CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOSAIC FLOORS AND THEIR
CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

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INTRODUCTION

The construction and decoration program of the Early Islamic structure at Tall Jawa included mosaic floors that were both functional and decorative. Two rooms on the lower storey were paved with mosaics: Room 606 in the north-east corner of the building and the Central Hall 607 (see Chapter 3, above). In addition to a detailed description of each pavement, the following chapter will provide relevant parallels for the Tall Jawa mosaics, a discussion of the construction techniques used, and a catalogue of the mosaic fragments and isolated tesserae recovered during excavation.

THE CARPET MOSAIC IN ROOM 606

Description

The floor surface of Room 606 is divided in two by the footings of two low partition walls (Installation D33:28+34). Both sections of the surface (D33:29a+b) were paved with mosaic, covering a total area of ca. 14.05 m² (2.88 × 4.88 m; Fig. 4.1). The section of floor (D33:29b) east of the partition walls covers an area of approximately 4.32 m² (2.88 × 1.50 m) and is made up almost entirely of plain white limestone tesserae. The tesserae in the northern section are extremely worn, rounded, and smooth, taking on the appearance of wadi-washed pebbles. A plain white border, four tesserae wide, surrounds this section and runs along the edge of Installation D33:28+34. It then follows the eastern face of the northern stone (D33:28), continuing south to a point where it appears to have been partially removed or destroyed.
The pavement (D33:29a) in the main section of the room is decorated with a rectangular carpet located in the centre of the room (Fig. 4.2). As in the area of the eastern pavement, the western mosaic is bordered by two to four rows of large white tesserae. The border closely follows the perimeter of the room and runs along the west face of Installation D33:28+34. The central design measures approximately 1.70 (north-south) × 1.86 m (east-west) and uses black, yellow, red, and white tesserae. A border of three rows of large white tesserae runs around this design and divides it in two. The larger of the two sections is outlined in red. This square area is then decorated with a grid of serrated simple filets\(^1\) executed in black. The three triangular spaces on the western side of the pavement are filled with yellow triangles with red tips (Fig.

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\(^1\) The technical descriptions of the mosaics are based on those in *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine* (Balmelle 1985).