



A. PLONTKE-LUENING

PITYOUS AND ITS MOSAICS

“Setting out from Dioskourias the first harbour will be in Pityous, at a distance of 350 stadia” reports Flavius Arrianus in his *Periplus Ponti Euxini* (peripl. 18, 1). The governor of Cappadocia and his representative fleet – one trireme and some *liburnae* – traveled in 134 AD along the Eastern Pontos shore and inspected the Roman garrisons between Trapezous and the “end of the Roman dominion” which was at his time in Dioskourias-Sebastopolis. Continuing the journey to the Crimea Arrian came to Pityous which was the first harbour after Sebastopolis, at a distance of 350 stadia. So there was no Roman garrison at Pitiunt in Hadrianic time. But it seems that the journey of Arrian gave the impetus to install in Pityous Roman forces because he recognized the importance of the place for the grain transport from the Northern Pontos to Trapezous which was the supply base for the Roman forces in Anatolia.

The first inscription from Pityous dates to 152 AD (Speidel, Todua: 1988, 56, fig. 3). It shows that Pitiunt became soon after Arrian’s visit the last station of the “Pontic limes” at the Eastern Pontic shore. This chain of Roman fortresses represents a specific type of Roman defensive structures – it consisted of castra in a distance of a one day’s journey by ship and was the base for the actions of the Pontic fleet with its headquarters in Trapezunt. At the same time it offered sure and comfortable resting places for the grain fleets which brought the supply from Northern Pontos to the Roman forces in Anatolia.

A tile stamp from the castle territory makes clear that here stood a deployment of the *leg XV Apollinaris* (Kiguradze, Lordkipanidze, Todua 1987), and an inscription on a sandstone slab can be read for the year 223 AD: *Maximo et Aeliano coss* (Speidel–Todua 1988 58 fig. 4). Zosimos (I 32, 1) reports for the 3rd c. AD that Pityous had an excellent harbour. The *Notitia Dignitatum* gives the fortress *sub duce Armeniae* (Not dign. or. XVIII 32 ed. Seeck 84) and suggests that here was installed a new *ala* (*prima felix Theodosiana*) in the later 4th c. AD.

The remaining fortress is with 162x136 m (2,2 ha, fig. 1) rather small. The fortress walls are built

with *opus caementitium* with a facing of small conglomerate blocks (*moellons*). The investigations of N. Kiguradze and G. Lordkipanidze in the NE of the castle made clear that the first castle was built with wood and earth (Lortkipanije 1991: 81, pl. 19-20) like the first fortress of Phasis as it is reported in Arrian (peripl. IX, 4). But in the later 2nd or earlier 3rd c. the walls must have been built for the first time in stone (resp. *opus caementitium*) because Zosimos mentions “very high walls.” The fan shape corner towers (fig. 4) show that a greater restauration took place in Diocletianic-Constantinian era: The fortress was rebuilt after the destruction and robbery of ships from the harbour by the Scythians in 257 AD reported by Zosimos.

Inside the fortress were unearthed the principia and houses of the officers; the bathes of the “*Reihentyp*” were outside the fortress near the *Porta Praetoria*. This gate was orientated to the East where today lies a swampy lake with is connected with a channel system to the Northwest. The canalization of the central part of the fortress goes directly to the lake. It seems very likely that here we have to see the remains of the “excellent harbour” mentioned by Zosimos (Lortkipanije 1991: 74-80). Unfortunately no investigations of the territory could be made yet. But it is clear that the ships were brought by a system from channels to the lake-the harbour basin was defenced from storm even as from enemies. It is a completely different situation than in Athenai on the southeastern Pontos shore where Arrian’s fleet lost one *liburna* in a heavy storm (peripl. IVs.). According to coins, in the time of Anastasius (491-518) even the harbour basin and a part of the *canabae* – which is also not investigated – were encircled by a wall. The north flank of the fortress was defended by a tower near the Eastern shore of the lake Inkit.

In Pityous lived one of the earliest Christian communities in Pontus Polemoniacus. Bishop Stratophilus from Pityous participated in the First Oecumenical concile of Nicea in 325 together with his brothers Longinus from Neocaesarea and Domnus from Trapezous (*Patrum nicaenorum nomina* ed. ed.



Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Marksches (1995) p. LXII).

The most interesting evidence of the flourishing Christian community we find in the complex of churches south of the harbour basin (fig. 2). From 4th-6th c. were built several churches at the place. The first was a rather big hall church which was destroyed by a fire which can be connected with a raid of the Huns (Lortkipanije 1991: 181) in the last third of the 4th c. AD. The church is considered to be the cathedral of Stratophilus and therefore was dated in the years unimmediately after 313. But it seems rather probable that it was built after the Nicaenian concile which must have been a trading centre for ideas and plans for church buildings all over the Empire.

Most interesting is the first basilica with traces of marble sculpture and a mosaic floor which can be dated into the 5th c. The plan of this church seems to be strange. The slightly polygonal apse is as broad as the naos. The supports of the nave are poorly documented although Cicišvili reports fragments of older bases on the stylobate which he considers re-used for the second basilica (Cicišvili 1975: 101). G. Lortkipanije (Lortkipanije 1991: fig. 6. 2. 2) reconstructs even this church as a hall church without supports, Sakaraia (Sakaraia 1984: 72s.) assumes wooden columns, and Khroushkova suggests a column basilica with architrave because of the fragments of a marble column and of an architrave with three fascies (Khroushkova 2002: 72-74). The main problem is the poor documentation of the excavation results. For a basilica with aisles argues the mosaic decoration – in N and S were narrow carpets typically for the decoration of aisles.

Main subjects of the mosaics are the paradise and the Vita aeterna. The apse mosaic shows two deers besides a cantharos (fig. 5), the mosaic on the podium in the centre of the apse gives a chrismon with alpha and omega (fig. 6). In the narthex was a basin for baptism surrounded by two mosaic carpets. The better preserved shows a cantharos flanked by birds (fig. 9). On the lid of the cantharos we see two birds – a reminiscence to the famous Sosos mosaic from Pergamum which was often copied in Roman mosaics. The mosaics from the aisles show geometric patterns (figs. 7, 8), and in the northern part of the narthex was a mosaic carpet with rhomboids (fig. 10) remembering the floor of the cross church of Antiokhia-Qaousiye (387 AD, Levi 1938: pl. CXIV a).

The mosaics have analogies especially in the Balkans and in Syria (Odišeli 1995: 31-60; Plontke-Lünig 2006: DVD, s. v. Pitiunt), lesser in the Chersonesus mosaics. Unfortunately mosaics from Cappadocia are not known yet – so we do not know whether there were direct connections between the centres of Cap-

padocia and Pityous.

The inscription in the podium mosaic gives us the donor Orel – obviously a Roman or Romanized man who wore in the 5th c. else the Roman cognomen Aurelius (Seibt 1992: 142).

It seems very probable that our richly adorned church was not only the cathedra of the bishop of Pityous but even had memorial functions as suggests the podium mosaic with Chrismon. A memorial function was assumed even by Matsulevich, Vostchinina, Brandenburg and Velmans.

In the 5th c. two martyrism stories became very popular in Eastern Pontos, each of them connected with Roman military forces. This seems to be an indicator for the importance of the Roman army in the region even at that time. The one, the martyrism of Aauraka (Bryer-Winfield 1985: 165-169; Text: PG 116 467-505), tells about five soldiers and their martyrism in Pontus; one of them, the legionarius Orestes, could have been venerated in the octagonal church of Sukhumi-Sebastopolis which was discovered and published by Lyudmila Khroushkova (Khroushkova 2002: 67-136). The other one is the Martyrism of Orentius or of the Seven brothers of Lazica (Acta SS Iunii IV p. 809ss.; Peeters: 1938; Bryer-Winfield 1985: 166f. 325; Braund: 1995: 265), which plays, of course, in the Diocletianic persecution. It is the history of seven Christian soldiers from the Roman garrison at Satala who were brought to Trapezous and from there by ship along the Eastern Pontos shore; the stations are the same like in the Periplus of Arrian. The first, Orentius, is martyred in Rhizaion-Rize, the next two, Firmus and Firminus, find their end in Apsarus, and the corpse of the last, Longinus, was washed to the shore at Pityous. So the martyrism materializes the common way of transport in the Eastern Pontos and shows Pityous again as the last station of Roman dominion. And it seems very probable that it was even Longinus who was venerated in the cathedral church of Pityous.

The church existed only a short time. Soon a new basilica was erected at the same place. Its plan is comparable with the 5th c. basilicas of Constantinople, and also the building technics – the walls were erected in opus mixtum – have their origin in Constantinople. Inside the church parts of the older mosaic floors were in use else; the destroyed parts were repaired with tile slabs.

The church was furnished with Proconnesian marble which is preserved only in small fragments (Khroushkova 2002: 83, fig. 8). It had an ambo to which belong stair plates with cross representations and a cancel screen with slabs with cross representations. Obviously to the altar belongs a slab with Chrismon.



So we may assume that the liturgy in Pitiunt followed the example of Constantinople.

The trade with Proconnesian marble reached even the easternmost Pontos coast. It is here not the place to speak about the furnishings of the cathedral church of Saisenos (today Caiši) in Northern Lazica where capitals from the 1st half of the 6th c. are preserved in the later church (Khrushkova 1980: 14-25, Plontke-Lüning 2006: DVD 263-267).

It is hard to date the two representative churches. The mosaics of the 2nd church point to a date in the 5th c. Inasmuch the church existed only a short time it seems probable that the new basilica was erected in connections with the building activities in the time of Anastasius in the early 6th c. The fragmented marble decoration indicates a strong destruction which may be connected with the selfdestruction of the fortress by the Romans in 542 reported by Procopius (bell. got. VIII (IV) 4). A comparable situation we find in the Iatrus fortress in Moesia (today Krivina/Bulgaria) where from the 4th to 6th c. three basilicas were built in succession south of the principia (Ivanov 1979: 27, fig. 1).

The last church in the Pitiunt fortress was built in the west of the three churches; its apse cuts in the narthex region of the previous churches. It is a hall church with a wide narthex, three-edged apse and wall pilasters which supported the barrel vault. The walls were built in opus mixtum, the vault in bricks; the proportion between bricks and mortar is nearly 1:2. In the apse was a mosaic with petal rapport; and a bench with a cathedra in the centre was documented. A small room in the eastern niche of the south wall was possibly a martyrion. So we may consider the fourth building for the rather modest cathedral which was built after the destruction of 542.

The structure of the church differs clearly from the constantinopolitan models of the previous churches. Analogies we find in North Mesopotamian churches of the 5th-7th c. like Mar Cyriacus in Arnas (Bell 1982: 16. 99, fig.9), Kefr Zeh, (Bell 1982: 44f., 120f., fig. 29) or Mar Philoxenos in Midyat (Bell 1982: 51f., 131, fig. 36) and in South Armenian churches like T'ukh (Gandolfo 1973: 85-88, figs. 3-10, 30-56; Cuneo 1988: 602; Thierry, Vaspurakan 230-232, fig. 41) and Pashvatsk (Gandolfo 1973: 90-93, figs. 18-25, 60-80; Cuneo 1988: 382; Thierry: 116). It is hard to say why in the region which was closely connected with Constantinople and Cappadocia a church of this plan was erected. Maybe the bishop who built the church came from these regions.

We have a rather scarce knowledge about the development of Pityous after the time of Justinian I. In the early 10th c. we see it in the register of archbishops of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nikolaos I. (901-907) at the 36th position, and it is called Soteriopolis (Not. Episcopatum ecclesiae Cpolitanae 7. 87 ed Darrouzès 1981). A lead seal found in Bulgaria and now in the collection Nikolov in Razgrad and dated by Seibt into the forties of the 11th c. belongs to the Protospatharios and Strategos Nikolaos who commanded the Byzantine fortress Anakopia (today New Athos) and Soterupolis. So we know that Pityous-Soterupolis was in Byzantine hands in the 11th c. The Abasgian coastal points were the base for the byzantine contacts with Alania north of the Caucasus range.

In the first half of the 10th c. the big church was erected more than 500 m east of the old fortress. The archbishop of Pitiunt-Soterupolis had founded a new and much more representative residence.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

А. Плонтке-Луниг

ПИТИУНТ И ЕГО МОЗАИКИ

Римская крепость Пителиунт, расположенная на западном берегу Пицундского мыса, является одним из лучше всего исследованных мест Восточного Причерноморья. Крепость была основана в середине II в. н.э. Первые постройки были сооружены из дерева. Аналогичную ситуацию можно было наблюдать в крепости Фазис в устье современной реки Риони, о чем мы узнаем из Аррианского перипла. Сохранившиеся крепостные стены Пителиунта с U-образными угловыми башнями были построены во времена тетрархии или правления Константина I. Крепость была отремонтирована после нашествия гениокхов в 257 г. Во время усиления римской власти в V-VI вв. н.э. была построена крепостная стена, вокруг неё *canabae* и сооружен порт.

Крепость Пителиунт являлась последним пунктом Понтийского лимеса на Восточном побережье Черного моря. Цепь крепостей вдоль границы империи являлась своеобразным типом римских оборонительных сооружений. Крепости были расположены на расстоянии одного дня пути кораблем. Они служили базами Понтийского флота и стоянками для транспорта зерна из Северного Причерноморья в Трапезунд, откуда снабжались вой-

ска Евфратского лимеса. Клейма на кирпичах из Пителиунта подтверждают присутствие отряда XV legiona *Apollinaris* в крепости. *Notitia dignitatum* упоминает Пителиунт *sub duce Armeniae*, который имел резиденцию в Салате в Малой Армении.

Раннехристианская община Пителиунта входила в состав епархии *Pontus Polemoniacus*. Пителиунтский епископ Стратофил подписал Никейский синод в 325 г. вместе со своими братьями Домнусом Трапезундским и Лонгинусом Неокесарийским. Интересные сведения раннехристианской жизни в Пителиунте содержат тексты в южной части стены VI в.: с IV по VI-VII вв. были построены четыре церкви на одном и том же месте. Особенно интересна базилика с остатками мраморного убранства и мозаичных полов V в. Центральной тематикой мозаичных полов является символика рая и вечной жизни. Надпись на мозаике в апсиде дает ктитора, вероятно, римский или романизированный человек (*Aurelius*). Очевидно, эта богатая базилика была связана с культом семи Лазских братьев, который был популярен в V-VI вв. в Восточном Причерноморье. По преданию, последний *Martir Longinus* был найден мертвым на берегу у Пителиунта.

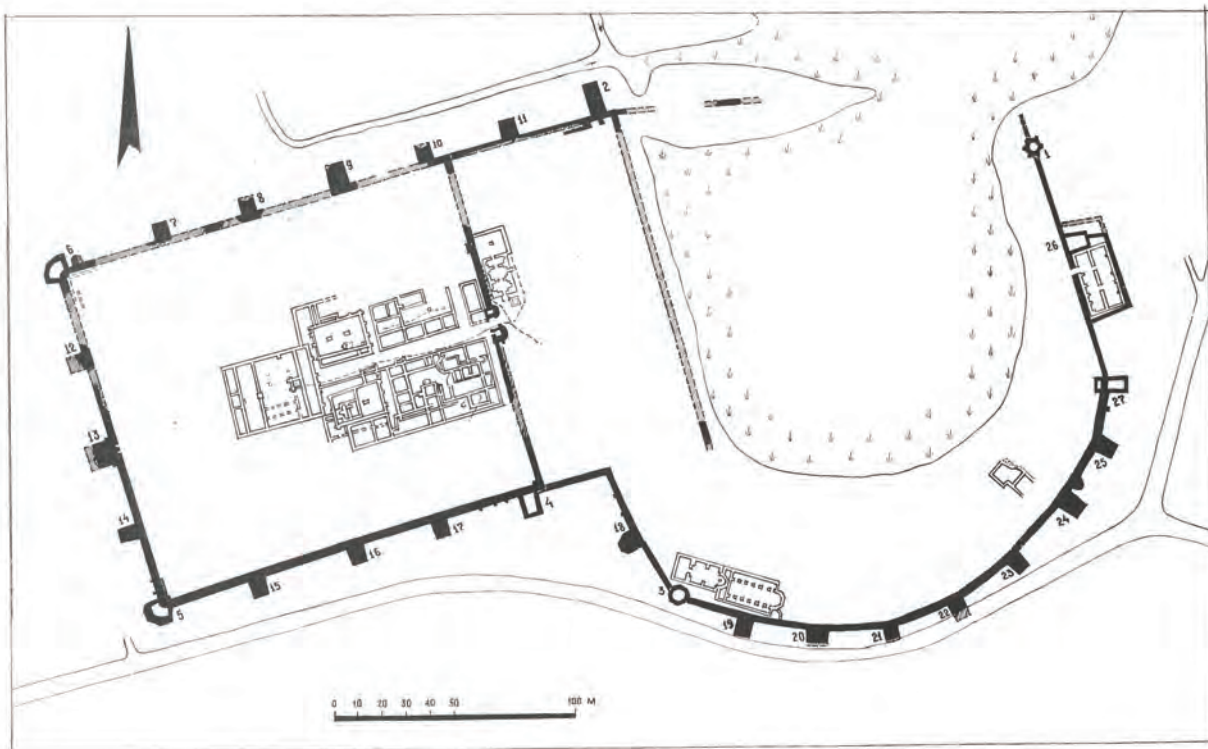


Fig. 1. Pitiunt, plan of the castle (Apakidze 1978 pl. 2)

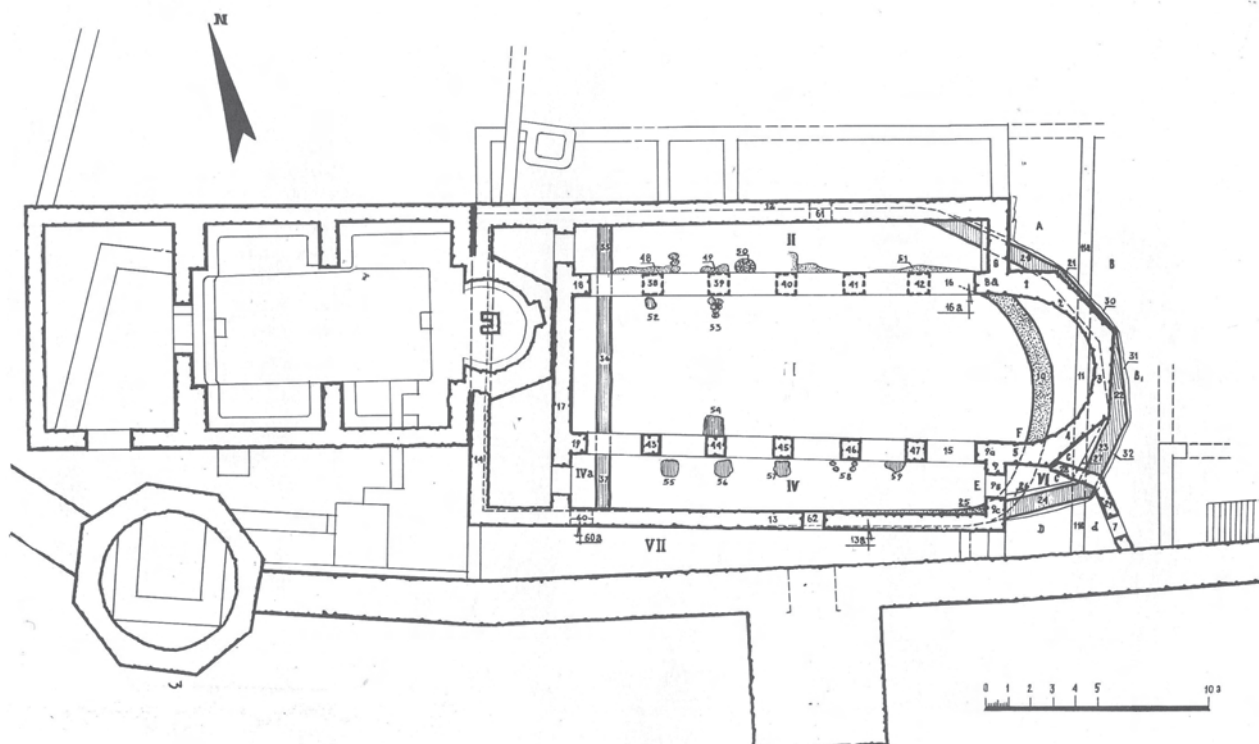


Fig. 2. Pitiunt, plan of the four churches (Apakidze 1978 l. 6)

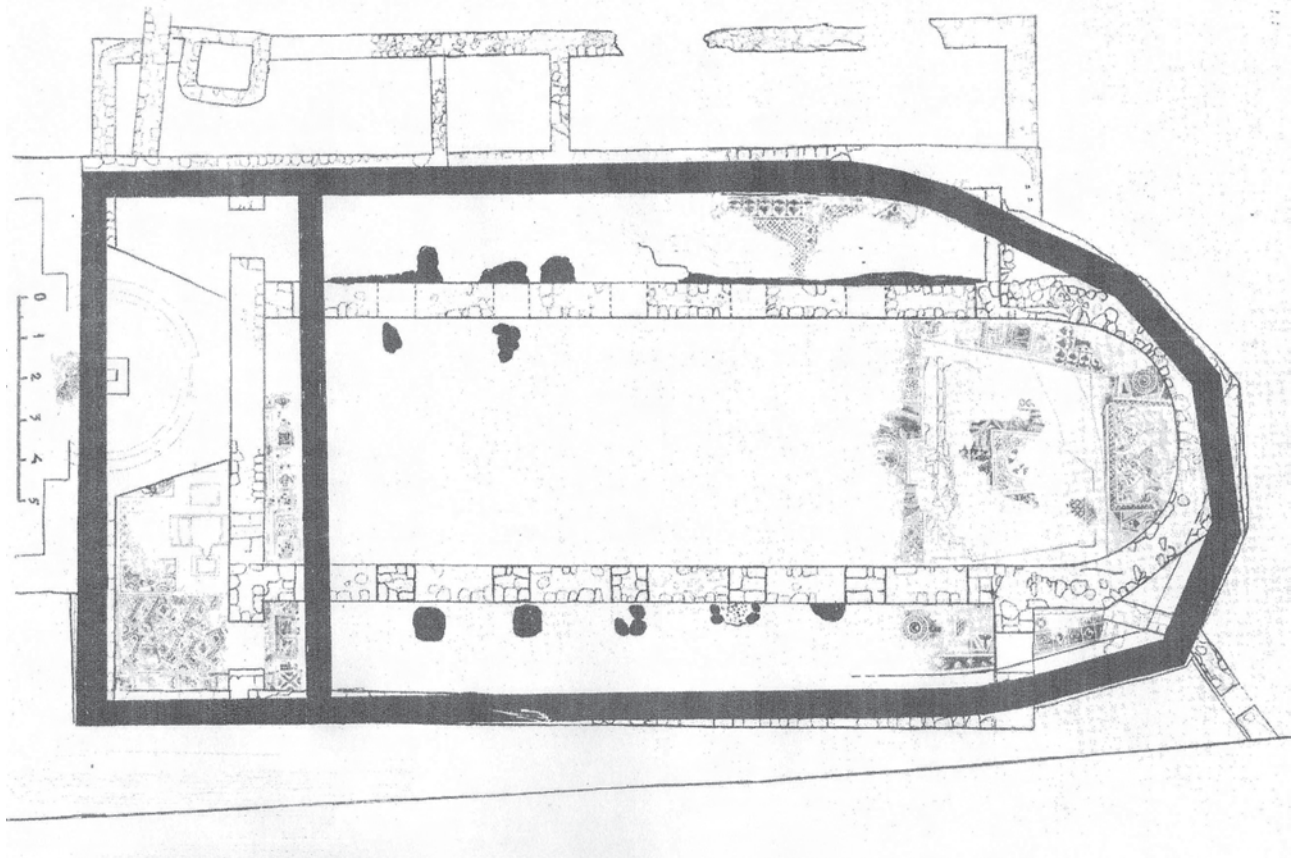


Fig. 3. Pitiunt, plan of the surviving mosaics (Apakidze 1978 pl. 7a)



Fig. 4. Southwest corner of the Pitiunt castle (photo Plontke-Luening)



Fig. 5. Mosaic floor in the apse (Apakidze 1978 fig. 130)

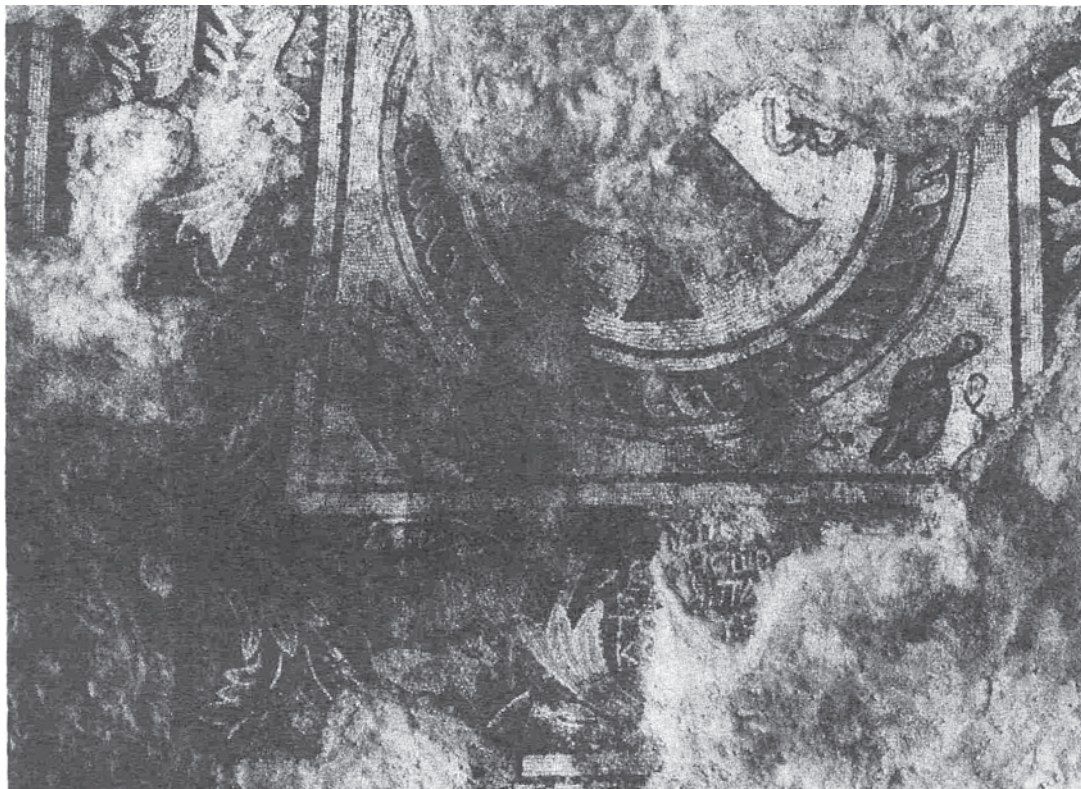


Fig. 6. Mosaic floor of the altar podium (Apakidze 1978 fig. 115)

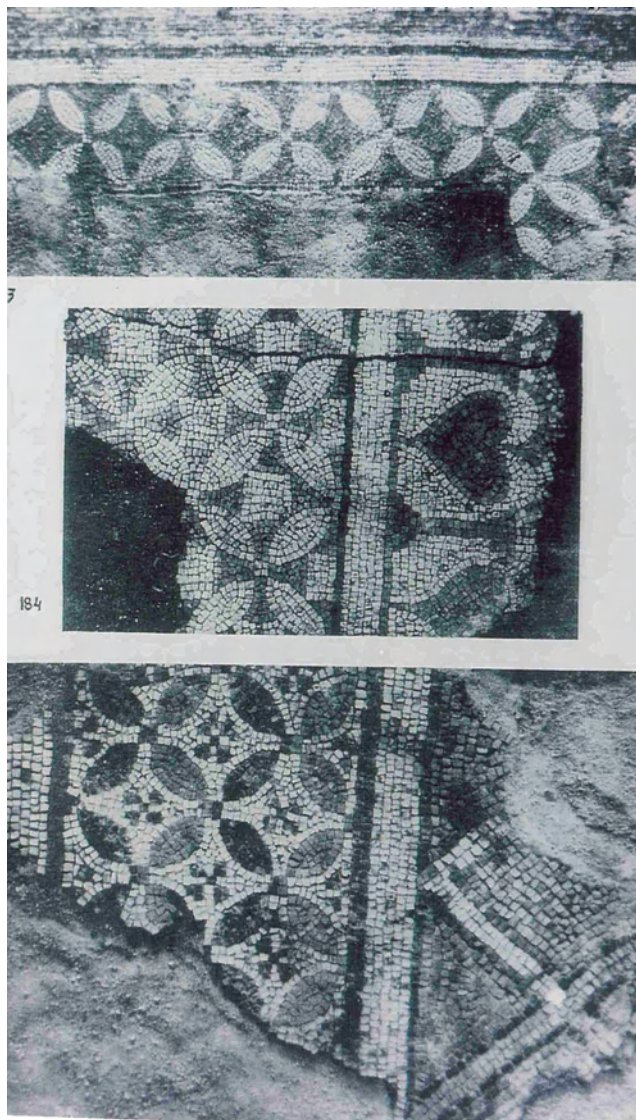


Fig. 7. Mosaic floor from the south aisle (Apakidze 1978 fig. 180-182)



Fig. 8. Mosaic floor of the south aisle (Apakidze 1978 fig. 168)



Fig. 9. Mosaic floor in the narthex, near the baptistery (Apakidze 1978 fig. 156)



Fig. 10. Mosaic carpet in the narthex (Apakidze 1978 fig. 145)