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SIMULACRA BARBARORUM. SOME QUESTIONS OF ROMAN PERSONIFICATIONS

For almost a century, the personifications of Roman provinces, as one of the principal elements of state propaganda, have been evoking great interest in scholars to investigate Roman art. The considerations started in 1888 by P. Gardner (Countries and Cities in Ancient Art, JRS 9, p. 47-88), found their continuation in the works of P. Bieńkowski (De simulacris barbararum gentium apud Romanos, Cracovia 1900) and M. Jatta (Le rappresen-tanze figurate delle Provincie Romane, Roma 1908), to quote only the most merited men of science taking up this problem at the turn of the 19th century. An important contribution was added by the investigations of P. Strack (Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts I-III [1931-1937]) based upon numismatic material and published in the thirties of this century, and those of J. M. C. Toynbee (The Hadrianic School [1934]), who considered this problem as one of the elements of Hadrianic classicism. At present, this topic is en vogue again in connection with the research regarding symbolics of imperial power and reflections of state ideology in art. The problem of personifications, not only those of provinces, is also connected with investigations on ancient iconography, as is to be seen in such new publication as e.g. LIMC.

Of course, the term »province« with reference to personifications cannot be used in a strict legal and administrative meaning (this question is explained by P. Strack).

One should rather use the terms »peoples« or »nations« in connection with personifications. This would also be more in correspondence with literary records in which *simulacra gentium* or *simulacra nationum* appear. As ancient sources indicate, their appearance was connected with triumphal processions. Besides these images or statues, and besides the abducted captives, also live prisoners were transported on *ferculum* with their hands tied back sitting under a tropaion, which is best illustrated on a relief from the temple of Apollo Sosianus (Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Helbig⁴ n° 1670), or on a relief from the times of Septimius Severus (Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme Helbig⁴ n° 2357). They were the representatives, the living embodiment of a conquered nation or subjugated land. Various representations of prisoners under a tropaion from somewhat later periods can be found on imperial coins with legends such as *Germania capta*, *Dacia capta* or *devicta*. Comparing both categories of objects, one can state that the pattern derived from triumphal ritual was transposed onto coins and came to be one of the main propaganda motifs to symbolize the conquest or subjugation of another country. The captives – standing, seated or kneeling under the trophy – decorating various artefacts, indirectly serve as personifications of a given nation, yet displaying one common feature – affiliation to triumphal art.

They appear also on numerous sculptures of the type

statua loricata (e.g. Vespasian's statue from Sabratha), or on architectural reliefs adorning triumphal arches (e.g. the arch in Carpentras). Very often they are kneeling at the emperor's leg (e.g. Domitian's statue in Olympia) or lying under his foot (e.g. Hadrian's statue from Hierapytna). Sometimes the place of the emperor is taken by the figure of Victoria, at whose feet a captive is kneeling (e.g. relief from Arcus Novus, now in Florence).

In the 1st cent. A. D. victory over an enemy is depicted in another manner also: The emperor on horseback felling a barbarian to the ground, trampling him with his steed's hoofs. One of the earliest representations of this type is the relief found in Kula in Lydia (now in Trieste), which shows a horseman attacking with a lance a standing woman with her hands tied back. An inscription below the scene informs us that the woman represents Germania, while the rider is Germanicus or Caligula. This motif is also to be encountered on Domitian coins with the legend *Germania capta*, while those of Trajan bear the legend *Dacia capta* as well as those of Lucius Verus and Armenia.

Suchlike images are allegories of the emperor's victory (and the components of allegory are symbols – trophies and personifications – captives) and fulfill a definite ideological function. They are one of basic signs of realism, or »Roman« current of the provinces' personification. It seems conceivable to forward the thesis that each representation of a barbarian in official state art who is not part of a multifigural narrative scene, but isolated and restricted to be depicted as a standing, lying or seated captive next to the emperor, trophy, or Victoria, stands for the personification of a nation either conquered by the Romans or at war with them.

Besides this type of personifications there are others equally widespread which can be defined as »idealistic« –

women in Greek or Roman dresses, holding attributes (e.g. reliefs from Hadrianeum). Usually they are so stereotyped that were it not for the telling attributes or elucidating inscriptions, their identification would be impossible.

The intertwining of idealistic and realistic currents is usually explained through the period of origin of the given personifications – through classicism of the Augustean or Hadrianic epoch or through anti-classical reaction under the Flavians and in the middle of the 3rd cent. A.D. It seems rather that explanations should be sought somewhere else. Namely, when the militarily upheaved province was personified, or a nation either at war or only just pacified was in mind, this extreme Roman realism took upper hand, marked by the prisoner's figure. On the other hand, the idealistic manner was employed at established peaceful relations; this is corroborated by the vast numismatic material. During Augustus' expansion beyond the Rhine, Domitian's wars against the Germans and Dacians, Trajan's wars against these latter or wars waged by Marcus Aurelius against the Markomans and Quadi, the representations of captives or fallen women or men appear very frequently on coins with a legend ... *capta* or ... *devicta*, for instance under Vespasian and Hadrian occurs *Iudaea capta*. When peace ruled in the Empire and along the frontiers, as under Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, the series of coins were minted bearing idealistically rendered female figures, holding the attributes characteristic of a given land.

This very intertwining of both currents provides another piece of evidence of the dualism in Roman art, dependent not only upon general artistic trends of a given period, but also adapting its means of expression to the current political circumstances.