

Mishko TUTKOVSKI

NI Stobi

mishko.tutko@gmail.com

THE MOSAIC DECORATION FROM THE EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE IN STOBI

Key words: *Mosaic floors, opus segmentatum, opus tessellatum, mosaic atelier, Synagogue II.*



Fig.1 Stobi-location of the Episcopal residence. Photo – M. Tutkovski

Abstract: This paper presents an in-depth analysis of the mosaic floors discovered in the Episcopal Residence of Stobi (previously known as “Casino”), offering insights into the craftsmanship, dating, and distinct mosaic ateliers involved. *Opus tessellatum* mosaics decorated the floors in the dining rooms and the corridors of the residence, while *opus segmentatum* mosaics are found in the thermal complex of the building. The tessellatum mosaic floors exhibit striking similarities to those in Stobi’s Synagogue II,

suggesting a shared mosaic atelier and dating to the middle or second half of the 4th century. In contrast, *opus segmentatum* mosaics in the thermal complex, display different characteristics and likely date to the first half of the 5th century. This publication presents, for the first time, a comprehensive catalog of all mosaic floors discovered in this building up to 2023, accompanied by extensive technical and photographic documentation, that facilitates further research into the artistic evolution of ancient mosaics in Stobi.



Fig.2 Ground plan of the Episcopal residence. Photo – M. Tutkovski

Introduction

The Episcopal residence is located in the area between the Theater and the House of Parthenius, on the south side of Principalis inferior street (Fig. 1, 2). Parts of the building (the apsidal room and the two rooms north of it, part of the thermal complex, and the eastern corridor) were discovered during the archaeological research of 1939-40¹. During these excavations, in the large apsidal room, which undoubtedly served as a dining room-stibadium, the remains of two sigma-shaped marble tables were discovered (Fig. 3, 4, 7). Another smaller marble table with a rectangular shape (Fig. 5, 7) was found in the adjacent room. Several bone dice and a bronze tray, probably used for dice games, were also unearthed during the research. These findings led researchers to speculate that the marble tables were used for gambling, thus, they named the building "Casino." This name was used unfoundedly in subsequent decades², while in recent works referring to this building, several authors indicate that the original purpose of the building was a private residence, which later acquired the function of an Episcopal residence³.

¹ J. Petrović, U Stobima danas, *Glasnik Hrvatskih zemaljskih muzeja u Sarajevu*, Sarajevo 1942, 487-488.

² Dj. Mano-Zissi, Stratigraphic problems and the urban development of Stobi, *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi I* (1973), 209-210; J. Wiseman & Dj. Mano-Zissi, Excavations at Stobi, 1971, *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, No. 4 (1972), 407-408; R. Kolarik, *The floor mosaics of Stobi and their Balkan context*, PhD Diss. defended at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1981, 16-21; F. Hemans, *Late antique residences at Stobi, Yugoslavia*, PhD Diss. defended at Boston University, Boston 1986, 156-162; З. Георгиев, „Casino/Коцкарница“ - Стоби: археолошко истражување во 2005 година, *Културно Наследство* 32-33 (2006-2007), 155-156.

³ Д. Герасимовска, *Улогата на живеалиштето во културата на живеење низ антиката во Р. Македонија*, Скопје 2009, 74-76; P. Makreski, T. Šijakova-Ivanova, Z. Georgiev, D. Balabanova Aleksova, A. A. Reka, B. Boev, G. Jovanovski, The restored opus sectile panel from the luxurious episcopal residence in the ancient city of Stobi—mineralogical and chemical findings, *Archaeometry* vol. 65, issue 3 (2022), 2; S. Blaževska, Marble relief decorated with griffins from Stobi, *Marinov Zbornik: Papers in Honour of Professor Emilio Marin*, Zagreb 2022, 201, 205; M. Tutkovski, A Preliminary Study of a Unique Wooden Table with Opus Sectile Decoration from Stobi, *Honorary volume for Panagiota Asimakopoulou-Atzaka professor emerita of the Department of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*, forthcoming paper.

Researchers revisited the building in 1973 to document and conserve the discovered mosaic floors⁴. Smaller-scale excavations in 1981-82 further defined and documented the discovered portions of the building. During this time, additional mosaic fragments were found in the apsidal room, and a fragment of a third sigma-shaped marble table was also discovered in the same room (Fig. 6, 7)⁵. In 1981, a coin depot with a *terminus post quem* in 583/4 was discovered in the room north of the stibadium⁶. The most recent excavations at the Episcopal residence, conducted from 2001 to 2006⁷, led to the near-complete discovery of the building, accompanied by the conservation of previously uncovered parts of the building⁸.

Architecture

The building shares a similar architectural concept with other luxurious residential buildings in Stobi, such as the House of Parthenius, Theodosian Palace, the House of Peristeria, and the House of Polycharmos. The space is organized around the inner peristyle, which comprises a central courtyard with a luxurious fountain and a pool on the west side, surrounded by porticoes with colonnades on the north, east, and south sides. Several incompletely explored rooms are situated on the western side of the peristyle (Fig. 2, 8). The primary entrance to the building was located on the west side, connected to a small street that encircled the theater and continued toward the Episcopal basilica of Stobi. This street, paved with large marble blocks originating from the theater, is

⁴ R. Kolarik, *The floor mosaics*, 16.

⁵ D. Ivanović, Istraživanja vo Stobi: mal proekt - čistenje na objektot Kockarnica-Kazino, *Stobi Note book* No. 136. The notebook is archived at NI Stobi.

⁶ M. Хаџи-Манева, Нумизматички сведоштва за крајот на VI и VII век, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 18 (2008), 381-396; M. Hadji-Maneva, Early Byzantine Coin Circulation in Macedonia Secunda, *Cercetari Numismatice* XV (2009), 107-132.

⁷ З. Георгиев, „Casino/Коцкарница“ - Стоби, 155.

⁸ The results of these researches have not yet been published. A brief description of the building and a ground plan is published in Д. Герасимовска, *Улогата на живеалиштето*, 74-75, fig. 106, 196, but more details about the architecture can be found in X. Талевски, *Промените во архитектонското и инфраструктурното уредување во урбаните центри на територијата на Р. Македонија во периодот од Диоклецијан до Ираклиј*, PhD Diss. defended at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Skopje 2020, 388-394.



Fig.3 Sigma-shaped marble table discovered in the stibadium. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.4 Sigma-shaped marble table discovered in the stibadium. Photo – M. Tutkovski

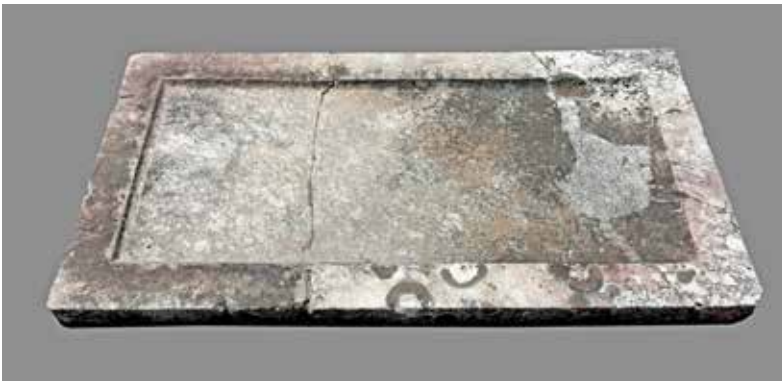


Fig.5 Rectangular marble table discovered in the room north of the stibadium. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.6 Fragment of a sigma-shaped marble table discovered in the stibadium. Photo – M. Tutkovski

known as Via Episcopalis (Fig.1,2)⁹. The corridors of the peristyle feature mosaic floors in *opus tessellatum*, while the central courtyard is paved with stone slabs. On the northern and southern sides of the peristyle, there are three rooms each, with only the northern side rooms having been discovered thus far. The central room, serving as a dining room-triclinium¹⁰, features a mosaic floor executed in *opus tessellatum*, while the adjacent room on the west has a ceramic tile floor. The entrance to the thermal complex of the residence is located in the northeast corner of the peristyle. It consists of a central room surrounded by three tubs, a praefurnium, sudatorium, caldarium,

⁹ F. Hemans, *Late antique residences at Stobi*, 47; M. Ивановски, В. Маленко, Епископска базилика, локалитет Стоби, *Македонски археолошки преглед 1* (2008), 106-109.

¹⁰ More about the functions of the rooms in the Episcopal Residence, see in M. Тутковски, *Доцноантичките мозаици од Р. Македонија*, PhD Diss. defended at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Skopje 2022, 270-275.

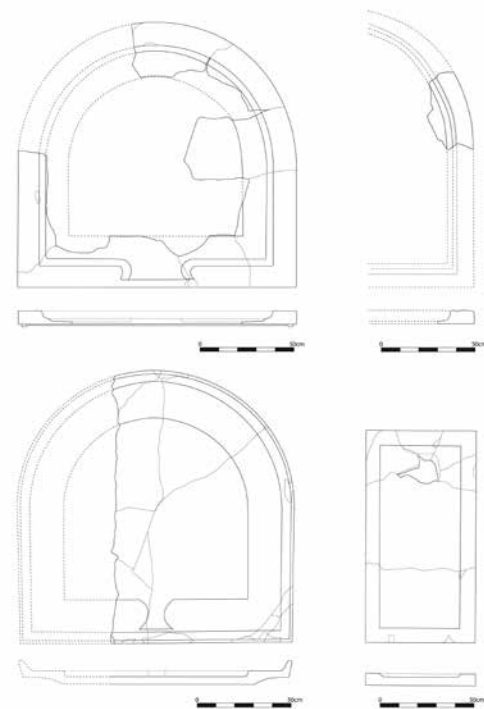


Fig.7 Marble tables discovered in the Episcopal residence. Drawing – NI Stobi archive, M. Tutkovski.

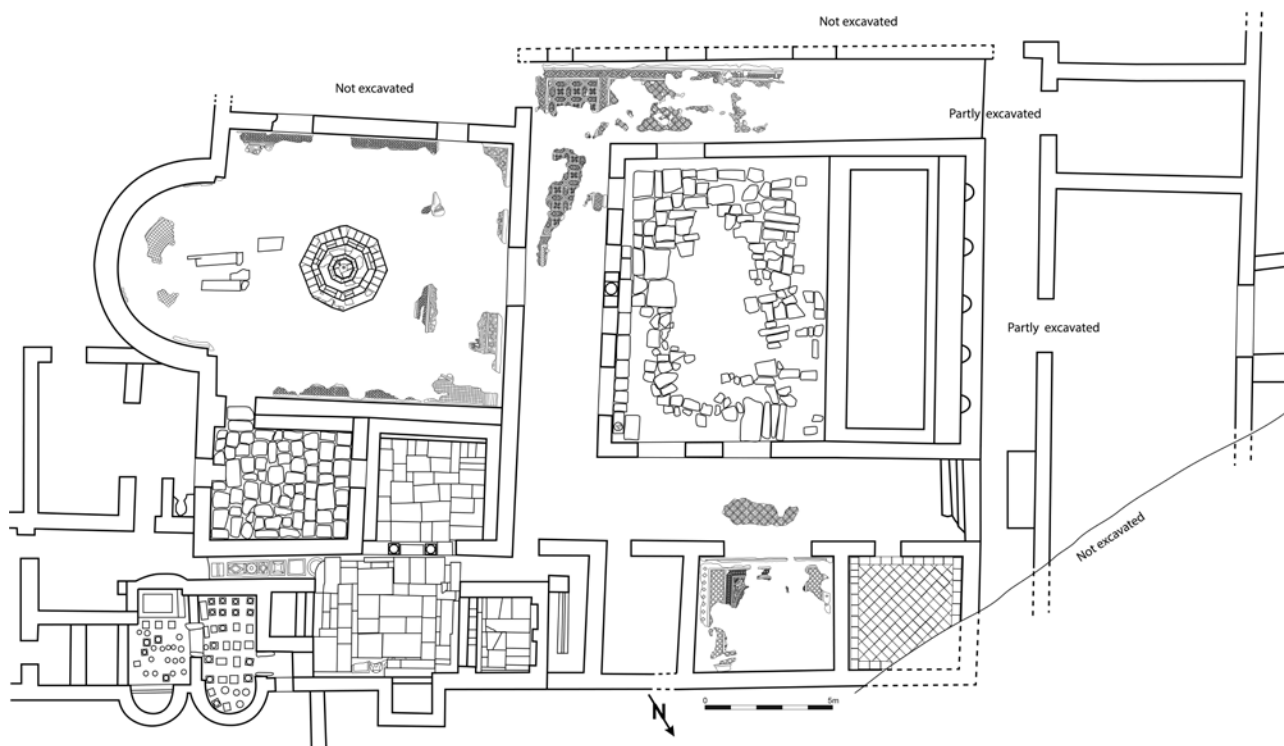


Fig.8 Ground plan of the Episcopal residence. Drawing – M. Tutkovski



Fig.9 Marble slabs with reliefs depicting griffins. Photo – M. Tutkovski

and a latrine on the eastern side¹¹. The floors in the thermal complex are covered with large marble slabs, and *opus segmentatum* mosaics are found on the corridor floor leading from the central room to the latrine, as well as in the northern part of the same room.

The large apsidal room, designed as a dining room-stibadium, is situated to the east of the peristyle. The room's floor was adorned with mosaic in *opus tessellatum*, featuring an octagonal fountain in the central area. The dining room is flanked by rooms on both sides, with only two rooms on the north side having been uncovered. The eastern room, with a floor made of stone slabs, connects to one of



Fig.10 Marble slab - trapesophoros with relief decorations of griffins. Photo – NI NCC archive

¹¹ X. Талевски, *Промените во архитектонското и инфраструктурното уредување*, 389-390.



Fig.11 Wall paintings in the triclinium: a) In situ paintings on the west wall.
b) East wall paintings fallen on the floor mosaic. Photo – M. Tutkovski

the rooms, most probably apodyterium from the thermal complex on the west.

Throughout its existence, the building underwent several reconstructions and space remodellings that cannot be precisely determined due to unpublished archaeological research results¹². Field observations suggest at least three distinct construction phases. The rooms of the thermal complex, as noted by F. Hemans in 1981, were later additions to the original structure of the Residence¹³. The floor in the central courtyard was renewed with new layer of stone slabs, and the entrances on the eastern side of the courtyard were walled. Two mosaic phases have been identified in the triclinium, and remains of mortar floors are preserved above certain mosaic positions in the northern and southern corridors. The central room of the thermal complex also exhibits a similar situation, with a partition wall and a staircase leading to the tub in the northern wall built over the mosaic decoration.

The archaeological excavations in this building produced a significant number of movable findings, with only a small portion having been examined and published. Some of these findings



Fig.12 Fragments of wall paintings with depictions of saints. Photo – M. Tutkovski

¹² X. Талевски, *Промените во архитектонското и инфраструктурното уредување*, 393.

¹³ F. Hemans, *Late antique residences at Stobi*, 161-162.



Fig.13 Fragments of wall paintings with incised inscription. Photo – M. Tutkovski

have already been mentioned in this paper, and in the following section, some of the most important discoveries made during the excavations in 2005-06 will be briefly discussed.

The excavations of the peristyle pool revealed two marble slabs with relief representations of griffins (Fig.9), and another marble slab with relief representations of griffins on both sides (Fig.10). The first two reliefs are carved from a single marble slab, originally part of an Attic sarcophagus¹⁴, while the third slab originally served as a pedestal for a marble table - trapesophoros. All these elements, most likely were repurposed as decorations for the fountain in the Episcopal Residence. In the small dining room, i.e., the triclinium, researchers discovered remnants of wall paintings on the western and southern walls, with parts of the painting from the eastern wall found fallen on the mosaic floor. The room's decoration includes painted imitations of marble panels separated by columns, with only small fragments preserved in the lowermost zone (Fig.11). During the excavations in the building, several fragments of wall paintings were found, including two representations of saints (Fig.12), suggesting the Christian affiliation of the building's owners and possibly the existence of a small chapel within the residence¹⁵. In this context, particular attention should be paid to a partially preserved Greek inscription engraved on a fresco fragment (Fig.13), where the word "αποστολος" or apostle is clearly recognizable. Other findings confirming the Christian affiliation of the residence's owners



Fig.14 Detail of a wooden sigma-shaped table with opus sectile decoration. Photo – M. Tutkovski

include a marble slab decorated with relief crosses, discovered in the southern corridor and a silver cross with the engraved inscription "ΥΠΕΡ ΕΥΧΗΣ" and the monogram with the name "Λεων" found in the peristyle pool¹⁶. The most significant find in this building are the burned remains of a sigma-shaped wooden table adorned with opus sectile decoration made from various minerals such as magnesite, quartz, dolomite, ankerite, cuprite, wüstite, beryl, and hematite¹⁷. Some of the square tiles, construct-

¹⁴ S. Blaževska, Marble relief decorated with griffins, 201-211.

¹⁵ The fresco fragments, featuring representations of saints, have a concave shape, suggesting their original placement on a curved surface, possibly adorning the semi-dome of an apse or an arch.

¹⁶ D. Spasova, A Corpus of Early Christian Metal Crosses from Stobi, *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi IV*, Stobi 2018, 393-408.

¹⁷ Л. Робева-Чуковска, З. Георгиев, Б. Боев, Истражувања на ранохристијанската интарзија од Археолошкиот локалитет Стоби, *Патримониум.МК* 3-4, 5-6 (2009), 233-238; P. Makreski et.al., The restored opus sectile panel, 1-17. Initial study regarding the form, function, and decoration of this artefact is published in M. Tutkovski, A Preliminary Study of a Unique Wooden Table, forthcoming paper.



Fig.15 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic floor in the apse. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.16 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic bordure towards south wall. Photo – M. Tutkovski

ed from transparent quartz with gilding, feature relief representations of birds surrounding a kantharos (Fig.14), thus associating it with well-known illustrations of the first verse of Psalm 41¹⁸. This exceedingly rare and luxurious artefact with Christian features further solidifies the theory that this sumptuous palace, directly connected to the new Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, belonged to church dignitaries from the bishopric of Stobi¹⁹.

¹⁸ More about the illustrations of 41 Psalm of David, see in: Е. Димитрова, Четириесет и првиот Давидов псалм – иконографска парадигма на христијанската антика, *Патримониум МК*. 1-2 (2007), 65-76.

¹⁹ The structure situated north of the Episcopal Basilica has been referred to as the “Episcopal Residence” in older literature. Although there are no conclusive indicators to substantiate this classification, it remains plausible that this building served as the original episcopal residence, coexisting with the Old Episcopal Basilica in Stobi.

Mosaic Decoration in the Building

The discovery of mosaic floors in this building spanned multiple archaeological campaigns conducted in 1940, 1973, 1981-82, and 2005-06. Djordje Mano Zisi and Ruth Kolarik published several mosaic fragments found in the western section of the stibadium, along with parts of mosaics within the eastern corridor up until 1973²⁰. The remaining mosaics uncovered in subsequent archaeological campaigns, will be published for the first time in this paper²¹.

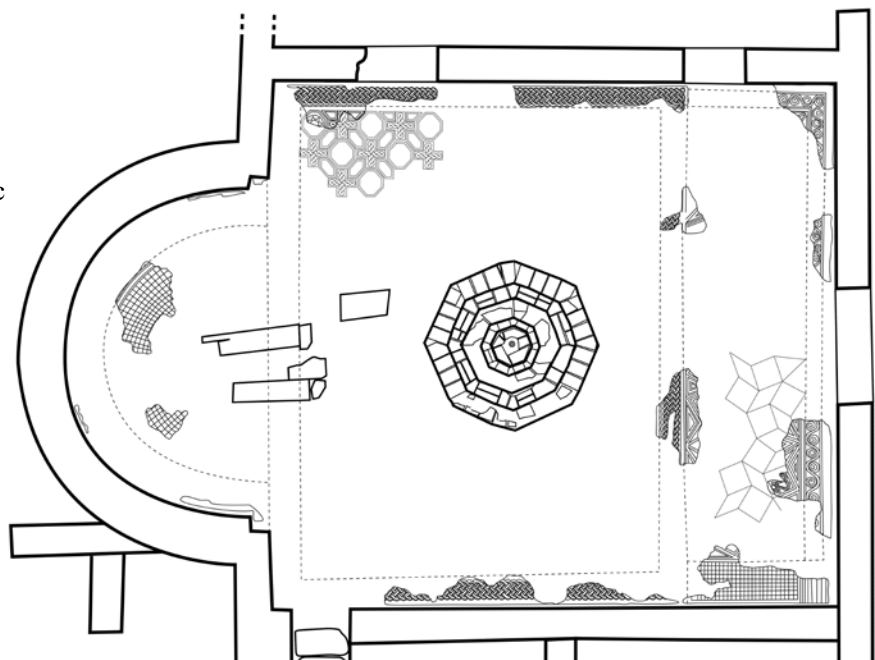
²⁰ Dj. Mano-Zissi, Stratigraphic problems, 209-210; R. Kolarik, *The floor mosaics*, 16-21.

²¹ It is important to note that I. Mikulčik, *Stobi: An ancient city*, Skopje 2003, 166, has presented entirely inaccurate drawings of the mosaics, which do not align with the actual designs and patterns discovered during archaeological excavations. This same misleading illustration was also replicated in Д. Герасимовска, *Улогата на живеалиштето*, fig.106, 196.



Fig.17 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic decoration in the south-east corner. Photo – M. Tutkovski

Fig.18 Episcopal residence. Partial reconstruction of mosaic decoration in the stibadium. Drawing – M. Tutkovski



Mosaic in the Large Dining Room - Stibadium

Dimensions, technique and materials used

The mosaic used to cover the entire surface of the room, measuring 15.3 x 10.3 meters, but only ten fragments have been preserved, with the largest measuring 8.8 x 1.2 meters, and the rest smaller, not exceeding 3.5 x 1.3 meters. The mosaic decoration is made in *opus tessellatum*, using precisely cut tesserae made from various materials, including white marble, yellowish tuff, pinkish andesite, dark red andesite, light gray-greenish sandstone, and blue-greenish limestone. The tesserae for the outer frames measure 1.6 to 1.9 cm, while the rest of the mosaic uses smaller tesserae ranging from 0.8 to 1.3 cm. The mosaic's substrate comprises a statumen layer, 10 to 14 cm high, composed of stones and bricks, followed by a 5-6 cm layer of hydrostatic mortar - rudus. On top of this, the nucleus is placed, made of lime mortar with

crushed brick, up to 6 cm high. The tesserae are embedded in a thin layer of white lime mortar with small admixtures of crushed brick.

Mosaic decoration

Only a few fragments of the mosaic remain, located along the side walls, two in the central part of the apse, and two more in the western part of the room (Fig.7). These fragments allow only a partial reconstruction of the mosaic design, which likely consisted of three decorative units: the apse, a larger rectangular area in the central part surrounding the fountain, and another rectangular area on the western side.

The apse mosaic fragments feature a chessboard pattern with diagonally placed rows of white and grey-greenish squares (Fig.15). The field contains cross-shaped motifs executed in dark red and yellowish colors. Only fragments of the outer border fram-



Fig.19 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic decoration in the south-west corner. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.20 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic decoration in the north-west corner. Photo – M. Tutkovski

ing the chessboard with unrecognizable decoration have been preserved.

In the central field, a six-strand guilloche border with gray-green outlines encircles the mosaic (Fig.16). In the southeast corner, next to the border, a small fragment with partially preserved decoration is preserved, consisting of an octagonal field with an eight-pointed rosette and part of a cruciform field decorated with an interlaced band (Fig.17). Based on these decorative elements, it is assumed that the entire space around the fountain was filled with alternating octagonal and cruciform fields decorated with simple geometric motifs (Fig.18).

The western part of the room features a simple bichromate border with a wavy line and spiral motifs framing the mosaic on the south and west sides (Fig.19). On the north side, a wider border with a chessboard pattern, similar to the apse mosaic, is present (Fig.20). Inside the field, remnants of geometric fields with square and rhomboid shapes are visible,

creating a pattern of cubes in perspective. Only one small fragment of a Solomon's knot inscribed in a square is preserved within this pattern (Fig.21).

Mosaics in the Corridors

Dimensions, technique and materials used

The southern corridor mosaic has a length of 10 meters, and the eastern corridor's mosaic measures a total length of 8 meters. In the northern corridor, two mosaic fragments with irregular shapes and dimensions of 3 x 1.5 meters and 0.5 x 0.4 meters were discovered. The mosaics in the corridors are made in *opus tessellatum* with tesserae measuring 1 to 1.3 cm, while larger tesserae ranging from 1.6 to 2 cm are used for the bordures. The tesserae are made from the same materials as the large dining room-stibadium: white marble, yellowish tuff, gray-greenish sandstone, pinkish andesite, dark red andesite, and blue-greenish limestone. The substrate for the mosa-



Fig.21 Episcopal residence – stibadium. Mosaic decoration towards west wall. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.22 Episcopal residence – peristyle. Mosaic decoration in the east corridor. Photo – M. Tutkovski

ics consists of a statumen layer made of stones and bricks, approximately 10 cm high, followed by a rudus layer of hydrostatic plaster, 4-5 cm high. The nucleus is also hydrostatic mortar, 2-3 cm high, and the tesserae are embedded in a layer of white lime mortar with small admixtures of crushed brick.

Mosaic decoration

East Corridor

The preserved mosaic decoration in the southern half of the corridor includes a mosaic inscription at

the entrance to the dining room (Fig.22)²². Only a few Greek letters remain, arranged in three rows:

CT...
 NA...
 CEK...

The inscription is rendered in gray-greenish color on a white background, surrounded by serrated saw-tooth bordure made with the same colors (Fig.23).

²² Dj. Mano-Zissi, *Stratigraphic problems*, 209-210.



Fig.23 Episcopal residence – peristyle. Detail of the mosaic inscription in the east corridor. Photo – NI Stobi archive.

The southern part of the corridor features a rectangular mosaic panel with intersecting octagons and hexagons, framed by gray-greenish and white outlines. The hexagonal fields are decorated with V-shaped bands in various colors, while the square fields display quatrefoil motifs.

South Corridor

In the eastern part of the southern corridor, a rectangular field with intersecting octagons is present (Fig.24). To the west, another rectangular field with intersecting circles and quatrefoil motifs fills the space. The circles are created using white tesserae, with alternating dark red and gray-green interior sections. The central part of the circles is adorned with serrated rhomboid fields rendered in white. The westernmost panel is separated from the rest by a guilloche border, composed of two intertwined bands of different colors. Within this panel, a network of interconnected peltae forms motifs that bear a resemblance to swastikas (Fig.24,25).

North Corridor

In the northern corridor, two mosaic fragments were discovered. The smaller fragment representing a four-strand guilloche bordure identical to that in the south corridor is located next to the southern wall, continuing westward into the unexplored part. The larger fragment in the central part consists of geometric pattern of intersecting circles, similar to the central field in the southern corridor but with a richer color palette (Fig.26).

Mosaics in the triclinium

Dimensions, technique and materials used

Only a 5.3-meter-long and 0.2-meter-wide strip of the first-phase mosaic was discovered along the southern wall. The mosaic from the second phase used to cover the entire 5.3 x 4.5-meter room, but only about 20% of it remains preserved.

The first-phase mosaic is executed in *opus tessellatum* with tesserae around 1.3 cm in size, composed of white marble, yellowish tuff, gray-greenish sand-



Fig.24 Episcopal residence – peristyle. Mosaic decoration in the south corridor. Photo – M. Tutkovski

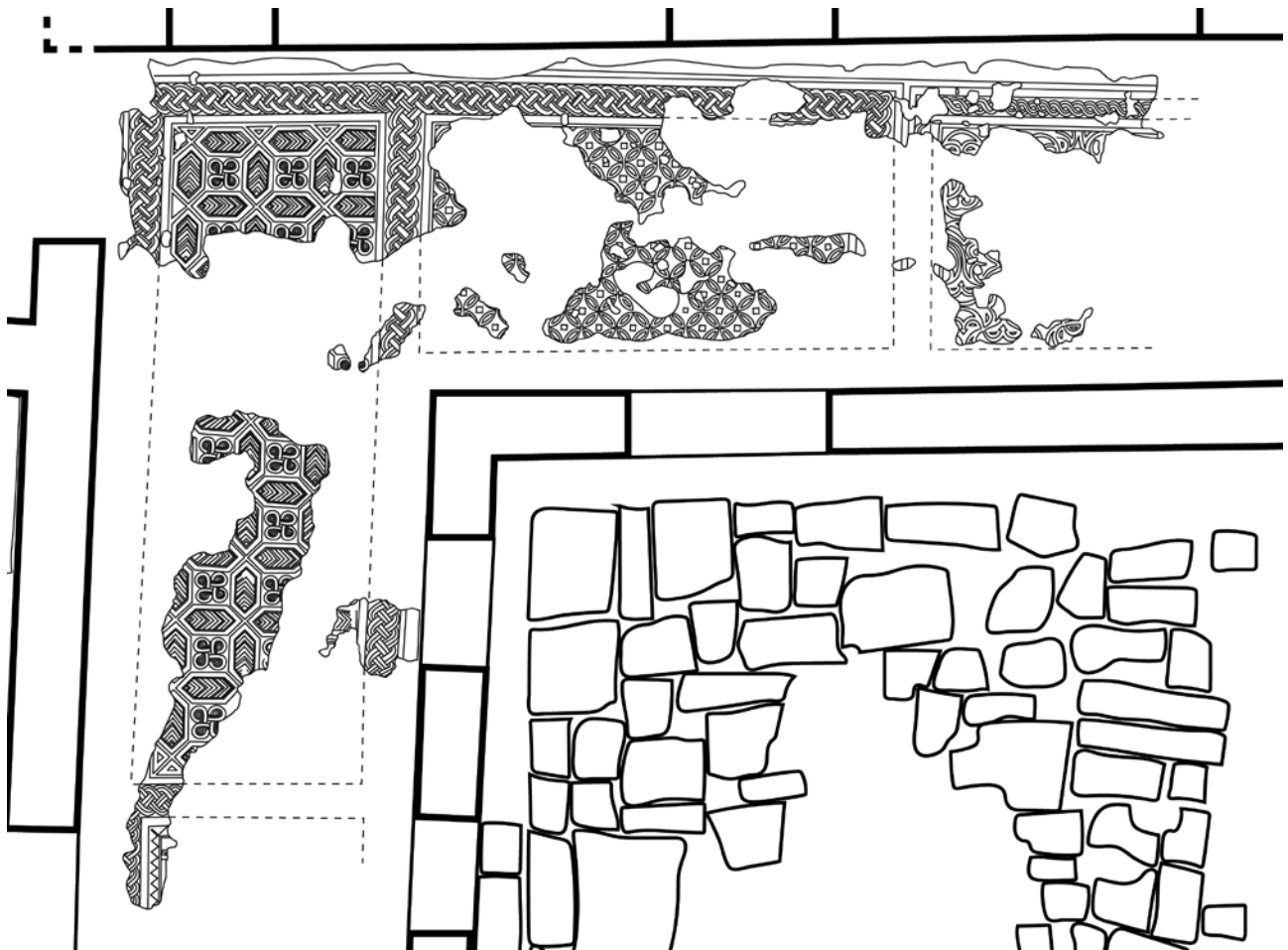


Fig.25 Episcopal residence – peristyle. Partial reconstruction of the mosaic decoration in the east and south corridor. Drawing – M. Tutkovski

stone, and dark red andesite. The substrate has not been examined.

The second-phase mosaic employed *opus tessellatum* as well, using tesserae made of various materials, including white marble, yellowish tuff, pinkish andesite, dark red andesite, gray-greenish sandstone, blue-greenish limestone, and pale purple limestone. Larger tesserae (1.3 to 1.6 cm) were used for outer decorative fields and borders, while smaller ones (around 1 cm) formed central motifs. The mosaic substrate has been partially investigated, consisting of layers of white lime mortar with crushed brick admixtures, a 3-4 cm pink lime mortar nucleus, and extremely hard white lime mortar rudus. In the southern part of the room, the first-phase mosaic was used as a replacement for the new mosaic substrate's rudus. A 2-3 cm high pink mortar layer was placed on top of the first-phase mosaic, fol-



Fig.26 Episcopal residence. Mosaic decoration in the triclinium and the north corridor. Photo – M. Tutkovski

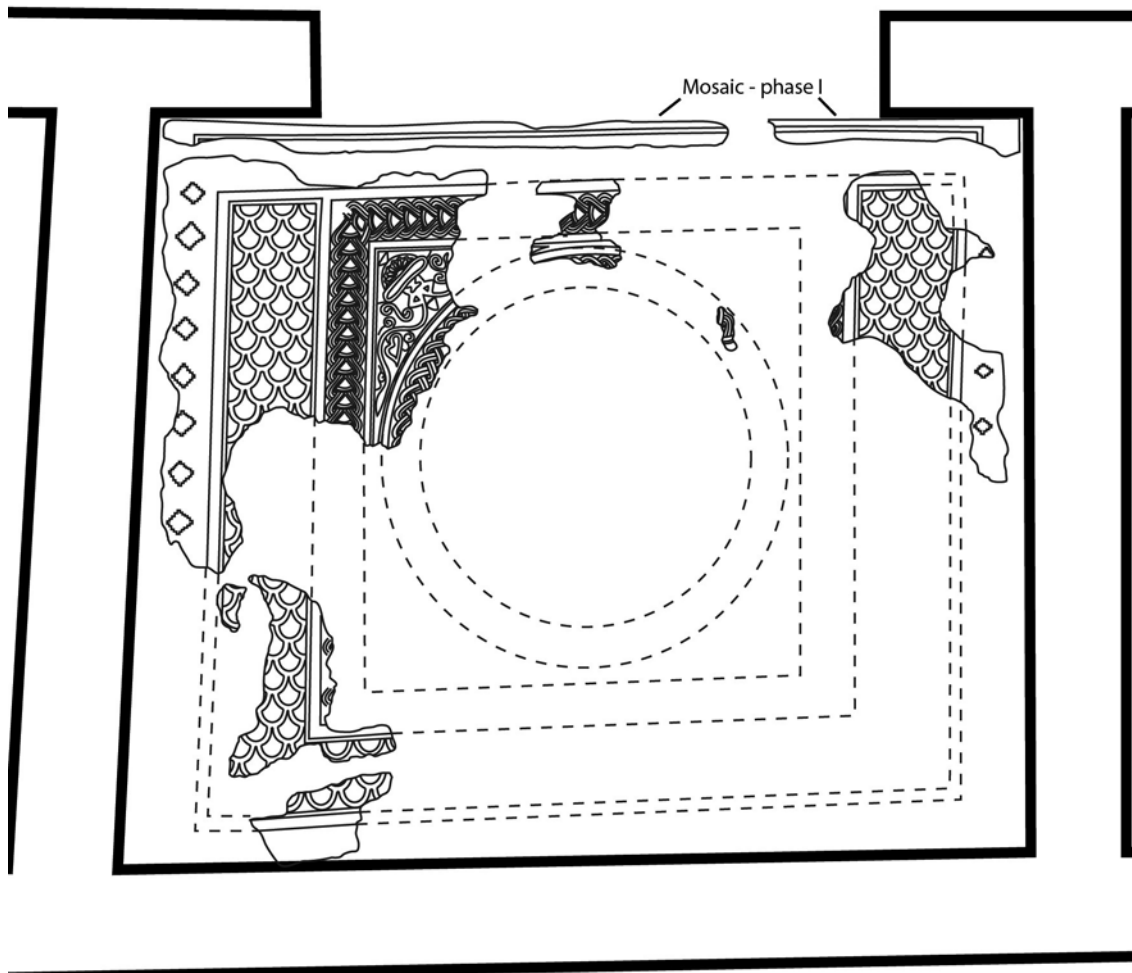


Fig.27 Episcopal residence. Partial reconstruction of the mosaic decoration in the triclinium.
Drawing – M. Tutkovski

lowed by the bedding layer and the tesserae of the second phase.

Mosaic decoration

First Phase

Only a thin strip of the first-phase mosaic remains, which features a gray-greenish line on a white background, and in the corners, there are small portions of decoration preserved, consisting of strips in white, dark red, yellow, and gray-green colors (Fig.26,27).

Second Phase

The mosaic's preserved fragments allow a partial reconstruction of its appearance. It was framed on all sides by a gray-green band decorated with jagged rhombuses in white tesserae, except on the southern side. A wide band with a "II" shape covered the central mosaic decoration on all sides except the south (Fig.26,27). This band featured a multiplied fish scale motif in white tesserae with three alternating diagonal color combinations. The next bordure is double straight looped guilloche which is framing the cen-

tral square field of the mosaic. Circular field formed by another guilloche border of four interlaced bands of two-color combinations on a gray-green background is inscribed in the square field. The spaces in the corners of the square field were decorated as well, but only part of the decoration is preserved in the southeast corner, depicting a kantharos with ivy scrolls and leaves, executed in gray-green and blue-green tesserae on a white background (Fig.28). The ivy leaves were filled with pale purple, while the kantharos body had a multi-colored fan motif with white outlines. Only small areas with impressions of tesserae in the bedding layer remain from the central circular field's decoration.

Mosaics in the thermal complex

Dimensions, technique and materials used

Mosaic 1 covers the entire corridor, measuring 4.8 meters long and 0.9 meters width, while Mosaic 2 represents a compact unit with dimensions of 1.5 x 0.6 meters, with an extension on the western side of about 1 meter, which is covered by a later partition wall and staircase.



Fig.28 Episcopal residence-triclinium. Detail of the mosaic depicting kantharos. Photo – M. Tutkovski



Fig.29 Episcopal residence – thermal complex. Mosaic floor in the corridor. Photo – M. Tutkovski

Both mosaics are executed in *opus segmentatum* with large and irregularly shaped tiles. Mosaic 1 employed tiles with dimensions ranging from 2 to 9 cm, made from various types of marble, serpentine, and limestone. Mosaic 2 featured white, light gray, and greenish marble tiles. The tiles in both mosaics were mostly created by cutting previously polished marble slabs, likely intended for floor or wall decoration. The mosaic substrate for Mosaic 1 has not been examined, while Mosaic 2 has a nucleus made of hydrostatic mortar about 10cm thick.

Mosaic decoration

Mosaic 1

The mosaic in the corridor comprises a series of simple geometric motifs using black-green and dark gray tiles on a white background. The motifs include a circle filled with pinkish and yellowish tiles, a rectangle, a rectangular panel with an inscribed concave rhombus, an elongated rectangular field divided into three parts with various designs, and a square field with a single band in the middle, framed by pink marble slabs (Fig.29).

Mosaic 2



Fig.30 Episcopal residence – thermal complex. Mosaic floor in the central room. Photo – M. Tutkovski

Positioned along the northern wall of the bath, Mosaic 2 featured simple geometric motifs, including a rectangular panel with a greenish band on a white background, a circular motif with four greenish leaves, and a representation of a rhombus at the western end (Fig.30).

An analysis of the mosaics reveals that two distinct mosaic workshops were active in the Episcopal Residence, employing different techniques for the mosaic floors. The mosaics in *opus tessellatum*, found in the two dining rooms and in the corridors of the peristyle, can be attributed to one mosaic atelier. The works of this mosaicists are recognizable through the creation of mosaic decoration characterized by geometric designs and motifs that are formed by relatively precise drawings, featuring harmonious forms that exhibit a prominent sense of symmetry and color harmony.

In contrast, the two mosaics in the thermal complex, created in *opus segmentatum*, were likely executed by either another workshop or, more probably,

by single artisan characterized by a much rougher craftsmanship of mosaic floors. These mosaics showcase freely formed geometric designs lacking symmetry, with simple and irregularly shaped motifs.

Comparative analysis of the mosaics

Mosaics in opus tessellatum:

The mosaics in the dining rooms and corridors of the Episcopal Residence share technical, iconographic, and stylistic similarities with those from the second phase of the Synagogue II in Stobi²³. These

²³ Djordje Mano-Zissi was the first to identify similarities among certain mosaics from the Episcopal Residence and the Synagogue II in Stobi. See: Dj. Mano-Zissi, *Stratigraphic problems*, 209-210; R. Kolarik, M. Petrovski, *Technical Observations on Mosaics at Stobi, Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi II*, Beograd 1975, 74-75, 104; R. Kolarik, *The floor mosaics of Stobi and their Balkan context*, PhD Diss. Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1981, 197-201.



Fig.31 Synagogue II. Preserved mosaic fragments from the second phase. Photo – M. Tutkovski

similarities encompass several aspects, including the careful craftsmanship of the mosaic tesserae, the technique of inserting them in the bedding layer with small interstices, the choice of materials, tesserae dimensions and colors. Additionally, specific geometric designs and motifs such as chessboard patterns, interconnected peltae patterns, orthogonal pattern of adjacent fish scales, double and six-strand guilloche bordures and serrated saw-tooth bordures, that frame the partially preserved inscriptions in both locations (Fig.31,32). This evidence strongly suggests that the *opus tessellatum* mosaics in the Episcopal Residence and those from the second phase of the Synagogue II are created by the same mosaic workshop.

Mosaics in opus segmentatum:

The distinct mosaic technique employed in the thermal complex of the Episcopal Residence also appears in three rooms of the Theodosian Palace in Stobi. In the apsidal part of the large dining room (stibadium) in the Theodosian Palace, there is a non-decorative *opus segmentatum* floor. Additionally, the central courtyard and the raised platform in room 3 of the palace feature mosaic decorations executed in *opus segmentatum*²⁴. However, there are notable differences between these mosaics and those in the Episcopal Residence. While the mosaics in the Theodosian Palace exhibit relatively precise and harmonious shapes arranged symmetrically, the mosaics in the Episcopal Residence display rougher craftsmanship, irregularly shaped elements, and a lack of symmetrical arrangement (Fig.29,30). Based on the existing evidences, it can be assumed that the mosaics in the thermal complex of the Episcopal Residence were created by a different mosaic workshop or, more likely, by a single mosaic artist who drew inspiration from the mosaics in the Theodosian Palace.



Fig.32 Synagogue II. Preserved mosaic fragment with inscription. Courtesy of Ruth Kolarik.

Dating of the building and the mosaics

The excavations conducted thus far have not provided archaeological evidence suitable for precise dating of the construction and its various phases. The Episcopal Residence belongs to the group of luxurious residential structures constructed on the middle terrace of the ancient city of Stobi, likely toward the end of the 3rd or early 4th century²⁵. Originally serving as a private residence for a member of the aristocra-

²⁴ D. Gerasimovska, Importance of Decoration in the House of Parthenius in Stobi, *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi IV*, Stobi 2018, 238-259; M. Тутковски, *Доцноантичките мозаици*, 152-158.

²⁵ Д. Герасимовска, *Улогата на живеалиштето*, 75

cy, it retained this function until the late 5th century when it became the episcopal residence following the construction of the new Episcopal Basilica²⁶. Several construction interventions during the 5th and 6th centuries have been identified in different areas of the Episcopal Residence, suggesting that the building continued to evolve. It ultimately fell out of use by the end of the 6th century²⁷, as indicated by the discovery of a coin depot with a *terminus post quem* of 583/4 in the room north of the stibadium²⁸.

Analyzes of the *opus tessellatum* mosaics in the Episcopal Residence have confirmed their common origin with the second-phase mosaics in Synagogue II of Stobi. Given that the Synagogue II mosaics are dated to the middle or second half of the 4th century²⁹, it can be reasonably concluded that the mosaic decoration in the Episcopal Residence was also created during this period. On the other hand, the mosaic floors in the thermal complex appear to be of a later date, as they were created by different mosaic artists who attempted to replicate the style of the mosaics found in the Theodosian Palace in Stobi. Given that the mosaics in the Theodosian Palace are dated to the late 4th or early 5th century³⁰, the *opus segmentatum* mosaics in the Episcopal Residence's thermal complex can be roughly dated to the first half of the 5th century.

It is noteworthy that all of the mosaic floors in this building were laid down in the period when the building was still a private residence, and according to the present knowledge, most of them remained in use even after the building was repurposed as the Episcopal Residence in the late 5th or beginning of the 6th century. Mosaic floors adorned the rooms of the Episcopal Residence until the end of the 6th century when the building was eventually abandoned.

²⁶ More about the dating of the Episcopal Basilica – phase I, see in: C.S. Snively, The Episcopal Basilica at Stobi in Context, *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi IV*, Stobi 2018, 288-290; G. Pavlovski, S. Blaževska, Archaeological Evidence for Earthquakes in Stobi, *Monumenta* Vol. 2-3 (2017-2018), 59; M. Тутковски, Мозаичната декорација од првата фаза на Епископската базилика во Стоби, *Патримониум.МК* 18 (2020), 186-188.

²⁷ Л. Робева-Чуковска, З. Георгиев, Б. Боев, Истражувања на ранохристијанската интарзија, 233; Д. Герасимовска, *Улогата на живеалиштето*, 75.

²⁸ М. Хаџи-Манева, Нумизматички сведоштва 381-396; M. Hadji-Maneva, Early Byzantine Coin Circulation, 107-132.

²⁹ J. Wiseman, Dj. Mano-Zissi, Excavations at Stobi, 1971, 408-411; R. Kolarik, M. Petrovski, Technical Observations on Mosaics at Stobi, 71-75, 104; R. Kolarik, *The floor mosaics of Stobi*, 197-201.

³⁰ М. Тутковски, *Доцноантичките мозаици*, 159-160.

МОЗАИЧНАТА ДЕКОРАЦИЈА ОД ЕПИСКОПСКАТА РЕЗИДЕНЦИЈА ВО СТОБИ

Резиме

Во овој труд се презентирани мозаичните подови кои се откриени во Епископската резиденција од Стоби (градбата е именувана како „Коцкарница“ или „Казино“ во постарата литература). Епископската резиденција има слична архитектонска концепција со останатите луксузни резиденцијални објекти од Стоби, какви што се Куќата на Партениј, Теодосијанската палата, Куќата на Перистерија и Куќата на Полихарм. Првобитната градба која најверојатно била подигната кон крајот на III или во почетокот на IV век имала функција на приватна резиденција, а кон крајот на V или во почетокот на VI век, односно по изградбата на новата Епископска базилика во Стоби, оваа градба ја добила функцијата на Епископска резиденција.

Резиденцијата има голем број на простории организирани околу внатрешниот перистил кој се состои од централен двор со луксузна фонтана и базен на западната страна. Коридори со колониади го затвораат централниот двор од северната, источната и јужната страна, а кон нив се надоврзуваат повеќе простории, од кои единствено оние на источната и северната страна се откриени речиси во целост. На северната страна од перистилот има три простории, од кои средишната имала функција на трпезарија-триклиниум, а на источната страна од перистилот е лоцирана големата апсидална просторија кој имала функција на трпезарија-стибадиум. Во североисточниот дел од градбата се наоѓа и термалниот комплекс кој се состои од повеќе простории со различна намена.

Мозаици во *opus tessellatum* се откриени во двете трпезарии и во трите коридори од перистилот на резиденцијата, а на две локации од термалниот комплекс се откриени мозаични подови изработени во *opus segmentatum*.

Најголем дел од мозаиците во *opus tessellatum* се сочувани само во фрагменти, а единствено во јужниот коридор е сочувана поголема мозаична

површина, која, исто така, претрпела сериозни оштетувања. Сочуваната мозаична декорација се состои од геометриски дизајни и мотиви кои се обликувани со релативно прецизни цртежи и складни форми со изразено чувство за симетрија и колористичка хармонија. Резултатите од анализите кои се презентирани во овој труд покажуваат дека овие мозаици имаат идентични технички, иконографски и стилски карактеристики со мозаичните подови од втората фаза од Синагога II во Стоби. Правилната изработка на тесерите, манирот на редување со мали фуѓи, изборот на материјалите, димензиите и колоритот на тесерите, како и специфичните геометриски дизајни, мотиви и бордури кои се повторуваат кај мозаиците од двете градби, го откриваат уметничкиот ракопис на едно мозаичарско ателје кое работело во Стоби кон средината или во втората половина од IV век.

Мозаиците во *opus segmentatum* кои се откриени во термалниот комплекс од резиденцијата имаат значително подобра состојба од претходните. Декоративните аранжмани на двата мозаици се состојат од едноставни геометриски дизајни кои се оформени слободно и со неправилни форми. Овие мозаици се изработени од други мозаичари кои најверојатно биле инспирирани од *opus segmentatum* декорацијата од Теодосијанската палата во Стоби. Времето на настанување на овие мозаични аранжмани може само приближно да се одреди во првата половина од V век.

Сите мозаични подови кои ги украсувале просториите од оваа градба, биле поставени уште во времето кога градбата била приватна резиденција. Според досегашните сознанија, најголем дел од нив останале во употреба и откако градбата ја добила функцијата на Епископска резиденција во доцниот V или во раниот VI век, а останале во употреба сè до крајот на VI век, кога резиденцијата била напуштена.

