This book examines the rich corpus of mosaics created in Crete during the Roman and Late Antique eras. It provides essential information on the style, iconography and chronology of the material, as well as discussion of the craftspeople who created them and the technologies they used. The contextualized mosaic evidence also reveals a new understanding of Roman and Late Antique Crete. It helps shed light on the processes by which Crete became part of the Roman Empire, its subsequent Christianization and the pivotal role the island played in the Mediterranean network of societies during these periods. This book provides an original approach to the study of mosaics and an innovative method of presenting a diachronic view of provincial Cretan society.

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The Mosaics of Roman Crete

Art, Archaeology and Social Change

Rebecca J. Sweetman

University of St. Andrews
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107018402

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First published 2013

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
Sweetman, Rebecca J.
The mosaics of Roman Crete : art, archaeology and social change / Rebecca J. Sweetman, University of St. Andrews.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Mosaics, Roman – Greece – Crete. 2. Crete (Greece) – Civilization. I. Title.
NA3770.S94 2012
738.50939’18–dc23 2012002644


Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.
To my families in Ireland, Canada and Scotland
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An impressive series of corpora of mosaics now exists for nearly every province of the Roman world with the notable exception of Crete. The corpora range from those that cover wide geographical areas such as Dunbabin's (1978b) *Mosaics of Roman North Africa* to the series of monographs recording the mosaics of Gaul (*Recueil général des mosaiques de la Gaule*) to those which deal with specific sites within a province such as Campbell's (1991) *Mosaics of Aphrodisias in Caria*. The considerable evidence has been approached in different ways, such as by focusing on a particular period (e.g., Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins's (1980) *Justinianic Mosaic Pavements in Cyrenaican Churches*) or on an identifiable style or technique such as Clarke's (1979) *Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics* or on a specific element of iconography such as Parrish's (1984) *The Seasons Mosaics of Roman North Africa*. Balmelle's (1985 & 2002) edited collections of geometric elements have made a significant contribution in allowing scholars to use a standardized terminology for mosaic descriptions. In more recent years, mosaic studies have fuelled some of the more enlightening debates on issues of craftspeople and use of architectural space (such as Kondoleon's (1995) *Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos* and Muth's (1998) *Erleben von Raum, Leben im Raum: Zur Funktion mythologischer Mosaikbilder in der römisch-kaiserzeitlichen Wohnarchitektur*) but without the publication of the basic corpus such analysis and interpretation is not possible.

In 1982, Sanders's pivotal publication *Roman Crete* allowed scholars access to an area of Roman studies which had been sadly neglected. This work was an indispensable record of the Roman and Late Antique archaeology and history of Crete, but the author's untimely death meant that the contextual analysis of the material was limited. In recent years, an increase in archaeological surveys and excavations has provided new primary material, and current research on aspects...
of Roman and Late Antique Crete is leading to a contrary and more nuanced view than that of Sanders. In this context, it is clear that a diachronic analysis of the island from a range of perspectives (local and centre) is needed to reverse the creeping determinism1 that has propagated the idea of Roman and Late Antique Crete as a provincial dead end. As such it is apparent that alternative means of assessing the nature of Crete within the context of the Roman Empire must be pursued and that mosaics, as a body of material common throughout the island and the empire across both the Roman and Late Antique periods, should be used to provide the core evidence.

This work represents the first corpus of the Roman and Late Antique mosaics of central and eastern Crete.2 As a corpus, the mosaics of Crete are not well known; the material published thus far has appeared either in Greek excavation reports such as Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον, in journals such as Κρητική Έστία or in local newspaper reports. In some cases, records of the mosaics exist only in archives and have yet to be published at all. In more recent mosaic studies, the published Knossos mosaics are being used in comparative analysis and this highlights the urgent need for the publication of the corpus. This monograph uses an archaeological approach to the interpretation of mosaics (Chapter 2) while providing essential information on their iconography (Chapter 3). Together these chapters allow a new interpretation of the evidence concerning their date and distribution (Chapter 4), the urban and architectural contexts in which they were found (Chapter 5) and the technology involved in their creation (Chapter 6). Ultimately, this approach affords a fresh view on the mosaics within various theoretical frameworks (Chapter 7). In the analytical discussion, full consideration is given all the mosaics of the island, evidence that contributes to a new diachronic study of Roman and Late Antique Crete. It is my contention that the mosaics of Crete do not simply belong in either a Western or an Eastern koine and that a careful analysis of their iconography, date and distribution will show that the fluctuating styles, locations and density of mosaics indicate subtle changes in the nature of the society of Roman Crete.

The inclusion of the Late Antique mosaics emphasizes the importance of Crete during the period and contradicts the common perception of decline. Not only do these mosaics indicate that the island was booming, but the evidence of itinerant mosaicists suggests that the island played a crucial role in the communication network of the Eastern Empire.

Through an interpretative archaeological approach to the Roman and Late Antique mosaics this monograph will offer a comprehensive and enlightened view of the nature of society in Crete from the first century B.C.E. to the seventh century C.E. In doing so, this work will make two major contributions to Roman Mediterranean archaeology: it will be the first publication of the corpus of mosaics of Crete, and it will present a new perspective on the long-term continuity and change of Roman and Late Antique Crete.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was undertaken with the generous support of a number of people and institutions. I have been extremely fortunate to have met so many who have been more than willing to help me in a variety of ways, ultimately leading to my completion of this work.

I started this work during a research leave supported by the School of Classics, University St Andrews, and I have benefitted greatly from an AHRC Research Leave award. A Cotton Fellowship ensured me four months of invaluable research at the British School in Athens, and my fieldwork in 2008 was generously funded by the Carnegie Trust.

I am grateful for the significant help given to me by many Ephores, Ephoria staff and colleagues in Greece, particularly those in the Athens Archaeological Society (especially Mrs Ninou), Professor Platon, Dr Karetsou, Professor Themelis, Dr Hadzi-Vallianou and the late Professor Bourboudakis and the French and Italian Schools. I would especially like to thank Ms Stavroula Markoulaki for her help and useful discussions on the Roman mosaics of Crete, and also Dr Panajota Assimakopoulou-Atzaka and Dr Anastasia Panagiotopoulou for their enlightening discussions on mosaics in general, and to thank all for sharing their material.

The library, office and archive staff at the British School at Athens has, as always, been extremely supportive and helpful with material and permits. I would like to thank all my good friends there – Helen Clark, Vicki Tzavara, Maria Papaconstantinou and Tania Gerousi – for their help in securing permits as well as for giving me access to material and publication rights. The librarians and the archivists of the British School are remarkable. Penny Wilson, Sandra Pepelasis and Amalia Kakissis searched for and acquired books, permissions and material on my behalf with patience and good humour, and they are always
Acknowledgements

helpful with matters inside and outside the library. As well as these staff members, the British School’s director, Cathy Morgan; assistant director, Robert Pit; and Knossos curator, Don Evely helped create a superb working environment for much of this research. I am particularly grateful to the director and all the staff for their kindnesses during my visit in spring 2008.

I am very grateful to Ben Millis for his generous help with my incessant questions about the mosaic inscriptions. Michael Boyd was particularly encouraging with the work for my thesis. Guy Sanders provided me with endless help and encouragement in discussions of this and other work. I am grateful to him for the invaluable opportunity to spend time working in Corinth.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Sara Paton. She gave me the opportunity to work on the Villa Dionysus mosaics and has generously allowed me to reproduce some of her photographs from the Villa Dionysus and Myrtos. She has encouraged me throughout my career, and I have benefited greatly from her extensive knowledge of and contagious enthusiasm for Roman Crete. I would especially like to thank her for her kindness on my trip to Chania.

Dr Liz Waywell kindly gave me access to her thesis, as well as much encouragement and many helpful insights on the material. Dr Demetrios Michaelides was also very helpful, particularly with information on the Cyrenaican mosaics. Professor Katherine Dunbabin, Dr Ruth Westgate and Dr Janet Huskinson provided encouragement and advice.

Permission for the reproduction of images has kindly been given by the following: S. Paton (Pls. 1–7, 13, Fig. 18); BSA Archives (Pls. 8, 9, 12, 23, 24, Fig. 12); K. Wardle (Pl. 10); A. Karetsou (Pl. 14); D. Hadzi Vallianou (Pl. 16, Fig. 19); Italian School of Archaeology (Pls. 17–19); Archaeological Society at Athens (Pls. 21, 27, 37); 13th Byzantine Ephoria (Pls. 25, 26, 28–30, 38); P. Themelis (Pl. 31); 28th Byzantine Ephoria (Pls. 32–6, 45–9); KE Ephoria of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (Pls. 39–44) and the Κρητικά Χρονικά © Society of Cretan Historical Studies (Pl. 50). The inclusion of colour illustrations would not have been possible without the generous support of ASPROM, The Association for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics.

Particular thanks to James Stewart for his timely editing work and to Clare Lewis for all her help and her mad dash to the post office on the 14th of November. I have enjoyed years of fieldwork and happy discussions of Crete in preparation for this manuscript and the thesis before. Early fieldwork was undertaken with the help of Michael Boyd, Johnny Gogan, Amanda Kelly and Kevin Sullivan. I was ably assisted in the most recent fieldwork by Brad MacKay, David Sweetman, Rosanne Meenan, and Barry and Kae Anne MacKay. Each went beyond the call of duty in their help on this project, and I am very pleased that they all enjoyed traipsing around Crete. I would like to thank my godparents, James Nugent and Mary Murnane, for their encouragement. My parents have always been particularly encouraging of this work, and their delight in it is inspiring. I am
Acknowledgements

very grateful to Katie Sweetman, who skilfully and patiently produced the line drawings, and to Margarita Lianou, who checked my Greek. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in the School of Classics for their encouragement and for creating a happy working environment. The work of the three external readers was of enormous help to me in getting the book into shape, and I am very grateful for their thorough comments. I would also like to thank everyone at Cambridge University Press who worked hard to see this through.

Finally, I would like to thank Brad, Conor and Aidan, mostly for allowing me to hijack their holidays but also Conor and Aidan for holding on just long enough. Brad has been incredibly encouraging in this project and now knows significantly more than he ever expected to about Roman and Late Antique Crete.
### ABBREVIATIONS

- **AAA**: Athens Annals of Archaeology
- **ABSA**: Annual of the British School at Athens
- **A.Delt.**: Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον
- **AE**: Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς
- **AJA**: American Journal of Archaeology
- **AR**: Archaeological Reports, ‘Archaeology in Greece’, JHS
- **ASAtene**: Annuario della scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni Italiane in oriente
- **BCH**: Bulletin de correspondance hellénique
- **BICS**: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies
- **Byz Corp I**: Pelekanidis, S., and P. Atzaka, 1988. Σύνταγμα των παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος I: Νησιωτική Ελλάς (Κέντρον Βυζαντινών Ερευνών Θεσσαλονίκη) (Thessaloniki)
- **Byz Corp II**: Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, P. 1987. Σύνταγμα των παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος II: Πελοπόννησος – Στερεά Ελλάδα (Κέντρον Βυζαντινών Ερευνών Θεσσαλονίκη) (Thessaloniki)
- **DOP**: Dunbarton Oaks Papers
- **IG**: *Inscriptiones Graecae*
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILN</td>
<td>Illustrated London News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHS</td>
<td>Journal of Hellenic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.Estia</td>
<td>Κρητική Εστία</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.Khron</td>
<td>Κρητικά Χρονικά</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIMC</td>
<td>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAAR</td>
<td>Memoirs of the American Academy at Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAE</td>
<td>Πρακτικά της Αρχαιολογικής Έταιρες</td>
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<td>PBSR</td>
<td>Papers of the British School at Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>The letter R with a number after it indicates the number of the geometric motif in Le Décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine (C. Balmelle, et al., 1985, Paris)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPGR</td>
<td>Reinach, S. 1922. Répertoire de peintures grecques et romaines (Paris)</td>
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<td>Sanders</td>
<td>Sanders, I. F. 1982. Roman Crete (Warminster)</td>
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<td>SEG</td>
<td>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</td>
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<td>Volanakis</td>
<td>Volanakis, I. H. 1987. 'Τα παλαιοχριστιανικά μνημεία της Κρήτης' K.Khron, KZ, 235–61</td>
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