

## ANCIENT GREEK PAINTING AND MOSAICS IN MACEDONIA

All the manuals of Greek Art state that ancient Greek painting has been destroyed almost completely. Philological testimony, on the other hand, however rich, does no more than confirm the great loss. Vase painting affirms how skilful were the artisans in their drawings although it cannot replace the lost large painting compositions. Later wall-paintings of Roman towns such as Pompeii or Herculaneum testifying undoubted Greek or Hellenistic influence, enable us to have a glimpse of what the art of painting had achieved in Greece. Nevertheless, such paintings are chronologically too far removed from their probable Greek models for any accurate assessment to be made about the degree of dependence or the difference in quality they may have had between them.

Archaeological investigation, undaunted, persists in revealing methodically more and more monuments that throw light into previously dark areas of the ancient world. Macedonia has always been a glorious name in later Greek history, illumined by the amazing brilliance of Alexander the Great. Yet knowledge was scarce about life in Macedonian towns where had reigned the ancestors and the descendants of that unique king, and so was life in many other Greek towns situated on the shores of the northern Aegean Sea. It is not many years ago, since systematic investigation began in these areas and we are still at the initial stage; but results are already very important, especially as they give the hope that we shall soon be able to reveal unknown folds of the Greek world in a district which has always been prominent in the historical process of Hellenism. From these investigations valuable elements can be drawn for many branches of study of the ancient world, but really unique will be the contribution to the study of Greek Painting. Numerous mosaics, wall-paintings, representations on marble surfaces have been revealed in several places and offer precious material for study. Most of these works have not been studied yet; many are only known by the brief first communications the excavators have made about them; some are so recent a find, or are in such condition, that only their excavators themselves or an eye-witness can know them at all. That is why my paper will have to be confined to present-

ing the material, rather than discussing the many problems a study of these works inevitably sets.

I should explain right here that if mosaics come first in my exposition, this only designates their numerical prevalence over the other kinds of painting and also the fact that they are better preserved. For we must bravely assert that a mosaic cannot be on a par with actual painting. Its texture, namely the material and its composition, affords a certain coarseness to the total picture taking away sensitiveness and flexibility of design and colour, which are elements necessary to the realization of high aesthetic achievement such as is produced by a piece of painting. The Latin name for a mosaic is perhaps not void of sense: *opus barbaricum*. Besides, the position of mosaics on the floors of "andron" gives evidence of their being considered to replace a movable carpet, and their pattern must have been inspired, in the beginning at least, by such "βαρβάρων ὑφάσματα." The artisans who worked with mosaics would have had to learn their craft very well — a matter of many years — to invent new ways of composition, even to find new materials, before they could overcome the difficulties arising through the very nature of their art.

However, what is preserved of mosaic floors constitutes a valuable witness to an art that is near enough to painting, is at times in contests with it or even trying to supplant it. Finally, if we recall that already at the end of the 4th cent. B.C. precisely when the making of mosaics expanded, our most immediate witnesses of Greek painting, the red-figured Attic vases, had ceased to exist, then we realize how important these mosaic works become for the history of ancient Greek Art. And as we shall see further below the first timid attempts gradually reached a level of ambitious composition; if they did not substitute for them at least mosaics were inspired by paintings, they were influenced by their techniques; and the endeavour was there to invent methods capable of rendering in mosaic the contemporary achievements of painting.

All the mosaics we shall deal with in this paper belong to the Classical or early Hellenistic times and they are made with river pebbles; artificial pieces of some kind of paste are only used for very few details. From this point of view then there is unity of technique so that it is easy to follow what progress was made in about 100 years.

The best - known mosaics found in Northern Greece are those of Olynthos, the town in Chalkidhiki, which was settled in 432 and destroyed by Philip II in 348 B.C. The excavations of the late Professor D.M. Robinson, begun in 1928 and finished ten years later in 1938, revealed the extensive ruins of this Greek town, which was rightly called the Pompeii of Greece. Complete building blocks of 10 houses each; straight wide perpendicular streets; watering and sewage systems; walls; rich villas; all this has given us a clear

picture of a town constructed on the famous Hippodameian plan. In many houses the floors preserve their mosaic paving which consisted of a brown-red layer of mortar 0.07 m. thick, where the pebbles, 0.01 - 0.06 m. long, were set. The paving was provided with a sub-structure. The mosaic pebbles are mostly of two colours: black for the background and white for the pattern; there are, however, also, red, yellow and green pebbles to designate certain details, especially names of animals, or various objects (shields, spears etc).

Most of the 20 mosaics preserved in fairly good condition have decorative motifs, mainly geometric. But there are also four large compositions with human figures and themes from mythology. One of these is quite destroyed, while the other three have been preserved almost intact and are now very well known, as one finds them in every manual of Greek Painting as well as in every study connected with the history of mosaics. Let us see them again, even though they are known, for they are the oldest mosaics not only in Macedonia but in the whole of Greece.

The mosaic of Bellerophon (Pl. I, 1), framed by a maeander pattern and tendril-spirals, is a composition adapted to the circular design of the room centre. With its bi-colour technique, white pieces for the pattern and blue-black ones for the background, and with its circular design, it creates the impression of a red-figured representation against the ground of a kylix. The mosaicist had simple and rather inflexible means at his disposal, but he also had the memory of the great moment of classical art; he thus contrived to retain something of the nobility and pride of a Parthenon horseman, without of course being able to retain his high spirit or his powerful drive. This is the very first time when the theme of Dhexileos is depicted, a theme to have a very long history indeed, both in the Greek and in the Christian worlds. The hero, riding on Pegasus, is about to strike the mythical Chimaera, just as Saint George will strike the Dragon.

The threshold of the same room was decorated with a mosaic representation of two griffins attacking a deer. This theme, which we are to meet time and again in Greek art, is a favourite composition with the artisans, for with it they can cover convincingly a rectangular area of a threshold or any other similar shaped surface.

Many and well preserved mosaics were found in a villa that received its name of "The Villa of the Good Fortune" from an inscription in one of the mosaics. In the "andron" there was a large mosaic with a representation of Dionysus and Maenads, on the threshold there were confronted Pans, in the hall to the "andron" another with an Achilles representation, in another room still, a mosaic with geometric ornaments and inscriptions, and in the hall of that room, representation of a wheel and the inscriptions ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ (GOOD

FORTUNE) and ΔΙΚΑΙΩΣ (JUSTLY). In these mosaics too the figures are depicted in white pieces against a blue-black background; but here the use of coloured pieces is somehow ampler, where we find red, yellow and mainly green ones.

The mosaic of Dionysus (Pl. II, 2-2a) is a multi-figured composition covering all of the rectangular surface of the room. In the centre Dionysus is on a chariot drawn by two panthers, the god's sacred beasts, while a small winged Eros is in flight over them and holds something in his hand that must be a goad. The god holds the reins with both hands, but at the same time he has the thyrsus in his left one. Before the chariot there is a strange figure moving; it has horns on its head and a peculiar thyrsus or a messenger's staff in its left hand. This picture is surrounded by an ivy-leaf frame, the god's characteristic plant. All around the central area there is a continuous frieze with the attendants of Dionysus, dancing Maenads, a satyr and a Pan. The Maenads hold drums and thyrsos, some are about to catch the goats running ahead of them, one has caught a goat by the horns, while two others, beside themselves with holy wrath, are about to tear another apart.

The artisan was sure to have had a painted or perhaps a sculptural model in mind when he tried to render the enthusiastic scene of holy wrath and the lively scene of the chariot with the god, by using the frugal as it were means of mosaic making. There is no doubt that he contrives to cover the surface convincingly with figures not lacking in clear delineation and nobility. Such a two-dimensional, level picture, however, will not even have the plasticity of a low relief, it deprives the figures of the throb of life and causes them to remain but decorative elements. If we want to know how much pathos and tension these maenads lack, all we have to do is to recall the maenads at the sacred wedding of Dionysus on the unique bronze amphora that was found three years ago at Dherveni outside Thessaloniki or the older maenads of the Berlin krater. In these splendid works of the 4th century one can see the godly oestrus, the "mania" granted as gift by the gods, as Plato says, transform the maenads into daemonic creatures and eternal forms of art simultaneously.

The mosaic in the hall of this room depicts a well-known and liked mythical theme: the handing of arms to Achilles by Thetis, his mother. (Pl. III, 3-3a). The picture occupies the oblong rectangular centre of that space and is framed by a wide decorative band of tendrils, meanders and spirals. On the left hand side there is Achilles sitting on a rock, where he has spread his himation; immediately to his right is his mother, standing, leading her sister Nereids to the shore in a slow pace; they, seated on marine creatures, carry the arms, the first has the shield, the second has the spear and the third, the helmet for the hero.

This scene, much more peaceful than the previous one, exudes calm and imposes itself to the spectator. Moreover, being larger in size, it affords the artisan more capacity for a better delineation and a richer rendering of folds. Finally, the presence of those swift marine creatures covers skillfully the ground and allows for a soft motion towards the spot where the hero of the scene is seated. The mosaicist has obviously in mind models of high art that he tries to imitate as best he can, and we cannot deny him the fact that he contrives this to a high degree within the limits of his art and his technique. For example, the figures of Achilles and Thetis have all the nobility, impressiveness and solidity of the figures in Classical Art of the second half of 5th Century B.C. On the other hand, they keep within the boundaries of decorative art not being able to supplant the great works of painting of that period that had achieved wonders of illusionism, as we know from the philological sources. Nevertheless, there is a sensible difference between the two mosaics of the same house, Dionysus and Achilles, and we may dare perhaps to suggest that they belong to different artists.

I should be afraid of tiring the reader, if I presented all the other mosaics from Olynthos that are in more or less good condition. Most of them have decorative geometric motifs anyhow, as we have said above. Yet it would be a real omission if I did not mention a unique mosaic, unique not only among the other mosaics of Olynthos, or the rest of Greece, but also among the total number of painting compositions in the ancient world as a whole (Pl. III,4). That this mosaic is unique was realized already by its excavator who notes the following characteristically:

There is one unique pebble mosaic...which should be especially mentioned, since it is an *opus prae-barbaricum* and breaks all Greek laws of rhythm and symmetry. It is art untrammelled by reason, perhaps done by a mosaicist of unsound mind (sic) but acquainted with symbolism. It is a kind of hieroglyphic script, a forerunner of "Ars Memorativa" of the Renaissance akin to James Joyce in modern literature."

Professor Robinson with the first thrill of the excavator, and a little rashly perhaps, proceeded to decide that "Wassily Kandisky is not the father of abstract painting" and that this mosaic could be compared to works of Paul Klee. Actually, both the mosaic and the house where it was found as well as the place of it present interesting peculiarities not explained in the publication of the excavation. What interests us at the moment is to note its existence and to stress that archaeological research often presents us with charming problems that unlock for us the area of meditation, which precisely constitutes the final end of every intellectual discipline.

Twelve kilometres away from Beroea, South East, there is one of the most important archaeological sites in Macedonia, near the village of Verghina. Results of the excavations I made at the most important necropolis of the early Iron Age situated in the neighbourhood have been presented in a previous volume of *Balkan Studies*. Yet, long before the necropolis was explored, excavations had begun at a unique hellenistic palace and two remarkable Macedonian tombs were revealed at the same site. Excavations on the palace are carried out by the University of Thessaloniki, which continues the investigations of L. Heuzey and the dean of Greek archaeologists, K. A. Rhomaios. It would be worth your while to have this majestic edifice of 3rd century B.C. discussed here. But I shall confine myself to present here a mosaic floor that was preserved in fairly good condition. More such mosaic floors are certain to have existed, but they were destroyed either accidentally or on purpose. Anyhow, the one preserved is very important for us. It was found in 1956 and its dimensions are 9.14 by 5.03 m. (Pl. IV, 5).

The mosaic was made with small river-pebbles black, white, grey, red and yellow of many shades. The best description of it would not come up to even a faint idea of its composition without the help of a picture, which is a most accurate design by the painter Professor Christos Lefakis. The spectator realizes at a glance that he has before him a work of art of high quality and inspiration testifying to a rich artistic tradition, outstanding sensitiveness, awareness of the media the artist disposes over and of the ends he is after, skill and experience uncommon. A rosace with eight petals and an equal number of sepals placed in the center serves as a core and a starting point to the composition. Eight pairs of stalks start from this central element and they interlace to create another flower-like design, harmoniously framing the rosace. The stalks twist towards the periphery in delicate and symmetrical motion and, branching off, they end in shoots, spirals and flowers so that the whole circular surface is covered with their profuse evolution, which however submits to strict geometric discipline. The circular surface is framed in by a circular band, which has on the inner side a complex maeander moving to the right, and on the outer side, a wavy spiral-maeander moving in the opposite direction. In the corners that remain vacant because of the circle, the artist has placed female figures changing into inverted palmettes at the lower ends; stalks shoot out from the sides of the palmettes, they develop first into two spirals each, then continue their development into the vacant space to make up young growths and flowers, which in turn run on to the farthest corners in succulent suppleness and marvellous exploitation of the ground.

This marriage of strict geometric discipline, the symphonic harmony of design and the freely developing succulent plant forms is a feat that has no

peer. Awareness of how important the pattern is as well as the use of it in a decorative manner are enlivened by a love for the throbbing figure; and they do not result in a cold, static covering of the surface, but give life to it, movement, while its objective existence is observed and eventually submitted to. Briefly: decorative creation, inspired and wise.

Until 1957 Olynthos had held a unique place because of the mosaic floors of its houses. Students of the ancient world had been greatly impressed by their age, quality of work and their large number. But in 1957 an accidental find led to the excavation of Pella, which is today the most important archaeological site in Northern Greece. Ample financial support gave Ch. Makaronas and Ph. Petsas, Antiquity Ephors and the excavators of Pella, a chance to continue their investigations to the present day, and to reveal wonderful remains of the capital of the Macedonian Kingdom; here, too, the Hippodameian method of town building was followed; we find wide streets and regular building blocks. Although these excavations have yielded a rich harvest, information published so far by the excavators is not so detailed. The brief expositions published by Ch. Makaronas in *Archaeologicon Deltion* and by Ph. Petsas in *Balkan Studies* however, as well as yearly information published in the other archaeological periodicals, have given us numerous and good pictures of the finds and of the ruins.

Among the most important finds we can certainly count the mosaic floors. Two large floor mosaics and two smaller ones were already revealed in the first year of excavations and immediately became known all over the world. To these were added in 1961 another three huge floor mosaics and a fourth, which is completely destroyed. Thus, so far we have five large excellent mosaics and two smaller ones that come from thresholds of rooms. There is well based hope that continued excavation may reveal many more.

The excavators' opinion is that all these mosaics must be dated from the early Hellenistic years and they accept a date around 300 B.C. based on excavation data; differences between the mosaics are attributed to different artisans. One might perhaps add a difference between probalbe models the artists had in mind without this to mean that the problem of chronology would thus find a definitive solution. Only meticulous and excaustive study of the mosaics and the other finds can do that.

On an off-hand classification we can divide the seven mosaics into four groups:

1. Decorative mosaics of thresholds
2. The mosaic of Dionysus
3. The two hunt mosaics, lion in the first, deer in the second

4. The two multi-figured mosaics with mythical themes, the abduction of Helen and the Amazons battle.

1. The theme of griffins attacking a deer has a long tradition; we have seen it in Olynthos, and we shall find it again in a painted representation on marble. It is, I think, a popular theme, for it gives the right solution for decorating an oblong rectangular surface like the threshold and like many other such surfaces often presented to the artisan for ornamentation.

The theme of heraldic Centaurs also presents a happy solution to the same problem; and the presence of a female Centaur on Pella threshold brings to mind a piece of information we have from Lucian, namely that Zeuxis was innovating when he painted a whole family of those mythical creatures. Perhaps we should also recall that the great painter lived and worked for a time in Pella.

2. The Dionysus mosaic (2.70X2m). was the first to have been revealed in Pella and naturally created a great sensation at once. (Pl. V, 6). The god rides his favourite beast, the panther, he is nude, holding the neck of the animal with his right hand, while he holds his thyrsus in his left. He has a crown of vine leaves on his head and he wears an ankle bracelet on his right leg. If this mosaic is compared to the well known mosaics of Delos, we can tell at once what tremendous difference there is between the early and the mature Hellenistic works. As has been rightly observed, the spectator looking at the mosaic has the impression that he stands before a huge red-figured vase painting, where lucid forms emerge from a black ground—the way the artist confines his colours to practically two, black and white, adding very discretely a few pieces of natural colour for the detail of, say, the green leaves. The artist must have felt that the handsome line of the effeminate god, with sensitive curve and mobile outline, as he obviously knew them from some painted model, could not be rendered with accuracy in a mosaic; for its pieces make up an indefinite outline formed only by an imagined line that runs across the actual intended, broken line of the outer pebbles on the outside of the figure and the outline. That is why the artist has used fine lead wire to denote some vital parts of the outline, on the face, the fingers, the toes and the sex indication of the god. (Pl.VIba-c) Set in this manner, the lead wire takes on the place of the characteristic and expressive line of the design on vase paintings.

The composition of this picture betrays sensitiveness, experience and presupposes a tradition if not in the mosaic craft certainly in the art of painting. Moreover, it is easy to tell that this pictures were transferred to a floor mosaic from a model decorating a wall, for the correct angle of sight is ob-



viciously one nearing the right angle and not the most acute one, which forms between the eye of a standing or reclining spectator and surface of the floor.

It cannot be denied that this work, as it has been said before, shows a classicist mood. We might add, completing the remark, that it belongs to a period of mannerism, where the spirit of the artist is dominated by excessive elegance and the charm of streaming curve, and is lead to create forms that have lost their inner drive and only preserve the grace of external refinement.

3. We are transported to a different climate by the two hunt mosaics. It is not only the theme that leads the artist to a different rendering; I should say, on the contrary, that it is a different intellectual and artistic attitude which has him resort to other themes for self-expression. Memories of classical art are very clear in both mosaics; the young man raising his sword, about to strike the prey, will find its remote model already in the group of Tyrannicides or even in the western pediment at Olympia, where we also meet the figure of the second young man who prepares to attack the enemy with his axe. Research into the history of this motif would offer a great deal to him who would undertake it; and, with the help of what Panowsky has taught us in his sagacious studies, we might be able to apprehend what intellectual background would cause a change in a detail, or cause the same detail to be attributed to another form. Yet, such an attempt is not of the present. It would be more interesting for us to look at the mosaics themselves and to discern the differences they have between them.

The lion hunt mosaic (Pl. VI, 7), covers a long and narrow surface, 4.90 by 3.20 m., and is surrounded by a frame with plant ornaments. The representation develops with ease in this space, so that each of the three figures is far enough away from the other two, and acquires autonomy and completeness. Although, here too, in the figures of the two young men one can see memories of the classical times, it is nevertheless clear that the artist intends to represent not only the volume of the three figures in three dimensions, but that he also and especially wishes to create the feeling of depth in the background by placing the lion slanted toward it in correct enough and convincing perspective.

From the first moment, when the mosaic was found the thought crossed my mind that it might be a picture of the famous hunt of Alexander and his friend Krateros, which we know Leocharis to have rendered in sculpture. I expressed this thought to my colleagues who had asked me to collaborate with them at the beginning of the excavation. If such identification could be proved correct, we would have the oldest and most genuine portrait of the famous army leader. I am afraid, however, that the figure of the dagger-

holder that we would imagine as that of Alexander, is much more likely the imaginary figure of an athletic young man and not the pictorial representation of Alexander as we know him from many other portrait copies.

The second hunt mosaic, deer this time (Pl. VII, 8), is square and covers 9.30 sq.m. This, too, is surrounded by a wide frame with wonderful plant ornaments. The shape of the surface had the mosaicist put his forms closely together so that they lose their independence and ease; on the other hand, the composition as a whole gains thus in power and dramatic unity. By adding the little dog he did not only enrich the picture numerically, but also provided another plane to stress the perspective rendering intended. The ground is, here too, of many colours, yet more prominent and covers a wider surface. The figures show all the intensity of early Hellenistic works; and although one could think of the battle of Centaurs painted on a marble slab at the Herculaneum, whose models are traced back to the 4th cent. B.C., if the figures are observed carefully, it will be realized that they are beyond the stage of the Mausoleion sculptures and are nearer the "Runner of the Palazzo dei Conservatori," his muscle tension and chest protrusion being even more accentuated. In connection with its theme, it would be useful to compare this mosaic to the one in Alexandria that has the same theme. For both mosaics of Pella coloured pieces of stone were used as well, especially red and orange ones, to indicate the soil, the lion's name, etc.

On the upper part of the mosaic there is an inscription in handsome lettering: ΓΝΩΣΙΣ ΕΠΙΟΗΣΕΝ (GNOSIS MADE IT) giving us the name of the artist, the oldest one we know to have made mosaics, more than one hundred years earlier than Hephæstion, whom we had known so far as the oldest mosaicist.

4. More badly destroyed, technically inferior and with obvious artistic clumsiness is the mosaic of the Amazonomachy (Pl. IIX, 9). The artist's incompetence is not, I think, enough to explain the imperfections it presents. To my mind, they are much rather due to the inferior model the mosaicist had, or perhaps even to the absence of one; in the latter case he would have had to rely on his own ability and on uncertain memories of similar themes when he tried to compose this one.

The last mosaic we have from Pella, Hellen's abduction, (Pl. IIX, 10) unlike the Amazon battle, constitutes a grandiose composition indeed as well as a technical feat covering a surface of about 23.50 sq.m. (8.36 long by 2.80 wide), and it is a great pity that it should have suffered quite a lot of damage, especially on its right hand side parts. On the left a quadriga is depicted (the three horses are preserved almost complete) with the charioteer standing, a-



*1. Bellerophon mosaic (Olynthos).*





2



2a

2-2a Dionysus mosaic (Olynthos).



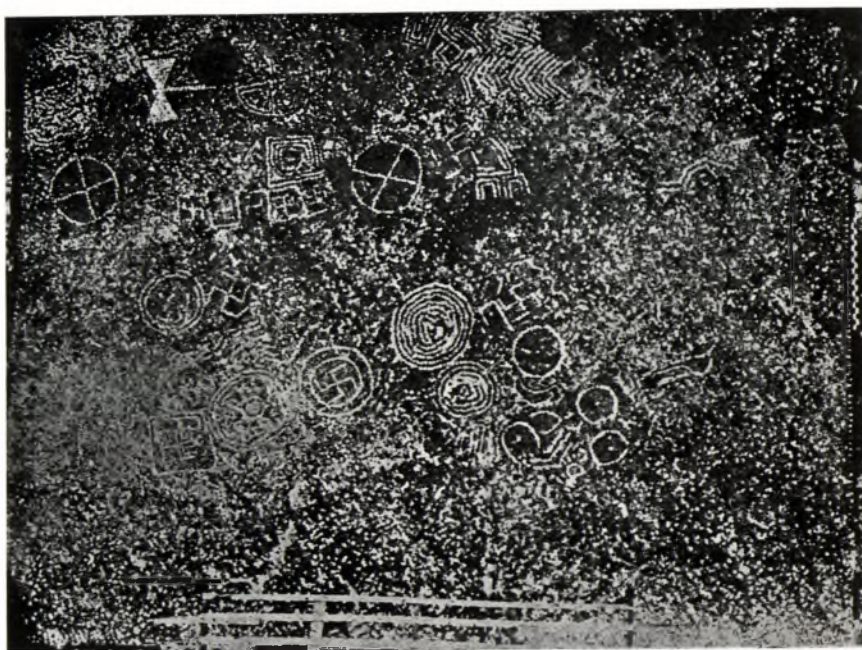


3

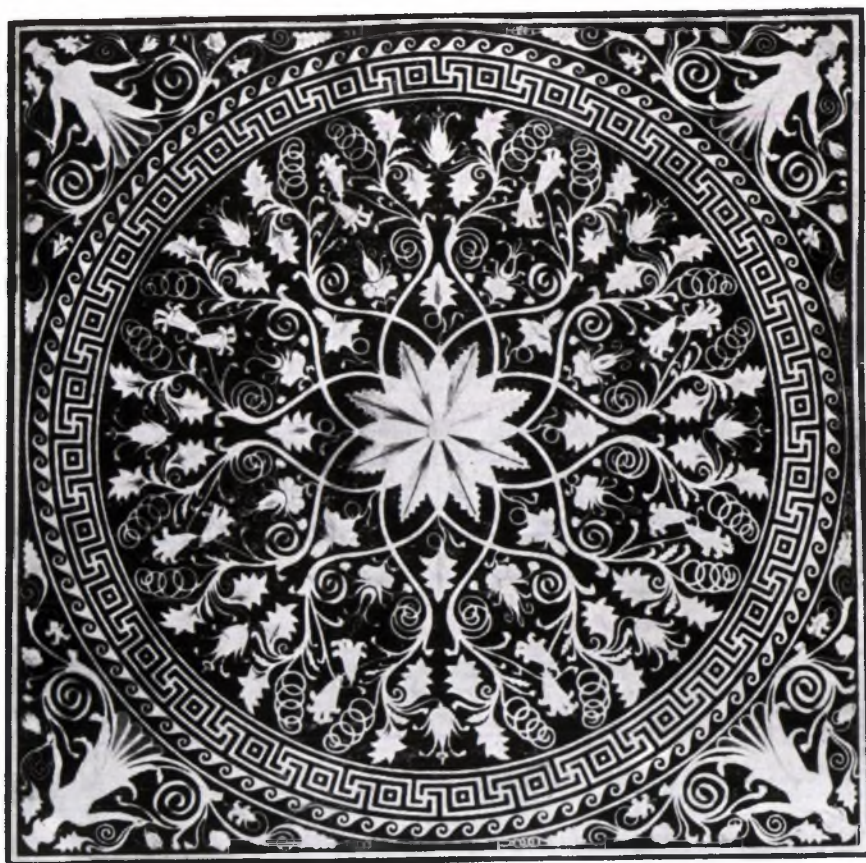


3a

3-3a. Achilles Mosaic (Olynthos).



4. Abstract mosaic (Olynthos).

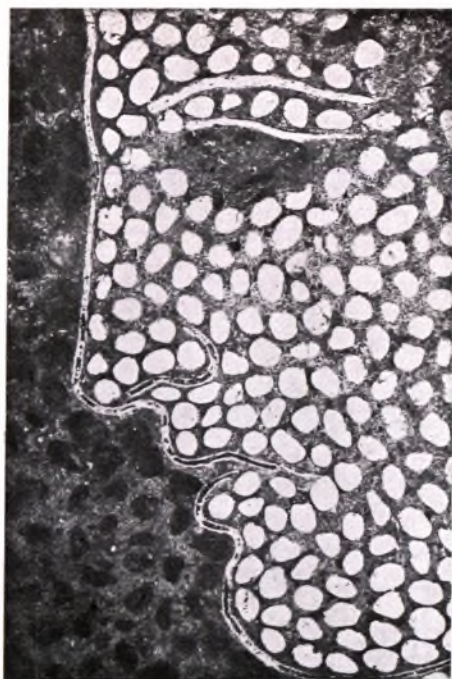


*5. Palace of Vergina Mosaic.*

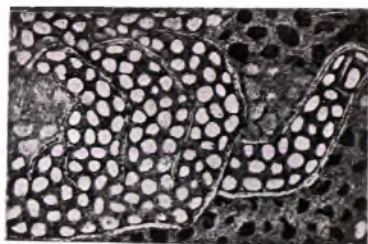




6. *Dionysus Mosaic (Pella).*



6a



6c



6b

6a - 6c. *Details of Dionysus mosaic (Pella).*



7. *Lion hunt mosaic (Pella).*





8. *Deer hunt mosaic (Pella).*



9. *Amazonomachy mosaic (Pella).*



10. *Helen's abduction mosaic (Pella).*





11



12



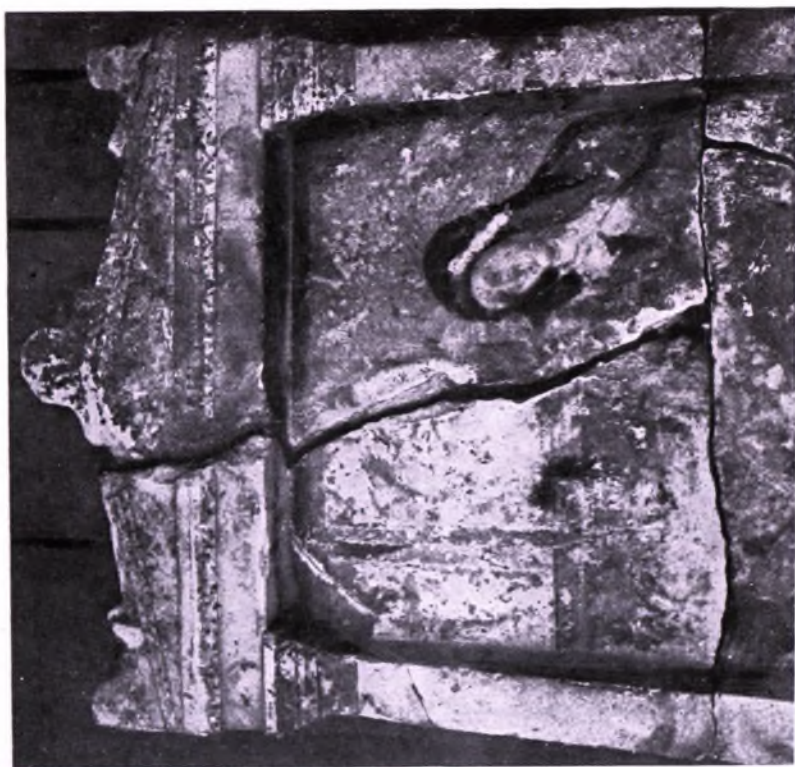
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*11. Painting from Verghina tomb throne.*

*12. Painting from Dion tomb.*

*13. Painting from Naussa tomb.*

15



*14 - 15. Painted tombstone from Vergina.*

14



bout to let the horses rush forward as soon as the rider mounts his chariot; the charioteer has turned an anxious face towards the rider, whose figure is fairly destroyed. We can tell, however, that he is young and that he has caught hold of a young maiden who is stretching out her desperate arms in the direction of the figure at the extreme right; she, in turn, puts out her right arm to the abducted girl, but on her face one sees clearly that she has lost hope of being able to rescue her friend who is in danger. It would have been hardly possible for us to identify this representation with any certainty as being connected with a known mythical theme, had not the mosaicist provided inscriptions to state the names of the figures: Phorvas, Theseus, Helen, Deianeira. We have then the abduction of Helen by Theseus. It is not of this moment to attempt a discussion on the problems, mythological and others, that this picture raises; suffice it to note that Phorvas is unknown to tradition—both written and monumental, as the charioteer of Theseus during the abduction of Helen, where Peirithous is always mentioned as the fellow of the Athenian hero in this amorous adventure of his. Tradition does connect Phorvas with Theseus, but in his expedition against the Amazons. Deianeira, too, is unknown as a friend or attendant of Helen.

It is my belief that the artist who made this renders in mosaic the important composition of a painter; and I think that through this mosaic we are recovering a lost work of painting of the 4th century B.C. Placing the chariot aslant allows for a magnificent development of the horses, and it was made with a wisdom and knowledge achieved years already before the Hellenistic period. The way bodies and especially movement are represented, mainly those of the horses whose lively attitude submits at the same time to some law of artistic rhythm, is no accidental achievement. If one only compared these horses with similar pictures on vases of Southern Italy, from the 4th cent. B.C., or even with works of painting from Roman times, copies of Greek models, of the same century, the undoubted superiority of the horses on the mosaic would become obvious at once. With all the differences between them, I would dare to suggest, that the Pella horses belong to that same proud family of horses from the famous Alexander mosaic at the Museum in Naples.

The last two mosaics with their mythical themes present a multilateral interest. If the Amazon battle is a popular and appropriate theme in a Macedonian house at 300 B.C., where are still fresh the memories of the great expedition against the barbarians and where the old mythical theme easily acquires a new symbolic shine, the theme of Helen's abduction by Theseus appears unexpected. Are we to say that the artists who made the mosaics were Athenians who had transported their own popular themes (the Amazon bat-

tle is an Attic theme) to the foreign land? If we have no safe evidence to support such suggestion, we would at least be quite near the truth in assuming that irrespective of the artist's nationality, the nationality of these works, of their models and of their tradition, was unmistakably Athenian.

Looking at the mosaics of Olynthos again and comparing the maenads of the Dionysus mosaic, for example, with Deianeira or Vellerophon and his Pegasus with Phorvas' horses and the youths of the Pella hunts, we realize at once the enormous achievements of the art of mosaic making in hundred odd years between the beginnings of the 4th and the beginnings of the 3d century B.C. Timidly decorative at Olynthos it goes on courageously to arrive at daring compositions of painting and contrives not only advanced techniques but also substantial artistic accomplishments at Pella.

After all these remarks I have so far explained we now realize why the mosaics preserved in Macedonia offer quite a lot of material for the study of painting during the later years of Classical Antiquity and the early years of the Hellenistic period. Mosaics are made of solid material that can stand physical hardship, while the works of paintings are by their nature much more perishable; hence we can explain why practically all should have been destroyed. Nevertheless, in Macedonia there have been found several important examples of painting, except that unfortunately some of them did not manage to keep much longer after they had been revealed. Almost all the works of painting we are going to mention come from tombs, such as are known as Macedonian, consisting of a chamber often preceded by a hall, covered with an arched roof and having a temple-shaped facade. Many tombs of this kind have so far been revealed in Macedonia. In four of them have been preserved remarkable works of painting.

1. The tomb of Verghina, which is dated quite safely in the beginnings of the 3d century B.C., had two painted friezes, one on the Ionic frieze of the outside, and a second in the band of the hall separating the perpendicular wall from the arch. In both cases we have purely decorative use of plant motifs, yet made with knowledge, sensitiveness and taste. The spectator enjoys the richness of coloured flowers that submit to a rhythm of colour and design. The paintings are in the fresco technique, but the colours present a certain density and Professor Rhomaïos talks of tempera.

A splendid marble throne with remains of the finest decoration was found in the tomb. A representation in colour of the familiar theme of griffins attacking a deer is preserved in a long and narrow band on the right hand side of this throne (Pl. IX, 11). The colours have been set by the encaustic method. The artist by using shading tries to render the volume of bodies in a

manner which is much more powerful than we have ever seen in mosaics. Professor Rhomaïos remarked that the artist had placed the two griffins on either side of the deer intending to show how it had a position aslant in relation to the spectator, in other words intending to open up a third dimension towards the background.

2. The decoration of a band at the marble bed found in the tomb at Dion excavated by Professor G. Sotiriadis, must have been even more important, if we can tell from the pieces preserved, as seen in the publication the excavator made (Pl. IX, 12). I suspect that the painter who made this copy tried on the one hand to be faithful to what he had before his eyes and so painted in faded colours; on the other hand, he let himself go and created many more transitional tones than the ancient picture actually had. With all these reservations in mind, we find that we have before us a genuine work of painting with excellent rendering of the volumes of the horses, remarkable knowledge of the rules of perspective, and finally, with a dramatic composition of a battle at the moment of its most intensive rush and uproar. The first horse on the left, with the rider leaning forward, recalls as it buckles the well-known horses in the famous Alexander mosaic from Pompeii, and must belong to a common tradition of painting. Next to it, the second horse, with its characteristic bending, gives the artist a chance to exploit the vigorous neckline thus creating an expressive pattern full of internal motion.

3. Such lively drive of a horse in a battle as well as extreme tension, stretching out of its powers, which competes with the violent movement of people, are rendered also in a wall-painting—lost today—of a tomb near Naoussa (Pl. IX, 13); this wall-painting was partly destroyed already when it was revealed, it was copied in 1889 and published in 1920 by the Danish archaeologist Kinch. The figure of the barbarian warrior is especially characteristic, dark, stressed even more through the whiteness of his turban. It was alleged that the wall-painting of Naoussa must have immediate connection with a portrait of Antipatros, made by a painter from Thebes, Nikomachos, who was a teacher to Philoxenos from Eretria, who in turn is considered to be the artist of the model for the famous Alexander mosaic of Naples. This hypothesis cannot be considered well enough testified; what we can say, however, is that the wall-painting of Naoussa is artistically very near a work like the model for the mosaic. Thus, the tomb at Dion and the tomb at Naoussa are connected both chronologically and artistically, and they can be taken back to a tradition common between these and the model of the famous mosaic.



4. In the same area, near Naoussa, another Macedonian tomb was found in 1954, the largest known so far, and it was called the tomb of Lefkadhia, from a nearby village. This unique monument has suffered serious damage on its facade and has not been definitively braced yet. Excavation and restoration work has gone on almost continuously between 1954 and now, and many brief, provisional expositions have been published about it by the excavator. Unfortunately no photograph or design of its most interesting decoration has been given, so that only a visitor can know them. I even fear that with time both the painted and the plastic decorations will suffer irreparable alterations.

The facade of the grave depicts a two-storey edifice. On the lower part there are four semi-columns of Doric order and two antae. The architrave rests on these supports. Then follow the triglyphs and metopes and the Doric cornice. Over the cornice there is a continuous frieze crowned with an Ionic cornice. On this there are six Ionic semi-columns and two end antae, and in their intercolumniation there are false windows or false doors. The uppermost part of the facade is destroyed, but the pieces have been found, so perhaps some day it will be restored to its initial shape.

The frieze, the metopes and the intercolumniations of the Doric columns were decorated. Decoration of the frieze was in relief of coloured stucco representing a battle between Macedonians and barbarians. The other pictures are more interesting for our subject. In the metopes there is a Centauromachy while in the four intercolumniations are the figures of the dead, of Hermes, of Aeakos and Radhamanthys.

The metopes, relatively small, are characteristic, although they cannot be compared artistically either to the rest of the wall-paintings or to the works we have seen before. The artist has rendered the volume of the figures by using the "cast shadow" technique, of blue colour. Moulding is intensified with a purple shade that transports us from the outline to the lighted, standing-out volume of the body. These pictures create the general impression of being drawings, where a student shows his ability to copy some painted or rather plastic model.

To the left of the entrance, there is Hermes depicted in red chiton, blue chlamys and a petasus on his head; he is holding a kerykeion in his left hand and with his right arm he addresses the dead in a gesture characteristic of the Soul-Leader Hermes, as Mrs Karouzou has shown in a recent article. She also remarked rightly that the posture of the god must have its origin in a sculptural model, for it is sculptural indeed.

The figure of the dead warrior is equally severe and noble. He wears a red chiton and over it a white armour with dark cherry colour girdle and shoulder pieces, over which there is also a chlamys. He holds the spear in his



right hand, and in the left a sword. This warrior reminds us somehow of another contemporary from a painted stele at Alexandreia, but the latter carries less weight and is not as impressive, although both have the mobility of early Hellenistic art.

Across from these two youthful figures that still preserve the idealistic tradition of classical art, we have in the right hand side the realistic features of the elderly judges of Hades, Aiakos and Radhamanthys. Immediately to the right of the door we can see Aiakos seated on a cube-shaped stool. His himation of ochre colour leaves his chest bare by three fourths; in his left hand, raised over his head, he holds his tall staff, in a posture reminiscent of the well-known sepulchral relief of New York, except that in the wall-painting the left hand is raised instead of the right one creating an entirely different impression, as the volume of the raised hand falls over the left side and shoulder.

Radhamanthys is depicted leaning on his stick, with his right knee bent, wearing a himation of almost identical colour to that of Aiakos. His posture and realistic figure remind one of the old man leaning on a stick in the wall-painting of the "Macedonian Royal Family" of Boscoreale, which we can take back to a model in the second quarter of the 3rd century B.C. At any rate, both these figures, creations of Hellenistic times, have intense realism and are products of an art which is to offer models not only to the Romans but also to the later Cristian artists, who will use such mythical figures as their pictorial sources when they represent prophets and other persons of the new religion.

5. The last monument we shall be concerned with comes also from Verghina. It was found in summer 1962 and has not yet become known except from brief archaeological news published in the *B.C.H.*, *Chronique des Fouilles*. It is a painted funeral stele that had broken and was thrown in with earth and other pieces at the construction of a huge mound; this mound we have been excavating for two years hoping to reveal some large Hellenistic grave it may cover (Pl X,14). We can see three figures; a female figure seated on the left, one standing on the right and a smaller one, of a girl, standing between the other two. In the top left hand side corner can be seen the framework of a window. The right hand side figure is best preserved allowing us to evaluate the whole composition (Pl. X, 15). As is well-known, such painted stelae were found many years ago in the district of ancient Dimitrias and are now on show in the Museum at Volos. Those stelae were considered at the time to be valuable examples of ancient painting, although it was also noted then, that the quality of their art was not always of the highest. The stele of Verghina not only compares favourably with the best examples of stelae at Dimi-

trias, but is definitely better than any of them. Looking at the standing figure, immediately called by the workers at the excavation a 'Madona', the spectator brings to his mind Briseis from the well-known wall-painting in the "House of the Tragic Poet" at Pompeii, with lowered eyes and a timidly refined posture; the opinion of art historians is thus confirmed, that the wall-painting, which is dated around 70 A.D., was a copy of Greek model from the years of Alexander the Great. The model of the wall-painting was certainly a very important work; comparing that to our stele would suffice to bring out its own high quality. The stele of Verghina must certainly be somehow later than the years of Alexander; a date round about 300 B.C. seems to me most probable.

As I stated already at the beginning of my paper, it was my intention to present as briefly as I could, a series of monuments, some of which are well known and some not so well known, rather than dwell on the many problems they set. It was not only lack of space that decided for me, nor was it the fact that several of the works referred to have not yet been published definitively and hence I should be reluctant to extend discussion of them. What really prompted my decision was the idea that the works of art themselves can speak to us more immediately than any an interpreter ever could.

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