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## *Circensium ministri :* who are the unmounted figures on Roman circus mosaics ?

Jeremy J. ROSSITER

The commemoration of circus games and the honouring of victorious charioteers were both common themes of Roman mosaic art. More than twenty-five mosaics are known which include images of victorious charioteers, and at least eight which show panoramic scenes of circus races in progress<sup>1</sup>. The latter include the well known circus mosaic from Piazza Armerina in Sicily<sup>2</sup>; a mosaic from Lyon<sup>3</sup>; three mosaics from Spain (Gerona, Italica and Barcelona)<sup>4</sup>; and three from North Africa (Carthage, Gafsa and Silin)<sup>5</sup>. All these circus mosaics present a 'birds-eye' view of the racing arena, in which the different charioteers and their teams can be seen competing. Usually four chariot teams are shown, but sometimes, as on the Silin and Lyon mosaics, each team is shown twice, in order to illustrate two different stages of the same race. Also included in all the circus scenes are a number of unmounted figures, normally shown standing in the arena, and it is on these figures and the functions which they perform that I would like to focus attention here. The number of these unmounted figures varies from one circus scene to another, depending partly on the state of preservation of the pavements on which they appear, but in every case there are at least two such figures, and in some cases as many as seven. The figures appear in a variety of poses and costumes and are shown holding a number of different objects in their hands.

Who then are these unmounted figures? What was their role in the organization of the circus games and what functions did they perform in the arena? In addressing these questions, I

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<sup>1</sup> On the iconography of the victorious charioteer, see K.M.D. DUNBABIN, "The victorious charioteer on mosaics and related monuments", *AJA* 86, 1982, p. 65-89; M. ENNAIFER, "Le thème des chevaux vainqueurs à travers la série des mosaïques africaines", *MEFR* 95, 1983, p. 817-58. The eight well-preserved circus mosaics are discussed at length in J. H. HUMPHREY, *Roman Circuses: arenas for chariot racing*, London 1986, especially Chap. 2. See also M. YACOUB, "Le motif de cirque: un motif d'origine africaine?", in P. JOHNSON, R. LING, D.J. SMITH (ed.), *Fifth International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics. Part 1* (JRA Suppl. Series No. 9, Ann Arbor 1994), p. 149-158.

<sup>2</sup> G.V. GENTILI, "Le gare del circo nel mosaico di Piazza Armerina", *Bolletino d'Arte* 42, 1957, p. 7-27; A. CARANDINI, A. RICCI, M. DE VOS, *Filosofiana: la villa di Piazza Armerina*, Palermo 1982.

<sup>3</sup> H. STERN, *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule* II. 1, Paris 1967, p. 63-69, pl. XLVI-LIV, XCVI, XCVIII.

<sup>4</sup> A. BALIL, "Mosaicos circenses de Barcelona y Gerona", *BRealAcHist* 151, 1962, p. 257-351; G. LOPEZ MONTEAGUDO, "Mosaicos hispanos de circo y anfiteatro", in *VI Coloquio internacional sobre mosaico antiguo, Palencia-Mérida, 1990* (1994), p. 343-367.

<sup>5</sup> For general discussion of these African circus mosaics: K.M.D. DUNBABIN, *Roman Mosaics of North Africa*, Oxford 1972; HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 208 ff; M. YACOUB, *Recherches sur les mosaïques tunisiennes relatives au monde du cirque*, Diss. Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1979. For the Carthage mosaic: L.A. CONSTANS, "Mosaïque de Carthage représentant les jeux du cirque", *Rev. Arch.* 3, 1916, p. 247-259. For details of the Gafsa mosaic: M. YACOUB, "Les aspects particuliers de la scène de course dans la mosaïque de cirque de Gafsa", *Cah.Tun.* 29, 1981, p. 495-513. For the Silin mosaic: O. MAHJOUB, "I mosaici della villa romana di Silin", in *III Colloquio internazionale sul mosaico antico, Ravenna 1980*, Ravenna 1983, p. 299-306.



shall consider not only the mosaic images themselves, but also the evidence provided by a number of written sources which shed light on the activities of the Roman circus. There are three Latin texts which are of particular importance; all are relatively late in date, but all provide valuable clues to the way in which the circus games were organized. The first is Sidonius' well known account of a race held in the circus at Ravenna in A.D. 465<sup>6</sup>; the second, a letter of Theoderic, preserved in Cassiodorus' *Variae*, which describes chariot racing in the Circus Maximus in Rome in the early 6th century<sup>7</sup>. The third is a passage in the *Digest*, deriving from Ulpian, which refers to some of the individuals employed in the Circus Maximus<sup>8</sup>. In addition, there is the Greek text of Pseudo-Chrysostom's Εἰς τῇ ῥπποδρῆμιον λῆγος (or in Latin the *Oratio de circo*), a highly rhetorical Late Roman pamphlet in which the author uses the imagery of the circus, and in particular of the victorious charioteer, as a metaphor for the Christian conquest of good over evil<sup>9</sup>. Other relevant documents include a number of inscriptions, mainly from Italy, and a few papyri which give details of circus operations in Roman and Byzantine Egypt<sup>10</sup>. In all these passages reference is made to different officials or circus 'attendants' who played a role in the running of the games. The generic term in Latin for these circus functionaries is *ministri*, or as Cassiodorus calls them *circensium ministri*<sup>11</sup>. The verb applied to their activities in the *Digest* passage is *deserviunt*, a word which suggests a humble, if not servile status.

With this range of written evidence to help, is it possible to establish the identity and function of the various unmounted figures shown in the mosaics? In some cases interpretation presents few difficulties. On the Lyon mosaic, for example, one of the attendant figures is clearly a 'gate-opener'; he is shown standing above the starting-gates to the left of the magistrate's box, pulling at a lever which operated the mechanism of the gates below<sup>12</sup>. In the *Oratio de circo* this individual is referred to as ὁ θυρανοῦκτης. In two papyri the word ἐφῴται ('starters') is used, possibly referring to someone with the same job (i.e. opening the starting-gates), although this could perhaps indicate the presiding magistrate who started the races by dropping the *mappa*<sup>13</sup>. This latter figure appears on several of the mosaics. On the Gafsa mosaic he is shown standing in the arena clutching the traditional white napkin, or *mappa*, in his left hand, while in his raised right hand he holds the victor's palm branch (fig. 1)<sup>14</sup>. In some written texts this figure

<sup>6</sup> SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, *Car.* 23. 306-427.

<sup>7</sup> CASSIODORUS, *Variae* 3. 51. For a new English translation, with notes, see S. BARNISH, *Cassiodorus: Variae*, Liverpool 1992, p. 67-71.

<sup>8</sup> *Digest* III. 2. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *PG* 59, col. 567-70.

<sup>10</sup> See HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 516 ff.; H.A. HARRIS, *Sport in Greece and Rome*, London 1972, p. 198-208.

<sup>11</sup> CASSIODORUS, *Variae* 3. 51. 6: ... *per quos circensium ministri missus denuntiant exituros*. SIDONIUS, *Car.* 23. 325-30, uses the word *ministri* to refer to the grooms and stable-hands who attend to the horses behind the starting-gates before the start of the race. His use (line 328) of the verb *hortantur* may have a technical sense and suggests a possible link with the role of the *hortatores* mentioned in *CIL* VI, 10074-6.

<sup>12</sup> STERN (above note 3), p. 64-5; HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 164.

<sup>13</sup> *De Circo*. col. 570; *P. Oxy* 152. 1; *SB* 14 (1983) No. 12059.

<sup>14</sup> On the use and origin of the *mappa*, see HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 153-4.



is referred to as ὁ μαρπ πιος, a term which seems to be a relatively late invention<sup>15</sup>. It is not clear why the artist of the Gafsa mosaic chose to show the magistrate standing in the arena. More usually he appears standing above the starting-gates, as is the case on the Lyon and Piazza Armerina mosaics.

Also distinct is the figure of a musician who appears on the Piazza Armerina mosaic. He is shown wearing a knee-length cloak and tunic and playing a long horn, or *tuba*. Sidonius mentions just such a figure (whom he refers to as a *tubicen*) employed in the Ravenna circus. His job, Sidonius tells us, was to signal the start of the games<sup>16</sup>. No doubt horns were sounded at other times during the races, either to incite the crowd or to herald the approach of the victorious charioteer<sup>17</sup>. One is reminded of the organ players who appear among the circus crowd shown on the base of the Theodosian obelisk, or those shown accompanying the amphitheatre games on the Zliten mosaic<sup>18</sup>. The use of musicians in the circus is mentioned in the *Digest* passage. There they are referred to as *thymelici*, a word which is found elsewhere in Latin legal texts in association with circus activities<sup>19</sup>.

Identifiable among the figures on the mosaics are several whose function appears to relate to prize-giving. According to Sidonius, the prizes given for competition in the racing arena included palms (*palmae*), crowns (*coronae*), necklaces (*torques*), silk garments (*serica*), and woven saddle-blankets (*tapetas villis versicoloribus*). The latter, he tells us, were used to decorate the horses as they paraded after the race and were given as consolation prizes to the runners-up<sup>20</sup>. Figures holding prizes can be seen on at least two of the circus mosaics. The Lyon mosaic shows two such figures, standing between the water basins in the middle of the arena, holding a palm and a wreath respectively. So too on the Piazza Armerina mosaic there is a figure (Humphrey identifies him as the *editor* or presiding magistrate) who holds a palm branch and a purse, which he offers as prizes to the winning charioteer<sup>21</sup>.

Several of the mosaics also show figures holding what look like coloured ribbons or streamers. The clearest example is on the Barcelona mosaic, where we see a figure in a knee-length tunic, standing to the right of the turning posts, holding three coloured ribbons in his left hand and one other in his raised right hand (fig. 2). A similar figure appears on the Silin mosaic, again holding three ribbons in his left hand and a fourth held aloft in his right hand. On the Piazza Armerina mosaic there is a comparable figure who stands at the round end of the arena,

<sup>15</sup> *De Circo*. col. 570 ; *P. Oxy.* 1051. 17. On the role of this individual in the Byzantine circus, see A. CAMERON, *Circus Factions*, Oxford 1976, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> SIDONIUS, *Car.* 23. 340-1 : *suspensas tubicen vocans quadrigas / effundit celeres in arva currus*.

<sup>17</sup> cf. TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*. 11 : *per tubam in stadio circum aemulantur*.

<sup>18</sup> G. BRUNS, *Der Obelisk und seine Basis auf dem Hippodrom zu Konstantinopel (Istanbul Forschungen 7)*, Istanbul 1935 ; A. CAMERON, *Porphyrius the Charioteer*, Oxford 1973, Fig. 19 ; S. AURIGEMMA, *Italy in Africa. Archaeological Discoveries (1911-1943). Tripolitania, Vol. I. The Mosaics*, Rome 1960, p. 53-59, pl. 143.

<sup>19</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 8. 7. 22 : *actuarii, thymelae, equorum curulium*.

<sup>20</sup> cf. ANDRONICUS, *Poet.* 44 (45), who uses the phrase *equorum inaurata tapeta*, presumably referring to the same kind of embroidered rugs.

<sup>21</sup> HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 228.



although in this case there is damage to the mosaic in the area of his raised right hand. A figure on the Lyon mosaic almost certainly belongs to the same type. Stern describes him as holding a folded streamer (*une banderole*) in his left hand and a whip in his uplifted right hand<sup>22</sup>; but more probably what he holds in both hands are the same coloured ribbons which we see on the other mosaics. The identity of these figures is not certain. De Balil refers to the figure on the Barcelona mosaic as a *designator*, a term which derives from the *Digest* passage where it is given as equivalent to the Greek word βραβευτής<sup>23</sup>. There is, however, nothing in the *Digest* passage which suggests a clear link between these *designatores* and the figures shown holding ribbons in the mosaic circus scenes. The figures on the mosaics hold four coloured ribbons which presumably represent the four circus factions. They appear to be referees of some sort. Their positioning near the turning posts suggests that their job may have been to watch the turns at the end of each lap and to signal an illegal manoeuvre or a disqualification.

The last and most numerous group of unmounted figures who appear on the circus mosaics are those who are shown holding containers of some kind. In some cases these figures hold goat-skin bags (Piazza Armerina, Gafsa, Italica), sometimes bowls (Silin, Lyon), or more commonly amphorae (Piazza Armerina, Barcelona, Silin, Carthage). Such figures have commonly been interpreted as 'sprinklers', or, to use the coined Latin word, *sparsores*<sup>24</sup>. This idea evidently derives from the *Digest* passage, which refers to a group of circus attendants whose job it was to 'sprinkle water for (or at ?) the horses'<sup>25</sup>. Something similar is hinted at in a passage in Petronius' *Satyricon*. At a point during Trimalchio's famous dinner party, the attending slaves enter the dining-room with wine for the guests. Petronius describes the slaves as 'long-haired Aethiopians with small wine-skins (*utres*), like those who sprinkle the arena in the amphitheatre'<sup>26</sup>. Of course, strictly speaking, this passage refers not to the circus games but to the amphitheatre, but the mention of 'sprinklers' in the fighting arena may hint at a more general practice, one which would be equally appropriate in the racing arena.

But what was the purpose of sprinkling water in the circus? What exactly was it that the *sparsores* were employed to do? According to Gentili, their job was to throw water at the wheels of the chariots to stop them overheating<sup>27</sup>. Humphrey, on the other hand, suggests that the water was thrown 'at the horses heads' to cool them off during the heat of the race<sup>28</sup>. To support this view, he cites a letter of St Basil, in which the bishop describes the refreshing power of a letter as being '.... like water poured out for the mouths of race horses in the middle of the

<sup>22</sup> STERN (above note 3), p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> *Digest* III. 2. 4. 1.

<sup>24</sup> The Latin word *sparsor* is unattested; the closest attested equivalent is the word *spartor* which is found on a single circus inscription from Rome: *CIL* VI, 10046, line 10. The Greek equivalent is προσχίτης, found in a circus-related papyrus of Late Roman date: *SB* 14 (1983) No. 12059.

<sup>25</sup> *Digest* III. 2. 4. 1: [ei] qui aquam equis spargunt.

<sup>26</sup> PETRONIUS, *Sat.* 34. 3-4: *Aethiopes capillati cum pusillis utribus quales solunt esse qui harenam in amphitheatro spargunt.*

<sup>27</sup> CARANDINI (above note 2), p. 339.

<sup>28</sup> HUMPHREY (above note 1), p. 198.



arena<sup>29</sup>. But surely Basil is here talking about water provided for the horses to drink. The natural place for this would be in the basins of the *euripus*, the central barrier of the circus<sup>30</sup>.

The use of water in the circus is alluded to in two other Late Roman texts. In the *Oratio de circo* there is mention of water being provided in a gourd (κολοκῖνθη) as refreshment for the victorious charioteer. There is also a mention by Jerome in his *Life of Hilarion* of a ritual 'sprinkling' of water before the start of a race in the circus at Gaza. Jerome relates how Hilarion instructed one of the stable owners, named Italicus, to sprinkle water from a pottery cup (*scyphus fictilis*) on 'both the stable, the horses, the charioteer, and the bars of the starting-gates'<sup>31</sup>. This was intended as a magic rite to ward off powers of evil and bring good luck, and victory, to the charioteer. A similar rite is recorded in *Greek Magical Papyri III* (19-43), which recommends pouring water in which a cat has drowned onto the race-track (ἦν τῇ σταδῶϊ) in order to bewitch one's rival!<sup>32</sup>

There were, then, a number of different ways in which water might be used in the Roman circus. Whether providing drinking water for horses, refreshment for charioteers, or sprinkling water for purposes of magic, men carrying water around in the arena must have been a familiar sight. At a much earlier date, Plautus describes just such a scene, referring to 'the Egyptians who carry the bucket round the circus at the games'<sup>33</sup>. Some of the figures shown on the mosaics hold bowls and appear actually to be 'sprinkling' water in the direction of the race horses (Silin, Lyon). These figures can plausibly be seen as *sparsores*, although whether their real purpose was to refresh or to bring good luck to the horses remains unclear. Other standing figures who are shown with goat-skin bags, like those on the Piazza Armerina and Gafsa mosaics (fig. 1), should not be assumed to have a similar role. They are likely water-carriers, but whether the water they brought to the arena was for use as drinking water or for some other purpose cannot be known. If a label is needed, they should probably be called *ministri*, the generic term favoured by the written sources.

But what about the amphora-holders, who are by far the most common figures shown on the mosaics (fig. 3)? Are they too, as has often been suggested, also to be interpreted as 'sprinklers'? There are, I believe, several reasons for rejecting this view. In the first place, the amphora-holders are usually dressed in costumes very similar to those worn by the charioteers.

<sup>29</sup> BASIL, *Ep.* 222. 1 : ὅποιον . . . ἐγωνισταῖς ὑπὸις ἦν μὲν τῇ σταδῶϊ ἄδωρ τοῖς στήμασι προσχρῶν.

<sup>30</sup> Compare *Anth. Lat.* 315 (LUXORIUS) which describes a water trough located in (or near) the Carthage circus (*decorem circi*) and providing water for the horses at the end of the race (*dulci flumine complet equos*). See S. STEVENS, "The circus poems of the Latin Anthology", in J.H. HUMPHREY (ed.), *The Circus and a Byzantine Cemetery*, Ann Arbor 1989, p. 171.

<sup>31</sup> HIER., *Vit. Hil.* 21 : *et stabulum et equos et aurigas suos, rhedam, carcaremque repagula aspersit.*

<sup>32</sup> K. PREISENDANZ, *Papyri Graeci Magici, die griechischen Zauberpapyri I*, rev. A. HENRICHs, Stuttgart 1973, No. III, line 43. I am grateful to Florent Heintz (Harvard University) for drawing my attention to this papyrus. For the sprinkling of water in magic rites in the Roman world : E. BURRISS, *Taboo, Magic, Spirits; a Study of Primitive Elements in Roman Religion*, New York 1931, p. 152-3.

<sup>33</sup> PLAUTUS, *Poenulus*. 5. 5. 112 : *Aegyptii qui cortinam ludis per circum ferant.*



They are shown wearing short tunics and usually have knee bands of the type familiar from images of charioteers. Secondly, many of them carry whips, which again would link them to the activities of the racing-teams, not those of the arena attendants. Thirdly, the same image of the amphora-holder occurs in other contexts which suggest that these were people of some importance, not mere circus attendants. The best parallels are the four amphora-holders who appear on separate panels on the circus mosaic from the *Maison des Chevaux* at Carthage (fig. 4, 5)<sup>34</sup>. These figures were identified by Salomonson as *sparsores*<sup>35</sup>; but their dress and (in one case) riding whip mark them clearly as charioteers. In appearance, they have much in common with the recently discovered statue of a charioteer found in the Yasmina cemetery outside Carthage; this figure also holds a whip in one hand and an amphora in the other<sup>36</sup>.

The amphora-holders on the circus mosaics should also, I believe, be seen as charioteers. If, however, they are charioteers, what are they doing on foot in the arena, and why are they holding amphorae? One explanation may be that they are 'team-mates' (*collegae*) of the charioteers who take part in the races. An inscription from Rome listing the victories of the charioteer Calpurnianus includes several races won 'on foot, beside the chariot' (*pedibus ad quadrigam*)<sup>37</sup>. Could this imply that the charioteers' success depended in part on help and technical advice given by unmounted team-mates? But why the amphorae? It is tempting to see these as prizes, reflecting the centuries-old tradition of the Panathenaic amphorae given to the winners of athletic competitions in Classical Athens?<sup>38</sup> The newly discovered 'Athletes Mosaic' from Batten Zammour near Gafsa points to the survival of this custom in Roman Africa. Among the figures shown on this pavement are several who carry a metal (bronze?) amphora strapped to the left forearm<sup>39</sup>. However, if the amphorae on the circus mosaics are prizes, we might wonder why neither the Roman inscriptions which list circus prizes nor Sidonius who specifies the prizes given at the Ravenna games mention precious metal vases<sup>40</sup>. Indeed the recurring motif of victory in the circus, both in literature and in art, was the palm and the wreath, not an amphora<sup>41</sup>. One final piece of evidence may be taken into consideration. This is the curious

<sup>34</sup> J.W. SALOMONSON, *La mosaïque aux chevaux de l'antiquarium de Carthage*, The Hague 1965, p. 56-7, Nos. 20, 24, 30, 34.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> N.J. NORMAN and A.E. HAECKL, "The Yasmina necropolis at Carthage, 1992", *JRA* 6, 1993, p. 238-250. The authors rightly identify the statue as a charioteer and 'an important member of a circus faction'; compare M.K. ANNABI, "Deux nécropoles au sud de la ville", in A. ENNABLI (ed.), *Pour Sauver Carthage. Exploration et conservation de la cité punique, romaine et byzantine*, Paris and Tunis 1992, p. 183-7, where the same statue is seen as a *sparsor*.

<sup>37</sup> *CIL* VI, 10047 b. For details see H. HARRIS (above note 12), p. 204.

<sup>38</sup> For prizes at the Panathenaic Games: W. DITTENBERGER, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* III, No. 1055.

<sup>39</sup> M. MUSTAPHA KHANOUSSE, "Spectaculum pugilum et gymnasium. Compte rendu d'un spectacle de jeux athlétiques et de pugilat, figuré sur une mosaïque de la région de Gafsa (Tunisie)", *CRAI* 1988, p. 543-561.

<sup>40</sup> Sidonius mentions only metal necklaces (*torques*); cf. SUETONIUS, *Augustus*. 43: *Nonium Asprenatem lapsu debilitatum aureo torque donavit*.

<sup>41</sup> On prizes at the games: DUNBABIN (above note 1), p. 69; N. DUVAL, "Les prix du cirque dans l'antiquité tardive", in *Cirques et courses de chars, Rome-Byzance, Colloque et exposition Lattes 1990*, p. 35-146; *idem*, "Les concours sur les mosaïques de Piazza Armerina. Prix et tirage au sort. L'influence de



'Bird Circus' mosaic from the villa at Piazza Armerina (fig. 6)<sup>42</sup>. This shows four chariots drawn by birds, driven by charioteers representing the different circus factions. Each charioteer is accompanied by a 'team-mate', another figure who stands beside the chariot. One of these accompanying figures is shown handing a palm branch to the victorious charioteer, while each of the four carries a small amphora tucked under the arm. Since all four teams are shown with amphorae, these can hardly be victory prizes. What they may be, however, is what we might term 'performance trophies', semi-precious containers given as a reward for successful completion of the race. Thus, whether shown in the broader context of a circus race, or as an independent figure in a larger collage of circus images, the image of the charioteer with an amphora became, like that of the victor with his palm and wreath, a respected symbol of skill and survival in the racing arena.

## DISCUSSION

**Jean-Pierre Darmon** : Le vase tenu par certains personnages à pied dans les mosaïques de cirque (qui est le même que celui tenu par la statue de l'Aurige vainqueur de Carthage) ne peut-il être considéré comme un des prix destinés au vainqueur ?

**Jeremy Rossiter** : I would certainly not exclude this idea, although the usual symbols of victory on charioteer mosaics are the palm and the wreath. The amphorae may perhaps have been consolation prizes, but there is no mention of these in the list of prizes given by Sidonius. By the 5th century, however, prize-giving practices could have changed.

**David Parrish** : Je suis d'accord avec Jean-Pierre Darmon pour identifier plusieurs des vases représentés dans les mosaïques de cirque et tenus par des assistants de la course aux chevaux comme des prix offerts aux auriges victorieux de la course. Cela pourrait être même le cas dans la statue d'un aurige trouvée à Carthage, qui montre le personnage tenant un vase à anse dans une main.

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l'agonistique grecque", in *La villa romana del Casale di Piazza Armerina* (Cronache di Archeologia 23), 1984, p. 157-169.

<sup>42</sup> On this mosaic and its interpretation, see DUNBABIN (above note 5), p. 91-2 ; R. HANOUNE, "Trois pavements de la Maison de la course de chars à Carthage", *MEFR* 81, 1969, p. 219-56.



Roger **Hanoune** : Je suggère à M. Rossiter que la forme très précise de certains vases (petites amphores pointues) est interprétable (vin, huile de qualité) et renforce l'idée qu'il s'agit non de récipients à eau pour rafraîchir le cocher, mais de prix.

Jeremy **Rossiter** : Mr Hanoune raises an interesting point that the form and size of the amphorae shown on the mosaics varies a great deal. I do not think that in any case their appearance precludes their use as water containers. Many are wide-mouthed vessels which would argue against their use as oil flasks.

Pauline **Donceel-Voùte** : There is a spout on the downward side of the vessel of the Carthage statue and the way the jug is held, hanging, is not as if it was a prize, proudly shown. These two elements seem to me most eloquent in the way of an identification **other** than that of a victorious charioteer with his prize.

Jeremy **Rossiter** : It is an important question whether the ways in which the amphorae are held provide clues to their possible use. In the mosaic images they are either held aloft, or else clutched under the arm. The statue is different again, with the amphora held low. This is perhaps to be explained by the funerary context of the statue.

Mongi **Ennaïfer** : Je voudrais savoir si M. Rossiter a adopté la datation haute (II<sup>e</sup> s.) pour la mosaïque de Scorpionus sur la base de nouvelles données archéologiques ?

Jeremy **Rossiter** : The latest excavations have not so far determined the exact location of the Scorpionus pavement within the bath complex. However, we can say that the bath complex as a whole belongs in its original form to the 2nd Century, but was extensively modified and rebuilt in the early 3rd Century.





Fig. 1. Circus mosaic from Gafsa (detail)  
(after A. MARTIN and G. FRADIER,  
*Mosaïques romaines de Tunisie*, Tunis  
1986).



Fig. 2. Circus mosaic from Barcelona  
(detail) (after B. SMITH, Spain, *a History  
in Art*, New York 1966).





Fig. 3. Circus mosaic from Carthage (detail) (after A. MARTIN and G. FRADIER, *Mosaïques romaines de Tunisie*, Tunis 1986).

Fig. 4. Mosaic from the *Maison des Chevaux* at Carthage (detail) (photo J. J. Rossiter, courtesy Musée de Carthage).







Fig. 5. Mosaic from the *Maison des Chevaux* at Carthage (detail) (photo J. J. Rossiter, courtesy Musée de Carthage).



Fig. 6. 'Bird Circus' mosaic from Piazza Armerina (after A. CARANDINI, A. RICCI and M. DE VOS, *Filosofiana : la villa di Piazza Armerina*, Palermo 1982).