

Floor Mosaics from the “Sanctuary of the Nymphs and Aphrodite” at Kasnakovo (Haskovo Region, Bulgaria)

Kasnakovo'daki (Haskovo Bölgesi, Bulgaristan) “Nympheler ve Aphrodite Kutsal Alanı”ndan Taban Mozaikleri

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Abstract

The archaeological excavations over the last 15 years at the site known as the “Sanctuary of the Nymphs and Aphrodite” at the village of Kasnakovo (Haskovo region), led to the discovery of a new buildings, whose rooms were decorated with floor mosaics. The analysis of the results of the research on the architectural complex from the Roman period points with increasing certainty to a rich private villa of a Romanized Thracian family.

The two residential buildings were richly decorated with marble facings, frescoes and floor mosaics. The earlier Building A functioned between the mid 2nd and mid 3rd centuries. It was burned and abandoned during the first major Goth's invasion in Thrace in AD 251. Two of its rooms were heated with hypocaust. The fragments of small and relatively thin tiles found in them, made of colored marbles, allow us to assume that they originated from a destroyed floor mosaic in the opus sectile that covered their floors.

Building B has two construction periods. The first coincides in time with the functioning of Building A. The floor mosaic in Room 8 belongs to this period. It is black and white and made in opus tessellatum. After the destruction in the middle of the 3rd century, Building B was enlarged and decorated with new mosaics. Until its final abandonment around AD 324 it had a semicircular courtyard surrounded by a covered portico with a colonnade, a large central room with mosaics, living rooms, a swimming pool and a bathroom with hypocaust. The floor mosaics in Rooms 2 and 12 date from the second period of Building B. Both mosaics are made in opus tessellatum. The patterns in both rooms are geometric, with similar compositions of diamonds and squares on a white background. The colors of the two mosaics are white, blue and red. Their stylistic features and data from archaeological observations show that the mosaics date from the second half of the 3rd century.

Keywords: Roman provincial art, roman villa, mosaic pavement, geometric motifs.

Öz

Son on beş yıldır Haskovo bölgesindeki Kasnakovo köyünde yer alan “Nympheler ve Afrodit Kutsal Alanı” olarak bilinen alanda yürütülen arkeolojik kazılar, taban mozaikleriyle bezenmiş yeni yapıların ortaya çıkarılmasını sağlamıştır. Roma Dönemi'ne ait bu mimari kompleks üzerine yapılan araştırmalar, giderek artan bir kesinlikle, Romanize bir Trak aristokrat ailesine ait zengin bir kırsal villaya işaret etmektedir.

İki konut yapısı mermer kaplamalar, freskler ve taban mozaikleri ile zengin biçimde süslenmiştir. Erken evreye ait A Yapısı, İS 2. yüzyıl ortalarından 3. yüzyıl ortalarına kadar kullanılmış, İS 251'de Gotların Trakya'ya düzenlediği ilk büyük akın sırasında yanarak terk edilmiştir. Bu yapının iki odasında hipokaust ısıtma sistemi bulunmaktaydı. Renkli mermerlerden yapılmış, ince ve küçük karo parçaları, opus sectile tekniğinde döşenmiş bir taban mozaığının tahrip olmuş olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

B Yapısı iki evreden oluşmaktadır. İlk evre, A Yapısı ile eşzamanlıdır ve 8 numaralı odadaki siyah-beyaz opus tessellatum mozaik bu döneme aittir. 3. yüzyıl ortasındaki yıkımın ardından B Yapısı genişletilmiş ve yeni mozaiklerle süslenmiştir. İS 324 civarında tamamen terk edilinceye dek yapı, yarım dairesel planlı, revaklı

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ve sütun sıralı bir avlu, mozaikli büyük bir merkezî salon, yaşam alanları, bir havuz ve hipokaustlu bir hamam barındırıyordu. 2 ve 12 numaralı odalardaki taban mozaikleri B Yapısı'nın ikinci evresine aittir. Her iki mozaik de *opus tessellatum* tekniğinde yapılmıştır ve beyaz zemin üzerine elmas ve kare motifli geometrik kompozisyonlar göstermektedir. Mozaiklerin renkleri beyaz, mavi ve kırmızıdır. Stil özellikleri ve arkeolojik gözlemler, bunların 3. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına tarihlendiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Roma eyalet sanatı, Roma villası, taban mozaigi, geometrik motifler.

The archaeological site „Sanctuary of the Nymphs and Aphrodite“ at the village of Kasnakovo (Haskovo region), is located on a low hill in the Eastern Rhodope, at the foot of which flows the river Banska, a right tributary of the Maritsa River (ancient Hebros). One of the most important roads in the Roman Empire - Via Diagonalis, followed the left bank of the Maritsa River less than 10 km from the site (Fig.1) and provided direct access to the North Aegean coast for all settlements from the city territory of Augusta Traiana - one of the newly founded cities in the Roman province of Thrace in 2nd c. AD (Ivanov 2012b: 467-491 Kamisheva 2012: 29-32).

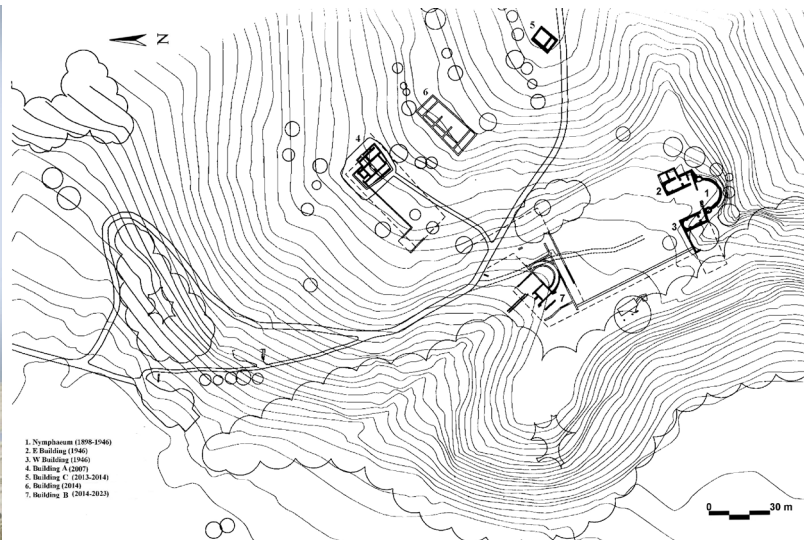
The Roman-era architectural complex covers an area of 1.5 ha and comprises buildings of various uses (Fig. 2). They are arranged on four terraces oriented longitudinally in an east-west direction. The largest, and lowest terrace, is oriented north-south. At its southern end there are karst rocks from which fresh water springs. The archaeological site near Kasnakovo has been known as the Sanctuary of the Nymphs and Aphrodite due to a Greek inscription from the 2nd century (*IGBulg.* III/2, 1714) carved on the stone arch in the retaining wall that stands above the spring. The inscription contains an explicit statement of the dedication of the fountain to the Nymphs and Aphrodite by a Romanized married couple, where the husband is of undisputed Thracian origin. The history of archaeological investigations at the site began in 1945 when the nymphaeum, the two buildings to the east and west of it, and another building interpreted as a theatre were uncovered (Venedikov 1950: 113-114 fig. 66). In the 1960s and 1970s, during excavations in connection with the restoration of the buildings around the spring, two rooms of a building with a hypocaust installation located north of the nymphaeum were partially uncovered (Aladzov 1997: 107-112).

Figure 1

Map with the location of the archaeological site at Kasnakovo.

Figure 2

Plan of the architectural complex with the buildings known to date (©Atelie 3).



After a long break, archaeological research at the site restarted in 2007. Archaeological observations, surveys, excavations and geophysical surveys which continue to this day produced considerable amounts of new data. Our

knowledge about the chronology, character, and functions of the site is much deeper (Katsarova 2018: 35-42; 2022: 141-150). Until now, archaeological excavations have been carried out in the area of five different buildings with residential, religious and hygienic purposes (Fig. 2). The finds discovered at the site suggests that the sanctuary was a private one and that it belonged to the villa of a wealthy family of Thracian origin.

During these new investigations, Building A, which had residential functions, was partially excavated on one of the terraces to the east of the nymphaeum (Katsarova 2013: 489-491; 2014: 412-415). Its architectural remains are poorly preserved due to the agricultural cultivation of the site in the 20th century. The uncovered part of the building (Fig. 3) represents less than one-third of its size as determined by geophysical surveys (Katsarova-Tonkov 2011: 360-362; 2015: 559-561). The excavated rooms are part of its eastern wing. Building A probably had two other wings, south and west, which together with the east wing enclosed a courtyard on three sides, open to the northwest towards the river valley. The east wing itself consists of two rows of chain-arranged rooms of various dimensions and functions, enclosed on the west by a portico with an Ionic colonnade (Fig. 4). According to the finds discovered within, Building A functioned between the mid-2nd and mid-3rd centuries. It was burned and abandoned during the first major Goth's invasion in Thrace in AD 250 - 251, which greatly affected Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana and their city territories.

Figure 3
The uncovered part of the Building A (©E. Mihov).

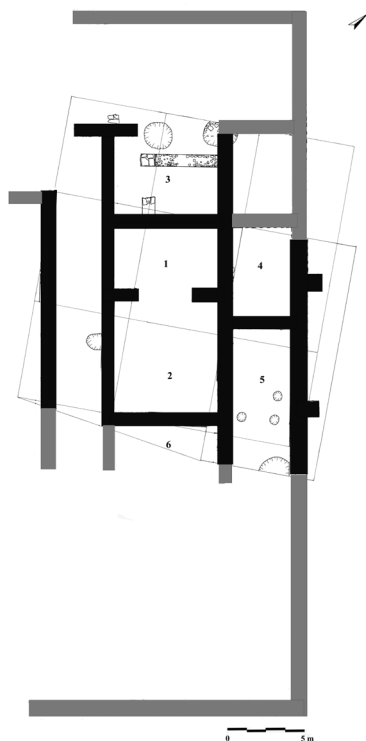


Figure 4
Plan of the east wing of Building A.



The excavated area of Building A included parts of six rooms two of which were heated by hypocaust. The walls in rooms 1 and 2 were richly decorated, with plinth of marble slabs and murals above it. The elements of the marble facing slabs, frames, cornices, fluted pilasters - were discovered in highly fragmented condition. Literally thousands of pieces of white and greyish-white marble facing were found in the relatively small area that was excavated. Among them, there are fragments of small and thin tiles made of coloured marbles (white,

grey, green, red), with quadrangular shape or rounded edges, which probably originate from a destroyed floor mosaic made in *opus sectile* (Fig. 5). The interiors of the two rooms are similar to those of some of the wealthiest houses in the Gulf of Naples that perished in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 (Barker 2021: 63-97). The decoration of Room 1 (vestibule) in Villa Armira in the early 3rd century was similarly executed, with a marble plinth, frescoes on the walls above it and mosaic in *opus sectile* on the floor (Mladenova 1991: 31-32).

Building B (Fig. 6) is the largest known building of the architectural complex at Kasnakovo (Katsarova 2020: 271-284). It was located north of the nymphaeum and was originally identified as a theater (Venedikov 1950), and later two of its hypocaust-heated rooms were excavated (Aladzov 1997: 109 fig. 54), but no connection was made between the two sectors. Its surface area, estimated through geophysical survey, exceeds 2,700 square meters. Archaeological excavations to date cover an area of 1000 square meters.



Building B was found to have two construction periods. The first coincides in time with the functioning of Building A - between the middle of the 2nd and the middle of the 3rd century. At this stage of research, the plan of Building B in the first period has not yet been fully clarified, since the data about it are documented in small trenches below later floor levels. After the destruction in the middle of the 3rd century, Building B was rebuilt and significantly expanded. It probably functioned as a residence of the owners after the middle of the 3rd century. Until its final abandonment in the 320s, the plan of the building included a semicircular courtyard surrounded by a covered portico with a colonnade (*ambulatio*), a large central room with mosaics, a swimming pool, a small pool and a bathroom with hypocaust (Fig. 7). A long corridor was built from the south, which connects the two wings with living quarters from the west and east, built in the last quarter of the 3rd century. The evidence from the archaeological investigations indicates that around the middle of the 4th century, Building B was in a semi-ruined state. New settlers with poor living standards took up residence in some of its more preserved rooms or built demi-dugout dwellings on top of the ruins and in the surrounding courtyard spaces. This small settlement existed in the period between the second half of the 4th century and the early decades of the 5th century.

Of the 20 rooms of Building B uncovered so far, fragments of floor mosaics have been documented in four. Room 2 occupies a central position in the plan

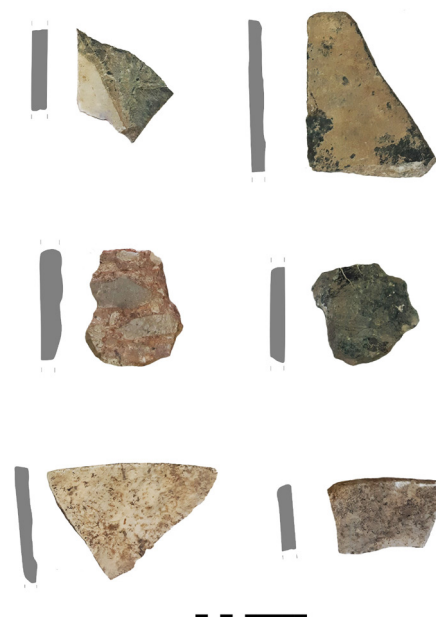


Figure 5
Coloured marbles parts of a floor mosaic in *opus sectile* from Building A (©E. Nikolova).

Figure 6
Building B during excavations in 2024
(©R. Stoychev).

of the building and has the largest dimensions (Fig. 8). It probably served as a reception hall. Rooms 7, 8 and 12, which are located north of the central Room 2, were also decorated with floor mosaics. They belong to the building's bathing area. The floor mosaics suffered considerable damage during the destruction of the building and during the Late Antique occupation of the site. Of the mosaic in Room 7, only a small fragment (0.30 m x 0.15 m) has been preserved in situ, which only allows us to ascertain the presence of a mosaic floor here.



Figure 7
Plan of the excavated part of Building B (2014-2023).



Figure 8
The central part of Room 2 in Building B (©E. Mihov).

The remaining fragments of mosaics found in rooms 2, 8 and 12 are made in *opus tessellatum*, and their decoration is extremely geometric. The main background colour of all the mosaics is white, and the geometric motifs are formed with white, blue, black and red *tesserae*. The borders along the walls of the rooms are made with large, roughly shaped *tesserae* of local limestone with pink veins. They range in size from 1.5 m x 1.5 cm to 2.5 x 2.5 cm. The use of these coarser monochrome *tesserae* accentuates the simple geometric compositions in the centre of rooms made with smaller *tesserae* (1 x 1 cm). This effect is further enhanced by the uneven arrangement of the large white *tesserae* in the borders, caused by their irregular triangular, quadrangular and often polygonal shapes.

Room 2 measures 12.70 m N-S x 7.50 m E-W. Originally, its two long walls had brick pilasters spaced about 1.80 – 2.00 m apart. The faces of the pilasters were plastered with smooth white plaster. Between them, at a certain height, rose thin brick walls painted red. After the destruction in the middle of the 3rd century, the pilasters were removed, and the red-painted walls were covered with new flooring. In most of the room, only the backing (*nucleus*) of the pink mortar mosaic, up to 0.07 m thick, was preserved. Underneath it, the *rudus* and *statumen* were not built, which is why the floor has sunk in places. The largest fragment of the mosaic, with maximum dimensions of 3.30 m (E-W) x 4.20 m (N-S), is preserved in the SW quarter of the room, in front of the entrance to Room 1 (Fig. 9). A fragment measuring 1.85 m (E-W) x 1.55 m (N-S) has been preserved along the eastern wall. A third larger fragment measuring 1.80 m (E-W) x 0.40 m (N-S) was uncovered in the northwest quarter of the room. Along the north and east walls, separate smaller fragments of the white coarse *tesserae* border were found. The total area of the mosaic uncovered and preserved in situ is approximately 25 square meters.

The fragments found in situ allow for a partial reconstruction of the floor mosaic scheme in Room 2. A border of large, white *tesserae* 1.94 – 2.00 m wide was formed along its four walls. Two 0.21 m wide parallel bands of blue and white



Figure 9

The largest fragment of the floor mosaic in Room 2 preserved in front of the entrance to Room 1 (©E. Mihov).

tesserae of smaller sizes follow, framing a diagonal grid of blue diamonds on a white background (D cor I: pl. 201 a). The diamonds are outlined with two rows of blue *tesserae*. They surround white fields filled with red and blue stepped squares, centred with white and blue crosses of five stones each (Fig. 10). The diamonds have a side of 0.24 m; they are 0.44 m long and 0.22 m wide. The squares located in their centre have a side of 0.08 m.



Figure 10

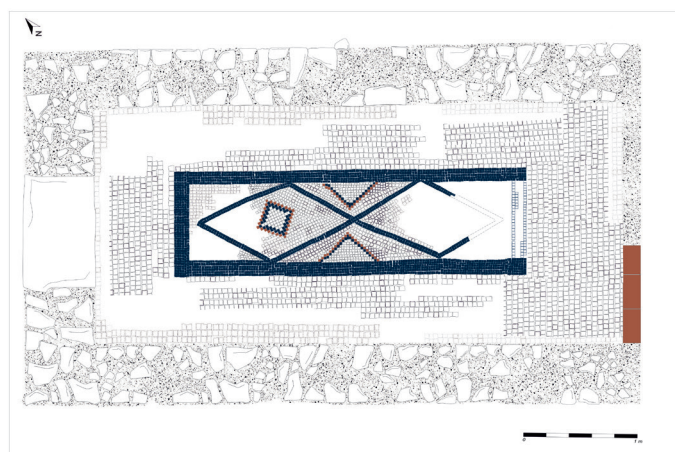
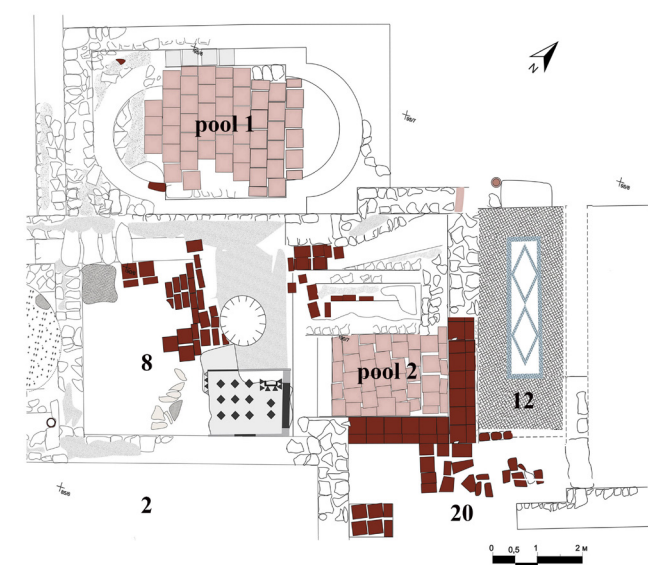
The geometric motifs on the mosaic in Room 2 – detail ( R. Stoychev).

Excavations made below the level of the mosaic in Room 2 documented an earlier floor level of mortar with a high sand content, which corresponds to the first construction period of the building until the mid-3rd century. The coin of Philip I Arab (244 -249 AD) found in one of the test trenches appears to be the

terminus post quem for the laying of the floor mosaic in Room 2. Due to the lack of a solid support, the mosaic floor probably quickly deteriorated and had to be repaired. In a thin layer of plaster of white mortar applied to one of the larger fragments of the mosaic in the northwest part of the room, a coin of the emperor Diocletian, issued between 295 and 299 AD, was found. Based on the data from the archaeological investigations, the date of the mosaic in Room 2 of Building B can be dated with a high degree of certainty to the second half of the 3rd c.

In the condition in which the mosaic was found, it is difficult to say whether the geometrical composition completely covered the central part of Room 2, imitating a kind of rectangular carpet, or whether it enclosed some figural *emblema*. Simple geometric motifs, with simple frames and with a sparing combination of only three colours, do not give great opportunities for in-depth stylistic analysis. Rectangular decorative fields, which repeat the room plan on a smaller scale and have wide white areas along the walls, appeared in the Hellenistic period and became widespread in the first two centuries AD in Italy and Asia Minor for the decoration of transitional rooms and corridors (Scheibelreiter 2007: 162; 2008: 260-261; Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011: 93-95). A number of examples of floor mosaics made in a similar manner between the mid-2nd and the end of 3rd centuries are provided by public baths and town houses in Ephesus (Jobst 1977; Scheibelreiter 2008: 259-275; Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011: abb.124, 125, 131, 135, 155, 161, 167, 238). Close in style, but significantly richer and more diverse in terms of the ornamental-geometric repertoire and colour range, is the mosaic from the vestibule of the baths in Augusta Traiana, whose date fluctuates between the first (Kamischeva - Karamanova-Zlatkova 2017: 173) and the second half of the 3rd century AD (Popova 2017: 68). Limited colouring of the geometric decoration (white, grey, black, ochre) and a wide white border, could be seen also in the mosaic from Room 6 of Building A 5 in Serdica, dated to the second half of the 3rd century (Ivanov 2012 a: 316) or the first half of the 4th century (Noeva 2016: 295-300 taf. 222-223, abb. 555-558). With a completely geometric decoration, executed in four colors (white, black, light blue and pink) is the floor mosaic from Villa No. 1 near Montana (Kalimanitsa village), dated to the first quarter of the 4th century (Aleksandrov 1983: 47-49; Markov 2017: 208-217; 2019: 99-101).

Room 12 is located east of the small pool No. 2 (Fig. 11). Its dimensions are 4.60 m (N-S) x 2.00 m (E-W). Two fragments of the floor mosaic have been preserved in situ (Fig. 12). The first is located immediately next to the southern wall and measures 0.70 m (N-S) x 1.00 m (E-W). It is part of a wide border of large white *tesserae*. The second fragment is in the central part of the room and its dimensions are 1.30 (N-S) x 1.00 m (E-W). Part of the geometric decoration is preserved here (Fig. 13). To a considerable extent, it resembles the composition executed in the central Room 2 (Décor I : pl. 201 a). A border of large white *tesserae*, 0.68 m wide, was also formed along the walls of Room 12. This was followed by a 0.21 m wide strip of 1 x 1 cm blue *tesserae*, framing a rectangular field. On the white background of this field are diamonds, the sides of which are formed by two rows of blue *tesserae*. In the fields enclosed by the diamonds, squares are depicted, the sides of which are made with one row of red and one row of blue *tesserae* (Fig. 14). The stylistic similarity to the mosaic in the central room indicates that the two were probably made at the same time. Observations during the excavations provide additional arguments in this direction. The walls surrounding Pool 2 do not belong to the original plan of Building B. They, as well as the rooms developing to the east of it, were built during its expansion and reconstruction in the second half of the 3rd century.



The two mosaics from the second construction period of Building B have characteristic stylistic features – a dominant white colour, simple, repetitive geometric elements, a modest colour palette. They give reason to put the date of their creation shortly after the middle and before the end of the 3rd century, since they are significantly different from the monuments belonging to the so-called Tetrarchic style from the end of the 3rd - the first quarter of the 4th century AD in the present-day Bulgarian lands (Popova 2016: 160-172) and the Balkans (Kolarik 1994: 171-183; 2006: 159-178). Similar in style and execution, geometric mosaics dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries were found in rooms with different purposes (triclinium, peristyle, corridors, etc.) during the archaeological investigations of two houses in Philippi (Greece) (Gounari 2008: 34 fig. 10; Gounari - Paissidou 2022: 389-396 fig. 16, 5; 16, 8).

Room No. 8 measures 4.30 m (N-S) x 5.20 m (E-W). Access from the central Room 2 to the two pools was made through it (Fig. 11). Its floor mosaic is bichrome. To make it, white tesserae were used in the background and dark blue/black tesserae for the geometric shapes. The preserved panel measures 2.00 m (E-W) x 1.90 m (N-S), (Fig. 15). It is limited to the south and east by narrow marble borders and a 0.18m wide strip of dark blue/black tesserae. In the field are nine dark blue/black squares with a side length of 0.18 m (D  cor I 1985:

Figure 11

Layout of the Rooms with floor mosaics 8 and 12 around the two pools.

Figure 12

The two preserved fragments of the floor mosaic in Room 12 (  R. Stoychev).

Figure 13

The geometric motifs on the mosaic in Room 12 – detail (  V. Katsarova).

Figure 14

Mosaic floor in Room 12 - graphic reconstruction (  E. Nikolova-V. Katsarova).

Figure 15

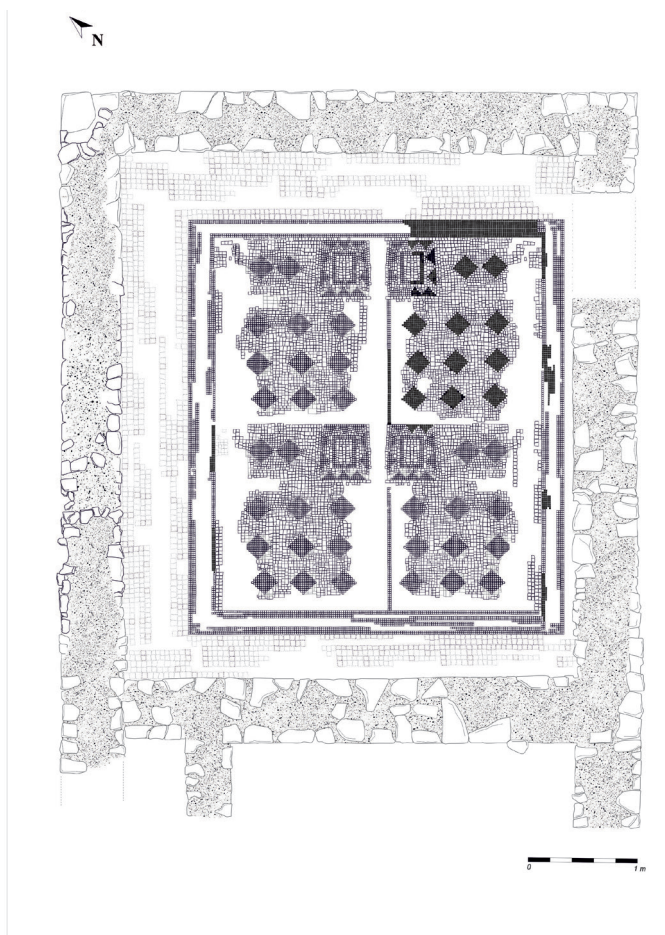
The preserved part of the mosaic in the southeast corner of Room 8 (©E. Mihov).



pl. 14 h, pl. 114 a). Between them and the frame to the east are depicted two more squares and a partially preserved narrow, possibly square (?) frame with triangles (Décor I: pl.10 a). The beginning of a similar one is also preserved from the west (Fig. 16). Another fragment of the floor mosaic measuring 0.50 x 0.70 m is preserved in the NW corner of the room. It is filled mainly with white, large tesserae and two or three rows from the beginning of the dark stripe. The mosaic floor in the central part of the room, which was already damaged in antiquity, was replaced by a heterogeneous flooring of bricks of different sizes and marble and stone slabs of irregular shapes. In the second half of the 4th century, the floor was disturbed by the digging of a garbage pit.

Figure 16

Mosaic floor in Room 8 - graphic reconstruction (©E. Nikolova -V. Katsarova).



The mosaic in Room 8 of Building B can be referred to the few examples of bichrome mosaics in the Roman province of Thrace from the period 2nd - beginning of the 3rd century (Popova-Moroz 1987: 6; Valeva 1995: 251-256; Ivanov 2019: 14-15). The black and white floor mosaics discovered so far from the territory of present-day Bulgaria originate from both public (Tsonchev 1940, 144-145, fig. 17; Bospachieva 2002: 301-305) and private (Mladenova 1984: 149-166) buildings. The highly simplified composition of black squares on a white background in Room 8 is quite popular and common among floor mosaics of the 1st century BC – 2nd century AD period on the Italian peninsula, where it was applied to the decoration of entrance spaces, atriums, corridors, living quarters, etc. (Becatti 1961: Tav. XXXIV, 157; XXXV, 328, 224, 155; XXXIX, 228; Blake 1936: pl. 11-14). Fields with simple framing, sparsely and sparingly filled with geometric ornaments and broad monochrome borders are characteristic of the earliest mosaics in the so-called Vedius' Gymnasium in Ephesus, which date from the time of its construction in the mid-2nd century (Scheibelreiter 2008: 261 Taf. 371-375). The black and white mosaic with the terminus ante quem of the third quarter of the 3rd century discovered in room 36e of Residential Unit 6 of Terrace House 2 in Ephesus has a diagonal execution of a chess motif (Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011: 242; abb. 162). The same composition, filled with three colors - white, black and red, can be found in room 25 of Residential Unit 5 of Terrace House 2 and dated to the first half of the 3rd century (Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011: 240; abb. 153). The partially preserved frames with triangles on the mosaic in Room 8 are similar to those of the small square fields with figural images at the southern end of the mosaic from Room 10 of Villa Armira from the first half of the 2nd century (Kabakchieva 2019: 53 fig. 12).

Taking into account the data on the construction history of Building B, the black and white mosaic in Room 8 can be attributed to the first period of its operation. During the construction of the steps to Pool 2, after the middle of the 3rd century, both the eastern wall of the room and the wide monochrome border of the mosaic from the east were destroyed.

There is information about the presence of floor mosaics in two other buildings from the architectural complex near Kasnakovo. Remains of a mosaic were found along the walls of a room of the building located west of the nymphaeum during the first archaeological excavations of the site in the 1940s (Venedikov 1950: 110-111). During the 2013-2014 investigations of Building C, located on the highest terrace east of the nymphaeum, it was found that the floor of the larger of its two rooms was decorated with mosaic laid on a thin layer of pink mortar (Katsarova 2017: 569 fig. 9). The mosaic is completely destroyed. Separate larger fragments of the mortar base were found overturned among the layer of destructions, with 5-6 tesserae preserved stuck on or only imprinted. A large quantity of large tesserae of white colour and smaller tesserae of white, blue, red and dark grey colour (Fig. 17) were found scattered throughout the area of the room, as well as in front of the southern facade of the building. In view of the existing interpretation of the site at Kasnakovo as a Roman-era Thracian sanctuary, the mosaic floors found in Building C and in the building to the west of the nymphaeum are of particular interest, as both buildings are assumed to have had cultic functions. In the known pagan sanctuaries located in a non-urban environment, in the territory of the Roman province of Thrace, no temple decorated with a floor mosaic is known so far (Valchev 2015). This fact gives me an additional reason to believe that the architectural complex near Kasnakovo was a private property.

Figure 17

Tesserae from the floor mosaic in Building C
(©V. Katsarova).



Around the middle of the 2nd century, the Thracian *Titus Flavius Beitukentos Esbeneios* and his wife *Claudia Montana* contributed to the building of the nymphaeum with three small pools. The Flavian Romanization of the dedicator and the mention of the name of the emperor's tribe *Quirina*, have been highlighted by some scholars as evidence that he was in fact the heir of an aristocratic Thracian family of *strategoi*, incorporated in the administration of the province during the reign of Vespasian (69-79 AD) (Tatsheva 2007: 41). Almost all known inscriptions of *strategoi* in Thrace from the Roman era have been found in sanctuaries and are associated with their foundation (Sharankov 2015: 73 note 38). At the same time, the members of this social group are considered with confidence to be the owners of some of the largest *villa* estates in Thrace from the second half of the 1st century AD onwards (Dinchev 1997: 11 note 22; Kabakchieva 2007: 233-244). The active integration of the Thracian aristocracy within Roman provincial administration and political structure from the period of the early Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties led to the adoption of a new way of life. One of its most striking manifestations is the construction of luxurious suburban villas, whose extravagant decor is perceived as a measure of the wealth and status of their owners. Although they have reached us in a rather poor condition, the floor mosaics from the villa around the spring at Kasnakovo show that Titus Flavius and his successors were strongly influenced by the Roman way of life. They have invested considerable resources in decorating their luxury villa with marble panelling, wall paintings and floor mosaics, following current trends in 2nd-3rd century Eastern Mediterranean *domus* design.

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