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Gudrun Bühl

*Constantinopolis und Roma, Stadtpersonifikationen der Spätantike.*

Akanthos, Verlag für Archäologie. Zürich, 1995.

334 pp with illustrations in the text. CHF 95.–. ISBN 3-905083-10-8

This splendid monograph is the third book in a series which has included H.A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art. The Representation of Abstract Concepts. 600–400 B. C.* (1993), and Chr. Aellen, *A la recherche de l'ordre cosmique. Forme et fonction des personifications dans la céramique italote* (1994).

Dr. Gudrun Bühl's volume is the realization of an enterprise which was a Dissertation accepted by the Philosophical Faculty of Freiburg University in 1992. While the order of the «female protagonists» is alphabetical, B. rightly remarks that Roma was around long before Constantine the Great founded the «New or Second Rome» on the Bosphorus. Like the «Third Rome» (Moscow), the «Second Rome» has undergone monumental transformations and, almost since 1453, has been Istanbul to the Ottomans and their Republican successors, but remains Constantinopolis to the Ecumenical Patriarch and his Christian followers. Roma of the Pontifex Maximus and the Republic of Italy remains Roma or Rome and still appears on Italian stamps, coins and paper money as an active personification, albeit mixed iconographically with Italia (which goes back to Antoninus Pius, 138–161).

The other two metropolises which are teamed with Roma and Constantinopolis in Late Antique art are Antiochia and Alexandria, all four being seen in the magnificent silver statuettes from the Esquiline Treasure in the British Museum (pp. 107–120). The date is close to the Calendar of 354 (pp. 80–106), but on the calendar the four cities, labelled and rich in surroundings (playful Erotes in the three expected cities), are Roma, Constantinopolis, Alexandria and Trier (Treviris); on the last a bound barbarian is pushed along by the Amazonian personification of the frontier capital. Antiochia of the Esquiline Treasure is the traditional figure, Orontes swimming in front, going back to the statue by Eutychides of around 300 B. C. Antiochia's decline in fortunes doubtless led to the replacement by Treviris in the graphics of 354. Antiochia does appear again in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (p. 131, fig. 70) but not as the traditional Tyche, only as an enthroned Dea Roma, although little Orontes still reaches up to her lap. And around 600, certainly before the island's initial conquest by the Arabs in 647, Cyprus joined Rome, Constantinopolis and Alexandria on a golden chalice from Albania, in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (pp. 121–124, figs. 63–66).

From the early seventh century onwards there are no surprises, for Alexandria as well as Antiochia have disappeared. From about 900 to 1300, in the manuscript-illuminations of the Holy Roman Emperors, willowy ladies with crowns and Gothic costumes hold up large orbs and flank emperors whose orbs, clutched like footballs, are awesome in size, but the cities or geographical regions no longer have individual iconographic characteristics. Such is the case with the women flanking the

enthroned emperor (Otto III ?) in the *Registrum Gregorii* in the Bibliothèque Condé at Chantilly (p. 250, fig. 119). Toward the end, the many, diverse provinces and other regions of the *Notitia Dignitatum* in Munich wear mural crowns and are set off by saintly nimbi or halos (pp. 258–265, figs. 124–130). Roma (fig. 130) has become the oddest figure ever to grace a study such as this, the helmet a giant doughnut, with three feathers emerging as plumes from the front.

In archaeology and literature, in numismatics and comprehensive studies such as this book, we sometimes forget that new discoveries can be made in 1996 as they were once in the ages of Heinrich Schliemann or Ernest Babelon. For example, the recent discovery of the «City of Ramses», Pi-Ramesses (Qantir), in the Pelusiac Delta of Egypt by the Pelizaeus Museum of Hildesheim gives some 30000 square meters of Bronze Age workshops with rich artefacts to prove that Odysseus' adventures in Egypt were truth not fiction.<sup>1</sup> Where Constantinopolis existed Roma is sure to be found. Such is the case with the celebrated silver medallions of May 11, 330, presented to dignitaries in connection with the establishment of Constantinopolis as the capital of Constantine the Great's (Christian) empire. Hereto there were six specimens with the Tyche-Constantinopolis on the reverse, the first image in the book (pp. 11–12, fig. 1); all examples are in major public collections.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Now Harlan J. Berk has recently published two more specimens.<sup>3</sup> What is amazing is that he published at the same time two such silver medallions with Roma enthroned on the reverse, spear in raised left hand, orb on the right hand, and a large oval shield with boss at her right side (*figs. 1 and 2*). There is no Roma of such elegance on the reverses of more pedestrian Constantinian coins and medallions. The *vota solidi* of Constantius II, 353 to 357, however, give the equivalent frontal flavour, Roma (and Constantinopolis) holding the shield between them, with their right hands (pp. 44–45, figs. 37 and 38). Berk calls the first of their two Roma medallions the «discovery coin», and in terms of the scholarship of this book they absolutely are.

<sup>1</sup> Od. 14.257-70, references from Sarah P. Morris and Emily Townsend Vermeule.

<sup>2</sup> Berlin (2), Copenhagen, Milan, Rome, and Trier (found locally in 1814).

<sup>3</sup> Harlan J. Berk Ltd., Chicago, 94th Buy or Bid Sale, January 1997, no. 732, one ex Bank Leu 22, 1979, lot 383.

Gudrun Bühl's book moves from monument to monument in classifications which evoke thought and which can suggest the iconographic currents, tides of uncertainty in the Late Antique period. Thus, on pp. 143–146, we find the civic ceremonies in the two main registers of the East Side of the Base of the Column of Arcadius in Constantinople, dated here between 401 and 402. Roma and Constantinopolis fill arcuated niches either side of a crowd of Senators and at least one foreign prince. Even granted that we see the Base as a German artist saw it in Constantinople in 1574, the two cities (fig. 76) are versions of a standing, Amazonian Roma, showing that Constantinopolis could shed her Tyche crown, long robes and cornucopiae when the overall occasion was emphatically military.

A compromise existed in the Consular Diptychs of Magnus, 518, in Milan and Paris (pp. 201–202, fig. 105), where both cities are helmeted, fully-garbed versions of Athena-Minerva, capstones of a ceremonial art which offered even more iconographic variations, as on the Diptych of Basilius in Florence, seemingly created in 541 (pp. 221–224, fig. 111). Careful research by B. has added to previous elucidations of the South Side of the Column of Arcadius «um 400», where torch-bearing Tychai, Oriens and Occidens, enframe a riot of Tychai-Provinces led by Nikai-Victoriae dragging prisoners (pp. 266–268, figs. 131–133). The East-West figures were pioneered on a medallion of Valens at Antioch between 375 and 378, earlier under Constantius II, 347 to 355. This is the overtly triumphal-military side of the Base, with cuirassed Emperors (Arcadius and Honorius?) Nikephorus in the center of the register above. Who the fourteen provinces are specifically, we'll never know, unless they were identified by small inscriptions like the Munich *Notitia Dignitatum* or the fragments of a Tetrarchic arch in the walls of Nicaea.<sup>4</sup>

Rome and Constantinopolis not only appeared everywhere on medallions and coins, in major reliefs, on gold and silver plate, on consular ivories, in manuscripts, and in mosaics but also in unusual personal contexts. One of the most interesting in the latter category is a comb of ivory from Egypt in the Benaki Museum, Athens (pp. 155–156, figs. 81 and 82). Rome with her orb and sceptre-staff is enthroned on the «obverse»; Constantinopolis with cornucopiae and torch is similarly posed on the reverse. Both figures, although somewhat primitive in details such as the faces are surprisingly articulate. The notion of having a great hair day with the prime personifications of Late Antiquity beats having a purse full of solidi with Roma and Constantinopolis on the reverse, or almost so.

As many have written, more have noticed, the disappearance of the vast repertory of pagan gods, goddesses, and minor mythological figures or personifications left the coinage impoverished and repetitious. Roma and Constantinopolis become bulwarks of imperial imagery, and when the coins of Byzantium-Constantinopolis were given over to Christian images, or merely to inscriptions, the two heroines of this book survived in various forms in all other media mentioned previously. The disappearance of other major cities: Antiochia, Alexandria,

<sup>4</sup> See G.M.A. Hanfmann, *From Croesus to Constantine* (Ann Arbor, 1975), p. 78.

Carthago, Trevisis, to name only a few, left Roma and Constantinopolis very much alone, occasionally trailed by those clusters of provinces on the Arcadius Column Base and in the Late Medieval manuscripts.

On the other side of the coin, so to speak, cities that are all powerful nowadays passed briefly through the repertory of satellites in the saga of Roma and Constantinopolis. Chief among these is Londinium, who kneels outside her walls and extends her arms in greeting to Constantius I as he rides across a forerunner of London Bridge on the famous gold medallion struck at Trier in 296 to 299 (pp. 303–304, fig. 149). As we have discussed, Trevisis (Trier) has a bigger rôle in the Late Roman World (Chronograph of 354, here fig. 50), but Londinium lives on in a much grander way. The vast repertory of medals struck for Napoleon I before and after 1800 brought many Tychai, like Mediolanum (Milan), back into the world of the visual and commemorative arts. Such thoughts could be the basis of a dissertation and a book on urban personifications in modern numismatic art.

Finally, no decent review can fail to comment on the *apparatus criticus* (i.e. footnotes), which here is excellent, indeed super. So is the «Verzeichnis der mehrfach zitierten Literatur» (pp. 313–324). To be personal, my book «the Goddess Roma» (1959) has an enlarged, revised edition of 1974, where the Romae of the Greek Imperial East, seeds for the twilight glorifications of Roma and Constantinopolis, were planted, and flourished. Constantinopolis-Tyche has her roots in the Livia as Ceres in Copenhagen or the bronze medallion of Julia Domna as Abundance.<sup>5</sup> There are also the huge, cornucopiae-bearing Tychai of the Flavian to Severan periods, such as the rich example in Istanbul from Prusias ad Hypium; whose headless counterpart was found in a crate at the Istanbul airport a few years ago<sup>6</sup> and the great «washerwoman» Tyche in Brussels.<sup>7</sup>

Two years before the great «I Claudia» exhibition<sup>8</sup> Susan B. Matheson arranged an exhibition and a catalogue devoted solely to Tychai, in which many forerunners for the female personifications of the Late Roman realm were collection and discussed.<sup>9</sup>

There is no better way to conclude this review article on a very important, most thorough book that to look at the *Enkolpion* of about 600 where Christian iconography and the Constantinian Tyche come together and appear together in the fashion of the classic *Advantus Augusti* composition. The scene on the obverse

<sup>5</sup> See S.B. Matheson, The divine Claudia: Women as Goddesses in Roman Art, in: I Claudia, Women in Ancient Rome, D.E.E. Kleiner and S.B. Matheson, Editors (New Haven, 1996), pp. 182–187, figs. 3 and 5.

<sup>6</sup> G. Traversari, La Tyche da Prusias ad Hypium (Rome, 1993). O. Açar and M. Kaylan, in: *Connaissance* Oct. 1990, pp. 132 and 136 (colour illustration)

<sup>7</sup> C. Vermeule, *Roman Art* (Boston, 1978), pp. 196 and 345, pl. 126.

<sup>8</sup> It travelled since to San Antonio (Texas) Museum of Art and to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.

<sup>9</sup> S.B. Matheson, An Obsession with Fortune. Tyche in Greek and Roman Art, in: *Minerva* Vol. 5 No. 6, 1994, p. 48; the catalogue discussed about 75 works of art.

shows the Flight into Egypt, Josephus as a Roman Senator with ceremonial staff leads the Virgin Mary and the Baby Jesus enthroned on the donkey, under the Star of Bethlehem, while the canonical, fully-clothed Tyche with cornucopiae receives them at the right. Here, she represents Egypt (pp. 304–307, fig. 151). Sadly, this last work of art in the book is lost, and we know it only from a seventeenth-century drawing in the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

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