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THE PAINTED DECORATION OF THE SANCTUARY OF JUPITER HELIOPOLITANUS  
IN *CARNUNTUM*

(Taf. CLXXXIX, Abb. 1–4)

Abstract

Das Heiligtum des Jupiter Heliopolitanus in *Carnuntum* wurde vom Österreichischen Archäologischen Institut zwischen 1978–1981 während einer Rettungsgrabung in großen Teilen freigelegt. Dabei fanden sich zahlreiche sehr stark fragmentierte Wandmalereien, aus denen mehrere Teilrekonstruktionen von Wandmalereisystemen entstanden, die alle am Ende der Periode 2.2. zerstört wurden und aus dem Nordwestbereich des Heiligtums stammen. Dekoration 12 besteht aus weißen gemalten und stuckierten Blattranken auf gelbem Grund sowie Stuckfriesen und stuckierten (Halb?)Säulen. Die Dekoration könnte aufgrund stratigraphischer Informationen zur Innenraumdekoration von Tempel A gehören. Von dort kommen auch Reste einer Marmorimitationsmalerei (Dekoration 13/14). Dekoration 9 besteht aus weißen Stuckplatten mit gelbem Spiegel, die sich zwischen den Pfeilern einer *Exedra* fand und stilistisch und technisch eng mit Dekoration 12 verbunden ist. In verschiedenen Entsorgungshorizonten und –gruben in Hofareal C fanden sich Reste eines Zaunes mit Blattwerk auf weißem Grund (Dekoration 19), dessen raumerweiternde und illusionistische Funktion am ehesten an der Innenseite der Umfassungsmauer von Hofareal C zur Geltung kommt. Weitere Rekonstruktionen und Gebäudezuweisungen sind für die Periode 2.3. für die Hallenbauten im Süden zu erwarten.

The sacred area of the Heliopolitan gods in *Carnuntum* is located to the east of the military camp and forms part of the *canabae legionis*. Rescue excavations by the Austrian Archaeological Institute took place between 1978–1981. During these excavations it was possible to excavate parts of a sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus with temples (A-B), porticoes (North-, West-, East, South-portico), two big halls with *podia* (H, I), a bath and a small open courtyard (C)<sup>1</sup>.

In a first step it was possible to document the wall painting fragments from the northern part of the area, from a few pits and the bath in their stratigraphical context<sup>2</sup>. The additional research of the southern area resulted in the discovery of further painting systems<sup>3</sup>. Altogether, 31 different decoration systems were analyzed in the sanctuary. The fragments are usually very small and in poor condition<sup>4</sup>. In accordance with the stratigraphy they were divided into three groups. All four decoration systems (12, 13/14, 19, 9) presented in this article are mainly from group 1: “Wall paintings from levelling and waste disposal caused by a reorganisation of the sanctuary”<sup>5</sup>. The decorations were reconstructed and assigned to the second phase (period 2.1–

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the excavations and previous research see Gassner *et al.* 2011b. For a plan see *ibid.*, fig. 3; Gassner *et al.* 2011a, fig.1.

<sup>2</sup> In April 2010 the project “The decorative equipment of the buildings in the sacred area of the Heliopolitanian gods in Carnuntum” started, financed by the Anniversary Fund of the OeNB (Nr. 13547) under the direction of V. GASSNER at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. See Tober in print; Gassner *et al.* 2011a; Gassner *et al.* 2011b. At the same time, research on the stratigraphy of the northern part of the sanctuary was carried out by E. STEIGBERGER and advanced current results in this area.

<sup>3</sup> Additional research especially for the southern part with the halls H/I and the Southern *porticus* was carried out in autumn 2010 and was financed by the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore some details of the reconstruction have to remain uncertain and include a wide range of possibilities.

<sup>5</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 160 f. The other groups are wall paintings from ritual fillings of pits (group 2) and residuals (group 3) without a defined stratigraphic or decorative context and very small fragments.

2.2) of the northwestern area. Its construction can be dated by the prevalence of Terra Sigillata Padana and Tardo Padana in the previous period as well as by the finds from the pits which date the reorganisation to the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and first quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Therefore, the periods 2.1–2.2 roughly comprise the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>6</sup> and the application of the wall paintings lies within this time range. It is certain that the wall paintings decorated some buildings at the end of period 2.2, until they were systematically knocked off the walls in order to reuse the stones of the masonry<sup>7</sup>.

The decorations are characterized by

- The size: Fragments of this group are generally larger than the other fragments from this excavation. One fragment of decoration 19 measures ca. 30 x 30 cm. One of the best preserved fragments of the scrolls on yellow ground (Decoration 12) measures 25 x 13 cm.
- A high quantity of painting fragments of a certain decoration and the dominance of one decoration in the strata: The surface of altogether ca. 0,5 m<sup>2</sup> of the scrolls on yellow ground originates from one levelling around temple A<sup>8</sup>. The overall preserved surface of Decoration 19 measures ca. 1,5 m<sup>2</sup>. Almost everything stems from pit 6 and a layer (SE 422) lying above it<sup>9</sup>.
- An accumulation of fragments in certain areas and contexts: The significant accumulation of fragments from Decoration 12 around temple A and from Decoration 19 inside the western wall of courtyard C.

The wall painting fragments originate from levellings and disposals of waste. At the end of the second phase of the sanctuary the wall paintings were knocked off in order to reuse the stones of the walls. This waste was deposited in dumps or fillings of debris to prepare the ground for the construction of the buildings in the following period 3.

Therefore the decorations generally derive from secondary contexts and the original room contexts are unknown. This circumstance complicates a secure allocation of the reconstructed wall painting systems, which will be introduced in the following section<sup>10</sup>.

Decoration 12 (Abb. 1) shows white painted and stuccoed scrolls on a yellow ground. The fine tendrils and leaves, whose shape cannot be determined (12/1)<sup>11</sup> were maybe combined with broad scrolled leaves of acanthus<sup>12</sup>. One fragment attests that the painting system also decorated a lightly vaulted surface. Stuccoed and painted wine tendrils often appear in context with Dionysiac iconography, which was common in *Pannonia*<sup>13</sup>.

Rectangular bases for columns or half-columns of 22–28 cm in diameter with part of a *torus*<sup>14</sup> (12/4), a simple profiled stucco frieze (12/3, Abb. 2)<sup>15</sup> and a single small part of a frieze (12/2) with free formed appliques complete this decoration system<sup>16</sup>. All these fragments show sections of the same yellow grounded painting joining the stucco decoration. A marble-imitation of giallo antico (Decoration 13/14) completes this ensemble<sup>17</sup>.

All these fragments can be combined to a hypothetical reconstruction: A *dado* or main zone was decorated with marble-imitation, followed by a simple profiled stucco-frieze and maybe also by a decorated stucco

<sup>6</sup> For the chronology of the sanctuary see Eschbaumer *et al.* 2003; Gassner *et al.* 2011b, esp. 165.

<sup>7</sup> For considerations concerning the destruction activities in the sanctuary, see Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 141–150.

<sup>8</sup> For details see: Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 151–153.

<sup>9</sup> For details see: Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 158 f.

<sup>10</sup> For details see: Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 161–164.

<sup>11</sup> Typological parallels and identification: Balmelle *et al.* 2002, 46; Baldassare *et al.* 2002, 337; Becatti 1961, pl. 102. 315; Wirth 1968, 171 fig. 86; pl. 28b; Krahe – Zahlhaas 1984, pl. 45; Allag 1997, 15–18. 309–312 esp. fig. 4–5. 9; Mathea-Förtsch 1999, 4–6.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Balmelle *et al.* 2002, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Madrassy 2004, 295 f. fig. 7, 6–7. See Gassner *et al.* 2011a; Gassner *et al.* 2011b.

<sup>14</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, Fig. 24. On stone architecture in *Carnuntum* see Ertel 1991, pl. 32, 2.1.9. The reconstructed height of the stucco-columns that measure almost half a Roman foot in diameter are of medium size in analogy to stone architecture, because they were smaller than the approximate size of the columns of the temple façade: Ertel 1991, 146 f. 289. 291.

<sup>15</sup> On a stucco cornice from the Roman villa of Selce (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) see Lazar 2008, 66 with fig. 27. 69. On a similar cornice from Vienna/Judenplatz: Kieweg-Vetters 2010, 806, pl. 38, 3; fig. 122, 3.

<sup>16</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, fig. 22. Garlands in the Sanctuary of Isis/Pompeji: Moormann 2011, 152 f. with fig. 78; Blanc *et al.* 2000, 257–261. 249 fig. 14, Housing-context in Palmyra: Schmidt-Colinet *et al.* 2008, 462 fig. 11; Tober in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 151–154; fig. 25.

cornice, separating the main zone from the upper zone. It blends into a vaulted surface with white and stuccoed vegetal scrolls on yellow ground. This decoration was completed by (semi-) columns.

All these parts of painting and stucco decoration originate from the levelling around temple A, which was made after the destruction of the temple in order to level the ground for the construction of the future temple B. The concentration of the fragments around temple A seems to favour a hypothetical localisation of this ensemble inside of temple A, although a connection with other buildings such as the eastern or northern *porticus* cannot be ruled out at this point of research. While the façade and the exterior revetment of the temple were made of stone, the inside decoration seems to have been painted and stuccoed. The chosen form of decoration including the material seems to differentiate between interior and exterior<sup>18</sup>.

Decoration 9 (Abb. 3) seems to be related in regard to the similar material and technical features, i.e. the dominance of white and yellow and the moulded surface. The fragments of white moulded orthostates or ashlar with yellow edges were found in a destruction layer between the pillars 7 and 8, which belong to a part of the so-called “*exedra*”<sup>19</sup>. It seems that the pillars or parts of the *exedra* were decorated with a moulded imitation of ashlar masonry that has been known since the Hellenistic period<sup>20</sup>. In Imperial times this technique was used to specify the hierarchy of the room decoration in combination with marble slabs and painted marble imitation<sup>21</sup>. Despite the poor state of preservation, it seems obvious that a similar use was intended for the paintings in the sanctuary. The pillars of the same phase of the wall of courtyard C were decorated with slabs. The variation between outdoor decoration with stone and covered areas with painted and stuccoed surfaces was therefore repeated and seems to reflect a general planning for the decoration of the sacred area in building phase 2<sup>22</sup>.

Most parts of Decoration 19 (Abb. 4) were found in the south-eastern corner of courtyard C in the filling of a pit. A waste deposit above contained many large wall paintings in high quantity, which were reconstructed as part of a garden painting. A 59,4 cm high red fence frames green foliage on a white ground. The crossing of each element of the frames is decorated with yellow medallions imitating metal. Because of the existence of four medallions, the fence had at least four compartments and the minimal reconstructed length has to be 2,40 m.

A 21,5 cm wide pink frame and a white panel with red lines separated the fence. The position of this intersection is not clear at the moment, but identical green leaves at one side of the pink frame prove their connection<sup>23</sup>.

Typological parallels for this type of fence<sup>24</sup> can be found in private buildings such as the villa of Balacapuszta (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD)<sup>25</sup>, in funeral contexts such as the tomb of Nehren (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>26</sup> and in the *Columbarium* under San Sebastiano (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD)<sup>27</sup>. All these examples are characterized by a reduced range of colour, a white background and a generally simplified stylistic expression. Their linear style neither displays deep perspectives nor three dimensional elements. In contrast to the colourful and luxurious garden paintings, which are enlivened with plants, water and animals<sup>28</sup>, this reduced

<sup>18</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 161 f.; Cf. the Sanctuary of Isis/Pompeji: Moormann 2011, 149–162; Blanc *et al.* 2000, 257–268.

<sup>19</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 140 f.; 154 f.; 164.

<sup>20</sup> See Mielsch 2001, 21; Ling 1991, 12; Bruno 1969.

<sup>21</sup> On the luxury of stone in *Carnuntum*: Ertel 1991, 257. Cf. the variation of stuccoed and painted marble imitation in the sanctuary of Isis at Pompeji: Moormann 2011, 149–162 esp. 151 f. and fig. 75–77; De Caro 1997, 340; De Caro 1992, 9; Kleibl 2009, 278–281. 284–286 with fig. 29.2–9; Blanc *et al.* 2000, 257–281. 287–291. Part of the expression of the social context of Terrace House 2 of Ephesus: Cf. Falzone – Tober 2010, 633 f. with note 7, fig. 1; Tober 2010, 237 with note 4; Zimmermann 2010, 116 f. 455. 464 f.; Zimmermann – Ladstätter 2010, 137 f. A similar variation of real stone architecture and stucco cornices could be observed in Terrace House 1 at Ephesus: See Tober 2010, 250 f.

<sup>22</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 161–164.

<sup>23</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, fig. 28. Maybe the frame of a doorway or a vertical element („Lisene“) of the decoration: See Palágyi 1991, 104. 108 f. fig. 23–24; Gogräfe 1999, 107. 458–461 fig. 335, a–b.

<sup>24</sup> See Ertel 1991, cat. 7.5.1, Pl. 15. 38.

<sup>25</sup> Palágyi 2004, 275 f. with fig. 12–13; Palágyi 1991, 89–114 esp. 104; 99 fig. 11; 114 fig. 30; Baldassare *et al.* 2002, 335 f.

<sup>26</sup> See Gogräfe 1999, 107. 458–461 fig. 335, a–b.

<sup>27</sup> See Tacalite 2009, 146 f. with fig. 129. 165–166 with fig. 144; Lepone 2004, 197 fig. 12.

<sup>28</sup> See in general: Mielsch 2001, 193–196. on paintings until the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD: De Caro 1990, 269–272; Salvadori 2000/01. Northwestern provinces: Thomas 1995, 305 f.; Gogräfe 1999, 53 f.

and linear style concentrated on the main elements of fence and plants and was used to evoke the idea of a *locus amoenus* with less effort and maybe less expense. Garden paintings as part of sanctuaries exist in *Herculaneum*<sup>29</sup> as well as in *Ostia*<sup>30</sup>.

For a hypothetical connection with a building some arguments can be found. First we have the concentration of the find spots along the western wall of courtyard C. Numerous rather large fragments were found in the same context. Therefore it does not seem likely that they were transported here from far away. The big dimension of the minimum size of the original installation and the lack of fragments with edges exclude a connection with small buildings such as *aediculae*, altars or pillars in that area<sup>31</sup>. Considering the length of the walls, the type and the style of the garden painting make it possible to hypothetically reconstruct this decoration on the inner wall of courtyard C<sup>32</sup>.

The garden painting in the courtyard of the Pannonian villa at Balacapuszta is very similar to the fence of the sanctuary<sup>33</sup>. This Pannonian example is 17 m long. Like the monumental garden painting in dwelling 4 in Terrace House 2 in Ephesus it was situated in the context of private living. These illusionistic garden paintings were designed to open the walls of an architecturally closed courtyard<sup>34</sup>. At the same time the abstract garden painting provides an ideal background for the sacred monuments and ritual acts performed in the courtyard of the sanctuary<sup>35</sup>. The open courtyard evoked the impression of a sacred grove. The garden painting at the borders of this area would lead to an attractive game of reality and illusion<sup>36</sup>. The function of the open courtyard would be stressed.

Typological parallels for the decoration of the Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus can be found in Pannonia in civil and military buildings of *Aquincum* and the villa of Bálaca as well as in other regions of the Roman Empire. Very close parallels, which might prove a local or regional style, are unknown at this point. Nevertheless, the recent research on wall paintings from the civil town of *Carnuntum* advance our knowledge of wall-painting systems used in *Carnuntum*<sup>37</sup>. At this point in time the wall paintings from the Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus are the best known examples from a Roman sanctuary in *Carnuntum*<sup>38</sup>.

In the second phase (period 2.1–2.2), the sacred area of the Heliopolitan gods was decorated with common designs of Roman wall decoration. No special religious or cultic motifs can be determined, which seems to be a well-established fact in most of the temples and sanctuaries of the Northwestern Roman provinces<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, the choice of the designs seems to be specific. Although a secure connection of room and context is not possible and the allocations stay mainly hypothetical, they open perspectives for further considerations. The choice of motifs and decoration systems seems to relate to the function and use of the buildings. The designs are related to stone architecture. They play with illusionistic effects and create an overall design for the sanctuary, which is at the moment the best known wall painting context of a Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in the Roman Empire<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Moormann 2011, 66; Jashemski 1993, 276 with plan 116.

<sup>30</sup> Mitreo delle Sette Porte/Ostia IV 5, 13; Jashemski 1993, 388 fig. 468; Becatti 1953, 93–99, esp. 96, pl. 22, 1–2; Moormann 2011, 67 f.

<sup>31</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 135 f.

<sup>32</sup> See Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 162 f.

<sup>33</sup> Palágyi 2004, 274.

<sup>34</sup> See Ephesus Phase III (middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century): Zimmermann 2005, 112, 121; pl. 85, 1–5; Zimmermann 2007, 269; Zimmermann – Ladstätter 2010, 131 f.

<sup>35</sup> In Courtyard C altars, pedestals and monuments of different size could have been arranged. This is evident by the research of stone monuments from this area: Gassner *et al.* in print a, esp. chapter 5. The connection between nature and sanctuaries is well known from Augustan sacral-idyllic landscapes, where nature „gleichsam als Mittlerbereich zwischen der Welt des Menschen und der Welt des Göttlichen fungiert“; see Hinterhöller, 2007, 128 f., esp. 164 f. See also Darling 1979, esp. 310–326; Mielsch 2001, 179–183.

<sup>36</sup> Gardens as parts of sanctuaries: Luschin 2010, 56–59, 142–232.

<sup>37</sup> See Behling in this volume; Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 150 footnote 224.

<sup>38</sup> See Vettors 2000, 63–66; Gassner *et al.* 2011b, 150 footnote 225.

<sup>39</sup> See Moormann 2011, 87–110 esp. 109 f.

<sup>40</sup> Just a few fragments of wall paintings are known from the Sanctuary of *Iuppiter Heliopolitanus* at Rome: See Moormann 2011, 184 f.

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## Abbildungen

Abb. 1: Decoration 12/1, abstract reconstruction of white painted and stuccoed scrolls

Abb. 2: Decoration 12/3, reconstruction of a simple profiled stucco-frieze

Abb. 3: Decoration 9, white moulded orthostates or ashlar with yellow edges

Abb. 4: Decoration 19, reconstruction of the fence of a garden painting

Graphic designs 1–4 by B. TOBER

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