

MOSAICI DI COS: DAGLI SCAVI DELLE MISSIONI ITALIANE E TEDESCHE (1900–1945)

BY LORELLA MARIA DE MATTEIS (MONOGRAFIE DELLA SCUOLA ARCHEOLOGICA DI ATENE E DELLE MISSIONI ITALIANE IN ORIENTE 17). PP. 366, FIG. 1, B&W PLS. 213, COLOR PLS. 21, TABLES 6, PLANS 26, MAPS 6. SCUOLA ARCHEOLOGICA ITALIANA DI ATENE, ATHENS 2004. €30. ISBN 960-87405-2-5 (PAPER).

The island of Cos is located in the Dodecanese in the Aegean Sea between Rhodes and Samos near the Turkish coast and was settled in prehistoric times. Development of the city of Cos began after 366 B.C.E. While the Classical city boasted a stadium, agora (public meeting place), gymnasium, odeon (theater), and bath complexes, most major monuments date to the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods. The city continued to prosper into the Late Roman and Early Christian eras. One reason for its continuing prosperity was its location on the Egyptian grain transport route between Constantinople and Alexandria, only 3 miles from the coast of Asia Minor.

De Matteis' work ("I mosaici romani dell'area delle 'Terme Occidentali' di Co," *VII Congrès International de la Mosaique Antique* [Tunis 1994]; "Nel mosaico del 'Giudizio di Paride' di Co," *Atti del I Colloquio dell'AISCOM* [Ravenna 1994] 111–24; "I mosaici di Co," *Dodecaneso* [1996] 174–76; "Il restauro dei mosaici di Co," *Dodecaneso* [1996] 176–81) has consisted of an analysis and cataloging of the mosaic pavements of Cos manufactured from the Roman Imperial age (first to fourth centuries C.E.) to late antiquity (fifth and sixth centuries C.E.), and excavated during the period of Italian occupation of the island between 1912 and 1945. Two discoveries by Herzog made in the early 1900s are also included. Following then-current practice, some mosaics were restored and pieced together arbitrarily by being incorporated as decorative elements into modern mosaics. Even in their fragmentary state, these are precious, as they are the only testimony to the mosaics' existence. They remain on display at the Castle

of the Grand Masters at Rhodes where floors from the same building were split up and installed in different rooms of the museum. Others were moved after the 1933 earthquake and subsequent rebuilding of the city. Due to the war, still others were reburied after being hastily photographed or drawn.

The author's goals included: reconstructing fragmentary mosaics; describing technical and compositional characteristics; proposing relative dating; examining the iconography, iconology, and recurring themes of figural decorations; and identifying the products of local workshops. To meet her goals, De Matteis attempted to recover all possible documentation, including photographs, drawings, excavation notes, correspondence, surveys, and other archival materials, and to directly study all mosaics found in situ in the area of the Western Baths.

Building a relative dating alone is a daunting task due to insufficient documentation and seismic events that disrupted the stratigraphy. The poor documentation also resulted in a lack of absolute chronology from the Imperial age into late antiquity. However, De Matteis formulated a dating system based on style, composition, and iconography.

Deconstructing improperly reconstructed mosaics and reconstructing them correctly is no easier a task, but De Matteis' reconstruction work did result in the ability to correctly date numerous public and private buildings. In addition, she was able to identify characteristics of design and technique that occurred frequently during each time period. The author herself admits that many questions remain unanswered and puts it simply: the riches

of different historical periods must satisfy us (206).

This catalogue represents years of field research and analysis of archival documentation. Six tables summarize data, including the proposed relative dating of the mosaics. Technical data on 71 individual mosaics include materials, colors, dimensions, and layout. Additional tables summarize figural and geometric compositions, iconography, and subject matter, and their frequency of use in the Imperial, Late Imperial, and Late Antique periods. The final table lists mosaics found in situ, in museums, and otherwise documented.

The book's format and ample size accommodate the numerous illustrations that follow the text and do justice to the author's research. Not indexed, the book contains a bibliography and list of abbreviations. The fact that it is in Italian unfortunately limits its readership.

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