

SVENSKA INSTITUTEN I ATHEN OCH ROM
INSTITUTUM ATHENIENSE ATQUE INSTITUTUM ROMANUM REGNI SUECIAE

Opuscula

Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome

7
2014

STOCKHOLM

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Prof. Gunnel Ekroth, Uppsala, Chairman
Prof. Arne Jönsson, Lund, Vice-chairman
Ms Kristina Björkstén Jersén, Stockholm, Treasurer
Dr Erika Weiberg, Uppsala, Secretary
Prof. Peter M. Fischer, Göteborg
Dr Kristian Göransson, Rome
Prof. Karin Hult, Göteborg
Prof. Arja Karivieri, Stockholm
Dr Emilie Karlsmo, Uppsala
Prof. Anne-Marie Leander Touati, Lund
Dr Arto Penttinen, Athens

SECRETARY'S ADDRESS:

Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Box 626
SE-751 26 Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: secretary@ecsi.se

EDITOR:

Dr Jenni Hjöhlman, Stockholm
E-mail: editor@ecsi.se

DISTRIBUTOR:

eddy.se ab
Box 1310
SE-621 24 Visby, Sweden

For general information, see www.ecsi.se

For subscriptions, prices and delivery, see <http://ecsi.bokorder.se>

Published with the aid of a grant from The Swedish Research Council

The English text was revised by Dr Catherine Parnell, Athens, and Rebecca Montague, Hindon, Salisbury, UK

Opuscula is a peer reviewed journal. Contributions to *Opuscula* should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee (address above) before 1 November every year. Contributors are requested to include an abstract summarizing the main points and principal conclusions of their article. For style of references to be adopted, see www.ecsi.se/guides-contributors. Books for review should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee (address above).

ISSN 2000-0898

ISBN 978-91-977798-6-9

© Svenska Institutet i Athen and Svenska Institutet i Rom

Printed by Elanders Sverige AB, Mölnlycke 2014

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

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.

MAJA KRAMER
Department of Historical Studies
University of Gothenburg
maja.kramer@class.gu.se
Postal address:
Hagens stationsväg 24
SE-426 71 Västra Frölunda

Mitología e historia en los mosaicos romanos, ed. L. Neira, Madrid: Ediciones JC 2010. 175 pp., 25 colour ill. 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.

A first group comprises three contributions treating specific motifs. 'Daedalus and the labyrinth. Some examples' (19–23), by M. Pilar S. Nicolás Pedraz, concerns the concrete and symbolic signification of Daedalus, the archetype of the artisan. The author draws attention to how the motif was particularly popular on mosaics in the Iberian peninsula, and how its many variations could be read possibly revealing different levels of cultural refinement of the viewers. A second article by M. Pessoa, 'Portraits or allegories in the mosaics of ten seasons of the Roman villa of Rabaçal, Penela, Portugal?' (25–40), treats the motifs of the seasons in the mosaics of one 4th–5th century AD villa in the central part of Portugal. Previous views of their significance are reassessed and instead of being mere allegories, they are suggested to be the portraits of the owners with the explicit purpose of social display. The third article in this group is by J.M. Álvarez Martínez, 'The representation of Orpheus and the animals in Hispanic mosaics' (41–49). The author analyses the motif of Orpheus, originating from the distant past of Antiquity from the 6th century BC as a symbol of physical force and magic power, and relates its subsequent variations and popularity to the changes that had taken place in the Roman Hispanic society. Hence, the motif is an illustrative testimony of a continuous process of re-signification as it in Late Antiquity came to symbolize quite opposite values, those of peace and unity, and further on how it also became an important Christian symbol.

A second group of articles presents the iconographic programmes of urban compounds. The first one treats the issue in a city of the west of the Mediterranean, in the south part of the Iberian peninsula: I. Mañas Romero (51–61), 'The contribution of mythology in the formation of domestic visual culture. The example of Italica (ss. II–III)'. The author shows how some repetitive themes based on the most common mythological narratives such as Bacchus illuminate a homogenized visual culture of the élite, but also how the preference for particular representations may reveal their predilections in regard to festivity and private life. The next two contributions concern the display of cultural, ethnic or religious identities and objectives of different local groups in two multicultural crossroad metropolises in the eastern Mediterranean. This is done by using comparative methods together with epigraphic and literal sources, starting in the city of Zeugma, with 'The suppressed mythology. The Roman mosaics of Zeugma' (63–75), by G. López Monteagudo. The author discusses a group of mosaics with motifs of Hellenistic mythological heritage containing highly significant scenes. They are recognized to have been chosen by the local Romanized élites, explicitly in order to mark the limits between their own world and that of others, thus to underline their overt Roman identity. Also belonging to this group is J. Bermejo Tirado, 'The construction of a pagan identity: The mosaics with mythological themes

as documents for a cultural history of Antioch' (77–87). This study looks upon how cultural identity was displayed in the city of Antioch through the languages used in the epigraphy in mosaics and literature in combination with the motifs chosen for the mosaics. With focus on the Greek-speaking élite, the author shows how they explicitly employed the Hellenistic heritage in architecture, epigraphy, and mosaics showing their ancestors' gods and heroes, thus displaying their aristocratic past, possibly in opposition to a new religion, Christianity.

Yet another group of contributions approaches a similar subject, but now all in the Iberian peninsula, focusing on the iconographic programmes of the villas rather than urban compounds. Here they are viewed as displaying a cultural and religious identity, aimed not towards other local ethnic élites but against a new state religion. The editor, in her introduction, draws attention to the fact that many newly-discovered and spectacular mosaic compounds in the Iberian peninsula are not of the commonly-found type. More and more mosaics being discovered in Late Antiquity villas depict ancient mythology. Their presence in this period strongly contradicts the commonly-held view of the quick and general rise of Christianity in the area. This is a view adopted by the authors of the two following contributions.

The first article is by J.M. Blázquez Martínez, 'Roman-Hispanic villas of the Late Empire decorated with mythological mosaics' (89–110). Here, splendid mosaics are presented, of a great scale with detailed and dramatic scenes from Greco-Roman mythology, from a variety of luxurious villas through the 4th century AD across the whole Iberian peninsula. The author draws particular attention to this persistence of pagan motifs in Hispania during Late Antiquity, a fact that obviously, together with the cited literary references, points to a principally still pagan cultural identity and a possible active resistance to the advance of the new religion. D. Fernández Galiano returns to the topic in 'The triumph of love: the mosaic of Paris and Helen in Noheda (Cuenca)' (111–136). The mosaic, divided in several longitudinal sections and of great pictorial and symbolic weight and complexity, is said to be one of the most spectacular on the peninsula. Particular attention is drawn to the scene of a Roman wedding ceremony. The author relates it to similar scenes both in Hispania and other parts of the Mediterranean, proposing that the *hierogama* symbolized the prosperity, stability and peace of not only the household, but also the society and land. Hence, it could have been chosen to represent the righteous, orderly and well-functioning part of the Roman society. This would be as a counterbalance to the propaganda of the new religion pointing much in that same direction underlining a similar set of values. The last contribution, also of the Iberian peninsula, now Portugal, is V. López, 'The compound of Mértola and its mosaics' (137–142), which examines the maintenance and longevity

of a series of both geometric and figurative motifs in the city. Some are mythological scenes of Hellenistic origin, which not only survived during 500 years of use, but were also gradually assimilated to new cultural and religious circumstances.

To conclude, the great impact of this book is in illustrating the importance of the motifs as results of a dynamic process of evaluation and re-evaluation of standards and beliefs over time. Here the focus is on the role played by the Roman mosaics in the important societal changes in Late Antiquity. Their complexity and number, and the fact that they were obviously deliberately used to serve as identity markers and messengers of sometimes subversive nature, places demands on both the viewers (read interpreters), and not least, the producers. Great knowledge is required to decipher the messages, as they were there not only to impress, but to distinguish between those who could decipher them and those who could not. There is a double purpose of both including and excluding, which thus constitutes an excellent testimony of the identity-shaping capacity of images. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that all the contributions in this publication provide us with proof of how the rich heritage of Roman mosaics, with their vast and complex visual representations, attest—in beautiful pictures—the strain and the complicated processes of a society during periods of transition and turmoil.

MAJA KRAMER
Department of Historical Studies
University of Gothenburg
maja.kramer@class.gu.se
Postal address:
Hagens stationsväg 24
SE-426 71 Västra Frölunda

Joseph E. Skinner, *The invention of Greek ethnography: From Homer to Herodotus* (Greeks Overseas), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012. 343 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-979360-0.

The invention of Greek ethnography: From Homer to Herodotus by Joseph E. Skinner is the third volume to appear in the book series *Greeks Overseas* by Oxford University Press. Like the two previous volumes I find this one to be stimulating, thought-provoking and original. Skinner and the editors of the book series, Carla Antonaccio and Nino Luraghi, deserve congratulations.

The main argument of *The invention of Greek ethnography* is that the Greeks had extensive contacts with Others, and that they were self-consciously aware of differences between themselves and Others far earlier than the 5th century BC: “this study sets out to emphasize the role that ethnographic interests played in a wider discursive process—a process through which Greek culture and identity were both invented and defined” (14).

The invention of Greek ethnography is organized in five chapters. The first chapter is a sensitive presentation of the relevant theoretical foundations and of the history of scholarship concerning these matters. It can also be read as an argument for the need to abandon the normative essentialism that has been governing in Classical Studies so far. Skinner identifies fundamental problems of the epistemological foundations of previous scholarship, both in normative scholarship during the 20th century and in the recent cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 2 consists of a short account of Others with whom the Greeks were in contact. Greek perceptions of for instance the Hyperboreans, the Scythians, the Amazons, the Thracians and the Phoenicians are accounted for. Skinner does not distinguish between real and imaginary Others, nor between past and present. In Chapter 3 Skinner discusses various discursive strategies that the Greeks used to conceptualize the Others, such as stereotyping and listing. This is followed in Chapter 4 by various micro-histories from around the ancient Mediterranean: Olbia, southern Calabria, Delphi and Olympia. The micro-histories elaborate encounters between Greeks and Others. Skinner emphasizes the contribution of the Others on Greek culture. What we often regard as Greek culture was, in effect, hybrid cultures. A profound difference between Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 is the elaborate use of archaeology in the latter. The last chapter is a sort of conclusion. It summarizes the arguments, draws conclusions, and points to issues that remain to be addressed.

Skinner’s main argument is formulated in a self-conscious dialogue with, and in contrast to, a model of ancient Greek culture which has emerged during the last decades. According to this perspective, a Hellenic identity emerged only after the Persian Wars, and in opposition to the Persians. Although the Persians were the Others *par excellence* in Greek culture, Skinner omits the encounters between the Greeks and the Persians in his book; this self-imposed limitation remains enigmatic for me. Skinner not only identifies problems with the above-mentioned model, but he also argues that there is evidence of Greek encounters with Others, and a Greek consciousness about Self and Other, earlier than the Persian Wars. In other words, Greek self-consciousness—in effect, Hellenic identity—existed before the 5th century BC, according to Skinner. He emphasizes the plurality of Greek identities. The Greek experience differed since it was shaped by different encounters and experiences in different places; Greek identity is a heterogeneous phenomenon.

Skinner uses the term ethnography in an abstract way. He does not aim to produce an exhaustive account of Greek perceptions of other peoples or of foreign finds in Greek culture. Ethnography is a discourse about foreign lands and peoples. It entails “thinking about culture from the point of view of an outsider” (16), a catchphrase Skinner repeats. Ethnography is