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(NOTES ON THE ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE ARTEMIS
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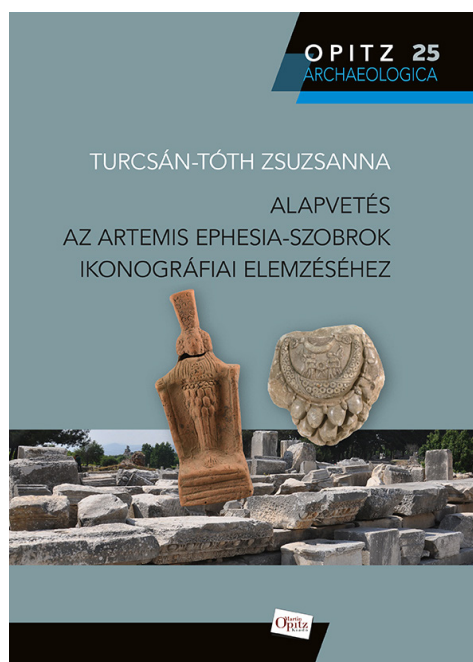
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Reviews

Review: Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth, *Alapvetés az Artemis Ephesia-szobrok ikonográfiai elemzéséhez* (Notes on the iconographic analysis of the Artemis Ephesia statues), Martin Opitz: Budapest, 2023, p. 368. ISBN: 978-615-6388-07-0

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Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth's recently published monograph is her doctoral dissertation, successfully defended in 2015. This 368-page monograph, the 25th volume in the Archaeologica series published by Martin Opitz, is not just the obligatory publication of a doctoral dissertation: the acknowledgements at the end of the volume show that the work is the result of nearly two decades of personal and professional development, a long and difficult career for a female scholar. I think it is important to emphasise this in a review, because in Hungarian and Central-East European academia there is still little emphasis on the difficulties faced by doctoral students who have become mothers and researchers who want to break out from their traditional female roles, in stepping up the hills of the professional *cursus honorum*.

The volume is the first monograph in Hungarian to be published on this topic and one of the few published in a long time on an aspect of Roman religion.

The volume is divided into eight chapters, followed by well-illustrated plates of small sculptures, gems and lamps, a detailed catalogue of 11 object types, a catalogue of medals, a catalogue of other objects, tables, a glossary, a bibliography and the acknowledgements.

In the introduction, the author briefly outlines the significance of the research on goddess Artemis Ephesia and formulates some of the major methodological questions that she seeks to answer in detail in her work, which call interdisciplinarity and a dialogue between classical archaeology, religious studies and art history. On page ten of the volume, in the outline of the theme, the author formulates her central questions that examine how the cult icons of the central sanctuary of Artemis Ephesia evolved, what influences were at work in the development of iconographic changes, whether it is possible to establish a typology, and whether there is a local, glocal or universal aspect to the visual narratives of the cult. Although the questions asked by the author are useful and correct, Turcsán-Tóth does not address the dynamic evolution of ancient iconographies of divine agencies, the mechanisms of change in ancient visual narratives, the notions of local, glocal and global religion. From a methodological perspective, it would have been useful to reflect on theoretical works on visual narratives of Hellenistic and especially Roman Empire cults, such as Richard Gordon's paradigmatic study of 1979 or Philip Kiernan's monograph of 2020¹.

Aside from this methodological shortcoming, which avoids a broader

¹ GORDON 1979; KIERNAN 2020.

contextualization of the cult and could have provided a broader methodological framework for the iconographic-visual program, the author's ambitious project should indeed be seen as an important work, as she indicates in her introduction that her aim is to collect all the known depictions of Artemis Ephesia and to provide the most detailed iconographic analysis to date, the last of which was carried out in 1973 in Robert Fleischer's classical work². The volume is therefore intended as an important contribution to the international scholarship too, providing a new critical catalogue of a corpus that has been closed for half a century.

In the second chapter, the author presents in detail the history of the six phases of the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, known not only from literary sources but also from decades of archaeological excavations, and presents also the fascinating story of the central cult statue(s). The chapter tells us how the temple was built over a period of nearly 1500 years, from the 11th century BC to the 5th century AD. The first known depiction of the cult statue of the shrine, which served as a sanctuary from 1200 BC to the 5th century AD and later became one of the wonders of the ancient world and one of the most popular pilgrimage sites, appears on very late small coins (*kistophoros*) dating from the 2nd century BC and the last iconographic figures are dated around 236 AD, when the sanctuary was severely damaged by a fire. Thus, the iconographic sources of the cult were created and shaped in a number of local and global forms in less than 400 years. The author describes in detail the literary sources on the cult image and also discusses other local representations of Artemis in Asia Minor (Artemis Anaitis, Artemis Leukophryene, Artemis of Sardis), which are similar in character but distinct in iconographic features. In a separate chapter, she analyses the forms of representation of the statue of Artemis on coins, which served as a particularly important mediator in the global, imperial dissemination and popularisation of the cult. In the fourth chapter, the author attempts, for the first time since 1955, to analyse in detail and establish a typology of more than 200 depictions of Artemis Ephesia based on the known statuary forms from the central sanctuary and the numerous regional copies and types. In her volume, Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth repeatedly reiterates that a work of this kind is not just a dry, descriptive, classical-archaeological repetition of the rigorous German positivism of descriptive art historical analyses, but also an important contribution to understand how the visual narrative associated with the myth and myth-variations of a deity changes in antiquity and what are the phases and stages in local, regional and macro-regional spaces. Although we do not see a clear typology in her volume – and the author stresses that such a typology may not be possible to construct – in chapters five, six and seven we see an exceptionally detailed iconographic analysis of the iconographic features of the statues of Artemis Ephesia. The author presents in detail the iconographic features of the head, the upper body and the *ependytes* (the rigid apron with reliefs and *protomedes* covering the lower body of the goddess). Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth not only discusses the iconographic specificities of the

sculptures known as Great and Beautiful Artemis (case studies A29 and A30 in her catalogue), but also the sources that are in Rome and in the great museums of the world, or those which are in private collections, catalogues of contemporary auction sites and in a large variety of online sources.

Particularly valuable is the part of the work that analyses the surviving depictions of Artemis in drawings and engravings of the Italian humanist and antiquarians of the 16th and 18th centuries: here the author demonstrates her excellent knowledge not only in ancient art and archaeological sources, but also in antiquarian historiography that are essential for contextualising this particular material evidence of Roman religion. These are complemented by the impressive quality of the images in her volume, which once again constitute an important and valuable addition to Fleischer's 1973 work. In her analysis of the iconographic details, the author considers it important to treat them not only as art historical features, but also as the material forms of a now lost collection of myths and narratives, iconographic elements of the mysteries (initiation rites) associated with the cult of the goddess. Although little is said in the work about the cult practices and the myth-variations associated with the cult of the goddess, the reader can glean details of these from the iconographic subsections. However, these will only become clear if we delve into the analysis of the unique iconography of the cult statue: for example, the sub-chapter on bees reveals that this representation may have Middle Anatolian, or even Hittite, Bronze Age antecedents and sources dating back to before the beginning of the cult in the 11th century BC. However, these must be treated with caution, as the Hittite origins of the 'breasts' of Artemis Ephesia have been refuted by many, including Zsolt Simon.

These intriguing suggestions, which for the time must be interpreted as hypotheses, are also true for other case studies in the religious history of Anatolia and Asia Minor: the iconographic antecedents of the cult of the Pessinian Magna Mater can be traced back to the early Neolithic, but its Late Neolithic and Bronze Age period is scarcely known. We also see such Late Bronze Age and Iron Age antecedents in the sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus at Doliche, where excavations in recent decades (especially the paradigmatic work of Michael Blömer and his team) have also provided evidence of pre-Hellenistic antecedents of the cult. Although the volume could not undertake a complex study of the religious history of the region, these examples illustrate that the religious histories of Asia Minor and Anatolia in the Bronze Age, Hellenistic and Roman periods are closely interlinked and in many cases some kind of 'continuity' or re-established religious tradition can be identified. In the eighth chapter of the volume, the author briefly summarises the results of the iconographic analysis: she does not take a definitive position on the technical questions that are debated in the literature and many of them remains probably unanswerable, but her conclusions suggest that the iconography of the large number of Artemis Ephesia statues known to date is constantly changing, in the Trajanic-Hadrian period in particular, there are significant changes in the new image of the statue, and some of the sculptural variants that are widespread in the Mediterranean world may well be local products (although it is impossible to reconstruct the exact way in which they

² FLEISCHER 1973. A new analysis by Robert Fleischer is in preparation (verbal confirmation of prof. R. Fleischer).

were made, the possible role of the Ephesian diaspora, the presence of initiates and the mobility of pilgrims). The catalogue is a brief, bibliographical listing of the objects, without any detailed analysis or presentation (which would make the volume monumental), but each is accompanied by a very high-quality, but almost miniature, photograph. The quality and detail of the images in this volume is unrivalled in the series of volumes on Artemis Ephesia. At the same time, one wonders what it would have cost to publish a volume of this quality with an international publisher.

This brings us to the thorny issue raised by the Hungarian language of the book. In recent years, the globalisation and internationalisation of humanities, and in particular of ancient studies, and the dominant use of English, has provoked much debate. While some scholars stress the importance of local, regional studies and the maintenance of a literature in the mother tongue, others argue against this kind of isolation, linguistic enclosure and ivory-tower-like academic attitudes. Such a work of international importance, the first to summarise the subject since Fleischer's 1973 monograph, could be published in English and would be much needed. At the same time, it is important for

Hungarian classics, archaeology and religious studies to have local publications in its mother tongue. It is not for me to decide on the dilemma, but I would consider it important that the author's work should be published in English. At the same time, it is also commendable that after the work of Károly Kerényi, István Hahn, István Tóth or Thomas Köves-Zulauf, Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth joins the prestigious list of scholars of religions who have enriched the Hungarian-language literature with an important work on ancient Mediterranean religion.

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