

BODRUM-TORBA MONASTERY MOSAICS

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Bodrum ilçesine bağlı Torba köyünde 2000 yılında yapılan kazılar sırasında Geç Roma Çağına tarihlenen taşınır ve taşınmaz eserler ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Tapınak-Şapel, Rahipler evi, Büyük Kilise, Hamam ve Sarnıç gibi taşınmaz eserler içinde yapılan kazı çalışmalarında, tahrip edilmiş alanlar dışında kaliteli mozaiklerle döşenmiş tabanlara rastlanmıştır. Mozaikler genel olarak MS. V-VII yüzyıllara tarihlenen motifler içermektedir. Tessera büyüklükleri ve sayıları da bu yüzyılların özelliklerini taşımaktadır. Özel sektör elindeki bu külliye ne yazık ki korunamamakta ve her geçen gün biraz daha tahrip olmaktadır.

Keywords: Bodrum, Torba, chapel, basilica, monk house, cistern, bath, mosaics

The village of Torba is located in the North-east of the Bodrum Peninsula, and the complex of the Early Byzantine structure to be discussed is located at the east end of Torba. The complex of early Byzantine structures (monastery) at Torba consists of a small harbour with the breakwater, a small temple and mausoleum (later chapel), Monk house, which had more than one storey, bath building, a large basilica and a large cistern. The walls of monk house and the basilica in particular are very poorly preserved, because of the terrible earthquake on August 8th, 1304. But all five structures have remains of mosaic floors.

Chapel-Mausoleum

Of the buildings of the torba monastery, the chapel is closest to the sea. The chapel is orientated northwest-southeast and placed North of the other monastery structures, and it is 12.81 m long, 6.88 m wide and 8.24 m high. There is a large apse at the back of this rectangular structure, and the only entrance is situated on the front side of the building, facing towards the northwest (Fig. 1). The Chapel's plan can be described as a *templum in antis*. Originally there must have been two columns between the antae walls, but neither of these is preserved. However, a large part of a marble column was found in front of the building, and it may have belonged to the chapel. The main part of the building is built of rubble and mortar, but the front side of the chapel and the two antae were originally faced with rectangular (Fig. 2), bluish ashlar of marble arranged as isodomic ashlar masonry. A large number of these blocks are still in their original position. Some marble blocks are missing. Unfortunately, most of the marble blocks from the buildings of the Torba Monastery Complex have been transformed to lime in a lime-klin situated close to the South wall of the chapel. The chapel is entered through a door about 2.45 m in width. Above the doorway there is a large lintel of marble, like an architrave with two fasciae, carrying a mutilated cornice. The cornice is quite heavily damaged. The ashlar facing is missing on the uppermost part of the wall, which is built rubble and lime mortar.

The façade of this chapel as well as its plan suggests inspiration from small temples and grave structures of more ancient times.

The roof of the chapel consists of a vault, severely damaged but still in place, and constructed of rubble and lime mortar like the rest of the building. The interior of the main room *naos* of the chapel is 8.5 m long including the apse, and 5.25 m wide. Along the South side of the room there is podium, measures 3.60 m length, 1.75 m width and 1.75 m height and is evidently not part of original layout, as it rests on the mosaic floor of the main room. There is coarse white mosaic on top of the podium.

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The height of the apse is 5.88 m on the outside including the roof, while the inside is 4 m high and 4 m wide (Fig. 3). The apse has a crypt with a centrally placed door leading to the main room. The floor of the crypt is below of the main room of the chapel and is reached by two marble steps. The floor of apse is 1.75 m above the floor of the chapel and it has some remains of a mosaic of rather coarse technique.

Most of the mosaic floor of the chapel is destroyed, and in the southernmost part of the room it is hidden under the great podium constructed here at some unknown period. However, part of the outer borders has been preserved (Fig. 4). The mosaic is surrounded by a band consisting of a white tesserae decorated with stepped-square shaped rosettes and limited by a dark line. After the row of the black coloured line, there are side by side isosceles triangles on the white tesserae. Inside of this follows a border decorated with vine tendrils. The tendrils come out of cantharoi depicted in the corners of the room (Fig. 5), and there are bunches of grapes, ivy leaves and vine tendrils. Inside of this band there are Orthogonal patterns of spaced swastika-meanders with single returns (Fig. 6). Colours are red, black, yellow and white. There are 107-112 tesserae in dm^2 . The architectural character of the building and the mosaic floors inside show that the secondary usage should be dated to the late-antique period (The end of the 4th - 5th centuries AD).

- Ruggieri, Giordano, Záh 1997: 119-161
- Ruggieri 1997
- Balmelle 1985: 39 Pl.10c, 77 Pl.35d

Monk House or Bishops house

The Monk House structure is 22.26 m long, 16.42 m wide. The building was originally a two storey rectangular structure, placed in a northeast-southwest direction, with one long side facing the sea and the harbour in front of it. The northwest wall of this structure is almost 20 m long and 3.4 m high, and it has a large window-opening in the middle. It could be determined that there are 13 rooms in the lower storey. The Second storey's pavement, with black and white coarse mosaic, was demolished by the great earthquake on August 8th, 1304. Judging from the mosaics and the coins found in the building, it seems that The Monk House or Bishop's House was most regularly in use from the end of the 4th century AD to the 6th century AD (Fig. 7).

Room XII is located at the south-west corner of the Monk House. There is fountain in the eastern corner of the room, along the South wall where there are some remains of a polychrome mosaic floor (Fig. 8). A large olive tree has destroyed a large part of the mosaic. The decorations of the mosaic are an orthogonal pattern of interlaced adjacent scales with polychrome tesserae¹ (Fig. 9).

Colours of tesserae are blue, black, red, yellow and white. There are 102-106 tesserae in dm^2 . Similar mosaic floors have been found in Halikarnassos, Iasos, Cos², and Xanthos³.⁴

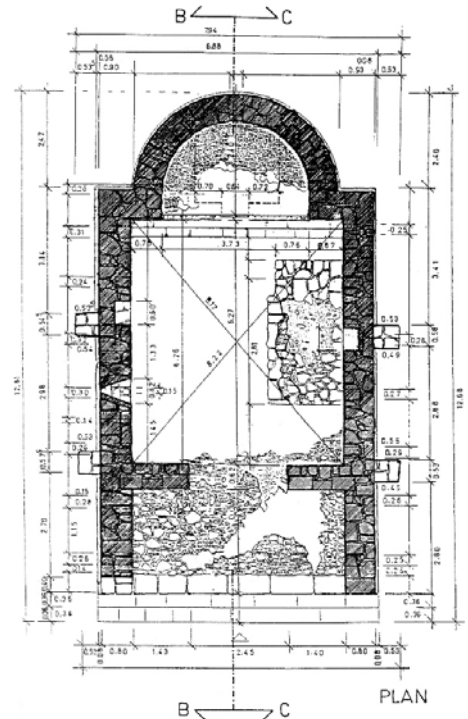


Figure 1
The Plan of the Mausoleum

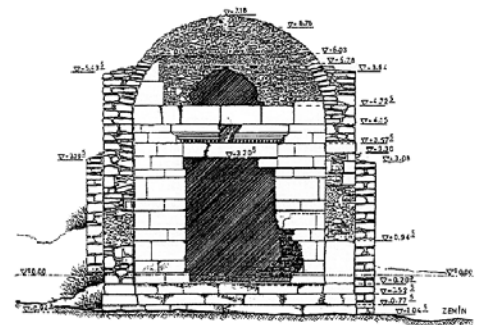


Figure 2
The Mausoleum. Front.

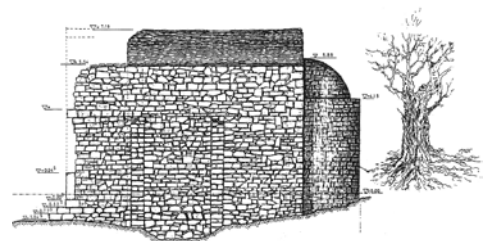


Figure 3
The Mausoleum. South Side.

1 *Décor* 1985: 215-217.

2 Brouscari 1997: fig. 3.

3 Raynaud 2009: fig. 24, 121.

4 De Matteis 1997: fig. 7.



Figure 4
The Mausoleum. The Mosaic floor.
(Photo.P.Pedersen)

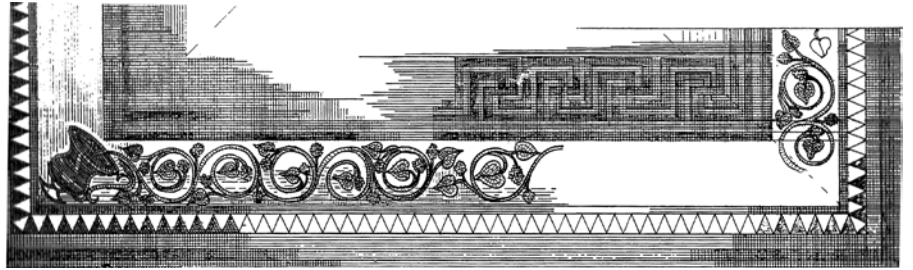


Figure 6
The Mausoleum.
Drawing of the outer border.

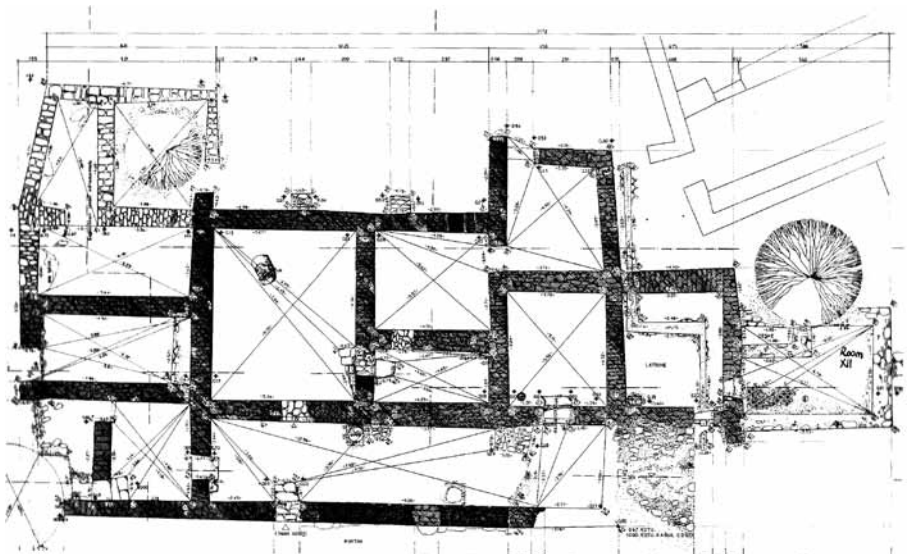


Figure 7
Plan of the Monk's House.



Figure 5
The Mausoleum.
Corner of the outer border of the mosaic.
(Photo.P.Pedersen)



Figure 8
The Monk's House. Mosaic in Fountain.

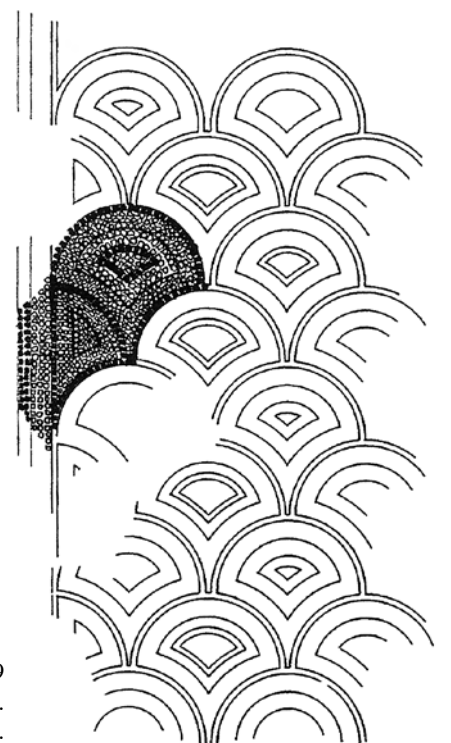


Figure 9
The Monk's House.
Drawing of the Mosaic of fountain.

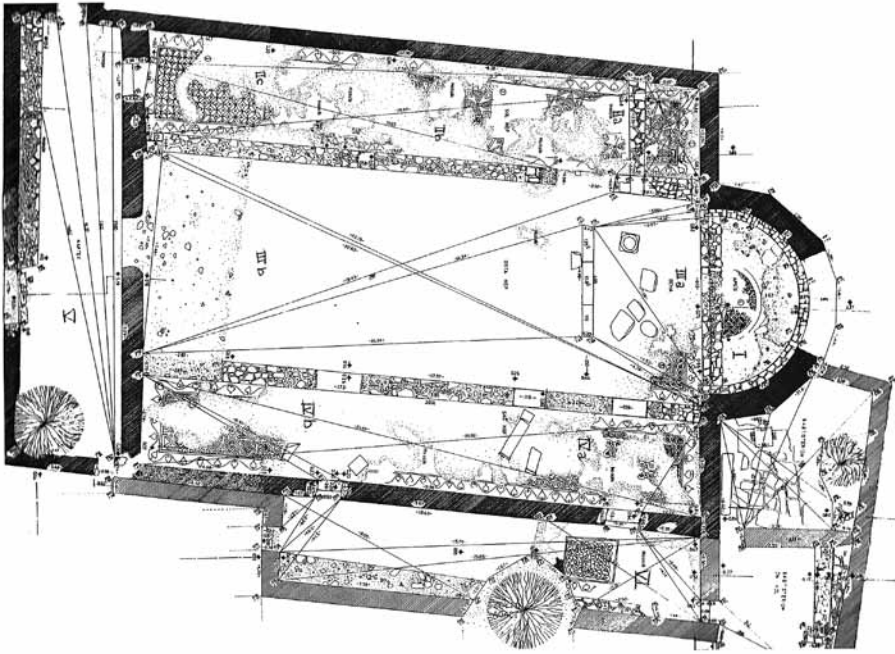


Figure 10
The Basilica. Plan.

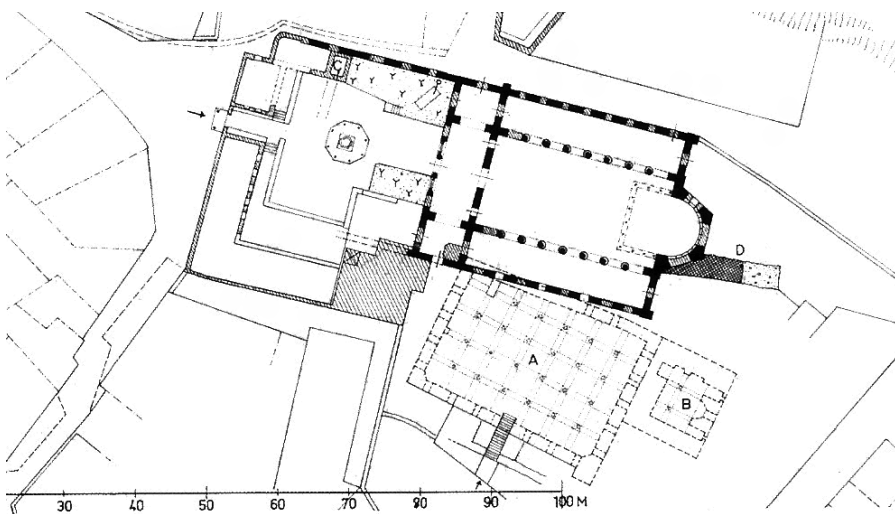


Figure 11
Imrahor Mosque from Istanbul. Plan.

Large Basilica

The Basilica had to fit into the available space between the rocky hill, the Monk House and the baths. Because of that, the plan of the church is not a quadrangle, but more like a parallelogram. The church together with apse is 34.94 m long and 22.06 m wide (Fig. 10).

In contrast to the church, the apse has quite a regular plan with a polygonal exterior and a semicircular interior. There is a large window in the middle of the apse, and a bench runs along the inside of the wall, forming *synthronon*.

The plan of the church shows that it belongs to the early basilica type of Byzantine churches. A parallel of this is the Imrahor Mosque, a three-aisled church which is one of the earliest churches in İstanbul (Fig. 11). This church was founded in 463 AD as the Basilica of Ioannes Prodromos in Samatya. It is one of the most characteristic examples of the early basilica type, having an apse with a



Figure 12
The Basilica. Mosaic of the Apse No. I.

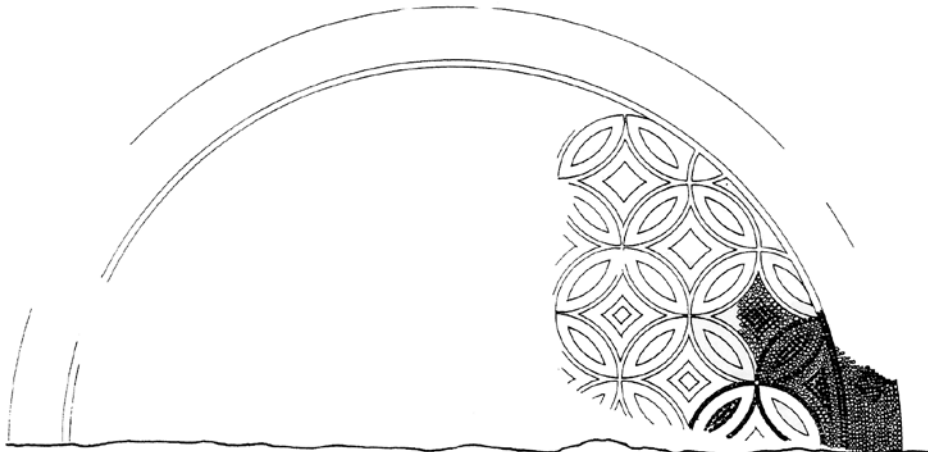


Figure 13
The Basilica. Drawing of the Mosaic.

polygonal exterior and a semicircular interior and a large central nave, separated from narrow side aisles by rows of columns⁵.

The floor of the church was originally completely covered with mosaics, but they are not well preserved. The earthquake destroyed most of mosaic floors, especially the central nave mosaic floors which are completely destroyed.

The Apse: (Number I)

The floor of the apse is decorated with an *opus tessellatum* mosaic (Fig. 12) with geometric motives consisting of orthogonal pattern of intersecting circles, forming spindles and included spindles and concave squares⁶. A black border encircles the central field and outside of this follows a broad band of white tesserae with a few scattered stepped crosses⁷ (Fig. 13).

In each of three, Central nave and two aisles, the floor is surrounded by a broad border with a decoration of ivy leaves and tendrils⁸ (Fig. 14).

⁵ Kuban 1996.

⁶ *Décor* 1985:237 c, g, 239 f.

⁷ *Décor* 1985: p. 37.

⁸ *Décor* 1985: 64 d.



Figure 14
The Basilica. Drawing of the Ivy-leaves and tendrils.

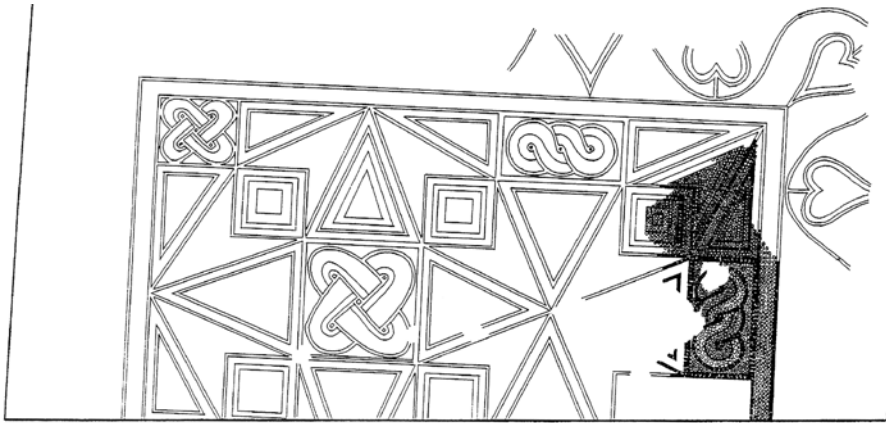


Figure 15
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from the east of the northern aisle.



Figure 16
The Basilica. The western side of the northern aisle No.II c.

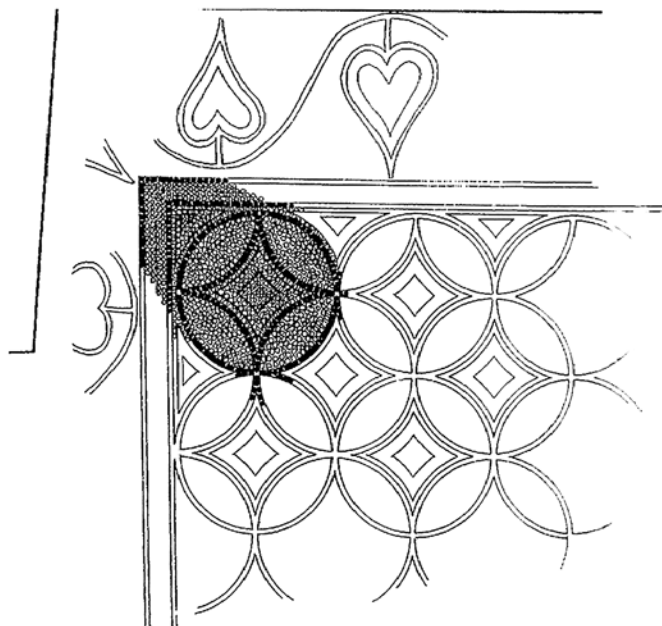


Figure 17
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from the west of the northern aisle.

The Mosaic shape is a semicircle with 3 m diameter. There are 90-97 tesserae in dm². The Consolidation of the mosaic was made at 2006 and covered with geotextile. Similar mosaic floors have been found in Cos⁹ and Xanthos¹⁰. The Best plan for the preservation of the mosaic will be to build a roof.

The Northern Aisle: (Number II)

In the northern aisle the *opus tessellatum* mosaic inside the band of ivy leaves had at least two large mosaics panels with different motives. The eastern panel (Number IIa) is no less than about 15 m in length and has a decoration consisting of triangles as Maltese crosses and small squares with a motive of intertwined ovals. The motive can also be read as squares and triangles inside an octagonal shaped frame. In the middle of the octagon there are solomon knot¹¹, at the border of octagon there are guilloche knot motives (Fig. 15). Similar mosaics are found in Xanthos¹², Cos¹³, Halicarnassos¹⁴, Iasos¹⁵. At the end of the eastern panel (Number IIb), around the middle of this aisle, there is a small panel with broken palmet motive or lyre knot. This motive too has a parallel in the basilica at Iasos, which is dated to the 5th – 6th centuries AD. Both mosaics are insitu and measurements are 4.10 m x 13.51 m. Tesserae are limestone and marble, and there are 95-100 tesserae in dm². Colours are red, yellow, black and white. There is much damage on the mosaic. Consolidation was made in 2006 and covered with geotextile.

The western panel in the northern aisle (Number IIc) is about 4 m in length and quite well-preserved (Fig. 16). It has a *opus tessellatum* mosaic, which has a simple decoration of intersecting circles forming spindles and included spindles and concave squares Fig. 17)¹⁶. This mosaic has parallels in Cos¹⁷, Xanthos¹⁸ and Halikarnassos¹⁹.

Central Nave: (Number III)

In the nave of the basilica at Torba almost all of the *opus tessellatum* mosaics are destroyed except for a small piece in the South-eastern corner in front of the apse (Number IIIa). There are slight remains of the central field of decoration, showing that it was of a geometric character. This field is surrounded by a coloured pair of undulating symmetrically shaded bands forming circles with eyelets²⁰, and outside of this by a band of ivy and tendrils which are similar to those in the aisles²¹, except that the interior of the ivy leaves in the nave is red. In the middle of this mosaics there can be seen some triangles and irregular quadrangles (Fig. 18-19).

9 Brouscari 1997: fig. 5.

10 Raynaud 2009: figs. 25, 32.

11 *Décor* 1985: p. 42.

12 Raynaud 2009: fig. 32.

13 Brouscari 1997: fig. 5.

14 Poulsen 1994: fig. 7.

15 Berti 1987: fig. 13.

16 *Décor* 1985: 237 c, g, 239 f.

17 Brouscari 1997: fig. 5.

18 Raynaud 2009: fig. 25, 32.

19 Poulsen 1994: fig. 7.

20 *Décor* 1985: 68 d.

21 *Décor* 1985: 64 d.



Figure 18
The Basilica. The east of the central nave.

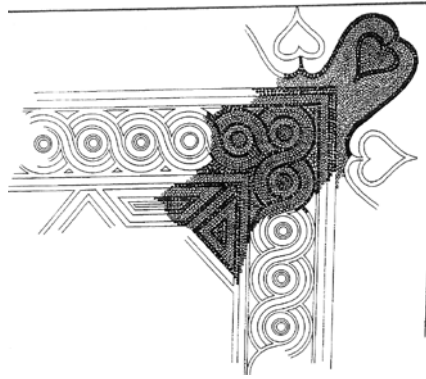


Figure 19
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from
the east of the central nave No. IIIa.



Figure 20
The Basilica. The east of the southern aisle
No. IV a.

Mosaics of the middle and west part of the nave (Number IIIb) are destroyed in earthquake in 1304. Some mortar traces of the mosaics can be seen in this part of the nave.

Southern Aisle: (Number IV)

The southern aisle has at least two long *opus tessellatum* mosaic panels inside the border of ivy and tendrils²², but they differ in length from those in the northern aisle. There are many areas with remains of destroyed mosaics spread over the southern aisle. The eastern part of the aisle (Number IVa) has a composition of orthogonal pattern of adjacent irregular octagons with four concave sides forming circles²³, while a guilloche and the usual ivy and tendrils surround the central field (Fig. 20-21). The Inside contour of the ivy tendrils are red. The measurements of this panel are 3.60 m x 3.30 m. There are 95-100 tesserae in dm². Colours are yellow, red, white, gray and black. This pattern is very common for the mosaic field, visible in Anatolia at Miletos²⁴, at Anemurium²⁵, at Iasos²⁶, at Küçük Tavşan Adası²⁷ and Xanthos²⁸.

In the western part of the South aisle (Number IVb) there is another motive, which may be described as interconnected crosses inscribed in circles or as an hour-glass motive leaving rhombic, concentric squares in between (Fig. 22). There are octagons, which have four opposite smooth edges, and four opposite concave edges, and there are red and yellow concentric squares in the middle of the octagons (Fig. 23). There are interconnected circles on the concave edge of the octagons.²⁹ The measurements of this panel are 4.79 m x 2.40 m. There are 95-100 tesserae in dm². Colours are yellow, red white, gray and black.

The west end of the church in narthex, there are white coarse mosaics (Number V) in very bad condition. Measurements are 3.90 m x 16.90 m.

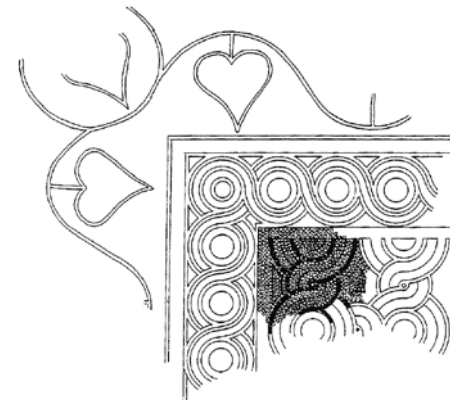


Figure 21
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from
the east of the southern aisle.



Figure 22
The Basilica. The west-side of the southern
aisle No. IV b.

22 *Décor* 1985: 64 d.

23 *Décor* 1985: 404 c.

24 Müler - Wiener 1977-78: pl. 33-2.

25 Campbell 1998: pl. 108.

26 Levi 1966: fig. 74.

27 Andaloro 2005: fig. 4.

28 Raynaud 2009: fig. 70.

29 *Décor* 1985: 168 a, c.

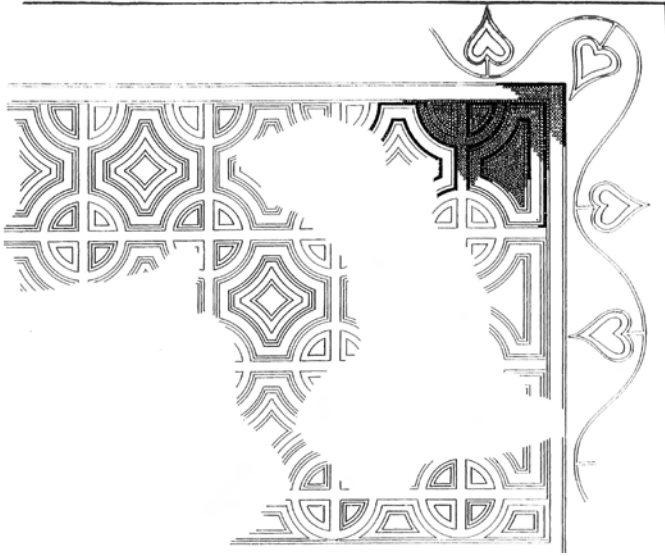


Figure 23
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from the west of the southern aisle.



Figure 24
The Basilica. The polychrome mosaic in the long room along the South of the southern aisle No.VI.

South Room: (Number VI)

The long room on the South-west side of the church has a plain white mosaic floor, except for a panel with polychrome mosaic surrounded by a border with ivy and tendril (Fig. 24). Polychrome orthogonal pattern of circles in asymmetrically shaded bands interlooped tangentially, forming irregular octagons, squares, and circles (Fig. 25). Colours are yellow, black, white, brown and blue.³⁰ This is a very common pattern in Anatolia; Anemurium³¹, Iasos³², Aphrodisias³³. This pattern is very typical of Early Byzantine Period on Cos, There are many examples. Church of St John³⁴, Baptistery of St. John³⁵, Xanthos³⁶.

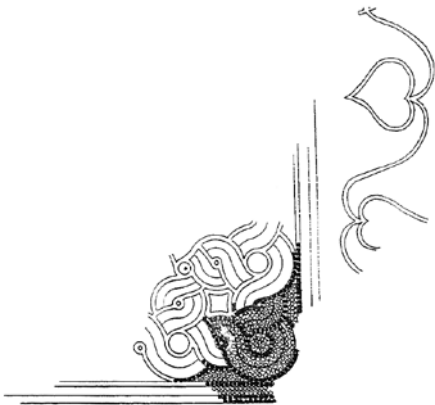


Figure 25
The Basilica. Drawing of the mosaic from the South long room.

Baths:

The building consists of a range of rooms placed back to back and oriented southeast – northwest, with a narrow rectangular plan. The total length is 33.16 m and width is 8.41 m . Baths have *palaestra*, *apodyterium*, *tepidarium*, *caldarium*, *praefurnium*, *figidarium*, *piscina* sections. A separate room was erected against the North-eastern corner of the baths. This room has a well preserved mosaic floor, and could perhaps be the court of baths, the *palaestra* (Fig. 26). The mosaic floor, which is made of coloured tesserae, was found in a very good condition. The composition consists of a central circular motive inscribed in a square frame. The very centre is like an emblema with a geometrical decoration.

30 *Décor* 1985: 235 a.

31 Campbell 1998: Pl. 108.

32 Levi 1966: fig. 74.

33 Campbell 1991: fig. 84, 88.

34 Parrish 2001: fig. 3.

35 Di Matteis 2004: Pl. XXVIII-3.

36 Raynaud 2009: fig. 106.



Figure 26
The Baths. Mosaic floor in the so-called
palaestra.



Figure 27
The Baths. Detail of the palaestra
mosaic floor showing a corner with tendrils
issuing from the cantharos.

The medallion in the centre contains an inscribed square with lateral loops³⁷. This medallion is surrounded by eight smaller medallions, which are interlaced with a two stranded, asymmetrically shaded simple guilloche, on a dark ground, and band of superposed chevrons, forming zigzag pattern. Each contains simple geometrical or floral ornaments. In each of the four triangular fields between the central circular motive and the square frame there is a crater, out of which tendrils of vine or ivy grow (Fig. 27). The square surrounding the central circle motive consists of a two stranded twist border, some black bands, and a border with a floral pattern consisting of interescting circles, forming saltiers of quasi-tangent solid spindels and concave square. Colours are yellow, brown, red, blue

³⁷ *Décor* 1985: 39.

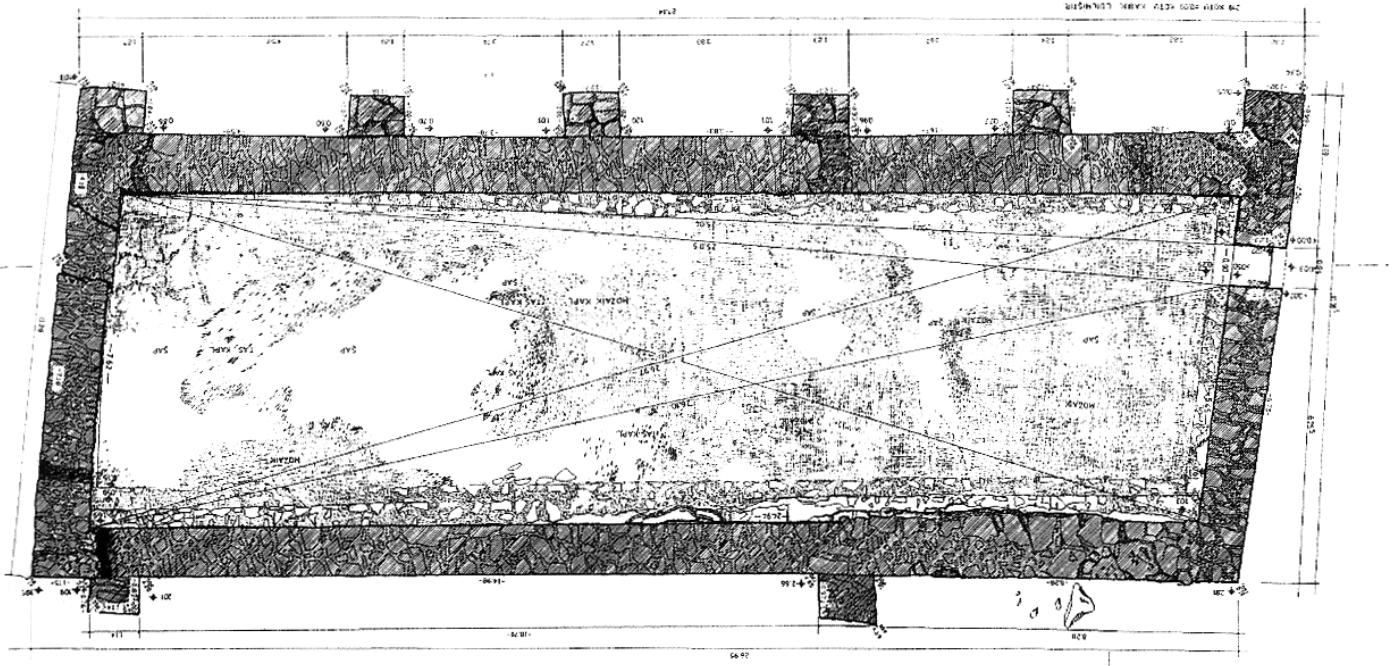


Figure 28
The Cistern. Plan.

and black³⁸. According to the finds and mosaics in building, it seems that The Roman Bath should be dated to 5th century AD. Similar mosaics are found at Halikarnassos.³⁹

Cistern

An oblong, trapezoid building, is situated on the sloping, rocky area South of the bath and basilica (Fig. 28). It is oriented northeast-southwest, and its interior measures ca. 25 m x 7.62 m. The best preserved part of the wall is the central part of the long North-western wall, which reaches a total height on the outside of about 4.62 m. The walls of structure are more than 1m thick, and the building probably either has no roof, or the roof was of wooden construction. The floor was renewed at different periods, mosaic floors can be seen in few layers, and was finally covered with mosaic made with large plain tesserae. Although the mosaic is of a very coarse character, it is still quite surprising that the bottom of a simple water cistern should have been furnished with a mosaic. The explanation of the mosaic floor may be to make a strong bottom for cistern.

Conclusion

Mosaics, which are reserved by the structures forming the Monastery which is dated to the Early-Byzantine Period in Torba Village in Bodrum, are produced in 5th - 6th centuries, beginning with late 4th century AD and early 5th centuries. It is a thought-provoking fact that these mosaics are products of the same workshop, which also produced other similar mosaics at Bodrum Peninsula and close islands, regarding the similarities of both motifs and details.

38 *Décor* 1985: 238 b, c.

39 Poulsen 1994: p. 115-133; Poulsen 1997: 9-23 fig.10.

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