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DENARII AS THE MEANS OF PROPAGANDA OF THE OFFICIAL POLITICS IN ROMAN EMPIRE

The denarius formed the backbone of the Roman currency through the Roman Republic. Later it continued to be the main coin of the Roman Empire until the middle of the 3-d century. These coins are considered to be the important historical monuments which help historians to study the economical and political life of the Roman Empire. Also the denarius was the important means of propaganda of the official politics and religious believes of Romans.

The images on denarii can clearly be classified as propaganda in different spheres:

- political (glorification of emperor, his success in foreign politics and unity with the army);
- religious (proclaiming the divine origin of emperor and the members of his family, the depicting of gods, goddesses, their attributes, temples, altars, cultic scenes);
- cultural (showing the emperor's successful cultural activities with the images of different architectural and art objects, scenes of celebrations) [1, p.120-125].

Imagery on the earliest denarii consisted of the bust of Roma on the obverse and a deity driving quadriga on the reverse. In ancient Roman religion Roma was the female deity who personified the city of Rome and more broadly the Roman state.

The imagery of coins was modified when Julius Caesar issued coins bearing his own portrait. It was the first Roman coinage to feature the portrait of a living individual. The most frequent portrait on the obverse of coins was the emperor's portrait. Their heirs, predecessors and empresses were also featured. This was done from the time of Augustus till the end of the Empire. The image of the Roman emperor was of a special importance, because the emperor embodied the state and its politics.

The reverse types featured legends that proclaimed the glory of Rome, the glory of the army, victory against the barbarians, the restoration of happy times and the greatness of the emperor. It usually illustrated mythical scenes or personification of various gods and goddesses. Typical reverses are usually seen during and after the periods of war when emperors make various claims of liberation, subjugation and pacification. During his campaign against Pompey Caesar issued the variety of denarii that featured images of Venus or Aeneas, trying to associate himself with his divine ancestors [2, p.237].

An example of the emperor who proclaimed his divine status was Commodus. In 192 he issued a series of coins depicting his bust clad in a lion skin (the usual depicting of Hercules) on the observe proclaiming that he was the Roman incarnation of Hercules [3, p.436]. It was not only Commodus who liked to show himself godlike. Augustus featured himself in the image of Apollo, Caligula depicted his sisters as Fortuna and Concordia, Nero was featured on the obverse of coins as Helios, Maximianus Herculus as Hercules. Such kinds of denarii confirm the great emperor's cult in Rome. Quite separate type of denarii were the so-called consecrational (from lat. – consecratio) denarii, which were minted on the occasion of the death of emperor or the member of his family and enrolment them to gods.

From the time of Caesar until the end of Roman Empire coins featured the idealized portraits of emperors and general proclamations of Empire and its politics, that's why we can say that they were the important means of propaganda.

LITERATURE

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