



Culture, identity and power in the Roman empire

Mosaic from La Chebba

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This mosaic of Neptune and the Four Seasons comes from La Chebba, in Tunisia. The figures are drawn from classical mythology. In the roundel at the centre is Neptune, god of the waters, riding on a sea-chariot. Unusually this image is combined with the four seasons - the daughters of Saturn and Ops. The figures of the four seasons and the plants around them are laid out in a geometric formation at the four corners of the mosaic. Each season is represented by standard iconography: Spring with roses, Summer with corn, Autumn with grapes and wine and Winter with olives and ducks. Along the edges of the geometric border are smaller figures of men occupied with seasonal work, and animals. All the figures are reasonably naturalistic with well modelled bodies but their shadows are rather schematic. This figured style develops into a recognisable African style of mosaics which became common throughout the southern part of the central Mediterranean.