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Representations of Eastern Lands and Nations in Political Propaganda of Antonine Emperors, Their Place and Role. Testimony of Coins

The subject matter of the present consideration is the functional and structural aspect of the political propaganda of the Antonines (96–192), as promoted in the emperors' minting in its part using the representations of eastern provinces, lands and nations in coin reverse iconography. They were employed to apologize the Roman Emperor as an ideal ruler: triumphator and benefactor of the state. Various combinations of these representations, often provided with “narrative legends” reveal the complexity of problems arising from the eastern policy of the Roman Empire.

The period of peace brought not very original representations of lands and nations in the monetary iconography. They are mainly personifications of *provinciae piae Jidelis* type. However, together with other "regional" issues of Hadrian and Antonius Pius, they acquire value for presenting the political images of these emperors: they are warrantors of order in the Empire made up of various provinces and lands together with their inhabitants. In this case the impersonations of lands and nations serve the ideas of peace and revival of the Roman Empire.

The period of eastern wars brought about the intensification of propaganda initiatives. In Trajan minting the history of the conflict with Parthians was related by means of individual images. There are no battle scenes of the emperor but original inscriptions that sum up successive episodes of the military operations. In Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus minting eastern lands and nations are represented mainly as enemies who the Emperor-Warrior fights with. The history of war was rendered in a few scenes which repeat certain metaphorical formulations explaining the effects of the war. They show the grandeur of the emperor, worthy the name of *imperator invictus*.

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Armenian Collaborators of Justinian I. Part 2. Eunuch Narses' Great Career

Narses was born ca. 480 in Persian Armenia but from his early adolescence he was staying at the imperial court. Sources describe him already as a mature man, whom the emperor trusted. He began his career as a civilian official and held various posts (*sacellarius, cubiculariuis, praepositus sacri cubiculo*). He was promoted to the rank of *illustris* in 537 or 538.

In 532 he played a part in saving Justinian's power during the Nike's mutiny. In 535 he intervened in Alexandria shaken at that time by religious arguments and succeeded in making Theodosius patriarch.

Narses' military career began very late, when he was 58 and was sent to Italy by the emperor in order to support Belisarius (538). Due to a conflict between the commander-in-chief and Narses, the emperor called the latter back to Constantinople soon.

Upon the return to Byzantium Narses remained one of Justinian's most trusted collaborators. One of his tasks was the investigation of the plot Belisarius and John of Cappadokia had been accused of. He intervened when unrest burst out at Constantinople. Sent to the Heruls he managed to make them take part in the struggle against the Goths and he participated in the struggle against the Slavs who had invaded Thrace (545).

On the turn of 550 and 551, when he was 75, Narses was appointed *strategos - autokrator* and ordered to defeat Totila, king of Ostrogoths. With considerable strength in men and

financial resources and with the experienced advisor, John, he managed to annihilate the state of Ostrogoths in Italy. He was honored for his feats with the title of patrician and became administrator of the regained province. His post was confirmed by the pragmatic sanction of 554.

Narses then organized administrative reforms of Italy and reconstruction from war destruction. He also helped install Pelagius on the papal throne. He became known as a severe administrator and was accused of getting huge money from his post. At the same time however he spent big sums on church foundations. Removed from his post by Justin II in 567 or 568, he died in Italy, probably in Rome between 568 and 574. A coincidence of the removal from his post with the Lombard invasion in Italy caused accusation of his collaboration with the latter. The accusations are not supported by any evidence though.

Most Byzantine historians speak of Narses with greatest esteem. His contemporaries tell about his human attitude, lack of cruelty, defending the victims, modesty, piety (he sympathized with monophysites) and keeping promises. He was able to operate in extremely difficult conditions, showing both military and organizational talents and did not belong to the individuals convinced of his own infallibility. In his actions he could make use of both conventional and non-conventional warfare and was popular among soldiers.

Narses' ethnicity did not have any influence on his career. He was brought up at Constantinople and nothing points out any ties with the country of his origin. He is almost certain not to have taken any actions in favor of Persian Armenia. Even if he had wanted to, he would not have had any chance to do that, as he was sent to other, distant provinces of the empire. It should be noted that he did not differ much from his compatriots, serving in the Byzantine army, although on the other hand, he could count on the loyalty of other Armenians in the imperial service.