popular among the Roman senate. Evans comments that the senate felt that the peace was purchased instead of a sweeping victory. The only form of peace for the senate would be content with was unconditionally dictated. From this perspective Roman honor was harmed by this treaty (Evans 1974: 99).

Besides this discontent, after his assassination Domitian suffered condemnation of memory in 96 A.D. His statues were destroyed, his name was erased from the buildings that he constructed, his titles were attacked (Varner 2004: 115). His reputation also suffered. He was referred as an abominable tyrant to justify his demise (Jones 1993: 161). Senator historians, on the other hand, ensured that his accomplishments were not appreciated. Evans (1974: 270) argues that the evaluations of historian and panegyrist, however civilly depicted, carry same belated vengeance enacted by the senate through *damnatio memoriae*. In the case of the Dacian war, this hostile depiction of Domitian as a tyrant affected the perception of the strategic value of this peace treaty as well as his other achievements.

On the other hand, while evaluating the agreement's soundness it should be considered that the year 89 A.D. brought a perfect storm for the Roman Empire. In January 89 A.D., Upper Germania governor Saturninus revolted against the emperor, bringing the empire at the brink of a civil war. He collaborated with the Chatti tribe, which proved to be a dangerous enemy in 83 A.D. After

dealing with these unrests, Domitian also faced a conflict with the Germanic tribes in Pannonia. The latest conflict with the Marcomanni and Quadi conflict put the Roman army into a risk of fighting with two fronts, risking the military achievements in Dacia in the previous year. Therefore, while holding an upper hand against the Dacians thanks to military achievements, a peace treaty was concluded. This treaty helped the Romans to pacify a hostile armed force. Decebalus' lack of military activity into the Roman region indicates this treaty served its purpose. Moreover, it turned the Dacian kingdom into a client kingdom for the Roman Empire. Thus, it prevented their participation into the grand coalition with the Marcomanni and Quadi against the Roman Empire.

5. Future Campaigns in Dacia

Although the basic strategic outcome was achieved for the Dacian campaign, the means of reaching this outcome overshadowed the result. Cassius Dio reports that because of grudges emanated from Decebalus' past deeds and the amount of subsidies the Romans paid Trajan decided to end the peace (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.6.1.). The Romans had the luxury of waging an offensive war against the Dacians during Trajan's reign. The conflict in the previous decade had been characterized as a Roman response to the Dacian attacks. The renewed conflict was a Roman offensive.

In the initial phase of the campaign Trajan used the legions that Domitian had raised in his final years (Wheeler 2011: 213). A strong garrison was set up by Domitian in Upper Moesia. This base was the main attack base, which Trajan used against the Dacians (Matei-Popescu 2006-2007: 31). In this province, two legions were stationed: VII Claudia pia fidelis and II Adultrix.³⁵ In addition to these two legions, a considerable amount of auxiliary forces were present. These fourteen cohorts were: I Clicum, I Cisipadensium, I Cretum, I Flavia Hispanorum, I Antiochensium, I Lusitanorum, I Montanorum, II Flavia Commagenorum, II Gallorum Macedonica, III Raetorum, V Gallorum, V Hispanorum, VI Thracum, VII Breucorum. In 100 A.D., the number of cohorts increased to 21 because of the preparations for the Dacian war. Thus, Trajan built on Domitian's already stationed military forces while preparing the Dacian war (Matei-Popescu 2006-2007: 33–34).³⁶ Under Domitian's rule competence and

35- The legion *IV Flavia Felix* could also be present in Viminacium (Matei-Popescu 2006-2007: 33).

36- Matei-Popescu points out that the recently published diploma demonstrates the number of cohorts was 19 in 97 A.D. (2006-2007: 34).

experience were the main criteria for military appointments. The experienced commanders such as Velius Rufus, Sextus Octavius Fronto, Gnaeus Pinarius Pompeius Longinus were appointed into provincial posts (Evans 1974: 105–6). The promotions of these experienced commanders provided Trajan valuable human source in his Dacian campaign.

Besides providing military base, the improved financial situation during Domitian's rule enabled Trajan to follow expansionist policy. Despite the revolts he faced, Domitian was able to maintain a stable treasury. Domitian's successor Nerva was able to pay donative and continue building programs. This suggests Domitian left a stable treasure to Nerva (Rogers 1984: 77). Trajan's building programs in the first years of his reign, most of them started in Domitian's rule, was due to the surplus left by Domitian (Syme 1930: 56). These arguments indicate Trajan inherited a stable treasure from Domitian, which enabled him to prepare for the Dacian war.

All these preparations paid off. In the First Dacian War in 101-102 A.D. Trajan captured fortified mountains, engines, and arms. Decebalus' sister was also seized. Decebalus agreed to surrender his arms and engines, destroy the forts, withdraw from the captured territory, have same enemies and friends with Rome, and decline shelter for the deserters (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.9.3-6.). Wheeler argues that Trajan's 101-102 A.D. campaign diminished Decebalus' power but did not destroy him. It only strengthened Domitian's settlements. Trajan did not raise new legions but reinforced Roman defenses on the Lower Danube (2011: 213).³⁷

When Decebalus started to act contrary to the treaty by collecting arms, providing shelter for deserters, sending envoys to his neighbors, even daring to annex territory of Iazyges, he was declared enemy of the Roman Empire by the senate (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.10.3-4.). Decebalus captured Longinus, who was the commander of the Roman army (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.12.1.).³⁸ Trajan crossed the Danube through the bridge he constructed and conducted the war with prudence, skill, and valor. Decebalus, whose territories and capital were occupied, committed suicide and his head was brought to Rome (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.14.1-3). Trajan decided to annex the Dacian territories. He annexed the Dacian territories after the victory in 106 A.D. "*South of the Carpathians, the*

37- Dio reports a military engagement at Tapae which resulted in the death of many enemy Dacians (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.8.1.). However, the scale of this engagement is ambiguous.

38- Longinus, having secured the poison committed suicide (Cass. Dio. LXVIII.12.4.).

plains of Oltenia and Wallachia, from which the Rhoxolani were henceforth excluded (but perhaps paid to keep out), became part of Moesia Inferior, now more than doubled its size” (Wheeler 2011: 213).

Trajan’s reversal of Domitian’s non-expansionist policy can also be evaluated as a discontent arising from Domitian’s relatively peaceful solution to the Dacian problem. The loss of prestige and the desire to expand seemed to guide Trajan’s expansionist policy. Whittaker argues that of the reasons of the war, accounted by Dio to exact revenge and to acquire gold, testify the lack of strategy that Trajan’s campaigns had. He criticizes Trajan of rushing to Parthia after conquering Dacia without strengthening the defense of region. The undermanned military force left in the region and weak defenses failed to deter the Marcomanni invasion in later century and the Goth invasion in the third century. Moreover, by destroying the stable Dacian kingdom, Trajan created a new threat emanated from the Sarmatians and the Iazyges. This new threat endangered the security of the Roman Empire for the next centuries (2004: 34–35). Indeed, Iazyges and Free Dacians, and the Rhoxolani created disturbances to reverse Trajan’s arrangements. Hadrian, fearing the invasion of the tribes, destroyed the bridge built by Trajan (Wheeler 2011: 215). Later, the province was abandoned to the Goths in the third century (Whittaker 2004: 34). Therefore, if we evaluate the Dacian campaigns from cost-benefit analysis, Domitian’s policy of strengthening the Dacian kingdom to stabilize the Danube frontier proved to be more efficient than Trajan’s expansionist policy.

CONCLUSION

This paper tried to evaluate Domitian’s Dacian campaign. The criticisms on Domitian’s Dacian campaign mostly rooted from the hostility felt by senator historians. Until Domitian’s reign, the emperors maintained a façade that the emperor is a *primus inter pares*, allowing the senate to have equal footing with the emperor. Domitian, however, abandoned this illusion, establishing the position of the emperor as the sole authority in the Roman Empire. This caused vilification of his character after his assassination in 96. A.D. The senators, who wrote history such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio committed character assassination after his death.

The hostility to Domitian affected the evaluation of his Dacian campaign. He was accused of purchasing the victory and celebrating a sham triumph in Rome. The military situation was not, however, a disaster. Although Fuscus’

forces were destroyed in the mid-86 A.D., the Roman forces made substantial progress in the Dacian territory in 88 A.D. The Roman forces even cleared the way for the Dacian capital. However, the final victory did not come. The Saturninus revolt in Germania and the threat arising from the Chatti tribe shifted military focus. Once these threats were eliminated, the Germanic tribes in the Pannonia posed new security threats to the Roman Empire. Under these circumstances, instead of waging military campaigns in two fronts Domitian opted to conclude a peace treaty with Decebalus, which turned Dacia into a client kingdom. In return, Domitian agreed to send money and provide technicians and tools for Decebalus.

It is true that Domitian did not conquer the whole Dacian territory. He did not win a glorious victory against the Dacians or the Chatti, compared to Caesar's victories against the Gauls, but he efficiently used the Empire's resources to secure the frontier even though he faced dangerous opponents. The treaty signed after military engagements with the Dacians was consistent with Domitian's non-expansionist foreign policy. He never intended to annex the Dacian territory in the first place. His aim was to stop the Dacian incursions into the Roman province, Moesia. He secured the frontier with this treaty. Through strengthening Decebalus over other Dacian tribe leaders, Domitian wanted to eliminate sporadic incursions to the Roman provinces. By turning Dacia into a client kingdom, he also prevented a coalition of enemy tribes on the Danube, while dealing with troublesome the Marcomanni and Quadi.

When Trajan became emperor, the Dacian problem served a perfect opportunity for Trajan, who was one of Domitian's generals, to distance himself from Domitian's regime and to please the senate. After series of campaigns, he managed to annex Dacian kingdom and kill Decebalus. Thus, he elevated the Roman dignity presumably harmed by Domitian's treaty. While accomplishing this success, he used the strengthened base set up by Domitian in Moesia. Domitian's generals and legions also participated in the war. He also benefited from the money surplus left by Domitian in this expedition. On the other hand, modern historians such as Whittaker and Wheeler point out Trajan's annexation of Dacia brought new disturbances. The Roman Empire had to deal with other hostile tribes on the Danube for later centuries after annihilating the Dacian kingdom. From this perspective, Domitian's diplomatic approach, backed by military power, for the Dacian problem was far superior to Trajan's expansionist policy. His resolve was not glamorous, but it was efficient.

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Cemal TEPE

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Ahmet EDİ - Ceylan TÜRK

KUVÂYİ MİLLİYE KAHRAMANLARINDAN BİRİ "MUSTAFA NECATİ"

Gökhan TEKİR

DOMITIAN'S DACIAN WAR

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