

## Representation of the Victory Monument (Τροπαιον)

### Tropaion in Greek and Roman Art

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The Greek and Roman civilizations were established on the basis of a single religious and political unity, interconnected by the geography of the place, with a general religion, and common customs and traditions.

The technical and military strategies differed according to the invasions and the military field of the army teams and military equipment, and they varied with different customs and traditions that were reflected on the battlefield after the end of the wars, with slogans and military political slogans, the most famous of which is the memorial of **Τροπαιον** victory.

#### **The goal of the study:**

The study aims to describe and analyze the artistic composition of the pattern of portrayal of the tropaion in Greek and Roman art.

The study is divided into several sections: First - the origin and meaning of the word Tropaion . Second - the emergence of Tropaion . Third - the study and analysis of some artistic examples of the style of tropaion in Greek and Roman art.

**Τροπαιον** was known in the past as a collection of weapons, armor, and ammunition accumulated on top of each other for the defeated party in the battle. Then these weapons were placed or hung on a wooden stand or on tree trunks in the same place where one of the two sides of the battle was defeated to display to passers-by after the victory in an attempt to recount the events and details of the battle represented in the spoils stolen from the defeated party in a concrete and realistic manner that embodies the most important events and military championships.

The tropaion as a concept was not clearly defined and it was expressed in several terms though it has one meaning (which will be tackled later on, in this study). Historians of ancient and new Greek and Roman monuments and studies agree that the shape of the tropaion is an emblem of victory that artistically reflects one of the military traditions in the Greek and Roman eras as well as a political sign of the post-victory period.

Tropaion is a Greek word Τροπαιον from the verb (tropē) meaning retreat after defeat. The word Trophy is derived from it in English and means a trophy memorial represented in (monument / cup / wreath / spoil / statue ....), which is a monument or a structure raised and decorated with the weapons, armors and the spoils of the defeated enemy that escaped from the battlefield. In the beginning it was depicted in the form of a spiraling tree trunk of (olive or oak) fixed to the ground (Figure No. 1) with weapons and shields hanging on it as evidence of defeat

This is what the Syracusans did when they wiped out a large number of the Athenian campaign on the banks of the river during the second phase of the Peloponnesian War in 415 BC-413 BC. The Syracusans decorated the tallest trees on the banks of the river with a group of Athenian shields (according to the historian Plutarch). This is registered on the Syracusan Coins (Figure No.2).



The term 'Trophy' was also used by some people in an unspecified and imprecise way as a reference to booty (war booty), which is known in Greek as *λαφυρο* or *Σκύλα*, which differs from *τροπαιο* in the sense of victory.

The tropaion was dedicated to the god to whom victory was attributed. The god was usually Zeus Tropus, the god of fate and destiny Atropos and the end of life as he was known in ancient Greek myths. In the case of naval battles, victory was attributed to the god Poseidon and the monument was decorated with the bows of the defeated enemy's ships and it was installed on the nearest beach where victory was achieved.

The memorial was not a Greek or Roman tradition but rather an ancient Greek ritual taken from the Persians during the Persian wars and the Greek cities in the fifth century BC when many battles were fought, the most famous of which was the Battle of Salamis.

As a memorial, the tropaion is also considered a continuation and representation of the symbolic content of the armors plundered during battles, which was represented and mentioned in the Iliad. The Tropaion was translated into a monument in line with the societal context of the ancient Greek city and it represented the objective correlative of the declaration of victory in a manner similar to narratives.

As for the Roman Victory Monument, it celebrated the Roman Empire and promoted universal Roman military domination, not a specific victory. Over time and after the first century of the Empire, the emergence of the monument as a symbol of the main Roman victory represented in the arches of victory became so widespread that the meaning of the tropaion as a monument to victory, as a stand-alone emblem, was not familiar to anyone at the time. It became just one of many symbols of battle events represented on memorial pillars and arches of victory.

It was known as tropaeum and was made as permanent memorial structures in the form of a military shield clothing with spears and weapons attached to it (Figure No.3). It also represented the war with its events and end as a major political event and a sign of victory that consolidates the person of the king or other public figures who are important in the war and as evidence of bad events which are difficult to remember for the defeated party.



### **Some artistic examples of tropaion style in Greek and Roman art.**

The tropaion in the Greek and Roman sculptural arts on various artworks came in diverse forms and representations, the majority of which are unique examples that appeared on pottery, altars, temples, and frequently on Roman coins.

Figure No. (4) Greek style Pelike vase. The red figure is preserved in the Boston Museum Under No. 187.20; it dates back to the mid-fifth century BC. The goddess Nike, the winged Greek goddess of victory, is depicted on the body of the vase, preparing and decorating the memorial (the tropaion) that consists of a hoplite panoply topped with a Corinthian helmet and a corset attached to it around Hoplon sword and shield.

Figure No. (5) Greek coin of the tetradrachm denomination. Rev of the goddess Athena, The British Museum depicts an owl (the symbol of Athena) standing on a stone, scattered stones and surrounded by two tropaion (In the form of a tree trunk standing for a military-style warrior) in celebration of the victory in the Battle of Chaironeia, in Boeotia, central Greece.

The Romans were also interested in glorifying their military victories by depicting them. During the last years of the Roman Republic (509-27 BC), senior military leaders used the form of a memorial and as a matter of propaganda to glorify themselves personally. Gaius Marius (a consul and a Roman military leader) was the first to celebrate the anniversary of his victory on the Germanic tribes of Gaul across the Danube in Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC).

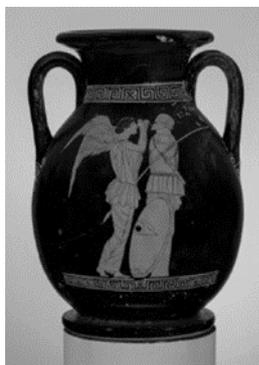


Figure No . (4)



Figure No . (5)

The goddess Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory, was depicted on the Rev silver coins crowning the top of the monument and at its base a picture of a kneeling prisoner (Figure No. 6). On the obverse of the coin, the God Jupiter was depicted. Over the years, the same design was followed, but with an increasing number of war prisoners surrounding the monument. By the end of the Republican era, the monuments on Roman coins celebrated the military success of the leader as a monument for his personal victory.



The Tropaion as a monument of victory appeared mostly on the art of Roman coins. Its forms varied although the differences were simple ranging between depicting the Tropaion separately without any insignia of the goddess of victory Victoria or depicting a certain number of prisoners on both sides of the monument.

In the Republican era, the Roman coins depicted prisoners with their hands shackled, sitting back to back on the sides of the memorial that was crowned with the Roman goddess of victory, (Figure No. 7). This design was prevalent in the Imperial era and was associated with the emperors' military campaigns and their victories. It showed the Tropaion next the goddess of victory or the Emperor or Caesar as (a powerful symbol to reinforce his personal victories) while showing the defeated party as a captive next to the Tropaion or kneeling bearing the monument of the Tropaion above his head (Figure No. 8).



Figure No . (7)



Figure No . (8)

The war was spoiled from the defeated party also varied from the rectangular arched shields, oval, hexagonal and circular in shape, decorated with geometric and floral patterns and Medusa heads, as a result of the frequent Roman wars with different states, which reflected the mixing between Roman and non-Roman weapons pillaged from wars, and perhaps this explains the reason for the appearance of the Roman Cups of Victory not only on the battlefield but on the Roman armor and costumes of the allies and Roman Emperors as well.

The weapons of the defeated enemies were often dedicated to temples and sacred places as votive offerings, symbolizing the victorious emperor and celebrating his victory.

Figure No. (9) the altar of the Temple of Domitian, decorated with a frieze with pictures of various accumulated weapons and armors, unarranged in a pile of arms, shields, helmets, bows, and garters belonging to the defeated party.



Figure No. (10) is an agate cameo (*Gemma Augustea* [the Gem of Augustus]) that represents real characters along with mythical and symbolic characters in one piece that is divided in two parts. The lower



part of the cameo depicts the victorious Roman soldiers decorating the Tropaion and raising it high as a sign of victory while the defeated barbarian soldiers are prostrated at their feet in a position of humiliation and submission.

Figure No. (11) is a view of the Tropaion on the body of Trajan's column in Rome decorated with a spiral carved frieze. The scene No. 48 (LXXVIII) at the bottom of Trajan's column represents a Tropaion on a tree trunk in the form of a warrior dressed in a full military uniform.



The first appearance of the Tropaion was on the lower part of the body armor of Emperor Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus (Figure No. 12). Perhaps this was to increase the prestige of the Emperor and the victorious state together.



-The Tropeion is a monument of an official nature designed by the victor as part of his celebration of victory and as one of the means of gratitude and praise to gods and not as a military standard for bearing armors, weapons and flags that imply the symbolism of victory.

-The central function of the Tropeion as a memorial on the battlefield is a special and personal experience as a declaration of victory, by expressing it with a fixed scene or view inside (we are the victors) with all the losses and horrors of the battle we faced.

- The depiction of the Tropeion in Roman art represents a model in itself, an attribute of the Roman goddess of victory Victoria who brings victory to the emperor and Rome. It also stands as an attribute of the god of war Mars and as a sign of victory in the hands of the emperor, and a symbol of Rome's military might.

The Tropeion was depicted on all kinds of Greek and Roman arts, and the share of its appearance on the Roman coin was endless. Most probably, it was used to publicize the defeat of the enemy and as a general symbol of Roman military success.

The " Tropeion " symbolizes the embodiment of the souls of defeated warriors so as to restrain their power and to unleash the divine protective forces and increase the prestige of the victorious state.

The memorials continued to exist in the modern era as sculptural or architectural creative work, constructed as an embodiment of the most important historical events and as constant evidence of the achievements of military leaders, politicians, national and scientific personalities, who have a profound impact on the souls of people and nations over the later times.

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