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# Opuscula

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Cover by Kristin Parknert. Drawing from Karlsson *et al.* in this volume, p. 38, fig. 18

Lyttkens is Swedish, but he writes almost flawless English (and from time to time surprises readers with a light-hearted remark). To a non-economist his economics was intelligible, and seemed realistic about the extent to which the actual behaviour of people departs from economic rationality. His ancient history I think ought to be intelligible to non-classicists. He knows the subject, and recent work on it, fairly well: there are a few slips or dubious details, but they could be corrected without invalidating his main points. In view of his readiness to allow for unintended consequences, I find it surprising that he considers it an intended consequence of Solon's changes that the linking of office-holding to property encouraged rich men to spend lavishly in order to demonstrate their wealth (79–82; he dates the beginnings of what later became the system of liturgies here, but I think few now would accept his guess that Athens already had some triremes this early). Poorer citizens undoubtedly formed the majority of those attending the assembly, but, since there is very little evidence that opinions in the Athenian assembly were divided on class lines, I think it is misleading to claim that in the 5th and 4th centuries "to be successful in the Assembly, a political leader would increasingly have had to advocate measures that benefited the poor majority" (61, repeated later).

Distinctive features of Lyttkens's approach are, for early Greece, an emphasis on the development of states with boundaries, of defined property of individuals within states, and (in a system in which only citizens could own landed property) the need to define who were citizens and were entitled to own landed property; and, throughout Greek history, an insistence that "nothing will change unless there are individuals with an incentive to act" (70; he follows P.B. Manville in arguing that there were many men whose citizenship of Athens might be challenged and who therefore had an incentive to support Cleisthenes' plan to establish a new basis for citizenship). It should now be agreed that, although the Athenians were not sophisticated economists, they did understand some basic economic principles and did sometimes make decisions from economic motives. This book is a sensible and worthwhile exercise in exploring the possibilities.

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I. Mañas Romero, *Pavimentos decorativos de Itálica (Santiponce, Sevilla). Un estudio arqueológico* (BAR-IS, 2081), Oxford: Archaeopress 2010. 234 pp., 122 figs. ISBN 978-1-4073-0480-9.

I. Mañas Romero, *Mosaicos Romanos de Itálica II. Mosaicos contextualizados y apéndice* (Corpus Mosaicos Romanos de España, XIII), Madrid-Sevilla: CSIC & Universidad Pablo de Olavide 2011. 188 pp., 188 figs., 32 colour plates. ISBN 978-84-00-09268-9.

Spain boasts a seemingly inexhaustible reserve of Roman mosaics of great quality, as well as a brisk pace in the work of archaeological excavation and publishing. New discoveries and interesting studies in the field are regularly published. Presented here are two books from 2010 and 2011, which are further contributions to the general picture of a vivid and prolific production.

The mosaics of Itálica constitute the greatest collection of Roman mosaics in *Hispania Antiqua*. The discovery of the site and its enormous amount of material gives an unprecedented opportunity to investigate themes of motifs, fashion, distribution and maybe also the existence of regional workshops. It also provides opportunities for drawing conclusions on location and chronology.

The two books, Mañas/BAR and Mañas/Corpus, are both based on a more extensive thesis on the Roman mosaics of the site by Irene Mañas Romero, defended at the University of Complutense, Madrid (*Pavimentos decorativos de Itálica (Santiponce, Sevilla)*) in 2008. It was written under the tuition of the Corpus project on Roman mosaics of Spain (CMRE) (*Corpus Mosaicos Romanos de España*) at CSIC (Consejo Superior de los Investigaciones Científicas), the Spanish board of scientific research in Madrid.

The original purpose was to present the mosaics *in situ*, together with other contextualized mosaics from the site. This was intended as a complement to the earlier corpus on Itálica, A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Mosaicos romanos de Itálica I. Mosaicos conservados en colecciones públicas y particulares de la ciudad de Sevilla* (*Corpus Mosaicos Romanos de España*, Fasc.II), Madrid 1978, which concerned the non-contextualized mosaics in museums and private collections in Seville, including those preserved only through drawings.

This is an extensive work, not just a compilation; it is a re-evaluation of earlier finds and new research resulting in these two publications, which can be advantageously consulted together, along with the earlier volume by Blanco Freijeiro. The main task was thus to examine several aspects of the mosaics from the viewpoint of the archaeological context. Hence, this is not only a way to delimit the topic; it puts focus on the importance of the location as such, a principal point of reference

in the following thematic analysis and reasoning. A second purpose was to collect the data of all known, but not always published, mosaics of the site in an extended study.

This included mosaics with a documented context, whether still *in situ*, in museums, in private collections, or lost and only known through drawings. Consequently the bibliography from the 200 years of excavation history of the site (from the turn of the 18th century onwards until the last rescue excavations took place in the first decade of the 21st century) was presented, including unedited documents such as photographs and manuscripts. All this was done with the overall perspective of studying the mosaics and their environment with up-to-date methods in order to obtain a concise and full picture of the ancient city.

In the Mafías/BAR publication, the catalogue covers 67 of the most significant mosaic pavements of *opus tessellatum* occurring in domestic spaces in Itálica. These were selected from the original 133 entries of *opus signinum*, *sectile* and *tessellatum* that were included in the thesis. They all date from two main periods of production: between AD 150 and 220, and from the end of the 3rd century AD and first half of the 4th century.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first part, 'Introduction' (the following titles of parts and chapters are the reviewer's translation) includes four chapters of a historiographical character. The first chapter ('Project, method and objective') starts with a presentation of the outline and structure of the work, including a short account of the main purpose, methods and goals of the project.

In Chapter two ('Introduction to the history and topography of Itálica'), the author introduces a concise chronology of the complex and still not fully established history of the oldest part of Itálica, *vetus urbs*. Even though this area is unexcavated, and the full extent of the later remains is unknown, recent rescue excavations have nevertheless added dramatic new evidence. Recent archaeological finds have for example changed the state of knowledge concerning the foundation date of the ancient city, its geographic extent and urban structure. For instance, there is now evidence that the site was an early Turdetan settlement long before the Romans arrived. Under Hadrian's rule (AD 117–138) it became a *colonia* and grew from 5 ha. to 51 ha., due to the so called *nova urbs*, an extension built on new land. Gradually abandoned for reasons not yet fully clarified, this zone today corresponds to the archaeological park. During the second half of the 2nd century AD, the 48 *insulae* were constructed, containing the public areas and the large, lavishly decorated private *domus* where the vast majority of mosaics have been found.

In Chapter 3 ('The gradual discovery of the mosaics'), the author continues with the story of the different phases of discovery and the archaeological excavations relating the mosaics to the buildings and the urban planning. Here, the author

gives a vivid account of the often dramatic events during the early days of the excavation of the site in an interesting and elegantly composed prose. An especially neatly condensed section is the painful reading of the story of discovery, further exploration and decay of some of the discoveries and finds, a story one wishes could have turned out better.

In Chapter 4 ('The present situation of investigation and analysis of the bibliographic production'), the author gives an extensive account of the full bibliographic production from the beginning of the 19th century up to the present. Attention is drawn to the fact that despite the multitude of works, the majority of which were written before 1920, few authors treated other than the most spectacular examples. Authors of the antiquarian tradition of the 19th and the 20th centuries are named along a timeline, illustrating the gradual increase of interest in the archaeological context from the 1920s onwards. This was followed by the systematic approach to both composition and iconography in the 1960s, carrying on with the *Corpus* project starting in the 1970s, when investigation enters into yet another phase with an interest in analytical description. The presentation ends with detailed, instructive, and up to date summary of the work of the last two decades, with its interesting new focus on the archaeological context of the mosaics, permitting a range of different kinds of questions to be posed.

The core of the work, the extensive second part ('Thematic analysis'), follows in five analytical chapters, where different themes are all closely related to the buildings to which the mosaics belong.

In an introductory chapter ('Domestic space of Itálica and its pavements'), the 16 buildings of domestic type are presented with useful summaries, which help the orientation in the text, for example *Casa de la Exedra* (The House of the Exedra). The author provides a detailed account of each building, including location, archaeological excavations and type, as well as investigations concerning social status and chronology. A detailed presentation of the individual mosaic floors is followed by an overall analysis of the use of décor in domestic space, including the proportion between the different areas of the house: social, private, sacral and service areas, as well as the circulation pattern of the house. Six of the buildings and ten of the *triclinia* of the buildings are presented in tables in this section.

The second chapter ('Figurative themes: the reception and use of images in the domestic space'), presents a systematic study of the topic which aims to find the conceptual intention behind the choice of motif. Indeed, the city of Itálica lends itself well to this objective because of its limited geographical extent and period of activity. There are 51 contextualized mosaics with figurative motifs comprising a mythological repertory, similar to that employed in the rest of Baetica. The

distinct difference between the topics of the two periods of production is of particular interest. During the first period in the second half of the 2nd century AD, the turn of the century and the first two decades of the 3rd century AD, Bacchus and his sphere dominate the mosaics, along with other narrative mythological themes, idyllic scenes, and especially love themes such as Hylas and the love stories of Zeus, Eros, Psyche, and Venus. Other narratives of mythological types, the marine world, and apotropaic and beneficent motifs were also in vogue. During the second period of production, the end of the 3rd century AD and first half of the 4th, new themes appeared, related to new ways of self-representation. Using fresh modes of symbolism, the mosaics alluded to the social status of the owner through motifs such as the horse races of the circus, the muses, philosophy and astronomy. The author points to how this corresponds to a new period in the history of the city, which is supported by many discoveries and finds.

In Chapter three ('Geometric compositions and vegetal repertory'), the author gives a concise account of different repertoires of the site and presents different approaches. The quantity of material assists in determining the characteristics of the site and for establishing a chronology. Traces of workshop activities in the city are recorded. This chapter is exceedingly well illustrated with a section of fine computerized drawings made by the author, including geometric compositions, and ornamental patterns such as borders and other decorative fillings.

In the technically-oriented Chapter four ('The manufacture of the mosaic of Itálica: the work as it can be seen in the remains of the material') the author presents what kind of information about the mosaics' manufacture can be gained by current archaeological techniques, and describes the subsequent restoration and conservation of the mosaics. The author emphasizes that through close study of the remains, material and method can be identified, and also related issues such as work organization and productive cycle, despite the lack of written sources concerning the craft.

A particularly interesting section deals with the geometric planning. For example, the author describes the assumed method of dividing the surfaces by set measurements, basic geometry, instruments, and mathematics. Concerning the decoration, the author gives an informative account of the repetitive use of some models, and subsequently develops this long-discussed subject in an unusually unbiased manner. The author succeeds in giving a comprehensive overview of the motifs and their variations by using known examples. Starting with the confirmed existence of cartoons, the author avoids becoming too deeply involved in the complicated question of their origin, their distribution and use, or concerning the subject of artistic independence and creativity. A further benefit of this highly practical approach is that it also considers one

of the major topics in today's research, the identification of workshops.

Finally, a last section considers evidence for the possible presence of a specific school in this area of Guadalquivir, based on the assumption of the size of the workshops, the area covered by mosaics and the similarity of the economy. The author highlights the variation in scholarly opinion on this matter, with some researchers opposing the idea of clear-cut schools as such, preferring to attribute the variations to the different artistic styles, environments and influences of taste and fashion then circulating throughout the Mediterranean. This important and accomplished chapter constitutes a well-balanced combination of an up-to-date summary of research, personal investigations of the site, and reasoning.

In the last, historically oriented, Chapter five ('Conservation and restoration of the mosaics of Itálica: a historic perspective'), the author considers the history, geography and topography of the city in relation to the different phases of its history of discovery, ending with the present-day state of investigation. The first section of the chapter tells the story of the origin and fate of the mosaics excavated before 1890, the mosaics left *in situ*, and those excavated after 1890, which were extracted with different levels of expertise and are today located in private collections and museums. This is a well-written and fascinating story of the cultural interests, politics and techniques of past centuries; it is illustrated with original black and white photographs of great interest. The second section relates to different conservation methods, before and after the 1970s. Before this date, conservation equalled extraction as much as it later meant leaving the mosaics *in situ*. In this stimulating chapter, the author displays a wide archaeological knowledge, and touches on the delicate question of the pros and cons of extraction. Many (although not all) of the mosaics that were extracted, as *objets d'art* and kept as such, turn out to be in a considerably better shape today (thus allowing more visually-detailed studies) than the mosaics still *in situ*. This is independent of whether or not they were excavated legally or illegally before 1912, or whether they were left *in situ* after the 1970s. The author places these facts in contrast to the study's primary focus: the context and its importance for subsequent analysis.

In the third part ('Final considerations'), the author provides a short summary of the different parts of the work along with the chronology of the site, underlining Itálica as a major site of importance for mosaics in the Roman world. The author concludes that she has tried to evaluate the significance of the mosaic floors and to validate the importance of the results as a fundamental source of archaeological evidence which may present new information concerning many varied topics related to the ancient city, its nearest surroundings and the Roman world. Hence, this study starts with the context of

the analysis of the floors, and returns to an even wider context with the sum of the results.

The Mañas/*Corpus* publication is divided into two parts; in the first ('The city of Itálica'), the author provides an extensive presentation of the history of the site; in the second ('The catalogue'), the author presents the mosaics in each building of the site.

The author starts by recalling the purpose of the original project; as earlier mentioned this was the completion of the previous corpus of the site by Blanco Freijeiro. The intention was thus originally to include the mosaics still *in situ*, but this was later changed to include all contextualized mosaics independent of their actual location. In addition, by incorporating knowledge achieved later (after 1978), the project was gradually enlarged, in order to give a fuller picture of the ancient city.

Hence, the work concerns the mosaics still *in situ* and some later finds discovered during rescue excavations. It also includes three appendices. The first appendix covers additional unpublished mosaics from the store of the Archaeological Museum in Seville; a second deals with mosaics from private collections. A third appendix presents a mosaic of importance, the lost mosaic "the Circus". New information has recently appeared which has permitted a new analysis of this mosaic. The book also presents a review of the historiography of the site, having the same structure as the earlier volume, but with added material from 1978 onwards. The extensive catalogue constitutes the main part of the book, accompanied by plans and illustrations.

The part 'City of Itálica' constitutes a shortened version of the two first chapters of the BAR publication, including new information about the city's foundation, as well as a concise reiteration of the further history, its growth and several changes of legal status. A separate second section, 'Discovery of the mosaics of Itálica', summarizes the complex history of excavation of the site in a remarkably clear and comprehensive presentation. We can follow the development of the events, from when the systematic excavations started in the beginning of the 19th century, to the most recent rescue excavations in the first decade of the 21st century.

In this publication, the catalogue, the core of the book, covers 82 mosaics in total of different *opus* (*sectile*, *signinum*, *tessellatum*). They are presented in relation to the 13 buildings to which they originally belonged. Further, it includes the finds from a few later rescue excavations, as well as some other well-known mosaic ensembles of both known and unknown location and context. The history of the buildings covers the time of discovery and excavation, and further explorations. Each building is described giving type, size, extent, orientation, plan, chronology and type of *opus*. This is followed by

a presentation of the best-known mosaics of the site and their localisation. The entries in the catalogue describe the characteristics of the mosaics: measurements, tesserae information, material and colours, type of *opus*, context, today's localisation and bibliography. Their context is further discussed, concerning form, motif, details of borders and composition, together with descriptions and parallels, concluding with the author's personal appraisal and comments on chronology. The buildings are: the House of the Exedra, the Edifice of Neptune, the House of the Birds, the House of the Rodio, the House of the Taverns, the House of Hila, the Second House, the House of the Planetarium, the House of the Birth of Venus, the Major Bath, the House of the Street of Silo and the Street of the Museums, and the Enclosure of the Forum.

Appendix I deals with diverse mosaics: two ensembles of the Seasons, *disiecta membra*, in private collections, mosaic fragments from the store of the Archaeological Museum of Seville, and the lost mosaic "the Circus" preserved as drawings. They are presented following the same form as the catalogue. Appendix II is a table of the chronology of the mosaics of the site. Appendix III presents a table of the contextualized mosaics, ordered by catalogue number, type of *opus*, chronology and location.

The Mañas/BAR is an extensive and painstaking work on the finds and research undertaken on a city of great importance in the Roman world. The author manages, despite its broad content, to combine a work of recollection, reference and personal investigation, considerably deepening our understanding of several issues. The unifying factor throughout the book is the consistent focus on the archaeological context of the mosaics, as a point of reference for all treated topics. This greatly helps the reader to refer to the large amount of information and automatically provides answers to questions concerning the first manifestations of the mosaics and the role they played. Consequently, the author is able to suggest several highly valuable answers that cast light on the society in which the mosaics appeared.

A particularly useful aspect in this volume is the ample information provided by the high quality plans, maps, tables and illustrations, old as well as new photographs, along with the computerized stylized drawings of patterns (made by the author). These provide a chronological frame and a basic geographical and historical guide, which can be continuously consulted during reading, and which is of great help. The result is genuinely impressive and this integrated publication fills a long-felt gap. It will certainly constitute the reference work for the site of Itálica for a long time to come. The structure of the handsome and easily-handled Mañas/*Corpus* volume follows the standardized format of the earlier volumes in the *Corpus* series. It thus has several different advantages compared with the Mañas/BAR volume from a

readability point of view. This is partly due to its clearer and more legible layout and partly because it grasps and presents the material in a more concentrated way. This is due to the more limited material, presented in the form of a catalogue, which complements the earlier volume in the series. The excellent quality plans, drawings and pictures in colour form an extra bonus (the colour plates were omitted in Mañas/BAR).

A shortcoming of the Mañas/BAR volume is that the compilation and analysis of different sources and their subsequent divisions into different sections has led to certain overlaps in the historically-related parts. Another point pertains to the production of the volume: regrettably, colour plate illustrations are omitted. These exist in the original thesis, and in the *Corpus*. They would have been useful.

So, although both publications are essentially academic in character, the Mañas/BAR is primarily directed to an already-introduced reader as a condensed thesis. On the other hand, the Mañas/*Corpus* offers a more easily consulted, although specialized, manual of the site and is accessible to a wider public.

In both books, the text and images and their condensed and updated contents, together with the maps, figures, tables and pictorial material explain the former glory of the city and its rich heritage of often spectacular Roman mosaic floors from several periods. A majority of these can today be visited *in situ* in Itálica, or in museums and open collections. Further, the books complement each other as they focus on different areas and aspects of the rich assemblage of mosaics. Itálica is presented in its totality for the first time, including much well-known, but until now unpublished material. Together these two books on Itálica are both recommended for their high quality, the up-to-date contents, and the way they succeed in recreating a part of the lost Itálica through its lavish mosaic floors.

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*Mitología e historia en los mosaicos romanos*, ed. L. Neira, Madrid: Ediciones JC 2010. 175 pp., 25 colour ills.  
ISBN 978-84-95121-56-1.

This is a dense and highly informative publication based on ten seminar papers presented at a conference on the subject at the University of Charles the Third, Madrid, in 2009. Its focus is the close relation between history and ancient Greek and Roman mythology as depicted on mosaics of the Roman era at the two far ends of the Mediterranean. The aim was to consider and reconsider their value as prime testimonies to events and turns of history.

The focus of the contributions is set on the deliberate choices behind the depicted myths, here grouped as either specific motifs, complete iconographic programmes of individual villas, or mosaic compounds of entire cities. The contributions centre on the figurative mosaics of *opus tessellatum* in the private sphere of the local élites of the provinces, mosaics that were frequently configured to reflect their users. The period is mainly the Late Imperial period, continuing into Late Antiquity and the Early Christian era and well into the Theodosian period. The geographic regions concerned are mainly the Iberian peninsula in the west, with two papers on Portugal and six on Spain, while two contributions concentrate on two cities of the eastern provinces; more precisely the cities of Zeugma and Antioch.

The editor and seminar organizer, L. Neira, introduces the anthology with some reflections (7–18), which are of great help for the reader. This paper combines an introduction and a synthesis, and establishes the importance of presenting the different contributions in a coherent timeline and historic context. Hence, the focus is set on the active use of mythology to depict, predict, reflect—and possibly to contradict—greater events in society. The author reminds us of the original use of many of the ancient myths as stories of the tangible changes of Greek society. Furthermore, the focus is set on how many myths continued, in the form of significant mosaics, to be used and re-used to depict, symbolize and enhance continual shifts and new values of later local communities. Hence, it proposes a view that makes them an even more useful and unique historical source, illuminating the surrounding society and its values, behaviours, standards, and, as we shall see, also gradually hardening conflicts between religions. Consequently, not only do we have the written sources, but also pictorial material to tell us *how* the mythology was used and interpreted.

The limited space does not allow an extensive review of all the contributions. I have therefore chosen to consider more closely only the papers with focus on a certain group of issues which relate to the important role that the mosaic played as an ethnic and religious divider.