

PART THREE

Documenting and Assessing Sites at Risk

The Mosaic Corpus of Turkey: A New International Research Project

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Abstract: *Turkey is one of the richest countries in terms of Roman mosaics. However, so far there has been no systematic presentation of these mosaics. Moreover, no collective strategy for the preservation of found mosaics has been developed. The aim of this study is to develop a corpus of Turkish mosaics and a collective working strategy.*

Résumé : *La Turquie est un des pays les plus riches en mosaïques romaines. Toutefois, jusqu'à présent ces mosaïques n'ont jamais fait l'objet d'une présentation systématique. En outre, aucune stratégie commune pour la préservation des mosaïques découvertes n'a été mise en place. Le but de cette étude est de développer un corpus de mosaïques de la Turquie et une stratégie de travail commune.*

In June 2004 a large group of mosaic specialists were assembled in Istanbul, under the authors' leadership, to begin a long-term project to document all the known mosaic pavements in Turkey, which date from the Greek to the Roman and Byzantine periods.¹ Turkey now joins the growing list of countries in the Mediterranean area and beyond that has established a national corpus of mosaics. The project team is working closely with the Association Internationale pour l'Étude de la Mosaique Antique (AIEMA) and has a direct link to its headquarters in Paris.

In order to centralize and coordinate the inventory project, we decided to establish the Center for Mosaic Research in Turkey at Uludağ University, in the city of Bursa. The center includes a library and a computer database for mosaics;² a research assistant there serves as a correspondent. From its inception the Corpus project was planned to cover all of Turkey systematically. David Parrish, Werner Jobst, and Mustafa

Şahin were its co-organizers, with participants coming from six countries besides Turkey: France, Italy, Austria, Germany, South Cyprus, and the United States. The first organizational colloquium was held in Istanbul in June 2004. The second colloquium took place in Izmir and Altinoluk in June 2005, with accompanying excursions to Old Smyrna and Pergamon and other mosaic sites in the region of Altinoluk. One sign of the project's success was the formation of a national chapter of AIEMA-Turkey, whose elected officers include mosaic specialists, university graduate students, museum administrators, field archaeologists, and mosaic conservators.

Organizing Principles of the Corpus Project

Various goals and criteria have guided our project from the outset, the first one being close cooperation with the director general for cultural heritage and museums and other officials in the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Ankara, as well as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Corpus organizers have met with Orhan Düzgün, current director general of museums and archaeological sites, and other individuals, such as Mesut Özbek and Beyza Üntuna, who are concerned with cultural relations between Turkey and the European Union. All these individuals view the Corpus project in the larger context of documenting and preserving Turkey's national artistic heritage. At present a commission in Brussels is considering an application for European Union funding to support our research and conservation efforts. Other funding agencies are also being contacted for this purpose.

Two other principles have guided us in creating the Mosaic Corpus of Turkey. One is that this enterprise be bilingual. All the Corpus volumes will be published in Turkish

and English, and for this reason a Turkish translation of C. Balmelle, H. Prudhomme, and M.-P. Raynaud, *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine* (2002), is currently being prepared. All its descriptive terminology will be available to the Corpus authors by the end of 2007.

Implementation of the Corpus Project

For the purposes of this project, Turkey has been divided into twenty-one historical regions, with individual teams of scholars, composed of two to seven members, responsible for documenting the mosaics from the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods in those regions.³ Only mosaic pavements are included, since the number of wall mosaics exceeds our research capacity. Previously published catalogues of mosaics from individual sites are to be integrated into the Corpus, such as the monograph on Antioch (Levi [1947] 1971) and the existing volumes on Ephesos (Jobst 1977). Other specialized studies of mosaics at individual locations, currently in preparation, will also become part of the larger Corpus.

The form for recording mosaics was developed collectively by the Corpus participants using the highest standards of our professions. This form is adapted to the requirements of individual archaeological sites, with special attention to the mosaics' architectural context. For example, if several mosaics decorated a certain building, a ground plan of the structure is provided (drawn in a similar scale and format in all cases) and all its rooms are numbered individually, with the associated mosaics clearly indicated. The building's social function and principal architectural features and the type of space each pavement ornamented are documented. In addition, the precise shape of the mosaic and its location and orientation in a given architectural space are recorded—for example, whether it serves as the main carpet facing the room entrance or as a panel inserted into a portico that faces a fountain in an adjacent court.

Otherwise, the inventory form gives all the necessary factual information about the pavement, beginning with its number in the Corpus volume (numbers are arranged consecutively for an entire archaeological site) and the technique of manufacture. This Corpus in fact encompasses all pavement techniques, ranging from pebble mosaics to *opus tessellatum* and *opus sectile* and other variant types of floors. For convenience, a title is assigned to the mosaic, and its provenance and present location are indicated. The Corpus includes not only pavements preserved at archaeological sites or kept in museums and private collections but also lost works of art known from archival sources.

Detailed information about the mosaic's physical features is also provided. This includes the pavement's dimensions, actual

and reconstructed (if the work is fragmentary); the exact materials used to make it and the type of mosaic foundations; the density of tesserae in various parts of the floor; and the colors employed (for which a standardized chromatic chart, such as the Munsell system, is useful). Another significant aspect of the pavement's physical description is its current state of preservation. This includes evidence of ancient or modern restorations, the manner of protecting the mosaic, or the conditions in which it is stored in a museum. If a pavement is lost, it is essential to find an archival record of it, in the form of a photograph or watercolor drawing, as has been done so effectively, for example, for missing mosaics in H. Stern, *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule. I: Province de Belgique* (1957–), and in the catalogue of mosaics from Trier and its surroundings by P. Hoffmann, H.-J. Hupe, K. Goethert, and L. Dahm, *Katalog der römischen Mosaik aus Trier und dem Umland* (1999).

The heart of the Turkish Corpus form is the description of the mosaic's design and imagery and the author's personal commentary. Proceeding from the pavement's outer margin, or *bande de raccord*, inward, all parts of the pavement are described in a precise, succinct fashion, using terminology from *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine*. If a mosaic contains several ornamental panels of differing design, all of these are numbered and indicated in a sketch. The accompanying commentary depends on comparisons with other, related works for questions of iconography and style. This also is the place to discuss the possible existence of a decorative program among the several mosaics ornamenting a particular building. The stylistic analysis, combined with any available archaeological evidence, also helps to give a date to the pavement, either confirming or altering previous chronological interpretations.

The final two elements in the documentation of a given mosaic are a bibliography of published references to the pavement and its illustration. The bibliography employs abbreviations found in the *Bulletin de l'AIEMA*, and the most important references are emphasized typographically. The illustrations include a plan of the building from which the mosaics come, photographs of the pavement, and, where necessary, a reconstruction drawing. The photographs will be published primarily in color.

Conservation of Turkish Mosaics

The final objective of the Corpus project is to promote not only scholarly research but also the active conservation of mosaic pavements in Turkey. We are equally committed to documenting these works of art and to doing whatever we can to help preserve them. It is the duty of the Corpus participants to indicate the exact physical condition of mosaics they are studying and,

wherever conservation is needed, to bring this to the attention of specialists and have them recommend appropriate treatments. Turkey has a few conservation laboratories, but they are in great need of professional materials, better equipment, and more personnel trained in this type of work. Therefore, funding is being sought to meet these needs and to foster a new generation of archaeologists and conservators specializing in the conservation of mosaics. For the moment, teams are needed to travel to individual archaeological sites to stabilize in situ mosaics at risk.

The purpose of the Corpus project committee is to alert the archaeological, conservation, and museological communities to the need for the conservation of mosaics wherever that need exists. The committee intends to do everything possible to help preserve Turkey's exceptional heritage in mosaic art, as well as to record it. Specific proposals for conservation have been made by the members of the committee:

- An inventory of mosaics must be created for each region of Turkey indicating the state of preservation of individual pavements. Forms with criteria for evaluating the mosaics' condition could be distributed to students and others gathering this information. The database at Bursa would collect all of the information from throughout the country.
- A three-part plan for the conservation of Turkish mosaics is proposed. It contains the following elements: (1) Create teams of specialists at various conservation laboratories in Turkey who can be contacted directly by field archaeologists and museum administrators and who can provide advice about mosaic conservation locally and also stabilize mosaics in situ at sites throughout Turkey. (2) Apply for funding to obtain materials necessary for mosaic conservation at various locations in Turkey over a three-year period. (3) Train selected Turkish students to become future, full-time specialists in the field of mosaic conservation in Turkey. Funding for this proposal will be sought outside Turkey. One possible source is the Getty Foundation in Los Angeles, California.

It was also suggested that individual Turkish students might seek additional training in mosaic conservation outside Turkey, for example, with internships at the laboratory at Saint-Romain-en-Gal in France. Another possibility is for students to apply to one of the professional conservation training programs in Europe sponsored by programs such as "Europa Nostra" and "Leonardo da Vinci" that aim to protect the cultural heritage of individual countries.

Finally, the Corpus will include previously published catalogues of mosaics at individual sites in Turkey alongside the new volumes. Each new volume will have color photographs exclusively, in addition to other, graphic illustrations.

The first volumes of the Turkish Corpus will document mosaics in Istanbul, Ephesos, Zeugma, and Xanthos. The purpose of this project is to make the vast treasure of mosaic art in Turkey easily accessible to the scholarly world and to give due recognition to these works of art.

Notes

- 1 The current project follows upon an earlier attempt to make a Turkish corpus, which was initiated in the 1970s by Elisabeth Alföldi-Rosenbaum (Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1971) but languished after the publication of a few volumes. The new Corpus is preceded by an initial synthesis of Turkish mosaics by Orhan Bingöl, *Malerei und Mosaik der Antike in der Türkei* (1997).
- 2 The Corpus library has already been the recipient of books generously donated by the headquarters of AIEMA in Paris.
- 3 The twenty-one historical regions are Thracia, Propontis, Bithynia, Mysia, Hellespontus, Lydia, Caria, Lycia, Pamphylia, Isauria, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Phrygia, Galatia, Paphlagonia, Cappadokia, Cilicia, Pontus, Mesopotamia, Gentes, and Erzurum, in eastern Turkey.

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