

## SUMMARY

## MOSAICS OF A ROMAN VILLA IN NIN

Jagoda MEDER

*The discovery of a Roman villa in Nin has opened a new chapter in the study of ancient mosaics in the eastern Adriatic. This is the largest site with ancient mosaics preserved in situ in Croatia. It provides a framework for a comparative analysis of both local and foreign material. The mosaics from Nin are probably the most important finds of the last century in general because of their state of preservation, the technical quality of their execution and their stylistic and morphological characteristics.*

*Black and white geometric and figural mosaics from the Roman villa in Nin were found completely preserved in three rooms and in a fragmentary state in another two rooms. They were also located in the area of a large peristyle and along a twelve-metre-long corridor in the eastern area of the excavation site. Seen from a comparative perspective, they bear traces of mosaics from the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Mosaic compositions are strictly structured. Motifs are based on a limited number of geometric shapes. The decorative repertoire is rich and inventive. Black figures are treated as silhouettes without white lines, a trait that resulted in two-dimensional graphic solutions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The mosaics from Nin can be categorised as all-over-pattern mosaics, as they are called by M. Blake, or Vielmusterboden mosaics, as they are called by Donderer. The mosaics, taken in general, have similar traits to mosaics from Italic lands: the 10<sup>th</sup> Roman region Venetia et Histria, the modern region of Emilia Romagna, and particularly Pompeii. Other mosaics with similar traits found in Croatia, apart from Istria, are mosaics discovered in Zadar, Skradin, Orlic near Knin, Narona, and on the islands of Murter and Vis. All together they form a still incomplete corpus of black-and-white floor mosaics in the eastern Adriatic.*

*The article analyses the mosaics from a stylistic and morphological point of view, without pretensions to completeness of treatment, which would require a multidisciplinary approach involving primarily stratigraphic analysis, followed by petrographic analysis and a comparative study of the finds in the villa, where the remains of frescoes, pottery, coins and other finds are located. The complex structure of the mosaics, the rich decorative repertoire, and figural scenes, all call for iconographic studies, studies which would bring us closer to the life of a rich landowner of Nin and explain the way in which he presented his own social status. In other words, apart from attracting attention through its artistic aspects, the mosaic inventory of Roman villas helps us reconstruct the social and cultural context, or more precisely, the life of the economically and socially privileged, both in the very centre and in the provinces of the Empire.*

*The Roman villa, situated in the north-eastern part of a small island, is located on the line of a decumanus, near the forum of which many traces have been preserved, and thus an important part of the villa's almost idyllic original historical and natural Mediterranean environment. For this reason, substantial professional engagement will be needed for the villa to be properly presented in conservation and museum terms. Contrary to practice in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when many of the world's museums became warehouses for museum treasures unearthed at archaeological sites in the Mediterranean, today we are witnessing numerous other possibilities and solutions for the presentation of mosaics in situ, even in the crowded centres of European cities.*

Translation: Alenka Patrun  
Revision: Stephen Hindlaugh