Personifications of Countries and Cities as a Symbol of Victory in Greek and Roman Art

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The trend towards anthropomorphizing, characteristic of the Greek mentality, has introduced into the everyday life, religion, literature and art a number of personifications, apart from the creation of an unusually developed hierarchy of deities, resembling both physically and psychically the man. The proper development of personifications, already known to Homer, Hesiod or elegists and lyrists of the 6th century B. C., took place in the time of drama formation, i. e. during the 5th century B. C. Dramatic plays (both tragedy and comedy) were to render in a condensed, concentrated form some emotional states of the heroes, or to represent certain abstract ideas.

A specific group of personifications is made by the embodying of countries, lands, territories, regions and cities, which I propose to define as "territorial" or "regional" as distinguished from the broader notion of "geographical" covering also representations of mountains, rivers, streams and springs. In literature their earliest example is in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo of Delos in which the personification of Delos island appears, making a speech and smiling (1,49 ff.). Personifications of cities and lands are often to be found in epinikia written by Pindar, glorifying the heroes and winners of sport games coming from the respective polis.

One of the best known literary instances of this kind of personification are the embodiments of Hellas and Persia, appearing in Aischylos' "Persai", created in 472 B. C. (191 ff.), and described as ideal female figures, distinguishable only thanks to their garments worn. Perhaps these characters had already occurred earlier in the lost tragedy by Phrynichos "Phoinissai" from 476 B. C.

Both these dramatic plays were associated with the Persian wars, victorious for the Greeks. Also the appearance in art of "territorial" personifications should be connected with these events.

Indeed, the earliest such personification known to us is depicted on a red-figured Makron's kotyle from the early 5th century B. C.,[1] where the figure of Eleusis standing next to Demeter appears, yet it is a unique case in that time. Pausanias (X 15,6) mentions also the statue executed by Amphion

erected in Delphi and representing Kyrene driving the chariot of Battos, while Libya crowns the ruler. The personifications within this group perform a function identical to that in Pindar's Odes, glorifying the tyrant and the city-state ruled by him.

After the Persian wars "regional" personifications were introduced more and more often which were meant to commemorate the Greeks' victory. It is not certain whether after the battle of Salamis a statue was erected in Delphi, making this island's personification, or whether this was the statue representing Apollo. The passage in Herodotos (VIII 121) is too laconic to enable definite conclusions. If the statue of Salamis was here in question, so it must undoubtedly have influenced in some way a bit later a painting by Panaions on the enclosure of the statue of Olympic Zeus, representing among others two figures, Hellas and Salamis, commemorating the victory (Paus. V 11, 5).

Some variation of "regional" personifications is found in the personifications of Demos – a people living in a given country, also appearing in the 5th century, and flourishing in the next one. From the literary sources we know that several painters (Parrhasios, Euphranor) and sculptors (Euphranor, Leochares) executed images of Demos. A whole series of 4th century reliefs adorning Attic decrees gives some idea of suchlike images. I do not discuss them, though they influenced the personification of the Genius Populi Romani.

In the 5th and 4th centuries B. C. works are also created which provides personifications of particular Greek cities and lands. Telephanes from Phokis, who worked in Thessaly and later on in Persia, made a bronze statue representing Larissa (Plin. N. H. XXXIV 68). A fragment of a copy of this work has been found in Persepolis.[2] The city was depicted as a woman seated on a rock and leaning her head against her hand, as does famous Penelope of Vatican. In the beginning of the 4th century B. C. after the battle at Aigospotamoi in 405 B. C., Aristandros of Paros made a statue intended for the sanctuary of Apollon in Amyklai, representing Sparta holding the then unusual attribute, a lyre, which accentuated a relationship to Apollon (Paus. III 18,8). In the 4th century B. C. Nikias painted Nemea as a woman seated on a lion, and holding a palm, symbol of victory in the agons (Plin. N. H. XXXV 127). In the 2nd half of the 4th century B. C. Kephisodotos the Younger and Xenophon created a sculptured group for the temple of Zeus in Megalopolis, in which the seated god had on his left the figure of Artemis So-

teira while on the right the personification of the city of Megalopolis (Paus. VIII 30,10).

From the same period come also two immensely interesting iconographical objects, departing from stereotyped images of cities and lands. The first one is a bronze mirror in the Louvre,[3] representing the personifications of two cities: Corinth as a seated bearded old man accompanied by Leukas, the personification of Corinth's colony. The patroness of Corinth was Aphrodite and that of Leukas Artemis, therefore the artist, when creating these personifications, took pattern for Corinth from its eponymic founder Corinthos, son of Zeus (hence the male appearance), and Leukas chose to be represented as a nymph. This is the only known example in Greek art where the city was represented as a male figure (of course Demos, which indirectly also represented a given city, was a man as well). Another object which breaks off from the stereotyped images of lands is the famous red-figured Vase of Dareios (also called Perses' Vase) kept in Naples,[4] and displaying, among other persons, the personifications of Hellas and Asia. Undoubtedly, the decoration of this crater, carefully thought over and planned, came into being under the influence of one of the dramatic plays focusing upon the subject of Graeco-Persian wars; it is however not certain whether it was influenced by Aischylos' "Persai" or the earlier "Phoinissai" written by Phrynichos.

During the 4th century B. C. an enormously important event in the history of the methods of nations' personification took place. In 351 B. C. Artemisia of Caria: "Tropaeum in urbe Rhodo suae victoriae constituit, aeneasque duas statuas fecit unam Rhodiorum civitatis, alteram suae imagines. Eam ita figuravit Rhodiorum civitati stigmata imponentem" (Vitruv. II, 8, 51). The ancient Oriental gesture of victory over the defeated enemy was employed for the first time (as we can suppose) in the sphere of Greek civilization. This typical tropaion was not the first to be erected in Greece (the earliest mention in Batrachomyomachy,159 ff.; later in dramatic works of the 5th century B. C.; it appears in art in Kabirion at Thebes, and on the frieze of Heroon in Trysa-Gjölbaschi, as well as on the balustrade of the temple of Nike on the Acropolis), yet probably the first to portray a victorious ruler branding his defeated enemies.

In the Hellenistic period, the employment of personifications of cities and lands became somewhat halted due to the spread of the images of Tyche, protectress of cities. The personifications coming into existence foremostly were associated with historical events. The repulse of Gallic invasion in 279 B. C. was commemorated by a giant statue of Aetolia, erected in

Delphi in 278 B. C. From the description by Pausanias (X 18, 7) and the images on the coins of the Aetolian League,[5] we know that this was the statue of a woman of supernatural size, clad in a short exomis, with a petasos on her head, seated on the pile of Gallic and Macedonian shields.

In Olympia, "is a statue of Greece, and beside it a statue of Elis. Greece is represented in the act of crowning with one hand Antigonus the guardian of Philip, son of Demetrius, while with the other she places a crown on the head of Philip himself. Elis is crowning Demetrius, who marched against Seleucus and Ptolemy, son of Lagus" (Paus. VI 16, 3. Translated by J. G. Frazer).

Both the latter instances testify that the earlier existing propaganda function of the personifications of lands and cities becomes more intensive. Such a function was performed by the images of cities during solemn processions – pompé of Hellenistic kings, i. e. those of Ptolemy II in 279 B. C. and Antiochos IV between 168 and 163 B. C.[6] (Athen. V 197. 191). Adding splendour to the procession, they emphasized the ruler's divinity and his victories. The same glorification of the ruler was to be performed by tropaions erected in Hellenistic times. Undoubtedly, a leading role was played here by Pergamon and its monuments in praise of the victory over the Gauls, erected after 228 B. C., or the lost statues commemorating triumph over the Syrians.

They became widespread in the whole Hellenistic world and the development of triumphal symbolics results in such monuments as that created by Mithridates in the 1st century B. C., after recapture of Asia and Pergamon from the Romans. The group was created then which represented Prometheus chained to the rock and a man (personification of a region) reposing at his feet as well as Heracles-Mithridates, liberator of Asia.[7]

Beyond doubt, these personifications and sculptured groups – tropaions, have greatly influenced the development and forms of Roman triumphal art, one of the features of which is representing the inhabitants of a conquered and subjugated land, which after some time was changed into a province.

During triumphal processions, apart from the captives led and booty carried, also "simulacra gentium" or "simulacra oppidorum" were presented. A perceptible beginning of this custom occurs in the end of the 3rd and the early years of the 2nd century B. C. (triumphs of Scipio Africanus in 201 B. C., L. Scipio Asiagenus in 188 B. C.). These "simulacra" were most probably the depictions of conquered cities and lands (such objects existed as well), but probably represented the natives of a given country – those gentes

clad in characteristic costumes, holding typical national weapons or appropriate attributes. Statues like this were borne in the triumph of Pompeius in 61 B. C. (Plin. N. H. VII, 98; Plut. Vit. Pomp. 45) and they later served the Roman artist Coponius as pattern for carving 14 statues of supernatural scale, placed in the portico of Pompeius' theatre (Plin. N. H. XXXVI 41; Suet. Nero 46). Similar statues, representing conquered nations, were erected by Augustus in his famous "porticus ad Nationes" (Serv. de Aen. VIII 71), and also in Lugdunum in 12 B. C. an altar was put up, dedicated to Augustus and Roma, decorated with the images of 60 Gallic civitates (Strab. IV, 192; CIL XIII, 227). In the triumphs also live prisoners were transported on a ferculum with their hand tied back, sitting under a tropaion which is best illustrated by a relief from the temple of Apollo Sosianus in Rome from 33 or 20 B. C.,[8] or by a relief from the time of Septimius Severus and his triumph over the Parthians.[9] Such statues and prisoners were the representatives of a conquered nation or subjugated land, an embodiment of a land or a province. Similar personifications appeared also during funerary solemnities of Augustus (Cass. Dio. LVI 39), or other emperors.

The personifications of defeated nations or those of the provinces subdued by Rome adorned colossal tropaions (St. Bertrand de Comminges, anc. Lugdunum Convenarum, with the figures of Gaul and Spain from the time of Augustus),[10] architectural complexes (such as Sebasteion in Aphrodisias;[11] porticus porphyretica at Forum Traiani;[12] Stoa of Colossal Figures at Corinth),[13] triumphal arches and city gates,[14] the state reliefs,[15] the cuirasses of imperial statues,[16] but in the first place the coins. It is numismatic material that may serve for the most comprehensive investigation of the development of suchlike images.

When comparing the images of provinces appearing from the 1st century B. C. on coins with somewhat later works of sculpture, painting or artistic handicraft, two principal currents can be distinguished among suchlike representations. This attempt at classification was already done in 1900 by Piotr Bieńkowski[17] who recognized the existence of a type of "provincia capta" – a saddened, seated woman embodying the freshly conquered nation, and a type of "provincia pia fidelis" – a standing woman with the attributes characteristic of a given region, meant to symbolize the province romanized and faithful to Rome. In 1934, Jocelyn Toynbee made another classification, having divided the personifications into the "idealistic" wearing a classical Graeco-Roman costume and holding attributes, and the "realistic",

clad in national dress.[18] This classification can be considerably extended, particularly with regard to the second group.

In my opinion, it is just the comparison of coins bearing the legend type "Germania (or Dacia, or Iudaea) capta (or devicta)" with the works of sculpture and painting which enables the defense of a thesis that each representation of a barbarian in the official state art, not included into a multifigural narrative scene, but isolated and restricted to the depiction of standing, lying or seated captive next to the emperor, trophy of Victoria, makes the personification of a nation living in a country either freshly conquered by the Romans or at war with them. Such personification we can call "realistic".

On the other hand, "idealistic" personifications such as reliefs from Hadrianeum,[19] coins of Galba, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius with the legend "Restitutor" or "Adventus Augusti", or the mosaics from Belkis (Zeugma)[20] are supposed to depict the nations and provinces faithful to Rome for a long time and therefore clad and coiffured in conventional way.

This differentiation reflects the dualism of Roman art, not only due to the prevalence of Hellenic or Italic components, but also considering the adaptation of art's needs to the political situation and the distinction of representations according to the requirements of state propaganda.

Obviously enough, I was only able to signalize in this brief pronouncement some problems, and first of all those related to only one function performed by the personifications of lands and provinces, namely the one assisting the cause of propaganda. Naturally, there exist also such images (yet far fewer) which are associated with mythology and are used for indication of the venue of myth's action (e. g. Crete in the mosaic with the representation of Theseus, discovered at Nea Paphos;[21] Lacedemonia in the mosaics with Zeus and Leda from Antiochia[22] and Nea Paphos;[23] Arcadia in the painting with Heracles and Telephos from Herculaneum;[24] Kyrene and Libya in the relief in British Museum),[25] yet they prove to be stereotyped mythological representations, remaining outside the mainstream of lands and nations personified in Greek and Roman art, serving the purpose of symbolical depiction of political events.

Notes

[1] CVA Brit. Mus. IV, pl. 28,2 a-d.

[2] C. N. Olmstead, A Greek Lady from Persepolis, AJA 54, 1950, pp. 10-18, pls. 8-10;
E. Langlotz, Die Larissa des Telephanes, Mus. Helv. 8, 1951, pp. 157-170; M. Robertson, A History of Greek Art, 2 vol., Cambridge 1975, p. 210.

[3] R. Hinks, Myth and Allegory in Ancient Art, London 1939, Studies of the Warburg Institute 6, pp. 68-69; M. Robertson, op. cit., p. 436; EAA, IV, s. v. Leucas.

[4] R. Hinks, op. cit., p. 65, pl. 8; C. Anti, Il vaso di Dario e i Persiani di Frinico, Arch. Cl. 4, 1952, p. 23 ff.; EAA, III, s. v. Dario Pittore, fig. 15; M. Schmidt, Der Dariosmaler und sein Umkreis, Münster 1960 (Orbis Antiquus, Hft. 15).

[5] BMC. Tessaly to Aetolia, p. LVII; C. Seltman, Greek Coins, London 1965, pp. 254-255, pls. LXII, 3, 4; G. K. Jenkins, Monnaies grecques, Fribourg 1972, p. 239, fig. 546.

[6] R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, Situazione dell'arte ellenistica, in: Dell'Ellenismo al Medioevo, Roma 1978, p. 30, supposed that the pompé of Antiochos IV was a kind of response to the triumph of Aemilius Paulus after his victory at Pydna in 168 B. C.

[7] M. Robertson, op. cit., p. 547; M. Bieber, The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age, New York 1955, figs. 482-483 (portrait of Mithridates in Louvre) and figs. 485-487 (statuette in Staatl. Museen in Berlin).

[8] B. Nash, Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome, I, London 1968, p. 28, fig. 18; Th. Kraus, Das römische Weltreich, in: Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 2. Berlin 1967, n° 178c; Helbig[4], II, n° 1670; B. Andreae, Römische Kunst, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1982 (4. Aufl.), Abb. 237; P. Zanker, Augustus und die Macht der Bilder, München 1987, Abb. 55 (Illyrians?).

[9] Roma, Museo Nazionale (collection Buoncompagni-Ludovisi). Helbig III, n° 2357; A. Giuliano, Museo Nazionale Romano. Le Sculture. I/5, Roma 1983, p. 195-198, n° 83.

[10] G. Ch. Picard, Les Trophées romains, Paris 1957, pls. 9-10.

[11] E. g. reliefs with Claudius and Britania, and Nero with Armenia. Cf. Kenan T. Erim, Récentes decouvertes à Aphrodisias en Carie. 1979-1980, RA, I, 1982, pp. 163-169; id., A New Relief Showing Claudius and Britannia from Aphrodisias, Britannia 13, 1982, pp. 277-281; R. R. Smith, The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, JRS 77, 1987, pp. 88-138.

[12] R. Delbrueck, Antike Porphyrwerke. Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte 6, Berlin 1932, pp. 48 and 135; P. Zanker, Das Trajansforum in Rom, Archäol. Anz. 1970, pp. 499-544; J. Pinkerneil, Studien zu den Trajanischen Dakerdarstellungen. Diss. Freiburg i. Br. 1983, pp. 187-191.

[13] R. Stillwell, Façade of the Colossal Figures. Corinth I, 2., Cambridge Mass. 1941; F. P. Johnson, Sculpture. Corinth IX, Cambridge Mass. 1931, pp. 101-106; H. v. Hesberg, Zur Datierung der Gefangenenfassade in Korinth. Eine wiederverwendete Architektur augusteischer Zeit, AM 98, 1983, pp. 215-238, pls. 44-46.

[14] E. g. the triumphal arch in Carpentras with representation of Armenian and Gaul (or German) chained to the tree-tropaion, cf. E. Espérandieu, Recueil géneral des bas-reliefs de la Gaule Romaine, I, Paris 1907, n° 243; Leroy A. Campbell, Mithraic Iconography and Ideology, Leiden 1968 (EPRO), pp. 244-245. Cf. the city gate adorned with barbarians erected during the reign of Augustus in Sepinum in Italy (so-called Porta di Boiano). Cf. B. Andreae, AA 74, 1959, pp. 226-227, fig. 64; EAA, VII, pp. 201-202, s. v. Sepino, fig. 258; P. Zanker, Augustus ..., Abb. 258.

[15] E. g. a relief in Museo Civico di Storia ed Arte in Trieste, from Kula in Lydia, with representation of Germanicus (or Caligula) and Germania. Cf. Th. Mommsen, Relief aus Kula, AM 13, 1888, pp. 18-21; K. Schumacher, Germanendarstellungen[4], Mainz 1935, n° 51, pl. 16; R. Brilliant, Gesture and Rank in Roman Art, New Haven 1963, Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts, XIV, p. 56, fig. 2. 21; E. Künzl, Germania, n° 1, LIMC IV/1, 1988, pp. 182-184.

[16] E. g. cuirass of the Augustus statue from Prima Porta, cf. Amelung, I, 14; A. Alföldi, Zum Panzerschmuck der Augustusstatue von Prima Porta, RM 52 ,1937, pp. 48-63; Th. Kraus, Das römische Weltreich ..., n° 288; Helbig[4], I, n° 411; P. Zanker, Augustus ..., fig. 148 a, b. Cuirass of Vespasian statue from Sabratha, cf. C. C. Vermeule, Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues, I, Berytus 13, 1959/60, n° 85; K. Stemmer, Untersuchungen zur Typologie, Chronologie und Ikonographie der Panzerstatuen, Berlin 1978, V, 10, pl. 38, 1-2.

[17] P. Bieńkowski, De simulacris barbararum gentium apud Romanos, Cracovia 1900. The classification made by Bieńkowski was modified later by M. Jatta, Le rappresentanze figurate delle Provincie Romane, Roma 1908.

[18] J. M. C. Toynbee, The Hadrianic School. A Chapter in History of Greek Art, Cambridge 1934.

[19] H. Lucas, Die Reliefs der Neptunbasilica in Rom, JdI 15, 1900, pp. 1-42; P. Bieńkowski, De simulacris ..., pp. 60-86; J. M. C. Troynbee, The Hadrianic School, pp. 152-159; Helbig[4], II, n° 1437 (with Bibliography); E. Nash, Pictorial Dictionary ..., I, pp. 457-461; F. Coarelli, Guida archeologica di Roma, Roma 1975, pp. 265-266; B. Andreae, Römische Kunst, fig. 486; A. M. Pais, Il "podium" del Tempio del Divo Adriano a Piazza di Pietra in Roma, Roma 1979.

[20] The latest, complete publication about mosaics from Belkis was given by K. Parlasca, Zum Provinzenmosaik von Belkis-Seleukeia am Euphrat, in: Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern, Paris 1983, pp. 287-295.

[21] W. A. Daszewski, La Mosaïque de Thésée. Nea Paphos II, Varsovie 1977, pls. 4, 5b, 8 a-b; EAA Suppl., fig. 279; C. C. Vermeule, Greek and Roman Cyprus, Boston 1976, p. 81, fig. 14.

[22] D. Levi, Antioch Mosaic Pavements, 2 vol, Princeton 1947, pp. 272-273, pl. 63 d.

[23] W. A. Daszewski, BCH 1984; id., Dionysos der Erlöser. Griechische Mythen in spätantiken Cypern, Mainz 1985, (Trierer Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 2), pp. 34-35, pls. 12-13.

[24] E. Pfuhl, MuZ, fig. 659; Toynbee, Hadrianic School, pl. XX, 2; EAA, III, fig. 496.

[25] Roscher, ML, II,2, pp. 2037-2038; C. H. Smith, BMC Sculptures, I, n° 790; J. Huskinson, Roman Sculptures from Cyrenaica in the British Museum. CSIR, Great Britain, II, 1, London 1977, p. 31, n° 60.