

# Archaeological Contexts of Inscriptions in the Private Sphere: The Mosaic Inscriptions of a *villa rustica* in Skala/Cephalonia

Elisabeth Rathmayr and Veronika Scheibelreiter-Gail\*

The article deals with inscriptions on the floor mosaics of a residence in Skala on the island of Cephalonia. The archaeological context of the inscriptions, their representation and legibility as well as their contents will be addressed. In at least two rooms, inscriptions have been combined with depictions that give insights into the beliefs of the residents. One shows the personification of Envy, depicted as a *damnatus ad bestias*, which was common in amphitheatrical scenes on mosaics in imperial times, another a sacrifice of three animals (*trittoaia*), which is only seldom depicted and also rarely documented in epigraphy and literature; to date, the picture in the villa of Skala together with a mention in a play by Aristophanes are the only sources for this sacrifice in the private realm of a house. Moreover, the depiction probably refers to a real sacrifice made on the outskirts of the villa. The commissioner of the inscribed mosaics was certainly the homeowner, who is recorded by his name Krateros in two mosaic inscriptions in the house. He was probably identical with Lucius Pompeius Krateros Cassianus, a member of a third-century-AD elite family from Elis known from inscriptions found in Olympia.

Although both the figurative representations on the mosaic floors and the length of the inscriptions are unusual, they have received too little attention so far. The nearest parallels are to be found in the mosaic art of Patras, only a short distance away across the sea, where a whole series of comparable mosaics came to light, especially during emergency excavations. The mixture of »Greek« and »Roman« in the depictions of the mosaics in the villa in Skala could be explained by a mosaicists' workshop from Patras, a Roman colony founded by Augustus, where such depictions might have developed.

*Keywords: Cephalonia; Skala; villa rustica; mosaic inscriptions; Roman Imperial times; domestic religion; sacrifice of three animals; phtonos; apotropaic; self-presentation*

---

\* Correspondence details: Mag. Dr. Elisabeth Rathmayr, and Mag. Dr. Veronika Scheibelreiter-Gail, IKAnt / ÖAW, Hollandstraße 11-13, 1020 Wien, Austria. Email: elisabeth.rathmayr@oeaw.ac.at; veronika.scheibelreiter@oeaw.ac.at.

### 1. The Building and its Construction Period

While the residential building in the modern village of Skala on the south coast of the island Cephalonia was already mentioned in nineteenth-century travelogues, systematic excavations were carried out by Vassilis Kallipolitēs in 1957.<sup>1</sup> Today the remains of the house are protected by a shelter construction, and visitors can use a walkway leading over the ruins.

Due to the location of the house away from a larger settlement on a plot by the sea, it was probably a *villa rustica*, which could have served both agricultural and recreational (*otium*) purposes. Several rooms of different sizes have been preserved (Fig. 1): while rooms I to V were certainly covered by roofs, area VI, directly adjoining in the west, could have been a courtyard, as indicated by the presence of a deep well and the discovery of a column.<sup>2</sup>

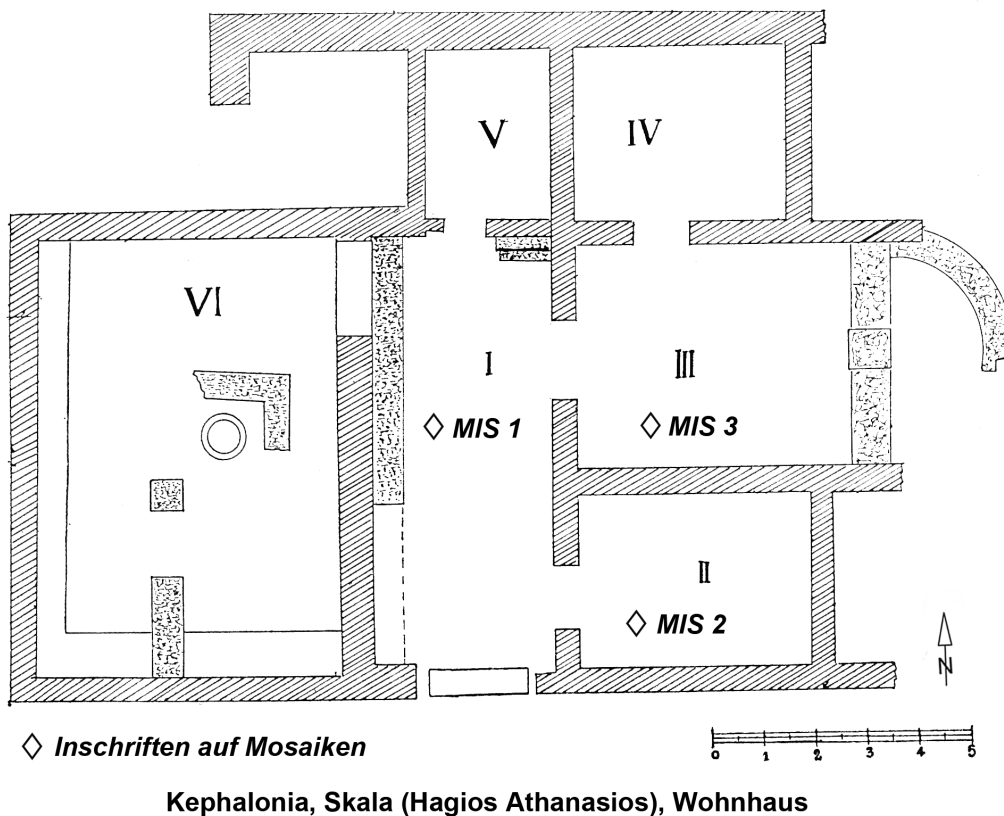


Figure 1: Plan of the house with the mosaics marked

- 1 TIB 3 (1981) 259; for travelogues of the nineteenth century, see Goodisson, *Historical and Topographical Essay*, 141-142; Riemann, *Recherches archéologiques*, 57 and 59.
- 2 Daux, *Fouilles en 1958*, 730.

Room I, which is entered from the south, is a long, wide corridor that may have served as a distribution area in this part of the villa (*Fig. 2*).



*Figure 2: Mosaic in corridor I on the left of the overall view*

It opens to three rooms in the east (II-IV) and probably to storeroom V in the north, as suggested by the latter's simple decoration – it is the only room without a mosaic floor – and fragments of *amphorae* and *pithoi* found there. Rooms I to IV are adorned with mosaic floors, that are still *in situ*. While the pavements of rooms I to III bear inscriptions, remains of mural paintings were only observed in room IV.<sup>3</sup> The building expanded at least to the east, as extensions of the outer walls of rooms II to IV indicate. The apse on the east side of room III, however, is likely to come from the use of the building as a church in Late Antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

The most recent pottery and small finds discovered during excavations of the foundations date back to the second half of the second century AD. They constitute a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the villa.<sup>5</sup> The mosaics of rooms I and II, and presumably also those of room III, can be assigned to the construction period for stylistic reasons. For them a date at the end of the second or the beginning of the third century AD is very likely. Destruction and abandonment may have been triggered by a fire catastrophe, which, based on coin finds, took place in the second half of the fourth century AD.<sup>6</sup>

3 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 8.

4 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 11; Daux, Fouilles en 1958, 732.

5 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 4 and 8-12; Daux, Fouilles en 1958, 730.

6 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 4 and 10.



## 2. The Archaeological Context and the Function of the Inscriptions

Corridor I measures 8.20 m x 3.60 m and thus occupies an area of approx. 30 m<sup>2</sup>. It has a mosaic floor with a personification of Envy (phthonos) facing the entrance, depicted at its center (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Mosaic in corridor I, detail

He is represented as a bare young man in a death struggle against four big cats (tiger, panther, lion, leopard), who have already inflicted numerous wounds on him, while his intestines are already bulging out of his stomach. Below the picture is the twelve-line inscription:<sup>7</sup>

- Ἦ Φθόνε, καὶ σο[ῦ] τήνδε ὀλοῆς | φρενὸς εἰκόνα [γ]ράψε hedera  
 ζωγράφος, ἦν Κράτερος θήκα|το λαϊνέην, hedera  
 5 οὐχ ὅτι τειμήεις σὺ μετ' ἀνδρά|σιν, ἀλλ' ὅτι θνητῶν hedera  
 ὄλβοις βασκ[α]ίνων σχῆμα τό|δε ἀμφεβ[ά]λου· hedera  
 10 Ἔστα[θ]ι δ[ὲ] πάντεσσιν ἐνώπιος, | ἔσταθι τλήμων, hedera  
 τηκεδόνος φθονερῶν δεῖγμα | φέρων στύγιον hedera

7 SEG 19, 409 with corrections of SEG 23, 389; editions: Daux, Fouilles en 1958, 730 Fn. 1 (L. 1-4); Marinatos, *Dyo epigrammata ek Kephallénias*, 355-361; J. and L. Robert, REG 73 (1960) No. 188 (L. 1-4); V. Kallipolitēs, *Anaskaphē*, 16-17 pl. 3-9; J. and L. Robert, REG 75 (1962) 171 (LL. 5-12); Daux, *Sur un épigramme*, 636-638, fig. 1; J. and L. Robert, REG 77 (1964) 174 no. 215; SEG 23, 389; Dunbabin and Dickie, *Invidia rumpantur pectora*, 8-10, 30 and 35-36 pl. 1; Donderer, *Mosaizisten der Antike*, 126 C 5 pl. 58, 1; Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 85-87 and 2, cat.-no. 48; IG IX 1<sup>2</sup>, 4, 1498.

*O Envy, the painter also drew the picture of your destructive spirit, which Krateros had laid in stone – not because you are honored among men, but because you, disfavoring mortals of their happiness, have taken this form. Now stand before all eyes, stand, miserable one, who bears the hated sign of the emaciation of Envy.*

(translation: V. Scheibelreiter-Gail)

Apotropaic inscriptions such as MIS 1,<sup>8</sup> meant to ward off envy, can be found in certain areas of houses – e.g. floors in entrances areas, on thresholds and doorframes – throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>9</sup> While monuments depicting Envy as a person are so far known only from the Greek East – from Egypt to the Black Sea, mainly in small-scale art (terracotta, lamps, amulets, reliefs) – in the West inscriptions have been found, but until now, no visual representations.<sup>10</sup> Bearing this in mind, what makes the *phthonos* mosaic of Skala so special is the combination of an elaborate inscription with an image of Envy personified. Moreover, it is illustrated in the context of a whole scene, not just through symbols. The iconography is also unique: Four feline predators attack a young man – not a snake, a scorpion or a bird, which are usually depicted for warding off (the) evil (eye).<sup>11</sup> One possible explanation for the choice of this depiction is to ensure that the immense physical pain of the tortured envious person is effectively portrayed. Obviously no prototype was used here, and it is very likely that Krateros, the commissioner of the mosaic and homeowner, chose this form of representation. The tattered *phthonos* is neither physically nor physiognomically reminiscent of a pale, emaciated wry-eyed man, but of a man in the prime of his years who was executed in the amphitheater as *damnatus ad bestias*. Comparable arena scenes are known from imperial-era mosaics, especially from Northern Africa.<sup>12</sup> The reference to the amphitheater is probably intended to illustrate the real experience of torture and thus make the representation even more abhorrent. Together with the inscription on the pavement, which was meant to catch the eye of the person entering, the homeowner created a particularly urgent warning against envy: Ruin should seize everyone who envied Krateros his fortune, as emerges from the opening phrase of the inscription *o phthone, kai sou ...* which is reminiscent of the formula *καὶ σοῦ* or of *et tu, et tibi* and certainly alludes to »Tit for tat«. <sup>13</sup> The inscription was intended to keep evil away from the inhabitants of the house on the one hand and to preserve the happiness (*ὄλβος*) mentioned in the text on the other. In the context of corridor I, the inscription and visual representation were placed in such a way that one had to deal with them. Anyone who wanted to enter rooms III to VI, had to either step on the depiction of *phthonos* or bypass it laterally, which could also be seen as an aspect of »magic«.

8 The numbers MIS 1-3 are taken from the monograph of the authors of this contribution (in progress). They are also used to mark the inscriptions on the house plans.

9 For instance Bruneau, *Recherches*, 643-645; Dunbabin and Dickie, *Invidia rumpantur pectora*.

10 Dunbabin and Dickie, *Invidia rumpantur pectora*, with numerous examples.

11 Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*.

12 C.f. e.g. Augenti, *Spettacoli*, 34, no. 9 (mosaic from a villa in Zliten), 35, no. 10 (mosaic from a villa in Thysdrus/El Jem), 36, no. 11 (Thysdrus/El Jem), 37, no. 12 (Zliten); generally on this topic, see Dunbabin, *Africa*.

13 C.f. Elliot, *Beware the Evil Eye*.

Room II is the first room on the east side that was entered from corridor I. It measures 4.50 m x 3.20 m and has an area of approx. 14.40 m<sup>2</sup>. It is decorated with a mosaic floor with a sacrificial representation and the metric inscription MIS 2 (Fig. 4-5):<sup>14</sup>



Figure 4: Mosaic in room II, detail

Παλλάδι καὶ Μ[ούσησι μά]λ' εὐ|πλοκάμοισι Τύ[χη τε]  
 Φοίβω τε Ἀπόλ[λωνι καὶ] Ἑρ|μῇ Μαιάδος υ[ιῶ]  
 5 αὐτῶ σὺν βω[μῶ Κρά]τερος | καὶ τοῦδε φίλ[ος παῖς]  
 ταῦρόν τε κρει[όν] | τε ἡδὲ φριξ[α]ύχε|να κάπρον |  
 10 λεπτήσιν [λιθά]|δεσσι συ[να]ρμόσ|σαντες [ἔθ]ηκαν  
 13 τέχνης δαιδαλέ|ης ἀναθήματα | καὶ μερόπεσιν  
 εἰκόνας εὐσεβί|ης ἔσορᾶν ἧς λῶ|ϊον οὐδέν hedera

*To Pallas and the beautifully curled Muses, Tyche and Phoibos Apollon, Hermes, Maia's son, have Krateros and his beloved child with this altar assembled from fine stones and consecrated a bull, a ram and a boar with a ruffled neck, a votive offering of a colorfully speckled art and for the mortals pictures of the worship of the gods than which there is nothing more appropriate to be regarded.*

(translation: Veronika Scheibelreiter-Gail)

14 SEG 19, 408 with corrections of SEG 23, 388; editions: Daux, Fouilles en 1958, 729-730, n. 1; Marinatos, *Dyo epigrammata ek Kephallēnias*, 355-361; J. and L. Robert, REG 73, 1960, no. 188; Kallipolitēs, *Anaskaphē*, 22-24 pl. 6. 7-9; J. and L. Robert, REG 75, 1962, 171; G. Daux, *Sur un épigramme de Céphalonie*, 636-338, fig. 1; SEG 19, 408; J. and L. Robert, REG 77, 1964, 174 no. 215; SEG 23, 388; Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 87-89 and 2, cat. 48; IG IX 1<sup>2</sup>, 4, 1497; Kokkinē, *Ἐ ἀεικονισῆ*, 84-85 λ. 4.





*Figure 5: Mosaic in room II*

The central zone of the pavement is divided into two differently aligned image fields. In the lower one sacrificial animals are arranged next to each other in profile on floor lines. Beneath these, the inscription is written in two blocks: six lines (lines 1-6) are arranged underneath the boar and the bull, the other twelve lines underneath the ram (lines 7-18). The lines are more or less straight, the line spacing is narrow, but the letter height of 4 to 5 cm is quite large. Since the text is close to the threshold and stands out from the light background with its dark color, it was easy to read when one entered the room.

Directly above the inscription the sacrificial animals – a wild boar, a bull and a ram – are depicted; they are oriented upwards towards a scene showing a sacrifice. While their slaughter is not shown, the subject of the upper picture is the frequently depicted libation, and maybe also fruits were offered.<sup>15</sup> The libation is carried out by the figure to the left of the altar. The attributes of a *patera* in its lowered left hand and a jug in its lowered right refer to this sacrifice. The action of the figure to the right of the altar is more difficult to interpret. Like the figure to the left, it is unveiled, barefoot and wears a tunic reaching down to the knees. The head, reproduced in three-quarter view, is slightly inclined and turned to the left. According to Kallipolitēs, the figure held a basket with both hands.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, due to the bad preservation of this part of the figure, nothing of it has remained. Yet, the basket could only have been depicted at breast height and the right arm must have been angled towards the torso<sup>17</sup>. Whether the left arm was also angled towards the upper body or hung downwards must remain open, but if the figure held a basket, then this arm would also have been lowered and angled to hold it<sup>18</sup>. While Kallipolitēs interpreted these figures as house heroes,<sup>19</sup> Kankeleit generally addressed them as boys;<sup>20</sup> Daux described the figure to the left as a child and the figure to the right as a female one,<sup>21</sup> and Marinatos, as male figures showing Krateros and his son.<sup>22</sup> The latter interpretation would fit the fact that image and inscription usually complement each other or are related to each other, whereby a sacrificial servant (that could be the homeowner or his child) and a deity named in the inscription could also have been depicted next to the altar, especially since gods are often shown on reliefs next to altars as the recipients of the offerings.<sup>23</sup> Of the deities who appear in the inscription as recipients of the sacrifice, Pallas Athena might be the figure to the right of the altar. She is not only mentioned first in the epigram, but the picture could also support this assumption in so far as the strands of hair protruding from the back of the head could be parts of a helmet bush.

15 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 20 names small fruits; Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 2, 88, speaks of a pomegranate that we cannot recognize. In our opinion the larger object in the middle seems to be a representation of a flame, as known from a number of sacrificial reliefs; see e.g. ThesCRA 1, pl. 16 Gr. 76.

16 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 19.

17 This is certain because the background of the mosaic between the altar and the figure is intact.

18 Cf. a sacrificer with a basket on a mosaic floor in Larisa, s. Pliota, *Diakosmēsē*, 261 and 551 pl. XXXIVa.

19 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 20: „οἰκουροὶ ἤρωες« (after Plut. *De fort. Rom.*10).

20 Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 181-182 and 2, 88-89.

21 Daux, *Fouilles en 1958*, 729.

22 Marinatos, *Dyo epigrammata ek Kephallēnias*, 360.

23 E.g. Greek and Roman votive reliefs, such as Mars on the so-called Domitius-Ara from the first century BC or many depictions of deities on black and red figured vases; see ThesCRA 1, pl. 14 Rom. 120; pl. 29 Gr. 537.



However, the short robe is unusual for Athena. It is maybe explained by the invocation of Pallas for Athena used in the epigram, by which the virgin girl is meant.<sup>24</sup> Though this representation cannot be precisely determined, it is clear that the scene illustrates a sacrifice *Graeco ritu* due to the unveiled heads of the sacrificers. Nevertheless, research has equated it with the *suovetaurilia* or even addressed it as such.<sup>25</sup> While the latter is, however, a typical Roman sacrifice, a sacrifice of three animals is also recorded for ancient Greece: the so-called *trittoaia*. From ancient literature and inscriptions we learn that in the course of this sacrifice a boar, a ram and a bull were slaughtered, but also other combinations of three animals occur.<sup>26</sup> Though the majority of sources refer to public sacrifices, Aristophanes provides the important information that it was obviously common to sacrifice three animals in a private house: in the comedy *Plutos*, the slave Cario makes fun of the new wealth of his master by telling that the latter, now crowned with a wreath, made a sacrifice of a wild boar, a he-goat and a ram inside his house, so that the smoke has driven him out.<sup>27</sup> With the occurrence of the three-animal sacrifice in Greece and the representation of a sacrifice *Graeco ritu* on the mosaic in room II, a designation of it as a *suovetaurilia* has to be rejected. This does not mean, however, that visitors from the Roman West would not have been reminded of this sacrifice when looking at the picture. Such an association might have been intended by the commissioner. Moreover, the iconographical scheme of the Roman *suovetaurilia* was probably taken over, since in Greek art – with two exceptions on black-figured bowls<sup>28</sup> – there are no representations of a three-animal sacrifice from either Hellenistic nor Imperial times. In contrast to the Roman *suovetaurilia*, which were exclusively dedicated to Mars, different deities from Greece are known as the recipients of the triple animal sacrifice:<sup>29</sup> Zeus, Hades, Artemis, Poseidon, Heracles, and especially Pallas Athena. Thanks to the inscription from the *villa rustica* in Skala, the list can now be extended by the deities which appear here alongside Pallas (Athena). These were certainly gods especially venerated by the homeowner and his family: Pallas (Athena), the Muses and Phoibos (Apollon) could point to a relation of the inhabitants to arts and crafts, and especially for the display of arts and *luxuria*. A special appreciation of these skills is evident in the mosaic inscriptions in the villa. In the inscription MIS 2 it is expressed by the emphasis on the way of setting and coloring the mosaic (cf. L. 10). Hermes, in turn, may have played a role in the lives of these people as this god of flocks and trade would be consistent with the function of the house as a *villa rustica*. If we now confront the inscription and the image, it emerges that they refer directly to each other, whereby the content of the epigram and the representation are easily understandable.<sup>30</sup> However, without the inscription one could interpret the sacrifice as *suovetaurilia* and the figure to the right

24 Kleiner Pauly 1 (1979) 681 s.v. Athena (W. Fauth).

25 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 31; Kankleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 182 and 2, cat.-no. 87.

26 While the oldest literary source of the three-animal-sacrifice is Hom. Od. 11, 97, the last evidence is Plut. Pyrrhus 6, 2, 5; for the three-animal-sacrifice see ThesCRA 1, 110 No. 417-425 s. v. Sacrifices (Antoine Hermary *et al.*).

27 Aristoph. Plut. 819-820: «καὶ νῦν ὁ δεσπότης μὲν ἔνδον βουθυτεῖ / ὕν καὶ τράγον καὶ κριὸν ἐστεφανωμένος: / ἐμὲ δ' ἐξέπεμψεν ὁ καπνός. οὐχ οἴος τε γὰρ / ἔνδον μένειν ἦν. ἔδακνε γὰρ τὰ βλέφαρά μου.»

28 Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure*, 39-40; ThesCRA 110 No. 425a-b s. v. Opfer (Antoine Hermary *et al.*).

29 ThesCRA110 No. 417-425 s. v. Opfer (Antoine Hermary *et al.*).

30 Differently Kankleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 182 according to whom the composition is unclear due to different orientations of the figures and would require a considerable ability of combination on the part of the observer.

of the altar as Mars, to whom, alongside Janus and Jupiter, this Roman sacrifice was addressed<sup>31</sup> and who, like Athena, was depicted with a helmet. This further means that without the inscription we would have a different idea of the recipients of the sacrifice.<sup>32</sup>

Since we know from Aristophanes' play *Plutos* that a sacrifice of three animals was possible in the private sphere of a house, at least in the classical period, the depiction on the mosaic could refer to a particular event which was intended to bring prosperity to the house and its inhabitants.<sup>33</sup> How and where exactly such a ritual could have been performed in the private realm is not handed down to us. Maybe it was similar to such a ritual described in Cato's *De agricultura*.<sup>34</sup> However, the dominant picture and inscription on the mosaic of room II can be referred to the religiosity of the homeowner. The representation on the mosaic may have reminded him/people/visitors of a concrete sacrifice made on the outskirts of the villa and indicate a function of room II within a domestic cult.

In general, depictions of sacrificial scenes in residential buildings are rare. But we know examples from mosaics in houses in Patras,<sup>35</sup> and Larisa,<sup>36</sup> from a wall painting in Dwelling Unit 7 of Terrace House 2 in Ephesus<sup>37</sup> and from a mosaic representation in the house of Quintus in Zeugma.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the nature of the sacrifice and the gods to whom it was dedicated, the epigram in room II in the villa of Skala also tells us the name of the homeowner Krateros, who, together with his son, commissioned the mosaic and thus the epigram and the depictions. He communicated with his contemporaries in words and image. The reason that only his name and not that of his son is mentioned could be explained by the

---

31 Cf. Cato agr. 141.

32 Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 182, arrives at wrong conclusions on the basis of identifying the sacrifice as the *suovetaurilia*. According to her, typical »Roman« themes such as the *suovetaurilia* and the arena scenes would synthesize with traditional »Greek« motifs to create an overall impression of wealth and variety.

33 Likewise already Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 31, who thinks of a sacrifice, which was carried out on certain days of the year.

34 Cf. Cato agr. 141 who describes here how a *villa rustica* (farm) should be lustrated: »*Agrum lustrare sic oportet. Impera suovetaurilia circumagi: »Cum divis volentibus quodque bene eveniat, mando tibi, Mani, uti illace suovetaurilia fundum agrum terramque meam quota ex parte sive circumagi sive circumferenda censeas, uti cures lustrare.*« (Undertake the preparations for the *suovetaurilia* to be driven about: »So that each [victim] may be allotted propitiously to the good-willed gods, I bid you, Manius, that you determine in which part that *suovetaurilia* is to be driven or carried around my farm, land (*ager*) and earth—that you take care to purify.« trans. Woodard, *Sacred Space*, 102-103). Then follows the libation to Janus and Jupiter and the prayer to Mars; for an interpretation, see e.g. Baudy, *Römische Umgangsriten*, 103-121.

35 Cf. Bonini, *Casa nella Grecia romana*, 109, fig. 84 and 479 cat. Patrasso 33: a mosaic from a house in the Odos Karatzá 12 depicts an altar with a sacrificial fire, a cock and a knife on the left and a goose on the right; cf. further Kolonas and Stavropoulou-Gatzi, *Museum Patrôn*, 83-84, fig. 90: a mosaic from a house in Patras, in the Odos Agios Dimitrios 40, shows three females dancing (*Horai*?) around an altar.

36 The mosaic of the fourth century AD shows a sacrifice of fruits? (grapes?) in a basket by a man and a woman to Dionysos; see Pliota, *Diakosmēsē*, 261 and 551 pl. XXXIVa.

37 It is an imperial wall painting showing a libation within a sacrifice *Romano ritu*, see Rathmayr, *Räume*, 657-658, pl. 402.

38 On the mosaic of a *triclinium* in a house in Zeugma a sacrifice within a mythological scene of Theonoe and Leukippe is shown, see Görkay *et al.*, *Observations on the Theonoe*, 1-12, fig. 1; Asēmakopulu-Atzaka, *To apangelma tou psēphothetē*, 52, fig. 39.

epigram form of the text. His name, of which -]τερος can still be read, has no word division,<sup>39</sup> which is otherwise common in this inscription. Krateros stands in the middle of the left column and thus approximately in the middle of the two inscription columns and is the only word that crosses the stand line of one of the sacrificial animals. Therefore his name was in a prominent position and could quickly be noticed.

Room III, the largest room, is the second room on the east side that could be entered from corridor I. It measures 16 x 4.25 m, which is approx. 68 m<sup>2</sup> and bears a long multi-line inscription MIS 3 on its mosaic floor that is only fragmentarily preserved:<sup>40</sup>

```

---ΛΑ-----
-----ΦΟΙ....ΟΜ-----
-----ΤΕ .....Τ-----
      horse?
4  -----Ν-----
      -----γ]ραπτα[ι?---ca. 5---]ΙΑ--
      -----αμενος κ[---ca. 6---]ΜΟ---
```

Comparable with the other mosaics of rooms I and II, however, is that the depiction and inscription are located in a large central field (4.50 m<sup>2</sup>) and their alignment to the entrance from corridor I. As in room II, the inscription was inserted into the field in several columns between representations. From the depiction, a left-facing leg of an animal (probably a horse<sup>41</sup>, less likely a bird<sup>42</sup>) has survived.

To date no attempt has been made to reconstruct a possible content from the poorly preserved letters. However, ΛΑ in line 1 and ΦΟΙ in line 2 can perhaps be added to Pallas and Phoibos, especially since these deities were already encountered in the epigram in room II. -αμενος in the bottom line will be the ending of an aorist participle; in connection with gods the frequent εὐξάμενος in the sense of »redeeming a prayer/having fulfilled a vow« would be conceivable, but also, for instance, γραψάμενος, which would also fit well in our context. Both, but also other possibilities must remain open. Although the letter combination ΤΕ in line 3 is frequently found in Greek words, in the concrete case it should nevertheless be considered that it was part of the name Krateros, since the homeowner also appears by name in the mosaic inscriptions of the other two rooms.

39 In contrast to a series of words that have been separated, such as the name of Hermes, the name of the homeowner is in a single line.

40 SEG 23, 390 with corrections. editions: Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 24-25, fig. 4; SEG 23, 390; Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 1, 89-90; IG IX 1<sup>2</sup>, 4, 1499.

41 Kallipolitēs, Anaskaphē, 24-26, fig. 4.

42 Kankeleit, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken* 2, 89, n. 4.



### 3. Conclusions

All three mosaic inscriptions of the *villa rustica* in Skala are part of a program which can be related to the homeowner Krateros. He was the one who commissioned the texts and the depictions on the mosaic floors of the three interconnecting rooms. Inscriptions and depictions are oriented towards the entrances of the respective rooms.<sup>43</sup> The texts are easily legible due to the large letters of 4 to 5 cm, which contrast with the white ground due to their black color. The inscriptions and pictures of the individual mosaics complement each other and give an insight into the beliefs of the inhabitants in the early third century AD and possibly even beyond, since they belonged to the furnishings of the villa until its destruction in the second half of the fourth century AD.

In the text the commissioner and homeowner Krateros comes to the fore as the only person named. Together with his son, who is mentioned in one text, he thus becomes the counterpart who communicated with his contemporaries in word and image. Mosaics, inscriptions and their placements were used by the homeowner as a medium for self-presentation, but they also reflect ancient law, according to which the landlord in his house determined all religious matters in his family.<sup>44</sup>

For the mosaics of rooms I and II it should be emphasized that there is no other representation of *phthonos* and a three-animal sacrifice in the Greek East (except the previously mentioned two examples from classical times for the latter). It can therefore be assumed that the representations were newly developed according to the wishes of the homeowner and clearly took iconographic borrowings from the Roman pictorial language. While the representation of *phthonos* was adopted from arena scenes, the three-animal sacrifice imitates the *suovetaurilia*. Nevertheless, we are dealing with Greek beliefs as is made clear by the inscriptions and the depictions of the unveiled sacrificers. While until now Aristophanes' play *Plutos* has been the only source for a three-animal sacrifice in the private sphere, now the depiction in the villa of Skala can also be regarded as a proof of this. Maybe the picture and text refer to a concrete sacrifice that most probably would have been carried out on the outskirts of the villa.

Amongst the preserved imperial-era mosaics from Cephalonia there are none which show stylistic, motivic or iconographic similarities with the mosaics of the *villa rustica* in Skala.<sup>45</sup> The elaborateness of the texts and the designs are rather reminiscent of the mosaic art of Patras. It is not only the combination of the patterns that allows parallels to be drawn with mosaics from residential buildings in this veteran colony founded by Augustus, but also the lengthy and detailed inscriptions which are otherwise unusual for floor mosaics

43 For the importance of alignment of inscriptions cf. the contribution of C. Jahoda in this issue (inscriptions on stone).

44 Cf. Wachsmuth, *Aspekte*, 48; Kaser, *Das römische Privatrecht*, 51-52.

45 Most of the mosaics stem from buildings uncovered in Sami, a town that from the Antonine period onwards had experienced a revival; cf. Kallipolitēs, *Archaiologikē Ephemeris*. For the mosaics that, due to their preservation or their restricted access, have not been studied properly, cf. Kankeleit, *Mosaiken Griechenlands* 2, cat. 44; Daux, *Chronique des fouilles en Grèce en 1959*, 731 and 733, fig. 7 (Agia Euphemia, bath-building of a villa?, second half of the second century AD); Kankeleit, *Mosaiken Griechenlands* 2, cat. 45; Daux, *Fouilles en Grèce en 1959*, 728-733 figs. 3-5 (Sami, bath-building; 2nd-3rd century AD); Kankeleit, *Mosaiken Griechenlands* vol. 2, Kat. 46; Kalligas, *Archaiologikon Deltion*, 28 B (1973) 426-427, pl. 385-386 (Sami, house-complex, 2nd-3rd century AD); Kankeleit, *Mosaiken Griechenlands* 2, Kat. 47; Pariente, *Fouilles et découvertes archéologiques*, 876, fig. 57 (Sami, house? third century AD); Kankeleit, *Mosaiken Griechenlands* 2, cat. 48; *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς* 1932/33, 6-7, fig. 8 (Valtsa, house? 2nd-3rd century AD).

that occur here, and, as in the villa of Skala, are always combined with figurative depictions. Thus it is very probable that a workshop from this nearby town across the sea was active in the *villa rustica* of Skala. In particular, a mosaic from a *villa rustica* in the outskirts of Patras from the end of the second or third century AD is reminiscent of the *phthonos* mosaic of Skala:<sup>46</sup> Here too we find a mosaic with a perspective rendering of cubes that decorated an elongated corridor, with its geometric pattern interrupted by a figurative depiction bearing an inscription with letter forms very similar to those in the villa of Skala.

Regarding the family that owned the villa, the inscriptions in rooms I and II indicate that Krateros and his unnamed child were the inhabitants, more precisely the homeowner and his son. The idea that these were instead mosaic artists can be rejected due to the prominent self-display of the people involved.

In general, the name Krateros is a name frequently used in Greece and Asia Minor in Hellenistic and Imperial periods up to the third century AD.<sup>47</sup> But since only the first name appears in the mosaic inscriptions of the villa of Skala, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty whether a certain Lucius Pompeius Krateros Cassianus, who was honored in an inscription of an honorific statue in Olympia,<sup>48</sup> is identical to that on the mosaic in the villa of Skala. However, the stone inscription, which is dated to 210 to 220 AD,<sup>49</sup> would be compatible with the chronological classification of the mosaics in the villa. Moreover, just like the person Krateros named in the villa, the Krateros named in the inscription in Olympia also had a child. This son, called Publius Egnatius Maximus Venustinus, erected the honorific monument in Olympia together with his grandmother Apria Cassia. Therefore, and because there is no other person named Krateros within the possible time frame in the immediate geographical environment, it can be assumed that the persons named Krateros in the inscriptions in Skala and Olympia are one and the same. While in the private sphere of his villa he would have presented himself only with his *cognomen*,<sup>50</sup> it was obligatory in the honorary inscription of the public realm that he was addressed with his full name.

It is conceivable that it was a wealthy family who owned an estate on the nearby island of Cephalonia. Yet, their town residence may have been in the prosperous town of Patras that was easily reachable via the sea and its important harbor. The latter is indicated not only by the proximity of the city to Cephalonia and Olympia, but also by the close stylistic connections of the mosaics of the villa to the mosaic art of this town.

### *Acknowledgements*

This work was supported by the Austrian Science Fund FWF within the project »Archaeological contexts of inscriptions in the private sphere« under the project number P 29161 Einzelprojekte.

46 House in the Odos Karolou; cf. Papapostolu, *Mosaics of Patras*, 50-56; Kolonas and Stavropoulou-Gatzi, *Mouseio Patrôn*, 58-59, fig. 61.

47 LPGN s. v. Κράτερος, where, however, the inscription from Cephalonia is missing.

48 IvO 477.

49 This date given in IvO 477 is based on the inscription IvO 122 from 265 AD in which the grandson of Krateros is very probably named; also Zoumbaki, *Roman Personal Names*, 351 no. 32.

50 Cf. Solin, *Zur Entwicklung des römischen Namensystems*, 5-9, concerning the development from a personal praenomen to a personal cognomen. The use of only the praenomen/cognomen is primarily attested for the private realm of the house.

## References

- Asēmakopulu-Atzaka, Panagiōta, Katalogos Rōmaikōn Psēphidōtōn Dapedōn me Anthrōpines Morphes ston Ellēniko Chōro, *Ellenika* 26 (1973) 216-254.
- Asēmakopulu-Atzaka, Panagiōta, *To epangelma tu psēphothetē kata tēn opsimē archaiotēta: 30s - 70s aiōnas* (Athens, 2011).
- Agenti, Domenico, *Spettacoli del Colosseo. Nelle cronache degli antichi* (Rome, 2001).
- Baudy, Dorothea, *Römische Umgangsriten. Eine ethologische Untersuchung der Funktion von Wiederholung für religiöses Verhalten, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 43 (Berlin, 1998).
- Beazley, John D., *The Development of Attic Black-Figure*, Revised edition (Berkeley, LA, 1986).
- Bonini, Paolo, *La casa nella Grecia romana. Forme e funzioni dello spazio privato fra I e VI secolo* (Rome, 2006).
- Bruneau, Philippe, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à L'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (BEFAR) 217 (Paris 1970).
- Daux, Georges, Chronique des fouilles en 1958, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique (BCH)* 82 (1958) 644-830.
- Daux, Georges, Chronique des fouilles en Grèce en 1959, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique (BCH)* 84 (1960) 617-874.
- Daux, Georges, Sur un épigramme de Céphalonie, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique (BCH)* 87 (1963) 636-638.
- Donderer, Michael, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung* (Erlangen 1989).
- Dunbabin, Katherine M. D., *Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage, Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology* 16 (Oxford, 1978).
- Dunbabin, Katherine M. D. and Matthew W. Dickie, Invidia rumpantur pectora. The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum (JbAC)* 26 (1983) 7-37.
- Elliot, John H., *Beware the Evil Eye. Greece and Rome* (Eugene, Oregon, 2015).
- Goodisson, William A., *A Historical and Topographical Essay upon the Islands of Corfu, Leucadia, Cephalonia, Ithaca and Zante* (London 1922).
- Görkay, Kutalmış, Pascale Linant de Bellefonds and Évelyne Prioux, Some observations on the Theonoe mosaic from Zeugma, *Anadolu / Anatolia* 31 (2006) 1-12.
- Kallipolitēs, Vassilis G., Anaskaphē Rōmaikēs Epauleōs en Kephallēnia, *Archaiologikon Deltion. Ekdidomenon apo tēs genikēs ephoreias tōn archaiotētōn (ADelt A)* 17 (1961/62) 1-31, pl. 3-9.
- Kallipolitēs, Vassilis, *Archaiologikē Ephemeris* (1960) 141-143.
- Kankeleit, Alexandra, *Kaiserzeitliche Mosaiken in Griechenland*. 2 vols: vol. 1 (text volume) and vol. 2 (catalogue) (Bonn, 1994).
- Kaser, Max, *Das römische Privatrecht*, HdA X.3.3.1 (=Section 10, Part 3, Vol. 3, 1st paragraph) (second edition), (Munich, 1971).
- Kokkinē, Phōteinē, *Ē apeikonisē tou kathēmerinou biou sta psēphidōta dapeda tou elladikou chōrou kata tē rōmaikē autokratōrikē periodo*. 2 vols. (Athens, 2012)
- Kolonas, Lazaros and Maria Stavropoulou-Gatzi, *Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Πατρών* (Athens, 2017).



- Marinatos, Spyridon, Dyo epigrammata ek Kephallēnias, Epistēmōnikē epetēris tēs Philosphikēs Scholēs tou Panepistēmiou Athēnōn (*EpistEpetAth*) 9 (1958/9) 355-361.
- Papapostolou, I. A., Mosaics of Patras. A review, *Archaiologikē Ephemeris* 148 (2009) 1-84.
- Pariante, Anne, Chronique des fouilles et découvertes archéologiques en Grèce en 1991, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique (BCH)* 116 (1992) 833-954.
- Pliota, Anastasia, *Ē Diakosmēsē tēs katoikias tou balkanikou chōrou kata tēn periodo tēs opsimēs archaiotētas*. Unpublished PhD thesis (Kapodistrias University Athens, 2013).
- Randsborg, Klavs, Kephallēnia. Archaeology and history. The ancient Greek cities, *Acta archaeologica* 73/2 (2002).
- Rathmayr, Elisabeth, Räume mit religiös kultischer Funktion, in: Elisabeth Rathmayr (ed.), *Die Wohneinheit 7 im Hanghaus 2 von Ephesos, Forschungen in Ephesos 8 / 10* (Vienna, 2016) 650-659.
- Riemann, Othon, *Recherches archéologiques sur les îles Ioniennes 2: Céphalonie* (Paris, 1879).
- ThesCRA 1 = Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum, ed. Vassilis Lambrinudakis and Jean Charles Balty (Los Angeles, 2004).
- Solin, Heikki, Zur Entwicklung des römischen Namensystems, in: Dieter Geuenich, Jörg Jarnut and Wolfgang Haubrichs (eds.), *Person und Name. Methodische Probleme bei der Erstellung eines Personennamenbuches des Frühmittelalters* (Berlin, 2002) 1-17.
- Wachsmuth, Dietrich, Aspekte des antiken mediterranen Hauskults, *Numen* 27 (1980) 34-75.
- Woodard, Roger D., *Indo-European Sacred Space. Vedic and Roman Cult* (Urbana, Chicago, 2006).
- Zoumbaki, Sophia B., *Roman Personal Names in their Social Context (Achaia, Arcadia, Argolis, Corinthia and Eleia)*, MEAETHMATA 31 (Athens 2001).

#### *List of figures*

- Figure 1: Plan of the house with the mosaics marked
- Figure 2: Mosaic in corridor I on the left of the overall view
- Figure 3: Mosaic in corridor I, detail
- Figure 4: Mosaic in room II
- Figure 5 Mosaic in room II, detail