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THE MOSAIC PAVEMENTS OF THE EPISCOPAL BASILICA IN MARCIANOPOLIS

The episcopal basilica was found *intra muros*, in the central part of the Roman and Late Antique/ Early Byzantine city Marcianopolis (now Devnya in Northeastern Bulgaria), situated 30 km west from Odessos/ Odessus (now Varna on the Black Sea). The name of the city Ulpia Marcianopolis was given after the name of Marciana, the sister of Trajan. He founded the city after the second Dacian war in 206, and in the 3rd – 4th century it became the second big city in Thracia after Philippopolis¹. However, this part of the province was then already renamed to Moesia Secunda. In the 3rd - 4th century it had a *officina* and became the headquarters of the Roman army. The site suffered from numerous invasions during the centuries, most of all from the Goths and the Huns. Several famous martyrs descend from Marcianopolis or the city played an important role in the trials against the Early Christians during their persecutions. The official Christianity in Marcianopolis is witnessed by several unearthed basilicas, some only registered, but others partly or entirely excavated².

The studied basilica is decorated very lavishly with architectonic sculpture (capitals, columns, liturgical furniture) and mosaic pavements³. The size, the plan and the decoration allow considering that this is namely the Episcopal basilica of Marcianopolis, known also as the South basilica. We have at disposal in the archive of the Varna Archaeological Museum numerous black-and-white photoes and about ten colour drawings of separate mosaic fillings, the latter made by a professional artist. The basilica has been excavated by the archaeologists G. Toncheva and M. Mirchev in 1957-1958. In the diary written by G.

¹ А. Ангелов, *Марцианопол. История и археология*, Русе 1999.

² Idem, *Християнството в Марцианопол*, В: Религиозният туризъм: Манастирите - носители на българската духовност. (Черноморски туристически форум), Варна 2008, 106-120.

³ See also the article of V. Tenekedjiev in this edition on the plan and the architectural decoration, with references. I am grateful to him for the new plan he has made and gave at disposal for my article.

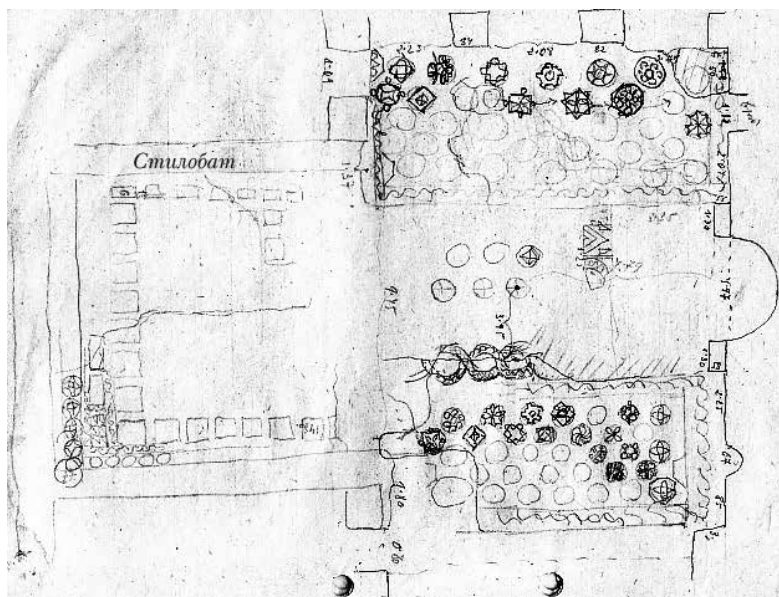


Fig. 1 The sketch of the mosaics in the diary of G. Toncheva

Сл. 1 Скица мозаика у дневнику Г. Тончева.



Fig. 2 Remnants of mortar from the pavement in the nartex and the north aisle.

Сл. 2 Остаци малтера од подне површине у нартексу и северном броду.



Fig. 3 General view of the mosaics in the naos and the transept. Situation during the excavations in 1957-1958.

Сл. 3 Општи изглед сачуваних мозаика у наосу и трансепту. Ситуација током ископавања 1957-58.

Toncheva, she has made only one not well readable and unclear sketch of the mosaic schemes and fillings, unfortunately without any written description (fig. 1)⁴.

On the one hand, very few is mentioned by the same author about the mosaics in her articles and brochure on Marcianopolis, the attention being concentrated on the city itself and the architecture of the basilica⁵. For the first time more detailed observations on the style and date of the mosaics are made in several articles of mine in the 80s of the last century, and later in the *Corpus of Late Antique and Early Christian Mosaics of Bulgaria*⁶. The basilica should be re-examined and even excavated again because the archaeological research was not complete so far. Therefore it has never got a full, but only a preliminary publication. A significant part of its problems concerning the periods of building, the plan and the date are closely tied also with the mosaics.

⁴ Г. Toncheva has given the diary and the documentation on the mosaics to me for using it in my dissertation on the Roman and Early Christian Mosaics from Bulgaria.

⁵ Г. Тончева, Мирчев М. *Исторически бележки за Марцианопол*, Исторически Преглед XII, 6, 1956; Г. Тончева, *Одессос и Маркианопол в свете новых археологических исследований*, Советская археология 1, 1968, 234-235; Г. Тончева, *Античният Марцианопол* (without a year).

⁶ V. Popova-Moroz, *V. Christian and Pagan Art of the 4th c. in Bulgaria*, *Miscellanea Bulgarica*, 1987, No 5, 264, 277. In: *Das Christentum in Bulgarien und auf der übrigen Balkanhalbinsel in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter. II International Symposium Haskovo (Bulgarien)*, 10-13 June 1986 Hg. V. Gjuzelev, R. Pillinger. = *Miscellanea Bulgarica*, 1987, No 5; Pillinger R., A. Lirsch, V. Popova, *Corpus der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Mosaiken Bulgariens*, Wien 2016, No 10, 67-70; V. Popova, *Liturgy and Mosaics: the Case Study of the Late Antique Monuments from Bulgaria*, *Niš and Byzantium XVI*, 2018, 140-141; A. Ангелов, *op. cit.*

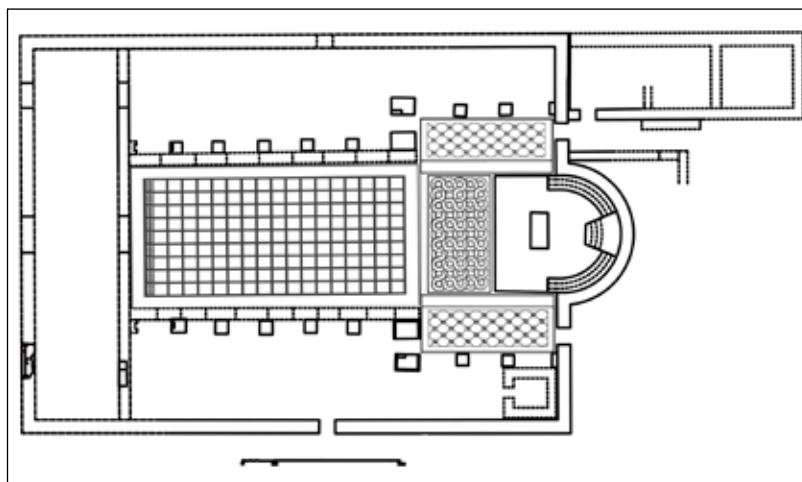


Fig. 4 The plan of the basilica of V. Tenekedjiev, with the reconstructions of the mosaic schemes of V. Popova and K. Petkova.

Сл. 4 План В. Тенекеджиев, са реконструкцијом мозаичких схема В. Попове и К. Петкове.

On the other hand, this basilica is one of the few monuments not only in Marcianopolis and Northeastern Bulgaria in Antiquity, but for the Early Christian architecture in the Balkans, concerning the appearance of the barrel vaulted and later of the domed Early Christian/ Early Byzantine basilicas⁷. Having in mind all these circumstances, my paper will be devoted to the compositional schemes, motives, style and date of the mosaics and its connection with the plan of the basilica. Naturally, the state of research is limiting to a great degree the possibilities of work. That's why I hope that this important basilica from architectural point of view and its mosaic decoration will be fully excavated and published entirely in the near future.

The mosaics cover the western part of the naos and the whole transept without the cancel. On the photos made during the excavations, in the narthex and the north aisle can be observed remnants of pavements, not noted in the diary of G. Toncheva. Its essence is not sure – either from the mortar under a brick pavement or even the layer-bed for the mosaics (**fig. 2**). The mosaics preserved in the naos are in a different state (**fig. 3**): better preserved are the two north and south panels of the transept and the west panel (in two parts, left and right one along the axis), situated immediately after the entrance of the naos, while the eastern part of the latter and the mosaics in the transept in front of the cancel are either partly preserved, or very fragmentary, or in many places entirely destroyed.

Nevertheless the schemes in the naos can be fully reconstructed (**fig. 4**). In the transept two big, narrow and long panels are flanking the chancel from aside. The schemes are identical and consist of octagons, connected by meander-swastika. Concerning the fillings, they are also very similar, but not identical in both panels (**fig. 5-7**), often representing variants of each motif. The identical motives are placed on one and the same row in direction north-south.

⁷ S. Ćurčić, *S. Domed basilica in Early Byzantine architecture*, In: *The Basilica of St. Sophia: Сердика Средец, София*, т. 7. София 2018, 11-32.



Fig. 5 The big north mosaic panels with octagons in the transept.

Сл. 5 Велики северни мозаички пано са октогоном у трансепту Голямото северно мозаично пано с октогони в трансепта.



Fig. 6 The big south mosaic panel with octagons in the transept.

Сл. 6 Велики јужни мозаички пано са октогоном у трансепту.

Some problems arise in connection with the reconstruction of the scheme in the central panel of the transept. It is occupied by the scheme of big interlacing circles (**fig. 8**) in which only two types of fillings are inserted in the center: a complex rosette and a square placed on one angle. From the photos it is difficult to decide all the circles have equal diameter or bigger and smaller ones are represented. The circles are very plastically treated, most of all the cable in one of the circles and less the guilloche. The rosette in the center is on its turn very picturesquely treated and both ways, the plastic and the picturesque, are adding to the artistic effect quite well.

A different smaller panel, playing probably the role of a border-band in direction east-west, between the big panel with octagons and the interwoven circles of the central panel of the transept, is preserved at the north side of the latter (**fig. 9**). It consists of geometric motives: a rectangular/ almost square with inscribed lozenge and smaller figures placed on the periphery in the space between the two big figures. On some other photos can be seen that preserved are only small squares, inserted at the angles of the rectangular/ the square but the big inscribed figure in the center is probably another, not lozenge, judging by the small remnants. Similar models in several variations can be seen in the west panel of the naos (**fig. 14**). In the sketch of the mosaic composition in the diary of G. Toncheva we can see the place of this border attached immediately to the north transept panel, beginning from the west line of the bema in direction east-west. Probably this north band-border panel was occupying the whole length from the apse till the west end of the transept. However, judging by the fragments, now only five rectangles/squares are preserved in the same direction.

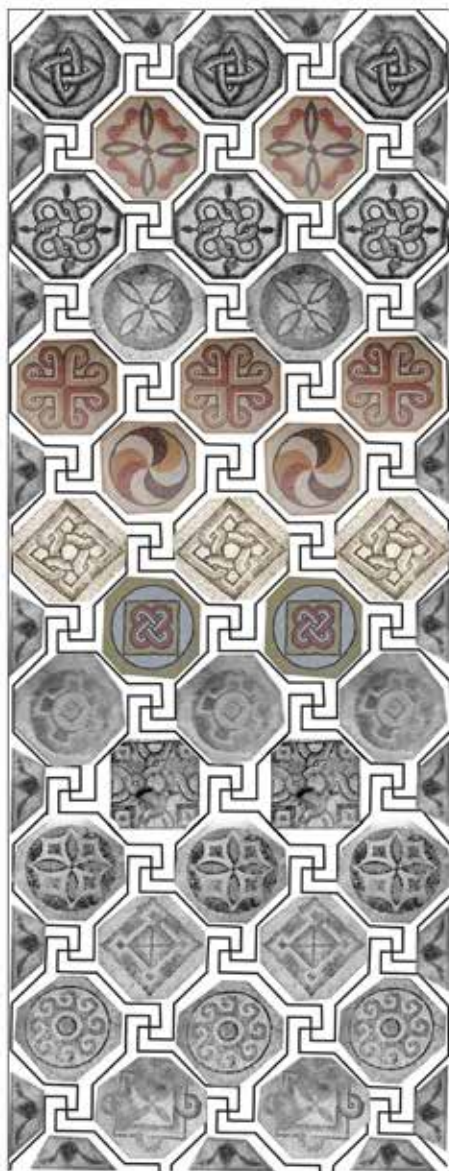


Fig. 7 Reconstruction of the big south mosaic panel of V. Popova and K. Petkova.

Сл. 7 Реконструкција великог јужног мозаичког панела према В. Попове и К. Петкове.

The south small band-border from the south side of the central panel of the transept is different from the just described north one (**fig. 10**). It begins north of the big south panel with octagons and swastika-meanders, revealing several simple lines and stepped triangles, and finishes before the interwoven big circles of the central panel. It seems that the width of the south band-border is slightly smaller than the north one⁸. It is not clear why the mosaicists have laid these two different borders having in mind that all the panels in the transept are symmetrically placed in relation to the cancel screen, and with very similar decoration. There could be two explanations: the first is that this difference in the dimensions has been achieved during the building itself and the mosaic panel inevitably reflects it; the second explanation is consequent to the first one – there was no place on the smaller surface to inscribe the complex geometrical schemes of the north border and the masters have chosen more simple motifs – thin lines, bands and stepped triangles. From this point of view, after preparing the central transept panel in front of the cancel, first was made the north band-border and the last to be laid was the south band-border.

Two more photoes show fragments which are isolated from any other, and not fixed on the sketch in the diary, so its place can be only supposed hypothetically. The first photo (**fig. 11**) reveals a band consisting of two big and one small circle, all interwoven, and probably used as a border, for instance in front of the west line of the bema/ the cancel. The second fragment (**fig. 12**) is with irregular outlines, the one part in the form almost of a triangle, filled with a laurel branch alternating with a guilloche and a parts of a palmette(?) at the one end. The whole form of the fragment reminds partly of the configuration formed between the four interwoven circles of the central transept panel. This configuration is

⁸ This is only an impression from the photos which is to be checked in situ, when the mosaics will be again opened.



Fig. 8 The central panel with interwoven circles in the transept.

Сл. 8 Централни мозаични пано у трансепту са уплетеним круговима.

Fig. 9 The small north panel in the transept (between the panel with circles and the north panel with octagons).

Сл. 9 Мали северни пано у трансепту (између паноа са круговима и северног паноа са октогонима).



formed by four concave half-circles. The photo with more panoramic view (**fig. 8**) represents several big interwoven circles: five in direction east-west and also five in direction north-south, forming twice such a configuration between each four of the circles. The fillings of the figure are not preserved, except some terminating parts of it. The same scheme of interwoven big circles (**fig. 10**) can be observed as well from the north side of the south panel with the octagons of the transept. As already mentioned, it does not begin immediately after the panel with octagons, but after a narrow band with simple strips and stepped triangles. This band plays the role of a border for the central transept panel with the circles from the south side. On each side of the periphery the circles do not begin immediately from the thin border line – they withdraw a bit to the center, and a triangle with two concave sides is formed in this way between each pair of circles.



Fig. 10 The small south panel in the transept (between the panel with circles and the south panel with octagons)

Сл. 10 Мали јужни пано в трансепт (између паноа са круговима и јужног паноа са октогонима).



Fig. 11 The unfixed fragment with three interwoven circles.

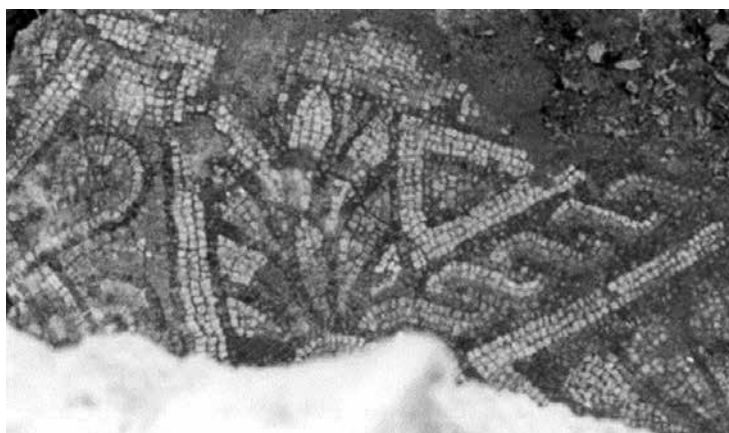
Сл. 11 Фрагмент мозаика са нефиксираним местом у композицији, састоји од три уплетена круга.

The west long panel of the naos has an orthogonal scheme of squares outlined by guilloche (**fig. 4, fig. 13-14**). It possesses 16 squares in direction east-west, while in the direction north-south they are only 9. Probably from all sides the panel has a wide border, preserved without the east side. It consists of intersecting circles forming four-leaf rosettes. The second but this time narrow border represents small triangles in two rows, placed diagonally in small rectangles. The fillings in each square of the orthogonal scheme in direction north-south are one and the same. In direction east-west the fillings are different and they can be repeated after several rows, resulting in a great diversity.

The colour drawings (**fig. 15**) made during the excavations are very bright and in the warm palette – red, ochre, yellow and light brownish, with white and brownish outlines and colour backgrounds– white, brown or ochre. The white background is minimal. On some places the outlines are made by a thin brownish-black line, in other cases the scheme is revealed by double white band, thus balancing the dark and light graphic impressions. Also balanced are the motives with straight lines and angles by placing next to them motives with rounded

Fig. 12 The unfixed fragment with leaves and guilloche.

Сл. 12 Фрагмент мозаика са нефиксираним местом у композицији, са листовима и плетеница.



forms and ends. A great play of variety is achieved by the tremendous number of different kind of combinations. In one case we have a simple motif, next to it is shown the combination of three separate motives inserted in one figure. In another case the position of the figure may be changed each time towards the main axes of movement or even in diagonal to them. In a third case the colours also vary together with the position and the form of the motif, including the changing colour of the background.

The repertory of the mosaic schemes in this basilica and especially of the variations of the motives are among the most lavish examples coming from Bulgaria. It should be applied a special mathematical formula, as to count exactly how many variants are used here, so great is the number of them. This richness of combinations, the preference of definite schemes and the lack of figurative motives and representations, except some plants/ leaves as non-changing filling motives, were the base to name the style “puristic”⁹. There are also other non-figurative styles in Late Antiquity, but the puristic



Fig. 13 The west panel in the naos.

Сл. 13 Западни мозаични пано у наосу.

⁹ В. Попова-Мороз, *24 древни мозайки*, София 1097, с.11; В. Попова. *Две раннохристиянски базилики в околностите на Никополис ад Нестум*, Изследвания в чест на Стефан Бояджиев, София, 2011, 295; Pillinger et alli 2018, S. 70.

one is standing out for its classicizing essence, excellent design, and proportions, free “air” around each element, lack of strict symmetry, diversity and astonishing combinations in all aspects. In another words, we have a metropolitan example of mosaic art, elegant, rich and mobile. The only thing which is not classical, is the more limited palette only within the warm tones, and the totally lacking cold and green ones.

The puristic style is a new phenomenon in the development of mosaic art in Late Antiquity. Not the schemes and the major motives are entirely new, but the classicizing treatment, the clear design and bright colour, the combinations and the endless variations. It avoids simplicity, banality and trivial treatment, it offers a real play of exuberant motives and their combinations. We can compare it with the examples of more usual style from the end of the 3rd till the second half of the 4th century, using simple schemes and motives, like the second by its time mosaic in the naos of the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis¹⁰. Another contemporary style in 4th-5th century, entirely absent in Marcianopolis, is that of the very rich “rainbow style”, spread widely in the Eastern Mediterranean and occupying every free surface, unlike the free “air” around each motif on the Marcianopolis mosaics.

The puristic style, being a part of the non-figurative trend of Late Antiquity, is entirely different from the mentioned contemporary styles. At the present moment, as a result of the excavations of the recent 60 years in Bulgaria, there are found already several examples of the puristic style (**fig. 16-17**), in which the main dominating schemes are one and the same, namely the octagonal, the orthogonal and the circle system. Additionally other schemes can be used in the same room, occupying less space, but always also easy readable, with the only so far exclusions like the interlacing circles in the central part of the transept of Marcianopolis. Here not the motives, but the scheme itself reaches even to the utmost complexity, underlying the main axis to the entrance of the cancel and the liturgical action in it¹¹. The monuments from Bulgaria, except Marcianopolis, are: the mosaics from the second building period of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis, probably from the Late Constantine I's time; the mosaics of basilica No 2 in the village of Garmen, in the suburbs of Nicopolis ad Nestum, from the period of Theodosius I; the mosaics in the naos of basilica Ib in Kabile, from the end of the 4th – first half of the 5th century; the mosaics from the private bath of a domus on the crossroad of boulevard Ruski-Graf Ignatiev in Augusta Traiana, from the second half of 4th century¹². Thus, the puristic style was applied both in the Early Christian basilicas and private buildings excavated in Thracia so far. Only Marcianopolis at that time belonged to Moesia II, but this area was always in close artistic contacts by the Black Sea with Constantinople and the other artistic centers of the south. This fact is very important for the development and the spread of the puristic style.

¹⁰ Е. Кантарева, *Нови стратиграфски проучвания на мозайката от епископската базилика на Филипопол*, В: Сборник доклади от Международна научна конференция „Наука, образование и иновации в областта на изкуството”, Пловдив 2018, 365-372.

¹¹ V. Popova, *Liturgy and Mosaics*, 140-141.

¹² Кантарева, *Нови проучвания*; Pillinger et alli, NN 73, SS. 330-336, Taff. 267-269; No 25, SS. 113-116, Taff. 63-65; No 32, SS. 147-150, Taff. 85-87.

On these examples it can be followed several phases in the development of the style. It was changing by making the scheme more complex: the octagon system is enriched by crosses with fillings inside (Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana) or adding more geometric elements (squares and lozenges) around the octagon (Garmen). The palette is becoming richer, including also the green and the blue, and more refined nuances, like brownish and bluish-grey in Philippopolis, green and lilac in Garmen; finely, not only the motives are richer, occupying every surface, but now, at the end of the 4th century, figurative motives are included, although only at the more important for the liturgy places – alongside the cancel in Garmen, in and in the aisles the naos and even in the aisles (Kabile). When these new monuments in the puristic style were found, for instance basilica N 2 in Garmen, it became clear, that the figurative images can appear at the most important from liturgical point of view places, especially in the advanced period of the Theodosian dynasty. It seems that at the first phase, as in the case of Marcianopolis, the figurative images have been totally ignored, while 20 years later they were introduced again, although only in the key places of the basilica, in front of the chancel at its entrance or alongside the bema. The figurative representations were at that time the Fountain of life, symbolizing psalm 41/42¹³, read at the entrance of the bishop or the priest leading the liturgy. Except these symbols, often widely used is the cantharos (Kabile), not only in the naos.

Another change is the usage of interwoven circles as the main scheme for the whole room and the new and very rich fillings in the center of them (Kabile). We can also observe that the balance between the picturesque and the graphic treatment is lost and that elements of the rainbow style were introduced (the private bath in Augusta Traiana). The palette of Marcianopolis is very similar to some of the mosaics in the residence, probably of Constantine I, in Kostinbrod near Serdica, as well as some mosaics from the Tetrarchy, where the colour background in warm tones, the variety of non-figurative motives and the numerous variations are the main features of this Tetrarchic style¹⁴. Still it is not clear if the palette in the puristic mosaics depends only on the local quarries, supplying with the material for the tessellae, or it is following chronologically the general trends in Late Antique art, accepting the palette of the subtle style at the end of the 4th-beginning of the 5th century. The similarity is obvious comparing the mosaics in the puristic style with the subtle style in sculpture and applied arts from the end of the 4th –beginning of the 5th century, especially the mosaics in the refined palette, except Marcianopolis.

Another problem is why the figurative representations disappeared in the Balkans, Greece and the islands and Asia Minor in definite periods and when namely and why it has happened¹⁵. Some scholars suppose the influence of the arianism or of a kind of proto-iconoclasm. Others assume that the Early

¹³ V. Popova, *Fons vitae in Late Antique Monuments in Bulgaria*, *Studia academica Šumenensia* 3, 2016, 154-198.

¹⁴ See the references in V. Popova, *Monuments from the Tetrarchy and the Reign of Constantinian dynasty in Bulgaria*, Niš and Byzantium XIV, 2016, 170-172.

¹⁵ W. Caraher, *Church, Society and the Sacred in Early Christian Greece*, Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2003.

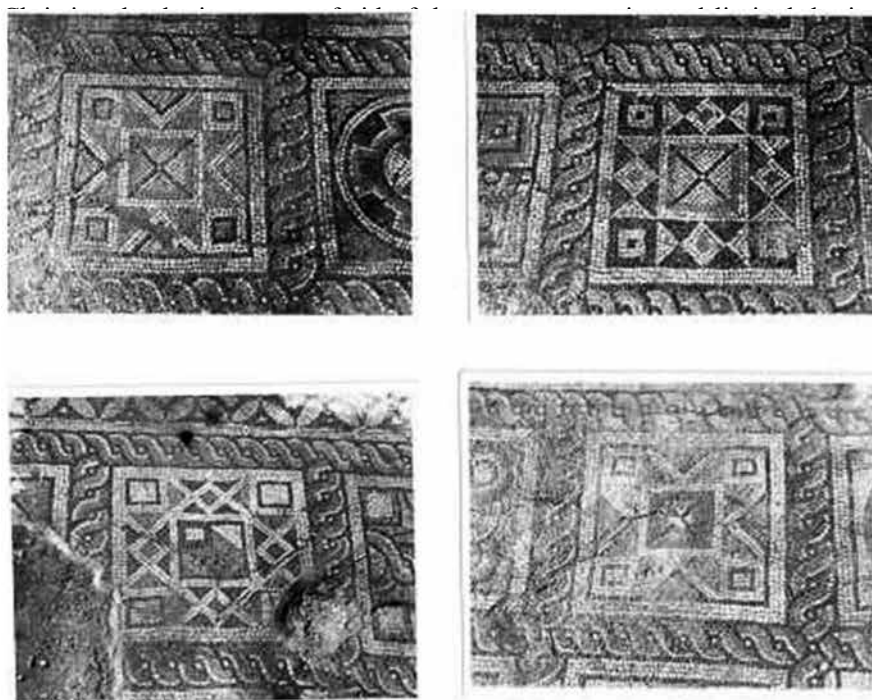
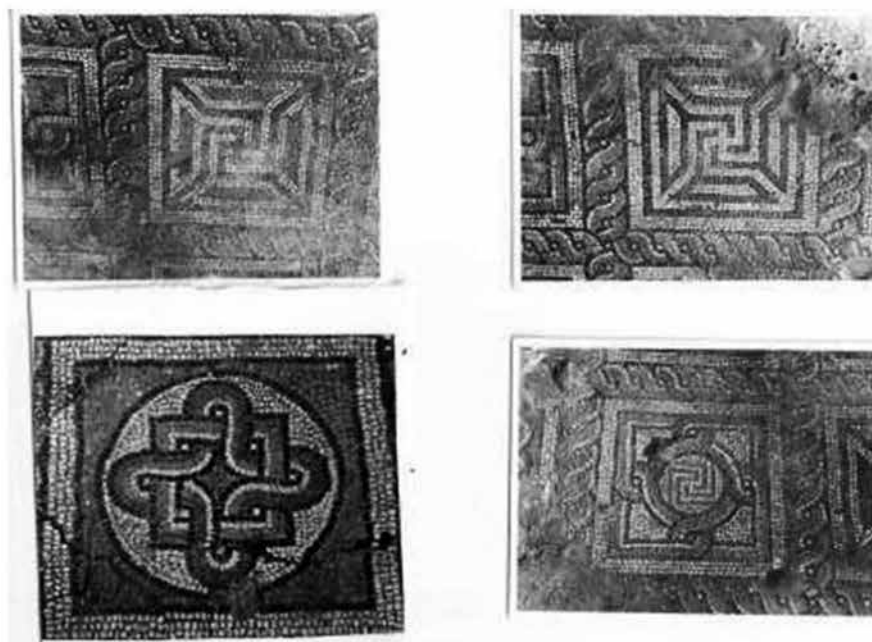


Fig. 14 Squares with separate motives from the west panel of the naos.

Сл. 14 Квадрати са различитим мотивима мозаика са западног панона наоса.



appearing of the puristic style in the relatively early period of Theodosius is the palette and some of the fillings, which are inherited from the mosaic pavements of the Tetrarchic residences in the Balkans (Romuliana, Serdica and Thessaloniki) and from some Early Christian catacombs and mosaics from the middle of the 4th century in Rome. The only change is that in Marcianopolis the black colour is avoided where possible and replaced by polychrome colours in a warm palette. Very important is the colour of the background, also inherited from the mosaics of the Tetrarchy and the Constantinian period, and changing constantly in the scheme, which really makes the mosaic resembling a carpet. The missing figurative representations develop this impression further. All the attention is concentrated to the rhythm of change of the fillings and colours, and its numerous variants in size, direction and colour. This style was ideal for the liturgical scenery and for the concentration of the attention to the actions of the bishop and his clergy.

Except the further development of the schemes and fillings of the Tetrarchic period by the puristic style, its enrichment and finely, the imperial taste can be felt both in the Tetrarchic and Theodosian time. The puristic style corresponds to the subtle style of the Theodosian dynasty, with the only exclusion – the limited palette of the mosaics in Marcianopolis. This fact probably shows that the mosaics from the Episcopal basilica in the city were the first to appear among the other examples of the style, still copying the palette of the preceding Constantinian and post-Constantinian period. It can be supposed that the building of the Episcopal basilica in Marcianopolis and its mosaics happened soon after the Goths' war in 376-378 and the necessary years for recovering, which means the beginning of the 80s of 4th century. The more time advances, the more the palette becomes refined and separate figurative motives introduced. Since there are not found coins dating the basilica of Marcianopolis, in this case for the purpose can be used the plan, the architectonic decoration and the mosaic style. Among the motives we can point to the Solomon's knots with sharp ends and the very complex and plastically treated scheme of interwoven big circles, appearing and used frequently namely in the second half of the 4th century. The slightly later examples of such circles from the beginning and the first half of 5th century, for instance in the Episcopal basilica in Odessos and basilica No 1 in Storgosia¹⁹, are more formal and generalized, deprived of the strong plasticity.

The influence and the inheritance of the puristic style were very strong up to the end of Late Antiquity, especially in the usage of concrete schemes and fillings and its artistic treatment. In this connection should be mentioned many monuments from Bulgaria: the orthogonal composition and the fillings of the north aisle in the Episcopal basilica of Odessos; the fillings in the composition of the vestibulum of the House of Antiope in Marcianopolis; the scheme and most of the fillings of basilica No 1 in Storgosia; the scheme and some fillings of the supposed basilica in Chomakovtsi; the composition and some non-figurative fillings of the villa urbana on Ruski boulevard 51 in Augusta Traiana; the rosette in the South porticus and the vestibulum of the residence

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, Taf. 10, Abb. 17; Taf. 45, Abb. 126.



Fig. 15 Colour drawings of separate mosaic motives from the transept and the naos.

Сл. 15 Обојени цртежи појединачних мозаичних мотива из трансепта и наоса.

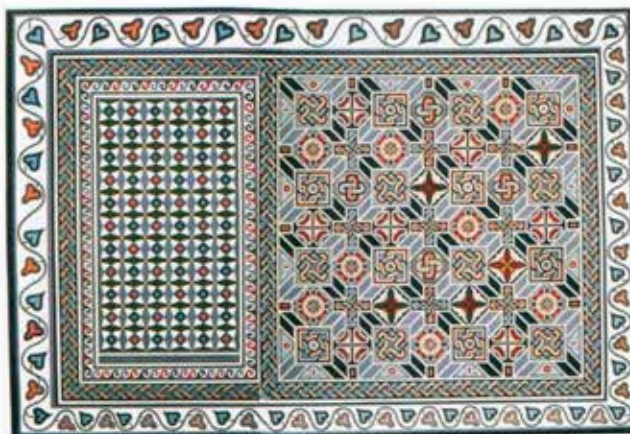
Eirene in Philippopolis; several fillings in the Small basilica in the same city; several fillings in the orthogonal composition of the Episcopal basilica, again in Philippopolis; finely the orthogonal scheme with donator's inscription and fillings in the south aisle and the fillings of the scheme with circles in the naos of basilica No 7 (the basilica of Bithus) in Pautalia²⁰. This created in Constantinople style and used in its hinterland in Thracia and Moesia, had a long reflection on the mosaic production, even in the next styles, because it was imperial and a novelty.

The other main problem, concerning the pavement mosaics of the basilica in Marcianopolis, is connected with the transept of the basilica. In the opinion of G. Toncheva, the basilica has two building periods: the first one of the late 4th century when it was one-aisled basilica; and the second period during the Justinianic period, when the plan was changed to a basilica with transept and three aisles. The way the mosaics are sticking exactly to the stilobate with columns and piers in the west part of the naos and to the walls and piers forming the transept, is very indicative that they are contemporary to this plan. In my

²⁰ Pillinger et alli 2016, Pl. 12-13; Abb. 57; Abb. 126-127 ; Abb. 130, 131, 134-135; Abb. 282, 284; Abb. 344, 357; Abb. 362; Abb. 412; Taf. 351, 352, 349.

Fig. 16A. The naos mosaic of basilica No 2 in Garmen. B. The Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis. West part of the north aisle, the second mosaic.

Сл. 16 А.
Мозаик у наосу базилике бр. 2 у Грмену. В. Епископската базилика у Филипополису. Западна страна северног брода други ред мозаика.



view, judging by the photoes and the sketches of the architectural plan, no traces of the supposed one aisled-basilica have been found. This observation is leading to the conclusion that the mosaics belong to the initial plan and it was with transept and three naves from the very beginning. The plan and the dimensions suppose that the basilica is a part of the experiments in enlarging the space for the already more complex liturgical service at that time, inside and outside the cancel, also it to be better observed from the naos and the aisles. It is not the standard transept, rather a pseudo-transept, whose end wings do not come out of the volume of the basilica in its eastern part and even are shorter than the width of the three naves.

There are many examples, beginning with St. Peters in Rome, with real or different kind of pseudo-transepts, because this space was necessary for more monumental representation of the liturgy in front of and inside the chancel. There were several solutions in that aspect, including the way the churches in Constantinople were crossed by the chancel wall covering all the space from

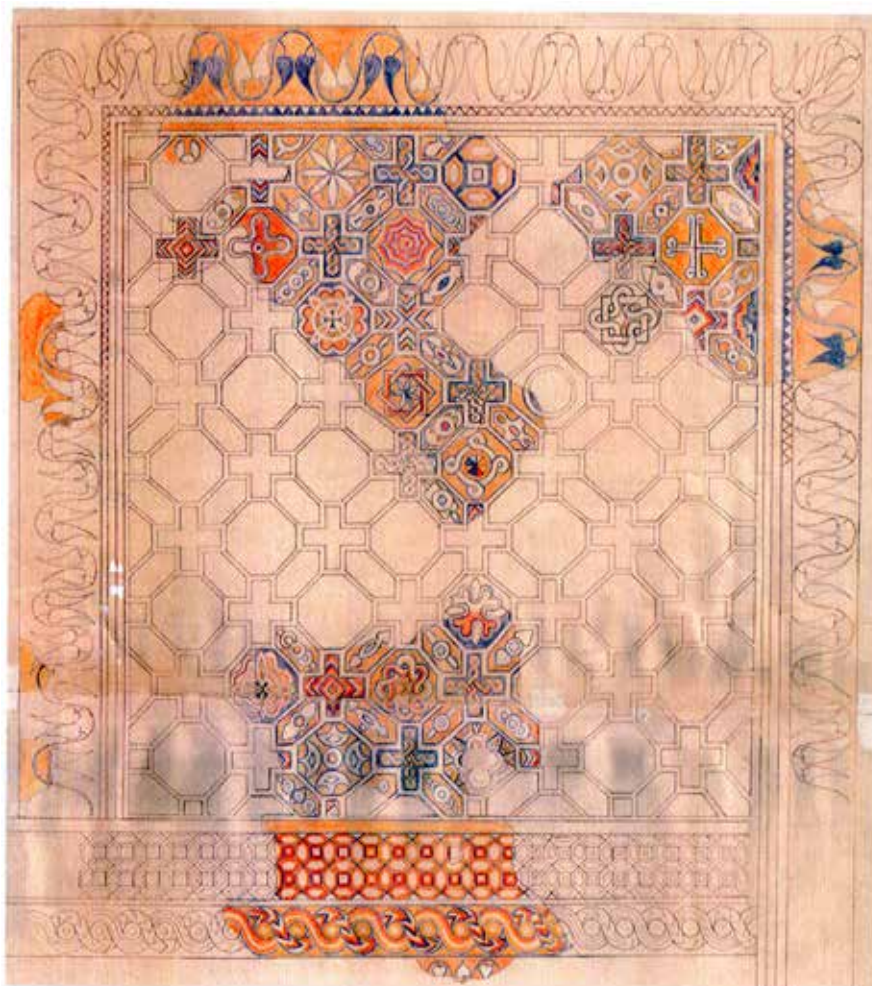


Fig. 17 The mosaic of a private bath. Domus on the crossroad Ruski-Graf Ignatiev in Stara Zagora / Augusta Traiana.

Сл. 17 Мозаик из приватне купаонице из градске куће на укрштању Булеvara Руски и Графа Игнатијева у Старој Загори / Аугуста Траиана.

north to the south, protruding strongly forward and forming a kind of a free pseudo-transept space. The third decision with a pseudo-transept, which does not reach or is not coming out of the north and the south aisle, as it is in the basilica with classical transept, is rarely met, including some examples in Greece as well, dated in the second half-end of the sixth century. The most identical parallel (for the transept only, not for the whole plan) is basilica B in Philippi²¹. The unity of the mosaic puristic style and the pseudo-transept in Marcianopolis

²¹ Ćurčić, *Domed Basilica*, 17, fig. 7.

shows, that this third solution appeared earlier, probably in the 80-s of the 4th century, at the early time of Theodosius I. Because of the piers, doubling the columns in the western part of the naos, it can be even supposed that the back aisles in its western parts have been covered with barrel vaults.

The pavement mosaics of Marcianopolis show how the initial orthodox period of Theodosius the Great was in constant search for adequate new kind of architecture and decoration. The attempts to enlarge the space of the liturgy is felt in Asia Minor, in Philippi in Macedonia, in several basilicas of Constantinople, in Rakitovo and Pirdop in Thracia, and, we should add too Marcianopolis and Lyutibrod in Dacia²². There are several more basilicas in the region of Odessos, where the experiments have been also performed for a vast cancel and better observation of the liturgical action²³.

According to the opinion of S. Ćurčić²⁴, the new time of the barrel vaulted and domed basilica began since the middle of the 5th century and continued up to the second half of the 6th century. In our case part of the architectural decoration, also the puristic mosaic style, the treatment and even the palette are leading to the conclusion of an earlier date, because in this part of Thracia the figurative representations re-appear almost at the beginning of the 5th century, as already pointed. The appearing of a basilica with a pseudo-transept in Marcianopolis can be considered as one of the first attempts for creating the new plan and covering of the basilica, even if the back naves in Marcianopolis have no barrel vaults. In that sense the mosaics as well as the architectural decoration supply with new data for the beginning of this novelty in the Early Christian/ Early Byzantine architecture.

Since the puristic style is one of the most classicizing non-figurative mosaic styles from the 4th century in the designing, schemes, fillings, richness of variants, proportions and relationship with the background, it might be considered that its development was influenced by the workshops of Constantinople, the taste of the imperial court and the theologians close to it. At the state of our present knowledge, the experiments in the Episcopal basilica of Marcianopolis can be related to a definite architectural influence, that of Constantinople, Greece and the Eastern Balkans. Since the Valentinians, Marcianopolis in Late Antiquity was the second big city after Philippopolis, with many artistic connections and financial possibilities because of a lot of political, economical and military reasons. The devastations of the Goths, although great, were later overcome and the city again restored its economic and artistic potential. The Episcopal basilica and its mosaic decoration, one of the most artistic, revealed the new situation during the early reign of Theodosius the Great. That was the earliest time the new experiments of the barrel vaulted basilica has begun, ac-

²² Ćurčić, *Domed Basilica*; see the references for Lyutibrod in Z. Dimitrov, *Early Byzantine Architectural Elements from Lyutibrod and its Region*, Niš and Byzantium XII, 2014, p. 185. The author has not paid attention to the changes in the plan, but only to the architectural decoration.

²³ А. Минчев, В. Тенекиджиев, *Разкопки на раннохристиянска базилика в м. Боровец, край Варна*, Археологически открития и разкопки през 2017 година, София 2018, 404-405, обр. 1.

²⁴ Ćurčić, *Domed Basilica*, especially 14-23.

according to the example of the Episcopal basilica in Marcianopolis, and later they brought to the domed basilica from the 5th century onwards in the whole Byzantine empire. From that architectural point of view, as well from artistic point of view, the Episcopal basilica of Marcianopolis and its mosaics is an important witness for an earlier date, than considered so far, for the experiments preceding in creating the vaulted basilicas and churches, namely the early time of Theodosius the Great, from the beginning of the 80s of the 4th century. Also we see the first data for correspondence of the mosaic puristic style to the general subtle style of the Theodosian period and its great achievements. On the third place, we see the beginning of the mosaic art of the early Theodosius, which differs from the subtle style in the palette and is more close to the palette of the Valentinians, the period of Constantine I and that of the Tetrarchy. This early period reveals that the Theodosian art has passed first through the influence of the previous periods, and only a bit later it acquired the typical and also refined style in the palette, known as subtle.

Вања Попова

(Независни истраживач)

МОЗАИЦИ ПАВЕМЕНТА ЕПИСКОПСКЕ БАЗИЛИКЕ У МАРЦИАНОПОЛИСУ

Рад се о мозаицима из ранохришћанске базилике који припадају нефигуративном репертоару. Он се разликује од других орнаментално – геометријских мозаика из 4. века својом класификујућом суштином и третманом обиља мотива распоређених на шареној и променејивој позадини. У Бугарској су ископана четири мозаика у овом стилу, који потичу из Тракије и Друге Мезије. Стога се верује да се након генезе тетархијског стила, он даље развијао и усавршавао вероватно у атељеима Константинопоља. Једина разлика у Марцианополису је топла и светла гама, блиска са неким мозаицима Тетрархије и Константиновог периода, што је омогућило да се мозаици датују у раним годинама владавине Теодосија I.

Мозаици се савршено уклапају у псеудо-трансепт и западни део наоса и изграђени су одмах након изградње. Аутор сугерише да је можда овај план показатељ постојања цилиндричних сводова над бочним бродовима и да су то неки од првих експеримената за стварање базилика и цркава са цилиндричним сводовима и куполама. Према овом споменику процес је започео раније него што је то било претпостављено, у 80-е године 4. века.