

The Mosaics of Roman House in Antandros

Antandros'ta Bulunan Roma Evi Mozaikleri

Yasemin POLAT – Seçil ÇOKOĞULLU*

(Received 22 March 2017 accepted after revision 05 July 2017)

Abstract

In this study, it is presented that the mosaic pavements of the Roman House from Antandros. Portico and the three rooms opening to portico is uncovered. However just portico and the biggest room has mosaic pavements.

The pavements are decorated with geometric motifs which are commonly used. Portico is decorated with the mosaic floor is composed of six panels with geometrical design surrounded by this guilloche frame. Whereas the geometric motifs are only on the main panel of the biggest room mosaic which is thought that it must have been used as triclinium, the bordur is designed by floral and figurative motifs. This geometric design of main panel of triclinium is similar to the villa (called Yamaç Ev) which was found in Antandros.

Epecially, the coins were found, on the basement of triclinium, portico and room 2, are of importance on dating the house and its findings. These coins are dated to Valerius Licinianus Licinus (317-320 AD) and Flavius Honorius (395-401 AD). Therefore this Roman house and the mosaics can be dated to the 4th century AD.

Keywords: Roman house, opus tessellatum, geometric motifs, struggle with snake, 4th century AD.

Öz

Çalışmanın konusunu, Antandros'ta bulunan ve "Roma Evi" olarak adlandırılan yapının portico ile triclinium mozaik tabanları oluşturmaktadır.

Portico mozaiği basit giyüş bandıyla çevrili, her birinde farklı geometrik motiflerin yer aldığı altı panelden oluşur. Bu motiflerin genel olarak yaygın kullanıma sahip olduğu söylenebilir. Diğer mekan mozaığının (triclinium) bordürü floral ve figüratif bezemeye sahiptir. Ana panoda kullanılmış olan geometrik desen ise Antandros'ta daha önce bulunmuş "Yamaç Ev" olarak adlandırılan villanın mozaikleri ile benzerlik taşımaktadır.

Özellikle, triclinium, portico ve 2. odanın tabanlarında ele geçen Valerius Licinianus Licinus (MS 317-320) ve Flavius Honorius (MS 395-401) sikkeleri, incelenen mozaiklerin tarihlendirilmesinde önemli rol oynamaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu Roma Evi ve buluntuları MS 4. yüzyıla tarihlenebilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Roma Evi, opus tessellatum, geometrik motifler, yılanla mücadele, MS 4. yüzyıl.

Antandros is situated in the ancient Troas region, the modern day Altınoluk town of Edremit district, Balıkesir province in Turkey. The ancient city is located on the south slopes of the Ida Mountain where the mythological story of the Judgment of Paris, known as the cause of the Trojan War, took place.

Systematic excavations in Antandros have begun in 2001 in light of the results of the survey carried out in 2000. The excavations in Antandros, which have been uninterruptedly going on since 2001, focus on four main

* Yasemin Polat, Ege University, Department of Classical Archaeology, İzmir, Türkiye. E-mail: yaseminpolat2002@yahoo.com

Seçil Çokoğullu, Harran University, Department of Archaeology, Osmanbey-Şanlıurfa, Türkiye. E-mail: secilcokogullu@gmail.com



sectors: the Roman Villa¹, the Necropolis², the City Wall³ and the Settlement drillings⁴.

The structure where the mosaics in subject were discovered was unearthed during the excavations at the city wall. A drilling sized 1.5 x 4 m. was made about 10 m. south of the city wall, which is erected with ashlar with bossage on the interior and exterior surfaces, in order to understand the destruction on the south end of the wall and to track its course. A mosaic pavement was discovered right under the soil surface of this area (Fig. 1). Consequently, the work on the wall was paused to give priority to the unearthing of the structure with the mosaic pavement (Polat et al. 2015: 143-145 resim 10).

The works revealed a 1.73 cm. wide corridor running from east to west covered with a mosaic pavement. The east end of the nearly 8 m. long corridor is in good condition whereas the west end was destroyed by agricultural activities (Fig. 2).

Figure 1
General view and plan
of Roman House:
a) Room 1, b) Room 2,
c) Room 3, d) Room 4,
e) Room 5, f) Room 6?
g) Portico.

¹ The Roman Terrace Villa named in Turkish “Yamaç Ev” with a total of 19 unearthed living spaces was evidently built in the late 3rd - early 4th century AD. The Roman Villa is situated on the terraces on the southwest slopes of the Kaletasi Hill and is one of the most remarkable parts of Antandros.

The floors of the villa are covered with mosaics and opus sectile marbles and its walls are decorated with frescoes while it has a covered area of nearly 1100 m² (one thousand one hundred square meters). The villa has its own toilet and a rather large bath complex. It was ascertained that the villa, which has a developed draining and water supply system, was used into the 6-7th centuries AD with some modifications. A bulletin on the mosaics of the Villa named *Floor Mosaics in the Roman Villa from Antandros* was presented by Seçil Çokoğullu Üney at the XII. Colloquium of the International Association for the Study of Ancient Mosaics held in Venice. Therefore, the mosaics of this Villa will not be included in the current bulletin. However, it is possible to say that there are great similarities between the mosaics of the Yamaç Ev and the mosaics of the building which is the subject of this bulletin.

² The necropolis of Antandros lies about 600 m. west of the Roman Villa and about 30 m. north of the Çanakkale motorway. It lies for at least 250 m. across the 40-50 m. wide shoreline which is bordered with a hill on the north and the sea on the south. The area was continuously used as a necropolis from the late 8th century BC until the 1st century BC.

³ The city wall is dated to the 4th century BC. A nearly 20 m. long part of the wall which is located on the west slopes of the Kaletasi Hill has been unearthed with work done so far. The wall is partly preserved up to six successive rows and was built with rectangular masonry blocks apparently indicating a Hellenistic date by their exterior bossage.

⁴ Settlement drillings: The cultural layers dating back from the Late Roman Period and as early as the 8th century BC were unearthed in the sectors named “Yol Üstü Sector” located right on the north of the Çanakkale motorway which passes over the settlement of Antandros. The uninterrupted cultural layers have moved the establishment date of Antandros to the 8th century BC in accordance with the layers of the necropolis.

Figure 2
General view of
Roman House.



The preserved part of the corridor mosaic consists of 6 separate geometric panels surrounded by a guilloche. Three spaces opening to the corridor were located on the north.

Room 1 (Triclinium)

The westernmost room is the biggest in size. The largest part of this room's west wall, which must have been the *triclinium* of the house, was destroyed by agricultural activities (Fig. 1). The entrance to the room with dimensions 6.70 x 4.00 m. was provided by a door on the southeast, whose threshold is preserved. The mosaic pavement preserved at the east side of the *triclinium*, that had a two winged door, reveals the flamboyance of the room during the ancient



Figure 3
Detail of the border of
triclinium mosaic.

times. A pink band surrounds the outmost part of the mosaic pavement and on the interior a simple blue ivy scroll with red *hederae* on white ground border the east, west and north sides. Although only a small part of the south frieze is preserved it is understood that this area consisted completely of a figurative space with various animal species (Fig. 3). Only a small part of the frieze is preserved on the east side with the depiction of a snake clinging to a plant and the rear body half of a feline. The tree is depicted in a simple way with blue, yellow and brown tesserae and has a short and thin trunk. The snake is s-shaped with a big head and a thin tail. Although it is depicted in front of the tree the real purpose must have been depicting it clinging to the tree. The outmost contour of the snake is black and the interior is made with black and dark brown tesserae. The slickness on the body was emphasized with a line of white tesserae on the underside of the body extending from the mouth to the middle of the body. The eye is formed

Figure 4
Detail of the inner border
and main panel decoration of
triclinium mosaic.



with white tesserae and black tesserae were used for the pupil. The head of the snake approaches the other animal figure which moves with its back facing the tree. The rear body and hind legs of this animal are preserved. It is depicted in a walking position marching forward. It has a thin tail with an uplifted tip. Its contours are black and its body is dark brown. The figures are positioned in the frieze in a direction that enables them to be seen by the observers in the room.

The inner border consists of an undulating interlaced band, forming circles and thorns. The band is symmetrically shaded in blue, white and red (D cor I: 118 pl. 68d).

The main panel of the *triclinium* pavement is decorated with a geometric pattern on white background. This geometric pattern is an outlined orthogonal pattern of irregular octagons intersecting and adjacent on the shorter sides, worked in blue swastika-meanders. The spaces created by the intersecting sides of the meanders are filled with irregular hexagons each in white, red, pink and blue colors placed in order (Fig. 4).

Room 2

To the east of the *triclinium*, otherwise known as Room 1, lies Room 2 with dimensions 4.00 x 3.50 m. and a compacted earthen floor. On the east side of the room this floor is paved with bricks (Fig. 2). Several in situ kitchenware pieces found on the floor induced the thought that this room was used as a cellar. This thought was supported by the discovery of a water channel formed by vertically placed floor bricks which extends across the south wall. Coarse, khorasan plaster detected in places on the east wall are suitable for use as a cellar. Numerous windowpanes found on the southwest corner of the room indicate the existence of a window on the west part of the south wall.



Figure 5
General view of the *portico*.

Room 3

Another room on the north with an entrance from the corridor is named Room 3. The room with approximate dimensions 2.10 x 4 m. has a compacted earthen floor.

Room 4-5

It is understood that on the south side of the *portico* there are three rooms accessed from the *portico* (Fig. 1). The width of the Room 4 on the east is 2.00 m. while the Room 5 is 2.5 m. wide. Both have a compacted earthen floor. These rooms are bordered by a wall on the north side. The same wall borders the *portico* on the south and extends to the west indicating that a sixth room existed at this place.

A door opening which was later closed with a wall was found at the east end of the *portico* with the mosaic pavement. This door opening, which also has a threshold, provided access to a room on the north and a door on the south which was probably the entrance door to the building.

The *portico*

This *portico* which is bordered on both sides by rooms has the best preserved tessellated floor of the house (Fig. 5). The outermost border surrounded by two bands in gray and white consists of a guilloche pattern. The loose simple guilloche is composed of two shaded strands outlined in black; one of them is shaded with red, pink and white, the other is yellow and white. The simple guilloche divides the mosaic pavement into 110 x 100 cm. square panels. Six of these panels are well preserved whereas the west panels are destroyed. Each panel contains patterns consisting of different geometric motifs and is framed by a white border. The patterns are alternately framed by square and circular borders. Floral motifs are used as filling when necessary. White, black, red, pink and yellow are the colors used as in the outermost border.

In the first panel from east to west, the pattern is placed in a white square frame (Fig. 6). The centralized pattern is an octagon containing four contiguous hexagons set around a central poised square and forming lateral squares. A black lozenge-swastika is within the central poised square with its sides extending to the medians and separating the hexagons. A central square is placed within each hexagon and is surrounded by 4 lozenges. The lozenges are alternately red-pink and black-yellow; the central squares are pink and white.

The decoration of the second panel consists of a centralized star of eight lozenges inscribed in a circle and placed in a white square border (Fig. 7). The

Figure 6
The first panel of *portico* mosaic.



Figure 7
The second panel of *portico* mosaic.



Figure 8
The third panel of *portico* mosaic.



lozenges and the circle are outlined in black. The grounds of the lozenges are alternately yellow and white. A second identical lozenge is placed within each lozenge, red in the white ones and white in the yellow ones. On the corners of the square frame are white *hederæ* with leaves (Décor II: pl. 50a; a variation of this motif), on pink ground.

The third panel consist of a centralized pattern in a pink square containing a grid of swastika-meander with double returns forming five square compartments (Décor I: 300 pl. 190e). Two of them contain pomegranates; the others comprise red and white triangles (Fig. 8).

The fourth panel contains the centralized pattern of a star of two squares inscribed in a circle and formed around a circle (Fig. 9). The pattern is placed in a square border. The edges of the squares that form the stars have white grounds with bands on their centers. One of the bands is pink in red border, the other one is yellow in black border.

The corners of the squares are tangent to the outer circle border, forming triangles with a convex side between the corners. Each of the triangles is alternately white and yellow. A two colored solomon knot motif is inscribed within a round border at the central space of the star motif. The spandrel-shaped spaces on the corners of the square border are decorated with a variation of the calyx pattern containing spindle-shaped petals on pink ground.

Panel 5 contains a centralized pattern of a star formed by four lozenges alternating with four poised squares tangent on contiguous corners (Fig. 10). The lozenges are decorated with black swastikas on a white ground. The poised squares are white and bear smaller squares in red. The squares are white but the inner ones are red. The maltese cross-like space formed in the center of the pattern is yellow with black outline.

Panel 6 has the centralized pattern of an interlooping square and curvilinear square (Décor II: 49) in a circle with an inscribed compound rosette of eight



Figure 9
The fourth panel of *portico* mosaic.



Figure 10
The fifth panel of *portico* mosaic.

Figure 11
The sixth panel of *portico* mosaic.



adjacent elements, four as inward-pointing *hederae* and four as spindle-shaped petals (Var. of *Décor* II: 66 pl. 267a.). In the center of the rosette, contrary to common use, there is no circle overlapping the petals. The spandrel-shaped spaces on the corners of the white square border are decorated with a floral motif resembling a spindle-shaped petal with volutes (Fig. 11).

Conclusion

The sections of the house which have a mosaic pavement are the *portico* and the *triclinium*. The *portico* mosaic is preserved with at least six of its panels whereas the mosaics of the *triclinium* are in pieces and preserved in limited spaces. Nevertheless the existing information is adequate for revealing the main decorative pattern of the mosaic pavement of the *triclinium*. According to this the largest part of the mosaic pavement decoration of the house had geometric patterns and figurative animal decorations were used in very limited parts.

All of the mosaic pavement was applied on white ground. The other colors used in the *portico* mosaic are black, brown, red, yellow and pink. On the *triclinium* mosaic the colors used are blue, red, brown, black and yellow.

The most important place in Antandros having mosaic pavements is the villa named Yamaç Ev. The largest part of the mosaics of Yamaç Ev also consist of geometric patterns as in the house subject to this bulletin. The figurative spaces are rather limited and their subject are once again animals. The ground is white on all the area. There is also an exact resemblance in the aspect of the used color scale.

The study of the motifs and patterns used for the mosaic decoration of the house reveals similarities with many examples however we cannot mention a one-for-one similarity, at least based on the studies done so far.

The ivy scroll forming the *triclinium* is a border pattern frequently used between the 3rd and 5th centuries from the east to the west of the Roman Empire. The border decoration of the mosaic pavement at the *apodyterium* of the baths in the aforementioned villa in Antandros also consists of an ivy scroll (Fig. 12). However, in the Antandros example the branches look more like acanthus.



Figure 12
Detail of *apodyterium* mosaic of
Yamaç Ev also in Antandros.

Although the ivy scroll bordering the *triclinium* mosaic has no equivalent in style, a border pattern of ivy scrolls is frequently used on mosaic panels with geometric patterns in Aphrodisias. An ivy scroll in the panel of the mosaic on the south room of the tetrapylon house in Aphrodisias this time is not placed on the border (Campbell 1991: pl. 59-60). In this example a lioness and a snake placed opposed to each other (in attack position) are depicted between an ivy scroll arrangement. This panel may consist an example for the elements that were used together (the ivy scroll and a snake with an animal on the south edge) in the border layout in Antandros.

Such examples with the subject of a snake opposed to an animal as in the border of the *triclinium* are not limited to Aphrodisias. An encounter between a snake and a doe (Campbell 1991: 18) is found in Cyrenaica (Campbell 1991: 18; in Apamea (Balty 1977: 143). Although this scene is being associated to Christian myths, the emphasis put on femininity, as in the tiger example from Aphrodisias, was rendered as an *attempt to protect its offsprings which are not depicted on the scene*. An apotropaic effect is suggested for these kinds of scenes based upon depictions of encounters between lions and snakes on amulets associated with names of angels. However, such a symbolic meaning is not suggested for the Aphrodisias example (Campbell 1977: 18). At this point, turning to the example from Antandros, the animal figure against the snake is not fully detectable since it is not well preserved and there is also no chance on commenting on its sex. Moreover, it is not certain that it's in struggle with the snake, as in the other examples. For this reason, it is considered that the present data are not sufficient for the iconographic evaluation of this scene.

The closest example of the undulating interlaced band forming the inner border of the *triclinium* is found on the floor of the room 2 of the villa near Nymphaion (Kemalpaşa) (Tok 2013: 89-91 picture 96). The motifs, compositions and figures used for the mosaics of this villa were compared to examples from regions near the Mediterranean coast between the 4th AD and the beginning of the 6th century AD and the villa was dated to the 5th – beginning of the 6th century AD (Tok 2013: 96-103).

The decorative pattern of the main panel of the *triclinium* (outlined orthogonal pattern of irregular octagons intersecting and adjacent on the shorter sides, worked in blue swastika-meanders) can be found on mosaics of the Roman period dated between the 2nd-4th centuries AD. The closest similar was found in Sardes. The floor mosaic of the Room A found in the gymnasium of Sardes, which according to findings continued to be in use during the 4th-6th centuries AD, is quite similar to the *triclinium* mosaic in its overall design scheme with an ivy scroll motif surrounding the outer border and a pair of undulating interlaced bands, forming circles alternating in size surrounding the inner border (Tok 1994: 33-36 picture 48). This is not the only use of the scheme in Antandros, since it is also used for the decoration of the *apodyterium* section of the bath in the Roman villa.

In the meantime, the geometric scheme with the centralized swastika finds parallels in one of the mosaic panels of the “*portico of the rivers*” in the “House of Porticoes” in Seleucia (Levi 1947: 109-110 fig. 42 pl. XCVIII). This example with red meanders and yellow hexagons with black outlines is dated around the second into the third century based on lamps found in the excavations. Another example is placed in the narthex of the basilica found in Gönen (Jobst 2011: 500, 502 abb. 48). This narthex mosaic is dated to the middle or the second half of the 5th century AD. A similar pattern is also used in Miletos in the first half of the 3rd century AD (Jobst 2011: 502). The same arrangement is found on the Panel no.1 of the Stoa mosaic dated to the second half of the 2nd century in the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens (Waywell 1979: 295 pl. 46 fig. 8).

The decoration scheme adorning the *portico* floor which is divided into panels, each containing a different geometric pattern was used for the design of *portico* mosaics during the Roman period. The Alytarchenstoa mosaic from Ephesos dating to the 4th century AD has a similar pattern in addition to the star of eight lozenges pattern used in the arrangement of the panel (Jobst 1977: abb. 49). Another similarity is the use of the ivy scroll and undulating interlaced band patterns as a border in the way that they were used in the *triclinium* of the Roman house in Antandros. A mosaic panel from Conimbriga (Portugal) is divided into panels as the example from Antandros (Bairão Oleiro 1965: fig. 2). At this point



Figure 13a-b

The coin which helps in dating the house, dates to the period of Valerius Licianus Licinius (317-320 AD).



Figure 14a-b

The coin, which helps in dating the house, dates to the period of Flavius Honorius (395-401 AD).

besides the general design, the use of variations of the star of eight lozenges motif in each panel is another similarity of this panel to the example from Antandros.

It is possible to say that the decoration elements and their variations in the mosaics of the Antandros Roman house have been widely used in the mosaic art of the Roman period. At the same time these examples date between the 2nd and 6th centuries AD providing a wide time range. Therefore, the evaluation of the finds unearthed during the excavations is important for dating of the mosaics of the Roman house of Antandros.

The coins found in the *triclinium*, the *portico* and the floor of the room 2 help in dating the house as well as the floor mosaics. The earliest of these coins dates to the time of Valerius Licinianus Licinius (317-320 AD) (RIC VII: ‘9-30 (Antiochia)) (Fig. 13 a, b) and the latest to the time of Flavius Honorius (395-401 AD) (LRBC II: 2581 (Kyzikos) 395-408 AD); RIC X: 68 (Kyzikos) 395-401 AD) (Fig. 14 a, b). Therefore it is clear that the building with the mosaics dates to the 4th century AD. This date also shows that this house was constructed about the same time as the Roman villa in Antandros.

Bibliography - Kaynaklar

- Bairrão Oleiro 1965 M. Bairrão Oleiro, “Mosaïques Romaines du Portugal”, CMGR I, 257-265.
- Balty 1977 J. Balty, Mosaïques Antiques de Syrie, Bruxelles.
- Campbell 1991 S. Campbell, The mosaics of Aphrodisias in Caria, nt., Canada, Pontifical Institute of Mediæval Studies.
- Décor I C. Balmelle – M. Blanchard Lemée – J. Christophe – J. P. Darmon – A. M. Guimier Sorbets – H. Lavagne – R. Prudhomme – H. Stern, Le Décor Géométrique De La Mosaïque Romaine I, Paris, 1985.
- Décor II C. Balmelle – M. Blanchard Lemée – J. P. Darmon – S. Gozlan – M. P. Raynaud, Le Décor Géométrique De La Mosaïque Romaine II, Paris, 2002.
- Jobst 1977 W. Jobst, Römische mosaiken aus Ephesos I. Die hanghäuser des embolus, Wien.
- Jobst 2011 W. Jobst, “Das Mosaikpaviment der frühchristlichen Basilika von Gönen/Germe in Mysien (Hellespont)”, 11. International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaic, October 16th - 20th, 2009 Bursa, 483-502.
- LRBC II R. A. G. Carson – J. P. C. Kent, Late Roman Bronze Coinage, Part II, London, 1965.
- Polat et al. 2015 G. Polat – Y. Polat – K. Yağız – S. Üney – R. Aktaş – D. Z. Arkan – A. Üney – A. Cumalıoğlu – E. Açar – E. Kıraç, “Antandros 2013 Yılı Kazıları”, 36. KST 3, 135-158.
- RIC VII P. M. Bruun, The Roman Imperial Coinage, Constantine and Licinius: A.D. 313-337, London, 1966.
- RIC X J. P. C. Kent, The Roman Imperial Coinage, The Divided Empire and The Fall of The Western Parts AD 395-491, London, 1994.
- Tok 1994 E. Tok, Sardes’deki (Sart) Geç Roma Erken Bizans Dönemi Mozaikleri, Lisans Tezi, Ege Üniversitesi, İzmir.
- Tok 2013 E. Tok, “Nymphaion (Kemalpaşa) yakınlarında Bir Roma Villasının Mozaikleri”, JMR 6, 59-105.
- Waywell 1979 S. E. Waywell, “Roman mosaics in Greece”, AJA 83-3, 293-321 pl. 45-52.