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AIEMA - Türkiye is a research center that aims to study, introduce and constitute a data bank of the mosaics from the ancient times to the Byzantine period. The best presentation of the mosaics of Turkey is the ultimate goal of this center functioning depending on AIEMA. A data bank of Turkey mosaics and a corpus including Turkey mosaics are some of the practices of the center. Additionally, this center also equips a periodical including the art of ancient mosaics and original studies namely JMR.

The JMR (Journal of Mosaic Research) is an international journal on mosaics, annually published by the Bursa Uludağ University Mosaic Research Center. The aim of this journal is to serve as a forum for scientific studies with critical analysis, interpretation and synthesis of mosaics and related subjects. The main matter of the journal covers mosaics of Turkey and other mosaics related to Turkey mosaics. Besides, the journal also accommodates creative and original mosaic researches in general. Furthermore, together with articles about mosaics, the journal also includes book presentations and news about mosaics.

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Bu dergideki makalelerde kullanılacak olan kısaltmalar Alman Arkeoloji Enstitüsü yayın kuralları, Bulletin de l'Association internationale pour l'Etude de la Mosaïque antique, AIEMA - AOROC 24.2016, La Mosaïque Gréco Romaine IX ve Der Kleine Pauly dikkate alınarak yapılmıştır.

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Faculty of Art and Sciences / Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi

Department of Archaeology / Arkeoloji Bölümü

16059 - Görükle / BURSA - TÜRKİYE

Tel & Fax: + 90 224 2941892

E.mail : mosaicsjournal@gmail.com

aiematurkey@uludag.edu.tr

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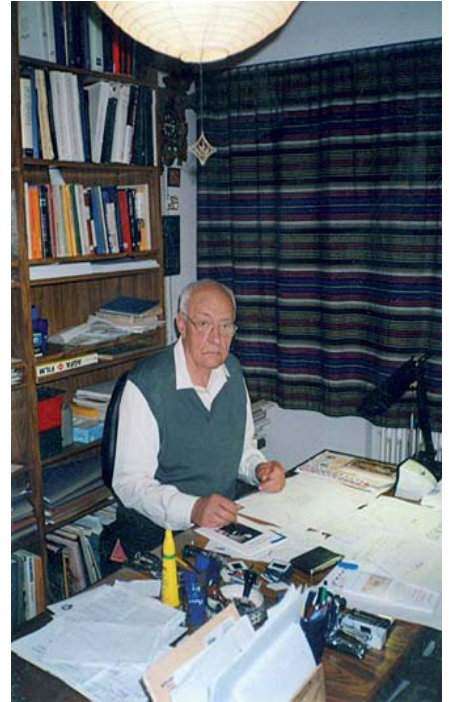
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José María Blázquez Martínez in memoriam (1926-2016)

José María Blázquez Martínez (Professor of Ancient History and Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History) passed away on March 26, 2016, in the city of Madrid (Spain) after a full life devoted to teaching, scientific research and the spread of antiquity; and leaving all of us -who have had the immense fortune to enjoy his mastership and overwhelming personality-, with an immense sadness.

Prof. Blázquez graduated in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Salamanca in 1951 and defended his PhD in the Complutense University of Madrid in 1956. During the next decade, Prof. Blázquez continued his training under the supervision of Prof. Pallottino at the University of La Sapienza in Rome and, granted by the DAAD, at the University of Marburg, under the supervision of Prof. Matz and Prof. Drerup. Subsequently he made other successful research stays at the University of Tel Aviv, the British Academy of Rome, the University of Catania, and in the German Archaeological Institute branches at Istanbul, Damascus and Riyadh. In this regard, Prof. Blázquez always defended the importance of international networks that, through academic contact with other schools and colleagues, conceived as essential for personal development and the progress of scientific research.



After this intense formative period, José María Blázquez obtained a position as Professor of Ancient History at the University of Salamanca (1966-) and shortly after at the Complutense de Madrid (1969-), where he was designated as Professor Emeritus. At the same time, he was an active member of the former Institute of Archaeology "Rodrigo Caro" (CSIC), that he directed during more than ten years (1973-1985). Finally, in recognition to his academic trajectory, Professor Blázquez was elected as a Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History. In all these institutions Prof. Blázquez developed a brilliant contribution to the promotion of Ancient History in Spain, especially important was his capacity for mentoring (he supervised more than 40 PhDs during his academic life) large teams of teachers and researchers, that obtained several tenured positions in different universities and academic institutions. He was also a prolific author publishing many handbooks and monographs that are authentic milestones in history the Spanish scholarship (i. e. *La Romanización, Historia social y económica. La España Romana. Economía de la Hispania romana*, Bilbao, 1978, *Historia de España Antigua, I. Protohistoria*, Madrid, 1980; *Historia de España Antigua II. Hispania romana*, Madrid, 1978). Largely influential was also his leadership in the direction of the scientific journals as *Archivo Español de Arqueología* (1973-1987) and *Gerión* (1983-2010). In addition, Prof. Blázquez directed numerous archaeological excavations at Caparra (Cáceres), Cástulo (Jaén), La Loba (Fuenteovejuna, Córdoba), and in the Monte Testaccio (Rome).

By virtue of its training and its wide perspective, Prof. Blázquez's research trajectory was the reflection of the scientist dedicated to the study of antiquity, with a masterful management of

diverse written and archaeological sources, always connected with current intellectual debates of all social and human sciences. During his career published more than 37 books, acting of editor in other 9 monographs. He also published 234 articles in the most prestigious, both Spanish and International, scientific journals and several chapters in collective volumes. His research interests covered multiples areas on the study of antiquity: the Phoenician and Greek colonization of the Western Mediterranean, the Late Iron Age communities of the Iberian Peninsula, the study of Pre-Roman religions, the Impact of primitive Christianity in the Late Roman Empire, and, of course, the ancient economy of Roman Spain, with an special focus on the exports of *Baetican* olive oil.

Finally, we would like to highlight his research on Roman mosaics, whose first publication dates from 1975 - "Arte y Sociedad en los mosaicos del Bajo Imperio" [Art and Society in the mosaics of the Late Roman Empire] *Bellas Artes* 75, 1975, pp. 18-25 -soon followed by- "Mosaicos romanos del Bajo Imperio" [Roman mosaics of the Late Empire], *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 50-51, 1977, pp. 269-293., In this regard, Prof. Blázquez continued the a research line previously initiated by his teacher Prof. Antonio García y Bellido. Since 1976 to 1996, Prof. Blázquez promoted and directed the Corpus of Mosaics of Spain, within the framework of the international project sponsored by the AIEMA. Through this monumental labor, Prof. Blázquez contributed to establish the study of Roman mosaics as an authentic sub-discipline in the field of the Spanish Classical archaeology.

The obtention of several I+D Research projects, funded in competitive calls by the Spanish Ministry of Science (acting as Principal Investigator from 1976 to 1997) and an International Project of the Joint Hispanic-American Committee, with the University of West-Lafayette, Purdue (Indiana-USA), allowed Prof. Blázquez to create a permanent research team on the study of Roman mosaics. This team, which I (Prof. Neira Jiménez) am honored of have been part, managed the realization of the above mentioned *Corpus de Mosaicos de España* (CME), a work continued afterwards by its dear colleague, Dr. Guadalupe López Monteagudo (CSIC). In addition to the publication of 12 volumes of the CME, he presented numerous papers on the Hispanic, African and Near Eastern Roman mosaics in the most prestigious conferences on these topics, such as the International Congresses organized by the AIEMA or *L'Africa romana* conference, organized by the Centro di Studi sull'Africa Romana of the Università degli studi di Sassari, as well as in countless courses and seminars in other institutions and universities, such as the Roman Mosaic Seminar of the UC3M, to which he attended every year, without missing any of the 9 editions celebrated.

Prof. Blázquez was a firm believer in the work developed by AIEMA, having been named member of Honor of this scientific association. He also formed part of the editorial board of the Journal of Mosaic Research, where he published various articles, and presented papers in both the 11th International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics, held in Bursa on 2009, and in the 5th Colloquium of AIEMA Turkey, held in Kahramanmaraş on 2011. Prof. Blázquez was a true lover of Turkey.

Prof. Blázquez was an unavoidable reference in the international scholarship on ancient mosaics, many colleagues who share our pain remember his vitality even in the XIII. AIEMA Congress held in Madrid on September 2015, where he gave the inaugural conference. As a testimony of his enthusiasm for the study of ancient mosaics, he was already thinking of traveling to the next AIEMA Congress scheduled for 2018 in Cyprus. Proof of his infinite generosity, he prepared

tirelessly until the end of his days a text on Diana in the mosaics of Roman Spain for X SMR, held in September 2016 at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

His decisive contribution to the study of antiquity has earned him numerous recognitions from many international academic institutions and associations: Fellow of German Archaeological Institute (1968), Board member of the L'Association Internationale d'Epigraphie grecque et latine (AIEGL), Member of the Hispanic Society (1974); Fellow of the Academy of Arts and Archaeology of Bologna (1980), Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History (1990), Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences (1993), Fellow of the Academia Nazionale dei Lincei (1994), Fellow of the Fine Arts Academy of Santa Isabel de Hungría (Seville) (1995), Fellow of the Real Academia de Bones Letres de Barcelona (1997), or Fellow of the Académie de Aix-en-Provence (1999), among others. He also received many prizes as the Franz Cumont prize from the Académie Royale de Belgique (1985), the Great Silver medal of Archaeology from l'Académie d'Architecture de Paris (1987), or the Cavalli d'Oro prize from Venice (2003). Prof. Blázquez was named *doctor honoris causa* by the universities of Valladolid (1999), Salamanca (2000), Bologna (2001), León (2005), and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (2015), and received the *Orden del Mérito Civil*, one of the highest recognitions granted by the Spanish govern.

He was a genius as scholar, but also a genial person. For both reasons, colleagues, students, and friends of many countries, that have the fortune of meet Prof. Blázquez during his life, feel a great emptiness for the loss of our dear teacher.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şahin
Bursa Uludağ University

Prof. Maria Luz Neira Jiménez
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid



Archaeology / Arkeoloji

1 Simonetta ANGIOLILLO

A New Mosaic Workshop in South Sardinia?

Güney Sardunya'dan Yeni Bir Mozaik Atölyesi?

9 Oktay DUMANKAYA

Room and Corridor Mosaics from the Ancient City of Germanicia and its Iconographic Assessment

Germanicia Antik Kentine Ait Oda ve Koridor Mozaiği ve İkonografik Değerlendirmesi

27 Maria de Jesus DURAN KREMER

From the Roman Mosaic to the Portuguese Pavement: Continuity of an Artistic Expression in Time and Space

Roma Çağı Mozaiğinden Portekiz Döşemesine: Sanatsal Dışavurumun Zaman ve Mekân İçerisinde Devamlılığı

41 Mercedes DURÁN PENEDO

Iconography Related to the Mineral-Medicinal Waters in Hispanic Mosaics in Castilla, Aragón and Navarra

Castilla, Aragón ve Navarra'da Yer Alan İspanyol Mozaiklerindeki Mineral-Tıbbi Sularla İlgili İkonografi

- 63 Zaraza FRIEDMAN
The Boat Depicted in the Yakto Thalassa Mosaics: Is it a Dug-Out?
Yakto Thalassa Mozaiklerinde Betimlenen Tekne: Bir Kano mu?
- 79 Amir GORZALCZANY - Baruch ROSEN
Tethering of Tamed and Domesticated Carnivores in Mosaics from the Roman and Byzantine Periods in the Southern Levant
Güney Levant'ta Roma ve Bizans Çağlarında Yularlanmış Olan Ehil ve Evcil Etoburların Betimlendiği Mozaikler
- 97 Lihi HABAS
Early Byzantine Mosaic Floors of the Church at Ozem, Israel
Ozem Kilisesi'ndeki Erken Bizans Çağı Mozaik Zeminleri, İsrail
- 121 Gülgün KÖROĞLU - Emine TOK
Sinop Balatlar Kazısında Ortaya Çıkarılmaya Başlanan Erken Bizans Dönemi Döşeme Mozaikleriyle İlgili İlk Veriler
First Data on the Floor Mosaics of an Early Byzantine Church Being Excavated Recently in Sinop Balatlar
- 137 Filomena LIMÃO
The “Opusmusium - Roman Mosaics in Portugal” Academic Project: from Teachers’ Lab to Public
Portekiz'deki “Opusmusium- Portekiz'teki Roma Mozaikleri” Akademik Projesi: Öğretmenlerin Laboratuvarından Halka
- 143 Guadalupe LÓPEZ MONTEAGUDO
New Reading of the Mosaic in Noheda (Cuenca, Spain)
Noheda'dan Bir Mozağin Yeniden İncelenmesi (Cuenca, İspanya)
- 149 Maria Luz NEIRA JIMÉNEZ
On the Interpretation of Pothos in a Mosaic from the Antiquities Market with the Representation of Pelops and Hippodameia
Antika Müzayedesinden Pelops ve Hippodameia Betimli Bir Mozaikteki Pothos'un Yorumlanması Üzerine
- 155 Elda OMARI
The Roman Villa of Tirana (Albania) and its Mosaics
Tiran Roma Villası ve Mozaikleri (Arnavutluk)

- 173 M^a Paz PÉREZ CHIVITE
New Documentation Technologies: The “Mosaico de Otoño” of the “Casa del Anfiteatro”, Mérida, Spain
Yeni Belgeleme Teknolojileri: “Amfiteatro Evi’nden Sonbahar Mozaïği”, Mérida, İspanya
- 179 Luigi QUATTROCCHI
Common Aspects of the Mosaics of Sardinia, North Africa and Iberian Peninsula in the Light of Recent Discoveries
Son Araştırmalar Işığında Sardunya, Kuzey Afrika ve İber Yarımadası’nda Bulunan Mozaiklerde Görülen Ortak Özellikler
- 193 M. Pilar SAN NICOLÁS PEDRAZ
Technical and Artistic Aspects of the Roman Mosaic of Castulo (Jaén, Spain)
Castulo Roma Mozaïğinin Teknik ve Sanatsal Açılardan İncelenmesi (Jaén, İspanya)
- 207 S. Sezin SEZER
Prusias ad Hypium Akhilleus Mozaïği
The Achilles Mosaic of Prusias ad Hypium
- 225 Derya ŞAHİN - Mustafa ŞAHİN
Roma Mizah Anlayışının Roma Dönemi Mozaiklerine Yansıması
Reflections of Roman Humour on Roman Mosaics
- 239 Derya ŞAHİN – Nur Deniz ÜNSAL
Ontario Kraliyet Müzesi’nde Sergilenen Edessa Kökenli Bir Grup Mozaik Pano
A Group of Edessa Oriented Mosaic Panels Exhibited in Royal Ontario Museum
- 257 Felix TEICHNER - Irene MAÑAS ROMERO
The Mosaics from Abicada and Boca Do Rio (Portugal) - A New Perspective Thirty Years Later
Abicada ve Boca Do Rio (Portekiz) Mozaikleri - Otuz Yıl Sonra Yeni Bir Bakış Açısı

- 273 Ivo TOPALILOV
On the Eirene Mosaic from Philippopolis, Thrace
Trakya, Philippopolis Eirene Mozaïği Üzerine
- 287 Federico UGOLINI
A New Insight into the Iconography of the Civitas Classis Mosaic at Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna
Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo'daki Civitas Classis Mozaïği İkonografisi Üzerine Yeni Bir Bakış Açısı
- 297 Miguel Ángel VALERO TÉVAR
New Representations of the Myth of Pelops and Hippodamia in Roman Mosaic Art
Roma Mozaik Sanatında Pelops ve Hippodamia Efsanesinin Yeni Tasvirleri
- 315 Sebastián VARGAS VÁZQUEZ
Cube Designs in Roman Baetica Mosaics
Roma Çağı Baetica Mozaiklerinde Küp Tasarımları
- 333 Véronique VASSAL
Iconographie et relecture d'une mosaïque gallo-romaine à décor multiple de Vienne (Narbonnaise)
Narbonne'dan Çok Dekorlu Bir Gallo-Roma Mozaïği'nin İkonografi ve Yeniden Okuma Çalışmaları
- Modern Mosaic Studies / Modern Mozaik Çalışmaları**
- 349 Hülya VURNAL İKİZGÜL
The Modernization of Mosaic Art in Turkey
Türkiye'de Mozaik Sanatın Çağdaşlaşması
- Book Review / Kitap İncelemesi**
- 361 Maja KRAMER
Los mosaicos de la Plaza de la Encarnación. Roma a Seville, Guadalupe López Monteagudo.
- 367 David PARRISH
Corpus of the Mosaics of Albania, Vol. 1, Butrint intramuros, Balkans' Mosaic, Marie-Patricia Raynaud - Agron Islami
- 371 Guidelines for Authors / Yazarlar İçin Yazım Kuralları

New Reading of the Mosaic in Noheda (Cuenca, Spain)

Noheda'dan Bir Mozaik'in Yeniden İncelenmesi (Cuenca, İspanya)

Guadalupe LÓPEZ MONTEAGUDO*

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Abstract

In the Roman villa of Noheda (Villar de Domingo García, Cuenca), the most distinguished of the structures excavated, is the so-called tri-apsidal (triconch) room, belonging to the residential part of a 4th and 5th century villa, with its 290.64 m² dimensions and its extraordinary figured mosaics. Many of the mythological themes represented are connected with loving partners: Pelops and Hippodameia, the story of Paris and Helen, the Triumph of Bacchus in the company of Ariadne. The scenes related are also represented to the mime “the jealous husband”, and Venus is evoked through mythological characters associated with her which appears next to the fishing scenes. The interpretative analysis of the ensemble mosaics found in Noheda is based on the mythological and allegorical scenes depicting certain characters. For instance the Eroses or the typical dextrarum iunctio gesture by lovers, Dionysus and Ariadne's hierogamia as the divine couple manifest the allegory of the exaltation of love, of the union of divine and human. Together with decorative elements, such as garlands and gardens, related with Venus, goddess of love, leads to an alone interpretation in allegorical lines as the subliminal messages are revolving around the triumph of love. So far, the mosaic in the triclinium of Noheda can be proclaimed as a great exponent of love; of lawful and unlawful relationships, of happy endings with couples' weddings or punishment inflicted on adulterous characters. It all of it presided over by the spirit of Venus as inspirer of love.

Keywords: Reading, messages, mythological characters, allegorical scenes, loving partners, dextrarum iunctio, hierogamia, garlands, erotes, gardens.

Öz

Noheda'da yer alan Roma villasında (Villar de Domingo García, Cuenca), kazılan yapılardan en seçkini, 4. ve 5. yüzyıla tarihlenen bir villanın konut bölümüne ait 290.64 m² boyutundaki ve olağanüstü figürlü mozaiklere sahip olan tri-apsidal (triconch) odasıdır. Betimlenen mitolojik temaların çoğu, sevgi dolu çiftlerle bağlantılıdır: Pelops ve Hippodameia, Paris ve Helen'in hikayesi, Ariadne'nin de yer aldığı Bacchus'un Zaferi sahnesi gibi. İlgili sahneler aynı zamanda “kıskanç koca” mimi ile temsil edilir ve Venüs, balık avlama sahnelerinin yanında ortaya çıkan, onunla ilişkili mitolojik karakterlerle birlikte görülür. Noheda'da bulunan mozaik topluluğunun yorumsal analizi, belli karakterleri betimleyen mitolojik ve alegorik sahneler temel alınarak yapılacaktır. Örneğin, Eroslar ya da dextrarum iunctio mimiğinde tasvir edilmiş sevgililer, aşkın yüceliğinin bir simgesi olarak, hem ilahi bir çift hem de ilahi olanla insani olanın birleşmesini temsilen Dionysos ve Ariadne'nin hierogamia sahneleri bulunur. Çelenkler ve bahçeler gibi diğer dekoratif bileşenlerle birlikte görülen aşk tanrıçası Venüs, aşkın zaferi etrafında dönen bilinçaltı mesajlar şeklinde alegorik olarak tek bir yönde yorumlanır. Şimdiye kadar Noheda'nın tricliniumundaki mozaikte, büyük bir aşkın; meşru ve gayrimeşru ilişkilerin, çiftlerin evliliği ile simgelenen mutlu sonların ya da zina yapan karakterlerin cezalandırılmasının betimlendiği söylenebilmektedir. Tüm bunlar, aşkın ilham kaynağı olan Venüs'ün ruhu tarafından yönetilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnceleme, mesajlar, mitolojik karakterler, mecazi sahneler, aşık çiftler, dextrarum iunctio, hierogamia, çelenkler, eroslar, bahçeler.

* Guadalupe López Monteagudo, Núñez de Balboa 40. 28001 Madrid, Spain. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0106-5108>.
E-mail: guadalupelopez@ih.csic.es

The figurative scenes of Noheda site –presented to the public in 2013 (Valero 2013: 307-330) stand out within the Spanish-Roman mosaic art as a whole and in the South Meseta in particular. The large decorated surface and the technical and artistic quality of the pavement, as its allegorical content, make this mosaic a *unicum*.

The mosaics of Noheda pave a triconch room belonging to the residential part of a 4th and 5th century villa with an adjoining *nartex* with two *exedrae* and an octagonal room (Valero 2013: fig. 2; Valero 2015: 439-443). According to the archaeologists this room was used as *triclinium*.

The rectangular area of the pavement is bordered with a frame of acanthus scrolls, is divided in six decorated panels with mythological and allegoric-themed scenes. There are also everyday-life scenes, such as the chariot race in the circus (panel A), boxing contests in the amphitheatre and extolling of the winning athletes with the victor's palm and the crown of triumph (panels B and E), probably evoking the proprietor's Euergetism. Additionally, there are aquatic scenes surrounding a grand central fountain or pool, featuring fishermen with various fishing gears together with mythological figures. A cheerful evocation of gardens is also present in the compositions of archways with ornamental flower insets paving the octagonal room and North *exedra* (Valero 2013: fig. 10, 11a-b, 12).

In the W area of the floor, at the entrance to the room, the myth of Pelops and Hippodameia is represented (panel A) (Valero 2013: fig. 13, 14; Valero 2016: 125-160). To the left, a group of two men and two ladies surround Oenomaus, seated in an armchair and reaching out with his right hand towards Pelops. In the striking upper strip there are two garlands and the heads of three dead suitors dangling gruesomely from a perch. The middle part depicts a race of *quadrigae* in the circus, where one of the chariots has suffered a *naufragium* and a wheel shoots up. From the other, driven by Eros, Pelops descends as the winning charioteer and is embraced by Hippodameia –with both characters in a *dextrarum iunctio* stance– who presents him with the victor's palm, while another character on the right side points at him as the winner.

In the upper part of the panel the *spina* of the circus has been represented in small scale to evoke the races appearing in Spanish-Roman mosaics in Italica, Paradas, Écija, Mérida, Barcelona and Bell-lloc (López 1994: 343-367). All of it is accompanied by garlands as a symbol of Venus.

The story of Paris and Helen is represented in the East part (panel C), divided in three scenes: the Judgement of Paris to the left, the Abduction of Helen, and the arrival in Troy by a ship with unfurling sails (Valero 2013: fig. 17, 18). In this panel the garlands –symbol of Venus– have been substituted with Erotes. The scene constitutes a *hapax* in Roman mosaic art as it conjoins the Judgement of Paris with episodes never represented before, such as the Abduction of Helen and the arrival of the protagonists to Troy.

The Judgement of Paris has been represented to the left in a conventional manner, with significant examples in the Hispanic pavements of Castulo and Casariche, *Ulpia Traiana* (Transylvania), Cos (Greece), Antioch (Turkey) and Cherchel (Algeria) (San Nicolás 2015: 563-571). In the Noheda mosaic Paris is featured sitting on a rock with a cupid at his feet before the three goddesses. The centre of the panel shows the Abduction of Helen, who, accompanied by three servants –one of them holding up a parasol over her head– is taken by the hand in a typical *dextrarum iunctio* gesture by Paris, who ushers her to a ship with four sailors and a cupid near the oars, as if proclaiming that love is what drives the journey to

Troy. The same ship is used to depict the arrival in Troy of Paris and Helen and the celebration of the *dextrarum iunctio* by the lovers, still escorted by a cupid and the three servants, one of them holding the sunshade over the princess as in the preceding episode, and by four small figures who celebrate the event dancing in front of the walls of the city.

In the easternmost zone of the pavement, the Triumph of Bacchus is pictured (panel D). The god, crowned by the *Victoriae*, rides a chariot drawn by centaurs in front-view in the company of Ariadne –under a parasol held by a servant– and his full cortege of satyrs, maenads and Silenus on his donkey (Valero 2013: fig. 19). The figure of Bacchus as *loutrophoros*, holding a pitcher full of wine, would illustrate Ptolemy II Philadelphus's famous pompé, described in Atheneo (*Athen.deipn.* V 200 ss.), where one of the triumphs in which Dionysus offers a libation –symbol of divine power– to celebrate his triumph is mentioned (San Nicolás 1997a: 405-420).

There are no garlands or Eroses in this scene, but love is present in the figure of Ariadne, redolent of happy and unhappy love (San Nicolás 2011: 47-60). At the time of his triumphant return from India, Bacchus finds Ariadne in the island of Naxos, where Theseus had abandoned her while she was asleep. She is found there by a satyr from the god's retinue, according to Nonnus's (*Nonn.Dion.* XLVII 265-471) and Philostratus's accounts (*Philostr.imag.* I, 15), at the end of the night, at the time of the "morning sleep", as described by Nonnus (*Nonn. Dion.* XLVII 282-283, 292). Dionysus and Ariadne's encounter appeared in the mosaic of Mérida created by Annibonius's workshop, and in the one recently discovered in Écija (CMRE XIV 2017: n° 37 fig. 70 A-B), and is a recurrent topic in North African and Eastern mosaics.

Dionysus takes Ariadne onto his chariot, weds her and drives her to Olympus. From that moment on Ariadne will appear inside the chariot next to Dionysus, in allusion to her divine condition, and the arts have managed to show it very clearly in Hispanic representations of the Bacchic Triumph in Noheda, Écija, Cabra, Fuente Álamo, Plaza de la Encarnación in Seville, Andelos, Liédena and Baños de Valdearados, and in North Africa in Orange, Sant-Leu and Sabratha, with just one mosaic documenting it in the East, in Gerasa. In Noheda this episode constitutes a final apotheosis for the whole content of the mosaic.

To the N and S of the central pool or fountain an array of scenes related to the theatre are displayed (panel B) by means of figures representing musicians, musical instruments, singers, masked actors and, most interestingly, a mime, whose name is known through an inscription by his side: MIMV ZELOTIPI NVM/FI. The title can be translated as "the jealous husband" and features two characters in chains –symbolising adultery– on a stage hung with profuse garlands evoking Venus, goddess of love, in this case sinful love (Valero 2013: fig. 15, 16, 20; Valero - Gómez 2013: 87-106; Lancha - Leroux 2017: 199-216).

Venus is also evoked in panel F through mythological characters associated with her which appear next to the fishing scenes (Valero 2013: fig. 21): Eros riding a dolphin, also featured in the Hispanic mosaics of *Barcino*, *Corduba*, *Astigi*, Santa Vitória do Ameixial (Portugal) and frequently in Eastern pavements, and that often accompanies Venus in statuary (LIMC III, "Eros"; "Eros/ Love, Cupid"); Nereid with a veil arching over her head resembling Europe, sitting on a Triton, whose iconography bears a heavy erotic charge. The connection of Venus with fishing is explicitly documented in Algerian pavements from the 3rd-5th centuries showing the Triumph of the Marine Venus in Khenchela, Kamissa

and Djemila, which include fishing scenes in their lower section, revealing the goddess's relation with fishing activities (López 2010: 160-186).

The goddess of love is also made present in the Noheda pavement through the presence of gardens, evoked by means of compositions of imbricated archways with flowery ornaments within, paving the octagonal room and the North exedra adjacent to the great rectangular pavement (Valero 2013: figs. 11, 12). The mosaic in the octagonal room is decorated with eight rows of kraters joined by garlands, alternating with stems crowned with lotus flowers. A similar composition –with analogous pieces in North African mosaic art– decorates a mosaic in the Portuguese villa of Torre de Palma (San Nicolás 1997b: 137-175; San Nicolás 2016: 270-288).

The presence of Erotes and garlands as an allegory of Venus and of love seems to be a constant in some South Meseta workshops, also characterized by scenes of amorous content. The garlands appear in the upper part –just like in Noheda– of the *Complutum* mosaic of Leda and the Swan (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid), accompanied by the inscription ADVLTERIVM IOVIS LEDA, alluding to the episode of Leda's seduction by Jupiter metamorphosed into a swan, and the subsequent union of the couple (Fernández 1984: 203-213). Also in *Complutum* in the mosaic Cupids 2 at Bacchus's House, two Erotes grasp garlands whose other ends are held by two doves. In Sisapo (Ciudad Real) (Zarzalejos et al. 2011: 69-83 fig. 23, 26-29), in the mosaic of Room no. 12, garlands held by gallinaceous birds decorate the angles created by the insertion of a circle inside a square, while a basket full of roses decorates the central emblem. This is a “reduced” representation typical of the Spanish-Roman mythology-themed mosaic art, where Venus is symbolised through her most characteristic elements, namely birds, garlands and roses (López 2006: 271-292).

Some other pictures from different places in Hispania, similar in iconography and contents, are found in the villa de la Estación (villa of the Station), in Antequera (Málaga), from the late 3rd or early 4th century, only one is an octagon decorated with two garlands Erotes carrying, one of them offering his companion a basket, is preserved. One another, is the mosaic of Panes Perdidos (Badajoz), in the former Lusitania, by the craftsman Dexter, with seasonal Erotes carrying baskets with fruits, associated to a female figure who is weaving garlands.

Venus's connection to Eros and garlands is documented in the mosaic of Fraga (Huesca). Venus together with Eros is present in the mosaic of the Casa del Anfiteatro (House of the Amphitheatre) in Mérida and in another example in Fraga, while there are two Erotes in the scene of the Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony belonging to the mosaic of Azuara (Saragossa). Garlands and roses can be added together with other mythological characters as well, as with Europe and the Nereids, symbolising the feeling insuflated by the goddess of love. The same affectionate symbolism of garlands appears in the pictures of Mars and Rhea, and of the she-wolf and the twins in the company of Mars in the circus mosaic of Bell-lloc (Girona), as well as in Bacchic mosaics found in the East, such as the ones in Zeugma, Shahba Philipopolis and Sheik Zouede.

This same loving dynamic, but with a different meaning, can be found in the iconographic setup of Carranque (Toledo) apparently alluding to the fateful consequences of forced or unrequited love. Scenes of Diana and Actaeon, Pyramus and Thisbe, Neptune and Amyone, Hylas and the Nymphs, are represented in the lunettes of the mosaic about Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and presided in the

central circle by a portrait of Venus. The death of Adonis before Venus and Mars, as a consequence of the god's jealousy, or the return of Briseis to Achilles in the context of the Trojan War, are also represented in Carranque (Fernández 1994: 199-210; Blázquez 2008: 91-125).

The message that this splendid mosaic of Noheda is trying to convey through the scenes depicted and the presence of certain details like the garlands and roses, symbols of Venus, the repeated appearance of Eros and the evocation of the goddess in the fishing scenes, is the extolling of love and marriage, the praise of Pelops and Hippodameia's and Paris and Helen's *dextrarum iunctio*, opposing the adultery of the characters in the mime panel, even if it also stems from love as attested by the presence of garlands.

Although at first sight the images represented could be considered to have an ethical content –a warning about the morality of lawful and unlawful relationships–, the presence of *dextrarum iunctio* scenes, the garlands, the Erotes and the dancers celebrating the betrothals all epitomize the extolling and full triumph of love. Even the profusion of garlands in the mime scene refers to the secret love of the characters in chains, half-hidden between two latticework panels which remind of the episode of adultery involving Venus, Vulcan's wife, and Mars. They are caught in bed by the husband betrayed and entangled by him in a metallic mesh, of his own making and exposed to public scorn (Hom.Od. VIII 266 s.).

In the same context of reality and mythology, the *domini* have been considered to appear as protagonists in the *dextrarum iunctio* scenes taking the gods and mythological heroes' place or identifying themselves with them. The aim was to use these weddings as a family portrait, the image par excellence of the Roman matrimony as a substantial component of the social order established within the principles of civilization. These are the same values that prevail in some mosaics in Antioch or at the House of the Dionysian *Telete* (or Poseidon House) in Zeugma: Virtue (*Arete*) and Wisdom (*Sophia*), that must come together with the education (*Paideia*) of children, as pointed out by J. P. Darmon (Darmon 2005: 1279-1300). Referring to three scenes related to marriage from a single *domus* in Shahba-Philippopolis, J. Balty reflects that fertility (*Eutekneia*), Wisdom (*Sophia*) and Justice (*Dikaiosine*) are essential values of the *paideia*, the children's education, in an iconographic and ideological program which, going beyond myth, is designed by the household *domini* to emphasise the value of matrimony (Balty 2005: 1307-1316).

In this allegorically-oriented reading, the Triumph of Bacchus, accompanied by Ariadne and his retinue and cheered by pervasive rejoicing and gleeful frenzy, constitutes the apotheotic climax of the whole contents of the mosaic, of the symbolism implied in letting love take control and carry us away. It is the end of the mythological tale that concludes with Dionysus and Ariadne's *hierogamia* as the divine couple enacts the allegory of the exaltation of love, of the union of divine and human, of the *telete* that lends its name to the mystery, of the civilising nature of marriage over wild beasts and semi-human creatures such as centaurs and fauns.

So far the mosaic in the *triclinium* of Noheda can be proclaimed as a great exponent of love, lawful or unlawful –but in any case romantic– relationships, of happy endings with couples' weddings or punishment inflicted on adulterous characters. The spirit of Venus as inspirer of love, also represented in several statues in the site, is key for an interpretative reading of the mosaic.

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