

## The Amazons' New Clothes: Representations of Tychai in the Imperial Greek East

Several cities in the Greek East, especially in Asia Minor, subscribed to a ktistic tradition according to which they had been founded by Amazons. Oftentimes the name of such a city was said to be that of the founder herself: examples include Smyrna, Sinope, Cyme, and Amastris, among others. The coins of these cities struck in the classical and Hellenistic periods not infrequently bear an obverse portrait of their respective founders, and in these portraits the Amazons in question are depicted similarly to other female figures such as nymphs, typically diademed or wearing a headdress associated with the local region (e.g. Amastris' Persian cap).

In the Roman Imperial era this depiction undergoes a radical change in two main ways. In the first place, these Amazons are frequently shown wearing the mural or turreted crown associated with city goddesses (*tychai*). Secondly, the Amazon founders begin to be shown in full figure on the reverses of their cities' coins, where they are often shown not only with a mural crown but also in a short chiton or tunic that reveals one breast; many also hold a double-headed axe, a characteristic weapon of the Amazons in classical art.

Like the double-headed axe, the short breast-baring chiton was strongly associated with Amazons in antiquity, but far more so among the Romans than the Greeks. As a survey of the depictions cited under "Amazon" in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* reveals, the Greeks more often showed Amazons fully covered, whether in "barbarian" clothing (e.g. long trousers, long-sleeved shirts, or Persian-style headdresses) than in a short chiton with one breast bared. This latter style was far more popular in the Roman imagination than in the Greek, not only in the visual arts but in literature as well: Virgil, for example, uses the image to characterize the virgin huntress Camilla as a figurative Amazon: *unum exserta latus pugnae* ("one breast bared for the fight," *Aen.* 11.649). In Roman culture more generally, this revealing

chiton was also the distinctive outfit of two closely related figures: both Roma herself and Virtus, the personification of “manliness” in the sense of martial courage and excellence. While not Amazons per se, both of these female figures are Amazonian in the sense that they exhibit behaviors associated with men, contrary to the expectations of their biological sex. It may be tempting to see such Roman figures, including not only Roma and Virtus but also the divine huntress Diana and her mortal doublet Camilla, as “borrowing” the Amazonian style of dress to mark this transcendence of gender roles, but the evidence is not so straightforward: the image of Roma in a breast-baring chiton can be traced back at least to the 270s B.C., long predating the widespread adoption of this style for Amazons in the Greek East.

Based on the numismatic evidence of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., I argue that we should analyze Roma’s adoption of this style of clothing in association with the very similar depiction not of an Amazon but of the personification of Aetolia as illustrated on a coin of the Aetolian League of the 280s. Both Roma and Aetolia represent non-Greek cities celebrated for their martial strength: indeed, a folk etymology of the name Roma derives the term from the Greek word *rhome*, “strength,” and the statue of Aetolia as an armed woman was erected in honor of the Aetolians’ successful defense of Delphi in 286. It therefore makes sense that “barbarian” (or “semi-barbarian”) female figures who exhibited such *virtus*, including Roma, Aetolia, and the Amazons, are shown or described wearing the same distinctive outfit.

The Amazon city founders depicted this way in the coinage of cities of the Greek East in the Roman Imperial period likewise needs to be examined in light of these precedents. As the depiction of Aetolia from the 280s B.C. had no demonstrable effect on the depiction of these founders, who are still shown in the Greek classical style through the end of the Hellenistic period, I propose that the marked shift in depictions of Amazon city founders from the pre-

Roman to the Roman period is due mainly to the influence of the image of Roma herself: there is in fact a remarkable depiction of Roma wearing a turreted helmet and an “Amazonian” chiton on a denarius of AD 68–69 (*RIC* Civil Wars 59), the only known precedent for the depiction of a city goddess sporting this garb. The similar imperial-era depictions of Amazon founders, so different from their classical and Hellenistic precursors, should therefore be seen as examples of Roman influence in the Greek East in the Roman Imperial period.