



Summary :

The depiction of cities in the form of persons is characteristic mainly of the Hellenistic era. This practice was also widespread during the Roman period, when apart from the cities whole provinces begun being personified, for reasons related to the political propaganda of the era. The most usual depiction of cities was in the form of Tyche or an Amazon, while provinces were usually represented as deities or simple women.

Date

Hellenistic and Roman periods

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

1. Cities

1.1. Cities as Amazons

According to tradition, many cities of Asia Minor were founded by [Amazons](#), and for this reason these were considered as tutelary deities. By the Hellenistic period, in the cases where cities were personified on coinage, these figures were identified with their founders and represented as Amazons, standing up with one breast uncovered, carrying the [pelte](#), and brandishing the double axe plus the symbols of each city ([Cyme](#), [Aegae](#), Myrina). The [Temple of Hecate](#) at Lagina of [Caria](#) is considered as an important monument: many cities of Asia Minor were depicted as Amazons on its north [frieze](#). This depiction commemorated the peace treaty ([Treaty of Amisus](#)) between the cities and Rome after the end of the [Second Mithridatic War](#) (81 BC).¹ On coinage of the Imperial period they are often accompanied by other deities ([Smyrna](#) as an Amazon in a [dexioses](#) scene with [Ares](#)) or identified with them ([Ephesus](#) as [Artemis Ephesia](#) on coins dating to Macrinus' reign, 217-218 AD).

1.2. Cities as Tyche

[Tyche](#) as a political deity was often identified with the city it protected. The most famous representation of this kind is the colossal statue of the [Tyche of Antioch](#), a work by the Sicyonian sculptor [Eutychides](#), commissioned by [Seleucus I Nicator](#) when he founded [the city](#) which bore his name on the banks of the Orontes River in Syria (c.300 BC). Because the city was founded by a king and consequently its establishment could not be traced back to the mythological past, it was depicted in the form of Tyche (=Fortune), the deified allegory on the same name. It was depicted as a female deity in a mural crown (polos) and attired in a long frilled himation, seated on a rock and brandishing wheatears, with the Orontes River at her feet depicted as a young man swimming. The lost original bronze sculpture by Eutychides, which also served as the city's devotional statue, has been recreated thanks mainly to its depictions on coins and signet rings, and to a surviving copy.²

By the 2nd, and mainly during the 3rd cent. AD, these two iconographic types become merged. Therefore, on [coins](#) from Smyrna dating to the reign of [Septimius Severus](#) (193-212 AD) the city is represented as a seated Amazon donning a mural crown.³

2. Kingdoms and Provinces

2.1. Commagene

[Commagene](#) is one of the most important monumental personifications of a geographical and administrative area in the late Hellenistic mausoleum of the king [Antiochus IV](#), at [Nemrut Dag](#) on the Taurus mountain.⁴

It was represented as a fertility deity, seated on a throne flanked by Greco-Persian and Hellenistic rulers, in a polos or crown and



brandishing the Horn of Amalthea on her right hand. On a relief dating to the same period, but executed in a more Hellenistic style, she is depicted as Tyche holding the Horn of Amalthea in a dexiotes scene with the king.⁵

2.2. Roman provinces

During the period of Roman conquest, the regions of the Hellenistic kingdoms were depicted on the triumphal monuments of the victors as kneeling, vanquished female figures. When they finally become [Roman provinces](#), their iconographic type changes and they are depicted as fertility deities, in the type of Tyche and the Amazons.

Most of the Roman provinces of Asia Minor were depicted for the first time like Tyche or Amazons on coinage minted on the occasion of [Hadrian's tour](#). [Phrygia](#) is depicted welcoming the emperor kneeling in a dexiotes scene, while on coins minted during [Caracalla's](#) reign (211-217 AD) the province is depicted together with Caria flanking [Zeus Laodiceus](#). The [Roman province of Asia](#) is represented as a Greek deity in the type of Tyche or [Cybele](#) wearing a mural crown, a [chiton](#) and an [himation](#) and holding a prow and a helm. These symbols alluded to the coasts of Asia Minor, the ports and wealth of the province, a large part of which originated from maritime trade.

[Cappadocia](#) was depicted on coinage minted during [Hadrian's](#) reign (117-138 AD) as an Amazon in a short chiton, brandishing hunting weapons. The warlike nature of the personified province is attributed to the campaign the emperor waged against the Parthians during this period. [Bithynia](#) is usually represented as Tyche wearing a mural crown and holding a helm and a prow or as a fertility goddess with a plough, wheatears and the Horn of Amalthea.⁶

These pictorial types have been borrowed by types usually used for the representation of female deities, abstract ideas and cities. This is why the designers of the coins or the sculptors felt the need to accompany their creations with the relevant explanatory inscriptions, without which their identification as representations of provinces would have been impossible, even during the time of their creation.

1. *LIMC* I, 1 (1981), pp. 649-650, see under entry 'Amazones' (P. Devambez); *LIMC* III, 1 (1986), pp. 799-800, see under entry 'Ephesos I' (H. Vetters); Harl, K.W., *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275* (Berkeley - Los Angeles 1987), pp. 71-82.

2. *LIMC* I, 1 (1981), pp. 840-851, see under entry 'Antiochia' (J.C. Baity); *LIMC* III, 1 (1986), pp. 799-800, see under entry 'Ephesos I' (H. Vetters); *LIMC* VIII, 1 (1997), pp. 115-125, see under entry 'Tyche' (L. Villard).

3. *LIMC* I, 1 (1981), pp. 649-650, see under entry 'Amazones' (P. Devambez); *LIMC* VIII, 1 (1997), pp. 115-125, see under entry 'Tyche' (L. Villard).

4. The colossal monument dates to the Late Hellenistic period (65 BC), before Commagene became a Roman province.

5. Dörner, F.K., *Der Thron Götter auf dem Nemrud Dağ Kommagene* (Bergisch Gladbach 1987); *LIMC* VII, 1 (1994), pp. 91-92, see under entry 'Kommagene' (F.K. Dörner); *LIMC* VII, 1 (1994), pp. 405-407, see under entry 'Phrygia' (R. Vollkommer).

6. Dörner, F.K., *Der Thron Götter auf dem Nemrud Dağ Kommagene* (Bergisch Gladbach 1987); *LIMC* III, 1 (1986), pp. 118-119, see under entry 'Bithynia' (S. Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann); *LIMC* V, 1 (1990), pp. 963-964, see under entry 'Kappadokia' (R. Vollkommer); *LIMC* VII, 1 (1994), pp. 91-92, see under entry 'Kommagene' (F.K. Dörner); *LIMC* VII, 1 (1994), pp. 405-407, see under entry 'Phrygia' (R. Vollkommer).

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	Villard L. , "Tyche", <i>LIMC VIII, 1</i> , 1997, 115-125

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Glossary :

	chiton, the
	Item of clothing consisting of a square woollen textile seamed on both sides.
	dexioses, the
	Scene at which two human figures are depicted in handshake, usually interpreted as a farewell to the dead. Such scenes are mainly found on funerary stelae.
	frieze (1. architecture), (2. painting)
	1. The part of the entablature resting on the architrave and below the cornice. In the Doric order the frieze is decorated with two alternative motives, namely the triglyph and metope, while in the Ionic order the frieze is a decoratively carved band. 2. Decorative horizontal band that sweeps parts of a vessel or the highest part of the walls in a room.
	himation, the
	Rectangular woolen (mainly) cloth that was worn over the <i>chiton</i> (cloak). It could be wrapped around the shoulders and the body in different ways and was fastened with a belt or with brooches.
	pelte
	A small and light shield, of elliptical or 8-like shape. It was often covered with leather. Initially it was used by the barbarian warriors but later it has been adopted by the Greeks (peltasts) and the Romans.

Sources