

About the 16th Colloquium of the International Association for the Study of the Ancient Mosaic AIEMA in Conímbriga, Rabaçal, São Simão and Santiago da Guarda, with excursion to Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu and Faro, 11th to 15th July 2025

Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu ve Faro'ya Yapılacak Gezilerle Birlikte Conímbriga, Rabaçal, São Simão ve Santiago Da Guarda'da 11 – 15 Temmuz 2025 Tarihinde Düzenlenecek Uluslararası Antik Mozaikler Üzerine Çalışmalar Derneği 16. Uluslararası Kolokyumu Hakkında

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Abstract


The announcement of the 16th International Colloquium of the International Association for the Study of the Ancient Mosaic AIEMA in Conímbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova), Rabaçal, São Simão (Penela) and Santiago da Guarda (Ansião), with excursion to Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu and Faro, (11 to 15 July 2025), led the event's proponents, members of the Portuguese Association for the Study and Conservation of the Ancient Mosaic - APECMA, the Portuguese section of the International Association for the Study of Ancient Mosaic - AIEMA (based in Paris), to consider the availability of each one of the archaeological site teams involved to prepare this International Meeting in a timely and efficient way, and propose the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC) to take the opportunity provided by this event to present the new Conímbriga Mosaic Restoration Centre - which would strengthen the Movement for the Promotion of the Nomination of Conímbriga to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Keywords: Congress, Roman Mosaic, Conímbriga, Restoration Centre, UNESCO.


Öz

Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu ve Faro gezisi dahil, Conímbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova), Rabaçal, São Simão (Penela) ve Santiago da Guarda'da (Ansião) düzenlenecek (11 - 15 Temmuz 2025) uluslararası antik mozaikler üzerine çalışmalar derneği AIEMA 16. uluslararası kolokyumunun duyurulması, etkinliğin taraflarının, Portekiz Antik Mozaiklerin Araştırılması ve Korunması Derneği - APECMA üyelerinin, Uluslararası Antik Mozaikler Üzerine Çalışmalar Derneği – AIEMA (Paris merkezli) Portekiz bölümünün bu uluslararası toplantıyı zamanında ve verimli bir şekilde hazırlamak için dahil olan arkeolojik alan ekiplerinin her birinin mevcudiyetini değerlendirmesine, ve Kültürel Miras Genel Müdürlüğü'ne (DGPC) bu etkinliğin sağladığı fırsattan yararlanarak Conímbriga'nın UNESCO Dünya Mirası Listesine Aday Gösterilmesi Hareketini güçlendirecek olan yeni Conímbriga Mozaik Restorasyon Merkezi'nin sunumunu önermesine yol açmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kongre, Roma Mozaığı, Conímbriga, Restorasyon Merkezi, UNESCO.

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The site of Conímbriga is today a complex where the built heritage and its harmonious and functional integration with the natural and cultural surroundings appeal to the visitors' senses and understanding. The same happens with those that visit the Roman *Villae* of Rabaçal and São Simão, in Penela, and Santiago da Guarda, in Ansião, in the Lands of Sicó.

The luxurious manor houses of these farm estates have mosaic pavements that in some cases exceed the artistic value of their urban counterparts. They constitute a way of showing visitors how some of the wealthy landowners of the municipality or the *ciuitas* of Conímbriga lived. In fact, if they remain protected, as much as possible, from the corrosive effects of tourism, these *Villae*, easily integrated in the same circuit, will be a great complement to the visit to the Roman city. In addition, the holistic valorisation of this heritage can become an important social, cultural, and economic development factor in our region and country.

Conímbriga is a man-made territory that bears witness to the relationships between peoples of various historical, social, and cultural backgrounds. Thus, in the context of Conímbriga's spirit of hospitality, we would like to ask the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage, the entity responsible for this unique and universal heritage, to give priority to the rehabilitation of the Conímbriga Mosaic Restoration Workshop and to the implementation of the project for the future Mosaic Restoration Centre, prepared in 2017 by the referred Directorate-General. The possibility to make these projects come true would greatly strengthen the Movement for the Promotion of the Nomination of Conímbriga to the UNESCO World Heritage List (Figs. 1 - 2 - 2a).



MOVIMENTO
PARA A PROMOÇÃO DA CANDIDATURA
DE CONIMBRIGA
A PATRIMÓNIO MUNDIAL
DA UNESCO



Figure 1
Promotion logo for the Nomination of Conímbriga to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Drawing of a bust, viewed from the front, with the head turned $\frac{3}{4}$ to the right and looking in the same direction, from the Roman mosaic of Autumn (also identified as Bacchus, due to the common features represented: bunch of white and red grapes, and vine leaves), dating from the last quarter of the 3rd century (Oleiro 1992: 117-125), conserved, in situ, at the House of the Fountains, in Conímbriga, and discovered, in 1939, at the time of Professor Vergílio Correia (1888-1944). Author: José Luís Madeira, 2014.

Figure 2
Mosaic depicting Autumn, conserved, *in situ*, at the House of the Fountains, in Conímbriga. 2nd and 3rd century. Local limestone. Dimensions: 30 x 30 cm. Photograph: Delfim Ferreira, 1980. (Oleiro 1992: 117-125).

Figure 2a
Proposed reconstruction, tessera by tessera, of the Autumn Season Mosaic, as a young woman crowned with grape bunches and vine leaves, wearing a sleeveless yellow tunic. Drawing by João Pocinho. Computer model by Flávio Simões, José Carvalho and Mariana Simões

The Mosaic Restoration Workshop was installed in the late 1970s¹ in a temporary building. However, it has been in the same location for more than 30 years (Fig. 3.1). The Mosaic Workshop was the place and school of renowned mosaicists and many conservation and restoration students, as well as a unique reference in the restoration panorama of Roman heritage in Portugal. The Workshop suffered severe damages after Storm Leslie hit the municipality of Condeixa-a-Nova and several coastal municipalities on 13th October 2018. It lost part of the fibre cement slabs, possibly containing asbestos, that were part of its roof.

Figure 3.1 - 3.2

Aerial view, from East to West, of the Monographic Museum of Conímbriga / Condeixa-a-Velha / Condeixa-a-Nova.

Photograph taken during a paramotor flight, which took off from the neighbouring Monte de Pega. Francisco Pedro. September 2018.

3.1. Conímbriga Mosaic Workshop affected by Storm Leslie on 13 October 2018.

3.2. Planned site for the installation of the new Conímbriga Mosaic Restoration Centre.



This Workshop has been fulfilling its duties as far as possible, but there are risks in terms of safety and health at work. Also, the conditions it provides for completing the necessary conservation and restoration works are insufficient. The building, adjacent to the visiting route of the archaeological site, can provide the public with a negative image which is not consistent with the ongoing commitment to the recovery, defence, and valorisation of Conímbriga and its heritage.

The year 2021 may be a turning point in the revitalisation process of Conímbriga. For this to happen, among other initiatives, it will be important, as mentioned, to start the implementation of the already existing project for the expansion and remodelling of the Museum, which includes the installation of the new Mosaic Restoration Centre.

Considering that the 16th Colloquium of the International Association for the Study of the Ancient Mosaic AIEMA will take place in Conímbriga, Rabaçal, São Simão and Santiago da Guarda, 11th to 13th July 2025 (Communications), as well as in Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu and Faro, 14th to 15th July 2025 (Excursion), it would be important to match this moment with the implementation of the new Conímbriga Mosaic Restoration Centre (Fig. 3.2) if it cannot be done earlier.

¹ In place of the previous one that was at the entrance of the Ruins since the 1950s. However, measures regarding the conservation of the mosaics were already implemented in Conímbriga: first, at the time of Master António Augusto Gonçalves, in 1899; later, in the 1930s, during the works done under the coordination of Professor Vergílio Correia, with for example, the reinforcement works aimed at securing the borders of the mosaic pavement, using mortar and a mason's trowel, carried out by António Duarte and by the then young mosaicist, José de Oliveira Loreto and other colleagues (Pessoa - Rodrigo 2005: 186-189, 222-224, 235).

We recall that the last International Meetings on Ancient Mosaic coincided with important advances in the study and valorisation of this type of heritage. They were held at the Bursa Uludağ University in Turkey, in 2009, Ca'Foscari University in Venice, in 2012, the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid, in 2015, and the University of Nicosia, Cyprus, in 2018. The 15th Colloquium of the International Association for the Study of the Ancient Mosaic AIEMA will be held in Lyon and Saint Romain en gal, France, in 17th to 21th October 2022, while the 16th Colloquium will take place, as mentioned, in Conímbriga, Rabaçal, São Simão, Santiago da Guarda, Alter do Chão, Mértola, Milreu and Faro, in 11th to 15th July 2025, promoted by the Portuguese Association for the Study and Conservation of the Ancient Mosaic - APECMA and the International Association for the Study of the Ancient Mosaic - AIEMA.

Great value has been added to the studies on the Heritage of Conímbriga, its territory, the country and beyond. The Meeting on Mosaics in the West and East, held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in 2008, the Portugal - Galicia Meeting, in 2013, and the Portugal - Algeria Meeting, in 2017, all played their part. Recently, the Portugal - England – Wales Meeting was held on 13th July 2019, in Conímbriga, the PO.RO.S Museum, the Roman *Villa* of Rabaçal (Fig. 4), the Roman *Villa* of St. Simão and the Roman *Villa* of Santiago da Guarda. This international meeting was attended by authors from Pontypool and

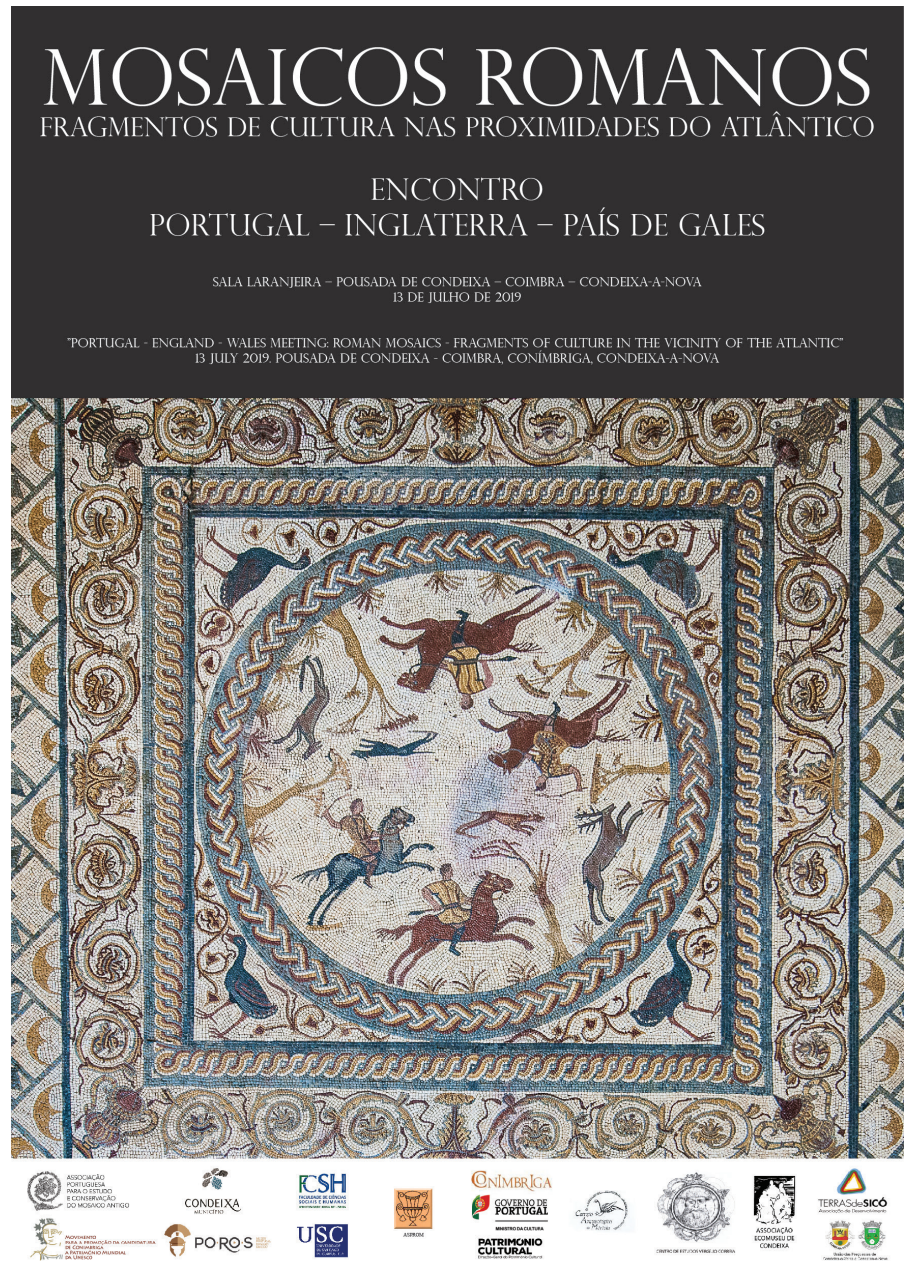


Figure 4
Cleaning, tesserae repositioning and consolidation of a section of the mosaic from the southern corridor of the *Pars Urbana* peristyle of the Roman *Villa* of Rabaçal, with a polychrome braid motif in swastika. It is possible to see the essential tools used in this procedure. These tools include a blower, brushes, scalpel, spray, spatulas, mortar shovel, sponge, several containers for products, toolbox, and protective pad. 2015 (Pessoa – Rodrigo - Madeira 2009: 13-14).

Djemila, cities of Wales and Algeria, twinned with Condeixa-a-Nova, as well as from the capital of Byzantine mosaic, the Italian city of Ravenna, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, since 1996, with which pre-twinning agreements have already been signed, in 2016. Attached are the “Notes” read at the end of this Portugal-England-Wales Meeting (Fig. 5 - Poster), by Professor Carolyn Cemlyn Jones, Director of the British Council, Coimbra, between 1979 and 2008.

Figure 5

Poster of the Portugal - England - Wales Meeting: Roman mosaics, fragments of culture near the Atlantic, held on 13 July 2019 | In the centre, a polychrome mosaic pavement with a Deer Hunting Scene - Detail of the central carpet of the Roman mosaic room of Conímbriga with Deer Hunting Scene, displaying a figurative medallion and birds in the corners (Oleiro 1992: 104-109 no. 9). Design authorship: Unknown. Execution: Unknown. Dating: Last quarter of the 2nd century and 1st quarter of the third century (Idem). Overall dimensions of the room pavement: 7, 5 x 5,8 m. Tesserae density: about 116 per dm². Average size of tesserae: 1 cm. Material: local limestone, white, black, grey, pink, red and yellow. Support: cement, sand, and wire mesh. Location: in situ. Conímbriga. House of the Fountains, discovered, in 1939, at the time of Vergílio Correia (1888-1944). Compartment with east wing access from the small yard south of the central garden or peristyle. Conservation and restoration: Raised and consolidated, around 1958/59, on reinforced concrete slabs. Theme - In the middle of a large pavement covered with geometrical and vegetal motifs, a square panel with rich and varied frames is drawn, enclosing a hunting scene. Among trees and thickets, two hunters, armed with spears, and two scouts, wielding reeds, chase on horseback, a deer, and a doe, assisted by two dogs. The scene inscribed in a circle created difficulties that the mosaicist knew how to overcome, displaying a developed sense of movement. The common moorhens, which decorate the open spaces between the circle and the rectangular frame, contribute to the perfect balance of the composition. Photography: Francisco Pedro, 2015. Promotion of the Nomination of Conímbriga to the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Finally, we believe that the present weaknesses regarding the infrastructure, as well as the lack of technically skilled workers in Conímbriga, will be resolved. This is needed to properly dignify the work and status of all who work there and to respond to those who look for solutions to protect the Heritage, particularly mosaics, present in cities, towns, and villages.



Figure 6
Participants of *Portugal - England - Wales Meeting: Roman mosaics, fragments of culture near the Atlantic*, held on 13 July 2019, visit the Mosaic Restoration Workshop in Conímbriga, hit by Storm Leslie, on 13 October 2018. Photograph: Francisco Pedro 2019.

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