

**REPORT**

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**“Conservation and Display of Three Mosaics in the Greco-Roman Museum in  
Alexandria”**

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Remarks on three mosaics from the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria following cleaning, consolidation and conservation by the American Research Center in Egypt

The recent cleaning, consolidation and conservation of three mosaics in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, carried out by an Italian team of conservators working under a grant from the American Research Center in Egypt, has contributed to returning these floors to their original appearance.

When found about a hundred years ago, the three mosaics were in overall good condition, but very dirty. Losses were not substantial, but some of the tesserae, especially at the edges of the surviving pieces, were loose. Preservation efforts undertaken previously (by restorers from the Egyptian Service of Antiquities before WWII) had not been too successful, especially with regard to the details of the Berenice II mosaic (for example, the *taenia* and the background).

The present work has consolidated the floors and provided them with appropriate display frames. The colors are now brighter. The mortar bedding in view between the cubes has been cleaned. The mosaics, especially the Stag Hunt and the Berenike II medallion, had been very fine before, but now they are splendid. The pleasing aesthetic effect is sure to be appreciated by tourists and interested scholars alike.

A comparison with my earlier descriptions of the Stag Hunt and Berenice II mosaics did not reveal any new details of the composition. It has contributed, however, to a better understanding of the color composition (with more discerning descriptions of the colors now) and has led to a revision of some previous assumptions.

It is a pity that the plastic foil introduced to protect the surfaces of the three mosaics hinders the viewing of these representations. Hopefully, the foil will be removed once the renovation of the Graeco-Roman Museum has been completed.

The effects of the ARCE project for the conservation and display of the early Roman mosaics from Kom el-Dikka are greatly commendable. One can only hope that sometime in the future there will be funds and opportunity to lift the remaining Roman mosaic floors that are known to exist in this sector, by which I mean the mosaics with intricate geometric ornament, executed in the *tesselatum* and *opus sectile* techniques, from a Roman villa (House *gamma*, cf. M. Rodziewicz, *Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie, Alexandrie III*, Varsovie 1984, pp. 51-52, figs. 36-39). While not figurative, these floors are an excellent example of the Alexandrian mosaic style of the Imperial period and it would do well to have them also on display in the Museum in Alexandria.

General note: For details of the discovery and technical specification of the size of the tesserae in particular sections of the pavement, as well as for the general interpretation of the Stag Hunt and Berenice II mosaics, see relevant catalogue entries in W.A. Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics From Egypt*, Mainz am Rhein 1985.

## No. 1. THE STAG HUNT

Shatby, near the Royal Institute of Hydrobiology (presently inside the University campus). 1921

Alexandria GRM Inv. No. 21643.

Mosaic with representation of three Erotes hunting a stag, surrounded by an animal border. Surviving dimensions: L. 5.25 m.; W. 3.95 m. Larger pavement originally. The adjusting frame was c. 1.4 m wide.

*State of preservation:* Part of the adjusting border, made of creamy-white tesserae, is now missing. The body of one of the Erotes, on the right-hand side of the pavement, was virtually destroyed by a trench dug in this place in antiquity, when the house was already in ruins. Otherwise, the pavement is relatively well preserved and does not seem to have seen much use. Upon transfer to the Museum, it was given a new substructure.

### *Components of the design from outside in:*

A wide border of creamy-white tesserae set in a haphazard, irregular way. The blurred effect is enhanced by the apparently intentional mottled coloring of the cubes, now distinctly visible thanks to the cleaning of the mosaic and the bedding mortar; the cubes reveal different shades of white through cream instead of being uniformly white. A wide panel, probably marking the threshold, is set off-center within this border. It is surrounded on three sides by a narrow checkerboard pattern of obliquely set yellow and creamy-white, dark-gray, and red tesserae. Next, there are two lines of red terracotta and of dark-gray stone laminae of various sizes, followed by a white meander on dark gray background, also made of laminae. Inscribed into the squares of the meander are a white star against a red background and a white rosette against a red background. Both the star and the rosette are made of *sectile* pieces. Next, there is a white bead-and-reel pattern of *sectile*, set against a dark-gray and yellow background, and another red line of terracotta laminae. This line surrounds an inner field made of tesserae set in oblique rows.

Inside the adjusting border of the pavement the decorative sequence is as follows:

- line of red terracotta laminae of differing length (2-4 cm);
- narrow checkerboard band of obliquely set yellow and creamy-white, dark-gray and red tesserae;
- line of red terracotta laminae;
- double guilloche of yellowish-brown and creamy-white tesserae. It has yellow or red calyx-shaped fields in the middle and red and dark-gray circular buttons in between the plaits, made either of four triangular stones or of specially cut round stones or terracotta. Following the cleaning process, the yellow cubes used in the guilloche turned out to be more varied in tone than previously thought: from yellowish-brown and a lighter hue of brown in some fields, to yellowish and dark yellow in others, apparently intentionally creating a mottled effect. The dark background of the guilloche is marked either by

specially cut triangular *sectile* pieces or irregular tesserae following a haphazard pattern;

- border of mottled red and orange-red tesserae set irregularly in 4-5 rows (5 cm wide);

- large border with depictions of animals, real and mythological, four on each of the long sides and three on each of the short sides of the mosaic. The background is made of haphazardly assembled dark-gray and black tesserae. The ground is indicated with creamy-white and yellowish-white tesserae.

In the animal frieze, starting with the side at the foot of the scene in the main panel, we have first on the left a panther-griffin standing on all four legs with long upturned gray-blue horns and a long S-shaped tail curling under, terminating in a tuft of hair indicated with irregular dark-yellowish pebbles. The nose, the open mouth, and inner parts of the ears are indicated with red and pink tesserae; the mouth itself is of a dark-brownish shade. Some shading of the inner parts of the legs is indicated with light-pink tesserae. The eye is made of a round black pebble and surrounded with a lead strip. Lead was also used to mark the contours and details of the muscles, hair and beard. Claws and teeth were made of pieces of stone specially cut to fit the required shape. Depicted next is a lion standing firmly on all fours, facing right. The head is turned toward the viewer. The nose and mouth are pink-red, the eyebrows black. Yellow pebbles and wide strips of lead were used for the mane and tip of the tail. Some red-pink stones and terracotta tesserae cut to size enhanced the shaded modeling of the legs and belly.

Facing the lion is a bull with raised left front leg. The body is made of creamy-white tesserae, the horns and hooves of bluish cubes. Hair on the forehead and on the end of the tail is indicated with yellow pebbles. Shadows on the inner parts of the legs and on the belly are in pink and light red. The eyes are of black pebbles surrounded with pink and black irregular stones and with a double strip of lead.

To the right of the bull, a wild boar runs to the right. Its body is of creamy-white tesserae, the bristles on its back of varied creamy-yellow and brown pebbles set off with wide lead strips. The inside of its open snout is indicated with red tesserae, while the fangs were made of specially cut pieces of white stone. Shading is indicated with pink tesserae. Hooves are of yellow tesserae. Lead strips are used to indicate contours and muscles and other details such as eyes, hair etc.

The border continues with another three animals depicted along the right side of the main panel. First comes a griffin with an eagle's head and spread wings. Its body is made of creamy-white tesserae with pink stones used for the shading and the beard. The crest and the tongue were marked with red terracotta cubes, the lower lip of yellowish stones. A black pebble for the eye has a red stone as highlight. Lead strips were used for the contours and details of feathers, beak and muscles. The claws were of white specially-cut pieces, in similarity to the other animal representations. Running to the right in front of the griffin is a gazelle with short white-gray horns, light-pink ears, and body indicated with creamy-white tesserae. The eye was made of a black pebble with white highlight and a wide lead frame. A small tree, freely composed of creamy-white tesserae with some shading at the edges of the branches, was depicted between the gazelle and a leopard facing it. Lead was used to mark the contours.

The leopard is shown standing on all four legs. It has a long S-shaped tail terminating in a tuft of hair, rendered with yellow and brown pebbles. Its body is made of creamy-white and almost black tesserae. The nose and the shading of the inner parts of the legs were indicated with light-pink cubes. The eye is composed of a black pebble with white and red highlights.

At the top of the main panel, the animal border begins with a hyena running to the right with open mouth and a red tongue indicated with pieces of terracotta. Its body is made of creamy-white tesserae and oblong dark-gray laminae used to indicate the dark stripes on the skin. The long and bushy tail is made of yellow and brown pebbles and lead strips. The haircoat on the back is shown by means of creamy-white pebbles and wide lead strips. Some shading of the inner parts of the legs is indicated with light pink tesserae. The teeth and eyeballs are made of specially cut white stones. The iris rendered by a black pebble is surrounded with a lead strip. Highlights are in white and red.

In front of the hyena, facing left, stands a panther-griffin with one front leg uplifted. It is of the same type and execution as the one already described. Only the horns are white and longer. Pink and creamy-yellow stones were used for the shading of the legs and belly.

There follows a lion, moving to the right. Its body is creamy-white, the shading of the inner parts of the legs made of light-pink tesserae. Yellow pebbles and wide strips of lead were used for the mane and tip of the tail. The nose and mouth were enhanced with pink-red tesserae. Teeth and claws were made of specially cut white stones. The eyes are of black pebbles surrounded with lead and enlivened with red and white highlights.

Running towards the lion is a wild boar. Its body is made of creamy-white irregular tesserae, the haircoat of yellow and light-brown pebbles and lead strips. Red tesserae mark the tongue, while the open snout is pink inside. Fangs and teeth are of specially cut stones, the eye is inlaid with a black pebble inside a white frame of cubes and lead strips.

On the left hand side of the pavement there are three animals: a griffin, a stag and another leopard. The griffin stands on four legs, facing right, its spread wings pointing back. Its head is that of an eagle with a red crest, and a red tongue showing from the white-pink beak. Its body is made of creamy-white tesserae; shading of the inner parts of the legs is indicated with light-red tesserae. The ends of the feathers are marked with tesserae that are not yellow, as thought previously, but a grayish-white. Lead is used for contours and inner details.

A stump of a tree divides the griffin from a stag. The animal, running to the right, has fallen to its knees just in front of a leopard. The stag has a yellowish-white body with dark gray or black dots made of freely placed tesserae, except for the outer edges. Shading of the inner parts of the legs is made with pink tesserae; the belly and neck are underlined with one row of white tesserae. The head is all white and so are the horns; the ear is shaded with pink and brown. The eye is made of a white stone cut to the required shape and of a black pebble with red highlight. The mouth is pink and the nostrils marked with black cubes. Lead strips were used for the contours and inner details.

The leopard stands on three legs, lifting the right front leg. Its mouth is

open. Pink tesserae were used to depict the nose and the inner part of the ear. The body is creamy-white with black and gray (after cleaning, the bluish tone seen previously turned out not to be so) dots. Pebbles were used for the hair at the end of the tail. Shading of the inner parts of the legs is in pink. The eye is of a black pebble with white and red highlights.

Moving inward from the animal frieze we find the following:

- narrow band of three rows of terracotta tesserae;
- band of dark-gray ivy with dark-yellow berries and heart-shaped leaves. The background is creamy-white and is made of tesserae. The leaves and bigger branches are also made of tesserae, while the berries are of pebbles; the secondary branches are underlined with wide lead strips. The ivy grows between gray acanthus leaves placed in the corners. The tops of the leaves are indicated with red terracotta tesserae. The ends of the ivy on three sides of the pavement form either a regular Heracles knot (on the top) or its imitation (on the sides);
- band of three rows of red terracotta tesserae delimiting the central field.

Finally, there is the central figurative panel with a representation of three Erotes armed with swords, a club (?), and lances, attacking a stag. The background is made of dark and light-gray and black tesserae set in haphazard way. The ground is marked with creamy-white stones. On the left, an Eros stands to the left with his head turned towards the stag. His hands are lifted and hold a club (?) or stick, of which only the handle is partly visible. His wings are spread. A golden bracelet shines on his wrist (but not on the ankle as previously thought) and a golden diadem adorns his head. The body is made of creamy-white tesserae with partial contours and shadows in pale pink and yellow stones. His bushy hair is indicated by yellow pebbles and wide lead strips. The eyes are made of white stones specially cut to fit the almond-shaped eyeballs. The irises are inlaid with black pebbles. Fleshy lips are marked with light-pink tesserae of special shape. Stones cut to shape were also used for the nose tip, fingertips and genitals.

To the left of the first Eros, a stag has fallen to its knees. The animal is struggling to get up, leaning on its right front leg, stretching its head upwards. The one visible eye glances in desperation at the hunters. The body of the stag is of pale yellow tesserae with black and dark-gray dots. Its mouth is indicated with pink tesserae, the ear is pink and yellow, the horns are white, as is the front of the chest and the part of the head around the mouth. The eye is made of a specially-cut white stone and a few tesserae and wide lead strips. Lead is also used to mark the contours and body details.

The second Eros stands facing left, his head in left profile. He is leaning forward, supporting himself on his right leg, while the left is extended back. He is about to strike the stag with a sword held in his raised right hand. The sheath, indicated with red terracotta tesserae, hangs at his left side. The belt, made of red and pink tesserae, runs across his right shoulder. In his left hand he holds a yellow lance with a bluish blade pointing downwards. His white wings are spread wide. The ends of the feathers are not pale yellow as thought previously, but grayish-white. His body is of creamy-white tesserae with part of the contours and shadows in light pink and pale yellow stones emphasized with lead. The thick bushy hair is made of yellow and brown pebbles and wide lead strips. A golden diadem (made of yellow tesserae) adorns his head, golden bracelets decorate

his wrists and ankles. His eye, nose tip and fingertips are made of specially cut stones.

On the right side of the picture, there is the third Eros. Only his legs and right hand have been preserved. He approaches the animal on tiptoe, holding a yellow spear with a bluish blade. His wrist and ankles are embellished with bracelets of gold indicated with yellow tesserae and framed with lead strips.

The technique of execution of the mosaic is characterized by the use of tesserae set tightly but freely, the pointillist effects particularly visible in the background. Inside the figures, the tesserae are set in a more regular way following the contours and main lines of the body, but they are always subject to the overall pictorial effects. This means that the direction of rows changes frequently and that the stones are set haphazardly, side by side or even obliquely. Pebbles are used to increase the pictorial effect of the bushy hair. Wide strips of lead serve the same purpose. They mark the contours and body details, and play a particularly prominent role in the hair. As a completely independent element, they are used to indicate the thin ivy branches. Purposely cut pieces of terracotta and stone were used to fit the particular shapes required in the figurative representations, for instance, the nose tips, fingertips, eyeballs, claws, fangs, etc. Terracotta laminae were used as division lines between particular elements of the decoration. White laminae mixed with tesserae can be seen in the meander key, gray and black laminae in the borders. Sectile bits were used for the star and the rosette, and for the bead-and-reel pattern and the background of these ornaments in the threshold panel.

## No. 2. BERENIKE II

1923 or slightly earlier. Accidental discovery in Tell Timai (Thmuis).  
Alexandria GRM Inv. No. 21736 (sent to Alexandria Museum by the Direction  
Générale du Service des Antiquités in 1923).

H. 1.440 m.; W. 1.440 m; central emblema: Diam. 0.790 m.

Representation of a woman crowned with the prow of a ship.

*State of preservation:* Only the central panel of a larger pavement was preserved. It comprises a geometric frame and a figurative emblema. The scales of the geometric frame appear to have been repaired at some point with different cubes. Fragments are missing from the background in the figurative panel. Other parts were broken and joined together. Small fragments near the prow, the left side of the emblema were restored with larger cubes of slightly different color. Part of the hair and of the prow is missing, as are parts of the stylis and of the ribbon. A few rows of cubes from the outer border of the pavement have survived in place.

From outside in the design consists of:

- two rows of dark-red cubes, some lighter red ones and some single black tesserae at the bottom of the pavement;
- four rows of background cubes at the bottom and five rows on the right-hand side of the pavement, belonging to the outer border; the colors are from white through grayish-white and occasionally even yellow to give a mottled effect;
- plain black band consisting of four rows of cubes (0.040 m wide);
- band of scales (0.250 m wide). The scales form three and a half rows, each successive row, counting inward, comprising scales of a smaller size. The first (half) row is made up of white and black scales against a white and blue background. The white is often mixed with patches of grayish white to give a mottled appearance; the blue is possibly rendered by vitreous cubes, and there is also some darkish blue-grey tesserae mixed in. The second row has half yellow-half brown scales; the lighter brown fields of the ornament were repaired in places, introducing khaki brown stones as a rule (2 completely, 1 made entirely brown and another just a section along the edge), and in one case a yellow field was repaired with brown cubes. The third one has white and blue scales with darkish blue-grey cubes mixed in with the mostly apparently vitreous blue. The white is again mottled with grayish-white cubes mixed in with the pure white ones. The half-scales in the outer circle were rendered in white and dark gray tesserae with some vitreous blue cubes mixed in. Repairs are visible again. Some lead strips were used;
- central *emblema vermiculatum*:

Immediately inside the border of scales is the figural representation - the head and shoulders of a woman dressed in rich military attire depicted against a creamy white background. Her head is crowned with the prow of a ship. She holds a stylis. Two ends of a ribbon float sinuously from the top of the mast and around her head. Her face, shown in three quarters, is round, broad and full. The light falls from the left side, illuminating the left cheek, left part of the forehead, nose and neck. The flesh is shown in white-pink hues. The forehead is rendered with creamy white cubes and with irregular splashes of pink in the front and yellowish on the left side. Big round eyes stare at the viewer. They are wide open and prominent. The eyeballs are grayish. The irises are made of several bands



of different colors: light green, gray and brown, and are surrounded by a white band. Black is used for the pupils, which are also marked with white highlights. Both lower and upper lids are clearly marked. The lower ones are made of three rows of brown, pink, and red-claret cubes. The inner corners are elongated. The upper lids, semicircular in shape, are made of black lines with black vertical tesserae indicating lashes. The shading above and at the outer corner of the eyes, in grayish-white and red-brown, indicates the overhanging of the brows. The eyebrows differ slightly in shape. This results from the position of the head. The left brow is more horizontal, longer, and with the end slanting downward towards the hair. It is made of brown hues. The right one is semicircular and is indicated with dark gray, almost black tesserae. The nose is big, as if slightly curved, with the nostrils almost in a straight line. The division from the forehead is marked with brown and red-orange cubes. The side of the nose on which light falls is pink with white light. The other side is shaded with orange, variations of brown, and red-claret. The cheeks are full, creamy-white, with irregular splashes of pinkish hues. On the shadowed side, the upper part is pink and tan, with dark-red at the edges and brown below. The mouth is small and full. The lips are parted and turned slightly outward. The upper lip has a heart-shaped outline, the lower one is straight. They are made of orange cubes with white lights and a red-claret partition line. Two white teeth show from behind. The small and fat chin is made up of lines of creamy-white, irregular orange-red splashes, and a lavender reflected light underneath, which emphasizes the overhanging part of the chin and adds to the heaviness of the face. The neck, exceedingly short and fat, is made up of horizontal bands of white, pink, with light-brown and darker brown shading. The upper part of the chest is white yellowish.

The hair is parted in the middle and combed back. It is rendered in brown, red-claret, gray, black and light-gray. A mass of locks, rendered in gray with black shadows, falls to the shoulder alongside the neck on the right side. Upon the forehead hang three hook-like curls, which are black, grey and light grey in color. The lower parts of the ears with long golden earrings show from under the hair on both sides of the head. The earring consists of a round ball-like shape rendered in dark gray and outlined in black, with white highlights emphasizing the oval shape. The headdress represents the front part and prow of a ship. It is set upon the head somewhat off the main axis of the face, so that the line of the prow does not follow that of the nose. The headdress thus appears to be turned too far to the left side of the head (i.e. the right hand side of the viewer). The prow is generally yellow with a brown shade to it. Two bands of decoration are found in between the horizontal side beams. The lower band comprises representations of dolphins, one on either side of the ship, facing forward. They are gray-yellow with orange highlights and black contours. The eyes are indicated with black cubes. The background is grayish. The upper band on the right side of the ship shows a schematic representation of a long sea snake made up of gray green against a gray background. There follows a golden diadem-wreath with orange. In the front is found a golden caduceus represented against a gray-brown background. The prow is straight and turned up. It is rendered with yellow cubes on the illuminated side and brown ones on the shadowed side.

Around her neck, the woman has a thin golden necklace or chain. She is dressed in a red tunic indicated with red-claret and red-orange tesserae. Only the right sleeve is visible upon the right shoulder. Over the tunic, she wears a silver cuirass inlaid with gold. Only the part on the front of the right shoulder (with shoulder strap) shows from under the *chlamys*. It is rendered with variations of white, gray, brown, and blue hues, with yellow-brown lines indicating golden inlay. A zigzag line made up of five rows of yellow and brown tesserae, delimits an inner field, which bears decoration in the form of several golden lines arranged in a radiating way. A triangle of larger black cubes (with some red claret cubes mixed in) appears at the edge of the *chlamys*, at the bottom. Upon the shoulder is found a row of horizontal laminae of white-yellow with brown-red shadows. A *chlamys*, white underneath and purple outside, covers the left shoulder and part of the breast. Its white edges are pinned together just above the right collarbone with a golden fibula in the shape of an anchor. The purple of the *chlamys* is rendered with red-claret and dark-red with dark gray folds. The white vertical edges are indicated with white and with gray and gray-brown shadows. Behind the left shoulder is found a thin fragment of an orange band probably belonging to a shield, now damaged. Against her left shoulder the woman holds a *stylis* indicated with yellow and white tesserae in a twisted pattern. Twisted around the mast is a black-and-white fillet. Both ends of the ribbon float on the right side of the woman's head. They terminate in a fringe marked in black on white.

*Technique of execution:* In the geometric border, particularly within the scales, tesserae are laid in a relatively irregular way, sometimes without rows. This may be due to restoration. Interstices in the geometric border are large and the mortar bedding shows through clearly. Some lead strips are used. In the figurative panel, which has the character of an *emblema vermiculatum*, the tesserae are fine, mostly square or rectangular, and tightly packed. In the face, colored mortar (pinkish) is used to increase pictorial effects and to conceal the interstices. In other parts, the mortar is white. No lead is used in the figurative panel. Tesserae are mostly of stone, though cubes of glass (variations of blue) are also used. The *emblema* itself has no frame. It seems that it was inserted into the scale pattern at a later date and had to be adapted to the available space, leaving room neither for any additional border nor even for the whole of the background. The part above the prow of the ship, where no place was left to divide it from the scales, is the best proof of this.

### No. 3. ALPHEUS AND ARETHUSA

Found at Tell Timai (Thmuis), shortly before 1914. Chance discovery. The pavement was said to be one of "plusieurs mosaïques" decorating the ruins of a house in the southwestern part of the Greco-Roman tell; it alone was transported to the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, despite being incomplete, because of the rather good quality of the workmanship.

H. 0.63-0.89 m; W. 1.57 m.

#### Representation of Alpheus and Arethusa

*State of preservation:* Part of a figurative panel with a section of the border surviving at the top; judging by the arrangement of cubes in the background on the right side of the scene, it is likely that this was the edge of the original panel. Preserved upper part of a scene with two figures - a man seen from the waist up, his right arm lost from mid-forearm down, his left arm virtually completely destroyed and his cape floating behind him. The woman to the right of him preserved only in the head and face part with a section of the mantle over the left shoulder. To her right, the top fragment of a branch still survives. The legends identifying the figures are preserved in the space above their heads.

The sole surviving element of the frame around the figurative pavement is a band of three rows of black tesserae, seen at the very top. The background of the central scene consists of cubes of various shades of white, from yellowish through light gray to reddish, giving in effect a mottled appearance. On the left side of the preserved fragment, a man is shown in upright position, a forked reed (?) apparently held in his hand. The upper body was depicted in three-fourths view, while the head was practically in profile, turned to the right. The man may have been stepping out of the water, the reed against his right arm suggesting a riverbank. Cubes of a yellowish brown hue were used for the flesh, shadowed very distinctly with pink, orange and claret red. In the facial part, splashes of orange mark the cheeks, forehead and side of the nose, with white highlights above the eyebrow. The part of the ear that is to be seen from under the tousled hair is also in orange. The eyebrow makes use of dark red claret cubes emphasized with an even darker shade of maroon on the lid. The eye itself has a black cube with white for a highlight, and dark red for the lower lid. A greenish-yellow hue can be discerned on the chin, which was also outlined with a dark red shade. The hair is shown close to the head, as if wet, the tousled effect obtained by the locks sticking out in all directions. Individual locks are rendered with rows of dark red cubes emphasized with tesserae of yellowish-brown color. The coloring of the neck, arms and upper body is consistent - fleshy tones in shades of yellowish brown, the contours in dark red and the deeper shades going through orange and dark red to lavender. Highlights on the torso were achieved with very light colors of the cubes, yellowish white and cream, to white in the center. At waist level, barely visible, are the remains of a loincloth (?) made of dark gray to black stones. The *chlamys* that unfolds behind the figure, creating a rounded color background for the torso, is gray with folds marked in light brown on it. The reed had a black stem with cubes representing variations of dark gray

spattered throughout to add to the pointillist effect. Above his head, a Greek inscription made of black cubes of the same size as in the background identifies the figure as Alphaeus.

The slight downward inclination of the man's head and the direction of his look indicate the object of his attention. It is a female figure, identified by the legend in Greek (also rendered with big black cubes) as the nymph Arethousa. Only the head with part of the mantle has been preserved. The nymph appears to be glancing back anxiously, searching for her pursuer, hence her face is visible to the viewer somewhat turned to the left and up, in three-fourths view. She has a pink and white complexion, the nose rendered with orange cubes, shaded with pink and dark red and with a white highlight along the ridge. Her eyes are black and orange with white for the eyeballs, under eyebrows that come in lighter red emphasized by shades of a darker red. The center of the forehead is a light pink, going through pink and dark yellow to brown on the sides. Her hairdo consists of wavy locks pulled back from the face. The hair is rendered with dark red cubes, occasional pieces of yellowish brown stone and black tesserae for the deeper shadows. Part of her mantle can be seen on her left shoulder and floating up to the left of her head. The colors of this coat are from gray to dark gray to black with light gray for shading of the folds, especially distinct to the right of the figure.

In front of Arethousa, a branch (perhaps from a standing tree ?) stretches out to the left and up. It is composed of dark gray cubes with the shades rendered in yellowish brown and dark red, and brownish at the tips.

The size of the tesserae, in the background as well as in the figurative elements, is 10 x 12; 10 x 15 mm overall. Smaller cubes, even 6 x 6 mm, occur occasionally in the facial parts.

Depicting a mythological scene in a water-related landscape and with a river deity as one of the characters should be seen as entirely appropriate in a house in Thmuis, a town situated on one of the channels of the River Nile. What is interesting is the reference to Greek tradition, Alphaeus and Arethousa obviously drawing from a mythology that was popular among the highbrow population of the province. Thus, the intellectual and aesthetic leanings of those who commissioned this floor decoration, as well as the traditions of the mosaicist workshop that executed it are brought into evidence. On the grounds of style, the floor should be dated presumably in the end of the 2nd century or early 3rd century AD.