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AIEMA - TÜRKİYE

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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 yapılmalıdır.

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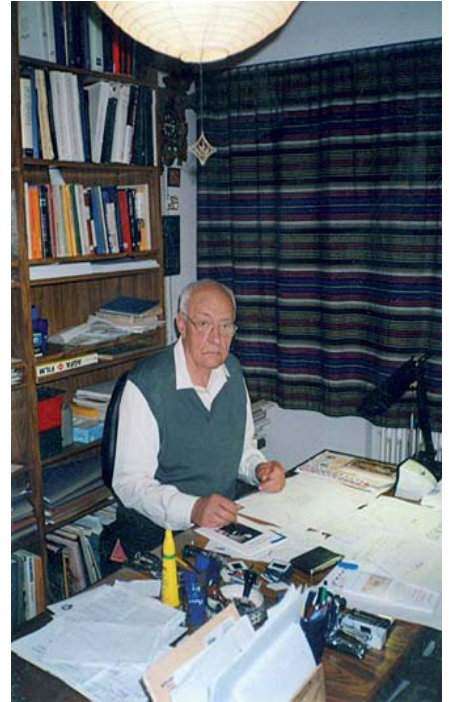
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## *José María Blázquez Martínez in memoriam (1926-2016)*

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





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# Common Aspects of the Mosaics of Sardinia, North Africa and Iberian Peninsula in the Light of Recent Discoveries

## Son Arařtırmalar Iřıęında Sardunya, Kuzey Afrika ve İber Yarımadası'nda Bulunan Mozaiklerde Görülen Ortak Özellikler

Luigi QUATTROCCHI\*

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### Abstract

*The article aims at understanding the common aspects of the new mosaics discovered comparing them to mosaics of North Africa and Iberian Peninsula. For the writing of this work, the teachings of the late Prof. Jose Maria Blázquez were handed down through a myriad of publications: A scholar who has always been busily occupied with all the mosaic art of the Mediterranean.*

*The first part is dedicated to the geometric mosaics, two from “Domus dei Mosaici” and “Domus di Orfeo” (Turrís Libisonis) and one from Sant’Imbenia, Alghero.*

*The second part is dedicated to the figurative mosaics: Orpheus discovered in Turrís Libisonis and a Head of Medusa discovered in Sant’Imbenia, Alghero.*

*The ancient mosaics of Sardinia show the influence of nearby North Africa, not only in the figured mosaics but also and above all in the geometric mosaics. The cities in which we find more evidence of mosaics in Sardinia are: Nora, Porto Torres and Cagliari. But the city that in the last year is returning the greatest testimonies in terms of mosaics is the ancient Turrís Libisonis.*

*This article will not take into account all the recent discoveries, only the most significant and comprehensive to better explain the North African and Iberian influences: The mosaics that are not taken into consideration, in any case, are very similar to those examined here. It is hoped that in the future the archaeological excavations will bring to light new mosaics: So we can have more evidence to establish how much the North African influence was present in Sardinia.*

**Keywords:** Roman mosaic, Sardinia, Hispania, North Africa, Roman Provinces.

### Öz

*Bu makale, yeni keşfedilen mozaiklerin Kuzey Afrika ve İber Yarımadası'nda yer alan benzer mozaiklerle karşılaştırıp ortak özelliklerinin anlaşılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın yazılması için, Prof. Jose Maria Blázquez'in geç dönemdeki çalışmaları sayısız yayınlar aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Kendisi, Akdeniz'in tüm mozaik sanatı ile her zaman meşgul olan bir alimdi.*

*İlk bölümde, “Domus dei Mosaici” ve “Domus di Orfeo”dan (Turrís Libisonis) iki mozaik ve biri de Sant’Imbenia, Alghero'dan bir mozaik olmak üzere geometrik mozaikler ele alınacaktır.*

*İkinci bölümde ise figürlü mozaikler yer almaktadır: Turrís Libisonis'te keşfedilen Orpheus ve Alghero'daki Sant’Imbenia'da bulunan bir Medusa Başı.*

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*Sardunya'nın antik mozaikleri, yakınındaki Kuzey Afrika'nın etkisini sadece figürlü mozaiklerde değil, aynı zamanda geometrik mozaiklerde de göstermektedir. Sardunya'da daha fazla mozaik kanıtı bulunan şehirler şunlardır: Nora, Porto Torres ve Cagliari. Ancak geçen yılki mozaikler açısından en büyük tanıklık eden şehir antik Turris Libisonis'tir.*

*Bu makale, Kuzey Afrika ve İberya etkilerini daha iyi açıklamak için yalnızca en önemli ve kapsamlı olan tüm keşifleri dikkate almayacaktır: Göz önünde bulundurulmayan mozaikler, her durumda, burada incelenenlere çok benzemektedir. Gelecekte arkeolojik kazıların yeni mozaikler ortaya çıkaracağı beklenmektedir: Bu yüzden Kuzey Afrika etkisinin Sardunya'da ne kadar bulunduğunu tespit etmek için daha fazla delilimiz olabilecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Roma mozaïği, Sardunya, Hispania, Kuzey Afrika, Roma Eyaletleri.

## Introduction

On September 14-16, 1990, the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Studies “L’Africa Romana” was held, whose acts were published the following year. On that occasion, Prof. José María Blázquez Martínez (Blázquez Martínez 1991: 911-926) spoke of the “Aspectos comunes de los mosaicos de Cerdeña, África y España”.

Almost three decades have passed, and it’s worth going back to that topic. Indeed, the publications following the corpus edited by S. Angiolillo in 1981 (Angiolillo 1981) sometimes came in irregular succession, and addressed specific cases or broader issues (Angiolillo 1984: 451-460; Angiolillo 1985: 68-70; Angiolillo 1986: 603-614; Mureddu – Stefani 1986: 339-361; Angiolillo 1987: 157-195; Boninu et al. 1987: 17-23, 84; D’Oriano 1991: 126; Angiolillo 1994: 97-102; Ghedini 1996: 219-232; Angiolillo 1999: 751-758; Novello 2001: 125-136; Colavitti 2002: 1221-1233; Sangiorgi 2002: 341-363; Ghedini 2003: 3-8; Cicu – Pianu 2004; Ghiotto – Novello 2008: 245-255; Boninu – Pandolfi 2008: 1777-1818; Miedico 2013: 16-37; Quattrocchi 2014: 247-252; Salvi – Carboni – Cruccas 2014: 243-272; Ferri 2015: 557-564; Quattrocchi 2015a: 317-234; Quattrocchi 2015b: 139-145; Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 507-516; Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 323-328; Quattrocchi 2016: 517-522; Quattrocchi –Rivano 2016: 277-281; Angiolillo 2017: 16-24; Quattrocchi 2017a: 367-379; Quattrocchi 2017b: 1295-1300; Quattrocchi 2017c: 161-168).

We will examine some new mosaics discovered in Sardinia in these last decades which, for temporal reasons, could not be the subject of Prof. Blázquez’s studies.

They are not many new discoveries, indeed, and the most significant ones come with no doubt from Turris Libisonis, a small town where some very remarkable mosaics were discovered.

We will then study the two great classes of mosaics: the geometric ones, by examining two different geometric patterns, and the figurative ones, by analyzing an Orpheus and a head of Medusa.

## Geometric Mosaics<sup>1</sup>

In Sardinia, the majority of the mosaics found are geometric, sometimes very simple and some other times more complex.

Recently, some invaluable geometric mosaics have been brought to light in the so-called “*Domus dei Mosaici*” in Turris Libisonis (Angiolillo et al. 2016a), as well as in the “*Domus di Orfeo*” (Angiolillo et al. 2016b), still in the same town.

In the territory of Alghero, the Villa of Sant’Imbenia (Costanzi Cobau – Nardi 2015) was recovered, restored, musealized, an interesting geometric mosaic.

<sup>1</sup> The geometric motifs will be cataloged according to Décor I–II with the abbreviation DG.

Not so recent is the discovery<sup>2</sup> of the tomb mosaic of *Fl(avius) Rogatianus*, in the Basilica of S. Lussorio at *Forum Traiani*, but still offering some interesting food for thought.

Continuing more to the south, the most interesting discoveries were made in Villaspeciosa (Cicu – Pianu 2004), in Settimo San Pietro (Angiolillo 2007: 10-23), and a mosaic fragment was found in *Sulci* (Quattrocchi 2016: 517-522), though little indicative and very fragmentary.

### DG 145c schema

The DG 145c schema<sup>3</sup> (D cor I: 220-221) in Sardinia can be found, with some variants, in several contexts: in *Turris Libisonis* in the “*Domus dei Mosaici*” (Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 510) (Fig. 1) dated to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; still in *Turris Libisonis* in the “*Domus di Orfeo*”<sup>4</sup> (Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 510) (Fig. 2); in Cagliari<sup>5</sup> (Angiolillo 1981: 101-102) only a fragment remains (Quattrocchi 2017b: 1295-1300), datable to the half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; in Nora in the “Vano I” of the “*Casa dell’Atrio Tetrastilo*” (Angiolillo 1981: 53-55; Quattrocchi 2017b: 1295-1300) (Fig. 3) with the same dating; lastly, in *Sulci* (Angiolillo 1981: 68-69; Quattrocchi 2017b: 1295-1300), still datable to the half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. We can also include the mosaic found in *Tharros* in the “*Terme di Convento Vecchio*”, in the *frigidarium* B, which reproduces a very similar yet simplified schema (Angiolillo 1981: 136-137).

These five mosaics all share the same geometric schema, but present differences in some details.

The mosaic from the “*Domus dei Mosaici*”, having a frame with ogives (DG 49b)<sup>6</sup>, presents an alternation of squares with different frames inside the geometric schema, alternation often not respected<sup>7</sup> (D cor I: 158): DG 101g<sup>8</sup> (D cor I: 158), DG 31b<sup>9</sup> (D cor I: 72). Inside such squares we can find Solomon nodes and four-petal flowers. In the bands, opposite peltae are represented instead, joined with a square, together with Solomon nodes at the intersection points with semicircles on the sides.

The mosaic of the “*Domus di Orfeo*” still presents the frame with ogives (DG 49b) but the whole floor is finer and more elegant. In the frames of the above mentioned squared we don’t find the DG 31b, but DG 71c<sup>10</sup> (D cor I: 121) and DG 9a<sup>11</sup> (D cor I: 36). On the inside, the squares are decorated with plants and a singular yin-yang instead. In the bands, the more elegant peltae have a heart-shaped motif with a conflicting color in the inside, and the square thins and becomes concave. At the intersection points, instead of the Solomon nodes,

2 Excavation campaign: 1959-60; 1970-80; 1994-99; 2003-09.

3 “Grid of outlined bands, here with the squares at the intersections bearing an inscribed bearing poised squares, with the squares at the intersections enclosing a knot as saltire, the rectangles containing a central poised square tangent to two opposed peltae”.

4 This mosaic is dated a few decades earlier than the previous one.

5 Probable origin in Viale Trento, the mosaic was considered lost.

6 “Row of intersecting and tangent semicircles, forming ogives and scales, the ogives concentrically striped”. In Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 510, it is stated that this frame is the DG 49f.

7 “Squared convoluted wave pattern”.

8 “Squared convoluted wave pattern”.

9 “Irregular simple meander, forming a long dentilled filet and an embattled filet, opposed and staggered”

10 “Shaded simple guilloche on a dotted ground”.

11 “Band of a shaded zigzag”.

we can find squares having a circle with fillet cross inside, surrounded by semi-circles. In the bands placed on the long exterior sides, there are accurate floral arrangements, including a variant of the DG 265f<sup>12</sup> (D cor II: 64).

In the case of Cagliari it's not possible to observe the alternation of motifs inside the squares<sup>13</sup>, which have floral patterns anyway. In the bands, the decoration is identical to the mosaic of the "Domus dei Mosaici", as well as for the decoration at the intersection points. The only difference is the heart-shaped motif inside the peltae.

In Nora we can find the very same situation, some rectangles placed on the bands present an elegant floral decoration of the same type found in the "Domus di Orfeo".

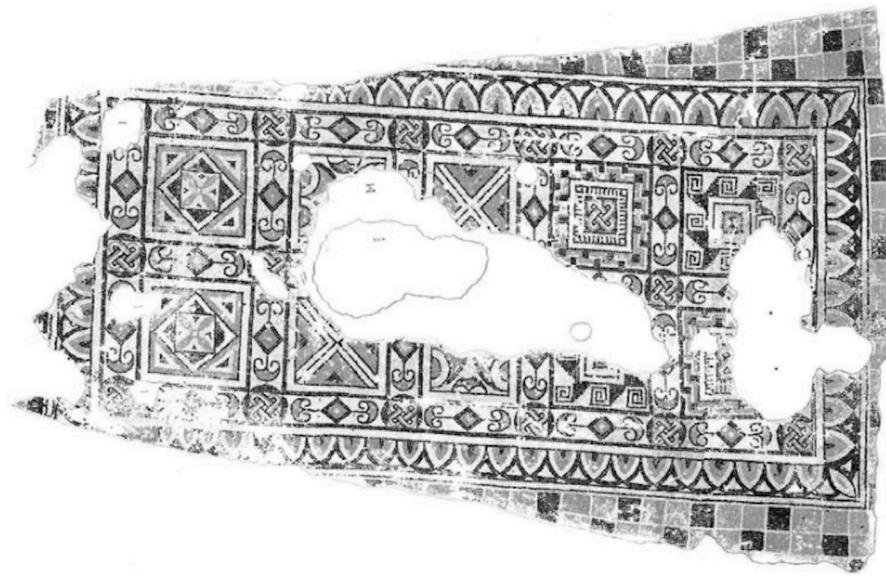


Figure 1  
Geometric mosaic, Domus dei Mosaici,  
Turris Libisonis (Photo by Angiolillo et. al.  
2016a).



Figure 2  
Geometric mosaic,  
Domus di Orfeo, Turris  
Libisonis  
(Photo by Author).

<sup>12</sup> "Compound elongated rosette of 4 noncontiguous elements, 2 as spindle-shaped petal and 2 as bracket".

<sup>13</sup> The frames of the squares are DG 71c and DG 9a.

Figure 3  
Geometric mosaic, Casa dell’Atrio  
Tetrastilo, Nora (Photo by Author).



Lastly, in *Sulci*<sup>14</sup> there are the same decorations of the mosaic of Cagliari.

As suggested several times (Angiolillo 1981: 210; Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 510; Quattrocchi 2017b: 1286-1297), the three mosaics found in Southern Sardinia, in Cagliari, Nora and *Sulci* would indicate the same workshop operating in that area<sup>15</sup>. In my opinion, the differences in decorations, mostly inside the squares and in some rectangles placed on the bands, are not due to different workshops, but the reason should be sought in the choices of the copybooks based on the taste of the buyers (or may also indicate different hands in the workshop). Interesting to note is that the peltae illustrated in the mosaics with schema DG 145c of Cagliari, Nora, *Sulci* and of the “*Domus di Orfeo*” are of type E5 (Torres Carro – Parzys 2016: 51-56), while the ones of the “*Domus dei Mosaici*” are of type E4 (Torres Carro – Parzys 2016: 54).

The copybooks, indeed, are very probably from North Africa, from the Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan areas. In this regard, we can mention the cases of Djemila (Blanchard-Lemée 1975: 170-171, 173), whereby the peltae and the squares are identical to the ones of Cagliari and *Sulci*.

In the Iberian Peninsula we can find this composition, with or without variations, in Teruel in the Roman villa called “El Regadío” (Blázquez Martínez et al. 1993: 234) of the III<sup>rd</sup> century. The geometric schema can also be found, albeit more simplified: in Liedena, in a mosaic of the II<sup>nd</sup> century (Blázquez Martínez – Mezquiriz 1985: 40-41); in the Roman villa of “Los Quintanares” in Soria (Blázquez Martínez – Ortego 1983: 29-32); in Merida in a bichrome mosaic of the II<sup>nd</sup> century; in Merida in the peristyle of the “Casa del Mitreo” (Blanco 1978: 15-17).

Specifically, in the villa “El Regadío” we can see how the copybook is reinterpreted. The peltae are missing and are replaced, in the short bands, by rectangles containing lozenges placed inside a decoration made up of triangles; in the long bands we can find squares instead. The Solomon nodes stay unchanged, as are the semicircles around the nodes themselves. More interesting are the frames of the squares: apart from the already mentioned twist (DG 71c) and the band of

<sup>14</sup> Only a pretty old photograph remains.

<sup>15</sup> S. Angiolillo believes that the mosaic of Nora was produced by African craftsmanships: Angiolillo et al. 2016a: 510. I don’t agree with this statement and I think, instead, that the main workshop could be in Cagliari: Quattrocchi 2017b: 1286-1287.

shaded zigzag pattern (DG 9a), we can find the DG 99f<sup>16</sup> (Décor I: 155). The inside of the squares, on the other hand, is filled with a flower together with a cross.

Identical seem to be the mosaics found in the villa of “Los Quintanares” (Fig. 4), with the only differences consisting in the Solomon nodes inside the semicircles being replaced by a flower similar to the Cross of Malta. These examples are very close to the previously mentioned mosaic, found in *Tharros*.

For what we can understand from these examples, the bound to the originally North African copybook seems to be stronger in Sardinia than in the Iberian Peninsula.



Figure 4  
Geometric mosaic, Los Quintanares  
(Photo by Blázquez Martínez – Ortego  
1982).

### DG 332b Schema

In the Roman villa of Sant’Imbenia, near Alghero, an interesting mosaic was discovered depicting the head of Medusa which, after a careful restoration (Costanzi Cobau – Nardi 2015), can now be admired in the Museo Archeologico di Alghero.

The head of Medusa<sup>17</sup> is located inside a circle from which a shield of oblong bipartite scales radiates, in contrasting colors (Décor II: 140) (Fig. 5). It’s then a geometric composition based on a main central figurative decoration. The peculiarity of this mosaic, however, is not the use of oblong bipartite scales, since they’re very common also in the Sardinian territory (Angiolillo 1981), but the geometric schema. In North Africa this schema can be found in Sousse, in a polychrome mosaic of the end of the II<sup>nd</sup> century (Yacoub 1995: 185) with the head of Medusa in the center. The main difference is in the oblong bipartite scales of this mosaic having alternate colors: black/white, red/white and green/white. This geometric schema, however, seems really very used to represent the head of Medusa: we can notice the same schema, with an increased movement in the oblong bipartite scales, in a mosaic of the III<sup>rd</sup> century preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Madrid, probably bought in Italy (Cabrera 2001: 116) (Fig. 6).

We can find further parallels in North Africa in Tolemaide, in Libya and Alexandria of Egypt.



Figure 5  
Detail of geometric mosaic,  
Sant’Imbenia, Museo Archeologico di  
Alghero (Photo by Author).

<sup>16</sup> “Row of tangent cuboids with serrated sides”.

<sup>17</sup> We will talk about this later, in part on figurative mosaics.





Figure 6  
Mosaic of Medusa, Museo Arqueologico Nacional Madrid (Photo by Author).

### Figurative Mosaics

Just in the latest years, the number of figurative mosaics found in Sardinia has increased. Until recently, indeed, the testimonies of figurative mosaics were very few, which to a potential wrong underestimation of the job done by Sardinian artisans. In this work we will take into account the four mosaics which are most representative of the discoveries of the last years: Orpheus, Three Graces, head of Medusa, and the marine settings of a spring.

### Orpheus

The mosaic of Orpheus from *Turris Libisonis*, recently published (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 323-327), is probably the most interesting finding of the latest years (Fig. 7).



Figure 7  
Mosaic of Orfeo, Domus di Orfeo, Turris Libisonis (Photo by Author).

Inserted within a complex geometric pattern, the musician is placed in an octagon, sitting with his left hand holding a lira and placing his right hand on the right thigh. The left leg not covered by the dress, with evident proportion issues, while the chest is naked and slightly twisted. Orfeo is looking at the lira and has subtle curly hair and the classic Phrygian cap. Around Orpheus, arranged in semicircle: a crow laying on the lira, a bird<sup>18</sup> (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 325), a lion, a roe deer<sup>19</sup> (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 235), a lizard, a leopard, a bull, a snake twisted on a tree and owl on it. The landscape is made only by some trees, in the form of branches. The composition, despite being of high quality, suffers from some slovenliness and cannot be compared to the elegant Orpheus of Cagliari (Angiolillo 1981: 99-101, half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century; Quattrocchi 2015a: second half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century). As recently stated (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 235), the two Sardinian mosaics are linked by the same posture of the right arm, a technical expedient that makes the representation of Orpheus more fluid (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 235).

The study of the copybooks, especially the ones related to Orpheus, which is always accompanied by animals, suggests that there were two types of copybooks the artisans could draw from. If we consider the example of the animals of the Orpheus from *Turris Libisonis*, for instance, we realize that the different animals revolving around the main character have exact comparisons with other mosaics. The lion is closely related to the ones of Cos (Blázquez Martínez 1989: 353-363), of *Thaenae* (Dunbabin 1978: 273), Chahba (Balty 1977: 44-49). The cheetah, instead, has precise comparisons with the just mentioned mosaics of Cos and Saragozza, and with the one of Palermo (Michaelides 1986: 478). The bull is not only closely related to Palermo, *Thaenae* and Cos, but has also similarities with the one from Cagliari (Angiolillo 1981: n. 101) and from *Carnuntum* (Panyagua 1973: 469).

Orpheus's pose instead, thanks to the technical expedient we mentioned earlier, may be associated to the mosaics of Palermo, La Chebba (Dunbabin 1978: 135, 254), Djemila (Blanchard-Lemée 1975: 23-106) and Ptolemais (Harrison 1962: 13-18).

It is worthy to note that the two Orpheus of *Turris Libisonis* and Cagliari can be associated by the same typology that I. Jesnick called "Type II", namely "The Greek Orpheus"<sup>20</sup>, which is also the most common one in *Hispania La Alberca* (4<sup>th</sup> century): Blázquez Martínez 1981: 81; El Pesquero (350 AD): Álvarez Martínez 1994: 217-224; Santa Marta de Los Barros (360 AD): Álvarez Martínez 1994: 36-37; Saragozza (4<sup>th</sup> century, Fig. 8): Fernandez Galiano 1987: 49-52; Arnal (late 4<sup>th</sup> century): Serpa Pinto 1934: 169, with five samples, and the second most common one in North Africa (*Uthina* (230-250 AD): Michaelides 1986: 479; Sakiet-Es-Zit (first half of 4<sup>th</sup> century): Dunbabin 1978: 135, 268; *Thaenae* (300-350 AD): Dunbabin 1978: 273; Cherchell (4<sup>th</sup> century): Ferdi 2005: 205-206; Ptolemais (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century): Panyagua 1973: 492; Tobruk (4<sup>th</sup> century): Panyagua 1973: 493; *Lepcis Magna* (3<sup>rd</sup> century): Aurigemma 1960: 52-54) with seven samples. Apparently, this typology originated in the East, in *Asia Minor*, Syria, Cyprus, Greece and Israel. The earliest evidences of the "Greek Orpheus" come from Cyprus, a Paphos in a mosaic dated 220-230 AD (Blázquez Martínez et al. 1995/1997: 70; Jesnick 1997: 140), from *Tarsus* in *Asia Minor* (Michaelides 1986: 478) dated to 225 AD, Edessa (227-228 AD) (Jesnick 1997: 141) and from

18 Interpreted as a parrot.

19 It is said to be a deer, but the horns are smaller.

20 In opposition to "The Thracian Orpheus" and "The Phrygian Orpheus": Jesnick 1997: 70-72.

Sparta (250-300 AD) (Waywell 1979: 302). The copybook was used in the East until at least the V century, as evidenced by the mosaics of Seleucia (García Gelabert 1987: 34) and Antalya (Blázquez Martínez – López Monteagudo 1986: 233-252). We can therefore suppose that the origin of this kind of Orpheus is in the micro-Asian territory, that it will be soon adopted in Tunisia (as proved by the example of 230-250 AD in *Uthina*), later transferred in Sardinia, and finally in *Hispania* (Oriental influences can be found in the mosaics of *Hispania* since the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries: Durán Penedo 2016: 64).



Figure 8  
Mosaic of Orfeo, Saragozza,  
(Photo by Author).

### Head of Medusa

The head of Medusa (Fig. 9) found in the Roman villa of Sant'Imbenia (Alghero) is an important evidence of the Sardinian mosaic heritage. Its importance does not surely rely in its stylistic rendition but, instead, in it being one of the few figurative mosaics found on the island.



Figure 9  
Mosaic of Medusa, Sant'Imbenia,  
Museo Archeologico di Alghero  
(Photo by Author).

The head, almost oval, has a marked contouring made of darker tiles in the edge of the face up to lighter colors that become white near the lips, forehead and eyes. This use of white, especially in the eyes area, seems to recall the mortal look of the Gorgone. Even the nose is rendered with a degradation of colors and looks sketched. The same can't be said for the lips, which appear slightly open. The hair is made up of the classic snakes (10 in total), but being the mosaic very incomplete, it's difficult to figure out how they were made. Some snakes have a white tile near the head, suggesting it should represent the eye.

As a whole, the figurative mosaic is not elegant, nor refined, unlike the geometric schema in which the *pseudo-emblema* is inserted, which is made cleanly and tidily instead. The head is sloppy with very few details.

The prototype used for the head of Medusa of Alghero doesn't seem to find comparisons with other mosaics having the same representation (Neira Jiménez 2015). We can mention, however, the contouring used to make the look more visible.

In *Hispania*, for instance, we can find a Medusa with an use of tiles similar to the one of Alcolea del Río (Sevilla), in a mosaic dated to the III<sup>rd</sup> century (Neira Jiménez 2015: 50). Still in the Iberian Peninsula, in Palencia (Mondelo – Balil 1983: 267-275), a head of Medusa was found, technically more advanced than the two earlier mentioned ones, and having a clear contouring.

We can however think that this particular treatment of the Medusa's physiognomic traits should be researched in the Tunisian area. Indeed, a stylistically advanced Medusa, presenting an excellent chiaroscuro on the face, comes from the area of Sousse (Yacoub 1995: 184-185). We can suppose that this technique will then be transmitted to the Sardinian and Iberian mosaic artisans.

In Sardinia, the lesson seems to have been approximately assimilated. In *Hispania*, instead, apart from the Palencia and Sevilla examples, we can also mention the beautiful head of Tarragona (Fig. 10) which reproduces finely and elegantly the facial contouring.



Figure 10  
Mosaic of Medusa, Tarragona  
(Photo by Author).

## Conclusions

The Sardinian mosaic heritage is lacking in the great stone carpets with mythological scenes we can abundantly find in North Africa and *Hispania* instead. In Sardinia there are mostly individual subjects such as Nereids, Orpheus, Medusa, the Three Graces (Angiolillo et al. 2016b: 323-325), but the figurative scene is not continuous.

There is therefore no figurative narration in the mosaics, to which the representation of single subjects, free from epic and mythological stories, is preferred.

However, there are several points of contact both with North Africa and *Hispania*. In addition to the ones already analyzed by Prof. Blázquez Martínez (Blázquez Martínez 1991: 911-926), in this work we could see how some geometric copybooks reappear in the three areas analyzed, and how that same influence is evident in some mosaics featuring Orpheus. This is an interesting fact because it tells us how these copybooks circulated within (and not only) the Western Mediterranean and were accepted, more or less deeply, by the local workshops. They're also a proof of the lively trade flowing between the three areas. Nowadays we can't fully understand the region in which the copybook exported from Africa arrived first.

Our hope is that the intensification of the mosaic discoveries will arrange the tiles of this interesting and fascinating mosaic *koiné* in these three areas, so different from each other from an economic and social point of view.

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