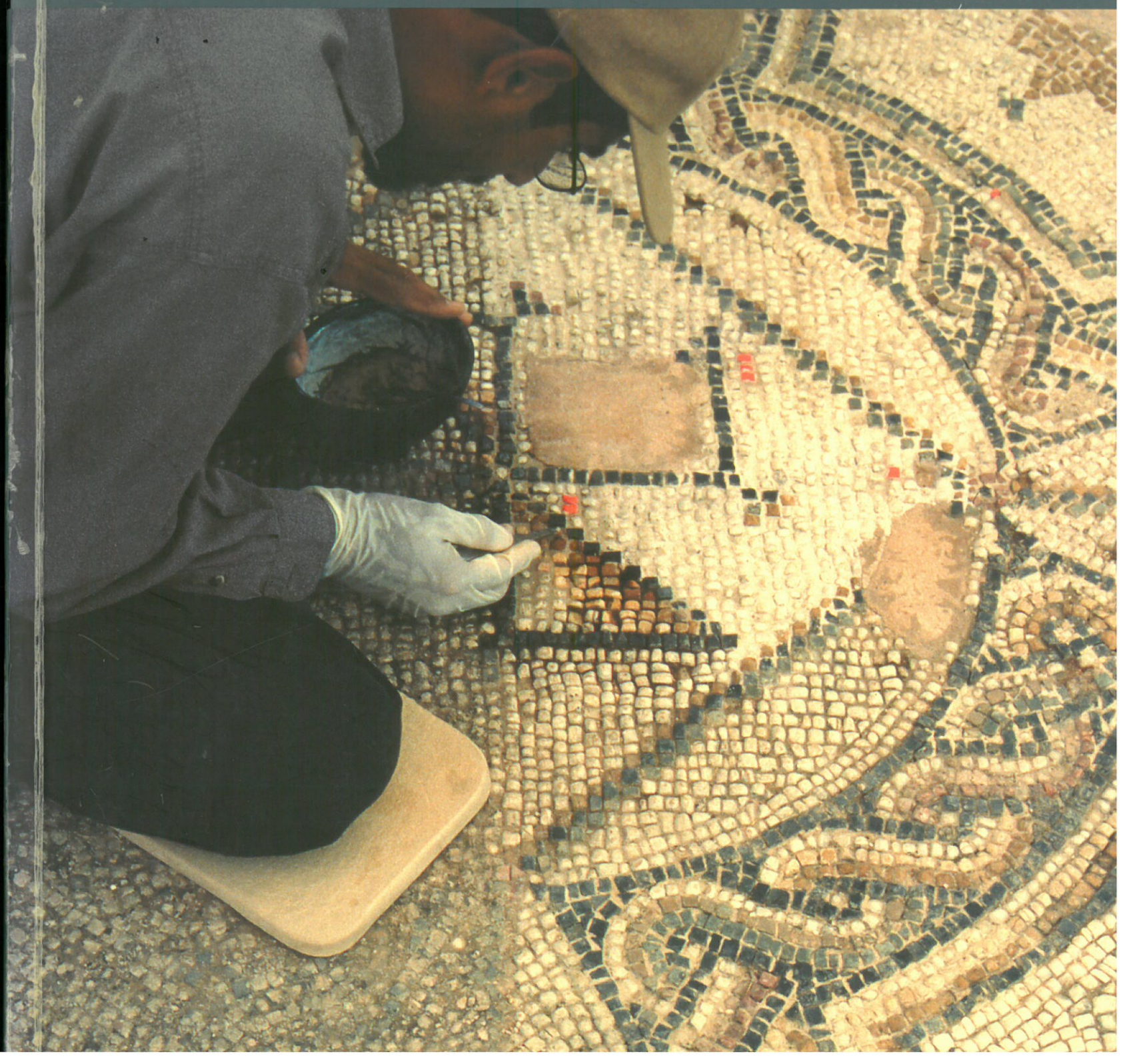
PROCEEDINGS

The 9th Conference of the International Committee for the Conservation of Mosaics, Hammamet, Tunisia, November 29–December 3, 2005

Lessons Learned: Reflecting on the Theory and Practice of Mosaic Conservation



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Leçons retenues : Les enseignements tirés des expériences passées dans le domaine de la conservation des mosaïques

Proceedings of the 9th ICCM Conference
Hammamet, Tunisia, November 29–December 3, 2005

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The Getty Conservation Institute

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An Evaluation of the Preservation of Reburied Mosaics in Cilicia

Füsun Tülek

Abstract: *The corpus of mosaics in Cilicia covers all the known mosaics from the region. Many aspects of the mosaics are evaluated in the corpus, including their state of preservation. Most of them seem to have received preliminary maintenance and consolidation. There are five principal methods used to preserve the Cilician mosaics. Among these, reburial was the most common method. However, in most cases reburial has been practiced as an intuitive preservation strategy. Reburial implementation in Cilicia needs to be examined further in order to identify what factors determined the choice of this method.*

Résumé : *Le corpus de mosaïques en Cilicie couvre toutes les mosaïques connues de la région, en évalue plusieurs aspects et fournit une base de données sur leur état de conservation. La plupart de celles-ci semblent avoir reçu un entretien et une consolidation préalable. Cinq méthodes principales existent pour conserver les mosaïques ciliciennes. Parmi celles-ci, le réenfouissement constituait la solution la plus usuelle. Cependant, dans la plupart des cas, le réenfouissement a été pratiqué en tant que stratégie de conservation intuitive. Le réenfouissement en Cilicie nécessite d'être approfondi afin de comprendre les facteurs qui ont déterminé la décision de recourir à cette méthode.*

The corpus of Cilician mosaics encompasses more than 150 individual panels from forty-two sites (Tülek 2004). Each site either constitutes a single structure carpeted with floor mosaics or is an ancient settlement yielding numerous structures decorated with floor mosaics. Some of these mosaics are available for hands-on examination, though most are inaccessible, and others are lost. The mosaic corpus documents the present state of Cilician mosaics and provides an account of the preservation methods (if any) (fig. 1). Among the preservation methods that have been recorded, reburial was the most common solution chosen in Cilicia. In some cases reburial was implemented as a temporary solution but turned out to be a long-term one.

Examination of the Cilician mosaics reveals two types of interventions: lifting mosaics to museums or leaving them in situ. Lifting was the least common. Eighteen floor mosaics from seven locations were lifted to museums. Of these, fifteen are on display; the others are stored. Nineteen floor mosaics from eleven sites have been categorized as "lost." This category comprises primarily those mosaics that were left in situ and could not be found during the field survey. They may have been looted or destroyed, or they may have deteriorated as a result of being exposed to the weather, as in the case of the mosaic left in situ at Imbriogon kome, whose tesserae disintegrated into "sugar lumps." Further, two of the Cilician floor mosaics were found in chunks, mixed into the soil during the cultivation of wheat and cotton fields.

The in situ mosaics have been found in the following five conditions:

- displayed in situ in a museum;
- reused as floors of modern village houses built over them;
- exposed without maintenance;
- recorded in the survey but not yet excavated;
- reburied.

The Misis, Narlıkuyu, and Anazarbus mosaics are displayed in situ as distant related exhibits of the local archaeology museums. The Misis and Narlıkuyu mosaics have received full conservation and restoration and are sheltered by protective structures built over them; the two figural panels of Anazarbus have been protected only by a shelter supported on four posts. Three of the in situ mosaics belong to a single monument and are being reused as the floors of present-day homes. These mosaics have been kept in fairly good

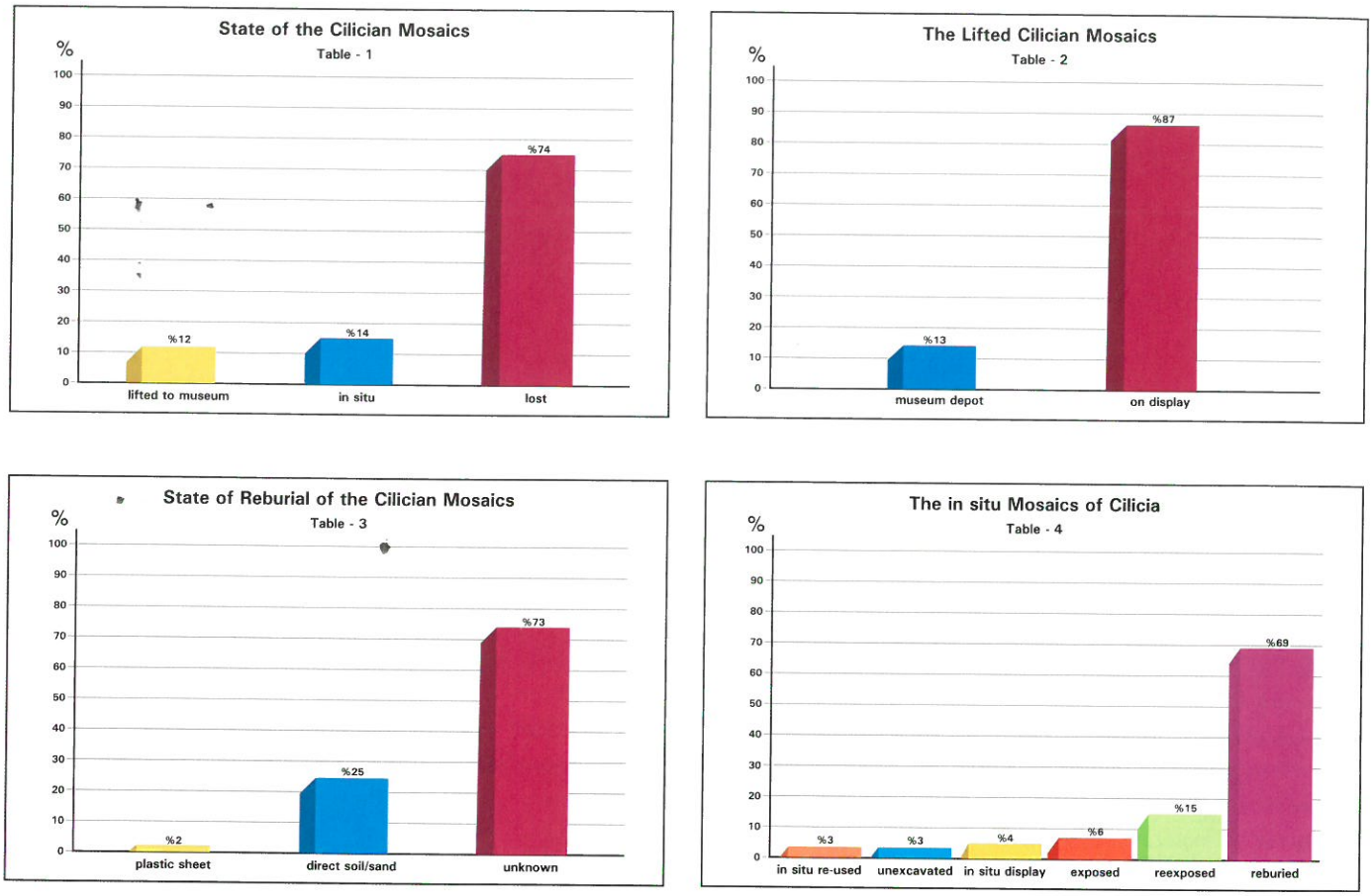


FIGURE 1 State of the Cilician mosaics.

condition compared to the exposed in situ floor mosaics, which have received little or no maintenance or protection. Five of the in situ floor mosaics have been exposed via natural causes or human vandalism, yet there has been no intervention to maintain and preserve them.

Reburied floor mosaics belong to twenty sites and number up to thirty-two mosaic panels. Some of the reburied mosaics have been reexposed. The reexposed mosaics come from sites such as Al Oda, Konacık, and the ancient settlement of Anemurium (figs. 2–4). The excavations of these sites have been concluded. These mosaics had once received consolidation



FIGURE 2 Anemurium mosaic.



FIGURE 3 Anemurium mosaic.



FIGURE 4 Anemurium mosaic.

and backfilling but were recently exposed due to erosion of the backfill by rains or the curiosity of tourists or tour guides. The present situation of the Anemurium mosaics indicates that reburial was chosen as the major strategy to preserve most of the floor mosaics, except for a few that were lifted to the museum.

The reburial practices implemented for these mosaics are varied. Since all the reburied mosaics are not available for examination—for example, those at Korykos, Meryemlik, and Dağ Pazarı—all the types of reburial are unknown. The mosaics available for examination have three backfill materials: sand, soil, and gravel. They were mostly used in direct contact with the mosaic surface. The use of a plastic sheet or geotextile as a horizon marker could not be detected. Maintenance and intervention records of these mosaics were not available for the present study. It was observed that the edges of the mosaic panels were consolidated with cement. Tall grass encloses these mosaic panels, some of which have been cracked and fragmented, and each fragment has also been surrounded by grass that dissects the mosaics and destroys the unity of the designs. However, there is no vegetation trailing over the surface of the mosaics. It is not clear whether pesticide was applied to the mosaics. On some, plastic sheets were used as horizon markers, though most of the sheets have decayed.

The Anemurium mosaics had no horizon markers on them. It is not clear whether they existed at the outset and were removed by the locals. However, the floor mosaic of Burial B1 16b at Anemurium had a deep backfill. The Alacami and Domuztepe floor mosaics were reburied with sand. The Domuztepe mosaic was covered with a layer of soil laid over the sand. Plastic sheet was not used in the maintenance and preservation of either mosaic. In Karlık a plastic sheet covers the mosaic, on top of which

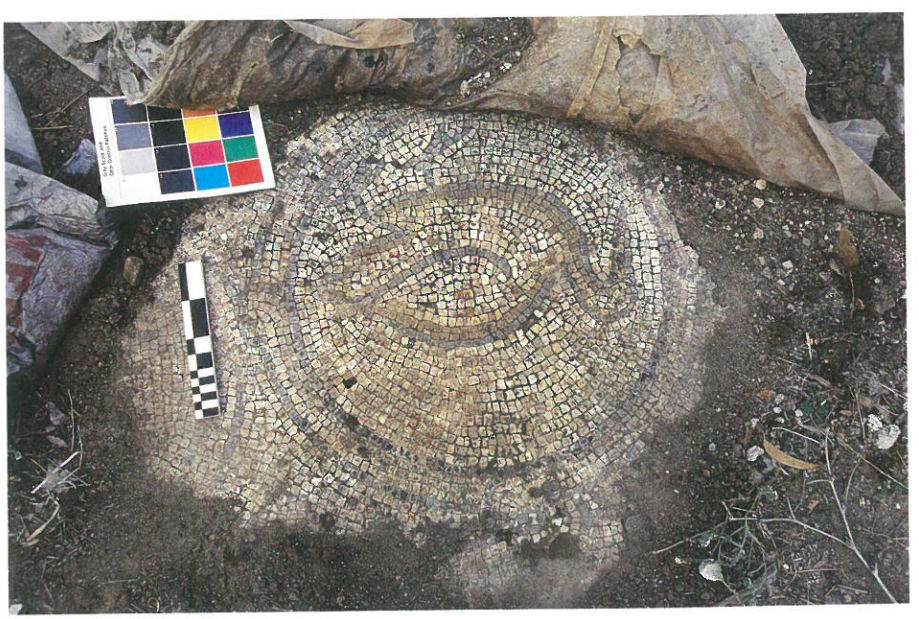


FIGURE 5 Karlık mosaic.

FIGURE 6 Soli mosaic.



is a layer of sand (fig. 5). In Kadıpaşa and Güneyköy river sand is in direct contact with the surface of the mosaic. One of the two Kadıpaşa mosaics, the one reburied beneath the road, has also been covered with a deep layer of soil to protect it. The Ovacık floor mosaic is also covered with river sand in direct contact with the mosaic surface and has no plastic sheet for protection.

The mosaics at ongoing excavations such as Celenderis and Elaiussa are backfilled with sand and receive annual maintenance. Similarly, the Soli mosaic (fig. 6) receives annual maintenance and was initially covered with a plastic sheet, on top of which was a layer of sand. In this case the plastic sheet promoted deterioration by sealing the damp and humidity over the surface of the mosaic, already heavily damaged when found. Roots and moss covered the surface of the mosaics like a spider web. The tesserae of the mosaic were in flakes, making it impossible to discern the figures depicted on it. However, the other half of the mosaic, excavated during my study, was in a fairly good state, with some effects of salt and roots on the surface. After consolidation and maintenance, 12-denier-thick woven geotextile was used as the horizon marker.

In conclusion, archaeologists at Cilicia preferred to preserve the floor mosaics in situ by backfilling them. The decision-making process is not clear. However, it seems that the reburial practices were mostly intuitive. In particular, the reburials implemented with soil or sand in direct contact with the mosaic surface seem planned as short-term strategies. There is still the intention to display some of the mosaics as in situ exhibits. Practitioners are aware of the damage caused by plastic sheets, and there is a conscious tendency not to use them as horizon markers. The use of geotextile as horizon markers is quite new for Cilician mosaics. Future examination of the Soli mosaic will provide more experience in the application of this material in the region.

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