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Revealing Ancient Patterns: The Mosaic Floor of the Temple at Pitiunt Hillfort

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Abstract

The mosaic floor of the Temple at Pitiunt Hillfort offers a fascinating glimpse into the artistic and cultural achievements of an ancient civilization. This abstract focuses on revealing the intricate patterns embedded in the mosaic, shedding light on their symbolic significance and historical context. Through meticulous analysis and visualization techniques, researchers have unraveled the complexities of the mosaic, allowing for a deeper understanding of the beliefs, rituals, and societal values of the ancient inhabitants. This abstract presents a comprehensive exploration of the ancient patterns, providing valuable insights into the artistic heritage of the Temple at Pitiunt Hillfort and the civilization that created it.

Introduction

Archaeological discoveries often provide us with glimpses of ancient civilizations and their rich cultural heritage. Among these remarkable findings, the mosaic floor of the Temple of Pitiunt Hillfort stands as a testament to the artistic and architectural brilliance of the past. The reconstruction and visualization of this mosaic floor have allowed researchers to unravel the intricate design, symbolism, and historical significance of this ancient monument. In this article, we delve into the meticulous process of reconstructing the mosaic floor and the technologies employed to bring it to life, shedding light on the remarkable artistic achievements of our ancestors.

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The harmony of the border is disturbed. As we see in the reconstruction, the meandering squares alternate. The squares are inscribed with various geometric ornaments or images of animals. While the harmony is preserved in the eastern part of the border, violations can be observed elsewhere. Sometimes, the mosaicist replaces the squares of the ornament with rectangles for the sake of harmony. The most serious violation is in the southern part; between two ornamental borders, the mosaicist could not place a meander. This is an eloquent illustration of the artistic skills of the Pitiunt mosaicists and shows that the mosaic was made on the spot, without prior calculations and drawings.

Rhombus Panel

An ornamental covering forms the southern part of the decorative border. Its pattern consists of intersecting diagonal rhombuses interlaced with alternating two-tone braids “wickerwork “and shaded rollers. Octagonal and round pendants depicting geometric designs and birds are placed at the tops and intersections of the rhombuses. During the construction of the barrier in the narthex of the later Temple No. 3, the eastern part of this cover was damaged. A trench was dug into the mosaic floor, and the foundation for the stone wall was made. The mosaic in this area was destroyed. As it was in the naos of the new temple, the eastern part of the real decorative border was preserved. However, it was possible to reconstruct the original appearance of this mosaic covering, thanks to the uniformity of the pattern.

The Discovery

The Temple of Pitiunt Hillfort, located in the region of Pitiunt in ancient times, was an important religious center in its heyday. Excavations conducted at the site unveiled a significant portion of a mosaic floor, which had been concealed beneath layers of earth and debris for centuries. The mosaic fragments, adorned with intricate patterns, motifs, and vibrant colors, sparked great curiosity among archaeologists and art historians.

A fragment of a border resting on the south-eastern shoulder of the apse of Temple No. 4 can be seen in the general arrangement of the mosaics to the north of the baptistery. On the other side, the westward turn of the border, slightly missing the apse axis of Temple No. 4, can be seen if we look at the eastern side of the meandering border. A rectangle inscribed in the northern part of the meander ornamental border is bound by these two lines. It can be seen that this rectangle is located almost in the center of the narthex; however, it is slightly offset to the north.



This is an indication that the central passage between the western entrance to the temple and the passage to the central nave were paved. It also suggests that the main entrance to the temple was not exactly in the center of the western wall; however was shifted 0.4 m to the north.

The mosaic was not preserved within this rectangle. Only a small fragment was found on the apse of Temple No. 4. At the same time, it has been suggested that this area may have belonged to the mosaic of the atrium which faced the entrance to the temple. On this basis, this pattern was used in the aisle, on the assumption that the mosaic in the atrium and the central aisle may have been the same.

Reconstruction Process

The reconstruction of the mosaic floor was an intricate and painstaking process that required a multidisciplinary approach. Archaeologists and conservators carefully excavated and documented each fragment, meticulously recording its original position and orientation. Advanced imaging techniques, such as photogrammetry and laser scanning, were employed to create high-resolution digital models of the mosaic fragments.

Virtual Reconstruction and Visualization

Using the digital models as a foundation, skilled artists and computer graphics experts embarked on the task of digitally reconstructing and visualizing the mosaic floor. Drawing from historical references, artistic styles of the time, and comparative analysis of similar mosaic designs, they meticulously pieced together the fragments like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Sophisticated software and algorithms were utilized to fill in the missing sections, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the final reconstruction.

Color Restoration and Symbolic Interpretation

One of the most captivating aspects of the mosaic floor reconstruction was the restoration of its original colors. Through careful analysis of the pigments, cross-referencing with similar ancient mosaics, and scientific techniques such as X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, researchers were able to recreate the vibrant color palette of the original design. This process brought the mosaic to life, revealing intricate patterns, mythological motifs, and symbolic representations.

Historical Significance and Cultural Insights

The reconstruction and visualization of the mosaic floor of the Temple of Pitiunt Hillfort provide valuable insights into the cultural and religious practices of the ancient civilization that inhabited the region. The



choice of motifs, the arrangement of scenes, and the depiction of deities and mythological figures offer glimpses into their beliefs, rituals, and societal values. The mosaic becomes a portal into the past, allowing us to understand the symbolism and artistic expressions of a bygone era.

The borders of the long sides of the naves formed 10 identical fields with the column bases, which were filled with geometric patterns analogous to synchronous Christian sites: Solomon's knots, intertwined circles, inscribed rhombuses and a flat swastika meander. It is important to note that all these patterns have analogues in the surviving sections of the Pitiunt mosaics. Thus, we have not introduced a single unfamiliar element. In the central part of the main nave, a panel with a similar decoration was made, analogous to the Chersoneso chrismons; however, the central filling was simplified by replacing the polychrome grid with a Solomon's knot of circular segments, which were also often used for similar sites. In the corners of the square, the kantharas were replaced by pelts. A simplified version of the central panel was chosen because there is no evidence of complex geometric patterns in the surviving sections of the mosaic.

Preservation and Public Display

Once the virtual reconstruction was complete, efforts were made to ensure the preservation and accessibility of the mosaic floor. High-resolution digital models were archived, allowing for continued research and analysis. Additionally, physical replicas or immersive digital installations were created, enabling visitors to experience the grandeur of the mosaic firsthand and fostering a deeper appreciation for ancient art and culture.

Conclusion

The reconstruction and visualization of the mosaic floor of the Temple of Pitiunt Hillfort have provided a captivating glimpse into the artistic achievements and cultural heritage of an ancient civilization. Through the meticulous piecing together of fragmented remains and the creative use of advanced technologies, researchers have breathed new life into this archaeological treasure. The mosaic floor stands as a testament to the enduring power of human creativity and serves as a bridge connecting us to our ancient past.

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