Patterned Paths: The Use of Mosaics within Cypriot-Roman Culture

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Today, mosaics are seen around the world decorating areas from the most mundane walls to floors in the most elaborate dwellings. While mosaics as an art form originated in the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia, mosaics did not become popularized in the Mediterranean world until the appearance of tessera-styled mosaics in the third century BCE. From the third century BCE until the sixth century CE there was a large expansion of mosaics to Roman and Hellenistic colonies. The expansion of mosaics in different colonies revealed the repetition of certain Roman and Hellenistic motifs such as the guilloche design, Ariadne's thread, and the labyrinth motif with central panels within the larger rectangular pictorial field. Some mosaicists from Roman colonies also borrowed the stylistic choice of frontal stiff figures in figural mosaics. On the other hand, some of the colonies altered the motifs while other mosaicists had distinctive forms of artistic expression.

Among these colonies is the island of Cyprus. As a part of the Mediterranean world, Cyprus is located forty miles south of Turkey, sixty miles west of Syria, and 480 miles southeast of Greece. Despite its proximity to these locations, Cyprus had full autonomy and acted primarily as an independent nation until the violent Ptolemaic invasion in 312 BCE. Following the introduction of Macedonian Greeks at both Paphos and Salamis, Cypriots appear to have experienced a shift in their cultural identity, which directly correlates to the fourth century BCE appearance of mosaics on the island. This essay argues that the initial appearance of mosaics in Cyprus signified external control and changes in both political and religious

associations. External control in Cyprus became visible through the eventual assimilation of foreign motifs via artistic expression in material culture. Mosaics acted as an expression of the status of the colonizers. On a personal and pragmatic level, they were also used to organize the space of the room. This essay analyzes the formal elements and artistic expression of mosaics at the coastal sites of Paphos, Kourion, Agios Georgios of Pegeia, and Agia Trias to show the most probable ethnicity of the artist as well as the regional style (fig. 1). This study also applies an archaeology of identity theory when analyzing the probable ethnicities of the mosaicists.

I. Methodology, Theory, and Framework

This essay acts as an interdisciplinary study between art history, archaeology, and history. By examining mosaics that are still in situ at archaeological sites, site reports, and local Cypriot research on mosaics, this study provides a post-colonial analysis. This is a fairly new form of studying the classics and aims to give agency back to the local population.

This essay uses material culture analysis to study the technical elements of mosaic styles. By examining the materials used, tesserae size, the detail of the mosaic, and the detail of the mosaic border to determine whether the mosaic is a stone and pebble mosaic or a tessera mosaic with an opus tessellatum or opus vermiculatum style. This essay also considers the use of emblema, studies figural mosaics, and compares the mosaics in Cyprus to mosaics outside of Cyprus in order to determine stylistic differences in the portrayal of forms. This same practice will apply in the analysis of geometric and vegetal patterns.

This study incorporates the archaeology of identity theory, including a focus on the display of bodies within mosaics, the most probable ethnicity or nationality of the artist or patron, and the use of mosaics to show status. In terms of the display of bodies, some of the mosaics considered in this study are aniconic, meaning they lack any idols or figural images. However, the lack of a figural representation is equally important in revealing identity. While the analysis of ethnicity has a problematic history, using a post-colonial lens breaks down some of these problems. In this case, by using a postcolonial lens while analyzing the ethnicity of the mosaicists, the focus shifts to local Cypriot narratives.

Local artistic expression can be determined through cross-cultural analysis of mosaics. The most probable ethnicity or nationality of the artist can be determined through the "perpetuation of insularity in social relations" and "how outsiders relate to and interact with insiders" as depicted in mosaics (Hu 2013, 374). One can see the idea of insularity in social relations through the rejection or alteration of foreign motifs. Examples of insularity can include inscriptions on mosaics in a local dialect, or inscriptions in a foreign dialect that exclude local communities from reading the inscriptions. By tracking either a Hellenistic, western-style threshold strip or a chain-like design through all of the Cypriot mosaics in this study, Roman, Greek, and Cypriot artistic expressions can be discerned. This approach allows for the identification of the most probable nationality of the artist and in certain cases the nationality of the patron. Importantly, the continuation of these motifs suggests a long-term assimilation of Cypriots borrowing and altering Roman and Hellenistic motifs.

By studying the location of mosaics and the houses they belong to, it is possible to determine the status of the owner. In mosaics like those in the House of Theseus, understanding who the owner of the mosaic was can reveal the intentions of the mosaicist. Status can also be determined through inscriptions, the size of a mosaic (belonging to a large panel of mosaics), and the detail of a mosaic. The representations within mosaics can also be a strong indicator of the status of the patron.

This essay considers an island archaeology framework that looks at cultural evidence of insularity compared to connectivity and the effects colonization had on inland and coastal cities. An island archaeology framework is an important theoretical lens, as it studies both processes of cultural connections, the use of material artifacts in reflecting agency, and the effects of both external and internal social agency. According to Jody Michael Gordon, this theory considers processes of colonization, including "passive adoption of an empire wide culture" or motifs (Gordon 2018, 7). This means that colonies such as Cyprus were subjected to long-term exposure of foreign Roman and Hellenistic motifs. These motifs in turn were eventually adopted or altered by local Cypriot mosaicists.

However, I argue that this framework also considers processes of resistance and infiltration, as seen in the material culture

as the island experiences fluctuating levels of insularity and connectivity. Since mosaics did not occur in Cyprus until the presence of the Hellenistic colonizers' influence, mosaics became the ideal material culture to study identity in Cyprus. Another key element is that the majority of mosaics in Cyprus are located along the coast, indicating the struggle to maintain an insular identity while being exposed to constant connectivity through sea trade. One can see the impact of connectivity in trade, colonization, other external influence, and patterns of expansion from external locations. All of these elements provide the necessary background to show the impact of Hellenism and Romanism on the Cypriot idea of self.

II. Hellenistic Mosaics

The first mosaic to appear in Cyprus was the *Scylla* mosaic at the site of Paphos in the House of Dionysus. This fourth century BCE stone and pebble mosaic is a clear indicator of a Hellenistic style mosaic, and the only stone and pebble mosaic within the archaeological record on the island. Stone and pebble mosaics are most commonly composed of black and white round pebbles that are about one centimeter in diameter (Dauphin 1997). While the appearance of the first mosaic in Cyprus chronologically corresponds with Ptolemaic rule of Cyprus, the mosaic contains motifs and other formal elements that indicate a pebble mosaic in an androne with a Hellenistic, western-style threshold strip (fig. 2) (Westgate 2000, 257). An androne in Greek houses is a place where "men wined, dined and socialized" (Rydzik 2022, 1). One can identify an androne by the presence of usually one single-panel mosaic surrounded by raised stone benches (fig. 4). Evidence for the existence of the *Scylla* mosaic within an androne is clear in the archaeological plot for the House of Dionysus. In the archaeological plot (fig. 3), the *Scylla* mosaic was uncovered in square one. The entrance to the building was located on the west side of square two; however, the *Narcissus* mosaic uncovered in square two was not constructed until the late second or early third century CE, indicating a much later expansion of the building. This suggests that the initial entrance to the building was located in square one at the location of the *Scylla* mosaic.

An important formal element of the *Scylla* mosaic is the Hellenistic western-style threshold strip (fig. 2). The border or the threshold strip appear to resemble a labyrinth or maze. This

decorative band is used "to create divisions of space within a room" and act as a form of social control, in the movement of people (Westgate 2000, 257). In Eretria, Greece, stone and pebble mosaics from the fourth century BCE maintain the same labyrinth threshold strips as the one located in Cyprus (fig. 4). The only true differences in these threshold strips appear to be the number of central panels within the larger rectangular pictorial field and the presence of an X in the border motif at Eretria. Another noticeable similarity between the two mosaics is the depiction of a tailed sea creature or the Scylla monster. These similarities indicate that the Cypriot *Scylla* mosaic was most likely produced by a foreign Greek artist for an elite individual on the island. Significantly, these same threshold strips appear in a third to second century BCE Italian mosaic at the site of Morgantina, House of the Tuscan Capitals, Room twenty-two (fig. 5), and at the site of Taormina during the second century CE (fig. 6). The same western-style threshold strips can also be traced back to the Egyptian *Sophilos* mosaic from Thmuis during the third century BCE (fig. 7). The continued repetition of one western-styled Hellenistic motif indicates that during the third century BCE, artistic expression expanded due to an increase in Hellenistic colonies.

There is also a spread of the Hellenistic *speira,* or spiral, motif that frames Dionysus in the mosaic at the Roman villa in Corinth, Greece (fig. 8). The Hellenistic *speira* motif is a repetition of wave-like shapes that face upward and are met by inverse wave-like shapes in a different color. Mosaics with the Hellenistic spiral suggest a Hellenistic connection in either the artist, the patron, or in the borrowing of motifs. One can see this in the Eastern-style mosaic from Delos, Quartier du Thiatre (fig. 9), the detail of a *Griffin* mosaic from Rhodes during the third or second century BCE (fig. 10), in the *Bellerophon Riding Pegasus from Olynthus* during the fourth century BCE (fig. 11), and in the House of Theseus at Paphos, Cyprus (fig. 12). Interestingly, at the House of Theseus, the colors of the Hellenistic spiral are reversed and the spiral itself is wider. This suggests some form of local agency as the Hellenistic spiral is borrowed but given new characteristics. Going forward, this essay further explores the connectivity and mosaic artistic expression that occurred in Cyprus from 58 BCE to the sixth century CE at the coastal sites of Paphos, Kourion, and Agios Georgios of Pegeia.

III. Mosaic Types

The introduction of the Roman Period in Cyprus brought the use of tessera mosaics with either an opus tessellatum style or an opus vermiculatum style. The two styles are distinguishable by the tesserae size. In opus tessellatum, "tesserae measured between 0.7 x 0.7 cm and 1.7 x 1.7 cm" (Dauphin 1997, 4). Many used this particular style to cover large areas and assembled it primarily at the site. Opus tessellatum is also distinguishable by its use of geometric and vegetal motifs. Mosaicists intended opus vermiculatum for more detailed work and often only used it for a center panel in a group of mosaics. This style appears to imitate paintings and usually is reserved for figurative mosaics. In order to capture the necessary level of detail, opus vermiculatum requires the use of tesserae that are smaller than 0.7 x 0.7 cm. In this style, the tesserae clearly define "their outlines and their internal lines," leading to a crisper more complex depiction than in opus tessellatum (Dauphin 1997, 4). Moreover, mosaicists often constructed opus vermiculatum off-site at mosaic workshops and then later moved the panels to the final site. This often required the process of emblema, which means introducing one element into another element. In this case, mosaicists often embedded the opus vermiculatum mosaic into a simpler border that had already been constructed at the site.

IV. House of Theseus

The use of both opus vermiculatum and opus tessellatum became common at the site of Paphos in 58 BCE when the Romans conquered Cyprus. At the site of Paphos, there are two main structures containing intricate and symbolic mosaics (fig. 13). During the early Roman period, "Cyprus was one of the most important mosaic producing centres in the Eastern Mediterranean" (Michaelides 2018, 215). Mosaics from this initial period of colonization appear at the House of Theseus, which was built to house the Roman Proconsul in the late first century BCE or early first century CE. As a representation of status at an elite site, the mosaics at this location are more intricate, elaborate, and almost always figurative. As Roman Cyprus became "a hyper-connected *insula portuosa et centralis* whose people could actively form their identities," it became essential for Rome to show their symbolical and political control (Gordon 2012, 5). *Insula portuosa et centralis* means

that Cyprus acts as both a port and central island for seafaring and trade.

At the House of Theseus, the most elaborate and earliest mosaic is the *Theseus* mosaic (fig. 14). Naturally, this mosaic depicts Theseus the moment before he kills the minotaur. His hand can be seen grabbing the minotaur's horns while his other hand is starting to swing his club for the killing blow. While this myth has many meanings, one of the main narratives is that Theseus conquered the unconquerable. Similarly, the Theseus mosaic at Paphos acts as a reminder of Roman control and political power on the colonized island of Cyprus. By building this mosaic within the Roman house of governance, politicians would conduct any political business with local Cypriots or foreign officials with a constant reminder of the Proconsul's status and Rome's power.

Interestingly, the inscriptions on the *Theseus* mosaic are Greek, just like the story. In this mosaic, we see Romans borrowing motifs and stories from the Greeks. Theseus is labeled in the center of the mosaic. The minotaur is labeled on the bottom right and the god of the labyrinth is labeled on the bottom left. The inscription of Crete on the top right and Ariadne on the top left indicate that the border of the mosaic acts as a coded inversion of both Ariadne's thread and the labyrinth itself (Messalla 2015, 1). Within the borders of the *Theseus* mosaic and the guilloche design, one can see Ariadne's thread through the representation of linked gray diamond shapes. Similarly, the mosaicist visually represents the labyrinth through both the guilloche design in the border and the brown-linked diamond shapes within the border. The labels are in Greek here rather than Latin, as the Romans wanted to make sure visitors got the message.

An interesting element for determining the identity of the artist who made a mosaic can be found in linguistic identity. The archaeologist Maria Iacovou argues that by the twelfth or eleventh century BCE, "people of an early Greek tongue had infiltrated the Late Cypriote settlements" (Iacovou 2006, 37). This led to the creation of three unique and distinct linguistic identities on the island. At this point, local Cypriots could communicate and write in Cypro-Syllabic, Cypro-Minoan, and "ancient" Greek. Occasionally, one of these three languages appears as an inscription on a mosaic. Since these are all local languages, their appearance suggests a higher likelihood that the artist or patron of the mosaic has a Cypriot

identity, whereas the appearance of a Latin inscription suggests a Roman artist or patron. In the *Orpheus* mosaic from the third century CE House of Orpheus in Paphos, Cyprus, there is a Latin inscription. The Latin inscription reads as "Gaius Pinnius Restitutus" and the term "epoiei" follows it (Kondoleon 1997, 29). The scholar and archaeologist Demetrios Michaelides believes that this inscription indicates the patron of the mosaic, and that the mosaic itself was produced in a local Cypriot workshop at Paphos (Kondoleon 29). The use of linguistics to represent identities is present within mosaics. When mosaicists used Greek in an inscription, there are two possible reasons. The first can be seen in the House of Theseus (fig. 14). The Romans most likely produced this mosaic, and the use of Greek allows for the message of the mosaic to reach and be understood by the local population. Secondly, a local Cypriot produced the mosaic, so they used their local spoken and written language. If a mosaic contains a Latin inscription, it was probably made by a Roman or commissioned by a Roman. Therefore, the inscription is most likely a name and used to show status.

The chain-like guilloche design (fig. 14) that makes up Ariadne's thread became a common Roman motif that often appears throughout Roman-Cypriot mosaics. The guilloche design is also seen at Paphos in the third century CE Roman mosaic of *Zeus and Ganymede* (fig. 15). At Paphos, there are also thread motifs that deviate from but reference the guilloche design. One can see this in the third century CE Roman mosaics of *Poseidon and Amymone* (fig. 16) and *Ikarios and Dionysos* (fig. 17). The *Zeus and Ganymede* (fig. 15) mosaic has the same guilloche design as the border in the *Theseus* mosaic, meaning that the *Zeus and Ganymede* (fig. 15) mosaic also references Ariadne's thread. Meanwhile, the mosaics of *Poseidon and Amymone* (fig. 16) and *Ikarios and Dionysos* (fig. 17) contain a new variation of the guilloche design as the border motifs are now braided and create an intertwined version of Ariadne's thread motif.

The same guilloche motif as the *Theseus* mosaic and the *Zeus and Ganymede* mosaic is seen in later Roman mosaics at the site of Paphos in aniconic mosaics (fig. 18). While the large presence of this motif within Cyprus indicates some local representation of identity, the same motif can also be found at a Roman villa in Corinth, Greece (fig. 8) and in Izmir, Turkey (fig. 19). The repetition of this motif across Roman colonies reveals the guilloche designs in Cyprus were

borrowed from Rome. However, there is evidence of slight alterations to the guilloche design within Cyprus as it becomes more compact and braided.

The *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic (fig. 20) is also located at the Proconsul's house but was constructed at a much later date, most likely in the fifth century CE. This mosaic contains Roman figural stylistic elements as seen in the frontal and stiff figures. The frontal and stiff Roman figures are typical of fourth-century and fifth-century Roman figural mosaics as seen in the Roman Mosaic with *Dancing Bacchic Figures* from the fourth or fifth century CE from Antakya, Turkey (fig. 21) and in a section of a floor mosaic *Depicting Fall* from the fourth century CE in Turkey (fig. 22).

The inscriptions in the *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic labels the characters from left to right. On the far left is a housemaid named Ambrosia, and next to her is the nurse "Anatrophe," who is holding the baby Achilles. In the section of the mosaic that was destroyed, the mosaicist would have portrayed Achilles again. Reclining on the chair slightly above the destroyed section is Achilles' mother, Thetis, and Achilles' father, a Roman magistrate, is located to her right. The three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos are also featured (Messella 2015, 2). The use of Greek inscriptions for this mosaic indicates local Cypriot artists produced the *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic. Similar to the *Theseus* mosaic (fig. 14), the motif of thread is prevalent. In this case, the fate, Clotho, can be seen holding a spindle. This spindle suggests that "Clotho is the one spinning the thread of life" (Messella 2015, 2). As the legend suggests, she is creating the thread of human fate. Interestingly, one can also see the thread motif in the border of the mosaic (fig. 20); however, the motif has evolved. In this mosaic, the thread motif has a more intricate braid, is wider, and uses stones with strong green and red tones.

The *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic also imitates the larger faces that are stylistic in the fourth/fifth century CE in Rome. This includes depicting babies disproportionately by giving them adult heads. While the Romans displayed their fourth and fifth century CE figural mosaics with more cylindrical heads, the Cypriots portray their figural mosaics with heads that are slightly more elongated vertically. Moreover, the eyes and lips in the *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic are almost identical on all of the figures, suggesting a loss of individuality. Scholar Demetrios Michaelides suggests in his book,

Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries): A Mirror of Intercultural Contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean, that Paphos may have contained Cypriot mosaic workshops during the Roman period. This is evident by the eye-to-lip ratio and portrayal within the *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic which matches the portrayal of eyes and lips in the *Phaedra and Hippolytus* mosaic in the House of Dionysus, from the late second / early third century CE (fig. 23) and other mosaics from the archaeological site of Paphos during the Roman period. This indicates that the *First Bath of Achilles* mosaic was commissioned by Romans and produced in a local Cypriot mosaic workshop at Paphos.

V. House of Aion

The House of Aion has five figural panels from the fourth century CE. Both the mosaic of the *Newborn Dionysos* (fig. 24) and the mosaic of the *Beauty Contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids* (fig. 25) are strong examples of opus vermiculatum. Both mosaics were most likely constructed off-site at a mosaic workshop and then embedded into the simpler but still detailed border. The figures still follow the frontal and stiff stylistic choices of the fourth century CE Roman imagery with disproportionate dimensions of the head to the rest of the body, particularly in the babies or cupid figures. However, the heads are still more elongated vertically than heads in the Roman style. This is emphasized in the man to the far right (Necktar) in the mosaic of the *Newborn Dionysos* (fig. 24). While the faces are more flushed and have more of a painterly quality to them, there is still a lack of individuality indicating the use of Paphos' mosaic workshops in the construction of the mosaics *Newborn Dionysos* and *Beauty Contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids.*

VI. House of the Gladiators

The late third century CE *House of the Gladiators* mosaics are found on the costal site of Kourion. These mosaics are strong examples of opus tessellatum. In the first *House of the Gladiators* mosaic (fig. 26), a *lanista*, or owner, named Dareos separates a gladiator named Lytras from another gladiator. The mosaicist portrays Dareos in a purple toga indicating his status and wealth. Dareos is also the only individual in the mosaic who is facing the audience and whose face remains uncovered. These combined

factors indicate his significance and the value of his identity over those of the gladiators.

Surprisingly, the gladiators in this mosaic are fully covered, and their physiques lack details. Moreover, this mosaic appears to combine gladiator armaments into one unique Cypriot style. The gladiator on the left (fig. 26) has the closest resemblance to a *murmillo* or "fish man" gladiator. This is evident by the presence of "a large helmet with a fish on its crest" (Gill 2019, 4). Traditionally, this style of gladiator fights with a straight Greek-style sword. However, this mosaic appears to combine the representation of the *murmillo* gladiator with the representation of a *secutor* gladiator, as this gladiator is equipped with the traditional *scutum* shield. The combination of the *murmillo* gladiator with the armament of a *secutor* gladiator may make up for the lack of portrayal of the gladiator physique. In fact, "due to their aggressive fighting style and their arsenal, the secutor seems to relate to Roman ideals of masculinity, as related to gladiators and soldiers" (Britt 2018, 36). The combination of the two gladiators by the artist could reveal the artist's perceived ideas about Roman masculinity. The second gladiator in this mosaic (fig. 26) appears to be a combination of a *secutor* gladiator and a *thraex* gladiator, yet again showing an outsider or Cypriot interpretation of Roman gladiators. This mosaic borrows imagery from Roman themes. The mixing of gladiator styles within both figural representations suggests a lack of knowledge about gladiators. This mosaic was most likely created for an elite at Kourion by a local Cypriot.

The other *House of the Gladiators* mosaic (fig. 27) depicts two gladiators in combat. The Greek inscription names the gladiator on the left, Margarites, and the gladiator on the right, Hellenikos (Raddato 2019). While this mosaic maintains the stiff and frontal style of Roman fourth-century imagery, the rest of the mosaic is completely Cypriot and shows complete Cypriot agency in mosaic expression. One can see the first Cypriot act of artistic expression in the portrayal of the helmet. Almost all Roman mosaics of gladiators have some form of projectile that imitates natural forms like horns from a goat or a dorsal fin of a fish (Gill 2019). The style and coloring of the helmet is unique in the archaeological record. Another unique element is that the face is the same color as the helmet, which is a unique Cypriot artistic expression. While the shield most closely resembles the Roman *parmula* shield, cutting the shield design in half

to create a semilunar design is also unique to this mosaic. Both of these mosaics from the Gladiator House at Kourion also borrow the Hellenistic western-style threshold strip discussed earlier.

The differences in Cypriot artistic expression of Roman gladiators and Roman artistic expression of gladiators are evident through the portrayal of gladiators in mosaics across different countries. The third century CE Roman mosaic from the Roman villa in Nenning, Germany (fig. 28) depicts a *retiarius* gladiator armed with a trident and dagger fighting against a stylistically accurate *secutor*. This mosaic also contains a Roman *lanista* like the *House of Gladiator* mosaic. The third century CE Roman mosaic from Germany (fig. 29) shows a *thraex* gladiator on the left fighting a *murmillo* gladiator on the right. The fourth century CE Roman mosaic from Torrenova (fig. 30) depicts a traditional representation of the *mumillo* gladiator. The third century CE Roman mosaic in Germany (fig. 31) depicts two equites fighters equipped with a lance sword and the *parmula* shield. The differences in both shields, armor, helmets, and the portrayal of the faces of the gladiators between the Roman mosaics outside of Cyprus and the mosaics in Cyprus during the Roman period demonstrates a clear distinction in style and artistic expression.

VII. Ktisis

In the fifth century CE at Kourion, there was a transition back to Roman imagery. The Ktisis mosaic is an example of emblema, as Ktisis has much finer detail with smaller stones in contrast to the less detailed border. In the Ktisis mosaic (fig. 32) the chain-like guilloche design returns and frames the Ktisis figure. Ktisis is often viewed as a symbol of the "founding spirit" and seen as the Greek patron deity of architecture (Maupin 2013, 5). One can see other Greek motifs in the portrayal of two spirals coming out of both sides of two Italian mandorlas (or almond shapes). While the Hellenistic spirals draw reference from Hellenistic motifs as seen in the Apulian, Salting Painter, ca. 360 BCE *Boreas and Oreithyia Among Floral Tendrils Emerging from an Acanthus Calyx* (fig. 33) and at pebble mosaic floors at Pella, Greece (fig. 34), the mandorlas may be a reference to Christianity. In fact, many see mandorlas in various art forms as "almond-shaped light (or aura) enclosing the whole of a sacred figure" (Klug 2016, 1). In later Christian periods, the mandorla is often seen surrounding

Christ. Since the fifth century CE marks the shift of Christianity in Cyprus and the use of aniconic representations, the mandorla in this mosaic may indicate Cypriot adaptation to Roman Christian motifs.

Other noticeable Roman motifs within the Ktisis mosaic are the chain-like or guilloche designs. The first design is seen in a circle around Ktisis and is reminiscent of the design around the *Theseus* mosaic. The second chain-like design acts as a border for the whole mosaic panel and is a clear expansion and elaboration to the one seen at the *Bath of Achilles*. Another noticeable Roman element is that Ktisis is portrayed holding the Roman foot, a measuring tool, in her hand. While this was the standardized form of measurement across the Mediterranean, its presence, along with the other motifs, suggests a complete adoption of Roman motifs. This is the first Roman period mosaic in Cyprus where there is a complete adoption of Roman stylistic elements and a lack of Cypriot artistic expression. This is even present in Ktisis' figural representation as her head loses the Cypriot elongation. The eyes are also more naturalistic and more attention is given to facial features. The portrayal of Ktisis' head and arm also contains a more naturalistic representation and ratio that does not normally appear in Cypriot mosaics.

VIII. Complex of Eustolios

The mosaics within the Complex of Eustolios are from the fifth century CE at Kourion during the late Roman period and early Christian period. During this time mosaics shifted away from figural representations as all floor mosaics started to become aniconic with vegetal, geometric, or animal motifs. The mosaic (fig. 35) at the Complex of Eustolios depicts a tame falcon, two fish, a guinea hen, four crosses with chain-like borders, and an unidentifiable bird that most closely resembles a dove. The Greek word for fish is ichthus, which acts as an acronym for "Jesus, Christ, Lord, Son, Saviour" (Martin n.d., 1). The bird that is unidentified but may be a representation of or related to a dove, symbolizes reconciliation with God. The unidentified bird sitting across from the tame falcon, which traditionally represents "a pagan's conversion to the Faith," supports this idea (Martin n.d., 1). While guinea hens do not act as symbols for Christianity in the modern day, the hens' portrayal in the center panel makes it the most important motif in the mosaic. Genesis 1:22 states, "And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and

multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth" (King James Bible 1). In this case, the guinea hen could be acting as a sign of prosperity and good health. The more likely explanation is that this motif had pagan roots and a pagan Cypriot or a recently converted Christian created the mosaic. As the guinea hen comes from Africa, its appearance on Cyprus in a Christian mosaic is probably the result of Cyprus' insular identity and its connectivity through trade. The continual use of the chain-like guilloche design with the more compact Cypriot style demonstrates the continuation of some stylistic trends within Cypriot mosaics. However, the removal of human figures from the mosaic shows a slow process of infiltration as Cypriots absorbed more iconography and started using primarily Roman motifs.

IX. Agios Georgios of Pegeia

The mosaics from the site of Agios Georgios of Pegeia date to the sixth century CE and were built during a period of Christian and Roman expansion. The goal of these mosaics (fig. 36) was to help organize the room. The use of a simple geometric repeatable pattern means that buildings could be expanded with ease and be continued in any direction without offsetting the space of the building. Michaelides argues that the "interlacing of two or more cables in order to form a succession of circles, ovals, squares, and other shapes that cover large expanses of floor" was the main motif during that time period (Michaelides 2018, 236). It is important that these circles still portray the chain-like design that was introduced in the *Theseus* mosaic. However, by the sixth century CE, the chain-like design had expanded to have much longer gaps between the "knots" or "loops," only contains four "knots" per circle, are no longer compact, and use a different color scheme. This mosaic also contains the rosette motif which the chain-like design frames. The assimilation of Christian motifs and a lack of figurative mosaics at sixth-century sites on Paphos indicate a complete adaptation of Roman motifs.

X. Agia Trias

Agia Trias is another sixth century site that was built during a period of Roman and Christian expansion. Unlike Agios Georgios of Pegeia, whose mosaicists constructed simple geometric repeatable

patterns, the mosaicists at Agia Trias kept using the panel mosaics. However, the mosaics at the site of Agia Trias follow the shift away from figural mosaics towards aniconic mosaics with Christian motifs. The most notable of these motifs at the site of Agia Trias is the pomegranate tree with three pomegranates (fig. 37). Pomegranates are significant in Christianity for four reasons. The first is that "pomegranate seeds are said to number 613–one for each of the Bible's 613 commandments" (Langley 2000, 2). This is a significant visual motif in Cyprus as the pomegranate specifically relates to the rules laid out in a new and spreading religion. Each part of the pomegranate tree takes on further symbolism. The shrub symbolizes sanctity; the flowers symbolize fertility, and the fruit symbolizes abundance (Langley 2000, 2). The pomegranate tree holistically represents balance and prosperity while simultaneously promoting the ideals of a new religion, Christianity, within Cyprus.

The panel mosaic also depicts a pair of sandals (fig. 37), which can take on a variety of meanings. The first potential interpretation for the pair of sandals is that the mosaicist is portraying a reflection of the footwear during that period. The mosaicists may also be portraying the footwear of a specific group, as "it was customary for early Israelites and Christians to wear sandals" with two rows of leather on the front (Lima 2022, 1). Romans, however, typically wore sandals with more rows of leather on the front. Another important aspect of the sandals depicted at the site of Agia Trias is that they are minimalistic and designed for durability.

Interestingly, this mosaic panel from the late Roman/early Christian site of Agia Trias also contains a design that is uniquely Cypriot. In the southwestern corner panel (fig. 37), the mosaicist created what appears to be two inverted semilunar patterns. This motif is reminiscent of the shield design at the *House of Gladiators* mosaic (fig. 27). The only discernible difference is that the shield design at the Agia Trias's mosaic has a needle-like point coming out of the middle of the shield. Meanwhile, the central part of the *House of Gladiators* mosaic is rounded. The other key difference is that the mosaic at the site of Agia Trias is missing the figure that would have accompanied the shield in earlier periods. There is a shift towards Roman motifs in the sixth century, as aniconic designs completely replaced figural mosaics. However, the presence of the uniquely

Cypriot shield design within mosaics suggests a rejection of full assimilation into the new Christian religion.

XI. Conclusion

Mosaics were introduced into Cyprus during the fourth century BCE during the Hellenistic period. By the first century BCE or first century CE, the Romans had conquered Cyprus and introduced tessera mosaics along coastal sites. From the third through fifth century CE, there was Cypriot artistic expression of mosaics at the House of Gladiators at Kourion and at the mosaics at the House of Theseus and House of Aion at Paphos. There appears to be an infiltration and acceptance of Roman motifs at the Complex of Eustolios at Kourion and the sixth-century sites of Agios Georgios of Pegeia and Agia Trias. The examples in this essay illustrate that Cypriot mosaics demonstrate eventual adaptation of foreign or colonizing artistic expressions and motifs through long-term infiltration. However, there were local mosaic workshops at Paphos operated by local Cypriots who used the Roman stylized frontal stiff figures while still adding elements of Cypriot artistic expression and identity. There was complete Cypriot agency in mosaics like the *House of Gladiator* mosaics which took inspiration from the Romans but acted as uniquely Cypriot. While the Cypriots borrowed foreign motifs as a result of increased trade and a colonizing presence, they always maintained an awareness of self-identity. This study strongly suggests that there is an early period where Cypriots asserted themselves through mosaics. However, by the late Roman/early Christian period, they had completely adapted to Roman stylistic motifs but rejected a full assimilation of cultural identity.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

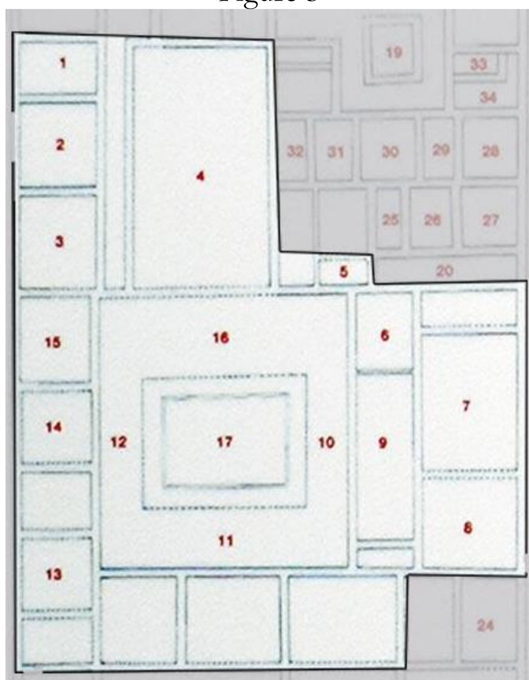


Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

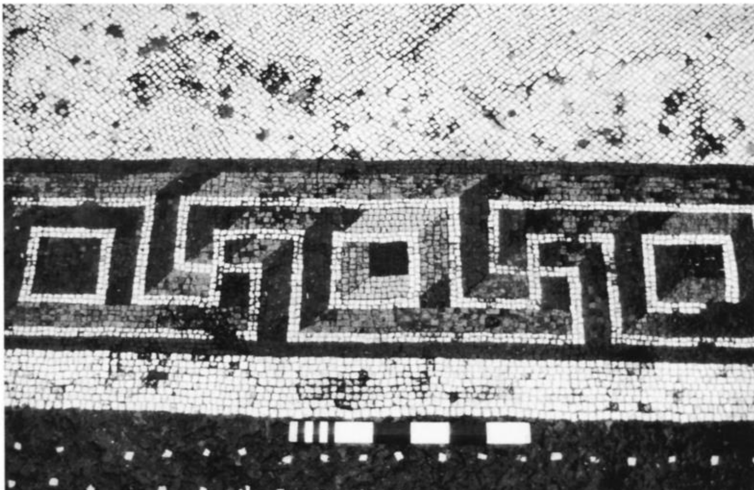


Figure 7

Figure 8

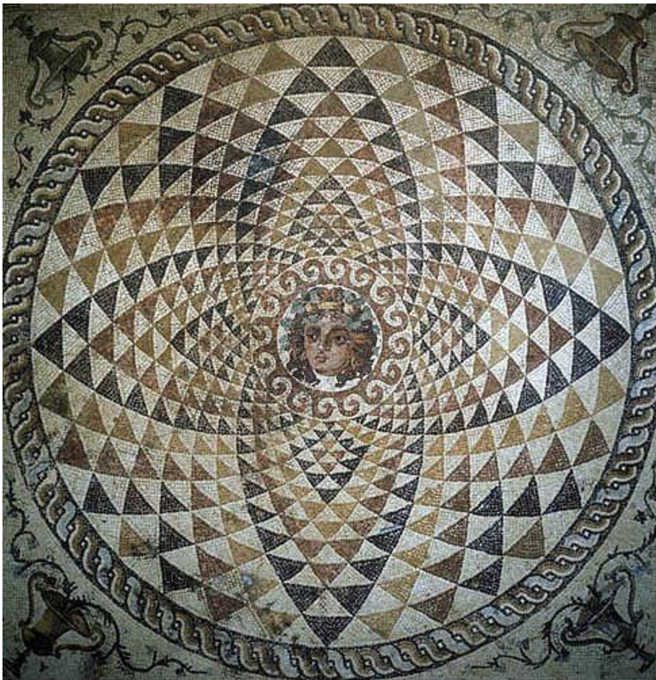


Figure 9

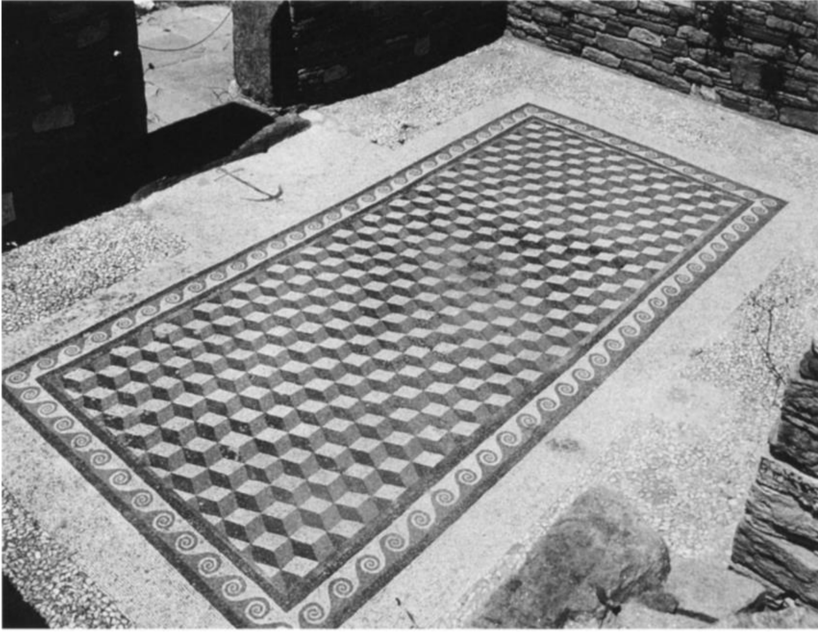


Figure 10

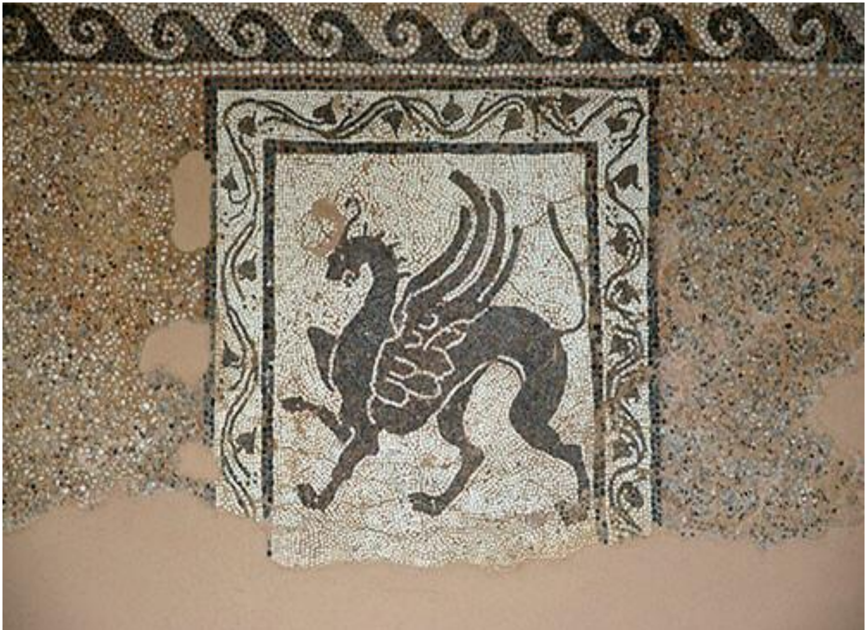
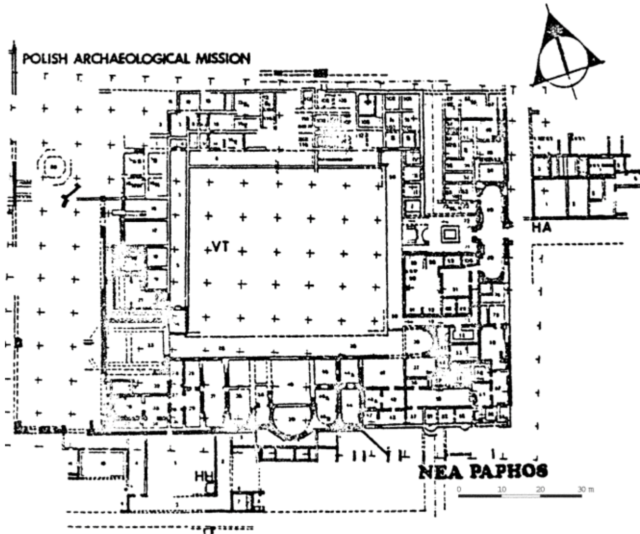


Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13



Plan of the Polish excavations.
VT – Villa of Theseus, HA – House of Aion, HH – Hellenistic House.

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

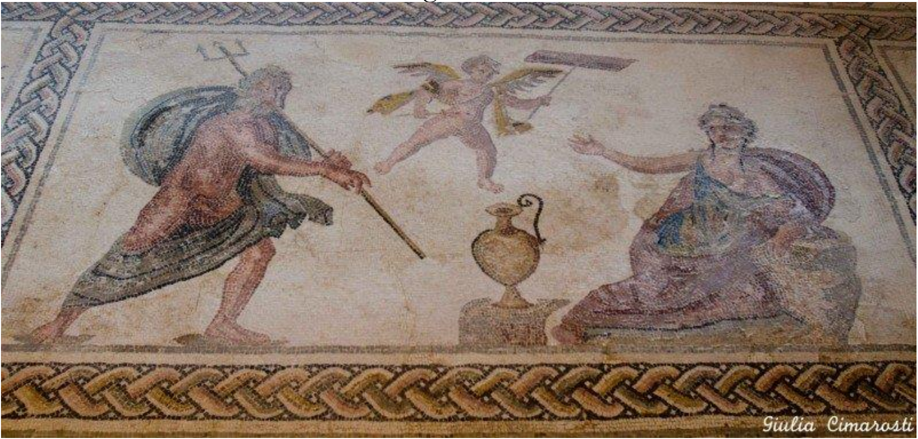


Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

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Figure 25

Figure 26

Figure 27

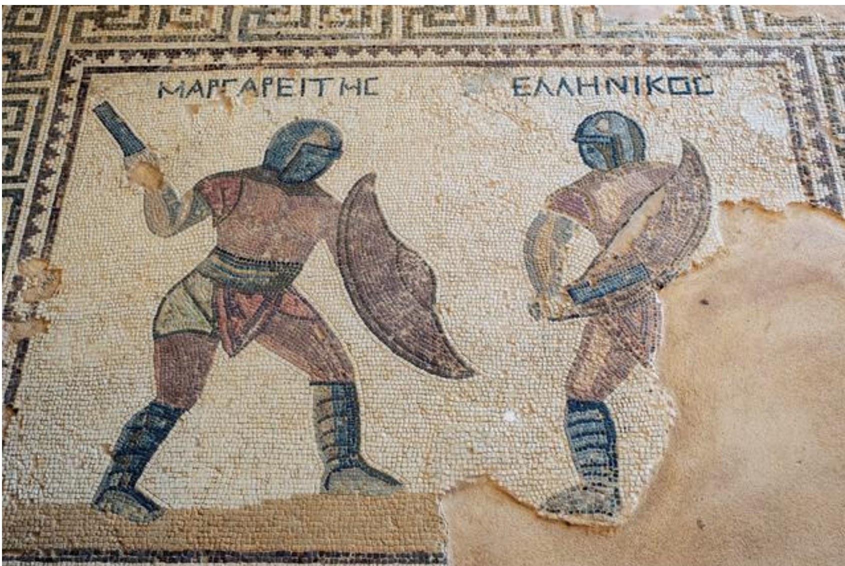

Figure 28

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

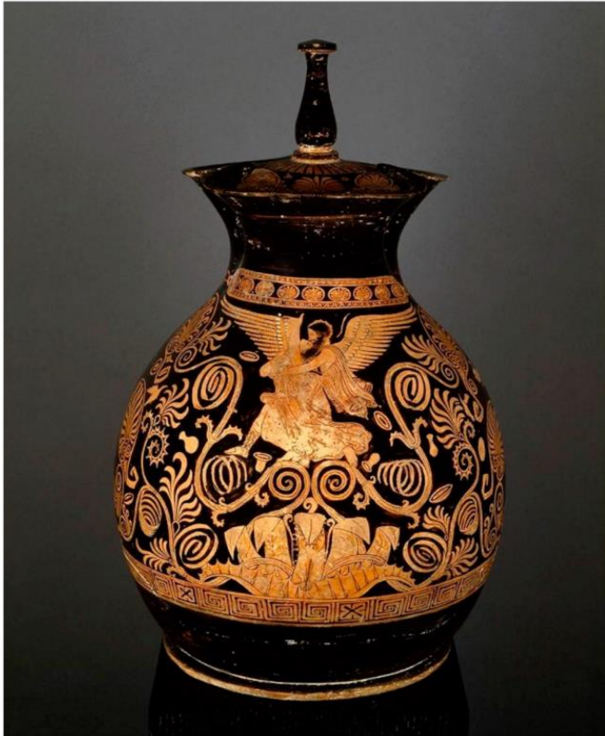

Figure 34

Pebble mosaic floor, Pella, Greece. Photo: @Helen Miles Mosaics

Figure 35

Figure 36

Figure 37

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