

MYNDOS MOSAICS

*Derya ŞAHİN**

ABSTRACT

The subject of this paper are the floor mosaics of Myndos that were found in the excavations.

Three of them were uncovered in the different places. The first mosaic is just inside the west edge of the breakwater which was constructed to control the entrance of the harbor and which drew attention in the land survey of 2004. The second mosaic covering was found during the 2006 excavations on a podium in the north-west part of the city. The last mosaic is the floor pavement that was found on Asar (Tavşan-Rabbit) island in the 2009 excavations. We have noted that the motifs of the Kos-Torba-Myndos mosaics belong to the same repertoire.

Key Words: *Mosaic, Myndos, Caria, Asar Island.*

ÖZET

Myndos Mozaikleri

Makalenin konusunu Myndos Antik Kentinde bulunan taban mozaikleri oluşturmaktadır.

Sözkonusu mozaiklerden üçü kentin farklı alanlarında açığa çıkartılmıştır. İlk mozaik 2004 yılında liman girişinde kontrolü sağlamak için inşa edilmiş olan mendireğin içbatı köşesinde bulunmaktadır. İkinci mozaik 2006 kazı sezonunda

* *Uludağ Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü, 16059 Görükle, Bursa - Turkey. E-mail: dsahin25@hotmail.com*

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açılan, şehrin kuzeybatı bölümünde bulunan podyumun bir kısmını kaplamaktadır. Son mozaik döşeme ise 2009 yılında Asar (Tavşan) Adası üzerinde bulunmuştur. Kos-Torba-Myndos Mozaik motiflerinin aynı repertuara ait olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mozaik, Myndos, Karia, Asar Adası.

Myndos, one of the cities of ancient Caria, has been archaeologically excavated since 2005. The ancient city is in the town of Gümüşlük, near Bodrum, in the Muğla district. In the excavations, a city, whose archaeological potential had not been known even though the city's name was mentioned in the ancient sources, began to be explored. The subject of this paper is the floor mosaics of Myndos that were found in the excavations.

One of those mosaics appeared in the rescue excavations of Bodrum Museum. However, because there is no publication about this excavation and the mosaic has been covered for five years, our information about the mosaic cannot go further than the fact that the mosaic is a pavement of a church. Other two mosaic pavements were unearthed in 2005-2006 through the archaeological excavations. On the other hand, one other pavement is located in the garden of old Karakaya Primary School, in central Gümüşlük. The last mosaic was unearthed August 2009.

The first mosaic is just inside the west edge of the breakwater which was constructed to control the entrance of the harbour and which drew attention in the land survey of 2004 (fig.1-5) (Şahin *et al.* 2007: 559-572). The structure was partly unearthed through the excavations of 2005. Until today, only two rooms of the structure that was built in rectangular local stones has been discovered (fig.5). The floor of the front room, in its initial stage, was covered by fascias and one mosaic, later however, was closed by marble slabs. The floor of the inner room that extends in north-south direction is of pressed clay. On the other hand, a wide range of marble fragments, some of which carrying crosses, was used in the entrance of the room. There are two niches in the west wall of the room. A freshwater-well was uncovered just under the south niche. The top of the well is bonded in pentagonal form by face stones. Besides the elaboration in the well top, just north of the well, uncultivated bedrock attracts attention. Due to the freshwater and cross-depicted fragments, it is thought that the place was built as a hagiasma. The mosaic pavement in the front room gives a clue about the construction date of the hagiasma. The dimensions of the mosaic floor are 350 x 150 cm. The tesserae dimensions range from 1.5 x 1.5 to 2 x 1.5 cm. Yellow, white, black, and Bordeaux marbles, green stones and terracotta were used in the formation of the pavement. A border formed by ivy scrolls was used in the short margins of the mosaic, only a small part of which has remained. In the inner part of the pavement, a design that is

formed with concave squares filled by circular motives is to be found. During the excavations, numerous plaster pieces with frescos were found especially in the south-east of the fascia.



Fig. 1. Harbour Mosaic



Fig. 2. Harbour Mosaic before the Excavation



Fig. 3. Harbour Mosaic



Fig. 4. Drawing of Harbour Mosaic



Fig. 5. The Harbour Mosaici

Another mosaic, found during the excavation which was headed by the Archaeologist Aykut Özet of the Bodrum Underwater Archaeological Museum to the east of Torba village in 2000 (Özet 2008: 9-42), plays a crucial role in the evaluation of the harbour mosaic of 2005. There, the concave squares and ivy scrolls that are used in the Grand Basilica are of the same design as those used in the mosaic situated in Myndos harbour. It is dated to the late 5th or early 6th centuries.

Another mosaic that is dated to same centuries as the Torba mosaics mentioned above is situated in a synagogue in Sardis. The floor of the synagogue is almost completely covered with a mosaic pavement. The concave square design especially in the part that is numerated 14 in the atrium of the synagogue is same as the design in the Myndos harbour area (Tok 2001: 143 fig.10).

Besides that, we see a similar design on Kos island. In a house dated to the late antique period (mid-6th century), a mosaic pavement was unearthed which depicts Kos Tyche (Brouscari 1997: 68, 70-71 fig. 3, 5). In the fourth panel of this mosaic, concave squares surrounded by ivy scrolls can be found. The organic elements on the Kos mosaic date it to second half of the 5th century. However, the mosaic situated in Myndos harbour should be dated approximately one century later.

Another floor covering was found during the 2006 excavations on a podium in the northwest part of the city (fig.6-10). The cut bedrock and the architectural elements suggest that a temple was situated here (fig.1). The mosaic is situated in the north-western part of the podium and belongs to the Byzantine phase. Small rooms are set around the aisle (fig.7). We must wait for excavations to be completed to claim anything about the function of the building in the late periods. The size of the mosaic floor is 490 x 54 cm and in the pavement white, black and yellow marble tesserae, green stone tesserae and brown terracotta tesserae whose dimensions range from 1.5 x 2 cm to 2 x 2 cm is used. A small part of the border, a narrow margin designed with interlaced bands, has remained in the northern part of the mosaic. Generally, the pavement, formed with hexagons filled with squares and placed vertically and horizontally in a discrete order, is preserved in good condition. The interlaced bands that are used in the room mosaic in the temple area are just like those in the Bodrum-Torba mosaics¹.

Another mosaic pavement is situated openly in the Garden of Karakaya Primary School in the centre of Gümüşlük (fig.11-14a-b). The

¹ The researches that are done in Torba play a crucial role in the evaluation of Myndos mosaics. Here, the concave squares and ivy scrolls that are used in The Basilica are just same with the design that is used in the mosaic situated in the Myndos Harbor. See: Özet 2008, 29 fig. 43.

measurements of the mosaic, which belongs to an indeterminate building, are 13.55 x 2.89 m. It is formed by 2 x 2 cm large marble tesserae. As observed, the outer part of the mosaic is surrounded by a row of spaced squares. The design formed by octagons with four concave sides that are filled with quatrefoils reflects a workmanship of considerably good quality. However, in consideration of its situation, it is quite unkempt and open to external effects. The octagons filled with four foils shows a parallelism with the Torba mosaics (Özet 2008: 30 fig. 45-46).



Fig. 6. The Temple Mosaic



Fig. 7. The Temple Mosaic

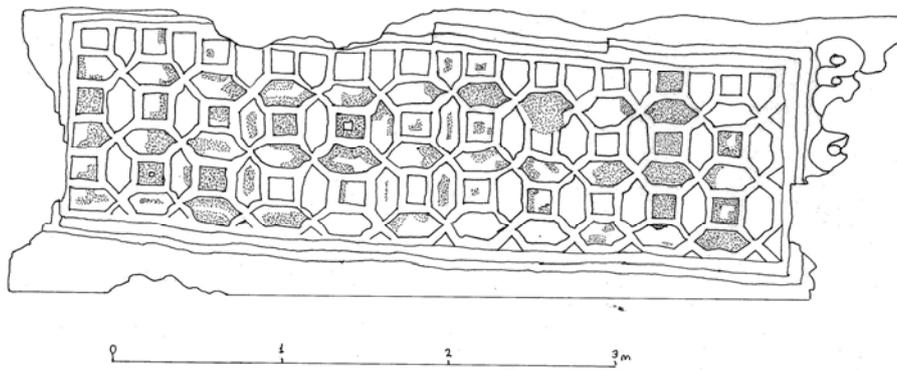


Fig. 8. Drawing of the Temple Mosaic



Fig. 9. General view from the Temple Mosaic

The last mosaic we want to introduce is the floor pavement that was found on Asar (Tavşan-Rabbit) island in the 2009 excavations (fig.15-20). The mosaic floor is in the tower placed on the top of the island, which is constructed with horasan mortar and rubble stones. The first drilling pit is 4m x 3m large 10 cm below the drilling pit; a wall lying in northeast direction was encountered. The most striking surprise in the tower

excavations was the existence of a mosaic pavement (fig.16). The mosaic floor points to the presence of a structure beneath the watchtower. The walls cutting the mosaic pavement perpendicularly indicate a second construction phase here. The pavement is affected by later construction phases and it is disrupted from place to place. In succeeding stages, the late period walls on the mosaic pavement were removed. Thereby, the mosaic pavement was completely unearthed. It is observed that the mosaic pavements that were under the late period walls are preserved better than the pavements that were in the open. In the drilling pit in the northwest corner of the area plenty of limestone and marble tesserae were found (fig.20). In the drilling which took place to establish the level in the area between the city walls and the northwest wall, a 4-line-inscription in Greek is found (fig.17).



Fig. 10. Detail of the Temple Mosaic

While in the beginning of the excavations we were hoping to find units belonging to the watchtower dated to 12th century according to the workmanship of its walls, we were faced with a structure paved with a mosaic (fig. 20). The mosaic pavement was not designed in the same period as the tower. This can best be observed through the aerial photographs. The wall that limits the mosaic floor and continues in east-west direction in the north side is intersected perpendicularly to the tower wall, but continues after the tower wall too, as can be understood from the remaining marks. Additionally, the main entrance of this structure corresponds only to the

corner of the tower of the castle wall (fig 21). Both situations indicate that the mosaic paved structure was constructed earlier than the city walls. However, in the blockage part under the mosaic, and in the parts where the mosaic was damaged, no ceramic evidence which can help us to make a judgment about the construction date could be found.

The mosaic is surrounded by interlaced bands. However, only in its long part in southerly direction there is a row of spaced squares at the outer part of the border. In the middle of the narrow part in the west side, the border is interrupted by a tabula ansata bearing an inscription. The inscription is not in good condition. In the pavement, there is a single goblet within a square frame that is situated above the tabula ansata, and adjacent to it there is a motif which is probably Solomon's knot, surrounded by a bobbin motif of squares within squares. Next to this there is an orthogonal pattern of adjacent scales that has partly remained. In some parts of the mosaic, the bobbin motives can be seen. As understood from the remaining parts, this pavement is formed by two different collateral designs, perpendicularly made up of three rows of bobbins and an orthogonal pattern of adjacent scales. In the section thought to have contained the apse, partially remaining, interlacing, band motifs can be seen. In the lower parts of the castle walls numerous mosaic pieces that are thought to have been from the same pavement were found.

Some parts of the pavement, destroyed over time, fell into the lower area, and a part of the castle wall was constructed right over them. We find similar designs with sandglass or bobbin motives that enclose the square from the inside, placed vertically or horizontally, in Kos (Brouscari 1997: 73 fig.10.)².

The mosaic pavement and its decoration, the orientation of the structure in east-west direction, and the existence of the entrance in the west, make us think that the structure is a church. A purple marble pavement and a single elevated slab are placed just in front, enabling the passage from the atrium to the main area (fig 22). As it is well known, this color is used only in the imperial palace or on the costumes of the imperial family. Its usage in this church shows that the structure is built with the support of the empire. This feature heightens the importance of the church.

² One of the inner parts of the eight squares surrounding Tyche is considerably very similar to the design of the mosaic in Tavşan Island.

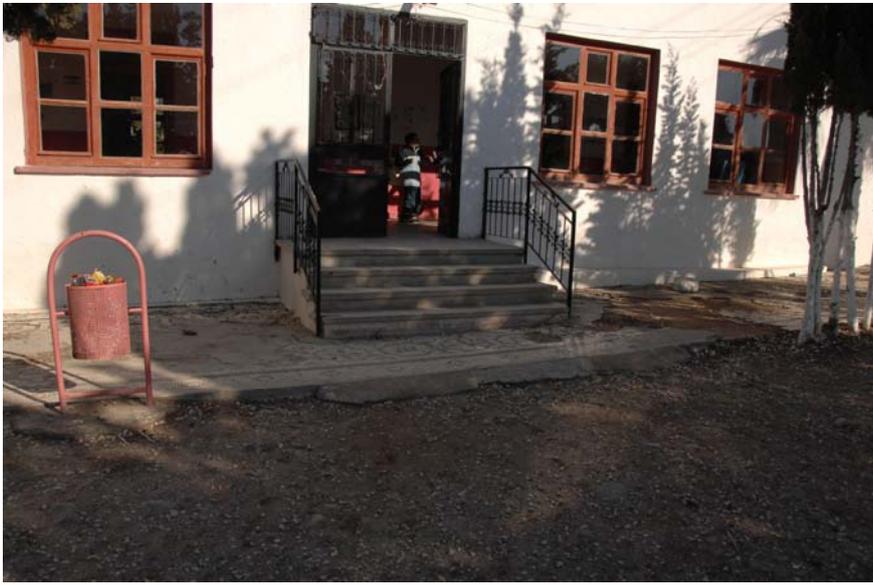


Fig. 11. The Mosaic from Karakaya Primary School



Fig. 12. The Mosaic of Karakaya Primary School



Fig. 13. Detail of the Mosaic from Karakaya Primary School

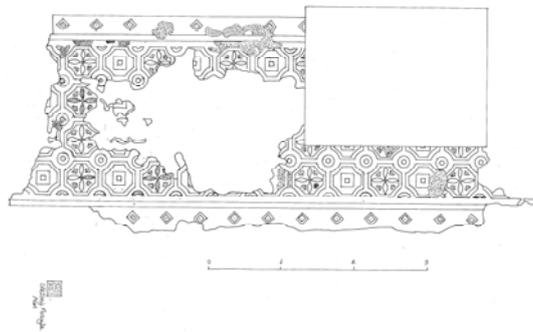


Fig. 14a. Drawing of the Mosaic from Karakaya Primary School

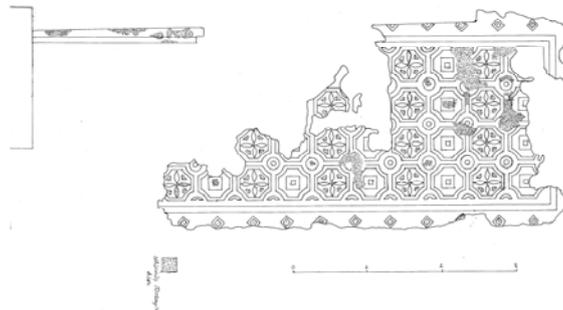


Fig. 14b. Drawing of the Mosaic from Karakaya Primary School



Fig. 15. General view of Asar Island



Fig. 16. General view of the Mosaic from Asar Island



Fig. 17. The Inscription from Asar Island



Fig. 18. Conservation Work on the Mosaic from Asar Island

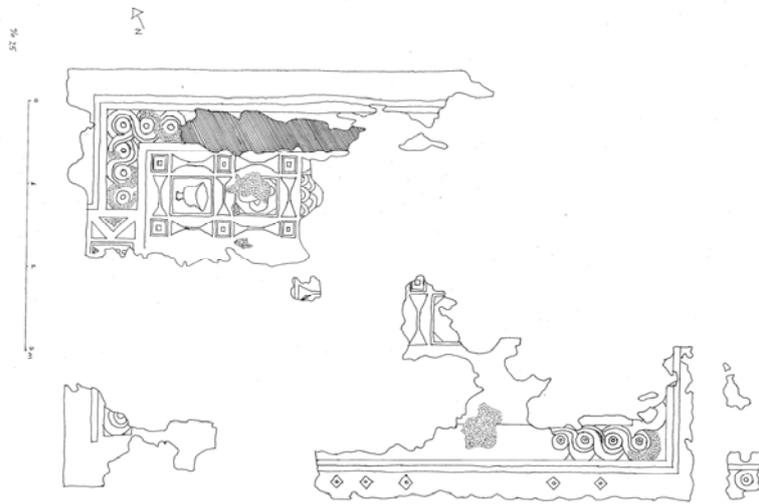


Fig. 19. Drawing of the Mosaic from Asar Island



Fig. 20. Fragments of the Mosaic from Asar Island

Assessment of Myndos Mosaics:

We are able to mention the existence of “Opus Tesellatum” pavements in Myndos in the light of the information obtained through the examples that are found. The tesserae forming the mosaic are made from local koyunbaba stones, colorful marbles and terracotta. It is observed that the measures of tesserae range from 1.5 cm and 2 cm almost in all pavements. On the mosaics, mostly black, white, yellow, blue, brown, green and cream colors are used. Generally, geometrical forms are used in the designs of the pavements. Only in the mosaic in the Harbor area, an ivy scroll border different from the rest is present.

The interlaced bands that are used in Myndos pavements³ also appear in the Bodrum-Torba mosaics too⁴. And also the octagons filled with four foils that are placed in the school garden show a parallelism with the Torba mosaics, too (Özet 2008: 30 fig. 45-46).

We find similar designs in Kos, such as the sandglass or bobbin motives that enclose the square from the inside and which are placed vertically or horizontally on Tavşan Island (Brouscari 1997: 73 fig.10)⁵. In both designs, bobbin motives enclosing the square from the inside that are placed vertically and horizontally and among which squares are placed.

It is possible to find a parallel for the concave square design surrounded with ivy scroll in Myndos Harbor in Kos (Brouscari 1997: 68, 70-71 fig. 3, 5)⁶ and Sardes (Tok 2001: 143 fig.10).

As a conclusion, we have noted that the motifs of the Kos-Torba-Myndos mosaics belong to the same repertoire. For this reason it might well have been the case that especially the Torba and Myndos mosaics were produced by same workshop in late 5th or early 6th centuries.

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³ Tavşan Island and the room mosaics in the Temple area.

⁴ The researches that are done in Torba plays a crucial role in the evaluation of Myndos mosaics. Here, the concave squares and ivy scrolls that are used in Grand Basilica are just same with the design that is used in the mosaic situated in the Myndos Harbor.

⁵ One of the inner parts of the eight squares surrounding Tyche is considerably very similar to the design of the mosaic in Tavşan Island.

⁶ The ivy scrolls surrounding the Kos Tyche and the designs formed with concave squares placed in the 4th panel are very similar to the Myndos mosaic in the Harbor.

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