

GISELA HELLENKEMPER SALIES: 1944 - 1999

Gisela Salies was born in Königshütte (Schlesien) on 19 February 1944, but in 1945 her family fled west before the Russian advance. She received her upper-school education from 1956 to 1963 at the Neusprachliches Gymnasium der Ursulinen in Cologne. This period included a term in 1962 at the Wirral County Grammar School for Girls. She was a natural linguist, and she acquired a fluency in English which she matched with a mastery of French, Italian and Greek. She took her first degree at the University of Cologne, where her subjects were classics and classical archaeology. For her post-graduate studies she decided to specialise in archaeology. From 1967 to 1969 she was enrolled at the University of Athens, and there her studies in classical archaeology and Aegean prehistory were supervised by S. Marinatos and N. Kontoleon. She took part in the excavations on the Kerameikos and became for a time an assistant in the photographic department of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens. This time in Greece led to a love of the country which drew her back again and again. She returned in 1969 to Cologne where, under the supervision of H. Kähler, she wrote her thesis, entitled *Untersuchungen zu den geometrischen Gliederungsschemata römischer Mosaiken*,¹ which won her a specially commended doctorate in May 1972.

The subject of her thesis might have led one to expect her to be employed in the field of Roman antiquities, but her first post was as a research assistant at the Akademie der Wissenschaften Mainz. She worked for several years under F. Matz at Marburg on the *Corpus für Minoische und Mykenische Siegel*, and after several study-periods at the museum of Heraklion, she co-edited (with N. Platon and I. Pini) a volume of the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*.² This experience led to her appointment in August 1976 as a Curator at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland, where she was to spend the rest of her career. In 1976 she was given responsibility for the editing and publication of numerous monographs and catalogues, as well as being the Editor of *Bonner Jahrbücher*, the long-established and distinguished journal. The journal celebrates the year 2000 with its 200th volume, and she oversaw the publication of more than 150 other volumes. Her achievements in building up the museum's publications and their international importance were recognised within the museum in September 1980, when publication was made the responsibility of a separate and substantial department, Wissenschaftliche Publikationen, and G. Hellenkemper Salies (who in 1979 had married Hansgerd Hellenkemper, now Director of the Römisch-Germanisches Museum Köln) became its head as Abteilungsdirektorin.

Her achievements as an editor and publisher by no means led to the setting aside of her scholarly interests. As a post-graduate student she had taken part in excavations in Athens and at Neuss, Buderich and Aldenhovener Platte; but her later international reputation was based largely on her work on Roman and Byzantine mosaics in all their aspects, not only their origins, style and iconography, but also their background, whether political, social or cultural. She returned to the subject of her dissertation in reviews and in a remarkable contribution to a conference at Mérida in 1990.³ She published extensive and authoritative papers on mosaics in publications such as *Bonner Jahrbücher*, *Germania*, *Gnomon*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, the *Antiquaries Journal*, and in the proceedings of international congresses on Roman and Byzantine art and archaeology. The history of the progress of the subject can be followed through her detailed and exacting reviews of the most substantial volumes of the various international *corpora*, as well as in a recent review-article entitled "Römischer Wohnluxus im griechischen Osten",⁴ setting out the state and problems of the subject. It was as an expert adviser that she was in 1978 and 1982 a member of the Canadian mission, led by J. Russell, to Anemurium in Turkey; that from 1983 to 1993 she was a collaborator in her husband's exploration in 8 study-tours of Cilicia, Pamphylia and Lycia for the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, carried out under the auspices of the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften; and that she made several study-visits to Ephesus, the last in 1997. In this same capacity she edited the section "Mosaiken" of the article "Kommagene-Kilikien-Isaurien" in the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*⁵ and in 1991 published a study of the connections between the mosaics of Cilicia and of Syria.⁶ She also published work on three of the great mosaics of

1 Published in *BjB* 174 (1974) 1-178.

2 Band II, 2: *Iraklion, Archäologisches Museum, Teil 2: Die Siegel der Altpalastzeit* (Berlin 1977).

3 "Irritations optiques dans l'ornementation pavimentale romaine," in *VI Colloquio int. sobre mosaico antiguo, Palencia/Mérida 1990* (Guadalajara 1994) 423-30.

4 *JRA* 10 (1997) 524-36.

5 Vol. IV (1984) 319-47.

6 "Kilikische Pavimente. Ein Aspekt künstlerischer Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kilikien und der Levante," in *De Anatolia antiqua* 1 (Paris 1991) 317-30.

Byzantine and Omayyad art: the mosaics of the Creation and of the story of Joseph at St Mark's, Venice,⁷ the mosaics of the Great Palace of Constantinople,⁸ and the mural mosaic of the Great Mosque at Damascus.⁹ Her papers on mosaics are to be collected and published in a volume to be called *Ornamenta musiva*.

Some may nevertheless feel that G. Hellenkemper Salies's greatest academic achievement was not in the field of mosaics. It came in 1990-94, when she was Director of the Tunisian-German project for the conservation and exhibition of the shipwreck of the 1st c. B.C. found off the Tunisian coast at Mahdia (on which she lectured to the Society of Antiquaries), and when she organised the research and also edited and contributed to its publication, *Das Wrack: der antike Schiffsfund von Mahdia* (2 vols., Cologne 1994). The Mahdia ship is one of the largest ancient ships ever to have been found. In four campaigns between 1908 and 1913 the cargo of 300 tons of architectural elements and art — a time capsule of the 70s B.C. — was salvaged and transferred to the Bardo Museum. In the 1980s alarming signs of corrosion appeared in the bronze objects, and so in 1987 the Institut National du Patrimoine, Tunis, committed about 500 bronzes needing conservation to the care of the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn. G. Hellenkemper Salies was put in charge of what proved to be an important diplomatic initiative between the German and Tunisian governments and a major international conference and exhibition (in 1994-95 in Bonn and Paris, followed by re-installation of the objects in the Bardo Museum in 1999), as well as a research exercise of the highest importance to scholarship. Her training in classical archaeology and her experience in Greece came to the fore. She defined the academic problems and led an international team of scholars to a new view of the interaction of Greek and Roman art and social history in the 1st c. B.C. Her work not only formed the core of remarkable cultural co-operation between the German and Tunisian governments; it also set new standards of co-operation by the multi-national team of authors, who made a very significant contribution to the history and archaeology of the period.

G. Hellenkemper Salies showed not least that such work does not always need decades but can be done with speed. Without her leadership, energy and scholarship, however, this apparently impossible project could never have been achieved. Unlike many scholars, moreover, she modestly believed that her own work and that of her colleagues were not the last words on the subject but the beginning of a long-term discussion; as part of this process she published in 1996 a group of papers by herself and 11 others which surveyed the state of opinion two years after the original volumes had appeared.¹⁰ In December of the same year, she went by invitation to give a paper on the anniversary of the Mahdia project in the public lecture theatre of the Louvre. This was her last public appearance; but she remained determined to continue her work. She offered to collaborate with a team in Paris on the second volume of *Le décor de la mosaïque romaine*, she returned to Paris in March 1997 as a guest professor to conduct a seminar, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure/Centre Henri Stern de Recherche sur la Mosaïque, on the Muses in mosaics, and she should have stayed longer to supervise the German translation of the entries for the *Décor*. Her deteriorating health prevented this; but she continued to work, at the museum or at home, on the editing of the *Bonner Jahrbücher*.

Public recognition of Gisela Hellenkemper Salies's achievements was marked by her election in 1990 as a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute and in 1996 as an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Her numerous friends in many countries, however, may feel that this chronicle of her scholarly and professional activities lacks an adequate picture of her elegance, charm and culture, and of the warm and vibrant personality that is the clue to her achievements. This is not the right place to attempt such a portrait; but it would be wrong not to mention how important was her marriage on 20 April 1979 to Hansgerd Hellenkemper. This was a true partnership which stimulated both to more than they could have achieved without the other, a benefit to their friends and acquaintances as well as to fellow-scholars who never met them. At the same time, and more importantly, the marriage was a private happiness, which stood up positively to the final test of more than five years of cancer which brought a tragic end to her life on 5 May 1999.

Kenneth S. Painter

7 *Im Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde. Die Mosaiken in der Vorhalle des Markusdoms in Venedig* (Freiburg 1986); *Nachwort zu: Die Geschichte von Josef und seinen Brüdern. Die Goldmosaiken im Markusdom von Venedig* (Freiburg 1987).

8 "Die Datierung der Mosaiken im Grossen Palast zu Konstantinopel," *BjB* 187 (1987) 273-308; "Konstantinopel, Mosaiken, (a). Von Konstantin bis Anastasios," in *Reallexikon für Byzantinische Kunst* IV (1990) 613-25; "Die Datierung der Mosaiken im Grossen Palast zu Konstantinopel," in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* IV. Trèves 1984 (Paris 1994) 185-88; "A propos des mosaïques du Grand Palais de Constantinople," in *VIIème Colloque int. de la mosaïque antique, Tunis 1994* (Tunis 1999).

9 "Die Mosaiken der Grossen Moschee von Damaskus," in *Corso di cultura* 25 (1988) 295-313.

10 "Neue Forschungen zum Schiffsfund von Mahdia," *BjB* 196 (1996) 199-370.