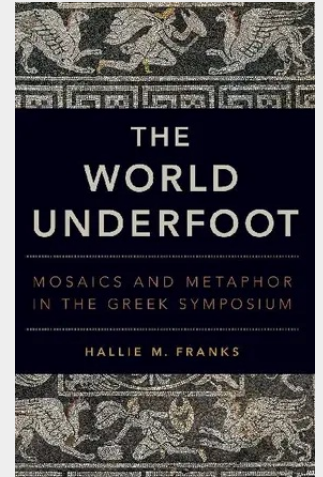


World Underfoot

Mosaics and Metaphor in the Greek Symposium

In the Greek Classical period, the symposium--the social gathering at which male citizens gathered to drink wine and engage in conversation--was held in a room called the andron. From couches set up around the perimeter, symposiasts looked inward to the room's center, which often was decorated with a pebble mosaic floor. These mosaics provided visual treats for the guests, presenting them with images of mythological scenes, exotic flora, dangerous beasts, hunting parties, or the spectre of Dionysos: the god of wine, riding in his chariot or on the back of a panther. In *The World Underfoot*, Hallie M. Franks takes as her subject these mosaics and the context of their viewing. Relying on discourses in the sociology and anthropology of space, she presents an innovative new interpretation of the mosaic imagery as an active contributor to the symposium as a metaphorical experience. Franks argues that the images on mosaic floors, combined with the ritualized circling of the wine cup and the physiological reaction to wine during the symposium, would have called to mind other images, spaces, or experiences, and in doing so, prompted drinkers to reimagine the symposium as another kind of event--a nautical voyage, a journey to a foreign land, the circling heavens or a choral dance, or the luxury of an abundant past. Such spatial metaphors helped to forge the intimate bonds of friendship that are the ideal result of the symposium and that make up the political and social fabric of the Greek polis.

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