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GERDA VON BÜLOW / SOFIJA PETKOVIĆ
(HERAUSGEBERINNEN)

GAMZIGRAD-STUDIEN I

ERGEBNISSE DER DEUTSCH-SERBISCHEN
FORSCHUNGEN IM UMFELD DES
PALASTES ROMULIANA



GERDA VON BÜLOW / SOFIJA PETKOVIĆ
(HERAUSGEBERINNEN)

GAMZIGRAD-STUDIEN I

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Gamzigrad-Studien I

Ergebnisse der deutsch-serbischen Forschungen im Umfeld des Palastes *Romuliana*

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON
GERDA VON BÜLOW UND SOFIJA PETKOVIĆ

MIT BEITRÄGEN VON
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GORDANA JEREMIĆ, ALEKSANDAR KAPURAN,
NATAŠA MILADINOVIĆ-RADMILOVIĆ, MARK OPELT, SOFIJA PETKOVIĆ,
STEFAN POP-LAZIĆ, ANA PREMK, CHRISTOPH RUMMEL, TIM SCHÜLER,
BRIGITTA SCHÜTT, JANA ŠKUNDRIĆ-RUMMEL, JÁNOS TÓTH, MILOJE VASIĆ
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Mosaics from Gamzigrad, with a special overview of the *sectilia pavimenta**

By Gordana Jeremić

Even though the remains of the fortification and buildings in Gamzigrad have been known since the 19th century, mosaics, as the most representative artistic and creative works of this imperial complex, were discovered only with the beginning of the first institutionalised researches of this site in the middle of the 20th century¹. First parts of the mosaic carpets with figural scenes appeared already during the first year of research, in 1953, within one of the corridors (hall 4) of palace 1, and they were published immediately after the discovery by their researcher, Đorđe Mano-Zisi. In that study, he reviewed them from their stylistic aspects, first and foremost, while attempting to provide a more precise dating for them, since the character and the name of the site were still unknown at the time². The year of 1969 was very significant because new discoveries of mosaic floors were made. An exquisite figural mosaic was discovered that year – a panel with a representation of Dionysus, set in an *aula* (hall 7), along with parts of floor decorated with cut marble tiles technique (*sectilia pavimenta*), in the most luxurious chamber of the palatial complex. Mosaics of Gamzigrad became available to the public through a series of conservation-restoration works, starting from 1954, as well as publications and expositional activities³.

Findings of rich decorations on floor and wall surfaces, ornate with cut marble tiles or mosaic cubes (*tesserae*), speak very eloquently of the desire of the purchaser to surround himself with luxury in the place where his life path began and would come to an end⁴. The rich and precious program of decorations for building units of *Felix Romuliana* comprehended mosaic floors discovered in eight rooms of palace 1, in the cross-shaped building in the south-western corner of the fortification (the so-called Romula's *triclinium*) and in the bath (identified by the researchers as "*thermae*") in the south-eastern corner of the fortification (*fig. 1*)⁵. Floors decorated with cut marble tiles (*sectilia pavimenta*) were registered in rooms and open spaces of palace 1 and in the *thermae*.

Buildings from the fortification complex of Gamzigrad also had walls and vaults decorated with mosaics, out of which individual findings of glass *tesserae*, with traces of golden foil on one side, have been preserved⁶. During more recent researches, individual *tesserae* were discovered in the complex, to the north from the representative fortification, within the building marked as *basilica*, the concentration of which could point towards the possibility that, at one point, this space could have been used as a depot of mosaic materials or a workshop (*officina*) *in situ* for the making of *tesserae* or mobile mosaic panels, used to decorate the buildings of Gamzigrad⁷.

* This paper is a result of the research on the project of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia: *Romanisation, urbanisation and transformation of urban centres of civil, military and residential character in Roman provinces on the territory of Serbia* (No. 177007).

1 ŽIVIĆ 2011, 15–16.

2 MANO-ZISI 1956, 67–84.

3 JEREMIĆ 2009, 34–36; 39–60, with earlier references; ŽIVIĆ 2011, 18.

4 This paper will not be dealing with problems regarding wall decorations in cut marble tiles technique, whose remains were noted in several rooms *in situ*, preserved, mostly, in lower zones of the walls. One of the best examples are the remains of a marble decoration in the octagon room, across from the *aula*, where remains of marble tiles were discovered (*porfido verde antico*), as well as iron anchors which fastened them onto the wall. See: ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 101.

5 JEREMIĆ 2009, 39–60.

6 Blue glass *tesserae* with golden foil were discovered in 2008, in the *apodyterium* of the bath, near the apse. ŽIVIĆ 2011, 128 note 27.

7 For additional information on this building, see VON BÜLOW in this publication, 96–99.

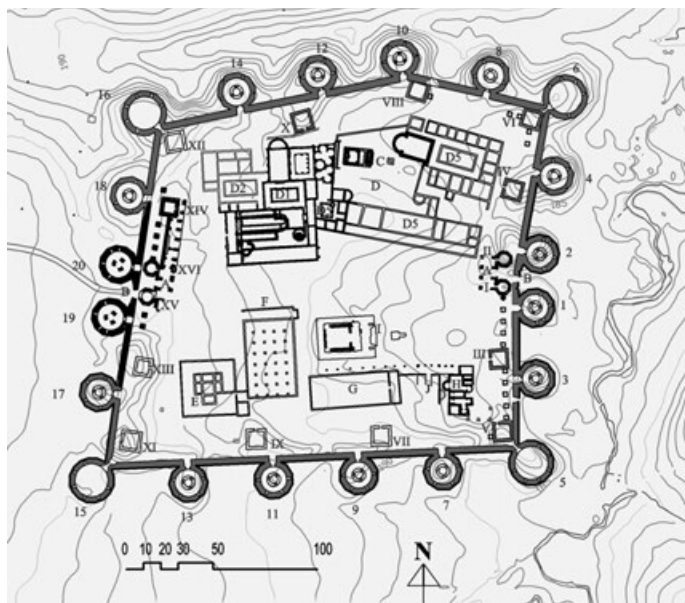


Fig. 1. Gamzigrad, site map: D1 – palace 1, E – cruciforme structure, H – baths (according to ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 53 pl. V).

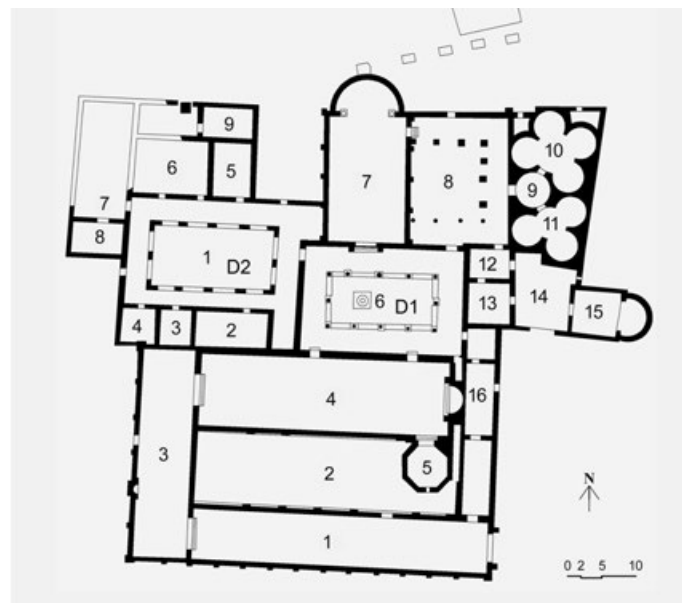


Fig. 2. Gamzigrad, plan of palace 1 (according to ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 89 pl. XXXIV).

MOSAICS FROM PALACE 1

The palace, with the appertaining rooms, took up the entire northern half of the fortification in *Felix Romuliana*; however, the complex with an elaborate basis and complicated, almost labyrinth-shaped passage scheme, in the north-western corner of the fortification, was marked as palace *proprie dictu* (palace 1) (fig. 2). Palace 1 is located on the surface of c. 3250 m². Archaeological researches were conducted here from 1953 up to 1974, when the biggest part of it was discovered. The researches established that the mosaics covered almost 1600 m² of the surface of the floors (fig. 3). They were discovered in various degrees of preservations, mostly because of later construction works and adaptations for repurposing certain rooms⁸.

The entrance into the palatial labyrinth was located on the eastern side of a long corridor (hall 1), near the very middle of the fortified palace, where there, on an imaginary axis, should be the intersection of *cardo* (which was, in fact, negated by objects built there) and the *decumanus*, which represented the only transversal in the fortification. By passing through three corridors (1, 3, and 4), with gradational additions of decorative elements in the architecture of the building (a niche in hall 3, the apse and appertaining octagon chamber near hall 4), one would reach the luxurious *atrium*. From the space with subdued light (halls 1, 3, and 4), in which that darkness was additionally stressed by mosaics as well, which had predominantly dark borders and motifs (fig. 4a.b), one would reach an area with more

“breathing space” (*atrium* 6), and with quite a lot of natural light, which prepared the visitors for a new dramatic change, making them face an even more dynamic decoration program upon entering a spacious chamber with an apse on the north (*aula*) (hall 7). They would, in fact, come face to face with a mosaic panel representing a seated Dionysus, with a nimbus around his head, and also a leopard sitting by his feet, looking tamed and content (fig. 5)⁹. By setting a mosaic panel of high artistic value onto the floor at the very entrance into the most festive chamber of the palace, its importance and sacralisation was emphasised. Additional decorative elements in the room only contribute to the sense of luxury and nobility of the space (fig. 6): there is a slightly raised podium in the central part, decorated with cut marble tiles (*sectilia pavimenta*) and surrounded by small mosaic fields depicting vivacious figural scenes (one of them being the preserved scene of animal hunting with *canis venaticus*) (fig. 7)¹⁰, and mosaic carpets with densely distributed motifs, which resemble fabrics made in patchwork style. The transition from the sacral space of the *aula* into smaller official rooms, accessible only to few privileged ones, leads through another spacious atrium decorated with mosaics (*atrium* 8) up to two

⁸ ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 100–101 fig. 81.

⁹ JEREMIĆ 2006, 49–50.

¹⁰ JEREMIĆ 2011, 293–295 figs 4; 5.

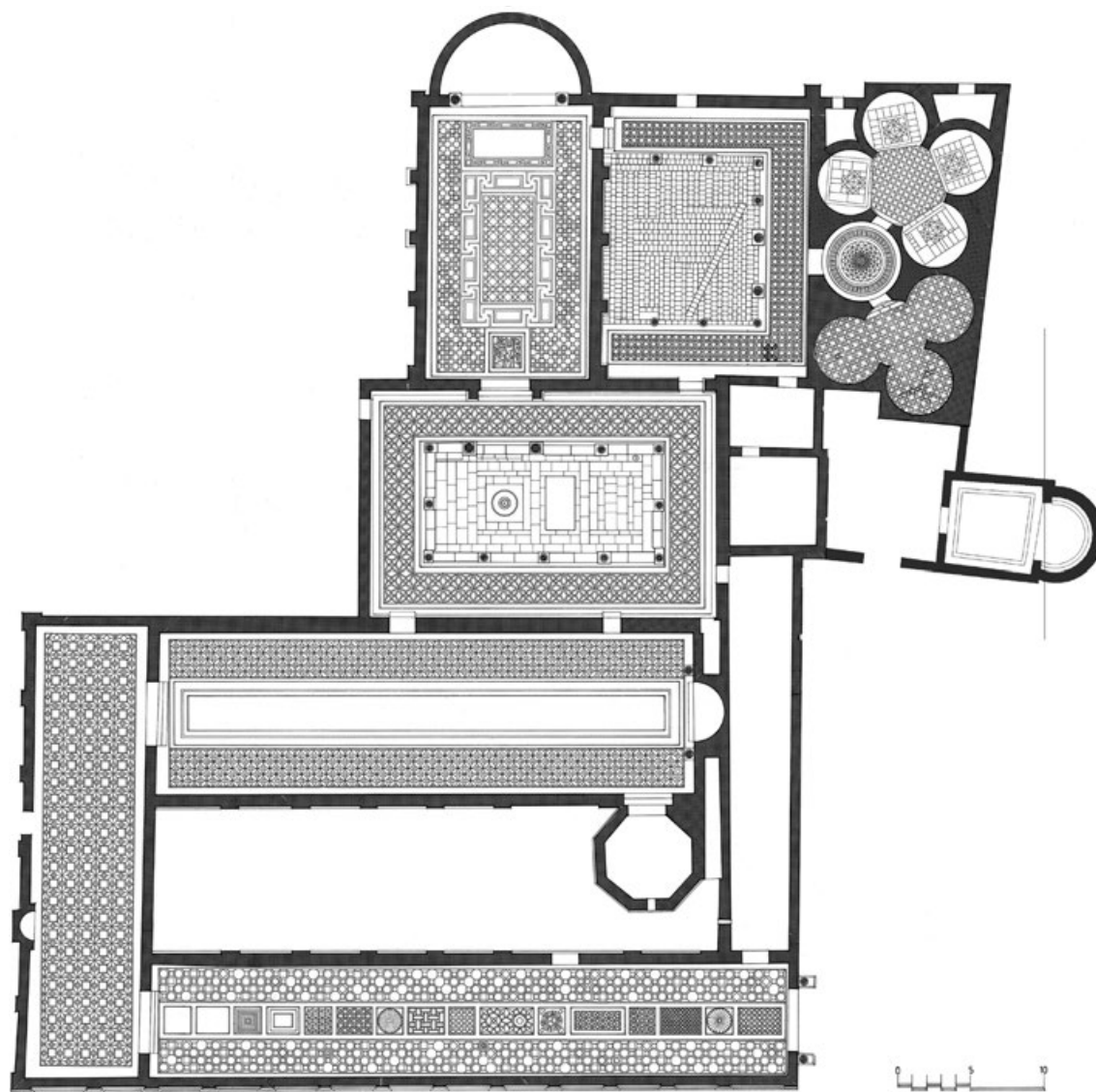


Fig. 3. Gamzigrad, plan of palace 1 with reconstructed mosaics (according to ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 89 pl. XXXV).

luxurious *stibadia* (halls 10 and 11) with floors decorated with cut marble tiles (more on that later). Those chambers were separated by a circular antechamber (hall 9) with a mosaic resembling a vortex spreading radially, from the centre towards the periphery, developing the motif of a shield formed of triangles (fig. 8).

The mosaics of palace 1 were formed in the shape of diverse rectangular geometrical carpets, in between which figural or geometric panels were placed. Certain carpets were made either in combination with or solely out of cut marble tiles (*sectilia pavimenta*). Different composition patterns were applied for the mosaics. In hall 1, there are octagons and meanders composed of swastikas, which is a less complicated motif, with the greatest number of par-

allels in Northern Africa, very popular in the times of the Severan dynasty¹¹. Among the panels from this chamber, the famous example with the labyrinth stands out, depicted in the hexagonal fortification with towers¹². Parallels for this type of labyrinths were shown on *circa* forty mosaics, in a wide chronological range during the Roman and late Roman period, and the majority of them belongs to the mosaic production of workshops of the Western Empire (27) or workshops from Northern Africa (7) (fig. 4c)¹³. In the chamber which is reached through corridor 1, i. e. in

11 SALIES 1974, 11 octagon system III, 39.

12 JEREMIĆ 2006, 49–50.

13 DASZEWSKI 1977, 42.



Fig. 4a. Gamzigrad, hall 1 of palace 1, side mosaic carpet (according to Živić 2011, 130 fig. 92).



Fig. 4b. Gamzigrad, hall 1 of palace 1, mosaic carpets and panels, detail (according to Živić 2011, 131 fig. 94a).



Fig. 4c. Gamzigrad, hall 1 of palace 1, mosaic panel depicting labyrinth (according to Živić 2011, 131 fig. 94a).

hall 3, the composition pattern is made of stars, formed by eight rhombi¹⁴. In hall 4, the division of fields into two parallel carpets was repeated, with panels in the interspace, filled with figural scenes this time¹⁵. Due to the very low preservation level of the mosaics, only parts of three panels are known, one of them showing a hunting scene (*venatio*) with two hunters very attentively awaiting a beast to show up, ready to catch it (*fig. 9a.b*)¹⁶. Hunting scenes were depicted in successive panels in *Felix Romuliana*, which were typical for mosaics from *Antiochia* (Antakya, Prov. Hatay, TR), in periods preceding Late Antiquity. However, hunting scenes became popular in North Africa first, and the earliest known example from Antioch is dated into the time of Constantine I, though we may note two different concepts, in regards to the contents, of the meaning of hunting in this two workshop circles¹⁷.

The paving of the spacious *atrium* 8, with a colonnade and a fountain, was made of marble tiles in the middle part, while the porches had mosaic floors, which were rather poorly preserved; however, the motif of crosses with four

14 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 70 no. 367.

15 MANO-ZISI 1956, 77–80 figs 18–20.

16 JEREMIĆ 2006, 50; 51 fig. 4; JEREMIĆ 2009, 228; 238–239.

17 JEREMIĆ 2009, 239.



Fig. 5. Gamzigrad, hall 7 of palace 1, panel with Dionysus (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).



Fig. 6. Gamzigrad, hall 7 of palace 1 (according to ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 93 fig. 55).

rhombi, placed in a circle, could be reconstructed¹⁸. Mosaic carpets of the most representative chamber of the palace (hall 7) were subdivided by connected octagons, which formed squares on the sides¹⁹. This pattern was especially popular in Northern Africa in the 3rd and the 4th century, while it was barely present in the mosaic art of Antioch at the same time²⁰. Octagons and squares were used as frames for numerous polychrome fill-in motifs, which were seen in hall 1 as well, however, the dense distribution of these



Fig. 7. Gamzigrad, hall 7 of palace 1, *canis venaticus* (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

18 BALMELLE et al. 2002, 40. Similar to this motif: BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 69 no. 364.

19 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 66 no. 344.

20 SALIES 1974, 10 fig. 34–37 (octagon system I).



Fig. 8. Gamzigrad, hall 9 of palace 1, mosaic (according to Živić 2011, 135 fig. 101).



Fig. 9. Gamzigrad, hall 4 of palace 1. a. mosaic panel with *venatio* (according to Živić 2011, 132 fig. 96). – b. mosaic panel with leopard (according to Živić 2011, 132 fig. 97).

motifs, and too large a number of them, produced an unpleasant feeling of overcrowding – *horror vacui*²¹.

A special place in hall 7 is taken by the mosaic panel with the famous depiction of Dionysus (fig. 5), placed so as to face the visitor, who had to go through a long and complicated path through the labyrinth to reach its centre. Dionysus, like the guardian of the crossing, is shown in an affected pose, with flexed muscles, theatrically raised hands, holding a *kantharos* in one hand, and leaning on a *thyrsus* with the other²². The fragile beauty of his face is in slight disproportion to the massive body of a hedonist, whose musculature, however, would be more appropriate for a body shaped through many Herculean exertions. Branches of the grapevine, standing in free space without support, depict the exuberance of nature and opulence of the vineyard, suggesting a rich local production of wine, necessary for every-day pleasures of Dionysian rituals. The leopard sitting by Dionysus' feet with jaws wide open leaves the impression of an animal which had only just sat down to rest after a frantic chase after the prey. This representation of Dionysus was probably chosen for the decoration program of the palace because of the esthetical and symbolic role it had for Galerius and his concept of ruling. Dionysus was one of the favourite deities depicted in mosaic art. The god of wine, patron of vineculture, agriculture, and theatre, with an entourage of maenads and

satyrs, had gone through many regions, from Spain up to India, teaching people how to grow grapevine and make wine. Those who would resist the cult or fail to pay it due respect, he punished with madness, causing them to kill their own descendants²³. Parallels for this representation of Dionysus primarily come from the Hellenistic period (Pella, Reg. Makedonien, GR; Delos, GR), and they are influenced by the identification of this deity with Alexander the Great, who, same as Dionysus, came all the way to India in his triumphant quest²⁴. The figure of Dionysus, as well as the panels with hunting scenes from Galerius' palace in Gamzigrad, can be compared, by their properties, to the best achievements of their time, and they were created according to classicistic models from the 2nd and the 3rd century. Dragoslav Srejšović interpreted the choice of Dionysus for the decoration of the most representative chamber in the palace of Gamzigrad as the desire of Emperor Galerius to be identified with this son of divine Zeus / Jupiter and a mortal mother, later enlisted among the inhabitants of Mount Olympus. Through this identification, Galerius could be likened to Alexander the Great, who waged wars on the East, just like the Emperor himself in AD 297–298, celebrating his triumph in the beginning of AD 299 in Antioch, where he could have found inspiration for the mosaic representations of Gamzigrad.

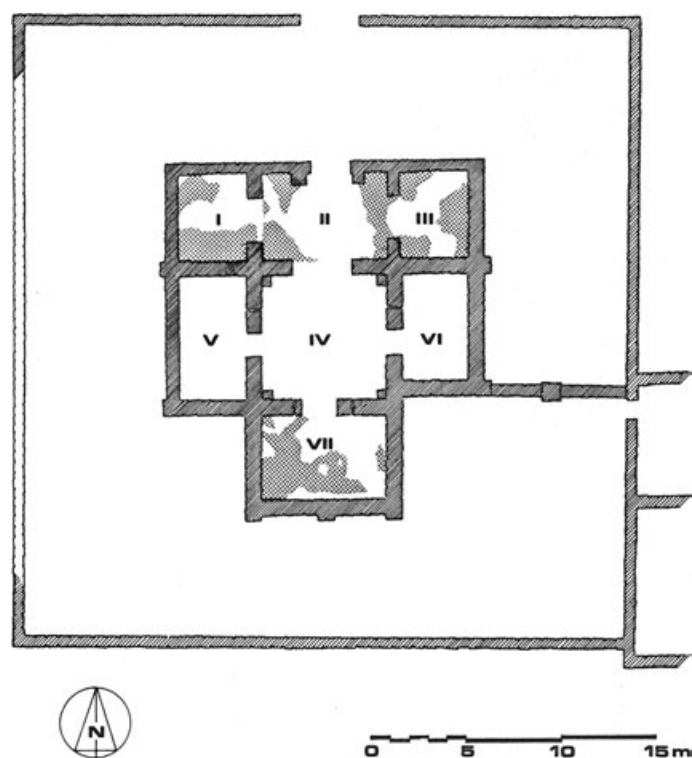


Fig. 10. Gamzigrad, cruciform structure in southwest part of the fortification (according to ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 86 pl. XXXII).

21 JEREMIĆ 2009, 54.

22 KOLARIK 1994, 176–179; JEREMIĆ 2006, 50–53; JEREMIĆ 2009, 54–55.

23 JEREMIĆ 2009, 175; with earlier references.

24 JEREMIĆ 2006, 50–52 figs 5–9.

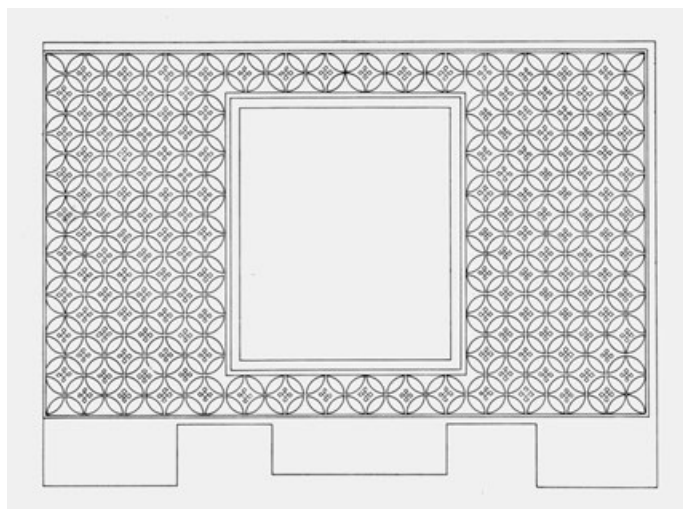


Fig. 11a. Gamzigrad, cruciform structure, room II, reconstruction of mosaic (according to SREJOVIĆ 1985, fig. 4).

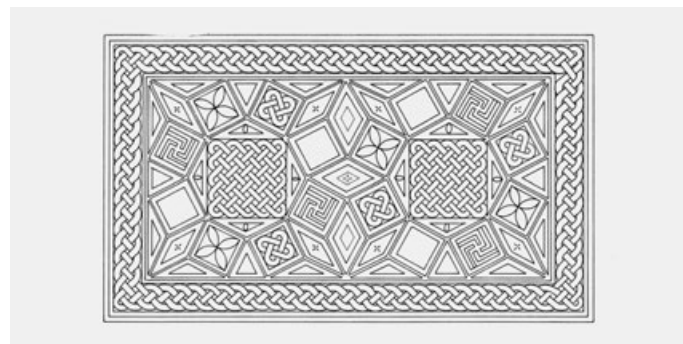


Fig. 11d. Gamzigrad, cruciform structure, room VII, reconstruction of mosaic (according to SREJOVIĆ 1985, fig. 7).

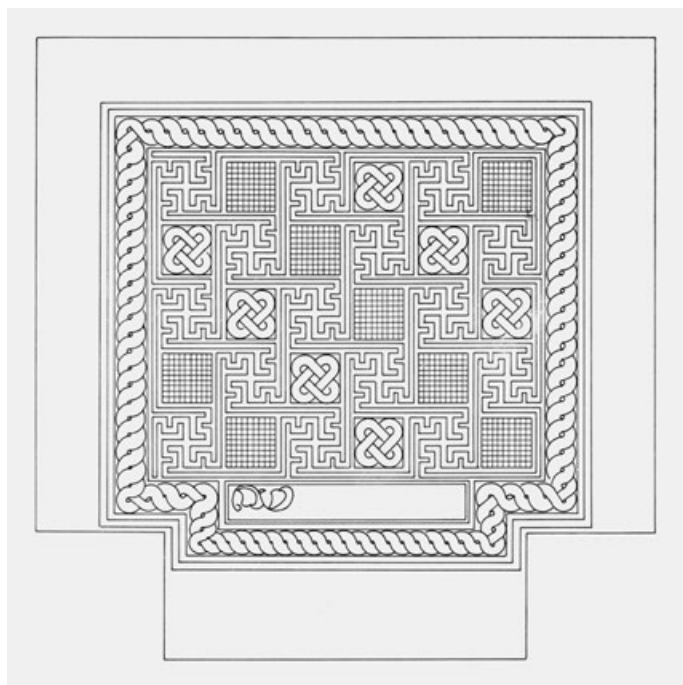


Fig. 11b. Gamzigrad, cruciform structure, room I, reconstruction of mosaic (according to SREJOVIĆ 1985, fig. 5).

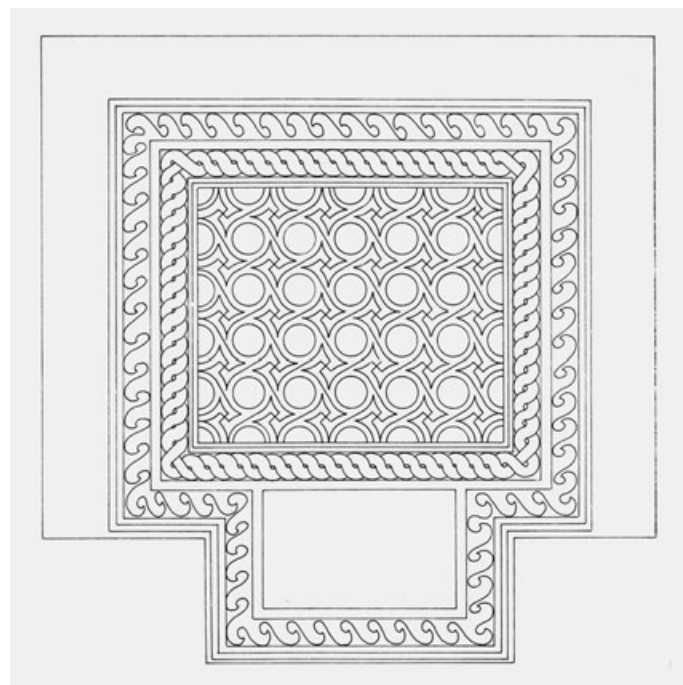


Fig. 11c. Gamzigrad, cruciform structure, room III, reconstruction of mosaic (according to SREJOVIĆ 1985, fig. 6).

MOSAICS FROM THE CROSS-SHAPED BUILDING IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN PART OF THE FORTIFICATION

In the south-western corner of the fortification in *Felix Romuliana*, separated by a built fence, there is a building with a cross-shaped base, with an entrance on the northern side (fig. 10). Archaeological researches noted that the building also had rich floor decorations. The floor of the

square central room consisted of large marble tiles, while in four rooms (I, II, III, and VII) parts of mosaic floors were discovered (fig. 11a–d), and it is probable that they existed in two more rooms (V and VI), however, they were completely destroyed²⁵. The poor preservation level didn't al-

low for a complete overview of composition patterns and motifs. Judging by the patterns present, they resemble the most to those from hall 1 (overlapping circles which form

four-petal flowers²⁶, tangent circles²⁷, octagons with stars formed by squares and rhombi²⁸), thus allowing us to assume that they may have come from the same workshop²⁹.

MOSAIC FROM THE BATH IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN PART OF THE FORTIFICATION

The bath (*thermae*) in the south-eastern part of the fortification was researched in several campaigns, starting from 1984. The most representative room was the *apodyterium*, whose floor was decorated with square tiles made from marble and dark sandstone, set in the pattern of a chess-board, beneath which remains of a mosaic floor were registered, that probably had never been finished / that might never have been finished (fig. 12). Beneath the mosaic, another, older floor of the room was registered, made of hydrostatic mortar, resting on a substructure of broken stone and clay. On the western end, the *apodyterium* ended with a raised semi-circular niche, also decorated with mosaics.

According to their pattern, the remains of the mosaics from the *apodyterium* imitate the floors made of cut marble tiles, filled with representations of the Solomon's knot. The mosaic was most probably created at the same time as the mosaics from the palace and the cross-shaped building, between AD 308/309–311. One of the questions is: why was the making of mosaics at the *apodyterium* brought to a stop? Was the sudden death of the Emperor the reason for this, or had the mosaic-masters been sent away from decorating this building, for some reason, even earlier? The placing of marble and stone tiles on pieces of mosaics is also difficult to explain. Furthermore, the question of absolute chronology is also impossible to answer in a satisfactory manner. Let us assume that the mosaic floor was made at the same time as other rooms decorated in the same way and that some of the mosaicists were hired to decorate the simple mortar floor of the bath (from the first phase of the fortification of Gamzigrad or earlier?) in a richer manner, with polychrome mosaics. It is possible that the mosaics were laid out in the final period of the hiring of mosaicists, who abandoned the workplace without having finished it is possible that the purchaser was dissatisfied for some reason. It is not possible to answer the question of how much time had passed from the making of the mosaics up to the setting of the next layer of the floor, namely marble tiles, with more precision at this point, because the bath was in use for a relatively long time during the 4th century and later. Therefore, the already mentioned tiles could have been added during later redecorations³⁰.



Fig. 12. Gamzigrad, baths, mosaic (according to Živić 2011, 136 fig. 102).

25 JEREMIĆ 2009, 59; with earlier references.

26 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 82 no. 437.

27 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 81 no. 431; SALIES 1974, 51.

28 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 104 no. 583.

29 JEREMIĆ 2009, 57–58.

30 PETKOVIĆ 2011, 176–178.



Fig. 13. Gamizgrad, hall 7, floor before conservation, viewed from the south (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

SECTILIA PAVIMENTA IN THE BUILDINGS OF GAMZIGRAD

The *sectilia pavimenta* technique – decorating floors using cut marble tiles, belongs to the group of luxurious and expensive decorating techniques of the Roman period. In the most ornate Roman houses, villas or public buildings, cut tile floors were most commonly a central feature in reception rooms³¹. Small or large tiles, most commonly of a square shape, were used for paving surfaces, and a module of the size of one Roman foot was used to measure them. This is one of the medium sized modules (from

one to three feet), and was favoured for the setting of tiles using this technique³². In Late Antiquity, secondarily used building and decorative materials are frequently encountered – tiles of different thickness and shape are used together on the same surface. The sites of the Roman world most commonly reveal floors where only the base is preserved, whilst the tiles themselves have most frequently been removed or used for some other purpose.

During the archaeological researches of the buildings inside the fortification, rooms and spaces meticulously decorated with multi-coloured marble or stone panels were registered. The large *aula* of the palace at *Felix Romuliana* (hall 7) represents the most north-westerly room of the complex (figs 6; 13)³³. The *sectilia pavimenta*



Fig. 14. Gamizgrad, hall 7, floor before conservation, detail, viewed from the south (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

31 In contemporary archaeological literature, the term *opus sectile* is used to describe the covering of both floors and walls with marble or some other material tiles, cut into certain shapes and laid onto a flat surface, whilst in Antique sources the term *sectilia pavimenta* is used to describe a floor covering. See: DUNBABIN 1999, 254; GUIDOBALDI 2005, 803–821. In Vitruvius' work on architecture, a method of laying tiles was described, see: Vitr. De arch. VII. 1.1. For the final layer, into which tiles are laid, see: MOORE 1968, 64–66. From the 1st century AD, in *sectilia pavimenta*, a base of brick or amphora fragments, pieces of marble or porous stone set in mortar was introduced, see: DUNBABIN 1999, 257.

32 DUNBABIN 1999, 257 no. 19.

33 ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 107; SREJOVIĆ 1983, 40; ČANAK-MEDIĆ / STOJKOVIĆ-PAVELKA 2011, 92–93 fig. 55.



Fig. 15a–c. Gamzigrad, hall 7, detail of the substructure of the cut tile floor (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).



in the *aula* of the palace at Gamzigrad was in the central, rectangular part of the room. The surface with cut marble tiles was surrounded with mosaic panels, one of which is preserved, with a representation of a running hound (*canis venaticus*; fig. 7). The *sectilia pavimenta* in this room occupied a rectangular space, 3.5×7 m in size and was oriented north-south. The surface was divided into three rows, each containing seven square fields, produced by applying a medium-size module. At the time of its discovery (figs 13–15a–c), only the substructure of this floor was found, which consisted of a statumen of larger pebbles and broken stone and two thin layers of nucleus of mortar with ground brick and tile strips of different types of marble set into it. Traces of fluting were visible on some examples, whilst others contained rounded edges of skirting or parts of thresholds, which indicate that these were secondarily used materials (fig. 15c). Tile strips from the substructure were placed in four rows and formed a frame for the square fields. Each square field was diagonally divided by tile strips into four smaller fields, filled in with tiles arranged

in parallel rows. This base was covered by a thin layer of mortar, onto which larger cut tiles were placed. This final layer of the floor is not preserved. The composition pattern which could have been applied most likely consisted of rows of alternating squares, with squares set on their corners, and rectangular strips that divided the fields³⁴.

The substructure of a floor decorated by using the *opus sectile* technique was discovered in the two adjoining *triclinia* of palace 1. On the southern side, there was the triconch *triclinium* (hall 11), whose floor, of the *opus sectile* technique, rested on compacted soil and layers of stone, ground and broken bricks and mortar, whilst the cut tiles in the tetraconch *triclinium* (hall 10) rested on a substructure which was, in turn, laid on the hypocaust pillars³⁵. The entrance to the *triclinium* complex was situated on the western side and was accessed from the covered *atrium*

³⁴ BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 63 no. 329; 95 no. 518 var; GUIDOBALDI 2009, 416 tab. II, F.

³⁵ JEREMIĆ 2014, 285–286.



Fig. 16. Gamzigrad, palace 1, halls 10 and 11 (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).



Fig. 17. Gamzigrad, palace 1, hall 11, remains of the substructure of the *sectilia pavimenta* (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

(atrium 8) through the circular vestibule (room 9, in fig. 2). The spaces inside the triconch and tetraconch (octagonal central rooms and conchs) were separated by marble thresholds. In the substructure of the floor of the triconch, there are a large number of marble tiles of different dimensions, arranged in pairs into a cross-shape (fig. 17). The floor made by using the cut tile technique was one single installation, covering the entire surface of the room.

The tetraconch *triclinium* (hall 10) had a relatively poorly preserved floor of the *opus sectile* technique and, generally, what remains is the first and the second layer of the substructure (*statumen* and *nucleus*), with its upper layer with tiles arranged in cross-shapes set in mortar (fig. 18–20). The tiles are of different types of marble and are mostly cut into irregular strips. In the octagonal part of the room, there was a unique motif, judging by the preserved substructure and the impressions left in the mortar, whilst in the conchs, a system of rectangular panels was applied, with squares of larger dimensions compared to those in the central part of the room³⁶. In the hall, in the final layer of the floor, a less intricate pattern was used, which probably consisted of an orthogonal arrangement of squares, comprising squares set on their corners (fig. 21)³⁷.

Aside from the examples from Gamzigrad, floors made by using the *sectilia pavimenta* technique were noted at two sites (*Sirmium*, Sremska Mitrovica, okr. Srem, and *Naissus*, Niš, okr. Nišava) in the Late Antique provinces on the territory of Serbia. The complex of the Late Antique *villa urbana*, situated *intra muros* in the eastern part of *Sirmium*, also had its floor made using the *sectilia pavimenta* technique (fig. 22). The cut marble tile floor is fragmentally preserved within the room in the eastern part of the *villa* (room 19), which unfortunately has not been completely explored and which, according to researchers, served as a *triclinium*³⁸. To create motifs, white, pink, and black marble was used, whilst the frame was made of large dark green tiles³⁹. Marble tiles were placed with a composition pattern of large and small adjacent octagons that form rectangles in the spaces where they meet (fig. 23)⁴⁰, whilst at a distance of 1.5 m to the east of this field, there was a composition of marble tiles in the shape of dodecagons overlapping each other, forming a hexagon in the intersecting area (fig. 24)⁴¹. The floors made using the *sec-*

36 JEREMIĆ 2009, 173.

37 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 60 no. 312; GUIDOBALDI 2009, 416 tab. II,C.

38 PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1962, 128; PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1968, 138; PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1971, 24; PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1980, 174.

39 PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1968, 137–139.

40 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 66 no. 347.

41 BLANCHARD et al. 1973, 77 no. 407.



Fig. 18. Gamzigrad, palace 1, hall 10, remains of the substructure of the floor, channels and hypocaust (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).



Fig. 19. Gamzigrad, hall 10, remains of the substructure of the *sectilia pavimenta* (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

tilia pavimenta technique were dated into the same period as the mosaic floors of the villa, the second half of the 4th century, based on the numismatic finds⁴². At *Naissus*, on the outskirts of the Late Antique town, a luxurious *villa suburbana* was partially explored at the site of Konjsko

Groblje on Vinik slope (fig. 25). The *sectilia pavimenta* technique was discovered in the southernmost part of

42 PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1980, 179.



Fig. 20. Gamzigrad, hall 10, detail of the substructure of the floor (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).



Fig. 21. Gamzigrad, hall 10, conservation of the floor (photo by M. Medić, processed by N. Borić, photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

the villa (fig. 26), where elongated hexagonal tiles were used, made of white and black marble⁴³. Based on the coin findings, the building was dated into the beginning of the 4th century⁴⁴.

The geometric *sectilia pavimenta* appear as one of the favourite motifs in the Mediterranean basin throughout the Late Antiquity, particularly in the 4th century⁴⁵. Based on the impressions left in the mortar, the motifs that were reconstructed in the final layer of the floor in the *aula* and *triclinia* of the palace at Gamzigrad (halls 7, 10, and 11)

have their closest stylistic and chronological parallels in the *sectilia pavimenta* of the imperial palace in Thessaloniki (Reg. Makedonien, GR). In the *triclinium* of the palace in Thessaloniki (fig. 27), squares and rectangular strips arranged diagonally were used as motif⁴⁶. This motif (motif B, fig. 28) appears quite frequently, having been noted in the octagon, the vestibule, and in the *triclinium* of the palace, in a *domus* in Hagia Sophia Street, and in several buildings discovered in the area of the town⁴⁷. A simpler motif, rows of alternating squares and squares set on their corners (motif L, fig. 28), was noted on a mosaic in the vicinity of the Hagios Demetrios basilica⁴⁸. A close parallel for the base of radially arranged strips of marble tiles is encountered in the substructure of the floor in the Temple of Serapis at *Leptis Magna* (Distr. Tripolitania, LY) from the 3rd century, which had an intricate composite motif within square modules⁴⁹.

In conclusion, we could summarise that *sectilia pavimenta*, excluding the paving with simple marble or stone pavers of a square or rectangular shape occurring at a number of sites, was a technique of decorating floors which was considered very expensive. This technique was mainly used for decorating parts of the floors in the most representative rooms within opulent buildings. *Sectilia pavimenta* at the aforementioned sites appears as a separate, confined surface, sometimes raised in relation to the level of the room's floor, as noted in the large conched *aula* at *Felix Romuliana* (hall 7), where the *sectilia* is combined with geometric and figural mosaic carpets, which surround it. In the triconch and tetraconch *triclinium* of the palace at *Felix Romuliana*, the entire surfaces of these rooms were decorated with cut tiles. The overall appearance of the floor in the three *triclinia* at *Felix Romuliana* unfortunately remains unknown due to its devastation, although most certainly a square module with squares set on their corners was used and rectangular tiles could have been used as separation strips.

Trends of decorating floors using expensive materials and techniques, such as *opus tessellatum*, *opus vermiculatum*, and *sectilia pavimenta*, were well known to wealthy customers in the Late Antique provinces of the central Balkan. The central placement of cut tile floors in rooms, along with the aesthetic, might also have had a practical

43 Gušić 1977, 92–94.

44 Gušić 1977, 95.

45 Vitti 2005, 699–700.

46 Vitti 2005, 697 fig. 4 (motif B).

47 Vitti 2005, 697.

48 Vitti 2005, fig. 8.

49 GUIDOBALDI 2005, 813 fig. 15.

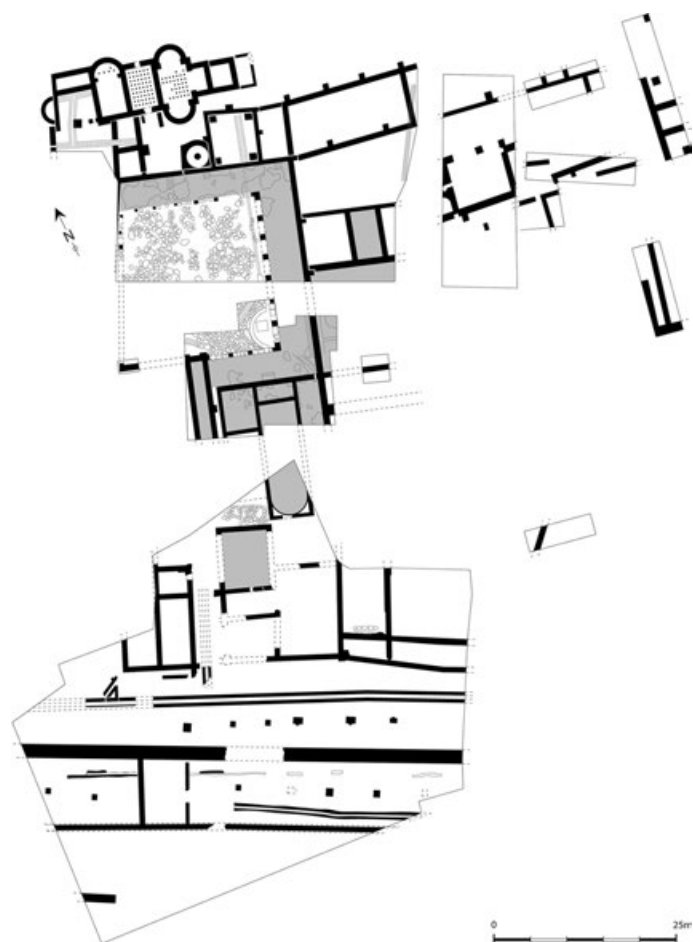


Fig. 22. *Sirmium, villa urbana*, plan (A. Subotić, according to the plan of PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1975, fig. 5).



Fig. 23. *Sirmium, villa urbana*, detail of the cut tile floor, by the northern wall (according to PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1971, pl. XI,38).



Fig. 24. *Sirmium, villa urbana*, detail of the cut tile floor, by the eastern wall (according to PAROVIĆ-PEŠIKAN 1971, pl. XI,39).

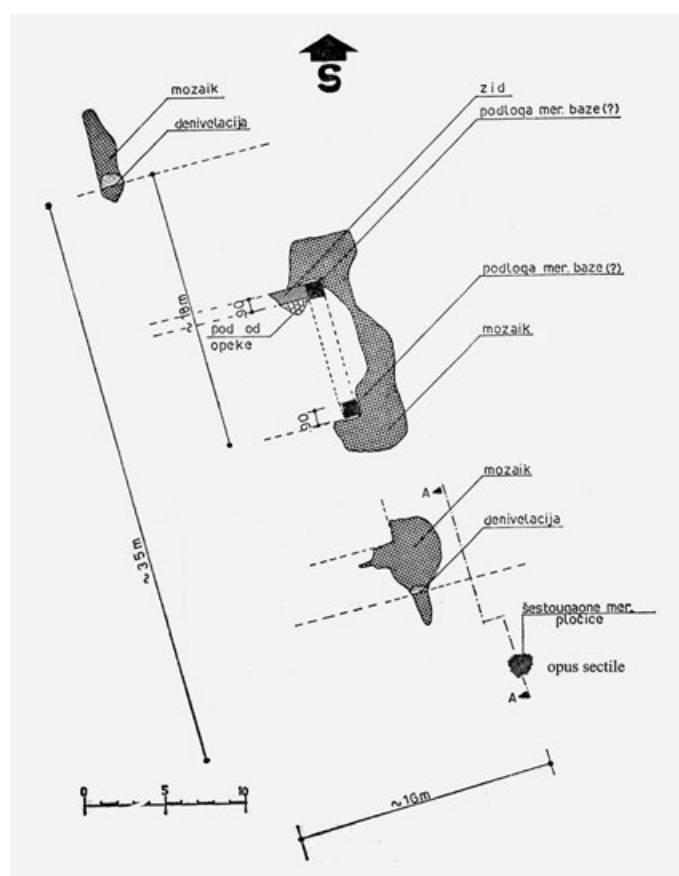


Fig. 25. *Naissus, villa suburbana*, plan (according to Gušić 1977, 92).

function. They were possibly placed this way due to ease of maintenance – the regularly shaped surfaces with cut tiles were more durable than those covered in a number of cubes with mortar joints. Even the reparation of cut tiles

was simpler compared to refitting the damaged mosaic floors. In addition, marble surfaces could have been more suitable for placing massive stone or marble furniture – chairs, thrones, tables, and the like.

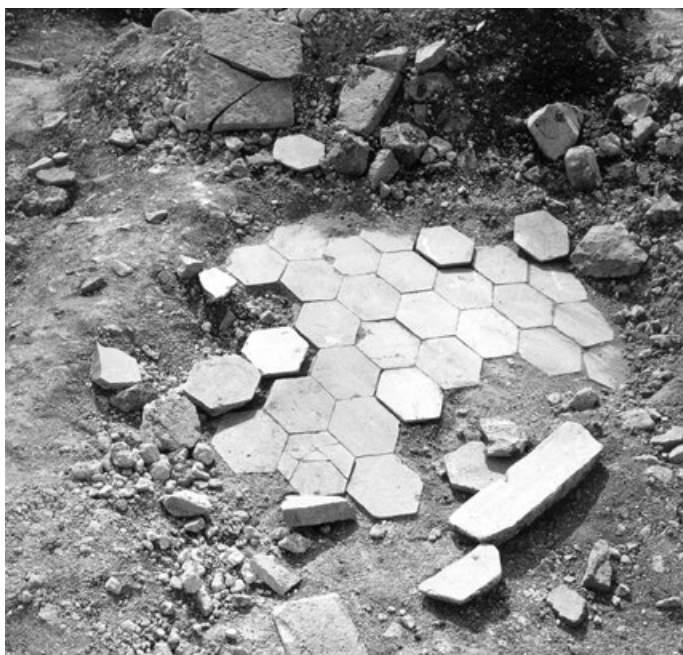


Fig. 26. *Naissus, villa suburbana*, cut tile floor (photo documentation of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Niš).

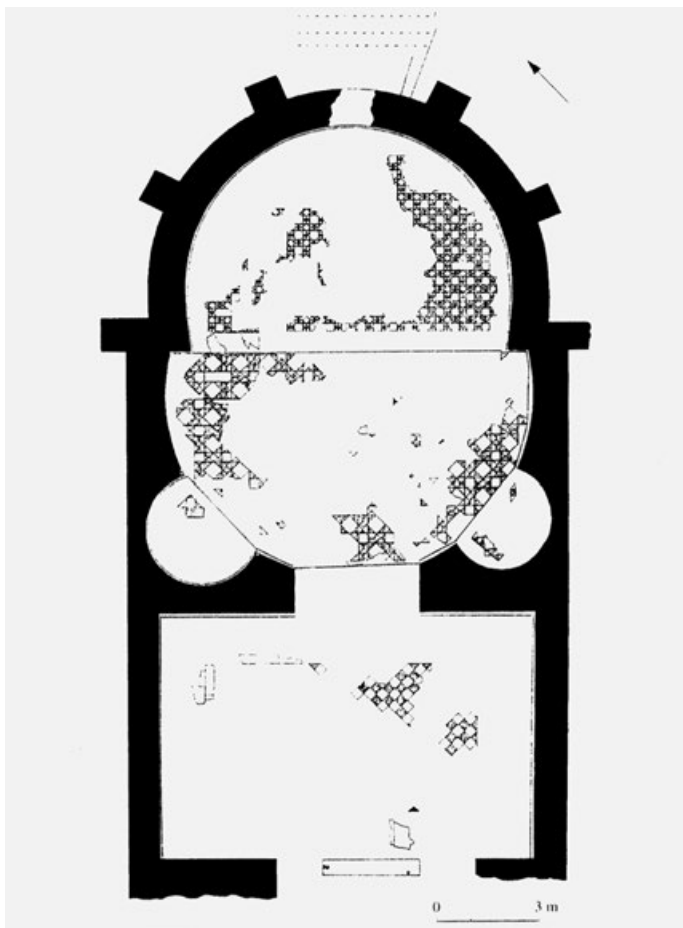


Fig. 27. Thessalonica, imperial *triclinium* on Via Gounari (according to VITTI 2005, fig. 4).

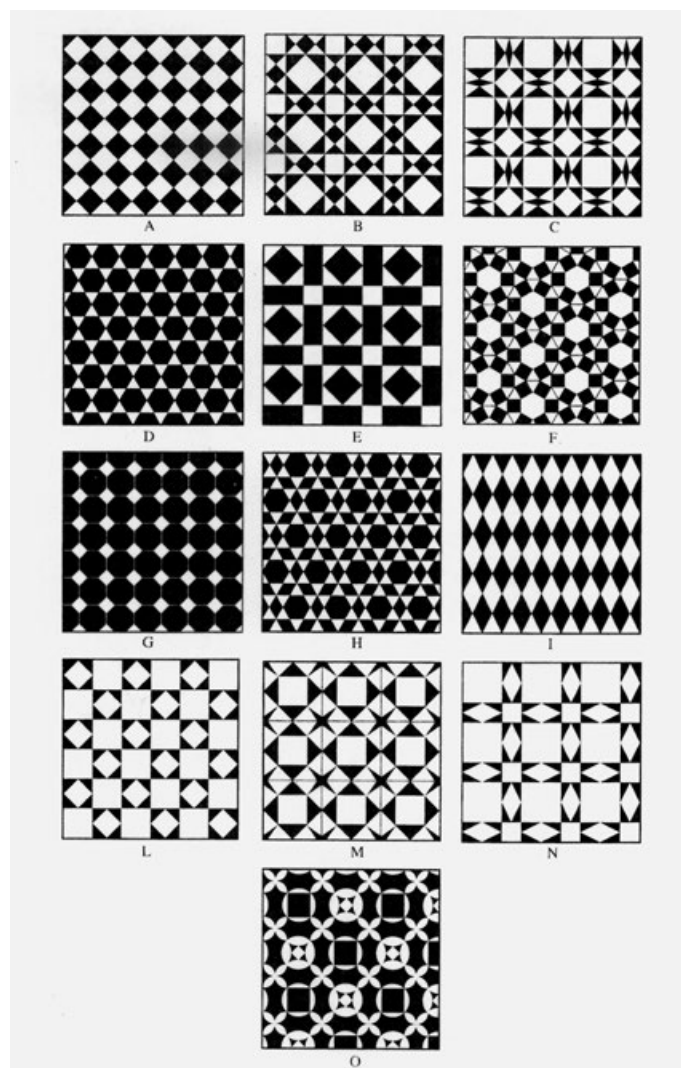


Fig. 28. *Sectilia pavimenta* motifs in Thessalonica (according to VITTI 2005, fig. 1).

CONCLUSION

What makes the research of mosaic and cut marble tiles floors especially important is their chronology within the imperial complex of Gamzigrad. During the conservation-restoration of the mosaics, it was noted that the substructures upon which they were placed had different quality and thickness⁵⁰, which could indicate that different mosaicist teams were hired, rather than the possibility of them being placed at different times, since they are rather uniform stylistically. Also, those same works noted that there are simple mortar floors beneath the ones with mosaics, which were in use for a shorter period. The numismatic findings, which could be used, with a certain degree of caution, for a more precise dating of the mosaics, were registered during the conservation works on the mortar

base layer for the mosaic floor of hall 4, where Licinius' mintage was registered, from AD 309–311⁵¹. The mosaics and *sectilia pavimenta*, as was noted long ago, were influenced, in regards to their program and making, by the ones from Galerius' palace in Thessaloniki, where the masters could have been hired to decorate the buildings of Gamzigrad. The question of primary *officinae* which were making the mosaics for both complexes should be considered after a detailed analysis of all motifs on both sites (*Felix Romuliana*, Thessaloniki), with comparisons to similar findings from the Mediterranean basin, for which we have more precise chronological timeframes for the time of their making.

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50 ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 113 no. 280.

51 ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 96 fig. 69. – A similar date is provided by coins from the mortar substructure of the floor in the northern polygonal tower at the western entrance: between AD 308 and 311. See: ČANAK-MEDIĆ 1978, 98.

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ABSTRACT

The imperial complex in *Felix Romuliana*-Gamzigrad had an opulent decoration program for rooms and open spaces. Some of the most sumptuous decorative elements were the mosaics and surfaces covered with luxurious marble tiles. The mosaics were mostly used to cover floors of the most representative buildings, such as palace 1, *thermae*, or the cross-shaped building in the south-western corner of the fortification, and traces of them were noted on vault decorations in the mentioned objects as well. The mosaics were made in *opus tessellatum* and *opus vermiculatum* techniques. Composition patterns with a square or a circular base were used the most, and fields were organised into carpets, filled with different geometric, vegetative, and figural motifs.

A special group of decorative floors from the buildings of *Felix Romuliana* consists of those decorated with cut marble tiles (*sectilia pavimenta*). The central part of the most representative room in the palatial complex – *aula* – was decorated with this precious technique as well as the appertaining two *stibadia* (triconch and tetraconch). Out of the floors decorated with this technique from palace 1, only the substructure and imprint of tiles in the mortar remained. A reconstruction of motifs used was made on the basis of an analysis of those elements, first and foremost on the basis of the most approximate analogy, chronologically and stylistically, – Galerius' imperial complex in Thessaloniki. Cut marble tiles also decorated the open *atria* of palace 1 as well as the *apodyterium* of the *thermae*. From the chronological point of view, they would belong to the same phase as the mosaics. During the removal and conservation of the mosaics, it was noted that they had been placed upon an older mortar floor. The mosaics could be dated into the later phase of Galerius' building activities, judging by coin findings (AD 308/309–311), while the mortar floors could possibly belong to the first building phase, or even earlier. When it comes to the *thermae*, it was noted that the marble and stone tiles constituted a newer floor in relation to the mosaics. The dating of this *sectilia pavimenta* is more uncertain, due to the fact that the *thermae* had been in use over a long span of time during the 4th century and later.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die kaiserliche Anlage von *Felix Romuliana*-Gamzigrad verfügte über ein opulentes Dekorationsprogramm, sowohl in Räumen als auch in Freiflächen. Zu den prachtvollsten Dekorationselementen gehörten Mosaik und mit luxuriösen Marmorfliesen verkleidete Oberflächen. Mit Mosaiken waren hauptsächlich die Böden der repräsentativsten Gebäude ausgestattet, so in Palast 1, den Thermen oder dem kreuzförmigen Gebäude in der Südwestecke der Festungsanlage; weitere Mosaikspuren konnten auf Gewölbedekorationen in den erwähnten Bauteilen festgestellt werden. Die Mosaik wurden in *opus tessellatum* und *opus vermiculatum* hergestellt. Dekore mit quadratischer oder kreisförmiger Grundfläche fanden am häufigsten Verwendung, und Felder wurden teppichartig angelegt und mit verschiedenen geometrischen, vegetabilen und figürlichen Motiven gefüllt.

Eine besondere Gruppe verzierter Fußböden aus *Felix Romuliana* ist mit geschnittenen Marmorfliesen verziert (*sectilia pavimenta*). Diese Technik findet sich im zentralen Teil des repräsentativsten Raumes des Palastkomplexes – der Aula – ebenso wie in den dazugehörigen beiden *stibadia* (Dreikonchen- und Vierkonchenbauten). Von den mit dieser Technik verzierten Fußböden in Palast 1 ist nur die Unterkonstruktion mit den Abdrücken der Fliesen im Mörtel erhalten. Auf Grundlage einer Analyse dieser Elemente konnten die verwendeten Motive rekonstruiert werden. Diese Rekonstruktion bezieht sich auf die chronologisch und stilistisch am nächsten stehenden Analogien aus dem Palastkomplex des Galerius in Thessaloniki.

Böden aus geschnittenen Marmorfliesen wurden ebenfalls in den offenen Atrien von Palast 1 und dem *Apodyterium* der Thermen verwendet. Aus chronologischer Sicht gehören sie zur gleichen Phase wie die Mosaiken. Während der Entfernung und Konservierung der Mosaiken wurde festgestellt, dass sie über einen älteren Mörtelfußboden gelegt worden waren. Anhand von Münzfunden (308/309–311 n. Chr.) werden die Mosaiken in die spätere Phase der Bauaktivitäten des Galerius datiert. Die Mörtelfußböden könnten daher möglicherweise der ersten Bauphase angehören, oder sogar noch früher datieren. Was die Thermen betrifft wurde festgestellt, dass die Marmor- und Steinfliesenböden einen späteren Boden als die Mosaiken bilden. Die Datierung dieser *sectilia pavimenta* ist unklar, da die Thermen während eines langen Zeitraumes im 4. Jahrhundert und später in Gebrauch waren.

(Übersetzung: Ch. Rummel)