Thesis submitted to the University of East Anglia for the degree of PhD 2014

The Large Pavement at Qasr el-Lebia in Cyrenaica: Episodes, Narratives and Transformations

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Text and Bibliography: 97,927 words (Appendices: 5,015 words)

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Abstract

The main focus of this thesis is the large mosaic pavement in the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia in Cyrenaica, Libya. It sets out to establish whether the fifty panels which comprise the pavement constitute a coherent programme. In order to do that the literature is reviewed, the site is set in its Cyrenaican context in terms of its history, its physical geography, its settlement patterns and its principal Christian buildings. The dating of the mosaic is considered and a detailed panel-by-panel catalogue of the images is offered. An iconographical study looks closely at groups of panels and correspondences between panels with a view to establishing whether they were entirely independent, one of another, or whether they constituted an overall programme. Having concluded that there are, indeed, significant levels of coherence, the study addresses a number of apparent discrepancies by looking at examples - in literature, sculpture and architecture - of a late antique predilection for disjunctions, puzzles and puns. After this wide-ranging review, the thesis returns to the most immediate context for the floor - its architectural setting. Inconclusive without further excavation, it nevertheless explores the possibility, based largely on the architectural evidence, that the pavement belonged to the ground floor of an episcopium. Finally, the study proposes an overall programme for the pavement and examines how the architecture constrained, and how the layout and iconography of the floor contributed to, a physical experience of the space in what may have been the *consignatorium* of a baptistery.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation for the guidance and inspiration I have received from Professor John Mitchell. His enthusiasm set me off on this journey and his continued encouragement has sustained me throughout.

My research trip to Libya in 2010 - supposed to be the first of many but sadly, to date, my only visit - was the foundation of this study. I am very grateful to the Society for Libyan Studies, Paul Bennet in particular, who guided me through the excruciating process of obtaining visas and to Graham Barker for allowing me to travel to Cyrenaica with his team of archaeologists. I am hugely indebted to Intisar Hawazi and Dr. Fawzi who put me in contact with Mukhtar Haweel - the best driver a nervous female PhD student could possibly have wished for on a first trip to Libya. The warm and effusive welcome I received once there can not be described, but special thanks go to Dr. Saleh Abdalah and Ahud Sadon from the Department of Antiquities in Cyrenaica, Dr. Muftah el-Shelmani from the university in El-Beida, Dr. Abusbee from the university in Tripoli and to Abdulhamid Abdussaid and Ahmed Adhafy, archaeologists in Cyrenaica.

Writing a PhD can be extremely lonely and I am very grateful to the staff and post-grad community in the School of World Art Studies at UEA whose support and friendship over the last four years has been invaluable and ensured a convivial and conducive working atmosphere. I am also particularly grateful for the hard work of the organising committee of OCLA; the programme of wide-ranging seminars, conferences and colloquia - and subsequent discussions - have inspired many of the ideas and hypotheses herein. My special thanks go to Dr. Richard Maguire who has been a wonderful collaborator and generous friend, accompanying me on research trips to Albania, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Libya, Macedonia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. He has patiently read endless drafts of this thesis and our insightful discussions have helped to shape the final product.

Lastly, my thanks go to my husband, Jon, for his support - and in particular for agreeing to spend his birthday among the “dust and bits of old stone” at Abu Mena in Egypt - a gesture above and beyond the call of duty. Also, to my five children, Sophie, Emily, Toby, Lottie and Anya who have watched in bewilderment as I have undertaken this project.

This thesis is dedicated to friends and acquaintances in Libya.

Jane Chick

Contents

1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Literature Review

1.2 Cyrenaica and Qasr el-Lebia: Historical Overview and Christian Monuments

1.3 The Large Pavement - Dating, Grids and Borders

2: Description of Large Pavement

3: Iconographic Analysis - Groups and Tableaux

3.1 Personifications

3.2 The Four Rivers of Paradise

3.3 *Kastalia*

3.4 Ocean and Nile

3.5 Architectural Representations

3.6 Musician

3.7 Guardians and Boundary Markers

4: The Large Pavement at Qasr el-Lebia: Its Wider Cultural Context

4.1 Classical Imagery in Late Antiquity

4.2 Collections, Fragmentation and *Varietas*

4.3 Reading the Large Pavement: Puzzles and Conundrums

5: Two Hypotheses, Review and Last Words

5.1 Hypothesis 1: Architecture

5.2 Hypothesis 2: Iconography

5.3 Final Words

Appendix 1: Other Mosaics from the East Church Complex at Qasr el-Lebia

Appendix 2: Other Sixth-Century Cyrenaican Mosaics

Bibliography


1
2
3
4
5
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1: Structure of Thesis and Review of Literature

Introduction

This thesis offers an analysis of the large mosaic pavement in the East church complex at Qasr el-Lebia in Cyrenaica, Libya. It includes a panel-by-panel description and an iconographical study of small groups of images and the correspondences between panels. It considers how the pavement fits into a broad eastern Mediterranean context and, finally, proposes two hypotheses for the function of the mosaic and the space it paved. An interdisciplinary approach has been taken, which includes historical, archaeological, iconographical and iconological lines of enquiry.

The main interest of the floor lies predominantly in its innovative and idiosyncratic iconography. The pavement has received a certain amount of attention in the past, including a cogent analysis by Maguire,[1] but the ideas and themes that have been proposed only go part way to unravelling the elaborate web of interacting and intersecting configurations which work together to create a complex overall programme. This remarkable survival deserves further consideration.

The prevalence of classical - pagan - imagery in the pavement has not been adequately dealt with. Were these motifs perceived as pagan survivals - the pavement perhaps exemplifying a resolution between two major cultural systems? Were they part of a repertoire of images which formed a common cultural frame of reference, mediating between Christian beliefs and local traditions? Or were they deliberate inconsistencies, calculated to add further variation to an already eclectic collection of images? One of the primary roles of this study, using the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia as a starting point, is to address the function and meaning of classical elements in early Christian settings. A study of the complex visual intersection and interchangeability of two seemingly irreconcilable cultures will attempt to elucidate the blurred transitions and overlaps between the imagery of the pagan and Christian spheres. The intention is not to try to draw definitive conclusions, but to evaluate a range of possible meanings and responses the mosaic may have elicited.

[1] Maguire (1987a) pp.44-55

Arbitrary survival makes assessment problematic but some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

The East Church complex, excavated by Goodchild in 1957, is one of two early Christian monuments at Qasr el-Lebia.[2] The building comprises a reverse-orientated basilica with a complex of rooms to the north and east and includes three fields of mosaic. The pavement and the complex have been dated by a dedicatory inscription in the mosaic to AD 539-40 – to the reign of Justinian (*r*. AD 527-565). A scarcity of written sources from the region and the relative isolation of Cyrenaica in Late Antiquity, mean that the monument is largely without historical, political and social context. The general absence of coherent Mediterranean-wide patterns of artistic production under Justinian, together with the largely independent characteristics of mosaic practice in the different regions of the late antique world, make it difficult to consider the pavement in a historical context which predicates a unified cultural production dependent on a central impulse. Far from categorisation as an artistic production of a peripheral province relying on an imperial centre for its inspiration and impetus, the pavement will be considered in the context of a network of coeval reciprocal interactions. Given these exigencies, any explanatory hypotheses or propositions must use the mosaic itself as their point of departure.

Literature Review

Cyrenaica, Qasr el-Lebia and the East Church Complex

The first part of the thesis introduces the pavement. It situates the mosaic in its immediate setting and in a wider Cyrenaican context.

The foundation myth of Cyrene, as told by Herodotus, is discussed by Rawlinson (1934), and Graham (1960) addresses the origins of the city in conjunction with the so-called 'stele of the founders' discovered at Cyrene. So-called primary sources for late antique Cyrenaica are few, but the writings of Synesius of Cyrene, translated by Nicol (1887) and Fitzgerald (1926; 1930), together with commentaries by Crawford (1901), Pando (1940) and Bregman (1982), offer an insight into religious attitudes and day-to-day life in Cyrenaica in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Laurence and Berry (1998) address the relationship between the Greek incomers and the indigenous Libyan population.

Between 1946 and 1951 Goodchild carried out fieldwork in Cyrenaica, which resulted in a number of publications on ancient settlements, fortifications and

[2] The other is the West Church, see chapter 1.2

possible routes across the region. Reynolds continued to work in this field after Goodchild's death and edited *Libyan Studies: Select Papers of the Late R.G.Goodchild* (1976), which contains some of these seminal articles. The lack of textual evidence means that the political and religious organisation of the region remains elusive, but Goodchild (1961b) addresses two inscriptions which shed light on the shift of the administrative centre from Cyrene to Ptolemais. Reynolds (1977) presents further evidence for the decline of cities in the region during Late Antiquity. Reynolds (1960) considers Christianity in Cyrenaica through inscriptions and Goodchild (1976) highlights religious dissensions and offers possible explanations for the success of the Arab campaigns in AD 642-5.

Coastal settlements in Cyrenaica, including theories about the position and footprint of the now lost city of Hadrianapolis, are the subject of a publication by Jones and Little (1971). Jones (1971) and Wilson (2001) address evidence for trading patterns. Romanelli (1971) gives an overview of Cyrenaica during the Roman period, and Stucchi (1975) provides a comprehensive chronological survey of architecture in the region from the Greeks to the Arabs.[3]

Individual Christian monuments have been discussed by Harrison (1964), who worked on the basilica at Ras al-Hilal, by Widrig (1975), who excavated and published the two basilicas at Latrun, and by Abusbee (1985) who conducted a study of the early Christian churches of Cyrenaica.[4] Harrison (1985) published a study of the building materials used in church buildings in Cyrenaica and Duval (1989) provided a review of excavations, surveys and scholarship during the 1980s. The most comprehensive resource for the study of churches in Cyrenaica is *The Christian Monuments of Cyrenaica* (2003); this compilation of previously unpublished documents by Ward-Perkins and Goodchild, edited by Reynolds, includes detailed studies and plans - many accompanied by photographs - of most of the known early Christian buildings in the region, including the placement, extent and state of mosaic pavements at the time of excavation.

With the exception of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, late antique mosaics in Cyrenaica are generally in a very poor state of preservation and, apart from a catalogue of floor mosaics by Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980), which includes plans, photographs and descriptions of the pavements, have barely been addressed. This catalogue is the only surviving record of some of the mosaics

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[3] This publication has been criticised for including assumptions, guesswork and value judgements,White (1977) pp.623-6; Walker (1978) pp.222-3; Ward-Perkins (1979) pp.363-5

[4] Master's degree, Abusbee (1985) - unpublished

excavated in the 1950s and 60s and, as such, is an invaluable resource.[5] Alföldi-Rosenbaum has considered the pavements as a contemporaneous group and has compared motifs and images with similar imagery from other parts of the empire. However, as Spiro commented, "to simply list similar or different examples, or ones with variations of borders, field designs and figural representations, serves no useful purpose unless there is a demonstrable reason for comparison".[6] Michaelides (1989a) records some second- and third-century mosaics, mainly from private houses in Berenice.

Iconographical Analysis

The next part of the thesis provides an in-depth iconographical analysis. Groups of images which constitute discrete tableaux with separate meanings which nuance or change the significance of surrounding imagery are subjected to analysis, and the appearance and occurrence of certain motifs are considered in both a Cyrenaican and a wider Mediterranean context.

Archaeological reports provide excellent contextual information for individual pavements, but rarely provide interpretative analyses of imagery. Art historical studies focus on specific images, often to the detriment of spatial and functional implications. Catalogues of mosaics, often confined by geographic area, are invaluable for their pictorial content and of particular relevance to this study are: Levi (1947) - the mosaics of Antioch; Budde (1969-72) - Cilicia; Spiro (1978) - Greece; Ovadiah and Ovadiah (1987) - Israel; Donceel-Voûte (1988) - Syria and Lebanon; Fantar (1994) - Tunisia; Piccirillo (1997) - Jordan; and Hachlili (2009) - a large part of the Levant.

As Spiro has pointed out, one of the dangers to which studies of mosaic pavements seem easily to succumb, is that of simply compiling lists - mosaics with comparable layouts, pavements with similar subject matter, motifs which look alike, etc. Systematic and integrative interpretative studies are less common. One of the most prominent art historians to engage with this material, Kitzinger, adopted a variety of approaches when working with mosaic pavements; one of his primary methodologies was formal analysis, which helped to shed light on different trends and to trace developments (1951; 1970; 1973; 1976). An iconographical approach, favoured by Grabar (1967b; 1968a; 1980), demonstrated

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[5] However, the volume does contain some errors; the plan of the East Church at Cyrene, referred to as Cyrene Cathedral, has been printed upside down and back to front and several of the photographs of the mosaics have been reversed.

[6] Spiro (1983) p.122

close connections between Christian imagery and Graeco-Roman art. Piccirillo (1981; 1989; 1997) and Campbell (1988) have used archaeological data and inscriptions to assist in interpretation. Dauphin (1976; 1978; 1987) concentrates on diagnostic features to produce typologies and identify clusters of 'workshops'. Dunbabin (1978), Poulsen (2012) and Sørensen (2012) have linked imagery in pavements with patronage. Donceel-Voûte (1988) has read the imagery in conjunction with church architecture and liturgy. Bowersock (2006) uses contemporaneous literary sources to try to understand the imagery. Balty (1995) and Mitchell (2006; 2007; 2008) have taken a wider view, considering pavements in their architectural and social contexts as well as cross-referencing them with other categories of visual culture and literary works. One of the most influential proponents of a holistic approach to interpreting mosaics is Maguire, whose "essay in interpretation",[7] *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art,* has been described as applying "new critical methodologies to problems in Byzantine Art".[8] This was the first of many publications by the author, which have helped elucidate possible meanings and functions of mosaic pavements and to offer solutions to problems that have hitherto remained elusive.[9]

The large mosaic pavement at Qasr el-Lebia was first reported in the *London Illustrated Evening News* in December 1957. In 1958 Ward-Perkins published a more detailed account. Grabar (1962) suggested that the mosaic represented the earth governed by God and Stucchi (1975) saw it as a representation of God's creation. Guarducci (1975) suggested a conjectural re-arrangement of the layout of the panels to produce a coherent programme[10]- an idea with which Stucchi (1975) concurred.[11] Alföldi-Rosenbaum (1980) analyses the imagery, but from the starting point that it held little or no symbolic meaning and that the pavement had no overarching theme or coherent programme. The images, she proposed, were copied from pattern books,[12] and the grid composition should be seen as rows of 'emblemata' rather than parts of a composition with a central theme.[13] This reading

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[7] Maguire (1987a) p.2

[8] Brubaker (1989) pp.737-40

[9] See, for example, Maguire (1987a); (1987b); (1992); (1993); (1999a); (1999b); (2000); (2007); (2012)

[10] Guarducci (1975) esp p.660

[11] Stucchi (1975) p.400

[12] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.14, pp.45-8 p.51, p.58, p.60. This view was also held by Ward-Perkins (1958) p.190; Goodchild (1961a) p.219 f/n2; Mathew (1965) p.86; Dunbabin (1999) p.97 and pp.302-3

[13] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.12

is reinforced by Dunbabin (1982).[14] Maguire (1987a) constitutes a definite break with this line of enquiry; he illustrates how multiple meanings can be read into motifs and how clusters of images work together. He also demonstrates a connection between the imagery in the pavement and allegorical ideas expressed by ancient authors.[15]

On the whole, however, the iconography of the pavement has been dealt with piecemeal. Attention has been almost exclusively focused on the *Pharos,* the Rivers of Paradise and the personifications. Goodchild (1961a) focuses on the architectural representation of the *Pharos*, drawing on information in the excellent study of the *Pharos* by Thiersch (1909). Grabar (1968b) and Maguire (2002; 2012) deal with the four Rivers of Paradise. A key text for a general understanding of the iconography of the Rivers of Paradise is Underwood's (1950) study of 'The Fountain of Life' in early manuscripts. In addition, Ferguson (2009) discusses the Rivers in his full and detailed description of rites and liturgies associated with baptism, and Jensen (2011) engages with the visual vocabulary of baptism. *Kastalia*, nymph of Apollo's oracular spring has been discussed by Grabar (1968b; 1969), Parke (1978), Magdalino (1988), and Chuvin (2009). Agosti (2003), in a particularly insightful article, translates the figure of *Kastalia* from the pagan to the Christian realm, and Shorrock (2011) addresses the role played by the *Kastalian* spring in classical literature. Grabar (1969) considers the three personifications at the west end of the pavement, comparing them to images of the *Gaddes* of Dura Europos, while Dufrenne (1980) focuses on the Christian implications of *Ananeosis*. The persistence and development of personifications in the early Christian era is well illustrated in Toynbee (1947) and Hanfmann (1951). Images of females, including personifications, are addressed in Kiilerich (2001), Kalavrezou (2003), and Stafford and Herrin (2005) - a book of essays focused on personifications in both the Greek and the late antique worlds.

The Pavement at Qasr el-Lebia in a Wider Mediterranean Context

The next section of the thesis addresses the choice of imagery and the overall composition of the pavement. It includes a short assessment of the so-called pagan-Christian dichotomy in Late Antiquity and briefly discusses how pagan and Christian themes were used in secular, funerary and ecclesiastical contexts. To try to understand how the pavement fits into the visual, religious and social landscape of the sixth-century Mediterranean world, an overarching assessment of visual

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[14] Dunbabin has conceded that, "at most, the common theme would be that of richness and fertility of the earth and its products", Dunbabin (1982) p.613

[15] Maguire (1987a) pp.44-55

practices, strategies and solutions from different regions is undertaken and consideration is given to dominant trends evident in late antique literary works as well as in visual culture.

Before addressing the question of why the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia looked the way it did, it is first necessary to try to understand the state of play between pagan and Christian cultures in the sixth century. The idea that Late Antiquity was a period defined by conflict and tension between these two major cultures, a notion propounded by, among others, Alföldi (1948) and Bloch (1945;1963), is no longer considered tenable; coexistence rather than discord is now generally accepted. Geffcken (1978) addresses this transition through laws and legislations, Harl (1990) through bans on pagan sacrifice and Averil Cameron (1994) through discourse and a wide range of texts. Alan Cameron (2004) makes the point that textual evidence from this period over-represents ecclesiastical works. Bowersock (1999) has suggested that Hellenism - Greek culture - should be seen as a backdrop against which pagans and Christians coexisted. Kaldellis (2008), underlining the idea that Hellenism was not synonymous with paganism, rejects the idea that the early Christians objected to Greek religion but admired Greek culture. In an epic and informative publication, Alan Cameron (2011) "dissects and deconstructs more than 100 years of scholarship",[16] demolishing long-held assumptions about confrontation between Christians and pagans and arguing against the 'myth' that, among fourth-century pagans, there was a concerted resistance to Christianity. The idea that conversion from paganism to Christianity was not clear-cut was suggested by Dill (1898) and again by Guignebert (1923). More recently, this concept has been developed by others, including Bonner (1984), Liebeschuetz (1995), Kahlos (2007), Alan Cameron (2011) and Cribiore (2013) .

In the same way that attitudes have changed regarding the so-called pagan-Christian dichotomy, so opinions have changed about the meaning and function of mythological imagery in Late Antiquity. The persistence of pagan imagery is no longer automatically assumed to be a sign of 'pagan vitality' or evidence of widespread paganism. Kitzinger (1976; 1977), Dauphin (1995) and Piccirillo (1997) have suggested that mosaics exemplifying earlier iconographic and stylistic traits were part of a classical renaissance. Bowersock (1999) sees mythological imagery as a nostalgic accoutrement which, according to Heather (1994), Leader-Newby (2004; 2005) and Poulsen (2012), came to be understood as an outward display of status and education. Merrony (1998) suggests that even though the meaning of mythological imagery had doubtless changed, it would nonetheless still

[16] www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/417316.article accessed 20.10.2013

have carried symbolic meaning. Weiss and Talgam (2002), however, take the view that mythological imagery no longer held any religious significance.

The pavement at Qasr el-Lebia is a bricolage of different images. In Late Antiquity the classical aesthetic of unity seems no longer to have been predominant. Marrou (1958) discusses a lack of unity and digressions in late antique productions, Kitzinger (1977) notes that diversity of style was one of the main characteristics of the period, and Brilliant (1994), Elsner (2004), Carruthers (2009) and Shorrock (2011) all address the idea of the cumulative and the aesthetic of *varietas* in Late Antiquity. Roberts (1989), in a book which focuses mainly on late antique literature, demonstrates that fragmentation and allusions to earlier works had come to be viewed as a positive. It was these ideas, applied to visual culture rather than literature, which helped shape this section of the thesis.

Architectural Context and Iconographic Programme

Finally, we return to the immediate setting of the pavement. The architectural remains are examined, the different strands of iconographical interpretation are drawn together and an overall programme for the mosaic is proposed, helping to substantiate two hypotheses for how this space may have functioned.

Chapter 1.2: Cyrenaica and Qasr el-Lebia: Historical Overview and Christian Monuments

Introduction

Modern-day Libya borders Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt and comprises the three states of Tripolitania, Fezzan and Cyrenaica **(1.2.1)**.



1.2.1 - Libya

The boundaries of Cyrenaica stretch from the Gulf of Sidra in the west to the Egyptian border in the east and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to Chad and the Sudan in the south. The region is divided into three distinct areas consisting of a coastal plain, which is crossed by numerous gorges, a mountainous region, known as the Gebel el Akhdar (Green Mountain) and the southern desert - the Calansico Sand Sea - broken only by a series of oases marking routes between Cyrenaica and Egypt to the east and the Garamantes (Fezzan) to the south-west. To the east and west of the region are large expanses of semi-arid, mainly unpopulated coastal plains - the Marmaric and Syrtic deserts.

Despite being surrounded on three sides by desert, the substantial annual rainfall in the coastal and mountainous areas of Cyrenaica makes this part of Libya

surprisingly green and fertile. Horden and Purcell have likened the Gebel el Akhdar to "a fragment of some Mediterranean archipelago [...] uneasily wedged against the African continent".[1] The main areas of habitation are the coastal strip, which runs between Benghazi (Berenice) in the west and Derna in the east, and the adjoining limestone plateau which rises to *c*.900 m in two successive escarpments to the south. Today the two main cities in Cyrenaica are Benghazi and Al Bayda (El Beida) which is positioned at the foot of the Gebel el Akhdar on a plateau about 25 kms inland **(see 1.2.1)**.

Early History

Cyrenaica was first colonised by a group of Dorian Greeks who arrived from Thera (Santorini) in the seventh century BC and founded the city of Cyrene on a high plateau about 15 kms from the sea.[2] Prior to this, Grinus of Thera, accompanied by a number of compatriots, went to Delphi to consult the oracle and offer a hecatomb on behalf of their native city.[3] The Theraeans were instructed by the oracle to leave their island and found a new city in Libya. According to Herodotus, the islanders were "quite ignorant where Libya was, and were not so venturesome as to send out a colony in the dark".[4] Apollo's advice was therefore ignored. During the following seven years not one drop of rain fell on Thera and, in desperation, another delegation was despatched to Delphi only to be reprimanded by the oracle and reminded that previous advice had not been heeded. A group of Theraeans was sent out to Libya and after a failed attempt to colonise the island of Platea off the coast of Cyrenaica, and another attempt to settle in an area of coastal lowland on the mainland, the colonists arrived at the site which would become the city of Cyrene. The settlement which built up around a mountain spring dedicated to Apollo, grew to become one of the most powerful and successful Greek cities in Africa.[5] In

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[1] Horden and Purcell (2000) p.65

[2] Herodotus *Historiae* IV, 145-159, in Rawlinson (1934) pp.249-61. The myth of Cyrene was referenced by Pindar, Parke (1978) p.201. It was also mentioned by Menander the rhetorician, who asserted that Apollo had colonised the mainland, the sea, Libya, the Hellespont, the East and all Asia, Pease (1917) p.1. There is an inscription on the "Stele of the Founders" (no earlier than fourth century BC) confirming the bond between Cyrene and Thera and celebrating the city's foundation, Graham (1960) p.95. Calame talks of symbolic narratives surrounding the foundation of the city, Calame (1990) p.321

[3] A hecatomb was a sacrifice - made only to Apollo, Athena or Hera - of 100 cattle, Encyclopaedia Britannica (1823) Vol.X p.316. For discussion on the Delphic oracle, see Parke (1939)

[4] Rawlinson (1934) p.249

[5] The spring still runs today.

recognition of the debt owed to Apollo's oracle, the Cyrenaicans sent a statue of a chariot - with the goddess Cyrene at the reins - to Delphi.[6]

Herodotus tells of inter-marriages and peaceful cultural exchanges between Libyans and the incomers, but the continued expansion of the Greek colony and the founding of new cities in other parts of the region, eventually antagonised the local population and relations between the Greeks and the Libyans became volatile. Periods of peace were intermittent and attacks on newly-established cities by the indigenous inhabitants became a recurring theme. In the middle of the fourth century BC, Cyrenaica fell under the rule of the Ptolemies and despite two major Cyrenaican revolts at the end of the fourth century and a short period of independence at the beginning of the third, it remained under Egyptian rule until *c.* 96 BC when Ptolemy Apion relinquished power to Rome.[7] Shortly after this Cyrenaica was declared a Roman province and the region was affiliated with Crete; the two regions formed a single province which came under the rule of a proconsul delegated by Rome.[8] Cyrenaica was left very much to its own devices until 74 BC, when Rome, suffering from a shortage of grain, needed to call on its resources and a proconsul was delegated by the Roman Senate as governor of the new province.[9]

Settlement and Provincial Organisation

In the Greek and early Hellenistic periods there were four main cities in Cyrenaica: Cyrene, Barka (later to become Ptolemais), Taucheira and Euesperides (later Berenike). At the end of the second century or beginning of the first century BC, a fifth city - Apollonia, the port city of Cyrene - was established and subsequently became an important city in its own right. There are also reports that during the second century AD Hadrian founded a sixth city, Hadrianapolis, although archaeological evidence for this remains elusive[10] **(1.2.2)**.

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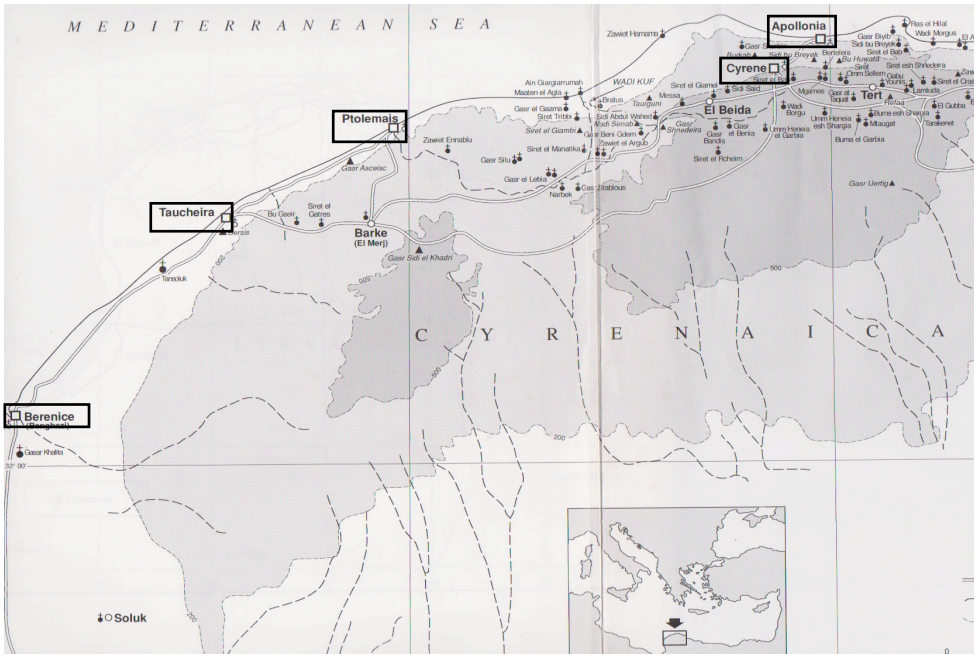
[6] Broad (2006) p.28

[7] Jones (1971) pp.357-9

[8] Boardman (1967) p.52; Romanelli (1971) p.47. Despite this period of joint rule there is little evidence of influence between the two provinces, Sanders (1982) p.133

[9] Sicily, usually a reliable source of grain, was struggling under the rulership of Gaius Verres. Bithynia, another renowned granary, was also annexed by Rome around the same time, Barker et al. (1985) p.367

[10] Jones and Little (1971) p.70. Hadrianopolis is mentioned by several late geographers, but the use of the term, Hexapolis, to describe Cyrenaica - as known from an inscription at Ptolemais -must have been short-lived, quickly reverting to Pentapolis, Goodchild (1961b) p.87



1.2.2 - Cyrenaica

Unlike Latin-speaking Tripolitania in the west of Libya, Cyrenaica gravitated culturally and politically towards the East and remained Greek-speaking until the Arab invasions in the seventh century AD. During the reign of Diocletian (AD 284-306) Cyrenaica became known as Libya Superior - or Pentapolis - and the area to the east of the region, separating Cyrenaica from Egypt, became the new province of Libya Inferior - or Sicca.[11] The Libyas were put under the military control of the Diocese of Oriens and a *vicarius* in Antioch until AD 367, when they were moved to the care of the Augustal prefect in Alexandria. In the sixth century, Justinian transferred control to the praetorian prefect in Constantinople.[12] From the time of its foundation in the seventh century BC, Cyrene had been the main city of Cyrenaica but following the creation of the provinces of Libya Superior and Libya Inferior, each province was allocated its own governor and the governors' headquarters - along with the superior status attached to that office - were transferred from Cyrene to Ptolemais.[13] Later still, the governmental head-quarters of Pentapolis were moved to Apollonia.[14]

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[11] The term Pentapolis has been traced back to the first century AD and is thought to have been introduced around the same time that Apollonia became a city in its own right - *c.* 67 BC, Jones (1971) p.358

[12] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.3

[13] Goodchild (1961b) p.92

[14] There is disagreement as to when this transfer took place but it is generally believed to have been sometime between the middle of the fifth century and the first quarter of the sixth century, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.35

The third century AD was a time of decline for the cities of Pentapolis. Towns contracted in size, municipal buildings deteriorated and there is little evidence of new public inscriptions.[15] In his book on Roman architecture, Ward-Perkins notes that Roman Cyrenaica was a "poor province, richer in history than it was in fine contemporary monuments [...] there are few Roman buildings that are of more than local significance".[16] Widrig has described the late antique archaeology in Cyrenaica as "a slowly evolving entity separate and distinct from the greater Christian/Byzantine whole".[17] This decline was doubtless compounded by a massive earthquake which shook Cyrene in AD 262. Despite an ambitious rebuilding programme implemented by the emperor Claudius Gothicus (AD 268-270), who also renamed Cyrene 'Claudipolis', the city failed to thrive.[18] Archaeological evidence suggests that from the third century AD there was an increased decentralisation of the population; people migrated from the urban areas to the countryside, cities went into decline and rural communities grew.[19] The impetus for this exodus is not clear but is often attributed to the threat posed by constant attacks on the towns by indigenous Libyans.[20]

Communication and Trade

Cyrenaica is positioned between two major centres - Alexandria and Carthage. However, it is separated from the Nile delta to the east by *c.*700 kms of desert and from Tripolitania to the west by another 700 kms of desert.[21] Even though the main overland route between Alexandria and Carthage passed through Cyrenaica, land-travel was slow and hazardous. The surrounding deserts, although not impassable, were dangerous and inhospitable and a continuous east-west route along the shore of Cyrenaica was precluded by the large number of wadis traversing the region. The most viable means of communication with other parts of North Africa should have been the sea, but even this mode of transport was not without its problems. In the east and west of the region strong onshore winds, unpredictable currents and a

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[15] Reynolds (1977) p.55

[16] Ward-Perkins (1981) p.368

[17] Widrig (1975) p.74

[18] The new name, like the emperor himself, was short-lived, Goodchild (1976) p.234

[19] This is particularly evident at Ptolemais where, probably during the fourth or fifth centuries, the Hellenistic city wall was dismantled and the *spolia* was used to build a number of fortified units within the city, Kraeling (1962) p.134 and p.139

[20] In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Synesius records raids, fire, plague and locusts. However, his writings also suggest that the cities were defended against attacks while the countryside was left to fend for itself, hence the large number of fortified farms, houses and churches recorded in rural communities, Reynolds (1977) p.56

[21] The hinterland also comprises some half a million square kilometres of Sahara desert.

rapidly shelving shore made shipping treacherous and harbouring problematic.[22] In the central area, where the deeply indented coastline offered natural harbour facilities, access between the littoral and the major settlement areas on the upper plateaux was challenging.[23]

Despite these difficulties, there is evidence that, in Antiquity, Cyrenaica was part of a Mediterranean-wide trade network; the region was renowned for the export of its Cyrenaen and Barcan horses and, in particular, for the celebrated wonder-drug, silphium, unique to Libya.[24] It is also recorded that, in the fourth century BC, Cyrenaica exported large quantities of grain to help relieve a severe famine in Greece.[25] Trading customs of Cyrenaica in Late Antiquity, however, are much harder to identify and there is very little evidence of commercial activity in the region during this period.[26] This situation is alluded to by Synesius who, in the late fourth century AD, noted that Syrian shipmasters, together with many of the larger traders negotiating the African coast, simply bypassed the Cyrenaican ports. He also bemoaned the fact that during periods of barbarian attack, exporting goods of any kind became near-impossible.[27] The archaeological record seems to confirm this; amphorae produced at Berenike, Taucheira and Ptolemais have not been found in any quantity outside of Cyrenaica and there is also little evidence of imported goods.[28] Wilson has commented that, on the evidence available, "it appears that late antique Cyrenaica was managing to subsist but not exporting in quantity".[29] Harrison, who has also portrayed Cyrenaica as "something of a backwater", has suggested that among the very few materials which were imported, were

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[22] Synesius describes how, on one voyage from Alexandria, his vessel was forced into land twice, Pando (1940) p.4. Notably, he makes no mention of travelling westwards towards Tripolitania.

[23] Jones (1971) p.71

[24] Silphium was a scarce and valued commodity with numerous culinary and medicinal uses. The plant is now extinct, Horden and Purcell (2000) p.65

[25] Jones (1971) p.354; Barker et al. (1985) p.367

[26] It has been suggested that one of the reasons for this may have been that much of the traffic which Cyrenaica had previously enjoyed, was diverted to the port of Alexandria, Cook et al.(1936) p.671

[27] Reynolds (1977) pp.53-8. Synesius *Epistulae* 4, 52, 54, 55, 61 and 148; *Catastasis,* see Fitzgerald (1926); http://wwww.livius.org/su-sz/synesius/synesius_letters.html accessed 23.3.2013

[28] Imported goods include a few remnants of Coptic fine ware and St. Menas flasks from Alexandria, amphorae and coarse ware from the Aegean and a few examples of fine pottery from Tunisia and Tripolitania, Wilson (2001) pp.28-43. Even at Berenike where the clay was suitable for amphora production, only a limited number of examples have been found. The lack of artefacts seems to reflect economic restraints rather than a lack of suitable material, Lloyd et al. (1977) p. 401

[29] Wilson (2001) p.41

Proconnesian church fittings and, possibly, large wooden beams used in the construction of church roofs.[30] It seems then, that during Late Antiquity, Cyrenaica was a relatively isolated outpost, remote from the remainder of the African continent and the rest of the empire. Rather than relying on imports and exports, the region appears to have become more or less self-sufficient.[31]

Christianity

The New Testament contains several references to Cyrene: Simon of Cyrene carried the cross for Jesus;[32] Christians from Cyrene are recorded as being in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost;[33] Cyrenaicans were among those who made up the first church at Antioch;[34] and Lucius of Cyrene was one of the chosen to whom the Holy Spirit gave instructions to appoint Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for missionary service.[35] There is also a tradition which tells that Mark the Evangelist was a Cyrenaican and that it was he who founded the first Christian community in the region.[36] Excavations by Manchester University recorded a stone in the city of Cyrene, allegedly engraved with 'Jesus Christ is aleph and omega'. Rowe considered the stone a Hebrew/Christian relic as it used the Hebrew aleph rather than the Greek alpha and the symbols are ordered from right to left. This stone has subsequently been cited as evidence of the early arrival of Christianity in Cyrene.[37]

By the time Dionysius was bishop of Alexandria (AD 247-64), each of the cities in Pentapolis seems to have had its own bishop. Dionysius sent epistles warning against the heresy of Sabellius to Ammon, bishop of Berenice, Basilides, bishop of the parishes in Pentapolis, and also to bishops Telesphorus, Euphranor and Euporus.[38] By the early fourth century there is evidence for seven bishoprics in

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[30] Harrison (1985) p.234

[31] Reynolds (1977) p.57

[32] Matthew 27:27-32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26

[33] Acts 2:4-11

[34] Acts 11: 20-26

[35] Acts 13:1

[36] *Life of St Mark* PG 115, cols. 164b, 168a

[37] Rowe et al. (1956) p.59. Rowe has also surmised that the numerous caves in the region were used for early Christian worship, Rowe et al. (1956) pp.151-4

[38] Eusebius *Church History,* vii.26. Sabellianism, a non-trinitarian belief, denied that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were separate persons of the Godhead, but were modes or aspects of a single divine person. The sect was named after the third-century Roman priest, Sabellius, Duchesne (1909) p.351

Libya Superior.[39] By the fifth century, monophysitism had become the main heretical issue in the region and in AD 482 the Emperor Zeno addressed the Henotikon to the bishops, clergy, monks and laymen of Alexandria, Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis.[40] The heretical problem is underlined by Evagrius who, in the sixth century, wrote that by the reign of Anastasius (AD 491-518), "there were very many divisions both in the East and in the western regions and in Libya, since the Eastern bishops were not on terms with those in the West or in Libya, nor in turn were the latter with those in the East."[41]

Dionysius' correspondence seems to suggest that by the middle of the third century, Alexandria already had unofficial dominion over the church in Cyrenaica. However, it was not until the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 that Cyrene was officially recognised as an ecclesiastical province of the See of Alexandria.[42] The relationship between the two was not, however, always straightforward; Riad has claimed that the church in Cyrenaica was disassociated from, and then reunited with, Alexandria many times,[43] and that after the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in AD 381, the Church of Pentapolis may actually have separated from the Church of Alexandria.[44] Letters written by Synesius at the beginning of the fifth century suggest that this was probably not the case, although his accounts of events at Hydrax and Palaibiska do suggest that there were tensions between the two regions.[45]

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[39] Jones (1971) pp. 317-41; Martin (1981) p.43

[40] Haarer (2006) p.123; Frend (1972) p.177. The epistle, dated 28th July 482, was a document of compromise intended to reunite the orthodox and the heretics. It was divided into three sections: firstly, affirming the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed as the only right and true testimony of faith; secondly, condemning Nestorius and Eutyches, and accepting the twelve anathemas of Cyril; and thirdly, adopting a doctrine regarding the nature of Christ which was favourable to the monophysites. It spectacularly failed to achieve its objective.

[41] *Evagrius* III, 30, cited in Haarer (2006) p.125

[42] At this time, Alexandria's authority over Cyrenaica, whether it had previously been formally set out or merely a tradition, was confirmed by the sixth canon of the Council, Chadwick (1960) pp.179; Ward-Perkins and Godchild (2003) p.5. Two of the named attendees at the council were Libyan bishops - Secundus, bishop of Ptolemais and Theonas, bishop of Marmarica, Hanson (1988) pp.156-7

[43] Thanks to Intisar Hawazi for translation - Riad, 40 ص .المرجع السابق, رياض

[44] Riad, 41-40 ص ص ,المرجع نفسه. It is thought that this split - if it actually happened - may have been influenced by the Patriarch of Constantinople as the separation would have given him a place of reverence second only to that of the Bishop of Rome, pushing the Church of Alexandria into third place, Bayens and Moss (1948) p.99

[45] Palaibiska and Hydrax were two villages under the jurisdiction of Erythrum. They overthrew the nominated bishop and replaced him with their own candidate, Nicol (1887) p.72; Crawford (1901) p.258; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2008) p.5

Christian Monuments

Information about early Christian buildings in Cyrenaica is restricted, not only by a lack of excavation, but also because, where excavations have taken place, the focus has been mainly on revealing the monumental architecture of the classical period. In many cases, this has resulted in the destruction of Roman and early Christian buildings.[46] Most of the churches in Cyrenaica have been dated to the mid-sixth century and even though the dating of some of these monuments has been contested, the earliest date assigned to any of the extant churches in the region is the mid-fifth century. The Arab invasion of AD 643 has been assumed, although not proven, to mark a *terminus ante quem* for church-building in the region.[47]

To date, the earliest archaeological evidence for Christianity in Cyrenaica, apart from the inscribed stone from Cyrene, referred to above, is a mosaic pavement in a private house in Cyrene. The House of Hesychius, which occupies a prime position just east of the agora, was rebuilt for the final time in the first half of the fourth century and the pavement from this construction phase contains several inscriptions invoking God and Christ and also includes an angel wearing priestly vestments.[48]

Sometime after this, probably from about the middle of the fifth century onwards, Christian churches came to dominate both cityscapes and rural landscapes.[49] A feature of many late antique sites in Cyrenaica is the presence of more than one church dated to the same period - almost touching in some cases - not only in the towns and cities but also in small outlying hamlets. Qasr el-Lebia is one of six rural sites with contemporaneous pairs of churches built in close proximity. One of the two is usually fortified and the other undefended. In five of the six cases, a striking feature of the arrangement is that one church is orientated to the east and the other to the west.[50] In fact, of the fifty-two churches in Cyrenaica for which the

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[46] Wilson (2001) p.28

[47] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.6

[48] Liebeschuetz has suggested that this house may have belonged to Synesius' father, Liebeschuetz (1985) p.159. Cameron points out that Synesius named his firstborn Hesychius, Cameron, Alan (1992) p.428. For inscriptions and translations, see Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.172

[49] For a comprehensive guide to most of the Christian monuments in Cyrenaica see Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003)

[50] Pairs of churches have been recorded at Latrun, Gasr Silu, Lamluda, Mgarnes and Siret Umm Sellem as well as at Qasr el-Lebia. The only one of these sites at which both churches are orientated in the same direction is Lamluda. All five main cities of Pentapolis have both east and west orientated churches. Widrig has argued that the reverse orientated church at Ras al-Hilal was probably originally one of a pair, although there is no archaeological evidence to corroborate this, Widrig (1975) p.198

orientation is known, twenty-four are orientated to the east, twenty-four to the west and four have apses to both the east and the west.[51] Even more surprisingly, the East Church at Cyrene, the larger of the two churches in this city and sometimes referred to as the 'cathedral' of Cyrene, had its orientation changed from east to west in the sixth century.[52] This unusual pattern of church building, which sets Cyrenaica apart from the rest of the eastern Mediterranean, remains unexplained. Goodchild has proposed that pairs of churches could be archaeological evidence for the existence of a flourishing Monophysite community.[53] He adds that even though there is insufficient evidence to decide which churches were Monophysite, "it seems at least likely that the more heavily fortified churches were the Orthodox ones, erected by government inspiration and subvention, and designed to have a military role as well as a religious one."[54] Frend, on the other hand, while acknowledging that the existence of two or more churches in Cyrenaican settlements could represent Orthodox and Monophysite congregations, makes it clear that this is no more than conjecture and that the pairs of churches may simply have represented dedications to different saints.[55] Monophysites are believed by some to have been opposed to imagery[56] and, accepting provisionally Goodchild's proposal, it is tempting to consider whether the heavily-figured pavements could offer any clues as to which congregation used which church.[57]

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[51] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.18

[52] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp.127-48

[53] Monophysites believed in the single divine nature of Christ and rejected the Council of Chalcedon of AD 451, which identified Christ as both human and divine. The fact that the Henotikon was addressed to the "bishops, monks and laymen of Alexandria, Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis" leaves little doubt that there was a large Monophysite community in Cyrenaica, Haarer (2006) p.123

[54] Goodchild (1976) pp.261-2

[55] Frend (1972) p.324

[56] Dobschütz and Runciman have suggested that the *acheiropoieton* - the image of Edessa - may have been 'invented' by the Chalcedonians during the siege of AD 544 in opposition to the Monophysites, Kitzinger (1954) p.120. Ostrogorsky detected a strong Monophysite streak in the iconoclastic theology of Constantine V - a disposition which is thought to have been already evident in the sixth century, Brown (1982) p.253. However, both Mango and Brock make the point that the Monophysite's rejection of imagery is based on just a few written accounts and that the paucity of archaeological remains that can confidently be assigned to the sect makes corroborating this assumption almost impossible, Mango (1977) pp.58-74; Brock (1977) pp.53-7. The aniconic decoration of an extant Monophysite church at Kartmin in Turkey is discussed in Maguire (2012) p.34

[57] However, in the cases of Qasr el-Lebia, Ras al-Hilal and Cyrene, the ornate gridded pavements which include much figural imagery - seemingly more suited to Orthodox than monophysite monuments - adorn churches orientated to the west, not, as might be expected of sixth-century Orthodox churches, to the east. If the pairs of churches in Cyrenaica do, indeed, represent a division of religious loyalties, the ornate nature of the pavements in the west-facing churches either contradicts the idea that the east-facing churches were more likely to be Orthodox, or adds to the view that the Monophysite's rejection of imagery is unsustainable.

Qasr el-Lebia

The archaeological site at Qasr el-Lebia occupies a small hilltop by the modern settlement of Bir el Mfauaz **(1.2.3-6)**.



1.2.3 - Qasr el-Lebia - from the south



1.2.4 - Approach to Qasr el-Lebia - from the south



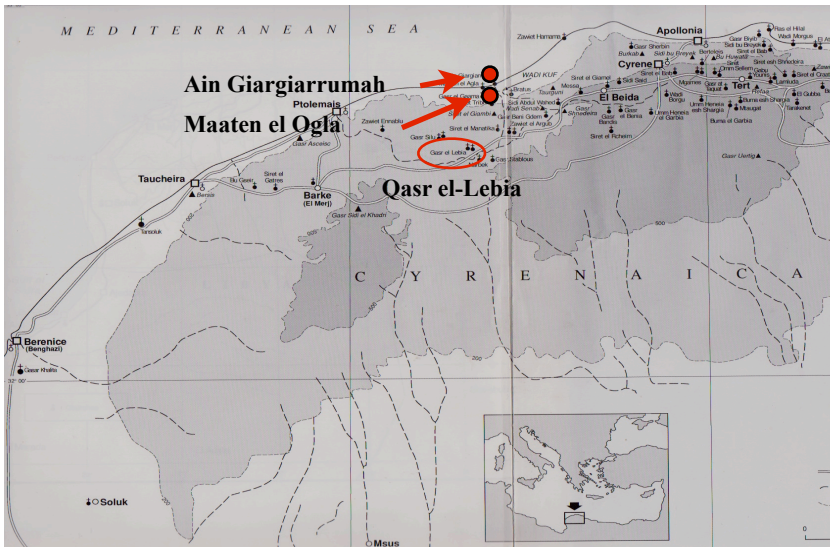
1.2.5 - View from Qasr el-Lebia - looking north



1.2.6 - View from Qasr el-Lebia - looking south-east

Little is known about the sixth-century settlement, now known as Qasr el-Lebia. The site, which is generally thought to have been renamed 'Theodorias' in Late Antiquity,[58] has been identified with several different ancient place names. Goodchild, on grounds of homophony, has associated it with the ancient settlement of Olbia, referred to by Synesius.[59] Stucchi, on the other hand, preferred to affiliate it with Neapolis which he believed to be the same place as the city of Caenopolis.[60]

Situated on a small fertile plateau near the west bank of the Wadi Kuf, 56 km east of Barka - modern-day El Merj - and 70 km west of the city of El Beida, Qasr el-Lebia lies at the west end of an escarpment which is punctuated with the archaeological remains of ancient towns and settlements. The town had relatively good connections along the west bank of the Wadi Kuf with the ancient coastal towns of Maaten el Ogla and Ain Giargiarrumah, from where it was possible to cross the mouth of the Wadi and proceed eastwards towards the territories of Cyrene and Apollonia. **(1.2.7)**.



1.2.7 - Qasr el-Lebia

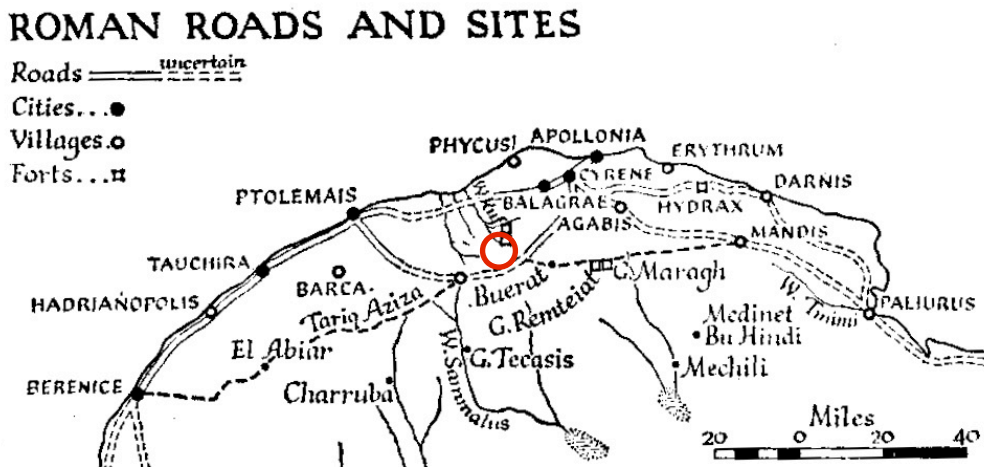
It was also close to the main east-west route across the region, which formed part of the overland route between Alexandria and Carthage[61] **(1.2.8)**.

[58] Chapter 3.6

[59] Synesius *Epp.* 76, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.267

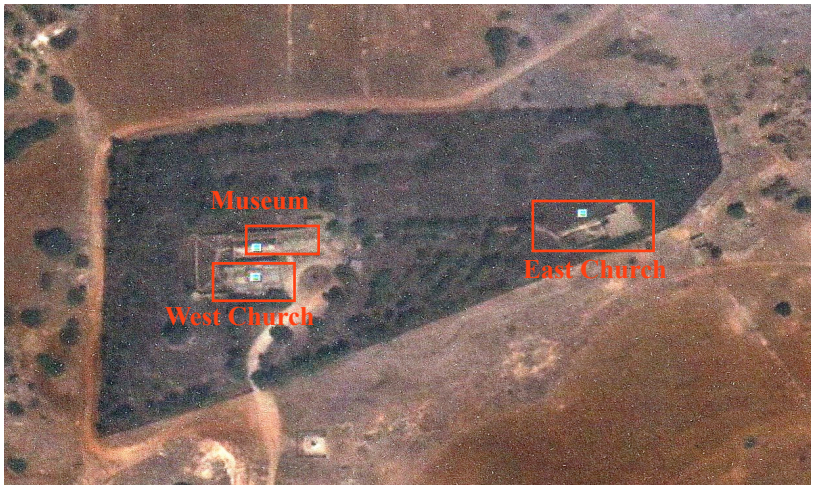
[60] Stucchi (1975) p.358. Both places are mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geographia*, although Ptolemy recorded Neapolis and Caenopolis at different locations, Ptolemy *Geographaia* IV. 4.7

[61] Goodchild (1976) p.148



1.2.8 - Proposed network of ancient roads through Cyrenaica

Today the main features of the site are two early Christian churches and a small museum which houses some of the mosaics **(1.2.9)**.



1.2.9 - Aerial view of the site at Qasr el-Lebia

Tnly other traces of ancient occupation in the neighbourhood are some rock-cut tombs scattered around the site[62] **(1.2.10-11)**.

[62] During a visit in 2010 the land surrounding the site had been ploughed but cursory field-walking revealed nothing to suggest that the settlement extended down the slopes from the hilltop occupied by the churches.



1.2.10-11 - Rock-cut tombs south of the East Church at Qasr el-Lebia

Rock-cut chambers are a recurrent feature in Cyrenaica and it is not uncommon for churches to be located adjacent to, or even above, older tombs. The West Church at Lamluda, for example, was built directly above a rambling rock-cut complex - sometimes referred to as "the lower church"[63] **(1.2.12)**. At Umm Heneia Garbia, a double-ended basilica sits above a so-called "underground church" to which a rock-carved baldacchino has been added[64] **(1.2.13)**, and the double-ended basilica at Messa sits above an elaborate rock-cut hypogeum, extended and altered to include two small apses and a nave-like area[65] **(1.2.14)**.

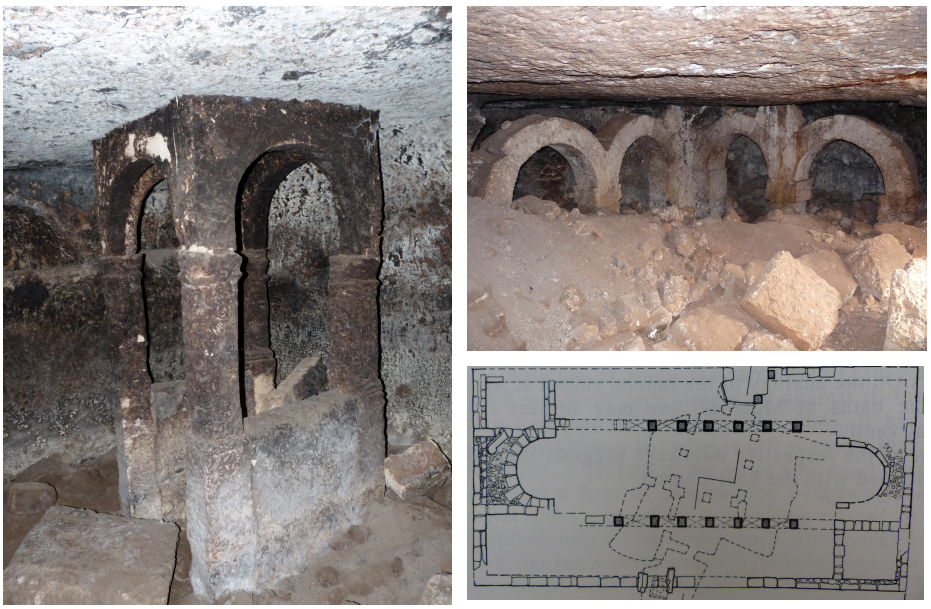


1.2.12 - 'The Lower Church', Lamluda and plan of basilica above

[63] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp.300-302

[64] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp.368-372

[65] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp.304-309



1.2.13 - Features in the 'Underground Church', Umm Heneia Garbia and plan of basilica above



1.2.14 - Adapted hypogeum, Messa and basilica above

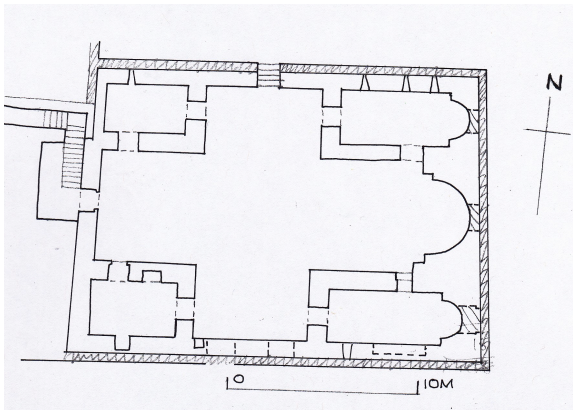
In most cases, the rock-cut features have not been dated, although they are generally accepted as pre-dating the church buildings.[66]

[66] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.267

The Two Churches at Qasr el-Lebia

West Church

The West Church at Qasr el-Lebia has been dated to the sixth century and is largely still standing. Its principal apse is to the east and it is the only church in the region to take the form of an inscribed cross **(1.2.15)**.



1.2.15 - Plan of West Church at Qasr el-Lebia

The exterior of the building is faced with dressed limestone masonry. The interior space is divided into a cruciform central area with four angle-chapels; the main east apse and the apses of the two eastern annexes are inscribed. The main entrance to the church seems to have been in the middle of the north wall with a secondary entrance to the west, although this may have led solely to a small courtyard. Internal doorways have flat lintels with relieving arches above (**1.2.16-17**).



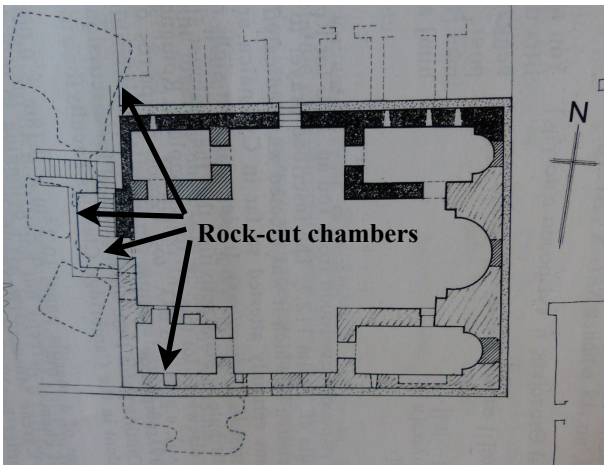
1.2.16 - West Church at Qasr el-Lebia. Exterior East wall



1.2.17 - West Church. Doorways into side chapels, looking east

In more recent times the building was incorporated into a Turkish fort and, later still, adapted for use by the Italian police force.[67]

Several rock-cut chambers, probably tomb chambers like those discussed above, adjoin the west end of the West Church. Ward-Perkins and Goodchild have suggested that, at Qasr el-Lebia, some of these features could date from as early as the fourth century BC.[68] It seems likely then, that the chambers around the church were probably extant when the Christian buildings were constructed and that they may well have played a role in determining the position of the sixth-century buildings **(1.2.18)**.



1.2.18 - Rock-cut chambers adjoining west end of

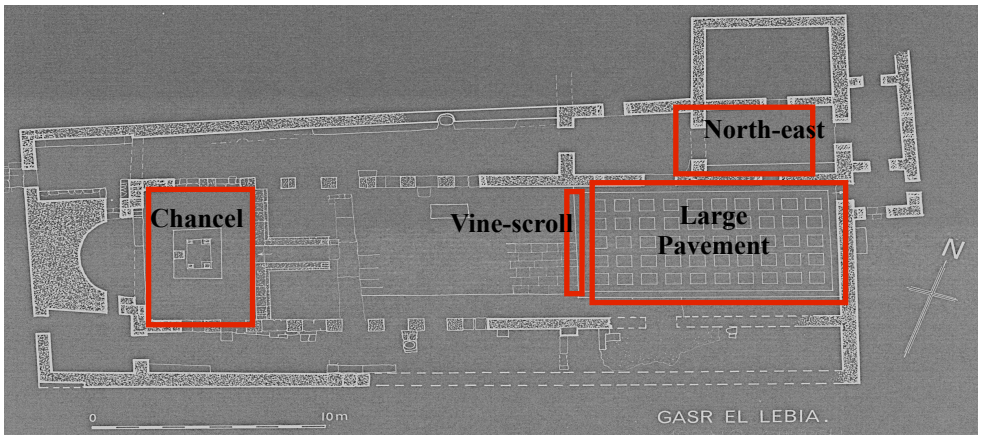
[67] Attesting to its continued strategic position, Reynolds (2001) p.171

[68] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.267

East Church Complex

The East Church complex, which is situated about 200 m to the east of the West Church, comprises a reverse orientated basilica with a complex of rooms to the north and the east - including a rock-cut tomb chamber comparable to those discussed above. The architecture of the church is addressed in section 5.1.

As well as the large pavement, which is the main focus of this thesis and is addressed in chapters 2 and 3, there are three other fields of mosaics which are detailed in Appendix 1 **(1.2.19)**.



1.2.19 - Plan of East Church complex - showing mosaic pavements

1.3: The Pavement - Dating, Grids and Borders

Introduction

The large mosaic paving the east end of the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia is a remarkably rich and complex work which survives almost in its entirety.[1] The pavement is composed of a grid of ten rows of five panels which are tied together by a continuous border of interlocking roundels. Aquatic imagery is ranged around three sides of the pavement - Oceanic in the east and Nilotic in the west - and an abundance of flowering and fruiting plants and trees gives the pavement a paradisiacal aura. Each of the fifty panels contains a different image and among the more common flora and fauna and architectural representations are female figures identified by inscription as personifications of abstract concepts, the Rivers of Paradise, a naked satyr and a personification of *Kastalia,* nymph of Apollo's oracular spring. Each of the individual panels carries its own signification and small groups of images appear to work together adding layers of meaning to the overall scheme. The panels are all orientated to be viewed from the east and are arranged to privilege the central axis of the mosaic. Although, at first glance, this is a seemingly disparate assemblage of images, the pavement offers a paratactic programme which maps out a journey from east to west.

This section discusses the dating and composition of the mosaic.

Dating

The mosaic pavement, and the East Church complex in which it is situated, have been dated to AD 539-40 by the dedicatory inscription near the centre of the floor.[2]

ἐγέ-	This work too
νετο καὶ	came into
τοῦτο τὸ ἔρ-	being in
γον ἐπὶ Μακαρί-	the time of Macarius
ου τοῦ ὁσιωτά-	the most holy
του ἐπισκό(που)	bishop
ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) γ'	in indiction year 3.

[1] The individual panels have been lifted and are now displayed on the walls of the museum at Qasr el-Lebia.

[2] See chapter 2. The inscription has been transcribed and translated by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.282

This date has been extrapolated from a reference to indiction year three and a circular argument which assumes that the town, *Polis Nea Theodorias*, and/or the East Church complex, were renovated and renamed in honour of the empress Theodora in her lifetime and during Justinian's reign.[3] This assumption has been perpetuated by modern scholarship. Mathew, for example, writes that "in the 6th century this [*Polis Nea Theodorias*] was the small Episcopal see of Olbia and in 539 it was renamed in honour or the reigning empress as the New City of Theodorias".[4] Jones states that, in Cyrenaica, Justinian "created a new – and very small – city west of Cyrene, called Theodorias",[5] and Magdalino confidently claims that "although not mentioned by Procopius, this [*Polis Nea Theodorias*] was almost certainly one of the cities refounded by Justinian".[6] Justinian's reputation for *renovatio*, and for church building in particular, makes it tempting to credit new or renovated ecclesiastical buildings of the sixth century to the emperor, even when there is little or nothing to substantiate the assumption. Even though there is evidence of small and seemingly insignificant settlements which occupied critical locations, being singled out for imperial attention,[7] and of towns being renamed in the honour of the empress,[8] there is nothing - other than the mosaic itself - to tie Justinian or Theodora to *Polis Nea Theodorias*. Procopius records that, in Cyrenaica, Justinian instigated the rebuilding of the city walls at Berenice and Taucheira, the building of two forts and two fortified monasteries on the southern frontier of Pentapolis, the renovation of the aqueduct at Ptolemais and the

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[3] Indictions specified the position of a year within a taxation cycle. These cycles were either five or fifteen years and were calculated from different dates in different places. An indiction year alone is, therefore, not reliable dating evidence. For discussions on indictions, see Whitby and Whitby (1989) esp. p.10; Meimaris (1992) esp. p.32; Blackburn and Holdford-Stevens (1999) pp.769-70

[4] Mathew (1965) p.86

[5] Jones does note, however, that Hierocles and Gerogius, when listing sixth-century cities, ignore Theodorias and record only the five old cities, Jones (1971) p.362

[6] Magdalino (1988) p.105

[7] For example, Constantine wrote to his praetorian prefect suggesting that the small community of Orcistus in Galatia deserved to be a town owing to its location at the joining of four highways, Brown (1980) p.19

[8] John Malalas notes that in AD 528 "the Roman Emperor renamed the fortress known as Anasarthon, *Theodorias* after the Augusta, having granted it city status", John Malalas, *Chronographia* book 18:32, cited in Jeffreys et al. (1986) p.259. Procopius records that the inhabitants of Béga (*Vaga*) in Proconsularis renamed their town *Vaga Theodoriada*, and also that Justinian added the title *Theodoriana* to the city of *Cululis* in Byzacena, Procopius *De Aedificiis,* VI.5.12-14, Stewart et al. (2005) pp.162-5; Feissel (2000) p.102. Grabar has mistakenly, associated Qasr el-Lebia with the town of *Vaga*, Grabar (1968b) p.47, and Saradi, on the basis of this assumption, has suggested that the church at Qasr el-Lebia is evidence of imperial propaganda through ecclesiastical monuments, and that the imperial renovation of the city was a way to strengthen the position of the Church by "promoting the presence of the state", Saradi (2006) p.139 and p.184

installation of a bath house at Berenice.[9] Even given that this catalogue of building-works cannot be accepted as a complete or wholly accurate account of Justinian's architectural achievements,[10] imperial initiatives in Cyrenaica seem to have focused mainly on defending boundaries and fortifying the region in order to restrain the "barbarians in that quarter from making sudden and unexpected inroads into the Roman territory."[11] There is no evidence to justify attributing any church-building in Cyrenaica to Justinian and, as Reynolds points out, although it is "a very tempting conjecture that Justinian built a fort here [at Qasr el-Lebia], there is no positive evidence for it".[12]

Several other Cyrenaican churches, particularly those in which grid mosaics have been found,[13] have also been dated according to the inscription at Qasr el-Lebia. Alföldi-Rosenbaum claims that "there is unanimous agreement about the Justinianic date of all the mosaics" and that "there can be no doubt that all these Justinianic mosaics are the work of one mosaic atelier."[14] These mosaics are generally thought to have been laid by itinerant mosaicists, probably under the instruction of local patrons and with the help of local craftsmen.[15] Foucher has suggested that Cyrenaica functioned as a sort of migratory bridge for the Alexandrian mosaic workshops to cross to Tripolitania and then on to Africa Proconsularis.[16] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Michaelides see the main influence as

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[9] Procopius *De Aedificiis,* Stewart et al. (2005) pp.153-6

[10] See, for example, Bowden (2006) p.223-32

[11] Procopius *De Aedificiis,* Stewart et al. (2005) p.155. Krautheimer has commented that during the sixth century vast numbers of small towns in North Africa were fortified and strong-points were erected which "formed a new kind of *limes* along the vulnerable borders" and protected the empire, Krautheimer (1986) p.258

[12] Reynolds (2001) p.171-3

[13] The East Church at Cyrene, Ras al-Hilal, the East Church at Apollonia and an identified building at Taucheira, see Appendix 2

[14] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.4

[15] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.21 and p.286. The scarcity of Roman mosaics found in the region, has prompted Alföldi-Rosenbaum to comment that Cyrenaica does not seem to have had a continuous tradition of mosaic art, Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.4. Notable exceptions are pavements excavated at Ptolemais, Harrison (1962), and in the House of Jason Magnus at Cyrene, Mingazzini (1966)

[16] Foucher (1963) p.72; (1964) p.11. Foucher does not agree with the opinion voiced by Di Vita that the difficulties of the overland journey would have been insurmountable, Di Vita (1966) p.43

coming from Greece,[17] Bonicatti,[18] Stucchi[19] and Guarducci[20] favour Alexandria, Bandinelli prefers Constantinople,[21] and Grabar suggests a Syrian and Palestinian influence.[22]

Excavations at Qasr el-Lebia have provided no stratigraphic evidence for dating the building and there is no record of coins or pottery which might have helped to corroborate the assigned date. Although a few coins have been recorded at other Cyrenaican sites, they are generally too badly corroded to be of use for dating purposes.[23] Pottery sherds from Ras al-Hilal, one of this group of so-called Justinianic churches, have been dated to between AD 550 and 650 and yet the church is generally dated according to stylistic similarities observed between its floor mosaics and those at Qasr el-Lebia, rather than by the pottery.[24] Excavations of a church at Sidi Khrebish in Benghazi, turned up pottery sherds which have been dated to the second half of the fifth century - certainly no later than AD 525 - and yet the excavators noted that, without the pottery evidence, one would have had little hesitation in assigning this church to the group of so-called Justinianic churches.[25] This raises the question of whether Sidi Khrebish was something of a renegade, whether the "pottery has lied"[26] or whether the dates assigned on stylistic evidence to many of the early Christian churches in Cyrenaica should be reconsidered.

However, with regard to the dating of the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia, diagnostic features, such as the border, the grid with imagery orientated to be viewed as visitors progress through the building, and animals seemingly suspended in front of trees in the manner of merry-go-round horses, all appear in other churches dated to the last decade of the fifth century or the first half of the sixth

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[17] Michaelides (1989a) p.366-7; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.65. This also concurs with Lloyd's opinion that the architecture of Cyrenaica seems to have been influenced by architecture in Greece, Lloyd et al. (1977) p.30

[18] Bonicatti (1963) p.128

[19] Stucchi (1975) p.399

[20] Guarducci (1975) p.662 and p.680

[21] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.66

[22] Grabar (1969) pp.269-73

[23] See, for example, Widrig (1975) pp.69-70

[24] Harrison (1964) pp.11-14

[25] Lloyd et al. (1977) p.173

[26] Lloyd et al. (1977) p.186

century.[27] In addition, the attire of *Kosmesis*, *Ktisis* and *Ananeosis* is comparable to that of other depictions of sixth-century female figures,[28] and the Rivers of Paradise only appear in floor mosaics from the very end of the fifth century.[29] Taking these points into consideration - and even ignoring the reference to indiction year three in the inscription - the pavement can be dated to somewhere between AD 490-560. For the purposes of this thesis then, the date AD 539-40, although not confirmed by independent evidence, has been accepted.

Grid Composition

One of the main characteristics of the pavement is its grid formation which comprises ten rows of five panels, each containing a different motif.[30] The rows of panels, described by Alföldi-Rosenbaum as a series of 'emblemata',[31] reflect a general predilection in Late Antiquity for organising groups of images into row formations.[32] This composition has been repeated in several other sixth-century churches in Cyrenaica: the nave pavement of the East Church at Cyrene comprises fourteen rows of nine panels; the east end of the nave of the church at Ras al-Hilal was paved with five rows of three panels; a square tableau of sixteen panels paved part of the south transept in the East Church at Apollonia; and an unexcavated mosaic floor in a grid layout has been recorded in a field at Gasr Bandis.[33]

In a wider context, there appears to be a cluster of contemporaneous mosaic floors with a similar grid formation in the central Mediterranean region. A pavement, from the church of St. Paraskevi at Kozani in Greece is arranged as a grid and at

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[27] For example, rams in front of trees in the chancel area of the sixth-century baptistery chapel of the Chapel of Martyr Theodore at Madaba in Jordan, Piccirillo (1997) p.118. Also, a bull and a lion in front of trees in the chancel of the the Church of Deacon Thomas at Mount Nebo, also in Jordan, Piccirillo (1997) pp.187-8

[28] See chapter 3.1

[29] See chapter 3.2

[30] Each panel measures between *c*.65cm² x *c*.67cm².

[31] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.11

[32] It has been suggested that this type of floor layout may have been imitating coffered ceilings, Grabar (1962) p.139; Dunbabin (1999) p.314. The coffered ceiling of the early fourth-century Constantinian basilica in Trier, is one example, see Krautheimer (1967) pp.115-40, and the ceiling of the synagogue at Dura Europos, lined with square tiles containing a variety of images, is another, see Kraeling (1979). Coffered ceilings were also imitated in paint, for example, in the Via Latina catacombs, (observed during visit Dec 2013), and in the Callixtus catacomb, which Finney describes as comprising "non-directional compositional units", Finney (1994) p.176

[33] For Cyrenaican mosaics, see Appendix 2. Only a few fragments of these mosaics have survived and studies must rely on Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980)

Byllis in Albania, the narthex in Basilica A and the naves in Basilicas D and E include grid layouts[34] **(1.3.1)**. In Macedonia, the narthex of the Episcopal Basilica and the nave of the Extra Muros Basilica at Stobi are arranged as grids[35] **(1.3.2)**, as is the north aisle of the Large Basilica at Heraclea Lyncestis[36] **(1.3.3)**. At Deir Solaib in Syria, the diakonikon was paved with a grid pavement[37] **(1.3.4)** and at Tegea in Greece, the nave of the Basilica of Thyrsos also assumes a grid formation[38] **(1.3.5)**.



Nave, Basilica D



Narthex, Basilica A



Nave, Basilica E

1.3.1. - Grid compositions at Byllis, Albania

[34] Kolarik (2005) pp.1255-67; Muçaj and Raynaud (2005) pp.383-98

[35] Kolarik (1987) pp.295-306

[36] Gjorgjievska (2008) pp.64-7

[37] Mattern et al. (1939) p.23

[38] Spiro (1978) pp.182-3, figs.198-200; Maguire (1987a) pp.24-8.



Narthex, Episcopal Basilica

1.3.2 - Grid compositions at Stobi, Macedonia



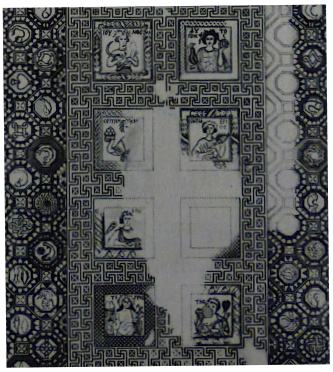
Nave, Extra Muros Basilica



1.3.3 - Grid compostion, Large Basilica, Heraclea



1.3.4 - Grid Composition, diakonikon, Deir Solaib, Syria



1.3.5 - Grid composition, nave, basilica of Thyrsos, Tegea, Greece

In all of the above late fifth- or early sixth-century pavements, as in the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, the imagery is orientated to be viewed from the same direction, as though anticipating the flow of visitors over the mosaic. This contrasts with most earlier Roman grid mosaics, in which imagery tended to be orientated in different directions and seems to have been ornamental rather than directional. For example, in both the early third-century 'Rustic Calendar' mosaic from Saint-Romaine-en-Gal in France,[39] and the third-century 'Mosaic of the Dice-Players' from Thysdrus in Tunisia, the outside panels are positioned as though to be viewed from the edge of the pavements and the inner panels are variously orientated.[40]

Borders

The fifty panels in the pavement are tied together by a continuous and repeating border of interlocking strands which create a series of roundels in black, ivory, terracotta and ochre. The border, which runs between the panels, breaks into the frames of each square three times on each side. The centres of the resulting roundels are filled with concentric circles of ivory, terracotta and ochre, small irregular terracotta sprigs sprout from the corners of the panels and black and terracotta bud-like protuberances fill the spaces between the roundels. The whole pavement is encompassed by an ivory border with a terracotta grid pattern and stepped terracotta, ochre, ivory and black diamonds at the junctions and inside each compartment[41] **(1.3.6)**.

[39] Dunbabin (1999a) p.80, fig.79

[40] Peachin (2001) pp.450-1

[41] Both the inner and the outer borders are *c*. 28cm wide





Detail of inner border



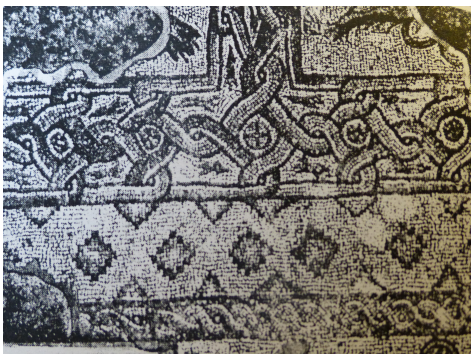
Detail of outer border

1.3.6 - Border *insitu* and details of borders

Variations of this distinctive border occur in several mosaic pavements in Cyrenaica: in the nave at Ras al-Hilal **(1.3.7)**; in the nave of the East Church at Cyrene **(1.3.8)**; in an antechamber to the baptistery at the West Church at Apollonia **(1.3.9)**; and - in an elaborated form - in an ecclesiastical building at Taucheira[42] **(1.3.10)**.



1.3.7 - Nave Pavement, Ras al-Hilal



1.3.8 - Nave Pavement, East Church,

[42] See Appendix 2



1.3.9 - Antechamber to baptistery, West Church, Apollonia



1.3.10 - Border at Taucheira

Outside Cyrenaica, similar borders have been found in pavements in the sixth-century Monastery of Siyagha at Mount Nebo in Jordan **(1.3.11)**, in the sixth-century Church of Küçük Tavşan Adsi at Bodrum in Turkey **(1.3.12)**, in a sixth-century basilica at Hermione in Greece **(1.3.13)**, in the narthex of the sixth-century Episcopal Basilica at Stobi in Macedonia **(1.3.14)**, in the north aisle of the sixth-century Large Basilica at Heraclea Lyncestis **(1.3.15)** and in the narthex of the sixth-century Plaosnek Basilica at Ohrid in Macedonia **(1.3.16)**.



1.3.11 - Monastery of Siyagha



1.3.12 - Church of Küçük Tavşan



1.3.13 - Basilica, Hermione



1.3.14 - Narthex, Episcopal Basilica, Stobi



1.3.15 - North aisle, Large Basilica, Heraclea Lyncestis



1.3.16 - Narthex, Plasonek Basilica, Ohrid

The recurrence of the grid composition and the border does not necessarily signal direct influence or contact between the different regions, but it is notable that the border and the grid composition both appear regularly in the central Mediterranean region and these comparisons help to corroborate the sixth-century date assigned to the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia.

Chapter 2
Description of the Large Pavement

Introduction

This chapter comprises a panel-by-panel description of the pavement. For ease of reference the panels have been given grid numbers. The survey starts at the west end of the pavement and moves eastwards, addressing the panels row-by-row. In other words, it begins at the top of the 'page' and moves down in the manner of reading a text.

This survey does not address the meanings of the images - chapter 3 comprises a detailed iconographical study. Neither does it reflect the way the imagery would have been encountered by sixth-century visitors or how the pavement as a whole would have been understood - this is discussed in chapter 5.2.


1
2
3
4
5
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J

Row A





A1: Hart with bell and pomegranates. A hart, facing the centre of the pavement, is outlined with a single row of black tesserae. Its eyes, mouth and ears are delineated in black and the horns, one of which breaks through the border of the panel, are also black. The body of the animal is treated in white, terracotta and ochre. It has a white chest with a terracotta line running down its throat and under its belly. The hooves are dark-brown and the tail is described by single strands of black and dark-brown tesserae. An ochre-coloured bell, outlined in green glass tesserae, hangs on a red ribbon around its neck. Behind the hart a tree bears three pomegranates in ochre and terracotta with white highlights. The trunk is outlined in black and filled with ochre and terracotta. The sprouting top of the tree has green glass leaves contoured in black. The. Three of the deer's hooves stand slightly above the bottom of the panel and one of the front legs is bent slightly giving the impression that the animal is actually suspended above the ground on the tree-trunk.



A2: ***Kosmesis.*** This figure, identified by inscription as *'Kosmesis',* is positioned as though walking towards the centre of the pavement. She is clothed in a pink, light-terracotta, terracotta and red *maphorion* which falls in folds from her shoulders. It is worn over a full-length blue and white striped robe with ornate black and ochre edging around the hem and cuffs. She is wearing red sandals. Her face is composed of very small tesserae, with distinctive black eye-brows, eyes outlined in grey and white and nose and mouth suggested by red, pink and white shading. She has an ornamented two-tone band across the forehead with pearls on strands hanging each side, recalling imperial prependulia.[1] There seems to have been a necklace in small glass tesserae above the line of her cloak, which has perished. In her right hand she swings an ochre, light ochre and black censer shaped like a tear-drop. In her left hand, which is held against her chest, she clasps a flower with a green glass stem and a terracotta and pink lotus-shaped bloom, which is also directed to the right. To the left of the figure, a tree with a light-brown and dark-brown trunk is outlined in black with grey and green glass branches and leaves shooting from its centre. To the left of the figure is a stylised cypress, outlined in black and filled with ochre, dark-grey and green glass chevrons. An inscription in small black tesserae reads KOC MH CIC.

[1] Bellinger and Grierson (1966) p.81



A3: Architectural representation of *Polis Nea Theodorias.* An architectural representation identified as ΠΟλICNEA θEOΔШIRIAC - *Polis Nea Theodorias.* The building is delineated by rows of black tesserae suggesting block work, architraves and windows. At the centre, a tall black archway is hung with a white and black speckled curtain caught up in a knot. The central gatehouse is ochre and ivory and either side are turrets in white, pink and terracotta with ochre and black crenellations. There are two openings in each of the upper two storeys. These towers are flanked by two slightly shorter towers in ochre and ivory, with castellated tops sloping downwards towards the centre of the building. There are three windows in the top storey and two in the next storey down. Above the central archway is a dome in ochre and ivory. Branches and stylised trees in ochre, grey and green glass appear to be sprouting from the roof of the building and the foreground of the panel is shown as black, brown, ochre and ivory wavy lines.



A4: ***Ktisis.*** This figure, identified by inscription as *Ktisis,* is forward-facing. She wears a *maphorion* of terracotta, light-terracotta and ochre, delineated in red, over a full-length robe of pink, light-terracotta and terracotta. Her shoes are red. On her head she has an ornamented band, which resembles an imperial prependulia with strands of pearls hanging each side. Her eyes are outlined in grey and she has well-defined eye-brows, nose and mouth. She is wearing a wide collar-like necklace with alternating green glass and terracotta tesserae. In her left hand she holds a white scroll-like object and in her right an ochre and green glass branch twisted to resemble a wreath. To her left a tree, outlined in black with a terracotta, ochre and light-brown trunk, has black and grey branches with four red and pink lotus-shaped flowers. To her right a stylised plant in terracotta, ochre and black, has six black and grey leaves and a single lotus-shaped bloom in red and pink.



A5: Hart with bell and fruiting tree. A hart, kneeling and facing the centre of the pavement, is outlined in a single row of black tesserae. Its eyes, nose, mouth and ears are marked by black tesserae. Its horns are twisted and shown by a single row of black stones. Its body is white, terracotta and ochre and it has a terracotta line running down its throat and under its belly. The hooves are dark-grey and the tail is ochre and black and appears to be pushed upwards by the border of the panel. An ochre bell outlined in green glass hangs around its neck on a red ribbon. Behind the hart is a tree with a black, terracotta and ochre trunk, with branches formed of single rows of black tesserae. The tree bears seven ochre pear-shaped fruits outlined in green glass. In front of the deer is small sprouting tree stump in terracotta, ochre and black. The ground beneath the deer is articulated by five layers of grey, light-brown, terracotta and black undulating lines.

Row B

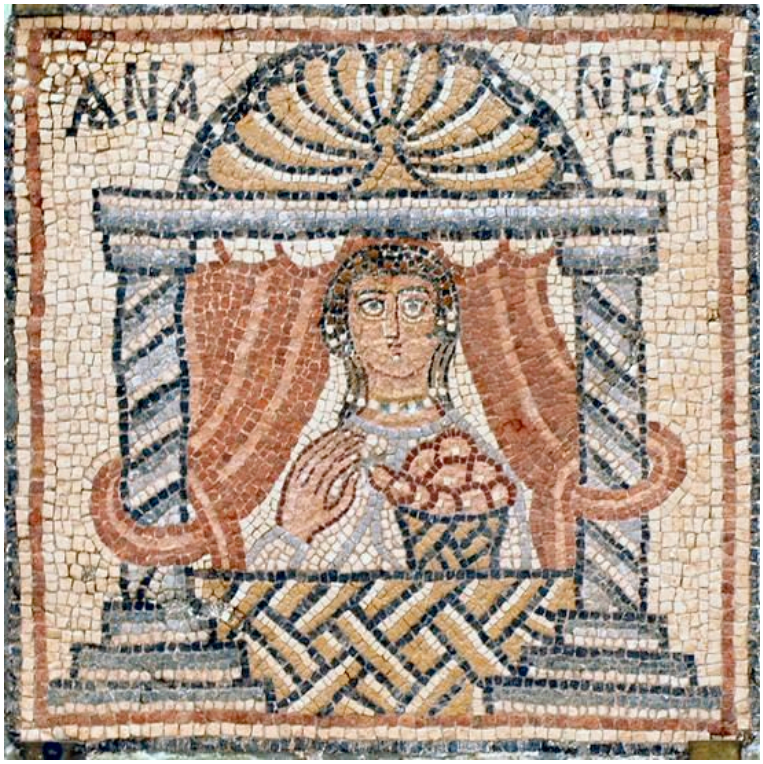




B1: Nilotic scene. Two fish, overlapping, face the outside of the pavement. Both have prominent terracotta and black dorsal fins, their bodies are mainly grey and white with terracotta, ochre, pink, grey and light-blue markings around the fins and across the backs. The one tail which is visible fans out in rows of terracotta and pink. The eyes are blue and outlined with ochre and black tesserae. One lotus plant has a grey, pink and ochre cup-shaped seed-head, two have terracotta, pink and white petals, and the third has a large open flower head, outlined in black tesserae and filled with green glass and ochre. A duck, nestled inside this flower head, has its head turned to the outside of the pavement. Its wing is terracotta and pink with a black band running across it, its head, neck and breast are pink and terracotta. A second duck, facing the centre of the pavement, is outlined in black, has a pink and grey wing with two bands of black running across it. Its body is light-blue and white, with two black rings around its neck. The eye is highlighted with pink and outlined in black. Its feet are pink and outlined in terracotta. The water is blue wazy lines.



B2: Geon. A personification of the river Geon seated *contrapposto* on an amphora. His body is orientated to the left but his upper body is twisted to the right as though to face the centre of the pavement. The figure has a long dark-brown beard defined by rows of thin black tesserae. His long hair, outlined in black, is dark-brown and light-brown from which emerge terracotta and pink lotus-like blooms. He has large eyes, black eye-brows and his nose is defined by very fine black tesserae. A few small white tesserae highlight the face. He has a light-grey, dark-grey and black robe wound over his left shoulder and draped over his right thigh but is otherwise naked. His genitals are clearly displayed, tipped with a white tessera. His body is outlined in terracotta and pink with red highlighting marking a rounded belly and creases on his side. Nestled in the crook of his left arm is an ochre cornucopia, outlined in black with two small red and pink fruit at the top. In his right hand, which reaches towards the centre of the pavement, he holds a rectangular implement, probably a sistrum - a musical instrument with Nilotic associations - in ochre with white markings and a green glass outline. To his right a tree, outlined in black with a terracotta and brown trunk and ochre and green glass foliage, bears four round fruits in terracotta and red. The figure is seated on a large water vessel lying on its side, outlined in black and constructed from terracotta and ochre concentric circles. Its rim is highlighted with a row of white tesserae and water flows from it delineated in light-blue and white.



B3: ***Ananeosis.*** A half-length female figure, identified by inscription as *Ananeosis,* is wearing an ornamented head-dress resembling imperial prependulia, a green glass and white choker-like necklace and a light-blue and white robe with long sleeves. She has large eyes and well-defined eyebrows and nose. Her mouth is denoted by two red tesserae and a single white tessera marks her chin. She is in an aedicule supported by two spiral columns on tall stepped bases with plain rectangular capitals supporting an architrave. All the structural elements are depicted in alternating single rows of black, grey, light-blue and white tesserae. Above the architrave is a scalloped conch. The outer edge of the conch is bordered by a double row of black tesserae interspersed with individual white tesserae. The markings on the scallop are single rows of black tesserae interspersed with ochre and white. The lower part of the aedicule is filled with a black, ochre and white basketwork screen. Two curtains in terracotta, light-terracotta and pink hang from the architrave behind the head of 'Ananeosis' and are looped around the spiral columns. In front of the figure a black and ochre basket is piled high with red, pink and white fruit, loaves or festoons. Her right hand is held at chest level as though plucking an object from the basket. To the left of the scallop are the letters ANA and to the right NEWCÏC.



B4: Phison. A personification of the river Phison seated *contrapposto.* His body is orientated to the right but turned at the waist to face the centre of the pavement. His right arm is stretched out as though offering a small light-blue and white bowl or shell. He is youthful and clean-shaven and his unruly brown and black hair is intertwined with green glass sea-weed. His eyes are lifted upwards and he has black eyebrows. His facial features are outlined with red tesserae and small white stones highlight his nose, mouth and chin. He is seated on a small rock or mound which is covered by a robe in black, terracotta, ochre and grey. He is unclothed apart from a grey and light-blue robe, outlined in black, which is draped over his left thigh and which falls in folds almost to the ground. His body is pink, terracotta and light-terracotta and outlined in red and his belly button is outlined with a semi-circle of white tesserae. In his left hand he holds a sprouting stem in black and green glass. On the left-hand side of the panel is a large ochre and terracotta round-bellied water jar outlined in black. This rests on its side and the water, shown as small wavy light-blue lines, seeps out around the edges of the panel.



B5: Nilotic scene The water filling the lower half of this panel is shown as small light-blue wavy lines. There are two fish facing in opposite directions. The fish are terracotta, light-terracotta, pink, grey and light-blue and the markings on the back and around the eyes are black. Above the fish two flamingos, one in front of the fish and one behind, are shown wading through the water in opposite directions. Their bodies are light-pink, dark-pink and white, outlined in terracotta. Their eyes are formed from black and white concentric circles and they have characteristically curved light-pink beaks. At the centre of a panel a large terracotta and pink cup-shaped seed-head is outlined in black and dotted with individual black tesserae and flanked by two pink and terracotta lotus-like flowers on long stems. Two terracotta, pink and white flowers float on the surface of the water.

Row C





C1: Stag with a serpent. A stag faces the centre of the pavement. Its body, outlined in black, is light-blue, dark-blue, grey, ochre and white. It has white spots on its blue back and a terracotta stripe along its throat, over its belly and down its flank. The creature's eye is highlighted with rings of white, black, terracotta, ochre and light-blue tesserae. Its horns, outlined in green glass, are dark-blue and ochre. The stag tramples on a serpent with all four hooves, holding its head in its mouth. The serpent is outlined in black and its body is white and ochre with brown and black markings along its back. It has a protruding red tongue.



C2: Lion facing right. A lion, facing the centre of the pavement, is outlined in black, its body shaded in terracotta, ochre and white. It has two paws lifted as though walking. Its head and tail are both held high and its mane is shown by wavy black, terracotta, ochre and white lines. Its face has terracotta markings and its mouth is open showing a red tongue and white teeth. Centrally, behind the lion, a terracotta and ochre tree is outlined in black with three green glass lines marking the top. On the right-hand side of the panel is a small black and green glass plant. The undulating ground beneath the lion is shown in white, ochre and terracotta layers.



C3: Eagle rending a deer. A bird of prey, probably an eagle, attacks a deer. The eagle is disproportionately large compared to its prey. It is positioned with its body turned to the left - towards the deer - but its head turned away. Its wings are outstretched as though just landed or about to take off. It is outlined in black, its feathers are black, ochre, grey and white and it has a round black and ochre eye and a light-blue and black hooked beak. Its long tail is delineated with black, ochre and white stripes. The eagle's talons are long and black and have pierced the flesh of the deer. The blood is shown as zig-zag rows of red tesserae. The deer, which is lying on its back, is not prostrate but has its legs and head stretched upwards as though struggling to escape. It is outlined in black and is terracotta, ochre and white. The eye is keyhole-shaped and the horns rendered with alternate black and grey tesserae.



C4: Lion facing left. A lion, sitting back on its haunches, faces the centre of of the pavement. It is outlined in black, its body shaded in terracotta, ochre and white. The mane is shown by wavy black, terracotta, ochre and white lines. Its face has terracotta markings and its mouth is open showing white teeth and a red tongue. Centrally, behind the animal is a tree, outlined in black and filled with terracotta and ochre tesserae with green glass lines delineating the top. On the left-hand side of the panel is a small black and green glass plant. The ground beneath the lion is white, ochre and terracotta and slopes downwards away from the centre of the pavement.



C5: Stag. A stag faces the centre of the pavement. Its body, outlined in black, is light-blue, dark-blue, grey, ochre and white. It has white spots on its blue back and a terracotta stripe along its throat, over its belly and down its flank. The animal's eye is highlighted with rings of white, black, terracotta, ochre and light-blue tesserae and its horns, which are outlined in green glass, are dark-blue and ochre. Its tail breaks through the border of the panel and its genitalia, depicted in pink tesserae and outlined in red and black, are clearly visible. The stag is grazing on a sparse shrub with a small ochre and black conical trunk.

Row D





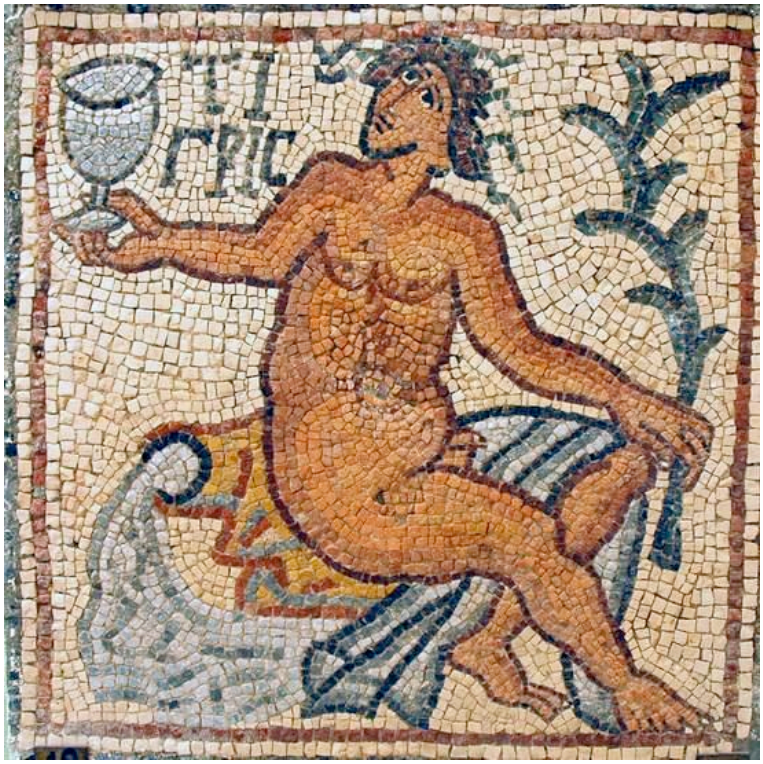
D1: Bear. A bear faces the centre of the pavement. Its hind paws are on the ground and it rears up as though ready to attack. Its body is black, dark-grey, light-grey, brown and ochre and there are a few white tesserae around the face and neck. The mouth is open showing white teeth and a red tongue. A tree is positioned centrally behind the bear but, rather than growing straight up, it is growing diagonally to the left as though to compensate for the beast's diagonal stance. The trunk of the tree is terracotta and ochre and outlined in black. The top, also outlined in black, is ochre and green glass. In the bottom right-hand corner of the panel a small cypress-like tree, with a black, terracotta and ochre trunk and green and grey foliage, grows to the right. Below the bear's feet the black, terracotta and ochre ground is slightly raised.



D2: Euphrates. A personification of the river Euphrates seated in *contrapposto* on a small round-bodied water vessel. His body is orientated to the left but his body is turned towards the centre of the pavement and he faces forward. The figure has black and dark-brown hair entwined with tendrils of green glass seaweed. His facial features are clearly defined and his nose and chin are highlighted with small white tesserae. He is naked apart from a black, grey, light-blue and white robe draped over his left shoulder, around his chest and over his right thigh. His body, which is outlined in red, is shaded in pink and light-terracotta, his rounded belly is marked by a circle of red tesserae and his genitals are clearly visible. In his left hand he holds an ochre and black cornucopia with two terracotta fruit appearing from the top. In his right hand he holds a lotus-like flower with terracotta, pink and white petals and a long black stem. The vessel on which he is seated is black, grey and white and the flowing water is delineated with grey and white wavy lines. On the right-hand side of the panel is a huge cup-shaped lotus-type flower in black, green glass, grey and ochre.



D3: ***Kastalia.*** *Kastalia,* nymph of Apollo's oracular springs, is seated in *contrapposto.* While her body is orientated to the left, the upper part of her torso is turned forwards. She reclines with her left arm by her side and her right arm raised above her head. She has long grey, black and green glass hair, her face is accented by light-terracotta shading on her cheeks, she has white tesserae highlighting her nose, mouth and chin and her eyes are directed to the right. She is naked apart from a black, grey and white robe falling from her left shoulder down her back and over her right thigh. Her breasts are outlined in red. She is seated on - or next to - a terracotta, ochre and black water-vessel from which water flows, rendered with light-grey and white tesserae. On the left-hand side of the panel is a tree with a black, terracotta and ochre trunk, its ochre and green top, which is outlined in black, contains four round fruits in terracotta and pink on long green stalks, Between the tree and the figure is the inscription ΚΑCΤΑλΙΑ.



D4: Tigris. A personification of the river Tigris seated in *contrapposto* on an irregularly shaped vessel. His body is orientated to the right but he turns to face the centre of the pavement. The figure has dark-brown and black hair entwined with green glass strands of seaweed. His eyes are raised upwards and his facial features are clearly defined. His body is outlined in dark-red and shaded in pink, terracotta and ochre with a few red highlights. He has a black, grey, light-blue and white robe hanging in folds over his left thigh. His genitals, outlined in dark-red, are clearly visible. His right arm is stretched out to the left and he holds a stemmed cup by its base. The cup is outlined in dark-grey, the lower half shaded light-blue and the upper half white. In his left hand he holds a black and green glass branch. He is seated on a vessel which is ochre, grey and terracotta and from which flows water shown as white, light-blue and light-grey lines.



D5: Crocodile in a Nilotic scene. A crocodile sits in shallow water denoted by short wavy light-blue lines. It is orientated to the left but turns its its head back to the right. It is outlined in black and overlapping scales of black, grey, and white cover its back. Its belly, legs, tail and throat are delineated with lines of green glass, white, light-blue and ochre tesserae. Its face, which is mainly white, is marked with single rows of blue and ochre. It has a long snout, its mouth is closed, its ears are laid back and its eyebrows are slanted. The toes of three feet disappear behind the outer border of the panel and one foot breaks into the border. Perched on top of the crocodile is a duck facing right. Its body is outlined in black, its throat is dark-brown with black spots and its legs, back and wing are two shades of terracotta. Two black stripes run vertically across the wing. Its underside and tail are ochre and terracotta with black spots on its underside and white stripes on its tail. Its face is dark-brown, blue, white and ochre and its beak is ochre. On the left-hand side of the panel, a large open flower on a slender black stem has twelve light-terracotta and white petals, each outlined in a darker terracotta. Its centre is ochre, outlined in black with eight small black spots. On the right-hand side of the panel, a flower with four petals in light-terracotta and white, grows from an ochre bud supported on a slender black stem and below this is a large cup-shaped lotus-type flower in black, green glass, grey and ochre.

Row E





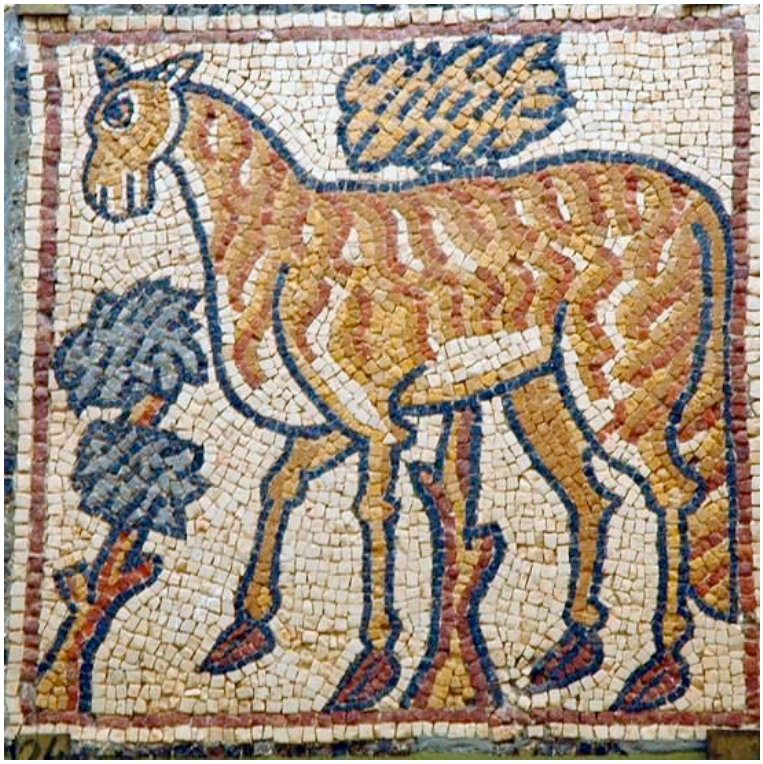
E1: Bull facing right. A large bull faces the centre of the pavement. Its body is outlined in black, shaded in dark-grey and light-grey and highlighted with a few light-blue tesserae. There is a line of alternate black and dark-grey tesserae running down its chest and its eye is highlighted with one ochre tessera. The tips of the horns disappear behind the border of the panel. The end of its tail has chevron-type markings in dark-grey, black and white. Its belly-button/genitals are marked by a single row of alternate black and grey tesserae. Centrally behind the bull, a stylised cypress tree, restricted by the top of the frame, is bent to the left. The tree is outlined in black, its trunk is mainly ochre with a line of green glass tesserae running up the right-hand side. The top of the tree is marked with the same chevron-like markings as the bull's tail but in green glass, black and ochre. To the right of the bull a small plant outlined in black and shaded in ochre and green glass has two slender stems sprouting from its trunk.



E2: Sheep facing right. A sheep faces the centre of the pavement. Its body and tail are outlined in black with ochre, light-ochre and terracotta stripes and its belly and throat are white. It has cloven hooves and its left legs are very slightly bent suggesting movement. Centrally behind the animal, a tree is outlined in black; the trunk is black, ochre and terracotta and the top is dark-grey, green glass and black. In front of the sheep is a small cypress-like tree with an ochre and terracotta trunk, topped with chevron-like markings in black, grey and green.



E3: Dedicatory Inscription. A large laurel wreath touches all four sides of the panel. The wreath is outlined – inside and out – with a single row of black tesserae. Six sets of three pink laurel leaves, outlined in terracotta, fill each lateral section of the wreath. At the top and bottom of the wreath, small green glass roundels are filled with ochre swirls. The spandrels are block filled in ochre, a pattern of a single row of black tesserae describing an undulating half-palmette in the spandrels. Inside the wreath are seven lines of black letters on a white background.



E4: Sheep facing left. A second pendant sheep faces the centre of the pavement. Its body and tail are outlined in black with ochre, light-ochre and terracotta stripes and its belly and throat are white. It has cloven hooves and its front right leg is slightly bent suggesting movement. Centrally behind the animal, is a tree outlined in black. The trunk is terracotta and ochre and the top is ochre with black markings. In front of the animal is a small tree with a terracotta and ochre trunk and two small clumps of dark-grey and light-grey leaves with black markings.



E5: Bull facing left. A second pendant bull faces the centre of the pavement, its head down as though grazing. Its body is outlined in black and is coloured terracotta, pink, ochre and white. Its belly-button/genitals are pronounced and its tail, which is hanging down, has chevron-like markings in terracotta, pink and ochre. Its right horn and ear break through the border.

Row F





F1: Oceanic scene. Two large fish outlined in black, have black, dark-grey and light-blue fins and black, dark-grey and light-grey stripes running vertically across their bodies. Each has a single row of terracotta tesserae around the gills. Open mouths reveal teeth of alternate black and white tesserae. On the left-hand side of the panel, between the two fish, is a black, grey, light-blue and red whelk-like spiral shell. The water in this panel is rendered by light-grey and light-blue wavy lines.



F2: Horseman facing right. A man rides a horse towards the centre of the pavement. The rider has short cropped light-brown and dark-brown hair and his face is light-terracotta. He wears a terracotta and ochre tunic with black markings, white leggings, short black boots and has a thin black strap over his right shoulder. The horse, which is outlined in black, has both front legs in the air as if galloping. Its mouth is open as though champing at the bit and the reins are pink and red. Its body, mane and tail are black, dark-grey, light-blue and white. Centrally behind the horse a tree rises, the trunk, black, light-terracotta and ochre with black branches bearing small oval terracotta and light-terracotta flowers or fruit.



F3: Temple-like building. A temple-like building is fronted by four columns on stepped bases. The bases, which seem to stand at the top of a small shallow set of steps or on a low stylobate, have three risers in dark-purple, red and light-red. The columns have vertical stripes in the same colours which gives the appearance of fluting, or perhaps of a differential fall of light on a rounded surface. On top of the column shafts are tripartite capitals/abaci in black, dark-purple, terracotta and ochre. Beyond the columns are what appear to be three steps leading to three doorways or openings covered by curtains. The middle opening is taller and wider than those either side. The two side doorways are covered with white fringed curtains with terracotta flecks and the centre doorway with an ochre curtain also with terracotta flecks. The surrounds of the openings are terracotta and above the doors grey and white block-work, possibly coffering is outlined in black. The columns and capitals support a black, grey and white architrave on top of which sits a triangular pediment, also outlined in black with grey and white stripes. The pediment is dark-ochre and ochre and at its centre is a black, terracotta and green glass panel. Perched at the apex of the pediment is a light-terracotta and black antefix. Either side of the pediment black and green glass trees rise up from behind the architrave with fanning branches and abundant foliage. The small area of trunk visible on the right-hand side is segmented and is dark-brown and black.



F4: Tethered horse facing left. A riderless horse faces the centre of the pavement. It is tacked-up in a brown and ochre saddle and bridle and tethered to a small tree by a brown rope. Its body is terracotta light-terracotta and pink, outlined in black, and its mane is marked with small black tesserae. The small cypress-like tree to the left of the panel has an ochre and light-terracotta trunk and a green glass and black top which is highlighted with a few light-terracotta tesserae. As in the pendant panel a tree grows up behind the horse, with a segmented black, grey and light-blue trunk and foliage of green glass and black stones.



F5: Nilotic scene. Two ducks are orientated towards the centre of the pavement - the smaller duck has its head turned back to the right. The larger duck paddles in water shown by light-blue wavy lines. Its body is outlined in black, its throat is dark-brown and its legs, back and wing are two shades of terracotta. Two black stripes run vertically across the wing. Its underside and tail are ochre and terracotta and there are black spots on its underside and white stripes on its tail. Its face is dark-brown, blue, white and ochre and its beak too is ochre. The smaller duck, which seems to be standing in mid-air, has the same colouring as the larger duck, but has a grey neck. A fish on the left-hand side of the panel appears to be diving straight down into the water. It is outlined in red, its top half is chequered terracotta and dark-grey and its belly is light-blue. It has a black and red fin, a terracotta and red tail and its face is grey and light-blue. Three lotus-type plants complete the composition: a large splayed flower with five red, terracotta, ochre and white petals on a long slender stem; a shorter grey, dark-grey, ochre and white seed head which floats on the surface of the water; and a smaller red, terracotta and white flower with three petals.

Row G





G1: Ostrich facing right. An ostrich faces the centre of the pavement, outlined in black with dark-brown and black feather-like markings on its back. Its face, neck and belly are terracotta with red spots and its beak is grey. The front leg of the bird is ochre, white and terracotta, the back leg is terracotta and red and both cloven pads are dark-brown. There are two small trees in the panel; one has a small black, terracotta and ochre conical trunk with two individual black stems sprouting from it, the other, also with a conical trunk, is taller and has two black and ochre clumps of foliage.



G2: Castellated building. A castellated fortress built on a black, grey and light-blue base. Black lines mark the block-work which is in three sections. The central section is ochre and white and has a band running across the building two courses from the top. The two outer sections are terracotta and light-terracotta with an ochre and white band dissecting the building three courses from the top. The lower part of the right-hand section is filled by a large black archway outlined with a single row of white tesserae. There are six crenellated turrets on top of the fortress - the three at the front are black and ochre and the three at the back are terracotta and black. All the turrets have three crenellations and two openings marked by two black tesserae.



G3: Peacock. A full-frontal peacock, tail fully extended, fills almost the entire panel. The body of the peacock is dark-grey, light-grey and light-blue with black spots across its front. Its head is turned to the right and it has a fine curved beak and two black antennae. The peacock's tail is mainly red with black and terracotta edging. Thirteen eyes in white, ochre, pink, black and green glass adorn each side of the tail.



G4: Guinea fowls and pomegranates. A pomegranate tree flanked by two birds, apparently guinea fowl, grows from a chalice which is set on two black and grey branches. The chalice, with scallop-shell markings, is outlined in black and shaded in dark-grey, light-blue and white. The stem of the pomegranate tree is ochre, the branches are black and green glass and the four pomegranates are red, ochre, terracotta and pink. The guinea fowl on either side look to the right. They have light-blue faces, blue eyes and a red and terracotta pouch under the beak. Their bodies are dark-grey with white spots, their tails are white and their backs and wings are a blue-grey with white markings. The flanks of their legs are white and they have black and white striped legs and feet.



G5: Ostrich facing left. In the opposing panel, a second pendant ostrich turns to the centre of the pavement. Similar in form and colour to its pair, it has a lower body and legs in pink and ochre with terracotta spots, its beak is grey and its cloven pads dark-brown. Two small trees to the left of the ostrich have conical-shaped trunks in terracotta and ochre with green spiky foliage.

Row H





H1: Oceanic scene. A large fish, facing right with its head lifted upwards, is outlined in black. It has a dark-grey and dark-red fin along its back, its body is dark-grey, dark-red and ochre with ochre spots. The eye is underlined with alternate dark-red, grey and ochre curves. Its mouth is open showing white teeth. Below are two smaller fish, one facing left, the other straight down. Both are terracotta, light-terracotta and pink with dark-terracotta spots and prominent pink and terracotta fins along their backs. Above the large fish is a lobster, its pincers and top of its body outlined in black, the rest of its body, terracotta, pink and ochre and outlined in red. The water in this panel is shown by light-grey and light-blue wavy lines.



H2: Satyr. A Pan-like figure advances towards the centre of the pavement. His left leg is raised as though he is leaping forwards. His hair, beard and horns are dark-brown and black and both horns break through the border of the panel. He has large eyes and a prominent nose. His body is outlined in black and shaded in pink, light-terracotta and ochre. The muscles in his chest and inner left leg are defined by lines of red tesserae. He has cloven hooves and his genitals are lanceolate and clearly visible. In his right hand, which is stretched forwards, he holds an ochre vessel outlined in black. Over his left shoulder he carries an ochre shepherd's crook or pedum, from which a grey, blue and black cloth billows out in wing-like formations. The satyr is positioned between two trees. Both have ochre and pink trunks outlined in black - the small tree to the right has brown and black foliage and the larger one to the left has green glass and black leafage.



H3: Musician. A musician is seated on a small rock or mound which is white, brown, ochre and black. His body is orientated to the right and he is facing forwards. He has brown and black speckled hair and his face is pink. He is clad in a light-grey and blue tunic with dark-grey spots, which is draped over his left shoulder and falls to his knees. His arms and legs are outlined in red and coloured pink and light-terracotta. In his left hand he holds one end of a long narrow stringed instrument and with his right hand he plucks the strings with a small white plectrum. By his feet, in the bottom right-hand corner, a black, pink, ochre and ivory dog lies with its body to the right, its head turned back towards the musician. The animal has a red collar, long thin snout, long ears and distinctive black and white markings around its neck. On the left-hand side of the panel is a tree with a black, terracotta and ochre trunk and spiky black branches. Four overly-large gourd-like fruits in terracotta, ochre and pink with white tips hang from the tree. A round grey and ochre pot with small stand hangs on a brown handle from a stump on the tree trunk.



H4: Leopard. A leopard-like creature advances to the right, its head turned back towards the centre of the pavement. It is outlined in black and shaded dark-grey, light-grey and light-blue with black spots. Its front left paw is lifted as though walking and its tail is held high. Centrally behind the animal, a tree rises with a black, ochre and pink trunk and green and black branches. Either side of the tree are two small plants - one has a single black stem with two branches, the other has a conical black and brown trunk and two black branches.



H5: Merman. A merman-like figure has a pink and light-terracotta face outlined in black and framed by black and dark-red hair. The eyebrows are slanted and the eyes slightly lifted. The upper part of the body is outlined in red and is shaded in pink, ochre and light-terracotta with clearly defined breasts and stomach. Two pincers, or crab-claws, grow from the stomach and have light-brown crescent-shaped claws outlined in black, attached to the body by segmented black, red and pink rings. The bulbous lower part of the figure is coloured light-blue, light-green, ochre and blue, with a trilobite tail in pink and red. In his left hand he holds a brown and ochre rudder with black attachments, which rests on his left shoulder. In his right hand he holds a long-handled four-pronged fork with which he is spearing a fish. The fish is outlined in black and is dark-grey, dark-red and ochre with a dark-grey and dark-red fin along its back. Its eye is underlined with alternate dark-red, grey and ochre curves.

Row I





I1: Oceanic scene. A large dolphin-like fish swims upwards and to the right in water marked by dark-grey and light-blue wavy lines. Its body and fins, outlined in dark-blue, are light-blue, blue and green glass. It has a terracotta, pink and red beak-like mouth and the shading around the eye is also terracotta, pink and red. Below the fish a brightly coloured squid is outlined in dark-blue, its tentacles alternating rows of dark-blue, terracotta and red and it has two round white eyes. Above the fish is a dark-blue crab with green glass and dark-red markings.



I2: Birds pulling festoons from a basket. A tall lattice-work basket, outlined in black and marked with a series of black, white and ochre lines, is flanked by four birds pulling festoons of red flowers from it. All four birds are outlined in dark-grey and have red legs and feet. The lower birds are shaded in light-blue and grey-blue and the upper birds in light-blue and darker grey-blue. The flowers in the festoons are red and terracotta with white centres.



I3: Bull facing right. A bull faces right, its head down as though grazing. It is outlined in black and its body is terracotta, ochre and white. Its horns, hooves and tail are dark-brown. It is grazing from a small plant in the bottom right-hand corner of the panel which has two single black stems. Two further small plants grow beneath the bull; both have very small conical bases in brown and ochre and two single black stems.



I4: Ram facing left. A ram faces left with its head down as though grazing. Its body is outlined in black and is predominantly ochre and light-ochre with white highlighting around its flanks. Short red and white wavy lines highlight its coat. Its genitals are clearly visible. Its horn, which is ochre with a dotted line of red running along it, is curled around a small white ear. It has a white eye outlined in black and a well-defined black eyebrow. By its feet is a small plant with an ochre conical base and two single black stems.



I5: Hybrid sea-monster. A marine monster, half land-creature and half sea-creature, faces left. It is outlined in black and filled with dark-grey, light-blue and ochre, with one line of green tesserae along its back. It has long thin red and pink ears, which hang down its back and a three-pronged red and pink tail. It has black, dark-grey and grey fore-legs and paws, a black and white striped section around its neck and a canine-shaped head which is black, dark-grey, blue and white. Its threatening mouth shows white teeth and a red tongue.

Row J





J1: Oceanic scene. Three fish swim in water shown by a series of short light-blue and grey wavy lines. The lower fish, facing left, and the slightly larger one above, facing right, are outlined in black with black, terracotta and pink fins along their backs. Their bodies are terracotta and pink with red spots, their mouths are open, revealing alternate black and white teeth. Between the two fish, on the left-hand side of the panel, an anemone-like shell is marked with a red triangle from which dark-blue, blue and grey lines radiate. At the top of the panel a small fish faces left. Outlined in grey, it has a dark-grey back, white belly speckled with light-blue and terracotta spots.



J2: Hybrid sea-monster. A sea-monster faces right. Its large bulbous body,straining to escape the confines of the panel is outlined in dark-blue and its fore-legs and paws are light-blue and light-grey. It has brown, white, ochre and grey markings around the neck and its face and head are dark-blue and light-blue with ochre and white markings around the eyes. It has white teeth, a red tongue and long thin red and pink ears flowing out behind. Its bulbous body is shaded in dark-grey, light-blue, ochre and dark-blue and it has a tripartite tail in red and terracotta. Below, in the bottom right-hand corner, is a spiral whelk-like shell in dark-blue, light-blue, grey and white with a red centre.



J3: ***Pharos.*** A building, identified by inscription as 'Pharos', has ochre, dark-ochre and white block work and is delineated by single rows of black tesserae. It is in two sections, both are castellated and the upper storey is narrower than the lower. In the centre of the lower section a black archway is outlined in white. The doorway is approached by a ramp shown by alternate rows of white, black, dark-grey and light-grey tesserae. Atop the building is a monumental statue. The figure, a naked male, is outlined in black and shaded in grey and green with tiny red tesserae around its head and face. It has a radiate head-dress and holds a black and green-grey sword or staff in its right hand A semi-circular dome rises from the upper storey, outlined in black, with a smaller black semi-circle at its centre, shaded in blue and grey. To the right of the building three wavy lines of grey and light-blue tesserae denote water. Above the water stands a trilobite edifice in black, dark-grey, light-grey and white, with a second monumental statue of a naked male on top. This statue is also outlined in black and shaded with grey and green-grey tesserae. Its left arm is not visible and the right arm is held in front of its chest. There is a suggestion of a line of alternate black and grey tesserae across the right arm/chest of the statue.



J4: Boat. A boat with a large sail, manned by two sailors, their heads turned towards the centre of the pavement. The water below the boat is grey and light-blue wavy lines and a row of grey tesserae following the underside of the boat shows the water line. The boat, outlined in black, is dark-green topped with alternating lines of black, ochre, light-ochre and red. A double row of ochre tesserae divided into sections by thin black vertical lines and topped with small red and black nodules, shows the inside of the boat. The mast, outlined in black, is ochre and is topped by an ochre flag. The cross-yard is red and outlined in green and from this the white, grey and light-blue sail billows out. An oarsman, his body turned to the right, his head turned to look out, sits in the stern of the boat holding a red and black oar. His neck and arms are outlined in red, the rest of his body in black. He has red and black hair and is wearing a short-sleeved ochre tunic. In the prow of the boat a second sailor faces left. His arms and neck are outlined in red and his body in black. He has black and red hair, wears a sleeveless ochre tunic and appears to be holding onto the front of the boat with both hands.



J5: A large fish, turning and twisting against the sides of the panel, is outlined in black with a long black, dark-brown and red fin along its back. Its belly is ochre and its back and tail are dark-brown and dark-red with groups of three ochre spots. Its face is lined with rows of black, dark-brown, red and ochre tesserae and its large black eye is ringed with black and ochre concentric circles. Its mouth is open showing white teeth. Above, in the water shown by short wavy lines in grey and light-blue, is a smaller red, terracotta and pink fish. In the bottom left-hand corner, is a squid with a black and red body, white eyes and tentacles of alternate grey, red and ochre tesserae. In the bottom right-hand corner is a spiral whelk-like shell in black, dark-grey, light-grey and white with a red centre.

Chapter 3
Iconographic Analysis: Groups and Tableaux

Introduction

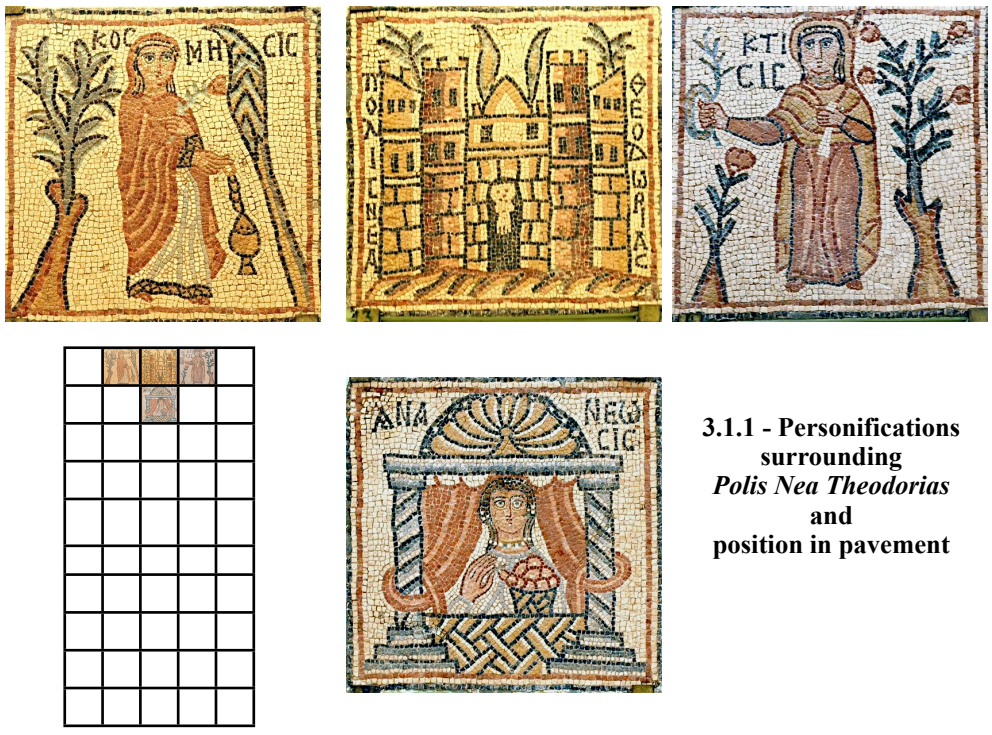
The previous chapters have addressed the layout and composition of the mosaic and presented a panel-by-panel description of the images. This chapter subjects the imagery to analysis. The placement of the panels is taken into account and correspondences between adjacent or aligned images is addressed. Each of the seven sections of this chapter considers small groups of images which work together to give meaning over and above the signification of the individual motifs.

Section one focuses on the personifications of *Kosmesis*, *Ktisis* and *Ananeosis*. It questions why the depictions of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* do not seem to fit with fifth- and sixth-century conventions for portraying personifications of abstract concepts, suggesting that these figures could be understood as elite female donor portraits. *Ananeosis* is considered as a symbol of Christian renewal and also as a possible Tyche, crowned by the architectural representation above her. The subject of section two is the Rivers of Paradise and why, here in this ecclesiastical seeting, it might have been deemed appropriate to depict these personifications as naked pagan river-gods. The third section deals with *Kastalia*, nymph of Apollo's oracular spring, suggesting that rather then being seen as a pagan intrusion, she could be understood as exemplifying the Christian ideal of rebirth and salvation. Section four discusses Oceanic and Nilotic imagery in Late Antiquity and considers the implications of juxtaposing these two bodies of water. The fifth section focuses on the three architectural representations along the central axis of the pavement, suggesting that, together, the buildings mark progressive stations on a pathway from east to west. Section six deals with the musician flanked by a satyr and a leopard, suggesting that the trio play a pivotal role in facilitating transcendence from the mundane to the heavenly realm. Finally, the last section looks at pairs of images which frame and accentuate the central axis of the pavement and mark the outer boundaries of the pavement.

3.1: Abstract Personifications

Introduction

Towards the west end of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia three female figures are identified by inscription as *Kosmesis* - 'adornment',[1] *Ktisis* - 'foundation',[2] and *Ananeosis*, 'renewal'. The figures, clustered around an architectural representation of *Polis Nea Theodorias,* are generally interpreted as personifications commemorating the foundation, adornment and renewal of the new city of *Theodorias*[3] **(3.1.1)**.



3.1.1 - Personifications surrounding *Polis Nea Theodorias* and position in pavement

A personification is an anthropomorphic representation of anything non-human.[4] In ancient Greece, personification was a device used to give human form to rivers

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[1] *Kosmesis* can also mean 'create order' or 'governance', Guarducci (1975) p.673

[2] *Ktisis* can also mean 'creation' and more rarely, 'possession' and 'acquisition', Levi (1947) p.254; Stucchi (1975) p.401; Leader-Newby (2005) p.240

[3] Ward-Perkins (1958) p.189; Grabar (1969) pp. 264-82; Guarducci (1975) p.683; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.35; Maguire (1987a) p.44

[4] For discussions on personifications, see Toynbee (1947); Hanfmann (1951); Warner (1985); Brilliant (1994); Stafford and Herrin (2005)

and oceans, seasons and months, cities and countries and even emotions and abstract concepts. Personifications were powerful beings and even though, compared to the major divinities, their sphere of influence would have been relatively restricted, they were 'believed in' and venerated as part of the pantheon of deities.[5] They were offered sacrifices, had cult statues and temples dedicated to them and, in visual narratives, were rarely distinguished by size or appearance from other gods and goddesses.[6]

In a Roman milieu, personifications of concepts and virtues embodied the blessings bestowed by the gods and were believed to possess an existence beyond the acts they represented. Cicero, for example, expressed incredulity that concepts such as hope, honour, victory and safety were accredited with "the force of divinities".[7]

From the Hellenistic period, personifications, particularly figures associated with abundance and good fortune, started to emerge in non-mythological contexts; the *Horae*, for example - a trio of dynamic classical figures, always full-length and invariably in a narrative context[8]- evolved into the four Seasons[9] **(3.1.2-3)**.



3.1.2 - Three *Horae* being led by Dionysos, first-century relief, Louvre Museum, Paris



3.1.3 - Four seasons, Zliten mosaic, Archaeological Museum, Tripoli

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[5] For example, *Hygeia* had the power to grant good health, whereas Athene had a whole range of gifts at her disposal, Stafford (2000) pp.230-1

[6] Stafford and Herrin (2005) p.2. See also Drachmann (1922) p.92; Shelton (1979) p.29

[7] Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Book III. XXIV. "I see their usefulness, and also their images which have been consecrated, but why they have the force of divinities I shall not understand until I am informed." Translation http://oll.libertyfund.org accessed 24.11.2011. See also, Stafford (2000) p.1

[8] Anthropomorphic religious-philosophical beings who presided over the revolutions of the heavenly constellations. Described by Hanfmann as "supernumeraries, never protagonists or even deuteragonists", Hanfmann (1951) p.79

[9] Hild (1900) pp.249-56; Parrish (1984) p.11. The importance of the Seasons lay not in their individual meanings, but in their significance as an ensemble.

Personifications of wealth and abundance became conspicuous elements of imperial propaganda and regularly appeared on coins and triumphal arches where they functioned as a type of eulogy celebrating the emperor's triumphant achievements and beneficent rule.[10] As the Roman state and its citizens began to transfer its allegiance from pagan deities to the new Christian God, there was a gradual shift in attitude towards personifications; their status was altered – downgraded – and although still potent they were, on the whole, no longer worshipped.[11] Ironically, it was probably this very demotion which enabled personifications to survive into the Christian era when many other gods and goddesses did not.

By Late Antiquity, personification was a well-established device in both literary and artistic traditions.[12] In Claudian's fourth-century panegyric for the consuls Probinus and Olybrius, for example, the Seasons are presented as personified forces,[13] and in his poem, *Psychomachia*, Prudentius, writing in the fifth century, presents battles between the personified virtues and vices.[14] In late antique visual culture, personifications were commonly depicted as generic female busts.[15] They were almost always separated from surrounding imagery by a frame and they rarely assumed roles in narrative scenes.[16]

Even in the early Christian period, personifications with underlying notions of abundance, fertility and good-fortune remained persistently popular, although their meanings were nuanced according to the context in which they were used.[17] In domestic settings, the Seasons and *Ge* - 'earth', were understood as references to happiness, wealth and abundance and Hanfmann has suggested that if these figures were to have been replaced by an inscription, it would have read: "May this house

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[10] Smith (1999) p.129. A text attributed to Menander Rhetor exemplifies this idea: "Rains in season, abundance from the sea, unstinting harvests come happily to us because of the emperor's justice," Menander Rhetor 377, cited in James (2005) p.297. See also Mattingly and Sydenham (1968) pp.324-30

[11] Toynbee (1947) p.136

[12] Campbell (1984) p.56

[13] Hanfmann (1951) p.167

[14] Nugent (2000) p.13

[15] There are some exceptions; river personifications, for example, were usually male and male personifications of the seasons have been found in villa pavements at Dougga and Carthage in North Africa, Parrish (1984) pp.134-6 and pp.105-8

[16] A notable exception is in the House of Aion at Paphos which presents a narrative scene, Daszewski and Michaelides (1988)

[17] Ewald (2005) pp.71-2

enjoy all good things throughout the year".[18] Their use seems to have increased during times of prosperity; at El Djem in Tunisia, personifications of the Seasons proliferated during the late second and early third centuries when the olive oil trade was at its height, but waned during the fourth and fifth centuries, when the region was no longer prosperous. In contrast, at Carthage, a city which remained relatively affluent into the sixth century, personifications of the Seasons continued to adorn the floors of villas, baths and public buildings throughout this period.[19]

These propitious female figures also found their way into ecclesiastical settings where, as well as being understood as symbols of abundance, they also seem to have taken on new and specifically Christian meanings.[20] The Seasons, for example, are thought to have embodied the logical cycle of nature created by God to give purpose to the passing of time and to imbue the world with an order by which man could live.[21] *Ge*, the folds of her robe overflowing with fruits, represented the bountiful gifts of God. Maguire has suggested that these previously-pagan figures were an indication that the good life, heretofore the prerogative of the Roman elite, was now under the control of the Christian Church and on offer to all.[22]

Perhaps more surprising is the renewed popularity in the late fifth and early sixth centuries of personifications of abstract concepts. These figures, unlike *Ge* and the Seasons, often carried no attributes and were usually only identifiable by inscription.[23] Renan, Kitzinger and Piccirillo saw personifications of abstract concepts as part of a so-called 'Justinianic Renaissance',[24] Downey suggested that their use reflected the moral and personal values characteristic of Late Antiquity,[25] and Brown that they could be seen as a declaration of intent by the local landowners to "exercise, within the city, virtues dear to ancient man".[26] Dunbabin has made the point that, by Late Antiquity, personifications had "lost any sense of

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[18] Hanfmann (1951) p.165.

[19] Parrish (1984) p.17

[20] Piccirillo (1997) p.38

[21] According to the teleological argument, the existence of orderly or purposeful creations was seen as evidence of an "ordering and purposing Creator" and an expression of divine provenance, Pease (1941) pp.163-200

[22] Maguire (1999b) p.253

[23] Some of the best-known examples have been found in the mosaic pavements in and around Antioch in Syria, Levi (1947); Campbell (1988); Cimok (2000)

[24] Renan (1864) p.625; Kitzinger (1976) p.220; Piccirillo (1997) p.22

[25] Downey (1938) p.349; Campbell (1984) pp.57-8

[26] Brown (1980) p.19

representing actual deities".[27] However, to see personifications as purely ornamental, or as no more than enervated survivals of a past tradition, would be to misconstrue their social relevance and agency. Campbell, for example, sees the personifications at Antioch as apotropaic symbols, suggesting that, in the same way that imitations of the emperor were empowered to act with his authority, so the imperial regalia of these figures rendered them efficacious.[28] Furthermore, an account from Thessaloniki at the beginning of the seventh century tells how the inhabitants of the city were reassured, not by a vision of St. Demetrius, but rather by the appearance at his side of *Eutaxia* - personification of 'good order' - "bringing to bear the full weight of her almost divine power".[29]

Kosmesis **and** ***Ktisis***

At Qasr el-lebia, *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* flank the architectural representation of *Polis Nea Theodorias* at the west end of the pavement. *Kosmesis* swings a censer towards the central panel with her right hand and *Ktisis* offers a twisted branch or wreath with her right hand and clutches a small white cloth in her left[30] **(see 3.1.1)**. These full-length female figures, in their rich attire, pearl-studded prependulia and red shoes, seem to be emulating the female attendants in the imperial court, as seen for example, in the mosaics of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna[31] **(3.1.4)**.

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[27] Dunbabin (1999) p.199

[28] Campbell (1984) pp.57-8

[29] Brown (1980) p.24

[30] In Late Antiquity, women are not commonly shown with censers. However, a letter by Cyril of Alexandria, describing the scene which followed the vote condemning Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, states: "... as we came out of the church, they preceded us with torches as far as the inn... and there was much joy and lighting of lights in the city, so that even women carrying censers led the way for us", Mcenery (1987) p.107

[31] Kiilerich (2001) p.174; Becker and Kondoleon (2005) p.211; Houston (1947) p.136 See also the sixth-century diptych leaf showing Ariadne beneath a scallop-shell semi-dome, now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Weitzmann (1979) p.31



3.1.4 - Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna - detail of Theodora

In Cyrenaica, *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* also appear together in pavements at Ras al-Hilal and Taucheira **(3.1.5)**.



3.1.5 - Sites in Cyrenaica where *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* have been found

In the sixth-century church at Ras al-Hilal the full-length personifications are positioned to the north and south of the solea - the main axial entry to the chancel.[32] They are depicted as orants under scallop-shell arches supported on

[32] Harrison (1964) pp.11-14. The panels have been lifted and are now displayed in the museum at Souza. The spelling of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* varies slightly; at Qasr el-Lebia the inscription reads: KOCMHCIC and KTICIC and at Ras al-Hilal it reads: KOCCMHCIC and KTHCIC.

Proconnesian columns.[33] Like the figures at Qasr el-Lebia, they wear maphoria over long-sleeved dresses but, in this case, the women are unadorned and empty-handed. In explanation for the differences between the figures at Qasr el-Lebia and Ras al-Hilal, Alföldi-Rosenbaum has commented that it "can only mean that personifications of 'foundation' and 'adornment' did not belong to the current stock of pictures available to the mosaicists so that, when called upon to provide pictorial rendering of these abstract ideas, the designers chose various representations of either donors or saints"[34] **(3.1.6-7)**.



3.1.6-7 - *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*, Ras al-Hilal

[33]The orant was commonly, although not exclusively, found in funerary contexts and is usually interpreted as either an intercessory figure or a personification of piety and prayer, Klauser (1959) pp.115-45; Hahn (1997) p.1095

[34] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.41

Kosmesis and *Ktisis* also appear in a building which has been identified as a sixth-century church or a bishop's palace at Taucheira[35] **(3.1.8)**. The women, together with a personification of *Ananeosis*, are accompanied by flowering shrubs and are framed in a colonnaded arcade with large birds perched in the interstices. Like *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia, they are grandly dressed with ornate headdresses, *Kosmesis* holds a staff or a rod and *Ktisis* a censer and a small white cloth.



3.1.8 - *Kosmesis*, *Ktisis* and *Ananeosis*, Taucheira

Images of *Kosmesis* are not attested outside Cyrenaica, but personifications of *Ktisis* are more widespread.[36] She adorns a fifth-century bath-house at Kourion in Cyprus where she holds a builder's measure suggesting that, here, she was intended to be associated with the foundation of the building[37] **(3.1.9)**. She also holds a measure in the sixth-century House of Ktisis at Antioch in Syria[38] **(3.1.10)**. She

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[35] The pavement, which has been lifted and is now inaccessible, has not been published. Stucchi recorded the personifications as being immediately in front of an apse, Stucchi (1975) p.427. For further comments, Michaelides (1982) p.117; Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.221. My thanks to Will Wootton who managed to snatch a few photographs of the pavement, now largely buried under rubble in a dangerous structure.

[36] For discussion on *Ktisis* and *Kosmesis,* see Toynbee (1970) p.98

[37] Mitford (1971) p.358. An inscription in a nearby room reads: "In place of big stones and solid iron, gleaming bronze and even adamant, this house is girt by the much venerated signs of Christ", suggesting that the owners were either Christian when the building was erected or had subsequently converted to Christianity, Christou (2007) p.27

[38] Levi (1947) p.357

appears, but without attributes, in the Constantinian Villa at Daphne,[39] in the House of the Sea Goddess at Seleucia,[40] and in the House of Ge and the Seasons at Antioch[41] **(3.1.13)**.



3.1.9 - *Ktisis* at Kourion, Cyprus



3.1.10 - *Ktisis,* House of Ktisis, Antioch, Syria



3.1.13 - *Ktisis,* House of Ge and the Seasons

In addition, a fifth- or sixth-century pavement from Jiyyeh (Phoenicia), now on display at the Beiteddine Palace in Lebanon, depicts *Ktisis* as a half-length nimbed figure. She wears a cloak over one shoulder, has an Artemis-style headdress, holds a hunting spear and is surrounded by four wild animals[42] **(3.1.14)**. A further mosaic, thought to date from the first half of the sixth century and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, depicts a richly-bejewelled bust identified by a partially restored inscription as *Ktisis* **(3.1.15)**. She is accompanied

[39] Levi (1947) pp.254-5

[40] Levi (1947) p.350

[41] Levi (1947) p.350

[42] The provenance of the mosaic is not certain but it is thought probably to have come from a villa either at 'Awza'i or 'Ouza'i south of Beirut. Dr Tomasz Waliszewski has warned that the mosaic was "heavily damaged by modern restoration during the 1980s", *pers. comm.* - 27.09.12

by a small figure offering her an overflowing cornucopia, and the Greek word *ΚΛΛΟΙ* – "good"; it has been suggested that there may have been another small figure on the other side of *Ktisis* and that the inscription originally read "good wishes".[43]



3.1.14 - *Ktisis*, Beiteddine Palace, Lebanon



3.1.15 - *Ktisis*, Metropolitan Museum, New York

[43] Evans et al. (2001) p.16. This mosaic is unprovenanced and heavily restored and, according to the Metropolitan Museum's website, the panel, including the first part of the inscription *KTI*, has been reconstructed from two separate fragments. www.metmuseum.org. Accession no. 1998.69; 1999.99. Accessed 19.9.2012. I would add that the presence of the subordinate figures would be more in keeping with the tradition of depicting *Ge* with two offerers - *karpoi* or *karpoforoi* - than with representations of *Ktisis*. For discussions about *Ge* and the offerers, Friedländer (1912) pp.150-2; Merrony (1998) p. 468; Maguire (1987a) p.71

To be identified as *ktistes* - founder - was a sign of high status and to found or 'renew' a city was reckoned an exceptionally praiseworthy achievement.[44] Representations of *Ktisis*, particularly when used in elite villas, may therefore, have been intended to reinforce that status.[45] Maguire has also observed that in Antioch, where the danger of earthquakes was a constant threat, *Ktisis*, particularly when shown with a builder's measure - a sign of a soundly built house - may have offered comfort to residents.[46] For the early Christians, *Ktisis*' remit may have extended beyond the secure foundation of a building and have included the secure foundation of earth - God's creation. Stucchi has suggested that the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia represented God's creation and Maguire observes that the rich variety of creatures in the pavement "demonstrates that here *Ktisis* stands for earthly creation".[47] What is notable is that, outside Cyrenaica, *Ktisis* does not appear in ecclesiastical settings.

Personifications and Donor Portraits

The majority of late antique personifications have been found in secular contexts and are invariably forward facing busts, isolated from surrounding imagery by roundels, wreaths or other framing devices. *Ktisis* and *Kosmesis* at Qasr el-Lebia, on the other hand, are in an ecclesiastical context, they are full-length figures and even though they are in a panel, they appear to be interacting with the architectural representation which they flank. These differences set the figures apart from most late antique personifications.

Grabar and Alföldi-Rosenbaum have noted similarities between *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia and contemporaneous donor portraits in church pavements at Gerasa in Jordan.[48] *Kosmesis* has been likened to Theodore who swings a censer towards a *tabula ansata* at the east end of the church of Ss. Cosmas and Damian[49]

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[44] Leader-Newby (2005) pp.240-1. However, to 'renew' a city might involve no more than a token repair - a sixth-century Cretan, for example, 'renewed' his city by repairing the floor of one cistern, Bandy (1970) p.63

[45] In fact, in the sixth century, lithomania was considered the "besetting sin of great bishops" and Justinian had to legislate against laymen building churches unless they could provide sufficient endowments to support a clergy and the running costs. Brown comments that, "Justinian's law assumes a background where prestige continued to be measured in stone", Brown (1980) p.19

[46] Maguire (2012) p.30

[47] Stucchi (1975) p.401; Maguire (2012) p.32

[48] Grabar (1962) p.135; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) pp.35-6

[49] The head of this figure is not original. Piccirillo (1997) p.288-9

(3.1.16), and to Elias, in the Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg, who also holds a censer **(3.1.17)**. *Ktisis* has been compared to a bejewelled Soreg who holds a branch in her right hand, also from the Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg **(3.1.18)**. Maria, the third donor in this pavement, is swathed in a maphorion comparable to those worn by both *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia **(3.1.19)**.



3.1.16 - Theodore, Ss. Cosmas and Damian (head reconstructed) with detail of mosaic before restoration



3.1.17 - Elias, Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg



3.1.18 - Soreg, Church of Elias, maria and Soreg



3.1.19 - Maria, Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg

An additional comparison can be made with a group of images in the nave of the sixth-century Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm er-Rasas in Jordan, in which the representation of a building, probably a church, is flanked to the right by 'Ouadia', who swings a censer towards the building, and to the left by two figures - one apparently making an offering and the other holding a flower[50] (**3.1.20-21**).

[50] The figures have been defaced by iconoclasts. Piccirillo (1997)



3.1.20-21 - Church flanked by two figures, Church of Bishop Sergius

The correspondences between our female figures at Qasr el-Lebia and these donor portraits, particularly given their dissimilarity with the more usual bust-in-roundel personifications and the fact that *Ktisis,* although a relatively popular personification, is not known from any other ecclesiastical contexts, suggest that further comparisons with depictions of benefactresses may be worthwhile. In Late Antiquity, religious patronage became one of the great vocations of elite women. As well as being a way of "buying the goodwill of the Almighty" and giving thanks for past benefits,[51] the endowment of churches and the commissioning of religious art was a way of legitimising and advancing social status, a practice attested to in a number of mosaic pavements.[52]

The sixth-century Orpheus mosaic from Jerusalem, discovered in a building generally thought to have served as a Christian funerary chapel and now on display in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, includes two full-length female figures in the panel below the Orpheus scene[53] **(3.1.22)**.

[51] Ward-Perkins (1987) p.71

[52] Kitzinger (1967) p.2; Hunt (1994) p.120; Parrish (2005) p.1103

[53] The building included a small apse adorned with a discrete cross, Hachlili (2009) p.76. Mucznik has argued that as neither the building nor the mosaic were aligned to the east and no sarcophagi were found, the building should not automatically be assumed to be Christian, Mucznik et al. (2004) pp.210-2



3.1.22 - Orpheus mosaic, detail of female figures

These two women, named by inscription as Theodosia and Georgia, are positioned between two robbed spaces, thought to have contained ossuaries. They flank a column bound with a ribbon which is reminiscent of pillars found in the groves of classical sacral idyllic landscapes[54] and, like *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia, they wear maphoria over embroidered dresses, red shoes, necklaces and prependulia. In addition, Theodosia and Georgia have halo-like headdresses. Also in common with *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*, the women are holding offerings; Theodosia holds a white object in her right hand and what appears to be a gold cloth with a red border and tassels in her left hand. Georgia holds a small bird. It has been suggested that Theodosia - meaning 'gift of the god', and Georgia - meaning 'fruit of the earth' or 'agriculture', were personifications; allegorical figures holding attributes of a symbolic nature.[55] A counter argument is that their rich attire and the fact that they are bearing gifts seems to place them in the category of elite female donor portraits.[56] The presence of the beribboned column, which lends the scene a classicising air, allows a degree of uncertainty to linger.

Two women are also depicted in an intercolumnial panel between the nave and the north aisle in a sixth-century church at Kissufim in Israel[57] **(3.1.23)**.

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[54] Friedman (1967) p.2. More recently, Olszewski has proposed that the column held a sundial similar to those erected in the market places of ancient towns and that the small nodule on top of the column was the *gnomon,* Olszewski (2009) p.658

[55] Ovadiah and Mucznik (1981) pp.160-1; Mucznik et al. (2004) p.201

[56] Friedman has argued that their sixth-century attire argues against the idea of them representing personifications, Friedman (1970) p.75

[57] Dated by two inscriptions to AD 576-8, Hachlili (2009) p.290



3.1.23 - Church at Kissufim

Once again the women are wearing maphoria and are bedecked with diadems and earrings, and "somewhat resemble the attendants of Empress Theodora in the Church of St. Vitale in Ravenna, Italy."[58] One of the women holds a platter, possibly containing a fowl, and is accompanied by the inscription *Kalliora*. Cohen has interpreted this label as 'good hour' or 'propitious hour', which would suggest that she represents an abstract concept.[59] Ovadiah, on the other hand, has interpreted the inscription, not as a concept, but as a greeting - 'in good time'.[60] The second woman, identified by inscription as 'The Lady Syltous' or 'The Lady of Sylto', in an act of *sparsio,* distributes coins with her right hand and holds what appears to be a small white cloth in her left.[61] Her attire and the gesture of *sparsio* align the figure with the personification of *Megalopyschia* in the Yakto complex at Antioch. The name, 'The Lady of Sylto', on the other hand, suggests that she is more likely to represent a female donor than a personification **(3.1.24)**.[62]

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[58] Cohen (1993) p.277

[59] Cohen (1993) p.280

[60] Ovadiah and Mucznik (1983) p.275

[61] The Roman rite of *sparsio* stems from the distribution of coins by consuls at their inauguration, Cutler (1994) p.295

[62] Poulsen has proposed that the positioning of the mosaic panel suggests that 'The Lady of Sylto' was probably responsible for the mosaic pavement in the northern part of the nave, if not the whole basilica, Poulsen (2012) pp.169-70



3.1.24 - *Megalopyschia*, Yakto Complex

The two women at Kissufim pose something of a conundrum; they appear in the same context with the same demeanour and attire - *Kalliora* appearing almost as an older version of 'The Lady of Sylto'.[63] However, one is generally thought to be a personification and the other a donor portrait. Is it possible that the two figures represented two aspects of the same donor - the *euergetism* and timeliness - of the same woman, perhaps?

Another apposite example of a female donor portrait is Anicia Juliana in the sixth-century Vienna Dioscurides[64] **(3.1.25)**. The imagery and inscription surrounding Juliana confirms her status as *ktistes,*[65] and she is flanked by two "classically inspired" personifications, *Sophrosyne* - 'prudence' and *Megalopyschia* – 'magnanimity'.[66] In her left hand Juliana holds a codicillar diptych and gestures towards the codex held by *Sophrosyne*. With her right hand, in a triumphant gesture of *sparsio,* she scatters gold coins taken from the fold of *Megalopyschia*'s dress. Juliana, seated on a throne and wearing a diadem-like headdress, is clearly the protagonist in this scene, but her gestures - taking coins from *Megalopyschia* and holding the diptych in front of *Sophrosyne* - seem to link the three women, suggesting that, like the figures at Kissufim, all three could be seen as different

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[63] Cohen (1993) p.279

[64] Anicia Juliana came from a prestigious line of female patrons; her grandmother, the empress Licinia Eudoxia, and her mother, Placidia the younger, were both patrons of St. Euphemia en trios Olybriou, a suburb of Constantinople. Most notably, Juliana was patron of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople, Kiilerich (2001) p.181; Connor (2004) pp.105-15

[65] A small naked *putto* hands Juliana an open codex, possibly representing the Vienna Dioscurides itself, which was presented to her by the inhabitants of Honoratae. A figure in proskynesis represents 'Gratitude of the Arts' and *putti* in the spandrels of the star are engaged in building activities, Premerstein (1903) p.110; Buber (1937) p.29; Kiilerich (2001) pp.171-3

[66] McClanan (2002) p.98

aspects of the same person - the personifications of *Sophrosyne* and *Megalopyschia* being manifestations of Juliana's wisdom and munificence.



3.1.25 - Anicia Juliana, Vienna Dioscurides

It seems then, that in the first half of the sixth century, the distinction between female donor portraits and personifications was blurred. This conflation was made more pronounced by the fact that, in Late Antiquity, Christian donors often went to great lengths to disguise their identity. A trend perhaps prompted by passages from the New Testament such as John 7:18:

> He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Like Roman aristocrats, Christian elite poured money into building projects but there seems to have been a major change in the psychology behind these magnanimous gestures - Christian donations were often made with ostentatious displays of anonymity and humility - concepts unimaginable in Roman times, when the whole point of giving was self-presentation.[67]

Anonymous benefactions may also have been a vehicle by which participants could demonstrate a complete acceptance of God's omniscience - a belief that, with or without a name, He would recognise both the gesture and the benefactor. Roueché

[67] Bowes (2008) p.594

has argued that this practice even extended to emperors and empresses who included their monograms rather than their names in prestigious church buildings.[68]

Despite a shift towards anonymous philanthropy, it was not uncommon for donor portraits, including those of female benefactresses, to appear in church pavements. Whether they were named or not, the status of these richly-attired females, often shown wearing jewellery which, in the sixth century, was expressly forbidden to those outside the court - most notably, pearl bands worn by empresses[69] - was aggrandised, ensuring that this was how they would be remembered in perpetuity.[70]

Just such a display can be found in the secular context of the sixth-century Hippolytus Hall at Madaba, where three bejewelled city personifications - Tyches - occupy the eastern edge of the pavement. Rome and Madaba are named - if not unproblematic - but the third personification, Gregoria, cannot be identified with any city of that name.[71] Avner-Levy has proposed that the figure may have represented a local philanthropist who, apart from this tribute, remained anonymous.[72] Buschausen has tried to make a case for the figure representing a specific benefactor who, in the time of Theodosius the Great, contributed large sums of money for the renovation of monastic institutions in and around Constantinople.[73] **(3.1.26)**.

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[68] For example, Justinian and Theodora marked Hagia Sophia with their monograms not their names, Roueche (2007) p.234. Paul the Silentiary described these monograms as "one symbol that means many words." *Descriptio ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae* lines 713-4, Mango (1972) p.87

[69] The Codex Justinianus ruled that pearls, emeralds, amethysts and sapphires were reserved for imperial use, Cod. Iust XI 12, see also Campbell (1984) p.57; Becker (2005) p.211; Kiilerich (2001) p.174

[70] Vuolanto (2002) p.247

[71] Bowersock has suggested that Gregoria may have represented Antioch, Bowersock (2006) p.85

[72] Avner-Levy (1996) p.370

[73] Buschhausen (1986) p.153



3.1.26 - City personifications, Hippolytus Hall

An example of this type of studied anonymity in an ecclesiastical context can be found in the sixth-century Upper Chapel of Priest John at Wadi'Afrit in Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, Jordan. Two unidentified portrait busts are included in the border of the nave pavement, one of which is a richly-attired female adorned with coronet, earrings and necklace[74] **(3.1.27)**.



3.1.27 -
Upper Chapel of Priest John, Wadi'Afrit

This image may have represented one of the female donors mentioned in an inscription towards the east end of the nave:

[74] These are the only two extant portraits, but it is thought there would originally have been four, Piccirillo (1997) p.232. Hunt sees the female figure as imitating the empress Theodora, suggesting that Theodora may have set the standard for female portraiture, Hunt (1994) p.120

> For the salvation of, and as a present of Your servant Sergius [the son] of Stephen, and Procopius, [the son] of Porphyria, Rome, and Mary, and Julian, the monk.[75]

If this is indeed the case, the non-specificity of the portrait - remote from the dedicatory inscription - highlights a tension between benefactors wanting to record their *euergetism* and yet feeling the need to preserve their anonymity.

This same discretion is illustrated by a number of anonymous ex-voto inscriptions in church pavements. An inscription in the basilica of Soloi in Cyprus simply reads, "God help him who made the mosaic".[76] In the nave pavement of the Vrina Plain basilica at Butrint in Albania, an inscription is not only anonymous - "In fulfilment of the prayer of those whose names God knows"[77]- but is also set slightly off-centre; a contrivance which places the donors away from the main axis of devotion, thereby indicating their unworthiness. It could be argued, however, that in the same way that the attire and jewellery of the female donor portraits marked the bearer as elite, so the imagery surrounding the Vrina Plain inscription - a rich variety of seafood which would almost certainly have been understood as a display of abundance - underlined the wealth and status of the benefactor. **(3.1.28)**.



3.1.28 - Vrina Plain basilica

Another group of objects which fits into this category of ostentatious anonymity are the late fifth- and early sixth-century consular diptychs produced to record the magnanimous gestures of the consuls whose duty it was to finance city entertainments. These portrait panels, despite being inscribed with the name and

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[75] Cited in Hunt (1994) pp.119-120. See also, Piccirillo (1997) p.232

[76] Michaelides (1987) p.67

[77] Greenslade et al. (2006) pp.397-408

title of each consul,[78] by following "a mere formula, essentially identical throughout the series",[79] retain a sort of anonymity and a degree of humility **(3.1.29-30)**.



3.1.29 - Consular diptych, Probus Anastasius



3.1.30 - Consular diptych, Aerobindus

This homogeneity cannot be attributed to lack of skill on the part of the artists as the surrounding decorative imagery, particularly the animated scenes of gladiators and animals at the bottom of some panels, are more life-like and intricate than earlier examples on which the consuls were clearly shown as individuals.[80] Given the propensity in the later fifth and early sixth centuries for self-proclamations of magnanimity to be tempered with a degree of humility, the standardisation of these portraits may have been intentional. Sixth-century consuls associated with grandiose displays of magnanimity, by down-playing their separate identities, were conforming to acceptable conventions for proclaiming position and announcing charitable munificence.[81]

Including the consular diptychs in this category of donor portraits, raises a further issue. Attributes were commonly used to identify personifications - *Ge*, for example, is identifiable by a swag filled with fruit or flowers **(3.1.31)** and Tyche by her mural crown **(3.1.32)**.

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[78] On western consular diptychs the consuls' names are generally inscribed on the read panel - the back - and his offices on the front. With eastern diptychs it is the other way around. Williamson and Stevenson (2010) p.47

[79] Morey (1941) p.46

[80] Capps (1927) p.70

[81] Eastmond (2010) p.762



3.1.31 - *Ge*, fifth-century tapestry, probably from Akhmin



3.1.32 - City tyche - Nicosia Museum

For donor portraits, too, accessories worked rather like insignia, helping to establish meaning and function and to calibrate status. On almost every consular diptych, for example, the consul holds a *mappa* in his right hand - a folded white cloth traditionally used ceremonially to signal the start of races in the hippodrome[82] **(see 3.1.29-30 and 3.1.33-34)**.



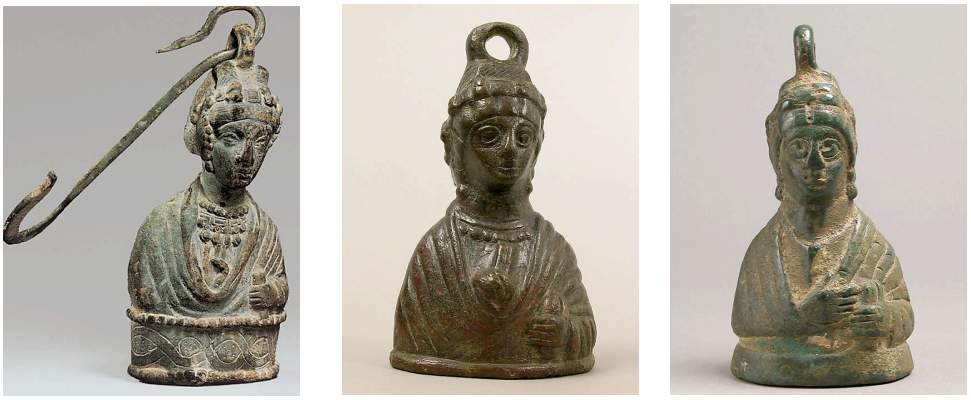
3.1.33 - Consular diptych, Valentianus



3.1.34 - Coin, Tiberius II Constantine

[82] The use of the *mappa* to start races is attested by the middle of the first century AD, although it may have been established earlier, Dagron (2007) pp.203-4. Cassidorus' *Variae* iii. 51.9 includes an anecdote describing how Nero ordered that his napkin should be thrown from a window to give permission for a contest to begin, Cameron, Alan (2011) p. 696

The *mappa*, although a symbol of consular authority, also came to be understood as a general emblem of power and a proclamation of status.[83] Its use was not restricted to consuls - or even to males - and the figures on many of the so-called empress steelyard weights also held a *mappa.*[84] Like the fifth- and sixth-century consular diptychs, the empress weights were typological representations rather than actual portraits and on almost every known example, the richly bejewelled female carries a *mappa* - held in her left hand rather than her right - as a symbol of imperial power and authority[85] **(3.1.35-37)**.



3.1.35-37 -Empress steelyard weights

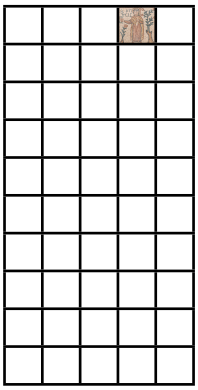
At Qasr el-Lebia, *Ktisis* holds an object in her left hand which has been described by Alföldi-Rosenbaum as a folded cloth, but which, I would argue, could be seen as a *mappa*[86] **(3.1.38)**.

[83] Dagron (2007) p.206

[84] St.Clair (1996) p.154; McClanan (2002) p.45

[85] Each weight had to be certified by the city's chief administrator, Vikan and Nesbitt, (1980) pp.32-3. It has also been suggested that these figures may have been intended to be seen as Tyches, like Roma or Constantinopolis, Thomas (1987) p.157

[86] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.123





3.1.38 - *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia and position in pavement

Furthermore, Theodosia in the Jerusalem Orpheus mosaic holds a similar object, variously described as a scarf,[87] a lotus,[88] a rose or a lily[89] **(3.1.39)**, and 'The Lady of Sylto' at Kissufim also holds an object described by Cohen as a white cloth,[90] by Ovadiah as the edge of an apron,[91] but by McClanan as a *mappa*[92] **(3.1.40)**.



3.1.39 - Theodosia, Jerusalem mosaic



3.1.40 - 'The Lady of Sylto', Kissufim

[87] Avi-Yonah (1981) p.320

[88] Mucznik et al. (2004) p.199

[89] Olszewski (2009) p.657

[90] Cohen (1993) p.279

[91] Ovadiah and Mucznik (1983) p.275

[92] McClanan (2002) p.37

It is possible then, that, in the same way that the *mappa*, together with imperial regalia, instilled the steelyard weights with status and authority, so the *mappa* held by these similarly attired women may have been intended as insignia of authority and status. To take this idea one step further, it could even be argued that the *mappa,* borrowed from consular diptychs - universally acknowledged as tokens of magnanimous benefaction - may have been understood, at some level, as an attribute of donorship. This possibility is reinforced by a seventh-century mosaic in the church of St. Demetrius at Thessaloniki, in which a male donor holds a *mappa* in his right hand[93] **(3.1.41)**.



3.1.41 - Donor with *mappa*,
St. Demetrius

I would like to propose, therefore, that the full-length figures of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia, rather than - or perhaps as well as - representing personifications of abstract concepts, could be understood as anonymous female donor portraits. Seen in this way, the inscriptions served to record the benefactions which enabled the foundation and adornment of the building but, at the same time, protected the identity of the women in a conspicuous display of humility. A fragment of mosaic pavement found at Gasr Bandis - a hill-top village about 30 kms to the east of Qasr el-Lebia - adds a measure of support to this interpretation. Several mosaic panels, surrounded by a border almost identical to that of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, have been recorded in a field but have not been excavated.[94] One panel contains two grandly-dressed women wearing maphoria over full-length robes and holding offerings **(3.1.42)**.

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[93] Grabar (1979) p.50

[94] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp.393-4



3.1.42 - Donor panel, Gasr Bandis

The figure to the right of the panel holds a leafy branch in her right hand and clutches a jar or amphora in her left arm. The central figure, orientated to the left, wears an ornamented head-band hung with distinctive strands of pearls resembling imperial prependulia and holds out a round object (damaged) on a tasselled cloth. The figures are accompanied by an inscription, [οἱ π] ρ ο σ ϕ έ ρ ο ν τ ε ς - 'those who make offerings'- a term "regularly used for Christian donors."[95] These female figures, clearly labelled as donors, closely resemble *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia, and so support the hypothesis that our so-called personifications represented benefactresses and should indeed be understood as 'those who make offerings'.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, full-length depictions of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* also appear in pavements at Taucheira and Ras al-Hilal. The attire of the figures at Taucheira, together with their privileged position in front of the apse and the fact that they are holding offerings - including *Ktisis*' *mappa*-like cloth - align them with *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* at Qasr el-Lebia and more generally with female donor portraits **(3.1.43)**.

[95] Transcribed and translated by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.4. Reynolds comments that the word - [οἱ π] ρ ο σ ϕ έ ρ ο ν τ ε ς - is in the masculine gender and therefore probably also refers to the male figure proffering a basket in a panel to the left of the women, Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.394



3.1.43 - *Ktisis* - with *mappa*-like object - and *Kosmesis,* Taucheira

The orant figures at Ras al-Hilal, on the other hand, are unadorned and empty-handed and seem to have little to do with worldly prosperity **(3.1.44-45)**.

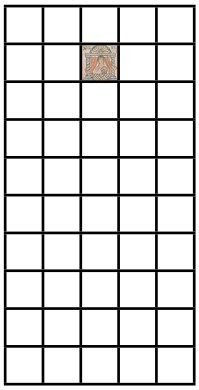


3.1.44-45 - *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*, Ras al-Hilal

The figures are, however, almost life-size and positioned immediately to the east of the sanctuary - an area likely to have been out of bounds to most women. The figures may not conform to the usual way of portraying elite female donors, but neither are they an obvious choice in representing the concepts of 'adornment' and 'foundation' - a basic requirement of both being wealth and status. It could be argued that these orant figures, embodiments of prayer and piety, represented the spiritual devotion of the benefactresses - the inscriptions recording their benefactions.

Ananeosis

In the row of panels immediately to the east of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* and adjacent to the architectural representation of *Polis Nea Theodorias,* a female figure is identified by inscription as *Ananeosis* - 'renewal' **(3.1.46)**.



3.1.46 - *Ananeosis* and position in pavement



In Cyrenaica, *Ananeosis* also appears alongside *Ktisis* and *Kosmesis* in a pavement at Taucheira where she is shown as a full-length richly-attired figure holding a censer in her right hand and, in this case too, the figure could belong to the category of female donor portraits **(see 3.1.8)**. Beyond Cyrenaica, *Ananeosis* appears in a pavement in the House of the Sea Goddess at Seleucia,[96] and in the Constantinian Villa, also at Antioch[97] **(3.1.48)**.

[96] Levi (1947) p.350. The image is damaged beyond recognition but the inscription survives, Maguire (2012) p.30

[97] Levi (1947) p.255



3.1.48 - *Ananeosis*, Constantinian Villa

In the latter, *Ananeosis*, framed in a foliate wreath encompassing clipeate personifications of the four Seasons, has been interpreted as representing cyclical renewal and abundance.[98]

At Qasr el-Lebia, *Ananeosis* is generally interpreted as one of a trio of personifications celebrating the renewal of *Polis Nea Theodorias*.[99] Grabar has taken this idea a step further, proposing that *Ananeosis*' architectural setting may allude to a temple dedicated to the Tyche of *Polis Nea Theodorias*.[100] Tyche grew out of a long tradition of divinities accredited with controlling the success or failure of human endeavour and during the Hellenistic period, these goddesses took on the role of tutelary deities, overseeing the fortune and prosperity of specific places.

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[98] Kondoleon (1987) p.308

[99] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins pp.35-7. Dufrenne, on the other hand, has argued that nothing in the iconography actually links *Ananeosis* with the panel above, Dufrenne (1980) p.243

[100] "...sur notre mosaïque, la femme dans le petit temple est sûrement une réplique de la Tyché de la nouvelle ville de Théodorias", Grabar (1969) p.268

They were occasionally depicted holding a ship's rudder, often carried cornucopias, but were most readily recognisable by their mural crowns[101] **(3.1.49-50)**.



3.1.49 - Tchye, Amman Citadel Museum



3.1.50 - Tyche, Hadrian's Temple, Ephesus

The triumph of Christianity saw the gradual abandonment of altars and temples dedicated to Tyche.[102] However, the city, as a concept, was embedded in the cultural consciousness as pivotal to social order and Brown has noted that Tyche, "stepped confidently into a gap that had opened up in men's minds between a very remote Christian God and a city whose vicissitudes still mattered to them"[103]

As noted above, Grabar has suggested that *Ananeosis* at Qasr el-Lebia could be seen as Tyche of *Polis Nea Theodorias*. Dufrenne refutes this claim on the grounds that aedicule-like structures were universal and that if the intention had been to represent *Ananeosis* as Tyche, she would doubtless have been depicted with an

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[101] Mural crowns were not exclusive to Tyche. The goddess Cybele wore a mural crown, Artemis of Ephesus sometimes wore one and some Roman empresses, including Julia Domna, wife of Septimia Severus, were depicted wearing mural crowns, Hörig (1979) pp. 129-34. A Hebrew literary source reflecting on traditions surrounding the costume of Jewish brides notes that brides wore a type of diadem called a "city of gold" or "Jerusalem of gold", Paul (1967) pp.259-63

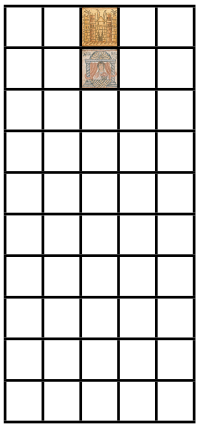
[102] However, a fifth-century text by Isaac of Antioch describes sacrifices being offered to the Tyche of Antioch, and in the middle of the sixth century, Symeon Stylites rebuked the inhabitants of Antioch for sacrificing in the name of the city Tyche, James (2005) p.300

[103] Brown (1980) p.24. Constantine established twin temples dedicated to the Tyches of Rome and Constantinople in his new city and the Tyche of Constantinople was a reworked effigy of Cybele (Rhea) who had been venerated as Tyche of Byzantium, Kalavrezou (2003) p.36. A coin celebrating the founding of the city depicts the Tyche of Constantinople, showing not the slightest trace of Christian symbolism, Toynbee (1947) p. 137

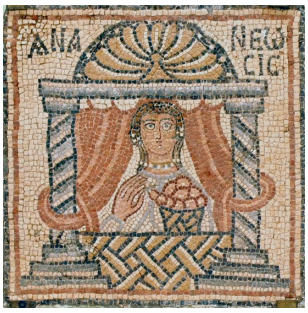
identifying mural crown.[104] I would argue, however, that not only is *Ananeosis'* rich attire and imperial jewellery germane to representations of Tyche - as seen, for example, on the sixth-century Tyche medallion excavated at Kh. Sheikh'Ali Malikina in Israel[105] **(3.1.51)** - but that *Ananeosis* does, in fact, wear a mural crown - she is crowned by the turreted walls of *Polis Nea Theodorias* immediately above her. In other words, her mural crown takes the form of the representation of the very city she protects **(3.1.52)**.



3.1.51 - Tyche medallion, Kh. Sheikh Ali'Malikina







3.1.52 - *Ananeosis* crowned by *Polis Nea Theodorias*

[104] Dufrenne (1980) pp.244-5

[105] Piccirillo and Alliata (1999) p.248

Accepting, for a moment, *Ananeosis* as Tyche and *Polis Nea Theodorias* as her mural crown, it is worth considering how this interpretation might change the pictorial dynamics of the west end of the pavement. *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* are no longer making offerings to a topographical representation - an arrangement which both Grabar and Dufrenne flag up as questionable[106]- rather, they are paying homage to the Tyche of the city. *Ananeosis*-as-Tyche is the protagonist flanked by two subordinate figures - one offering a wreath, the other swinging a censer in her direction. This type of composition - a central figure propitiated by two adjutants - is an oft-repeated configuration. Examples include two votive reliefs from Dura Europos in which the central figure, the *Gadde* or the city Tyche, is flanked by two attendants.[107] In both cases the figure on the right hand side is crowning the *Gadde* with a wreath and in at least one of the reliefs, the figure on the left, probably a priest, holds a *thymiaterion* or a censer[108] **(3.1.53)**.



3.1.53 - Votive reliefs, Dura Europos

To see *Ananeosis* as a crowned Tyche introduces the idea of exchange and reciprocity; offerings being made in anticipation of return blessings - a notion confirmed by the offerings being made by *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*. This type of axis of devotion - tiers of figures paying homage to, and perhaps expecting recompense from, a central female figure - is evident in another sixth-century work; the *Hestia*

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[106] Grabar notes that “on ne couronne pas une ville”, Grabar (1968b) p.50; Dufrenne (1980) p.242

[107] In one of the reliefs the *Gadde* is seated on a throne supported by two eagles - a detail which could be seen to be repeated at Qasr el-Lebia where *Ananeosis* is positioned directly above an eagle.

[108] In one relief the figure to the left of the *Gadde* is badly damaged, but he too, could have been lighting a censer, Grabar (1969) pp.269-71

Polyolbos tapestry from Egypt, now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington D.C.[109] **(3.1.54)**.



3.1.54 - *Hestia Polyolbos* tapestry

Hestia – 'hearth'- is enthroned and flanked by two attendants and six naked *putti* bearing medallions inscribed with the blessings she offers.[110] Like *Ananeosis*, *Hestia* is richly-attired with fine jewellery and the status of both women is elevated - or at least confirmed - by flanking figures who are seemingly paying them homage.[111]

Ananeosis occupies a position at the centre top of a tableau of nine panels which is clearly defined by the four Rivers of Paradise, one at each corner **(3.1.55)**.

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[109] The tapestry, once thought to be a "devotional object of the latest Greek paganism," is now more generally assigned to the decorative rather than religious sphere, Friedländer (1945) p.20; Kalavrezou (2003) p.163; Kajava (2004) pp.1-20. Although much later, the twelfth-century Belle Verrière window in Chartres cathedral in France could be seen as a continuation of this tradition; the Virgin, Christ on her knees and a dove above, is crowned by an architectural representation of the celestial city. She is flanked by pairs of angels swinging censers and offering candlesticks, Miller (1980) p.12

[110] Thacher (1967) p.108

[111] Friedländer also compares the attire of *Hestia Polyolbos* to that of the Empress Theodora, Friedländer (1945) p.3. Before she became goddess of the common hearth, *Hestia* was assigned by Zeus to sit at the hearth - the centre of the house or temple - and was therefore associated with the *omphalos* at the centre of the universe, Kajava (2004) p.1; Shiner (1972) p.433; Friedländer (1945) p.5. *Ananeosis* too, by association with the eagle and *Kastalia*, can be seen to have associations with the *omphalos*, see chapter 3.3



3.1.55 - *Ananeosis* residing over group of nine panels, west end of large pavement

She is flanked by Geon and Phison, both seated in *contrapposto*, their bodies turned towards her, both seemingly paying her reverence and both proffering gifts. Not only is she set among the Rivers of Paradise, but her canopied aedicule-like structure resembles a ciborium and the scallop shell semi-dome, spiral columns and curtains are all elements commonly used in church architecture. In addition, the lattice-work screen between the columns could be seen to be similar to screens depicted around the Holy Sepulchre, as depicted, for example, on several of the sixth-century Monza and Bobbio ampullae[112] **(3.1.56-57)**.



3.1.56-57 - Monza ampullae

[112] Grabar (1958)

The contents of *Ananeosis'* overflowing basket is generally interpreted as either fruit or bread; Kondoleon sees *Ananeosis* - with her basket of plenty - in a similar way to *Ananeosis* in the Constantinian Villa at Antioch - as a figure of abundance.[113] Stucchi, assuming the basket to hold bread, sees it as making reference to the Eucharist.[114] I would like to propose an alternative hypothesis and suggest that *Ananeosis* is shown pulling a festoon from her basket.

Although the contents of *Ananeosis*' basket might, at first, appear to be rather non-specific, closer inspection suggests otherwise. Comparisons can be made between the contents of *Ananeosis'* basket and the festoons held by birds in the chancel pavement at Qasr el-Lebia[115] **(3.1.58)**, and with the festoons being pulled from a basket by four birds further east in the pavement **(3.1.59)**.

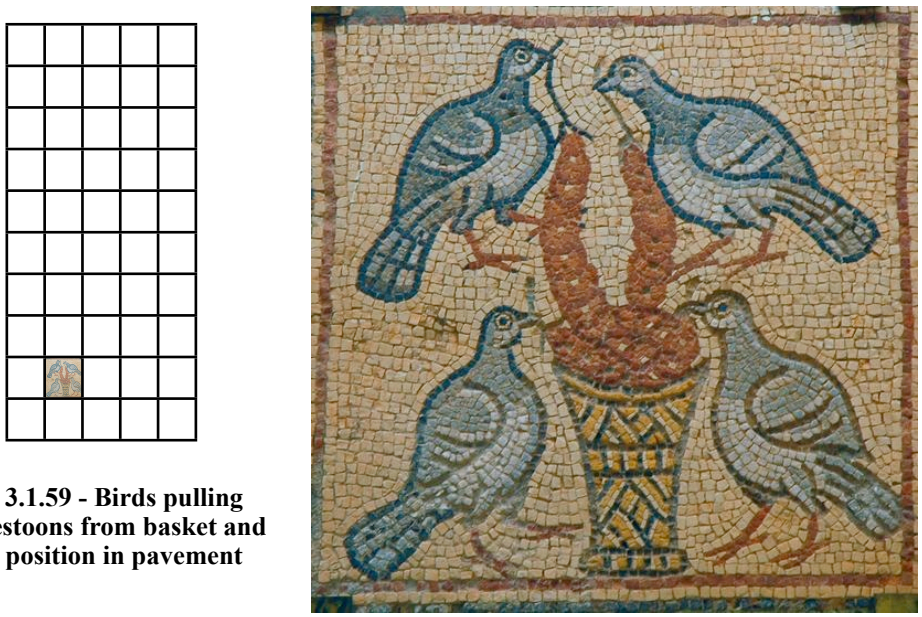


3.1.58 - Festoons above roundels in chancel pavement

[113] Kondoleon (1987) p.308

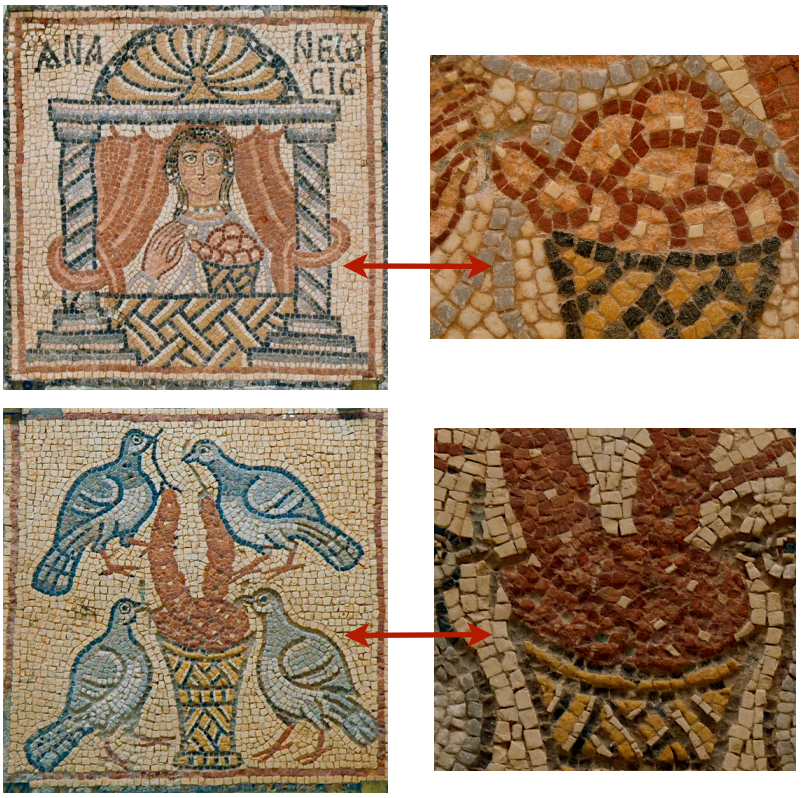
[114] Stucchi (1975)

[115] See Appendix 1



3.1.59 - Birds pulling festoons from basket and position in pavement

Even though the surface of the chancel pavement has been damaged, the correlation between all three motifs is clear. It may also be significant that the part of the basket on show above the screen in front of *Ananeosis* - itself resembling basketwork - is remarkably close to the upper part of the basket surrounded by the birds **(3.1.60)**.



3.1.60 - Details of festoons and baskets in the large pavement

If then, *Ananeosis* is holding a basket of festoons, what did they signify? For the purposes of this discussion, a distinction should be made between flower-festoons - simple strings of petals or flowers - and lavish foliate swags, heavy with fruit and flowers. The two genres are quite different in their construction and, I would like to suggest, carried separate meanings. Traditionally, large swags and garlands were associated with sacrifice and most commonly adorned altars: grandiose garlands hang between oxen skulls around the altar of the first-century *Ara Pacis* in Rome[116] **(3.1.61)**; a garlanded altar with two sacrificial hinds is depicted on a first-century Augustan coin **(3.1.62)**; and cherubs holding garlands adorn the basin in the court of the altar at the second-century Temple of the Sun at Baalbek in Lebanon[117] **(3.1.63)**.



3.1.61 - *Ara Pacis*



3.1.62 - Coin from Augustan period



3.1.63 - Basin in court of the altar, Temple of the Sun, Baalbek

[116] Castriota (1995)

[117] Sader et al. (1998)

From the second-century AD, overblown and sumptuous garlands were also included on sarcophagi, although in this context, they appear to have been mainly decorative, possibly representing the good life, well-being and abundance rather than sacrifice.[118] Around the same time, flower-festoons also started to appear in funerary art, where they seem to have been related directly with the deceased. Festoons hang either side of a man and his wife on a second-century tomb relief from Ostia Antica[119] **(3.1.64)**, and on a Roman tombstone, now in the Grosvenor Museum in Chester, the deceased reclines on a couch beneath two birds resting on festoons[120] **(3.1.65)**.



3.1.64 - Tomb relief from Ostia Antica



3.1.65 - Tombstone of Curatia Dionysia, Grosvenor Museum

Festoons also proliferated in the Roman catacombs. In the Catacomb of Domitilla, they are strung across the ceiling of the cubiculum of the Good Shepherd and the walls of the cubiculum of Cupid and Psyche[121] **(3.1.66-67)**. On a vault in the Catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter, unattached festoons fill the interstices between the protagonists - Christ with Peter and Paul and the Lamb of God with four

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[118] Dunbabin, *pers.comm.* 25.3.2013

[119] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.178

[120] Wright and Richmond (1955)

[121] Pergola (2000) p.24 and p.32

martyrs[122] **(3.1.68)**, and in the Via Latina Catacombs festoons adorn many of the walls and ceilings, they overflow from baskets and are shown in the beaks of small birds and peacocks[123] **(3.1.69-70)**. In a grave at Thessaloniki in Greece a single festoon accompanies a pair of peacocks flanking a chalice[124] **(3.1.71)**.



3.1.66 - Catacomb of Domitilla, Cubiculum of Good Shepherd



3.1.67 - Catacomb of Domitilla, Cubiculum of Cupid and Psyche



3.1.68 - Reconstruction of vault from catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter

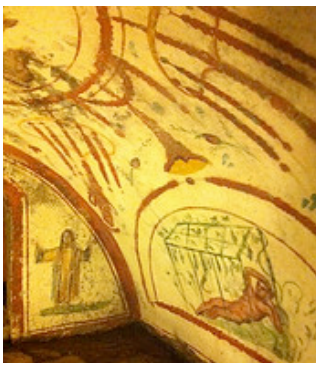
[122] Du Bourget (1972) pp.166-72

[123] Grabar (1967b) pp.35-38

[124] Grave no. 29 at Anatolikos. Breytenbach and Behrmann (2007) p.58



3.1.69 - Via Latina catacomb



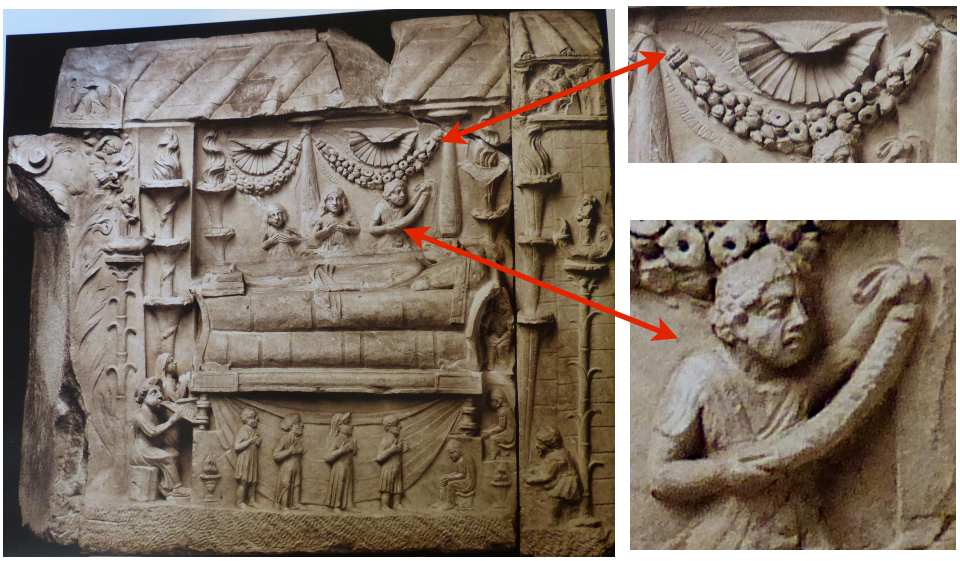
3.1.70 - Via Latina



3.1.71 - Grave 29, Anatolikos, Thessaloniki

These objects were used quite differently from large swags and the variance in the two genres is particularly well illustrated on a relief from the second-century tomb of Haterii, now in the Gregoriana Profano Museum in Rome, on which ornate multi-fruited garlands hang on the walls of the tomb chamber and a simple flower-festoon is being presented to the deceased[125] **(3.1.72)**.

[125] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.58



3.1.72 - Tomb of Haterii, detail of flower festoon and ornate garland

The presentation of the festoon is a significant feature on this relief - one that can also be seen on a second-century sarcophagus lid in the Cortile Ottagono in the Vatican Museums, on which a cupid offers a flower-festoon to a 'sleeping' woman[126] **(3.1.73)**.



3.1.73 - 'Sleeping woman', sarcophagus lid, Vatican Museums

The same idea is expressed on a late third-century sarcophagus, now in the baptistery in Florence which appears to show a festoon workshop with the deceased being presented with a finished product **(3.1.74)**. A similar theme appears on a sarcophagus in St. Matthias, in Trier, Germany, dated to *c.*AD 300, which

[126] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.187

features Noah and his family in the ark flanked by two men making festoons from baskets full of flower-heads **(3.1.75)**.



3.1.74 - Festoon sarcophagus, baptistery, Florence



3.1.75 - Noah sarcophagus, St. Matthias, Trier

Attaching a specific meaning to images of flower-festoons is not straightforward but depictions of their construction and presentation suggests that the making and gifting of festoons was an important element in the observance of the dead. It is possible that this imagery reflected the tradition of scattering roses on tombs during annual rose festivals,[127] or the practice of decorating altars and shrines with real garlands, a custom evidenced by extant hanging-devices in some tombs chambers.[128] This practice may also have prompted the fashion for decorating niches in tombs with random flower-heads or petals, as seen in the necropolis under St. Peter's, in Rome, for example **(3.1.76)**.

[127] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.28.

[128] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.295; Castriota (1995) p.29



3.1.76 - Niche in necropolis under St Peter's basilica, Rome

In a study of the fourth-century cemetery at Sopianae - modern-day Pécs in Hungary - Pozsárk has suggested that the festoons strung behind an image of Daniel resemble half-wreaths and may have been intended as a symbol of martyrdom[129] **(3.1.77)**. To understand these festoons as making reference to wreaths of martyrdom may help to explain their prevalence in funerary settings.



3.1.77 - Burial chamber of Sts. Peter and Paul, early Christian cemetery of Sopianae - detail of Daniel with festoons

It is notable that by the end of the fourth century flower-festoons seem to have largely disappeared from the repertoire of Christian imagery and yet, somewhat inexplicably, they appear in three different compositions at Qasr el-Lebia. None of the settings are overtly funereal and yet the motifs cannot be dismissed simply as

[129] Pozsárk (2005) pp.67-8. See also Hudak and Nagy (2009) p.22

space-fillers.[130] In the chancel pavement of the East Church complex, the festoons adorn roundels containing jewelled crosses - the cross being a symbol of Christ's sacrifice and the roundels resembling wreaths. Following Pozsárk's interpretation, here, the festoons could be understood as referencing crowns of martyrdom **(see 3.1.58)**. The festoons in *Ananeosis'* basket, if *Ananeosis* is taken as symbolising spiritual renewal, could also have been intended as wreaths for those who had died and been reborn in Christ.

***

Situated on the central axis of the pavement, bedecked in jewels worthy of an empress and occupying a sort of aedicule which draws on both imperial architecture and high-status church furnishings, *Ananeosis* is a multivalent motif, playing a complex and pivotal role in the overall meaning of the pavement. On one level she can be understood to represent seasonal abundance and cyclic renewal - a concept enhanced by her over-flowing basket, the adjacent Nilotic scenes and the profusely fruiting trees in nearby panels. At another level, 'crowned' by the walls of *Polis Nea Theodorias* and in association with the propitiating figures either side, she becomes the city Tyche, personifying the good fortune and protection of *Polis Nea Theodorias*. Above all, however, *Ananeosis* should probably be understood in a specifically Christian sense. She imbues the whole pavement with a soteriological significance, exemplifies the Christian concept of renewal, instantiates Christian rebirth through baptism, redemption through resurrection, and offers to those who believe, a crown of martyrdom.

[130] Festoons sometimes appear as random objects in secular settings. In the apse of a second- or third-century trilobed building in Carthage, for example, putti adorn an architectural representation with festoons. In the second- or third-century Mason de la Voliere, also in Carthage, they appear among the flora and fauna of the pavement in the *viridarium* and, in a slightly later context, festoons fill the interstices and adorn buildings in the the fourth-century Caddeddi Villa in Sicily; in this case, Roger Wilson has commented that the festoons were probably simply space-fillers with no symbolic meaning, Wilson *pers.comm.* 20.12.2013

3.2: The Rivers of Paradise

Introduction

The west end of the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia is dominated by a tableau of nine panels framed by personifications of the four Rivers of Paradise, one at each corner **(3.2.1)**.



3.2.1 - Four Rivers of Paradise defining the tableau at the west end of pavement

The figures, clearly identified by inscriptions as Geon, Phison, Tigris and Euphrates, are represented as classical river-gods similar to those found in Roman statuary, on triumphal arches, coins and ivories.[1] Geon, Tigris and Euphrates are overtly naked, their genitalia clearly displayed and, in the case of Geon, his penis is given added emphasis by the single white tessera highlighting its tip.

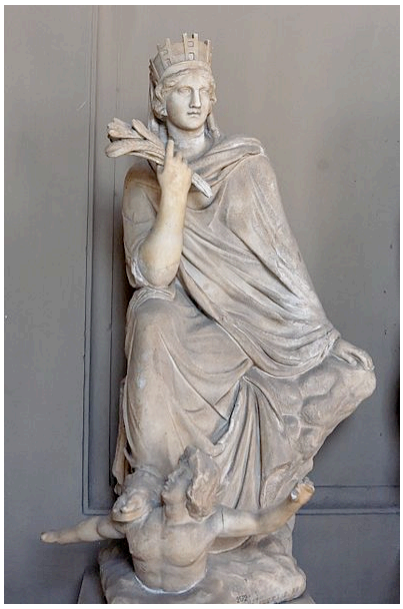
River Personifications

In ancient Greece, river-gods were revered and nurtured and rivers were believed to be imbued with healing and wealth-bringing properties.[2] They fertilised the land, created borders and boundaries and functioned as lines of communication, linking dispersed communities and isolated regions. During the Hellenistic period, river

[1] Rubenstein (1984) p.259

[2] Ostrowski (1991) p.34

personifications came to be seen as "potent indicators of place"[3]- the Tyche of Antioch, for example, stands above a personification of the Orontes River[4] **(3.2.2)**.



3.2.2 - Tyche of Antioch

In the Roman era, they functioned as effective vehicles of imperial propaganda, representing victorious battles and territories conquered. On the Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki, for example, a personification of Tigris is shown at the feet of a personification of Armenia or Mesopotamia[5] **(3.2.3)**.



3.2.3 - Arch of Galerius - Personifications of Euphrates and Tigris

Rivers continued to be seen as powerful forces into the Christian era and textual sources suggest a lingering fear of idolatry: Athanasius of Alexandria castigated the

[3] Huskinson (2005) p.248

[4] Huskinson suggests that, in Antioch, the river personifications took on the "status of foundation heroes", Huskinson (2005) p.258

[5] Laubscher (1975) p.75. Magdalino has suggested that, in the sixth century, the four Rivers of Paradise may have been used in a similar way; that they, "in one way or another marked the limits of Justinian's empire," and may even have been used to symbolise the reach and influence of the Church, Magdalino (1988) p.106

Egyptians for revering springs and rivers;[6] Firmicus Maternus wrote that "the inhabitants of Egypt worship water, supplicate water, venerate water with an everlasting series of superstitious vows";[7] the first of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catecheses* condemned the practice of lighting lamps and incense to springs and rivers in the hope of being healed;[8] John Chrysostom, with particular reference to women, denounced the wearing of amulets inscribed with the names of rivers;[9] and Isaac of Antioch bemoaned the fact that so-called Christians would still hang lamps by sacred springs.[10] During the fourth and early fifth centuries, personifications of rivers - or indeed other geographical entities - were almost never included in the decoration of churches; as Maguire has noted, they were probably "too reminiscent of pagan deities to have been at home... even on the floor."[11] From the second half of the fifth century, however, personifications of natural phenomena - including rivers - began to find their way into Christian contexts and by the sixth century even the River Jordan and the Rivers of Paradise assumed the appearance of classical river-gods in Christian settings.

The Rivers of Paradise - Textual Sources

The Rivers of Paradise are introduced in the Book of Genesis:

> And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.[12]

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[6] Athanasius, *Oratio contra gentes,* 24; PG XXV col. 48c, cited in Maguire (1993) p.150

[7] Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum* 2.1, cited in Forbes (1970) p.44. See also, Hermann (1959) p.48

[8] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogica Catechesis* I, 8; PG 33, col. 1072B, cited in Maguire (2012) p.26

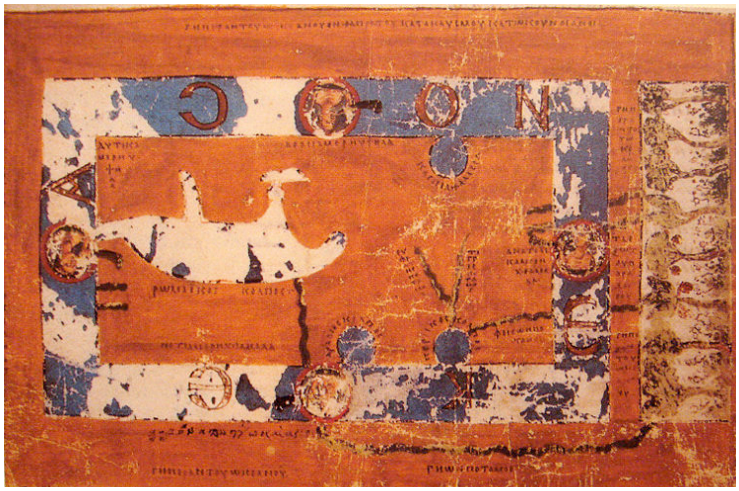
[9] John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses, Homilia* VIII, cited in Schaff (1969) p. 298

[10] Isaac of Antioch, cited in MacMullen (1997) p.145

[11] Maguire (1987a) p.21

[12] Genesis 2:10-14

These biblical rivers, originating from the Fountain of Life in the Garden of Eden,[13] have traditionally been associated with actual terrestrial rivers - the Euphrates and Tigris with their modern-day namesakes, Geon with the river Nile[14] and Phison with the Ganges or the Danube.[15] For Epiphanius of Salamis, being able to actually see the Geon - the River Nile - and drink the water of the Euphrates, was all the proof he needed to be sure that the description of Paradise in Genesis was true.[16] The rivers provided a tangible link between the heavenly and earthly realms - a conduit for blessings to pass from Paradise to the inhabited world.[17] In the fourth century, Ephraem the Syrian described the rivers as being absorbed into "the periphery of Paradise" and channelled, "as if by an aqueduct" through the sea to the earth.[18] The sixth-century poet, Avitus, wrote of the Rivers springing from a fountain in Eden and of the River Phison conveying both the water of life and the wealth of paradise to man's place of banishment on earth.[19] Cosmas Indicopleustes' sixth-century map shows the four Rivers flowing from earthly paradise, under the ocean, and re-emerging in the inhabited world[20] **(3.2.4)**.



3.2.4 - World map (north at top) Cosmas Indicopleustes

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[13] Underwood (1950) p.47

[14] Maguire (2012) p.22

[15] In his *Etymologies* Isidore of Seville identifies the River Phison with the Ganges, Darian (2001) p.182; Barney et al. (2006) p.280; Maguire (2012) p. 22. Phison was identified as the Danube in Syriac commentaries, Mathews et al. (1994) p.100; Hachlili (2009) p.180

[16] Epiphanius of Salamis *Epistula ad Joannem Episcopum Jerosolymorum,* cited in Maguire (2007) p.3. See also, Dechow (1988)

[17] Maguire (2002) p.25

[18] Ephraem the Syrian, *Commentarii in Genesim* 1.23B, Daniélou (1953) p.452

[19] Avitus, *Poematum de mosaicae historiae gestis* pl.59: 329-30, cited in Maguire (2002) p. 26

[20] *Topographia Christiana* 3.25 and 4.7, cited in Winstedt (1909) pl.7

In the same way that the Rivers of Paradise irrigated and fecundated the inhabited world, so the Gospels – the word of God - were believed to sustain and nourish the Church.[21] The correlation between the Rivers and the Gospels was set out in the third century by St. Cyprian:[22]

> Ecclesia, setting forth the likeness of paradise, includes within her walls fruit-bearing trees [which] she waters with four rivers, that is, with the four gospels wherewith, by a celestial inundation, she bestows the grace of saving baptism.

St. Augustine of Hippo expounded and expanded this exegesis, asserting that the Rivers of Paradise represented the four Gospels, the four Evangelists and God's divine wisdom; those who drank the waters of the Gospel drank the waters of eternal life.[23]

Several centuries later, these ideas were succinctly summarised by Hrabanus Maurus in an explanatory text to an allegorical composition of the Rivers of Paradise issuing from Christ. He wrote:[24]

> The four gospels therefore, written by the four evangelists, suggests the four rivers of paradise which flow from one source, because just as the rivers which originate from one source have watered the entire earth, in the same way the four gospels flow from the true and unique source, that is, Christ; anyone who has drunk from him once will never be thirsty in eternity.

The Rivers, flowing from the Fountain of Life, were also seen as analogous with the salvific blood and water which flowed from the wound in Christ's side[25]- a detail which aligns Christ with the *fons vitae aeternae*,[26] and which is made reference to in Revelation 22:1:

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[21] Underwood (1950) pp.105-6

[22] St. Cyprian, *Ep*. 73.10, cited in, Cohen (2000) p.105

[23] Augustine *De Civitate Dei* XIII, 21, cited in Underwood (1950) p.47. See also, Augustine's commentary on Genesis II 5:6, cited in Hill and Fiedrowicz (1999) p.74

[24] Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780-856), *De laudibus sanctae crucis,* cited in Perrin (1997) p.125

[25] John 19:33-4 "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forth-with came there out blood and water."

[26] Barker (1991) p.89

> And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Christ was, then, the source of eternal life - the blood and water which sprang from the wound in his side, the living waters of baptism which cleansed mankind of sin and offered spiritual regeneration. St. Ambrose wrote:[27]

> There was the fountain which watered paradise. What is this fountain if not Jesus Christ! The fountain of life is eternal just like the Father; as it is written… "out of his body shall flow the living water"

This belief is also attested to in a verse from a fifth-century inscription in the Lateran baptistery[28] **(3.2.5)**.

> Here is the font of life which bathes the whole world, its ultimate source the side of Christ wounded.



3.2.5 - Inscription above font, Lateran Baptistery, Rome

The same belief is elaborated in the Typicon of Jerusalem - a twelfth-century chant which was sung on Good Fridays in the atrium of the Holy Sepulchre complex in Jerusalem:[29]

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[27] Ambrose, *De Paradiso* III, 13 - in response to John 7:38 - cited in, Thunø (2002) p.58

[28] Ferguson (2009) p.769

[29] This twelfth-century chant was compiled from a tenth-century liturgy which almost certainly reflected a much earlier tradition. It was sung at the centre of the atrium - the 'paradise' or 'new Eden' which marked the *omphalos* of the Christian world. Psalm 74:12 states that God worked "salvation in the midst of the earth", Underwood (1950) pp.105-6

> And Thy life-giving side, like a fountain bubbling forth from Eden,
> Waters Thy Church, O Christ, like a reasonable Paradise,
> Thence dividing into sources, into Four Gospels,
> Watering the universe, purifying creation,
> And teaching the nations faithfully to worship Thy Kingdom.

The Rivers of Paradise - Visual Sources

In Late Antiquity, visual manifestations of the Rivers of Paradise seem to have been exclusively confined to Christian contexts.[30] Early images usually depicted four streams issuing from the Mount of Waters which served as a podium - or foot-stool - for Christ or his proxy.[31] The fifth-century apse mosaic in the basilica at Nola, now lost, was described by Paulinus:[32]

> He (Christ) himself, the rock of the Church, is standing on a rock, from which flow four sonorous springs, the evangelists, the living streams of Christ.

In the apse mosaic of the late fifth-century chapel of Hosios David at Thessaloniki, the Mount of Waters is accompanied by the inscription: "A life-giving source, accepting and nourishing the souls of the faithful [is] this most venerable house"[33] **(3.2.6)**. In the main apse of the sixth-century church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Christ is seated on a globe above the Mount of Waters[34] **(3.2.7)**.

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[30] An exception may have been an inscription above a doorway in Ostia. The building used to be thought to be a baptistery but has recently been reclassified as a second-century nymphaeum or bath-house belonging to the Domus of the Tigriani. In the first instance the inscription was transcribed as: *In [chrism] Geon Fison Tigris Eufrata / Cri[st]ianorum sumite fontes,* Calza (1940) pp.63-88, but a re-examination has suggested a reading of: *In [?IHU?] Geon Fison Tigris Eufrata / [TI]GRINianorum sumite fontes,* Bolle (2012)

[31] See Schlee (1937) esp. p.37. The image of Christ atop the mount of waters has been interpreted as having apocalyptic associations, Finch (1991) p.22; Daly (2009) p.59

[32] Paulinus, Epistula XXXII.X, cited in Goldschmidt (1940) p.39

[33] Hoddinott (1963) pp.173-9; Maguire (2012) p.20

[34] Patrizia and Paolo (1997)



3.2.6 Apse mosaic, Hosios David, Thessaloniki



3.2.7 - Apse mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna

This composition, Christ or a christological signifier, atop the Mount of Waters, also figures on sarcophagi and smaller artefacts: the so-called sarcophagus of Constantine III in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna has both a cross and a lamb on the mound from which the Rivers flow[35] **(3.2.8)**; a fifth-century ivory gospel book cover is adorned with a jewelled cross above the Rivers of Paradise

[35] Bovini (1968) pp.42-3, pl.22

(3.2.9);[36] the 'Capsella Africana'- a fifth-century silver reliquary casket from Algeria - depicts a youthful male standing above the four Rivers, holding a wreath and being crowned by the hand of God[37] **(3.2.10)**; and a christological axis on a sixth-century pilgrim ampulla comprises the four Rivers of Paradise, the Mount of Waters, a cross and a bust-portrait of Christ in a mandorla[38] **(3.2.11)**.



3.2.8 - Sarcophagus in Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna



3.2.9 - Milan Cathedral Gospel Book



3.2.10 - 'Capsella Africana'

[36] Now in Milan Cathedral treasury. Natanson (1953) p.13

[37] Now in the Vatican Museums. The figure has been interpreted as an unnamed martyr, perhaps referring to "a generic idea of martyrdom and its rewards", Leader-Newby, (2004) p.105. However, his position, atop the Mount of Waters, makes Grabar's interpretation of the figure as "Christ as a martyr" much more likely, Grabar (1946) pp.56-7

[38] Now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Vikan (1982) p.22



3.2.11 - Pilgrim ampulla, Dumbarton Oaks Collection

There were exceptions, however, and sometimes the idea of the Rivers issuing from the Fountain of Life was implied rather than shown. A sixth-century composite capital from a basilica at Thaumakos in Greece, for example, is decorated with four truncated bodies of water - three of which are inscribed as Tigris, Geon and Phison - surrounding a cross[39] **(3.2.12)**.



3.2.12 - Capital from Thaumakos

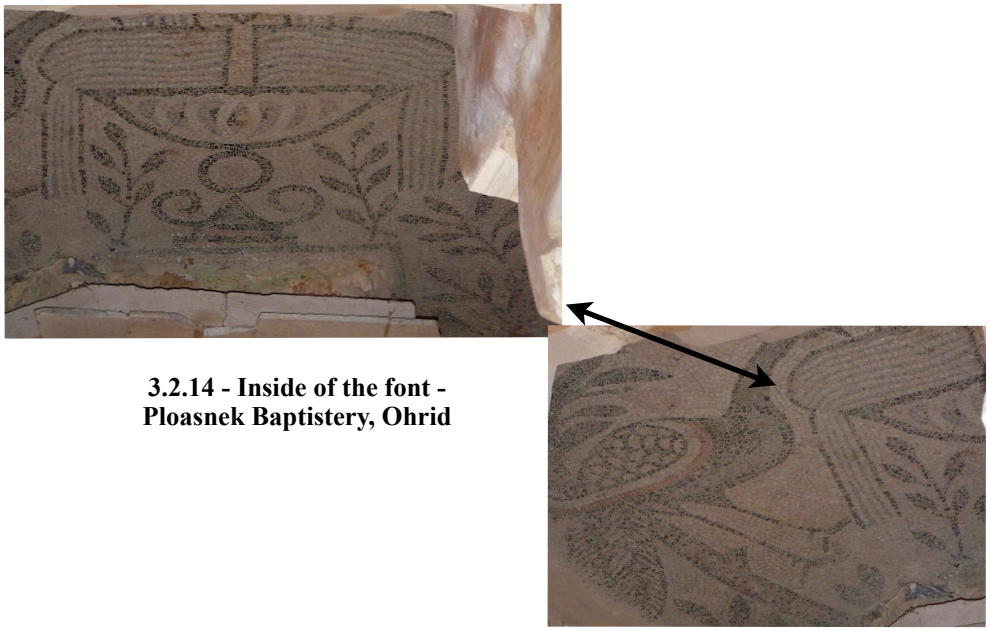
From the late fifth century, when the Rivers of Paradise started to migrate from walls and vaults to floors, the Rivers were often symbolised by canthari overflowing with water. In the baptistery of the Episcopal Basilica at Stobi in

[39] Lazaridou (2011) p.137

Macedonia, four large canthari with spouts of water are positioned around the font[40] **(3.2.13)**, and in the actual font of the sixth-century Plaosnek baptistery at Ohrid, also in Macedonia, four canthari, flanked by peacocks, overflow with water[41] **(3.2.14)**.



3.2.13 - Baptistery, Stobi



3.2.14 - Inside of the font - Ploasnek Baptistery, Ohrid

[40] Kolarik (1987)

[41] Bitrakova-Grozdanova (1975)

Around the same time that the Rivers of Paradise started to appear underfoot, they also began to take on the guise of pagan river-gods. In Cyrenaica, as well as at Qasr el-Lebia, the Rivers were included in a sixth-century pavement at Taucheira[42] **(3.2.15)**.



3.2.15 - Personification of the Euphrates River, Taucheira

Further afield, the imagery appears in the sixth-century polyconchal Plaosnek church at Ohrid in Macedonia, where the Rivers, identified by inscription, are depicted as mask-like heads spewing water from their mouths[43] **(3.2.16)**, and similar representations, although unlabelled, appear in the late fifth-century baptistery at Mariana on Corsica[44] **(3.2.17)**.



3.2.16 - Personification of Geon - poly-conchal church at Plasonek, Ohrid

[42] The pavement has been excavated but not published, Michaelides *pers. comm.* October 2012. Stucchi recorded the three personifications as being in front of an apse, Stucchi (1975) p.427. For further comments see Michaelides (1982) p.117; Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.221

[43] Bitrakova-Gozdanova (1975) p.55-7

[44] Doig (2008) p.44



3.2.17 - River personifications, Mariana Baptistery, Corsica

In the sixth-century baptistery at Jabaliyah in Israel, Phison - a semi-naked bearded male with long hair - and Geon - a bare-breasted female - flank the font and are half-submerged in the water of a river[45] **(3.2.18)**.

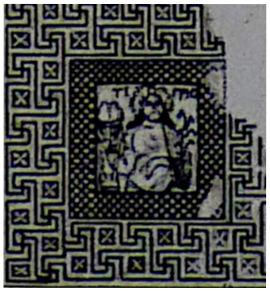


3.2.18 - River personifications, baptistery, Jabaliyah

In the nave of the sixth-century basilica of Thyrsos at Tegea in Greece, the Rivers appear as half-length forward-facing figures with robes draped over one shoulder. They are crowned by foliate wreaths and hold cornucopias in one hand and water reeds or stems of *hedera* in the other[46] **(3.2.19)**.

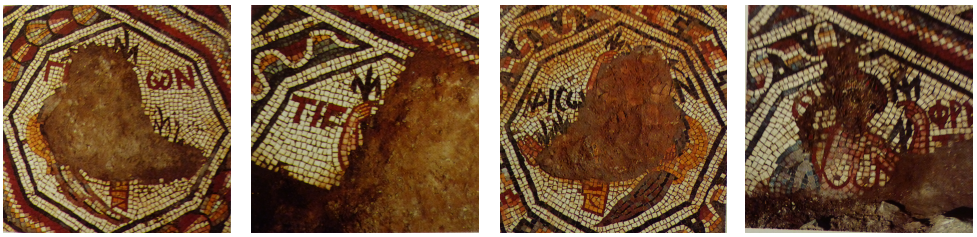
[45] Humbert (1999) pp.216-8

[46] Maguire (2012) pp.42-3



3.2.19 - Detail of Tigris, Basilica of Thyrsos, Tegea

The four Rivers were also included in the pavement of the sixth-century Chapel of the Martyr Theodore at Madaba in Jordan[47] **(3.2.20)**, in the nave of the sixth-century Church of St. Paul at Umm er-Rasas, also in Jordan[48] **(3.2.21)**, and in a fifth- or sixth-century church at Hadrianopolis, in Paphlagonia in Turkey[49] **(3.2.22)**.



3.2.20 - Remains of river personifications, Chapel of Martyr Theodore, Madaba

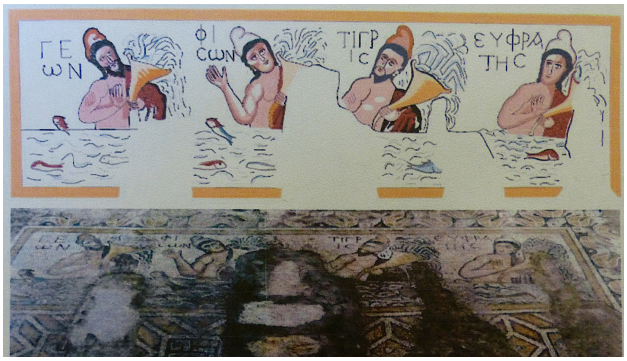
[47] The only personification not badly defaced by iconoclasts is Euphrates - a half-length forward facing figure with a semi-naked upper torso, foliate wreath and holding a water reed, Piccirillo (1997) p.117

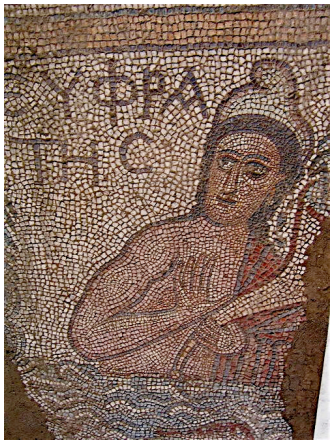
[48] The Rivers are now only identifiable by inscriptions, but the figures appear to have been depicted in the manner of river-gods with overflowing urns Piccirillo and Alliata (1999) p. 200, pl.4

[49] Lafli and Christof (2012) pp.43-5; Pataci et al. (2012) p.169. These personifications are in front of the apse. They are semi-naked figures half-submerged in water which is inhabited by fish. The personifications are crowned with Phrygian-like hats rather than wreaths of water-weed and are holding cornucopias from which their rivers appear to flow



3.2.21 - River personifications, Church of St. Paul, Umm er-Rasas





3.2.22 - River personifications, basilica at Hadrianoupolis, Paphlagonia - detail of Euphrates

The personifications of the Rivers of Paradise at Qasr el-Lebia then, fit with a general trend in the sixth century of depicting the Rivers in floor mosaics as personifications.

Transposing the Rivers of Paradise to the floor, particularly in buildings where there was a large throughput of traffic, is likely to have been considered problematic; being trampled underfoot was, on the whole, understood as a sign of defeat and disrespect.[50] It is perhaps not a coincidence then, that at the same time that the Rivers of Paradise started to appear in mosaic pavements, they also took on

[50] Mark the deacon describes how after the destruction of the Marneion in AD 402, Porphyry constructed a huge church on its foundations, placing the remaining fragments of *spolia* in front to be "trodden underfoot not only of men but also of women and dogs and swine and beasts. And this grieved the idolaters more than the burning of the temple." Mark the Deacon, *Porphyry* 76, translation, www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/porphyry.asp, accessed 1.2.2013. See also, Van Dam (1985) p.12; Rapp (2001) pp.53-75. This idea is also reflected in the Theodosian edict of AD 437, which prohibited the use of the cross in church pavements, *Codex Theodosianus* I, tit. VIII

the appearance of pagan river-gods. In other words, personification can be understood as a device used to facilitate the transfer of a Christian theme to floor level. Not only did the figures under the feet of worshippers appear paganic, but the streams were no longer shown emanating from a single source - a contrivance, perhaps, to ensure that members of the congregation could not position themselves above the *fons vitae aeternae*, thereby aligning themselves with Christ.

There are, however, a few exceptions. A drawing of the sixth-century baptistery at Oued Ramel in Tunisia, shows the Rivers of Paradise - or at least, streams of running water which make reference to the Fountain of Life - flowing from the scalloped edge of a shell adjoining the western arm of a cross - a composition which creates a sort of christological axis with the cross-shaped font atop (and to the east of) the the Mount of Waters. Underwood has suggested that the room to the east of this font may have been a *consignatorium,* in which case catechumens would have walked over the Rivers of Paradise immediately before entering the font[51] **(3.2.23)**.



3.2.23 - Baptistery, Oued Ramel

In the pavement of the fifth-century Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam in Syria, between the large raised bema and the chancel - a space likely to have been out of bounds to the general congregation - an eagle sits atop the Mount of Water[52] **(3.2.24)**.

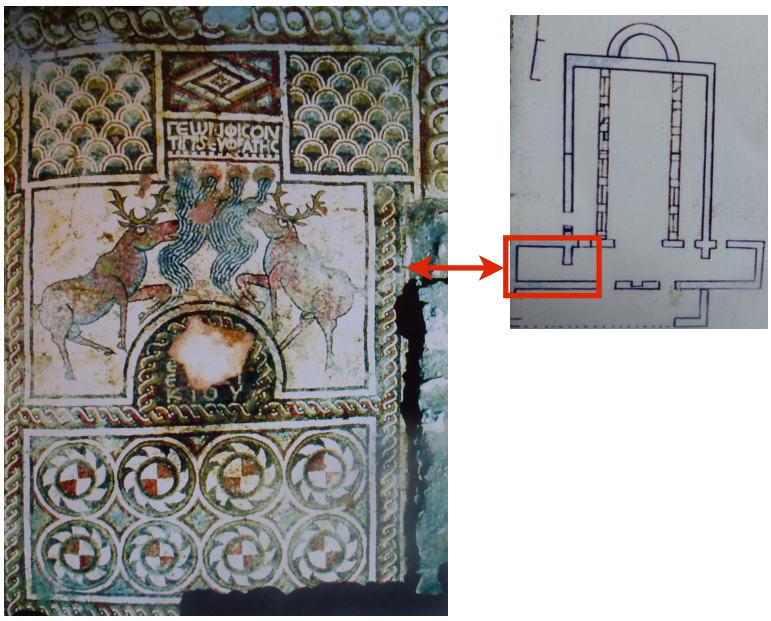
[51] Underwood (1950) p.137; Drewer (1981) pp.542-3; Jensen (2011) p.220

[52] The pavement has been dated by inscription to AD 447, Zaqzuq and Piccirillo (1999) p. 463. This is earlier than any of the examples of personifications of the Rivers of Paradise in floor mosaics.



3.2.24 - Church of the Holy Martyrs, Tayibat al-Imam - position and detail of eagle

Also, in the sixth-century Basilica D at Byllis in Albania, a small funerary chapel at the north end of the narthex - only accessible from the south - contains a depiction of the Rivers flowing from a semi-circular panel containing the fragmentary remains of a dedicatory inscription (**3.2.25**). In neither of the last two cases is the area likely to have seen much, if any, through traffic.



3.2.25 - Chapel north end of narthex, Basilica D, Byllis

Nudity

The Rivers of Paradise at Qasr el-Lebia stand out for their explicit nudity. In ancient Greece, the athletic male nude was celebrated and depictions of erotic nudity – both male and female - were commonplace. Images of exposed sexual organs were potent symbols with magical and apotropaic powers and representations of enlarged phalli were often used to protect vulnerable points in public spaces and were a popular choice for personal amulets[53] **(3.2.26)**.



3.2.26 - Street corner, Leptis Magna, Tripolitania

[53] Bonfante (1989) p.544

By the Roman era, however, attitudes had changed and nudity was, generally, neither celebrated nor revered. On the contrary, it was a state reserved for endorsing the inferiority of those of low social standing; slaves were displayed naked in the market place,[54] captives were paraded naked in triumphal processions,[55] and Christian martyrs were stripped naked before being publicly tortured or killed.[56] However, a rather peculiar disjunction seems to have existed between what was appropriate in real-life and what was portrayed in visual culture; in artistic productions, rather then being shameful or degrading, nudity was considered heroic - either a state reserved for mythological characters, gods and goddesses or a device used to project divine qualities onto mortal beings.[57]

In early Christian art, explicitly naked figures are rare and figures referred to as nude are more often than not either partially-clothed or shown in a generic and sexless manner. The naked figures in the pavements at Nikopolis, for example, may be wearing almost no clothing but their genitalia are not depicted[58] **(3.2.27)**.



3.2.27 - Basilica A, Nikopolis

Naked figures such as these are usually understood as iconographical transfers from a classical tradition and generally dismissed as merely decorative rather than meaningful. The nudity of two male hunters in the Sepphoris mosaic, for example, has led scholars to interpret the scene mythologically, suggesting that the artist had tried to "revive the sensual quality of the Classical nude, contrary to the prevalent

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[54] Glancy (2002) pp.9-38

[55] Hallett (2011) p.64

[56] For example, Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas were naked when they were led into the arena at Carthage to be martyred, but the crowds were so offended by the nudity of the two young mothers that they were removed from the arena and clothed in loose tunics, Shaw (1993) p. 7; *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas* 20, Jensen (2012) p.299

[57] Maguire and Maguire (2007) p.125; Tanner (2000) p.45; Hallett (2011) pp.9-10

[58] Chrysostomon and Keffaloniton (2005) p.38

trend in late antique art to neutralise this figural style".[59] The nudity of Patrocles and Achilles in the Mosaic of Achilles at Madaba in Jordan, has been described as "startling and rare" and attributed to the fact that the subject matter of the pavement is mythological[60] **(3.2.28)**.



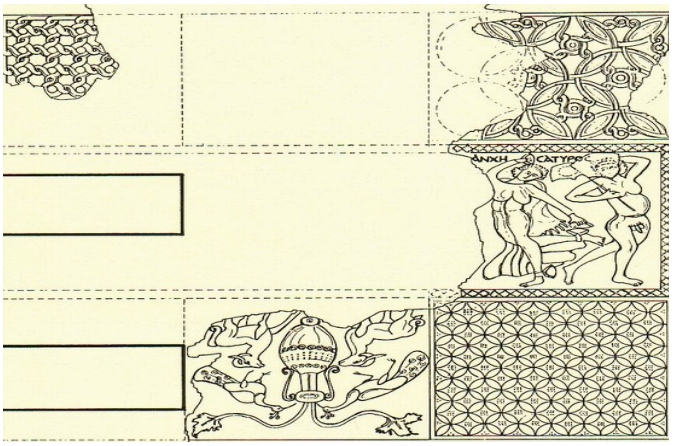
3.2.28 - Patrocles and Achilles, Madaba

However, a similar mosaic discovered in a nearby building - probably a villa - includes, not only an explicitly naked figure but, in an adjacent panel, a cantharus with a sprouting vine, flanked by two peacocks and two rams - a scene brimming with Christian connotations[61] **(3.2.29-32)**.

[59] Weiss (2010) p.175. See also, Weiss and Talgam (2002) p.76

[60] Talgam (2004) p.227. See also, Piccirillo (1997) pp.76-7

[61] Piccirillo (1997) pp.76-7



3.2.29 - Plan of mosaic



3.2.30-31 - Banche and Satyr with detail of naked figure



3.2.32 - Cantharus flanked by sheep and peacocks

In the Old Testament, nudity is portrayed as degrading and humiliating[62] and yet, in the early Christian period, certain Old Testament figures were regularly depicted naked. Both Daniel and Jonah, exemplars for Christian salvation and sacramental rebirth,[63] were more often than not nude. Daniel is invariably shown as a naked orant between two lions, appearing regularly on sarcophagi and other funerary monuments **(3.2.33-34)**, and Jonah, exceptionally for Old Testament signitive motifs, is commonly represented in an abbreviated narrative, sometimes appearing three times and each time naked; examples include the pavement in the fourth-century basilica at Aquileia in Italy and a third-century sarcophagus, now in the Vatican Museums[64] **(3.2.35-36)**.



3.2.33 - Daniel. Fourth-century sarcophagus, Vatican Museum



3.2.34 - Daniel. Fourth-century loculus cover, Vatican Museum



3.2.35 - Jonah - three appearances in the fourth-century basilica, Aquileia

[62] Keller (1993) p.32

[63] Smith (1966) p.222; Jensen (2012) p.310 and p.315

[64] Jensen (2011) pp.50-1. These three appearances, together with the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the great fish, can be seen as cognate with catechumens being immersed three times in the font. For mosaic floor at Aquileia, see Marini (2003)



3.2.36 - Jonah - three appearances on third-century sarcophagus, Vatican Museums

It is generally accepted that Jonah, reclining naked beneath the gourd, was modelled on classical depictions of Endymion in his permanent state of sleep, or perhaps on a slumbering Ariadne.[65] However, unlike Jonah, these classical models were rarely depicted completely naked **(3.2.37)**.



3.2.37 - Endymion. Sarcophagus in Galleria Doria Pamphilj

A naked Jonah then, was not a case of nudity simply copied from a classical model, but a classical model rendered naked for a specific reason.

Even though, in the early Christian era, nudity was generally denounced as reprehensible or as demonically inspired,[66] there was one Christian ceremony for which nudity was not only acceptable, but was actually a precondition - baptism. Catechumens seeking full membership of the Church through the rite of baptism

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[65] Lawrence (1961) p.324-7; Elsner (2006) p.293. See also chapter 4.1

[66] Jensen (2012) p.305. Perhaps in an attempt to denigrate and demean these pagan-like images, naked figures were often treated as a source of humour, Maguire and Maguire (2007) pp.97-134. An account in The Life of Bishop Porphyry of Gaza, written by Mark the Deacon in the fifth century, describes a naked statue of Aphrodite allowing "all of her shameful parts to be seen", Maguire and Maguire (2007) p.106

did so naked.[67] In the New Testament, baptism is described as death and rebirth - the baptismal font symbolising both the tomb in which one was buried with Christ and the womb from which one was reborn.[68] Nakedness is a state common to both processes and was therefore a pre-requisite for baptism.[69] Gregory of Nyssa insisted that nothing should come between the human skin and the oil and water of baptism,[70] and both Cyril of Jerusalem and Theodore of Mopsuestia made reference to the prelapsarian Adam. Cyril wrote:[71]

> You were naked in the sight of all, and were not ashamed; for truly you bore the likeness of the first-formed Adam, who was naked in the garden, and was not ashamed.

Theodore of Mopsuestia saw the removal of clothes prior to baptism as an act which symbolised peeling off the old self and all associated evil deeds.[72] However, the Greek and Latin terms for nakedness - *gymnos* and *nudus* - need not have implied complete nudity, and the term may simply have referred to the divestment of certain garments[73]- John Chrysostom's *Instructions to Catechumens*, for example, refers to baptisands disrobing but retaining one garment.[74] Nevertheless, whether catechumens were completely naked or only partially naked, the idea of unashamedly disrobing would have contrasted with - and perhaps, to some extent redeemed - Adam's later shameful nudity.[75] Nakedness then, made an unequivocal

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[67] Ferguson (2009) p.507, p.697 and p.785

[68] Romans 6:3-4. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

[69] Pre-existing Jewish tradition also insisted on total nudity for purificatory baths, Jensen (2011) p.141

[70] Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration* 35, Srawley (1903) pp.123-134

[71] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst* 2.2, Riley (1974) p.145 and p.181

[72] Theodore of Mopsuestia *Bapt. Hom* 3.8, Riley (1974) pp.16-3 and p.178

[73] Zeitler (1999) p.186

[74] John Chrysostom *Instructions to Catechumens* 1.2, cited in Guy (2003) p.140. One argument against the likelihood that baptisands were completely naked is that male clergy were unlikely to have baptised naked women. For discussions see Christiansen (1981) pp. 1-8; Guy (2003) pp.136-8. There were, however deaconesses who are thought to have baptised women, Wijngaards (2011) pp.77-8

[75] Zeitler (1999) p.196; Jensen (2011) p.166. Gilhus discusses how the transition from paganism to Christianity was a change from a sacrificial cult where the animal body was key to the Christian cult where the human body was key. Gilhus (2006) p.2

statement about the rites of baptism, about the paradisiacal prelapsarian state and about restoring prerogatives lost by Adam.[76]

To understand nudity in early Christian settings as making an allusion to the undressed state of the newly-baptised, could help to explain the uncharacteristic open-mindedness which occasionally permitted seemingly inappropriate and pagan-like figures to be depicted in Christian contexts.

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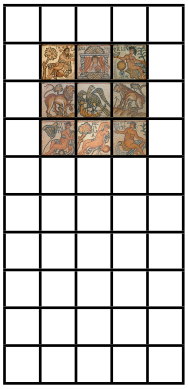
In the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, the Rivers of Paradise are the only elements of the pavement, apart from bishop Macrius' dedicatory inscription, which can be seen as exclusively Christian. Unlike the peacock, the stag with the serpent and the eagle - all well-known Christian symbols but all with long-standing and well-established pre-Christian significance - the Rivers of Paradise belonged solely to a Christian iconography. However, in this case, the Rivers are not shown as streams emanating from the Mound of Waters or as canthari overflowing with the Water of Life - they are depicted as pagan river-gods. The accompanying inscriptions may identify the figures as Christian, but their appearance makes their meaning ambiguous.

The tableau of imagery defined by the four Rivers is presided over by *Ananeosis* - in this context understood as Christian renewal[77] **(3.2.38)**.

[76] Riley (1974) p.183

[77] See chapter 3.1





3.2.38 - Tableau towards west end of large pavement

She governs the surrounding imagery, and could be understood to be calling on the old river-gods to serve the new dispensation - a baptismal reference made more pertinent by the dual nature of the figures. The distinctive and rather idiosyncratic posture of these equivocal figures, orientated away from the central axis of the pavement but with their upper bodies twisted back towards this potential *via sacra* as if to make offerings, could be seen as an acknowledgment and acceptance of this role; in other words, the *contrapposto* stance of the personifications represents a turning away from the old to face the new. In addition, the nakedness of the Rivers, particularly when seen alongside *Kastalia*, here symbolising the *fons vitae aeternae,*[78] could be understood to evoke the unashamed nudity of catechumens.

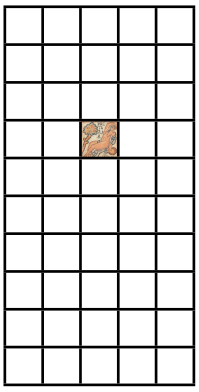
Although it is tempting to dismiss the paganic nature of these figures as no more than a legacy of classical art, it seems to me that, here, the explicit nudity of these ostensibly anomalous personifications was intended as a powerful device to capture the attention of the viewer and offer a route to understanding this part of the pavement. The appearance, posture and demeanour of the four Rivers of Paradise underline the idea of baptism, rebirth and resurrection and, in so doing, advance and enhance the soteriological significance of a Christianised *Ananeosis.*

[78] See chapter 3.3

3.3: *Kastalia*

Introduction

On the central axis of the pavement, a naked female figure, identified by inscription as *Kastalia,* reclines voluptuously on an upturned urn from which water flows **(3.3.1)**.





3.3.1 - *Kastalia* and position in pavement

The figure is generally understood as the nymph of one of Apollo's oracular springs, although opinion is divided as to whether she represents the *Kastalian* spring at Daphne near Antioch, the spring at Delphi, or whether she is simply representative of Apolline oracular springs. What is clear, however, is that *Kastalia* was universally associated with Apollo and pagan tradition.

Kastalia at Daphne

At Daphne, the Apolline oracular utterances were believed to come directly from the *Kastalian* spring. In the second century AD, Hadrian reportedly blocked this source of divination after it foretold his accession - a measure he hoped would ensure that no-one else could receive the same prophesy.[1] By the early fourth century, however, the waters must have been flowing again as the Christian community at Daphne, in an attempt to stem the pagan prophesies, translated the

[1] Sozomen *Hist Eccl*. 5.19, cited in Digeser (2004) p.65. Also, Ammianus Marcellinus 22.12.8, cited in Downey (1961) p.222. Other sources, however, detail Hadrian's re-engineering of the waterworks at Antioch and it may have been this process which diverted the water supply away from the spring, Boatwright (2003) pp.137-8

relics of Babylas, a third-century Antiochene bishop, to the site of the spring.[2] According to Socrates Scholasticus, the saint's remains inhibited the prophetic source and the oracle was silenced.[3] Sozomen reported that when the emperor entered the temple, Apollo complained that "'the place is quite full of the dead' and that, because of this, the oracular responses were prevented from going forward".[4] Towards the middle of the fourth century, Julian the Apostate removed the relics of Babylas from the spring, anticipating that the oracle would once again issue prophesies,[5] but according to Ammianus, shortly after the spring was reinstated, fire destroyed the site - an event for which Julian blamed the Christians, and which the Christians saw as an act of divine retribution.[6]

Kastalia at Delphi

Delphi, although geographically more remote from Cyrenaica than Daphne, has strong historical ties with the region. In common with many Greek colonies, Cyrene was founded as the result of instructions received from Apollo through his oracle at Delphi.[7] Even in the fifth century, Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais, alludes several times to the oracle at Delphi,[8] and the special relationship between the two cities is articulated in some of the extant architectural details in Cyrene. Buttle has noted ornamental details on both the Temple of Artemis and the Temple of Demeter at Cyrene which correspond with the Treasury of Cyrene at Delphi,[9] and the base of a preserved column which stands at the centre of the nymphaeum in Cyrene is encircled by acanthus leaves, a detail, which mirrors the fourth-century BC column of dancing women which stood to the north-east of Apollo's temple at Delphi[10] **(3.3.2)**.

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[2] Digeser (2004) p.66.

[3] Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 3.18, www.newadvent.org/fathers/26013.htm accessed 25.11.2013

[4] Sozomen *Eccl. Hist.* 5.19, cited in Digeser (2004) pp.66-7

[5] Athnassiadi (1991) p.274. As part of this same campaign, Julian also ordered the removal of prayer houses which had been built around the Temple of Apollo at Didyma. Sozomen *Eccl. Hist.* 5.20, cited in Digeser (2004) p.76; Matthews (2010) p.439

[6] Matthews (2010) p.440

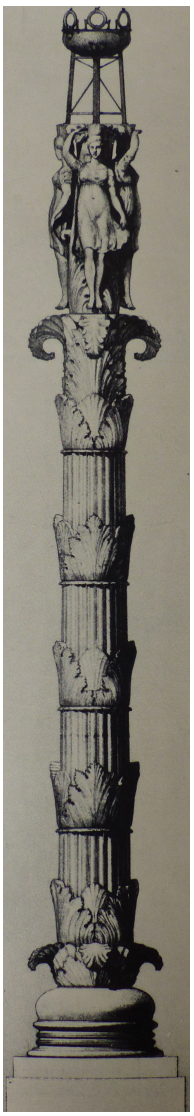
[7] See chapter 1.2

[8] Synesius, *De. Prov* 1.4 and *De insom* 7, cited in Pando (1940) p.141

[9] Rowe and Buttle (1956) p.41

[10] Nikopoulou-de-Sike (1978) p.13 and p.55





3.3.2 - Nymphaeum, Cyrene (left) and reconstruction of Column of the dancing women, Delphi

The *Kastalian* spring at Delphi, sited at the foot of Mount Parnassus, was believed to be a gift of the Kephisos River. Some classical works refer to the spring as a fountain, using the name as a periphrasis for Delphi,[11] others treat *Kastalia* as a source of poetic inspiration, thereby aligning the spring with the Muses of Helicon.[12] The main function of the *Kastalian* spring, however, was the role it played in preparing for the worship of Apollo.[13] The fifth-century BC poet, Euripides, described the purifying ceremony that took place on the seventh day of the month - the day sacred to Apollo. First the oracle - the *Pythia* - purified herself

[11] For example, Strabo, 9,3,3; Pliny the elder, *NH* 4,3,4; Pausanias 10,8,9; Herodotus, 8, 39; Pindar *Pythian* 4, cited in Parke (1978) p.200

[12] Faraone (2004) p.218

[13] Nikopoulou-de-Sike (1978) p.9

in the waters of the *Kastalian* spring, and then groups of male priests were encouraged to do the same:[14]

> But come, you Delphians, Apollo's devout,
> Go to Castalia's silver springs
> And dip yourselves in its crystal dews.
> Then enter the shrine with lips purged
> Of hurtful converse. Set your tongues
> As paragons of gracious speech
> To those who would consult the god.

This lustration ritual may have been prompted by the legend that Apollo himself had bathed in the waters of *Kastalia*, thereby imbuing them with an extraordinary quality for purification.[15] The process also extended to pilgrims seeking a prophetic response from the Apolline oracle.[16]

For Roman poets, including Vergil, Ovid and Martial, *Kastalia* continued to be a source of poetic inspiration and, in the same way that classical authors used *Kastalia* as a periphrasis for Delphi, Martial employed the term as an epithet for the Muses, describing the author Silius as "the glory of the Castalian sisters".[17]

The oracular site, allegedly silent from around AD 360, was officially closed in AD 390 by the emperor Theodosius, although the early Christian polemic against pagan oracles had begun already at the end of the second century when Clement of Alexandria wrote a grand rhetorical attack on paganism, asserting that the oracles had been silenced:[18]

> Do not therefore seek diligently after godless sanctuaries, nor after mouths
> of caverns full of jugglery, nor the Thesprotian cauldron ……
> The Castalian spring, at least, is all silent. So is the spring of
> Clophon; and the rest of the prophetic streams are likewise dead.

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[14] Cited in Broad (2006) p.36

[15] The legend was recorded by an anonymous writer of the third century BC, Parke (1978) pp.203-4

[16] A late fifth- or early fourth-century BC inscription on another fountain in the sanctuary at Delphi prohibits visitors from stepping into it, suggesting that, elsewhere – at the *Kastalian* spring, perhaps - it was commonplace for pilgrims to wash, or even immerse themselves, in the flowing waters, Parke (1978) pp.199-219

[17] Cited in Parke (1978) p.207

[18] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 2.10, cited in Shorrock (2011) p.34. See also Dempsey (1918) p.180; Clark (2004) p.56

During the following centuries this sentiment was repeated and endorsed by other Christian writers[19] and was eventually confirmed by the Delphic oracle herself who, in AD 362, reportedly announced to Julian's envoy, Oribasius the Quaestor:[20]

> Say to the king; the cleverly-embellished hall has fallen
> to the ground; Apollo no longer has a cell.
> He has no prophetic laurel, no babbling spring;
> even the chattering water has stopped.

For early Christian poets, inspiration now came from the Holy Spirit through the Grace of God; they no longer looked to the waters of the *Kastalian* spring for motivation, but turned instead to the River Jordan. The fourth-century poet, Juvencus, wrote:[21]

> Come then, may the sanctifying Spirit be present, the author of my song, and may the sweet Jordan with its pure stream nourish me as I sing, so that I may speak things that are worthy of Christ.

Towards the end of the fifth century, Bishop Paulinus of Périgueux, in a paraphrase of Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St. Martin*, wrote:[22]

> Let those gibbering madmen clutch the Muses to their raging breasts. Let Martin guide us. Such a change of the mind is pleasing to me, it is for such a well-spring that my heart thirsts. Let frenzied breasts demand Castalian water; other cups are right for men who have been reborn in the river Jordan.

Kastalia **at Qasr el-Lebia**

Although *Kastalia* is mentioned in a number of textual sources,[23] visual depictions are rare and there were no established conventions for portraying the nymph. A female figure accompanied by two inscriptions - *Kastalia* and *Pallas* - in a topographical border in the fifth-century Yakto complex at Daphne in Syria, is the

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[19] For example, Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.2.8, cited in Shorrock (2011) p.34

[20] Clark (2004) pp.56-7

[21] *Evangeliorum Libri* is about the life of Christ and is based closely on the Gospels, cited in Shorrock (2011) p.22. See also Green (2006) pp.15-23

[22] Shorrock (2011) p.23

[23] For example, Euripides, *Ion*, 94; Horace, *Odes*, 3,4 and 61; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1, 3, 4 and 14; Ovid, *Amores*, 1, 15 and36. Also, Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 4 and 13

only other securely identified image of *Kastalia*[24] **(3.3.3)**. In this context, set amid local landmarks which seem to have some historical reality, it seems likely that the figure personified two of Daphne's springs rather than instantiating any religious significance.[25]



3.3.3 - *Kastalia* and *Pallas*, Yakto Complex, Daphne

At Qasr el-Lebia, *Kastalia,* reclining on an urn with her right arm draped over her head, resembles the classical figures of Endymion or Ariadne[26] **(3.3.4-5)**.

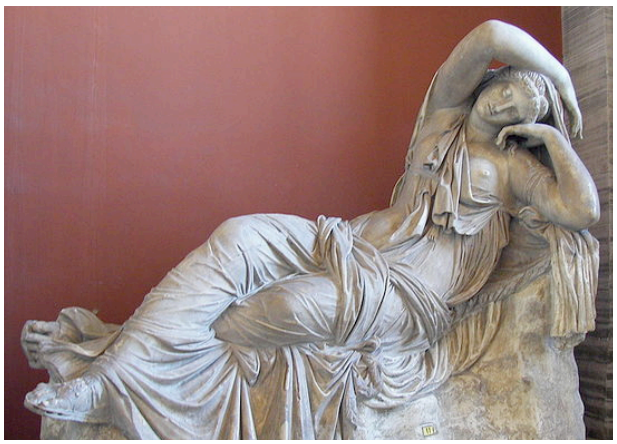


3.3.4 - Selene and Endymion, sarcophagus in Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome

[24] Levi (1947) pp.326-8. It has been proposed that the fragmented remains of a female figure in the pavement of the cemetery church at Delphi may have been a depiction of *Kastalia*, however, there is no identifying inscription or corroborating evidence for this identification, Sodini (1970) pp.710-1

[25] Huskinson (2005) pp.221-2

[26] And so perhaps, by association, early Christian depictions of Jonah, see chapter 4.1



3.3.5 - Sleeping Aridane, Vatican Museums

Alföldi-Rosenbaum, unable to explain the presence of such a well-known pagan figure in a Christian floor - and reluctant to credit the image with any symbolic meaning - has suggested that mosaicists simply copied *Kastalia*, together with the Rivers of Paradise, from pairs of river-gods and nymphs found in pattern books.[27] Stucchi, who saw the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia as representing God's creation, interpreted *Kastalia* as marking the centre of the world and the fruiting tree by her side as the Tree of Life.[28] Magdalino explored the possibility that, in the same way that the Rivers of Paradise represented the four Evangelists and the four Gospels – divine wisdom - so, *Kastalia*, representing the sagacity of the Apolline oracles, was a symbol of earthly wisdom. He was unable to decide, however, whether the figure was intended to symbolise "the harmonious coexistence of divine and earthly wisdom or the resurgence of the former at the expense of pagan prophesy which has run dry."[29] Grabar, on the other hand, saw the scene as religiously significant, interpreting it as an allegory of Christianity overcoming paganism; the pagan oracle, he argued, had been silenced by the flanking Rivers of Paradise.[30] Maguire took the idea of paganism defeated a step further, suggesting that, not only had the pagan spring been silenced by the Rivers of Paradise, but that it had been converted by them.[31] More recently, Agosti, drawing on a poem attributed to Eudocia, interpreted *Kastalia*, not as a defeated negative, but as a Christian positive. Eudocia, making reference to a holy man at the *Kastalian* grove in Daphne whose heavenly-inspired words replaced Apollo's prophecies, suggested that his divine utterances imbued the spring with a new and superior sacrality. Seen thus, *Kastalia*

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[27] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.40

[28] Stucchi (1975) pp.401-2

[29] Magdalino (1988) p.104

[30] Grabar (1968b) p.52; Grabar (1969) pp. 277-8

[31] Maguire (1987a) p.51; Maguire (2012) p.14

remains a powerful inspirational force, no longer inspiring profane poetry but now able to "slake the thirst of the blessed."[32]

With these interpretations in mind, I would like to readdress the problem of how *Kastalia* at Qasr el-Lebia might have been understood. The hypothesis that the figure was symbolic of paganism defeated or converted may offer a neat solution to the problem of why such an influential pagan figure was assigned a key position alongside the Rivers of Paradise in a Christian building. However, some aspects of the iconography are at odds with such an interpretation. The legend of *Kastalia* at Daphne tells that when the *Kastalian* spring was blocked and the water no longer flowed, the oracular prophecies ceased. If the imagery at Qasr el-Lebia had been intended to show *Kastalia* as silenced, defeated or converted, it seems unlikely that she would have been portrayed with her water-source in full flow. In addition, even though the figure is positioned between two of the Rivers of Paradise, the scene is not concordant with the idea of victorious oppressors flanking a defeated enemy; *Kastalia*, far from appearing as the down-trodden object of subjugation, reclines with an air of insouciance, while the neighbouring Rivers of Paradise seem to be paying her homage and celebrating her presence. It is *Kastalia,* at the centre of the composition, who appears to be the dominant figure, supported and confirmed by the flanking subaltern river-gods **(3.3.6)**.



3.3.6 - *Kastalia* flanked by Euphrates and Tigris

The late fifth-century apse mosaic at Hosios David at Thessaloniki makes an interesting comparison. In this mosaic, Christ stands atop the Mount of Waters, the Rivers of Paradise flow into a stream below his feet and the faint outline of a pagan river-god is just visible in the water **(3.3.7)**.

[32] Agosti (2003) p.555



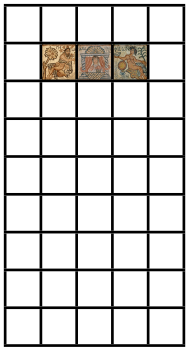
3.3.7 - Apse mosaic, Hosios David, Thessaloniki - detail of pagan river-god

In the same way that he interprets *Kastalia* at Qasr el-Lebia as a converted pagan spring, Maguire sees this ghostly figure as the "defeated or converted figure of the old deity."[33] Here, however, the way in which the river-god is depicted seems to corroborate such an interpretation; the figure is shadowy - almost lost among the fish and the ripples of the water - and the spectre-like god raises his arms as though "in astonished acknowledgement of the heavenly vision above him, recognising Christ as his master".[34] Unlike *Kastalia* at Qasr el-Lebia, this pagan figure does, indeed, appear to be defeated, downtrodden and subservient.

It should also not be overlooked that, if *Kastalia* is to be interpreted as having been overpowered or converted by Euphrates and Tigris, the same interpretation might be taken to apply to *Ananeosis* who sits between Geon and Phison - an issue which scholarship has not addressed **(3.3.8)**.

[33] Maguire (2012) p.21

[34] Maguire (2012) p.21





3.3.8 - *Ananeosis* flanked by Geon and Phison

As discussed in chapter 3.1, *Ananeosis* is neither an exclusively pagan nor a Christian figure; in this context, however, she can be understood as a redemptive figure representing Christian renewal. Following this reading, the flanking Rivers of Paradise are more likely to be paying her homage than suppressing her.

If *Kastalia* does not symbolise the defeat of paganism, what was her function and why was she allocated a prime and axial position in the pavement? In his article, *The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels*, Underwood builds a case for the inseparability, in symbolic, pictorial and literary terms, of the Rivers of Paradise and the spring from which they originated.[35] If this criterion is applied to the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, it is almost impossible not to cast *Kastalia* - reclining amid the four Rivers, water freely flowing from her urn - in the role of originating spring. However, this interpretation is problematic. The spring in the Garden of Eden from which the Rivers of Paradise emanated was the Fountain of Life, believed to be the source of eternal life and the font of the life-giving waters of baptism.[36] The waters flowing from that spring were believed to be analogous with the blood and water that flowed from the wounds of Christ - a belief reflected in early Christian visual and textual sources.[37] On the face of it then, it may seem absurd to suggest that a naked female figure, inextricably linked with Apollo, may have symbolised the Fountain of Life and so, by association, Christ Himself. However, on closer inspection, other elements of the iconography lend weight to this argument.

In the Middle Ages a bare-breasted female figure representing, or acting as surrogate for, Christ may not have been considered such an eccentric idea. Medieval theologians readily interpreted the wound in Christ's side as a breast

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[35] Underwood (1950) p.115

[36] Underwood (1950) p.47

[37] See chapter 3.2

"lactating Eucharistic blood in the chalice of *Ecclesia* and into the mouths of the faithful."[38] Bynum has observed that "we do not have to extrapolate at all in order to conclude that theologians saw the wound in Christ's side as a breast",[39] and analogies between the two occur in numerous texts: a twelfth-century saint observes that, placed between Christ's side wound and the Virgin's breast, he would not be able to decide from which he should draw nourishment;[40] Bernard of Clairvaux compared the nurturing qualities of Christ to a breast-feeding mother;[41] and Catherine of Siena urged Christians to attach themselves to the breast of Christ, the source of charity and the flesh from which milk is drawn.[42] Even though texts making reference to Christ's wound as a breast did not become commonplace until about the eleventh century, the idea was not a new one and as early as the second century, Clement of Alexandria drew comparisons between the milk of the breast which nourishes babies and the milk of Christ – the blood which flowed from Christ's side – which spiritually nourishes believers and leads to salvation.[43] John Chrysostom and Augustine both make reference to Christ as a maternal figure,[44] and in the eighth century, the poet, Alcuin, refers to the Virgin as the *fons vitae*.[45] Seen in this light, perhaps this sixth-century bare-breasted female, surrounded by references to renewal and salvation is not as incongruous as she might first appear.

Also relevant is *Kastalia's* position on the central axis of the pavement with an eagle hovering above **(3.3.9)**.

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[38] Fassl (2010) p.182

[39] Bynum (1986) p.403

[40] *Patrologia Latina* 185,878, cited in Ryan (2002-3) p.70

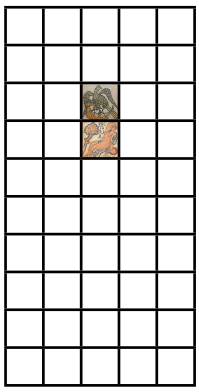
[41] Miller (2010) p.120

[42] Bynum (1986) p.417

[43] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1:6 www.newadvent.org/fathers/02091.htm accessed 24.8.2012

[44] John Chrysostom, *Matthaeum Homiliae*, 76.5; Augstine, *Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* CXXIV, cited in Bynum, (1977) p.271

[45] Kimball (2010) p.445





3.3.9 - Eagle residing over *Kastalia* and position in pavement

The centre of the ancient world was marked by the *omphalos* at Delphi. This was the point at which the eagles, sent out by Zeus to fly across the world to determine its centre, were said to have met.[46] Next to the *omphalos* was the *Kastalian* spring.[47] The centre, or *omphalos*, of the Christian world is marked by the Holy Sepulchre, "the martyrium of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection"[48]- at the centre of Christendom then, was the body of Christ - the *fons vitae aeternae*.

Kastalia as the Apolline *Kastalian* spring, symbolises the centre of the ancient world and *Kastalia* as the *fons vitae aeternae,* the centre of Christendom. This dual centrality is highlighted by the eagle above which, not only makes reference to the legend of Zeus, but also to the fable in the Physiologus which describes how the eagle, flying high up to the sun – so high that its feathers are scorched – dives three times into a spring where the water restores and renews every part of the bird

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[46] Cole (2004) p.74

[47] The perception of Delphi as being at the centre persisted into Late Antiquity and is illustrated in a literary exchange between Paulinus and Ausonius; Paulinus, describing how visitors would "summon deaf Apollo from his Delphic cave", wrote, *ciere surdum Delphica Pheobum specu. 'Delphica*' in the middle of the line reflects Delphi's location at the centre of the classical world, Shorrock (2011) p.19

[48] Krautheimer (1986) p.63. Melito of Sardis in his sermon, *Peri Pascha*, stressed the idea of 'the centre': "you killed your Lord in the middle of Jerusalem…in the middle of the street and in the middle of the city, at the middle of the day for all to see", Biddle (1999) p. 60. Psalm 74:12 also underlines the importance of 'centre' in the Christian doctrine of salvation: "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth". In the seventh century, John of Damascus describes the Holy Sepulchre as the "spring", the "source" and the "fountain of resurrection", John of Damascus, *Oratio* III,34, cited in Underwood (1950) p.96. In the ninth-century, Bernard, during a visit to Jerusalem, noted that the centre of the garden of the Holy Sepulchre was believed to be the centre of the world, Wilkinson (2002) p.266

except its beak, which it chips off on a rock.[49] This action came to be seen as a prefiguration of Christian baptism; just as the eagle was able to renew its youth by diving three times into the restorative waters of the spring, so the sinner who repented could be renewed by being immersed three times into the waters of baptism.[50]

Drawing on texts in the New Testament which cite eagles gathering at a carcass as an allegory for the gathering of Christian congregations, together with writings and commentaries of the Church fathers which elaborate on this idea, Maguire has interpreted the eagle with its prey at Qasr el-Lebia as symbolising the gentiles gathering at the body of Christ.[51]

With Maguire's interpretation in mind - and accepting that *Kastalia* symbolises the *fons vitae aeternae* - these two panels, presided over by the redemptive figure of *Ananeosis,* deliver a powerful message of soteriological significance **(3.3.10)**.

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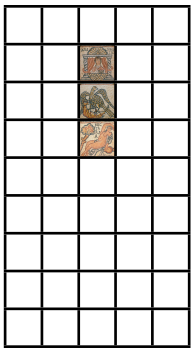
[49] Payne (1990) p.61

[50] Rendell (1928) p.10. An idea which reflects the writings of the Old Testament, in which the eagle was associated with the renewal of the soul by the grace of God, Isaiah 40:31 reads: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, an not faint." Psalm 103:5: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's..."

[51] Maguire (1987a) pp.51-3. Matthew 24:28 reads: "For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Luke 17:37: "And he said unto them, wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." A commentary on the *Hexaemeron*, attributed to Anastasius Sinaites, interprets these eagles as the souls of the just gathering at the body of Christ, Anastasius Sinaites, *Hexaemeron*, 6, cited in Kühn and Baggarly (2007) p.179. In his commentary on St. Luke's Gospel, St. Ambrose identified the corpse as "the church where we are renewed in spirit through the grace of Baptism", St. Ambrose, *Expositio in Lucam* 8.55-6, cited in Riain and Íde (2001) pp.288-9. Ambrose also addressed this idea in his writings on the sacraments: "Where the body is, there also are the eagles, hast thou read in the Gospel. Where the body of Christ is, there also the eagles are wont to fly, that they may shun earthly things, pursue heavenly", cited in Thompson (1950) p.50. And in his teachings for baptizands: "The corpse represents the altar and the corpse of Christ is on the altar. You are eagles, renewed by the washing away of the fault", Ambrose, *De Sacramentis* 4.7, cited in Maguire (1987a) p.52. A hymn by Ephraim the Syrian suggests that a believer who partakes of the communion bread - the 'corpse' - becomes an eagle that flies to Paradise, Hymn of Ephraim the Syrian, cited in Maguire (1992) p.292





3.3.10 - *Ananeosis* residing over the eagle and *Kastalia* and position in pavement

Comparable with this salvific alignment is a marble relief, dated to the late fifth or early sixth century, found built into the apse wall of a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century church at Panaghia on the peninsular of Kavala in Greece[52] **(3.3.11)**. The relief depicts an eagle perched on a chalice-like vessel under a scallop-shell dome.



3.3.11 - Relief from a church at Panaghia on the Kavala peninsular

[52] Maguire (1992). The proportions and angles of the carving suggest it may have been part of an ambo comparable to that from the Church of St George in Thessaloniki, now in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, Maguire (1992) pp.4-5. For details of this ambo, see Hoddinott (1963) pl.23

The eagle is sometimes understood as a symbol for Christ: Evans has interpreted the eagle in the sixth-century 'Armenian' mosaic found near the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, as representing Christ;[53] in the fifth-century Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam in Syria, an eagle stands atop the Mount of Waters[54]– a position usually reserved for Christ or his proxy; and in a study of the pavement here at Qasr el-Lebia, Guarducci, identifying the quadruped held by the eagle as a he-goat, has suggested that the eagle represents Christ combatting evil.[55] In the Kavala relief the eagle holds a snake in its beak - a motif sometimes understood to represent Christ locked in combat with the forces of evil[56]- and grasps a small quadruped in its talons - a gesture which could be understood to tap into the idea of eagles gathering at the body of Christ, as discussed above. The chalice, which seems to be tipped forward as though to display and celebrate its contents, resembles receptacles overflowing with water which are often used to symbolise the four Rivers of Paradise, particularly common in baptisteries. Examples include, canthari in the sixth-century baptistery at Stobi in Macedonia[57] **(3.3.12)**, the vessel flanked by two peacocks in the sixth-century baptistery at Henchir Ounaïssia in Tunisia[58] **(3.3.13)**, and the cantharus in the sixth-century baptistery at Butrint in Albania[59] **(3.3.14)**.



3.3.12 - Cantharus in baptistery, Stobi

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[53] Evans (1982) p.219

[54] Zaqzuq and Piccirillo (1999) pp.443-64

[55] Guarducci (1975) p.676

[56] St. Jerome writes that Christ protects his children from the devil just as an eagle shields its young in the nest from the serpent, Isaiam 66.13, cited in Maguire (1992) p.290

[57] Hoddinott (1963) pp.168-9

[58] Fantar (1994) p.229

[59] Mitchell (2004) p.202-18



3.3.13 - Chalice at Henchir Ounaïssia



3.3.14 - Chalice, baptistery Butrint

These similarities suggest that the Kavala chalice may have been intended to represent the waters of baptism, a hypothesis given added weight by fragmentary remains of a pavement from the peristyle between the apse and the baptistery at Bir Ftouha near Carthage in Tunisia **(3.3.15-16)**.[60] Several panels present an amalgamation of two commonly-occurring themes - harts drinking from the Water of Life and Christ atop the Mount of Waters. However, in these pavements a chalice, not Christ or a lamb or a cross, is situated atop the Mount of Waters from which the Rivers of Paradise flow. It is also of note that Delattre, who excavated part of the site in 1895, reported that the inside of one of the handleless vases was red inside, "to figure, without a doubt, the divine blood."[61] In these cases then, it is the chalice which must be understood to represent the source of the regenerative waters of baptism.

[60] Fantar (1994) pp.230-1; Stevens et al. (2005) p.304

[61] Delattre (1895) pp.337-9



3.3.15 - Cantharus atop Mount of Waters, Bir Ftouha



3.3.16 - Cantharus atop Mount of Waters, Bir Ftouha

The same basic elements in the Kavala carving are repeated at Qasr el-Lebia. An eagle with its prey is positioned above a motif symbolising the *fons vitae aeternae* - in the carving this is the chalice, while at Qasr el-Lebia the role is fulfilled by *Kastalia*. At Qasr el-Lebia, *Ananeosis*, crowned by a scallop-shelled dome, presides over the arrangement lending it a soteriological emphasis, while in the Kavala carving this part of the composition is conflated and a simple scallop-shell semi-dome performs the same function. A similar composition appears on the central axis of the sixth-century 'Armenian' pavement, found in Jerusalem, where an eagle, wings lifted and head turned to the right, is positioned in a vine-scroll roundel immediately above a chalice.[62] Here too, then, the scheme might be understood to reference water as purifying and regenerative **(3.3.17)**.

[62] Avi-Yonah (1933) p.36; Evans (1982) pp.217-22



3.3.17 - 'Armenian' pavement

Before leaving the soteriological axis of *Ananeosis*, the eagle with its prey and *Kastalia*, it is worth considering what the eagle as pyschopomp could add to the tableau.[63] Hovering above *Kastalia*, here understood in christological terms, it is possible that the eagle could be understood as a reference to the apotheosis of Christ, or perhaps as symbolising Christ as pyschopomp. Friedman has suggested that by the second century AD, Christ was established, among Christians and pagans alike, as "a leader of souls to an immortal home",[64] an idea attested in John 10:27-8: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish". In the fifth century, Maximus of Turin wrote that "Christ [who] takes the Christian captive to the heavens, as the eagle carries off its prey",[65] and the idea is also encapsulated on the sixth-century Antioch chalice which shows the resurrected Christ seated above an eagle with outstretched wings.[66]

Kastalia's Nudity

Not only is the figure of *Kastalia*, with her pagan associations, a surprising addition to a Christian floor, but her blatant nudity is also unexpected. Roman reticence about public nudity spilled over into the Christian era - naked figures

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[63] The eagle was renowned as a pyschopomp; at the cremation of an emperor a living eagle was released from the funeral pyre to symbolise the soul of the emperor ascending to heaven at his apotheosis, Cumont (1922) pp.158-9; Newbold (1925) pp.362-5

[64] Friedman (1970) p.5

[65] Maximus of Turin, *Homilia* LX, cited in, Bolman (2009) pp.57-66

[66] Newbold (1925); Weitzmann (1979) p.592

were rare and bare-breasted female figures appear even less frequently than naked male figures.[67] As discussed in chapter 3.2, in Late Antiquity, the only situation in which public nudity seems to have been acceptable was during the initiatory ritual of baptism and it is therefore possible to understand the nudity of Jonah and Daniel - and indeed the personifications of the four Rivers of Paradise in the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia - as reflecting the undressed state of baptizands. I would suggest that *Kastalia* could also be seen in the same way. Rather than imitating a classical tradition, her nudity is making reference to the baptismal liturgy which revolved around the purificatory waters of the *fons vitae aeternae*, here represented by the naked *Kastalia*.

Although the iconography is rare, there are two other notable sixth-century examples of bare-breasted female figures in ecclesiastical settings which could be interpreted in a similar way. The first, a bare-breasted personification of the River Nile, "rivulets springing from her breasts", adjacent to the font at Jabaliyah in Israel[68] **(3.3.18)**. The second, a personification of Summer, her right breast bared, in the south aisle of the church at Petra in Jordan[69] **(3.3.19)**.



3.3.18 - Baptistery, Jabaliyah - with detail of personification of Geon

[67] Even in antiquity, most female divinities, with the exception of Aphrodite and Venus, were normally depicted clothed, Jensen (2012) p.304. For a discussion on nudity in early Christian art, see chapter 3.2

[68] Humbert (1999) pp.216-8; Hachlili (2009) p.181 and p.289. This singular example of a River of Paradise is reminiscent of Nonnus' tale of the suicide of Aura in which she is turned into a fountain by Cronion and "her breasts became spouts of falling water", Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* 48. 928

[69] Waliszewski (2001) pp.219-70



3.3.19 - Personification of Summer, Petra

Unlike Geon at Jabiliyah, Summer at Petra is not in a baptismal setting.[70] She is, however, surrounded by imagery traditionally associated with baptism - fish, wading birds, cockerels, and a fisherman. Of particular interest, an eagle - wings lifted and head turned to the left, reminiscent of the eagle above *Kastalia* - hovers above the head of bare-breasted Summer. The orientation of the images suggests that the aisle was intended to be traversed from west to east and, as at Qasr el-Lebia, there is a central axis - a kind of processional corridor - on which Summer is positioned.

These three bare-breasted figures, one from Israel, one from Jordan and one from Cyrenaica, represent, in turn, a River of Paradise, a personification of a season and the nymph of a pagan spring, **(3.3.20)**.



3.3.20 - Three sixth-century bare-breasted female personifications - Geon, Summer and *Kastalia*

[70] A baptistery adjoins the west end of the basilica, Markoe (2003) pp.239-49

The figures are geographically widely-dispersed. They symbolise diverse concepts and adorn pavements in different parts of ecclesiastical complexes, and yet, despite these differences, all three seem to encapsulate a similar meaning. In each case, the breasts have been made the principal focus: Geon's breasts float mesmerisingly on the waters of the river they have created; Summer's one bare breast, supported and displayed in a swag-like fold of material, is given added prominence by small tesserae carefully laid in ever-decreasing concentric circles around her nipple; and *Kastalia's* arm draped over her head draws attention to her breasts.

In their Christian settings, surrounded by Christian imagery, the nudity of these figures is likely to have arrested the gaze of viewers, making them question what the figures signified and challenging preconceptions about what was appropriate imagery in an ecclesiastical setting.

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It would be easy to dismiss the image of *Kastalia* at Qasr el-Lebia as a reference to, or remnant of, a pagan past - a classical figure in a Christian context. However, even though it is impossible to disaffiliate the name, *Kastalia,* from its Apolline connotations, and despite the classical pose and apparent incongruity of her nudity in this setting, she can be understood as an eloquent, if rather covert, allusion to the salvific power of the Christian faith. The figure would undoubtedly have evoked memories of a pagan spring and a classical past, but here, nestled among the Four Rivers of Paradise, an eagle grasping its prey overhead and looked down on by *Ananeosis*, *Kastalia* can be seen to symbolise the regenerative waters of the Fountain of Life. Neither pagan, nor defeated or converted, *Kastalia* combines the oracular utterances of the past with the Christian prophecies of the present - she represents the essence of a past culture in a sixth-century milieu.

3.4: Ocean and Nile

Introduction

An array of aquatic imagery is ranged around three sides of the large pavement in the East Church at Qasr el-Lebia **(3.4.1)**.



3.4.1 - Aquatic scenes around the large pavement

A tradition has grown up which sees pavements with watery borders as imitating the ancient ideogram of the inhabitable world encircled by the mythical *Okeanus* - the earth surrounded by the ocean - and this hypothesis has been applied to the

pavement at Qasr el-Lebia.[1] This section considers how Oceanic and Nilotic imagery may have been perceived by the late antique viewer and what the implications of juxtaposing Ocean and Nile might have been. In conclusion, it will argue that the programme of imagery in the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia, presents a far more nuanced scheme than simply 'earth and ocean'.

Okeanus and Ocean

The idea that the earth was an island surrounded by waters goes back to the earliest period of Greek thought.[2] In ancient Greek cosmology, *Okeanus*, the great fresh-water stream, was believed to encircle the earth like a moat and was credited with being the source – the father - of all terrestrial waters.[3] The moon and stars were believed to rise from and set into its waters and the sun-god sailed from east to west across the stream, marking the eternal flow of time. Elysium, or the Isles of the Blessed, where the chosen few lived a blessed and happy afterlife, lay in the far western streams[4] and to reach the paradisiacal shores of the Isles, the waters of *Okeanus* had to be negotiated.[5]

The advancement of knowledge, even the discovery of a spherical world, seems not to have challenged the concept of a terrestrial earth surrounded by *Okeanus*,[6] and this common concept of Roman cosmography was absorbed into Christian thinking. Eusebius wrote that God "in the middle, like a core, [He] laid out the earth, and then encircled this with Ocean to embellish its outline with dark-blue color".[7] A sixth-century map by Cosmas Indicopleustes, depicted the world as a land-mass surrounded by water, beyond which lay the earthly Paradise[8] **(3.4.2)**.

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[1] For example, Maguire (1987a) p.48; Grabar (1962) p.138. see also, Kitzinger (1951) pp. 81-122; Maguire (1987c) pp.221-8; Engemann (1997) pp.154-6; Barry (2007) pp.634-5

[2] Homeric poems refer to the ocean as a river encircling the earth, Kitzinger (1951) p.102

[3] Hansen (2004) p.16. In the *Iliad*, *Okeanus* is twice introduced as the begetter of the gods and even as the origin of all things, *Iliad* 14.201 and 302; 14.246, cited in Nesselrath (2005) p.153

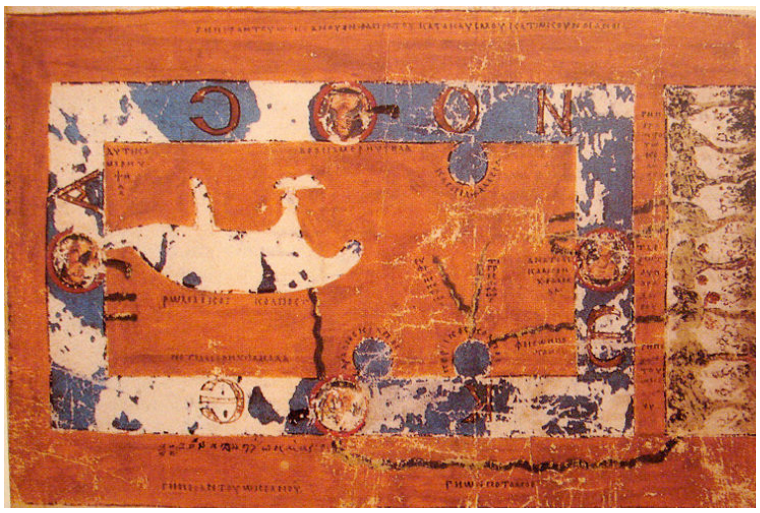
[4] Peck (1897) pp.588-9; Sacks (1997) pp.8-9; Hansen (2004) p.22 and p.161

[5] Griffiths (1947) p.124; Toynbee (1964) p.309

[6] The geographer, Strabo, wrote – quoting Homer - that "The inhabited world is washed on all sides by Oceanus, and this is true;" Strabo *Geography* 1.1.3, Jones (1969) vol.1, p.5

[7] Eusebius, *De laudibus Constantini* 6.6, cited in Maguire (1987a) p.21

[8] Winstedt (1909) pl.7



3.4.2 - World map (north at top) Cosmas Indicopleustes

In the early Christian period, the journey across the waters of *Okeanus* to the Isles of the Blessed came to be seen as synonymous with the transition of the faithful from earth to heaven.[9] Clement of Alexandria described the passage from earth to Paradise as a voyage which culminated in being steered "to anchor in the haven of heaven",[10] and this ideology is often referenced in early Christian imagery. On a fourth-century sarcophagus, now in the Camposanto at Pisa, for example, the deceased, at the centre of a marine *thiasos,* is being transported over the water **(3.4.3)**.



3.4.3 - Sarcophagus with bust of deceased and marine *thiasos,* Camposanto, Pisa

It is also possible that the ubiquitous phenomenon of strigilation on sarcophagi, read in various terms of reference and signification, may also have been a reference

[9] See for example, Toynbee (1964) pp.309-310; Friedman (1967) p.9; Barry (2011) pp. 11-12

[10] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.7 cited from earlychristianwritings.com. 9.3.2012

to the waters to be crossed by the deceased; the strigils - abstracted curling waves - symbolising the separation between this realm and the next[11] **(3.4.4)**.



3.4.4 - Strigilated sarcophagus, Camposanto, Pisa

In Late Antiquity, the Ocean was perceived in a number of different and often contradictory ways. As well as retaining an association with *Okeanus*, the Ocean was understood as the purveyor of turmoil and disorder - a formidable and threatening force and a place to be feared.[12] Biblical texts refer to the Ocean as an abyss, the depth and a bottomless pit;[13] it was the "watery chaos of the material world",[14] the chasm of unruly waters harbouring the "primeval dragon of chaos" which threatened the organisation of the world,[15] and the place where "God keeps the sea monsters in the solitary depths, lest they disturb the world's shipping".[16] However, the Ocean also had a more benign nature and, perhaps acting as a marine foil to *Ge*'s earthly abundance, was understood to symbolise the abundance of the seas.[17] A passage from John Chrysostom's *De inani Gloria* describes a scene at Antioch when the generosity of a local benefactor was celebrated:[18]

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[11] Gütschow, however, saw strigilated sarcophagi as imitating wooden caskets, Gütschow (1931) p.109. Hanfmann and McCann see strigilar decoration as a practical and relatively inexpensive form of decoration which allowed figures to be added to the ends and centre of compositions, Hanfmann (1951) p.26; McCann (1978) p.138. Evans has proposed that the undulating motifs were inspired by tools used by athletes in the gymnasium to scrape oil and sand from their bodies, Evans et al. (2001) p.11. Huskinson prefers to emphasise the connection between strigilations and architectural motifs, such as spiral columns which were often found in spaces of sanctity, Janet Huskinson, *pers.comm.* 9.3.2012

[12] McGinn (1994) p.158

[13] For example, Genesis 1:2; Jonah 2:5; Revelation 9:2; Revelation 11:7

[14] Lamberton (1983) p.39; McGinn (1994) p.158

[15] McGinn (1994) p.156

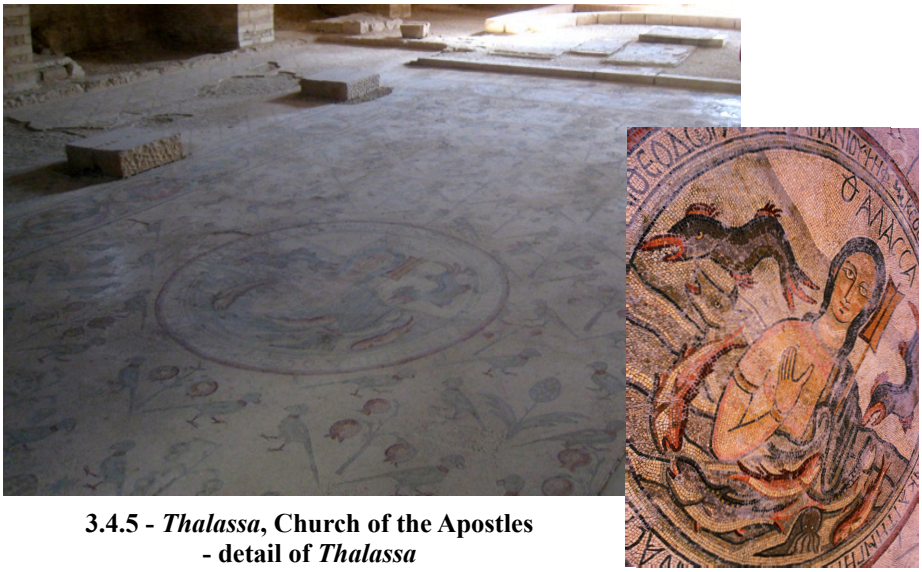
[16] George of Pisidia, *Hexaemeron* , lines 1005-8; Migne, PG, XCII, col. 1511, cited in Maguire (1987a) p.34

[17] See for example, St. Basil *Adversus Eunomium* 1.16 and Gregory Nazianzenus *Oratio* 38.7. McGinn (1994) p.158

[18] John Chrysostom, *De inani Gloria* 4-5, cited in Laistner (1951) pp.87-8

> All with one voice call him protector and ruler of their common city and stretch out their hands in salutation. Next, betweenwhiles they liken him to the greatest of rivers, comparing his grand and lavish munificence to the copious waters of the Nile; and they call him the Nile of gifts. Others, flattering him still more and thinking the simile to the Nile too mean, reject rivers and seas; and they instance the ocean and say that he in his lavish gifts is what Ocean is among the waters, and they leave not a word of praise unsaid.

A visual representation of the Ocean - or in this case, the sea - celebrated as provider of plenty, can be found in the sixth-century Church of the Apostles at Madaba in Jordan which has as its centrepiece a personification of *Thalassa* - a reference to God's abundance, perhaps[19] **(3.4.5)**.



3.4.5 - *Thalassa*, Church of the Apostles
- detail of *Thalassa*

The idea of Ocean as abundance is further highlighted in the sixth-century Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm er-Rasas in Jordan where the Ocean - in this case a personification identified as *Abyss* - is located at the east end of the nave, immediately in front of the sanctuary, while *Ge*, a well-known figure of plenty, has been relegated to the west end[20] **(3.4.6)**.

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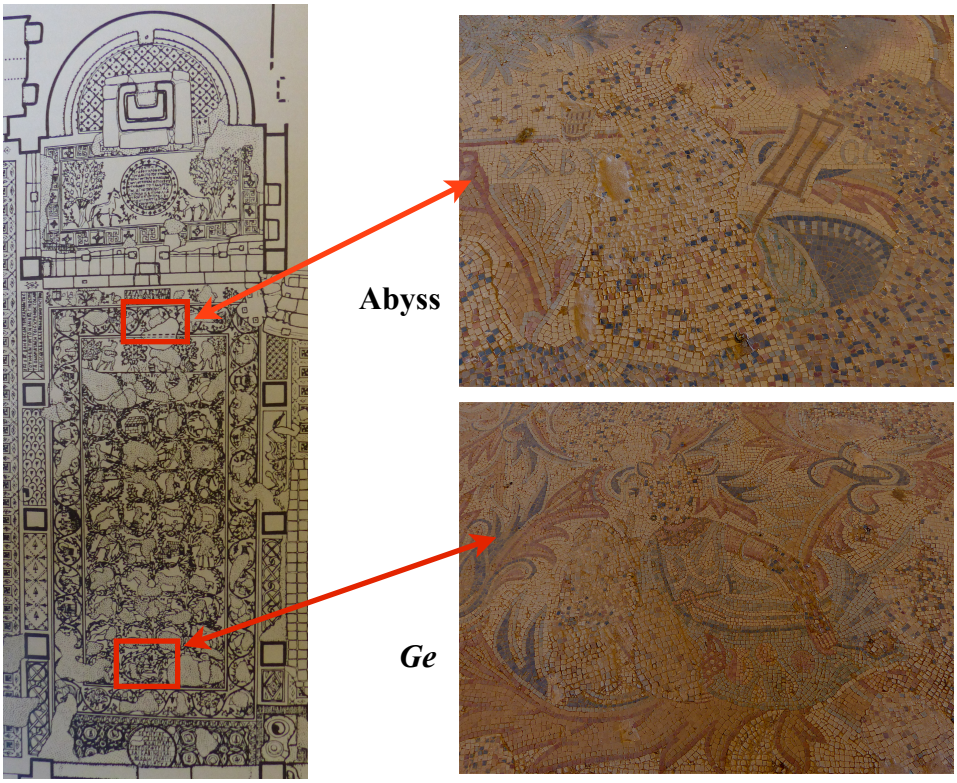
[19] The mosaic is accompanied by the inscription: "O Lord God who has made the heavens and earth, give life to Anastasius, to Thomas and Theodora. [This is the work] of Salaman the mosaicist", Piccirillo (1997) p.106. Wages makes a case for the personification of *Thalassa* evolving from the figure of *Tethys*, the consort of *Okeanus,* Wages (1986) pp. 123-5. See also Boyce (1958) pp.68-70

[20] Both personifications have been defaced but are identifiable by attributes and inscriptions, Piccirillo (1997) pp.234-5



3.4.6 - *Abyss* and *Ge*, Church of Bishop Sergius, Umm er-Rasas

Ocean was also sometimes seen as a protective influence; a visual attestation to this interpretation can be seen in a late fourth- or early fifth-century pavement at Ain Témouchent near Sétif in Algeria, where a personification of *Okeanus* is accompanied by an inscription invoking the gaze of the mask as protection against misfortune caused by envy[21] **(3.4.7)**.



3.4.7 - *Okeanus*, Ain Témouchent

[21] *Invida sidereo rumpantur pectora visu cedat et in nostris / lingua proterva locis hoc studio superamus avos gratumque / renidet aedibus in nostris summus apex operis feliciter.* Dunbabin (1978) pp.151-2; Dunbabin and Dickie (1983) p.13; Maguire (1999b) p.245; Maguire (2012) pp.17-20

There seem, then, to have been multiple and co-existing strands to the nature of Ocean and it is difficult to determine where the idea of *Okeanus* - the great freshwater stream and primordial force - ended and the concept of a terrestrial Ocean began. There also appears to be a discrepancy between Ocean as abyss and bottomless pit and Ocean as a symbol of abundance and a protective force. It seems that, as Christian theology developed, these bodies of water, merged to become one and the same thing.

Nilotic Imagery

Imagery representing the River Nile has been a recurrent theme throughout the Mediterranean from the beginning of the first century BC onwards.[22] Distinctive features, such as Nilometers, representations of the city of Alexandria or personifications of the Nile were common components in this imagery, but even without these defining landmarks, the genre is instantly recognisable from the ubiquitous Nilotic flora and fauna. In Late Antiquity, the Nile was still regarded as conveyor of material prosperity and Nilotic images were understood as symbols of divine providence, wealth and fecundity.[23] This imagery did not necessarily signal a special connection with Egypt or express cultic associations,[24] rather, it symbolised the annual inundation of the Nile.[25] The importance of this event cannot be over-exaggerated; the cyclical floods receded to leave the erstwhile parched land replenished and fertile and the resulting crops - controlled and distributed by the *annona* - helped ensure the continued well-being of the entire empire.[26] Rites and traditions around the Nile's surge were deeply embedded in communal culture and inextricably interwoven into day-to-day existence; as Frankfurter points out, they were so bound up with the rhythms of the agricultural cycle that "neither priestly nor imperial nor, ultimately, Christian institutions could alter its cultural significance."[27]

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[22] Meyboom (1995) p.16

[23] Balty (1995) p.245; Maguire (1999a) p.181; Versluys (2002) pp.294-5; Lee (2009) p.64

[24] Balty (1995) pp.249-53; Hamerneh (1999) p.189

[25] Versluys (2002) pp.294-5

[26] Temin (2013) p.105

[27] Rites surrounding the anticipated surge were fixed astronomically but the *sēmasia* festival only took place when the river attained its optimum height, Frankfurter (1998) p.42

Despite the fact that the annual flood was now heralded as an annual illustration and celebration of God's creation of the world,[28] there remained a reluctance to transfer responsibility for this vitally important act of nature from the tried and tested hands of the pagan gods, in particular, Serapis, Isis and Demeter, to the control of the new Christian God. This recalcitrance is highlighted by the pagan writer, Libanius, who notes that, despite an eagerness on the part of Christians to abolish all feasts to the pagan deities, feasts to the Nile continued.[29] On the same subject, Firmicus Maternus writes:[30]

> In vain do you suppose that this (Nile) water that you worship will ever bring you profit. For it is through another water that people are renewed and reborn.

At Hermopolis in Egypt, an annual festival which anticipated the flood persisted into the Christian era. It involved inhabitants and priests parading a large wooden statue through the local villages in a "bacchic frenzy".[31] It has also been recorded that the *sēmasia* continued to be celebrated at the Temple of Akoris well into the fifth century.[32] Late antique writings attest to a continued worship or veneration of the Nile: a fourth-century hymn praises and personifies the Nile, referring to its waters as "life-giving" and "divine" and acclaiming the Nile as "king of rivers" and "nourisher of children";[33] a sixth-century Greek papyrus contains a supplication to the river which reads; "Come O Nile, climb up to the sixteen cubits which bring joy";[34] and a sixth-century eulogising hymn, in a syncretistic combination of ancient cultural tradition and Christian belief, begins with the pagan-like invocation, "O most fortunate Nile, smilingly have you watered the land; rightly do we present to you a hymn," but concludes in a prayer to Christ the Saviour, "True illumination, Christ, benefactor [save] the souls of men, now and [forever]".[35] It seems, then, that despite being superficially Christianised, rituals and beliefs

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[28] Meyboom (1995) p.380. A sixth-century letter from a Christian at Oxyrhynchus illustrates this belief: "To the most honourable Calus, secretary of the noble house. I again bring the good news to your honor that the blessed fertilizing river of Egypt has risen by the power of Christ", Maguire, Maguire and Duncan-Flowers (1989) p.15

[29] Libanius *Orationes* 30.35, cited in Haas (2006) pp.166-7

[30] Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum* 2.1, cited in Hermann (1959) p.48

[31] Frankfurter (1998) p.44

[32] Weiss and Talgam (2002) p.69. For general discussion on the *sēmasia*, Meyboom (1995) pp.72-3

[33] Cribiore (1995) p.99

[34] Bonneau (1964) pp.411

[35] From a sixth-century papyrus found in Antinoë, cited in Manfredi (1981) p.56

concerning the annual flood, continued almost unaltered through the first centuries of the Christian era.[36]

Despite the continued veneration of the river Nile, Nilotic imagery was quickly assimilated into Christian iconography and deemed a suitable subject for the decoration of churches, where it principally signified an abundance of earthly delights, paradise on earth, and spiritual regeneration.[37] Examples of Nilotic imagery in church pavements are plentiful and include: the north and south transepts of the fifth-century Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha in Israel[38] **(3.4.8)**; the nave border of the sixth-century chapel of El Maqerqesh at Beth Govrin in Israel[39] **(3.4.9)**; a late fifth- or early sixth-century pavement in the church at Zay al-Gharby in Jordan[40] **(3.4.10)**; and a section in the pavement of the sixth-century church of St John the Baptist at Gerasa, also in Jordan[41] **(3.4.11)**.



3.4.8 - Detail from Church of the Multiplication, Tabgha



3.4.9 - Detail from nave border, Chapel of el-Maqerqesh, Beth Govrin



3.4.10 - Detail from nave, Zay al-Gharby



3.4.11 - Detail of exedra, St. John the Baptist, Gerasa

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[36] Talgam makes the point that these rites should be viewed as folklore or popular traditions rather than as evidence of pagan enclaves within a Christian society, Talgam (2004) p.234

[37] Hermann (1959) pp.64-7; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.51; Maguire (1999a) p.181; Lee de (2009) p.65

[38] Kitzinger (1976) p.54

[39] Avi-Yonah (1981) p.293

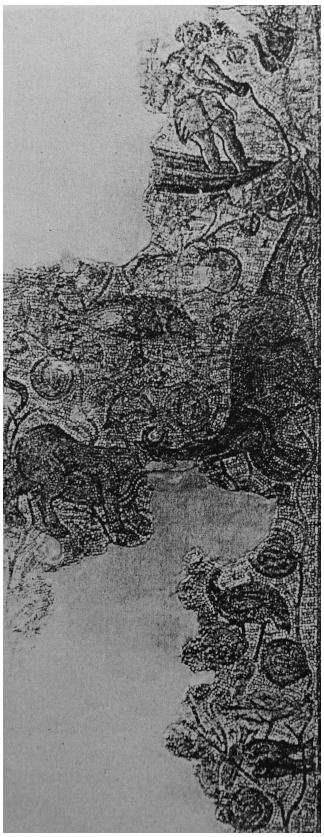
[40] Piccirillo (1997) p.324

[41] Piccirillo (1997) pp.287-9

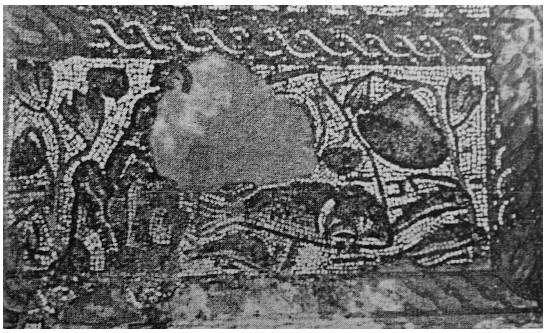
In Cyrenaica, Nilotic imagery has also been found in a sixth-century pavement from Taucheira **(3.4.12)**, and in the East Church at Cyrene[42] **(3.4.13-14)**.



3.4.12 - Nilotic imagery surrounding a personification of Euphrates



3.4.13 - Nilotic imagery, North aisle, East Church, Cyrene



3.4.14 - Nilotic imagery, south porch, East Church, Cyrene

At Qasr el-Lebia, there is a Nilotic scene in the north-east annex[43] as well as in panels ranging around the edge of the large pavement **(3.4.15)**.

[42] For Cyrenaican mosaics, see Appendix 2

[43] For north-east annex, see Appendix 1



3.4.15 - Nilotic panel, north-east annex, East Church Complex

It is noticeable however, that even though Nilotic imagery was acceptable - desirable even - in ecclesiastical contexts, individual personifications of the Nile were only used in the guise of the paradisiacal Geon - and even then, only when chaperoned by the other three Rivers of Paradise, thereby reducing the possibility of the figure being worshipped. [44]

Earth and Ocean Compositions

In Late Antiquity, the theme of 'earth and ocean' regularly appeared in church pavements - the terrestrial imagery countering heavenly scenes which are thought to have adorned the ceilings of many churches.[45] The idea of depicting the earth surrounded by water was, however, not a Christian construct. At Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, for example, the Teatro Marittimo, a circular building encompassed by a ring canal – quite literally land surrounded by water - had entablatures running around the outside edge of the island decorated with a sculpted marine *thiasos* frieze, enhancing the impression of earth and ocean[46] **(3.4.16-17)**.

[44] A personification of Nile was recorded in a building at Jiyeh in Lebanon which may have been a church, although this categorisation has never been confirmed, Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski (2000) pp.165-77. In a church at Umm el-Manabi in Jordan a figure, now lost, has also tentatively been identified as a personification of Nile, although this interpretation has been treated with scepticism, Glueck (1951) pp.229-30

[45] Kitzinger (1951) p.107; Avi Yonah (1972) p.122

[46] Barry (2011) p.24. For catalogue of sculpted friezes, Ueblacker (1985);



3.4.16 - Teatro Marittimo, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli



3.4.17 - Teatro Marittimo - detail of marine *thiasos*

One of the best-known Christian 'earth and ocean' compositions is the mosaic pavement in the north transept of Basilica A - the Basilica of Dometios - at Nikopolis.[47] A central panel of fruiting trees, plants and birds is enclosed by a series of borders, the largest of which is an aquatic border densely populated by fish, sea-creatures and fishermen **(3.4.18)**.

[47] The basilica and its pavements have been dated to the middle of the sixth century. See Kitzinger (1951) p.92; Maguire (1987a) p.22; Dunbabin (1999) p.219



3.4.18 -'Earth and Ocean' mosaic, Basilica A, Nikopolis

An inscription in a *tabula ansata* glosses the subject of the composition:[48]

> Here you see the famous and boundless ocean
> Containing in its midst the earth
> Bearing round about in the skilful images of art everything that breathes and creeps
> The foundation of Dometios, the greathearted archpriest.

This combination of paradisiacal imagery and laudatory text presents a visual sermon on God's Creation.[49] It also worked as a kind of *mappa mundi*, allowing visitors to stand above "the entire earth with the ocean all around."[50] Perhaps taking this floor with its explanatory inscription as a model, modern scholarship has categorised other pavements with aquatic borders, including the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, as 'earth and ocean' compositions. These include the late fifth- or early sixth-century church of St. John the Baptist at Uum Hartaine in Syria,[51] a late fifth- or early sixth-century church at Khalde in Lebanon,[52] the sixth-century chapel of Thyrsus at Tegea in Greece,[53] and the pavement in the narthex of the sixth-century Great Basilica at Heraclea Lyncestis in Macedonia.[54]

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[48] Translation in Kitzinger (1951) pp.100-1

[49] Kitzinger (1976) p.58

[50] Kitzinger (1951) p.106

[51] Donceel-Voûte (1988) pp.192-201

[52] Donceel-Voûte (1988) pp.359-71

[53] Åkerström-Hougen (1974) pp.120-3

[54] Gjorgjievska (2008)

The idea of 'earth and ocean' was not solely confined to floor mosaics. The fourth-century decoration of the central dome of Santa Constanza in Rome, now destroyed but known from an engraving by Pietro Santi, had an aquatic border running around the rim of the dome, seemingly separating the earth below from heaven above[55] **(3.4.19)**. The sixth-century intarsia revetment panels in the apse of the sixth-century Basilica of Eufrasius at Porec in Croatia are decorated with tridents - a reference to the sea - and cornucopias - a reference to earthly abundance[56] **(3.4.20)**. Finally, the ornately carved ceiling beams in the sixth-century church of St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai, alternate geometric or foliate designs with land or aquatic compositions[57] **(3.4.21)**.

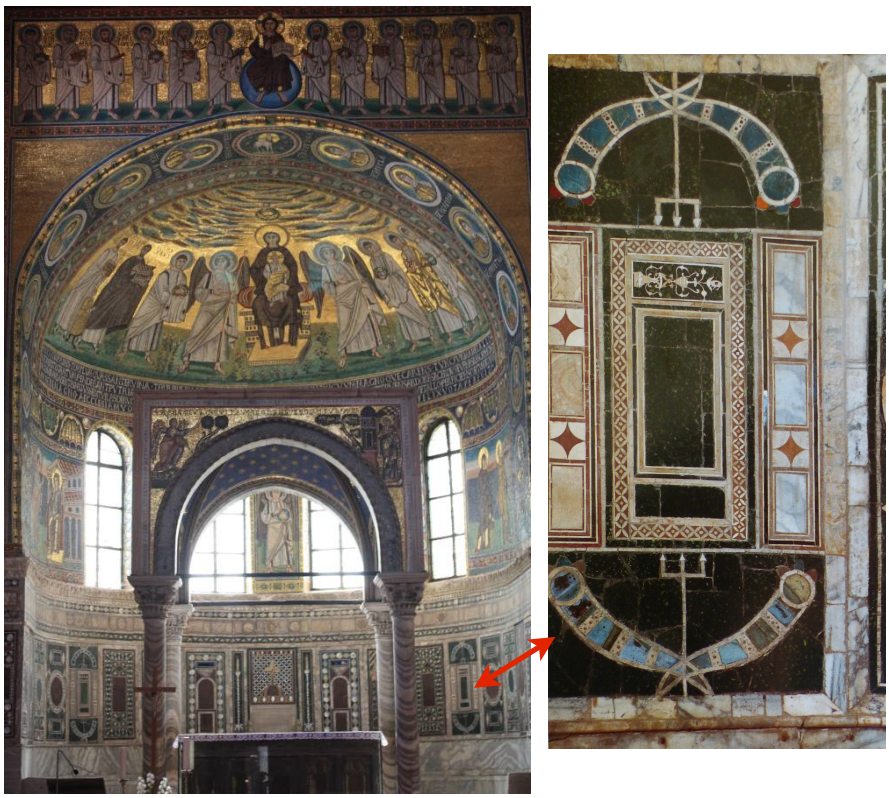


3.4.19 - Central dome, Santa Constanza - drawing by Pietro Santi Bartoli

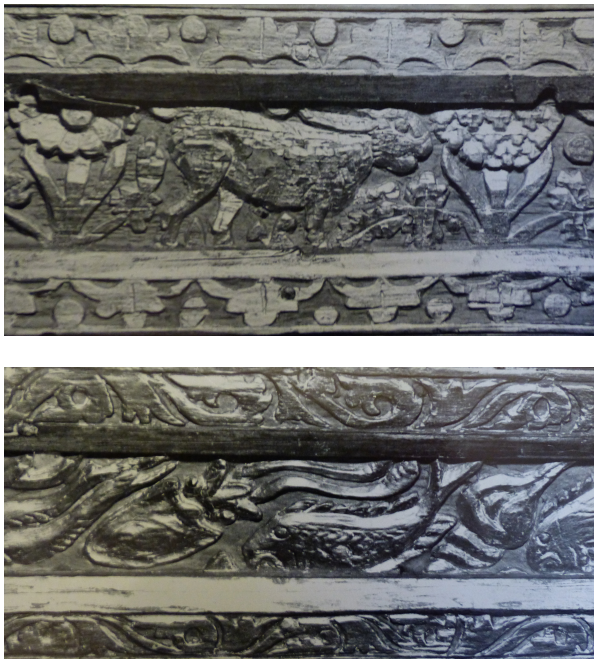
[55] Stern (1958) p.167

[56] Maguire (1987a) p.77; Terry and Maguire (2007)

[57] Maguire (1987a) pp.28-29. Ornamentation of the beams at St. Catherine's from the east: 1–land; 3–sea; 5–land; 6–land; 9–air; 12–Nilotic. The remaining beams are adorned with foliate rinceaux, Forsyth and Weitzmann (1973)



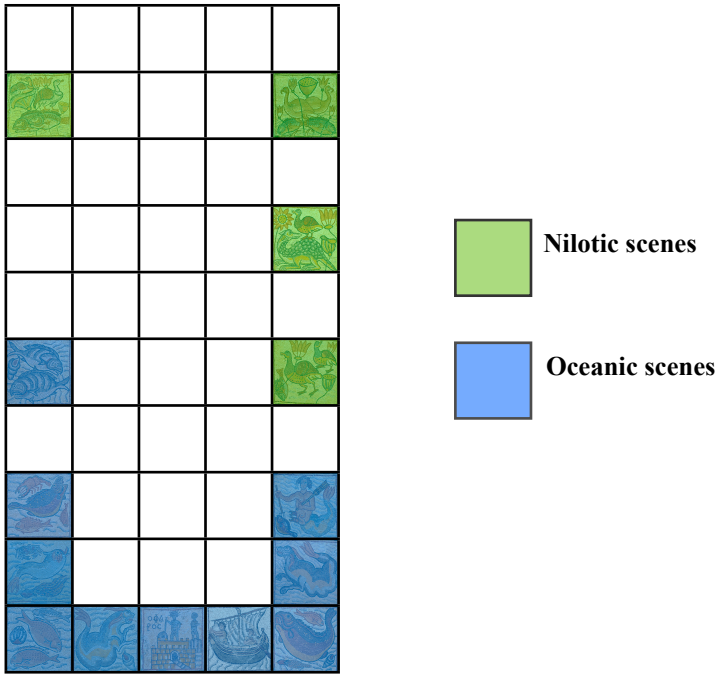
3.4.20 - Basilica of Eufrasius, detail of intarsia panel



3.4.21 - St. Catherine's Monastery - detail of land beam (top) and aquatic beam (bottom)

Ocean and Nile at Qasr el-Lebia

Addressing the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, Maguire remarks that "river life, especially the flora and fauna, is mingled with marine life in the outside frames".[58] However, unlike most so-called 'earth and ocean' compositions, at Qasr el-Lebia there is no jumble of Oceanic and Nilotic motifs. Rather, care has been taken to identify the two bodies of water as distinct. The subject matter does this quite effectively - whelks, squid, lobsters, crabs, anemones and sea-monsters in the Oceanic panels; ducks, flamingos, a crocodile and lotus plants in the Nilotic panels. However, to ensure that there could be no confusion, in the Oceanic scenes, a watery background of blue-grey wavy lines fills the entire panel, while in the Nilotic scenes, the water only covers the lower half of the panels. In other words, the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, although ostensibly in-keeping with other sixth-century 'earth and ocean' compositions, is actually distinguished from them by the clear divide between the Oceanic imagery, dominating the east end of the pavement, and Nilotic imagery, confined to the west **(3.4.22)**.



3.4.22 - Placement of Nilotic and Oceanic scenes

[58] Maguire (1987a) p.47. It seems that in late antique art a distinction between the two genres of flora and fauna - Oceanic and Nilotic - was not necessarily recognised - the border in the south transept of the basilica at Nikopolis,for example, despite being referred to in the inscription as *ΩKEANON*, includes both Nilotic and oceanic imagery, Maguire (1987a) p.22

Among the Oceanic scenes are two hybrid sea-monsters **(3.4.23)**.



3.4.23 - Sea-monsters, east end of large pavement

Traditionally, sea-monsters proliferated alongside nereids and tritons on Roman sarcophagi, where they symbolised the passage of the deceased across the sea to the Isles of the Blessed.[59] **(3.4.24)**.



3.4.24 - Third-century sarcophagus with a Nereid and sea-bull, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Museo Nuovo, Rome

In early Christian contexts, sea-monsters, particularly creatures with canine-like heads, were most commonly associated with the Jonah narrative. According to Elliot, the sea-dog would have been particularly appropriate for this imagery as the 'great fish' which swallowed Jonah is sometimes identified with the species *Canis*

[59] Lawrence (1962) p.294. For general discussion, see Cumont (1966). These hybrid creatures - half-fish, half-mammal - also constituted a favourite motif for mosaic pavements, for example the fourth-century pavement at Littlecote Hall, Wiltshire in England, see Witts (2010) esp. pp.90-1

Carcharias, the sea-dog or shark, often found in the Mediterranean.[60] Iconographic examples of this type of sea-dog include, a fourth-century double register sarcophagus from the Cemetery of Calixtus in Rome **(3.4.25)**, and a late fourth-century loculus slab from the Cemetery of Praetextatus, also in Rome **(3.4.26)**.



3.4.25 - Sarcophagus, St Calixtus, Rome - now in the Vatican Museums



3.4.26 - Loculus slab, St. Praetextatus, Rome

The Jonah narrative was a popular subject for the decoration of catacombs **(3.4.27-28)** and was also found, although less frequently, in floor mosaics **(3.2.29)**.

[60] Elliott (1890) p.137. It was a common belief amongst fishermen that every land animal had its counterpart in the sea, for example, sea-dog, sea-cat, etc, Gregor (1885) p.183



3.4.27 - Jonah, Catacombs of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter



3.4.28 - Jonah, Catacomb of Priscilla



3.4.29 - Jonah narrative, Aquileia basilica, with details of Jonah

Jonah is not represented in the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, but it is possible that the sea-monsters may have been understood as an underlying reference to his soteriological narrative, particularly the creature on the northern side of the pavement with its canine-like head and paws. Staying with this line of thought, there are other elements in the pavement which could be seen to be making a similar allusion; the musician sits beside a tree hung with fruits reminiscent of the gourds above a reclining Jonah[61] and, further west in the pavement, *Kastalia's* pose brings to mind classical depictions of Endymion, the mythological figure on which Jonah is generally thought to have been modelled.[62]

[61] See chapter 3.6

[62] For discussion of Jonah and classical prototypes, see chapter 4.1

For the most part, however, sea-monsters in Late Antiquity represented a borrowing from Greek tradition[63] and given that there are two sea-monsters, it is possible that these creatures could have been introduced as references to the mythological *Scylla* and *Charybdis*. In Greek mythology *Scylla*, derived from either the Greek *skyllaros* - dog, or *skylax* - dog-shark,[64] was a ferocious fish-tailed sea-goddess with a cluster of canine fore-parts around her waist and a voice which sounded like the yelping of dogs. *Charybdis,* almost always associated with *Scylla,* was a personified whirlpool or bladder which, three times a day, sucked in and then spewed out vast quantities of water.[65] These two monsters occupied rocks either side of the Strait of Messina and were located close enough together to pose an inescapable threat to sailors - avoiding one meant falling prey to the other.[66] *Scylla* and *Charybdis* were still known - and indeed made reference to - in Late Antiquity; Jerome, for example, is recorded as having paused by the shores of Scylla to contemplate the ancient myths of *Scylla*, C*harybdis* and *Odysseus*,[67] and Synesius, when describing a drunken slave who had to be tied to the mast of a ship to keep him from the wine, made reference to *Odysseus* who had to negotiate both the sirens and *Scylla* and *Charybdis.*[68] A pavement found in a sixth-century building, possibly a synagogue, at Beth She'an in Israel, depicts this scene with the fragmentary remains of two sea-monsters, interpreted by Jente as *Scylla* and *Charybdis,* on either side of Odysseus' ship[69] **(3.4.30)**.

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[63] Shepard (1940) p.3; Lawrence (1962) p.295

[64] Shepard (1940) p.96

[65] Stoneman (1991) p.51; Hansen (2004) p.231-2

[66] Hansen (2004) pp.231-2. Thetis was instructed by Hera to guide the Argonauts through the Strait of Messina avoiding *Scylla* and *Charabydis,* cited in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 4. 786 and 825, Rieu (1971) p.12

[67] Rahner (1963) pp.339-40

[68] Synesius of Cyrene, *Epistula* 32 Crawford (1901) p.301

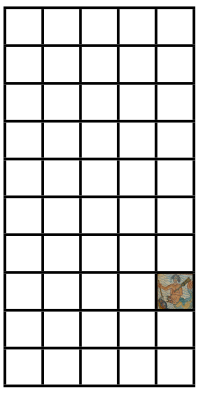
[69] Jente (2000) pp.241-8; Förster (1990) pp.549-50



3.4.30 - Odysseus with fragmented remains of two sea-monsters, Beth She'an

At Qasr el-Lebia, the two hybrid sea-monsters are positioned in the manner of *Scylla* and *Charybdis* either side of the entrance to this part of the complex. Teeth bared and ready to attack, these fierce creatures can be seen as the malevolent counterparts of guarding lions, bedevilling the entrance of whoever ventured into the building - responding perhaps to the lions guarding the eagle with its prey towards the west end of the pavement.

Also among the Oceanic imagery is a merman **(3.4.31)**.





3.4.31 - Merman and position in pavement

The earliest recorded merman, the sea-god *Ea,* or *Oannes*, was a god of the early Babylonians and is known from fragmented reports of an account given by Berossus, a Chaldean priest of about 200 BC.[70] The merman reappeared in classical mythology as Triton, son and attendant of Poseidon and god of the great salt-lake Tritonis, believed to have been located in Libya.[71] The depiction of the merman at Qasr el-Lebia resembles images of *Phorkys*, a fish-tailed hybrid sea-god, with crab-claw forelegs growing from his belly - particularly relevant here as one of his off-spring was *Scylla*[72] **(3.4.32)**. The figure also brings to mind the sea-god *Okeanus* who was usually depicted with the upper torso of a man, lower body of a serpent, crab-claws growing from his forehead and surrounded by a variety of fish or hybrid sea-monsters - attributes which underscored his lordship of the ocean[73] **(3.4.33)**.



3.4.32 - *Phorkys* and *Keto*, from Antioch, now in Antakya Museum

[70] Fragments of Berros' writings are known from quotations cited by authors at the beginning of the Christian era, for example, Flavius Josephus and Alexander Polyhistor, Waugh (1960) p.73

[71] Herodotus *The Histories,* IV. 42-43, Rawlinson (1934) p.261; Stoneman (1991) p.33. See also, Gottschick (1858) p.3. The legend of Triton guiding the Argonauts on their perilous journey through the desert from Lake Tritonis to the sea would make Triton a suitable figure to be used here and Sichtermann refers to the figure at Qasr el-Lebia as Triton, even though the fork he holds is four-pronged, rather than three-pronged, Sichtermann (1959) p. 346.

[72] *Phorkys* and *Keto* were parents of *Scylla*, Fontenrose (1959) p.96

[73] Barry (2011) p.11



3.4.33 - Roman mosaic of *Okeanus* from Utica, now in Bardo Museum, Tunis

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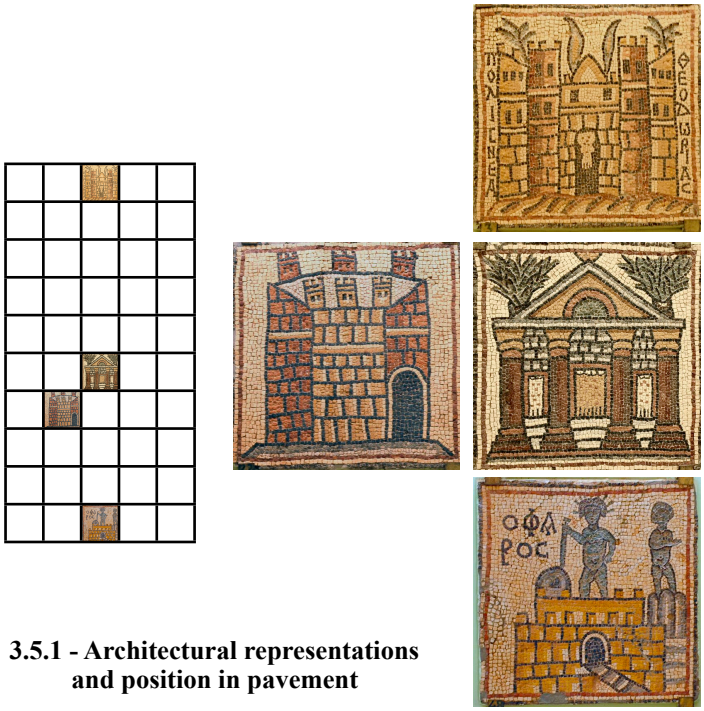
The clean-shaven young merman at Qasr el-Lebia may be a long way from the usual representations of *Okeanus*, but the crab-claws sprouting from his stomach, his fish-tail, paddle and fork, together with the surrounding sea creatures, may have been enough to call to mind this mythical god. Given the oceanic imagery, the boat heading towards the guiding light of the *Pharos* and the paradisiacal beacon of the peacock's tail ahead, it seems very possible the merman could have been understood as a reference to *Okeanus*. In the same way that the transitional waters of *Okeanus* had to be crossed to reach the Isles of the Blessed on its western shores, so the east end of the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia had to be negotiated to attain Paradise in the west.

3.5: Axial Architectural Representations

Introduction

Nestled among the flora and fauna of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia are four architectural representations. Three of the four lie on the central axis of the pavement and the fourth, just to the south of it. Two of the four buildings are identified by inscription, but the identity of the other two is not known **(3.5.1)**.



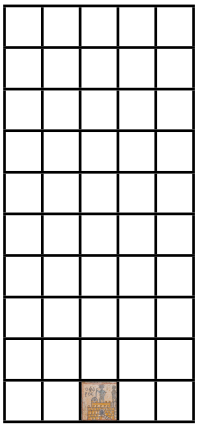
3.5.1 - Architectural representations and position in pavement

Pharos

At the east end of the pavement an architectural representation, identified by inscription as ΟΦΑΡΟC,[1] is generally accepted as representing the Alexandrian *Pharos*[2] **(3.5.2)**.

[1] The usual labelling of *Pharos* seems to have been ΦΑΡΟC, Fakharani (1974) p.264

[2] The *Pharos* was designed by Greek architect Sostratus of Cnidus during the reign of Ptolemy II. At this time, only the name of the king was allowed on buildings erected during their reigns but Sostratus carved a personal dedication which he then covered with the official dedication to Ptolemy. Sostratus' inscription reads: "Sostratus of Cnidus, son of Dexiphanes, to the savior gods, for sailors", McKenzie (2007) p.41



3.5.2 - *Pharos* and position in pavement



The structure has two crenellated tiers, a ramp leading to an arched doorway,[3] and is surmounted by a dome-like feature.[4] A monumental naked figure standing on top of this structure is crowned by a rayed halo and holds a staff. Behind the *Pharos*, and separated from it by a stretch of water, is an unidentified trilobite structure topped by a second naked figure, also nimbed but seemingly empty-handed. Unlike the other figures in the pavement which have pinky-cream coloured skin, these colossal figures, although shown with life-like anatomy and in natural poses, are a grey-green colour suggesting that they probably represent bronze statues.

The *Pharos* of Alexandria, a navigational tower which was later transformed into a lighthouse, was built between 283–279 BC on the eastern tip of the island of Pharos, connected to the mainland by a *Heptastadion* - a man-made causeway.[5] At about 400 feet high, the *Pharos* was one of the tallest structures on earth. Clad in brilliant white marble and adorned with numerous sculptures,[6] it became a

[3] For Goodchild, the ramp, which is remarkably similar to the steps on the *Pharos* coins of Alexandria from around the time of Domitian, is an indication that this building represented the Alexandrian *Pharos*, Goodchild (1961a) p.220. The ramp was described in an Arab text in AD 1166, McKenzie (2007) p.42

[4] This object may represent the large mirror on top of the *Pharos* which has been described as being used both telescopically and defensively, Thiersch (1909) p.40

[5] The *Heptastadion* measured seven stadia, Haas (2006) p.24. One stade measured about 600 Grecian feet, Rennell (1800) p.15

[6] Elnashi et al. (2006) p.138

celebrated landmark, announcing Alexandria as the gateway to Egypt[7]- in the same way that the hills and the walls of Rome came to stand for the city itself,[8] so "the Pharos became Alexandria and Alexandria became the Pharos".[9] The building was toppled by a series of earthquakes between AD 320 and AD 1303.

The main focus of the composition at Qasr el-Lebia, however, seems not to be the building, but the two monumental statues for which the *Pharos* and the trilobed structure appear to serve as bases. Textual and visual evidence attests to the fact that the *Pharos* was originally topped by a statue, although the identity of the figure remains uncertain. At one time it was thought to be a statue of Isis Pharia,[10] but at the beginning of the twentieth century, Thiersch argued for the figure being Poseidon.[11] In the 1930s, this identification was undermined by the discovery of a glass cup at Begram in Afghanistan which shows the *Pharos* surmounted by a beardless male figure - thought to be an unlikely portrayal of a Greek god - and a Ptolemaic ruler became the preferred identification[12] **(3.5.3)**.



3.5.3 - Begram cup, fom Afgahanistan

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[7] Lighthouses modelled on the Alexandrian *Pharos* were built at Taposiris Magna, Ostia, Ravenna, Syria and Dalmatia. A system of watchtowers, similar to the *Pharos* but on a much smaller scale, extended westwards along the North African coast connecting Alexandria with Cyrene. The tower at Abusir survives, Forster (1922) p.16

[8] Paulinus of Pella in a confessional poem to God, describes the topography of Rome as, "the renowned walls of famous Rome on the world's heights", Vout (2012) p.106; Roberts (2001) p.542

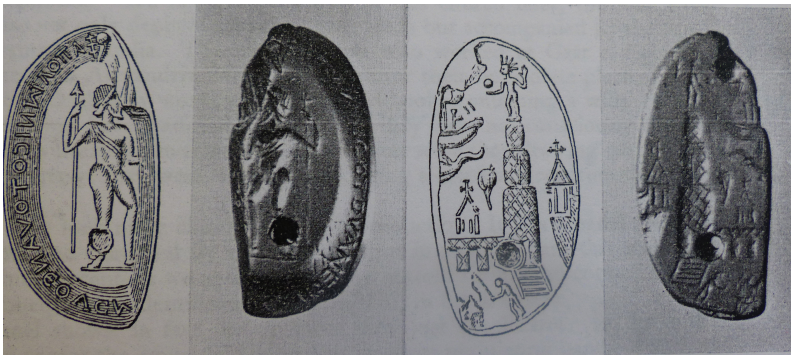
[9] Forster (1922) p.133

[10] On coins, Isis is often shown next to the *Pharos* rather than atop it. The epithet 'Pharia' was probably added to Isis to refer to her cult place on the island of Pharos, Handler (1971) p.60

[11] Thiersch (1909) pp.8-12

[12] Goodchild (1961a) p.218; Handler (1971) p.60

More recently, Goodchild, making reference to the radial halo worn by the statue at Qasr el-Lebia, has proposed that Helios would not have been out of place atop the *Pharos*, observing that, not only has the Colossus of Rhodes been identified as Helios,[13] but that a haematite gem, now in the British Museum, is engraved with a lighthouse surmounted by Helios[14] **(3.5.4)**.



3.5.4 - Haemetite Gem, British Museum

The idiosyncratic tripartite structure on which the second statue stands is puzzling. Goodchild, without much conviction, has suggested that the feature may be a triumphal arch or even intended for part of the Serapeum.[15] The distinctive edifice bears some resemblance to Egyptian papyriform columns, for example, the recut columns salvaged from the sea near Fort Qait Bey at Alexandria **(3.5.5)**.



3.5.5 - Re-cut papyriform columns, nr. Fort Qait Bey, Alexandria

The three prongs of the building also bring to mind the *metae*, located at either end of the *spina* in a Roman circus **(3.5.6)**.

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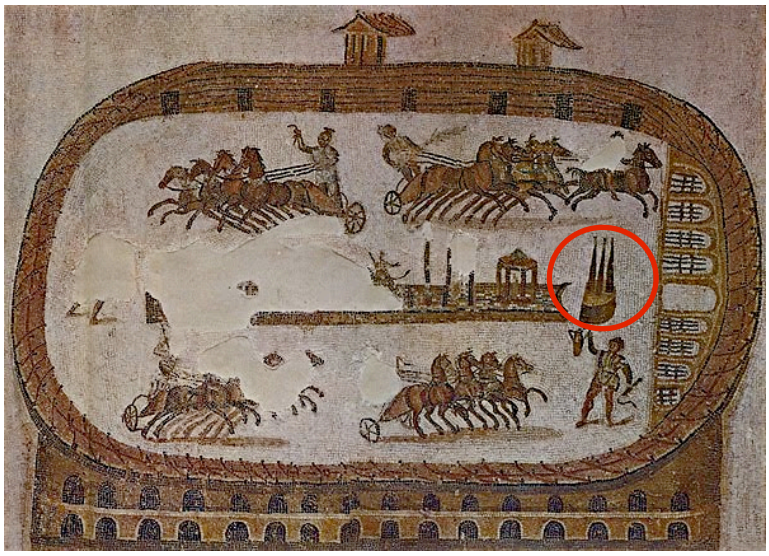
[13] The Colossus of Rhodes was built around the same time as the *Pharos* and was also a monumental structure guarding the entrance to a harbour, Goodchild (1961a) pp.221-2. For further discussion on associations between the statue and the Colossus of Rhodes, see Hoepfner (2003) p.74

[14] Dalton (1921) p.14

[15] Goodchild (1961a) p.223



3.5.6 - *Metae,* circus maximus mosaic, Bardo Museum, Tunis

Situated at the east end of the central axis, the *Pharos* panel corresponds with the architectural representation of *Polis Nea Theodorias* at the west end. One interpretation is that the juxtaposition of these two buildings, both representing place, was intended to announce, promote or consolidate a long-standing, if rather tempestuous, affiliation - whether political or religious - between Cyrenaica and Alexandria.[16] It is also possible that rather than - or perhaps as well as - representing the *Pharos*, the panel was intended to be understood more generally, as a lighthouse.[17] In Christian iconography, a lighthouse was understood as a symbolic guiding light - 'a beacon of faith'.[18] One illustration of this belief is an early Christian *loculus* - a grave-covering of Firmia Victoria, now in the Vatican Museums - depicting a boat heading towards a lighthouse; an allusion to the deceased being guided across the waters to heaven[19] **(3.5.7)**.

[16] Chuvin (2009) p.174

[17] In the Hellenistic period 'ΦΑΡΟC' was used to refer to the *Pharos* of Alexandria, but in later periods the word came to mean simply lighthouse, Fakharani (1974) p.264

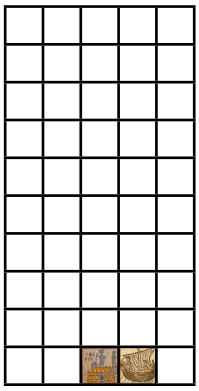
[18] Stucchi refers to the lighthouse as "il farò della fede" - 'the beacon of faith', Stucchi (1975) p.402. See also, Maguire (1987a) p.51; Engemann (1997) p.156; Chuvin (2009) p. 174

[19] Abrams (1982) p.225



3.5.7 - Grave-covering of Firmia Victoria, now in the Vatican Museums

In our pavement too, a boat sails towards the *Pharos,* suggesting that, at least on one level, the building could be understood as a 'beacon of faith' **(3.5.8)**.







3.5.8 - Boat sailing towards the *Pharos*

Early Christian writers referred to boats as metaphors for the safety and peace of the Church.[20] In the pavement of the late fifth-century church at Khaldé in Lebanon, a boat is accompanied by the inscription *ploion ērēnēs* – "ship of peace"[21] and in the pavement of a fifth-century building, Beth Leontis, at Beth She'an in Israel, a boat has been interpreted as a symbol of the Church and the mast as a symbol of the cross[22] **(3.5.9)**.

[20] Maguire (1987a) p.34. Rahner sees the Church as a ship on the ocean, serving as a safety-net for man, offering salvation and entry to heaven, Rahner (1963) p.346

[21] Chéhab (1959) p.110

[22] Förster (1990) pp.549-50; Talgam (2004) p.230



3.5.9 - Boat at Beth Leontix, Beth She'an

The boat at Qasr el-Lebia can be interpreted as a vessel drawn to the guiding light of the *Pharos* - as offering safe-passage and a means of negotiating the threatening imagery surrounding the entrance in the north-east corner of the room. It could also be understood to symbolise the Church - a vessel enabling mankind to make the transition from one realm to the next - from the here to the beyond.

However, whether the building labelled '*Pharos*' was intended to signify the Alexandrian *Pharos* or simply a lighthouse, the choice of imagery remains something of a puzzle. If the intention had been to make reference to Alexandria by displaying its most iconic monument - or indeed to simply depict a lighthouse - a tall tiered structure, as it appears on numerous coins and floor mosaics, would have achieved this effectively and without the need for an inscription[23] **(3.5.10-12)**.



3.5.10 - Coin from reign of Antonius Pius, AD 138-161



3.5.11 - Coin from reign of Marcus Aurelius, AD 161-180

[23] Even though coins rarely reproduced the proportions or ornamental detail of the *Pharos* correctly, the general appearance was correct, Handler (1971) p.58



3.5.12 - Two examples of the *Pharos* in pavements at Ostia Antica

As it is, the panel is ambiguous - the label tells the viewer one thing, but the iconography, dominated by the exaggerated presence of two monumental statues - seems to say something quite different. As Goodchild noted, attention is focused on the figures "even at the cost of distorting the appearance of the supporting structures."[24] Despite their prominence, however, the identity of the central statue can only be surmised and that of the second statue is even more elusive. A coin from the reign of Commodus shows the *Pharos* with two figures facing each other, presumably across the harbour mouth, but the figures are not identified and they are shown beside the *Pharos,* rather than on top of it[25] **(3.5.13)**.



3.5.13 - Coin of Commodus, with two figures by the *Pharos*

A pavement from the late fifth-century Nile Festival building at Sepphoris in Israel includes an architectural representation of Alexandria with the *Pharos,* and to the right of the city stands a column topped by a full-length statue which has been identified as the Column of Pompey[26] **(3.5.14)**. However, the iconography of this

[24] Goodchild (1961a) p.220

[25] Handler (1971) pp.57-74

[26] The so-called column of Pompey was erected in AD 291 by Diocletian. It survives today and investigations have revealed a large hole at the centre of its abacus with four smaller holes at the corners, suggesting that it may have carried a statue, Weiss and Talgam (2002) p.61. Empereur has argued that the column carried a statue of Diocletian rather than Pompey, Empereur (1998) pp.102-3

pavement revolves around the *sēmasia* and offers no clues as to the identity of our monumental statues.

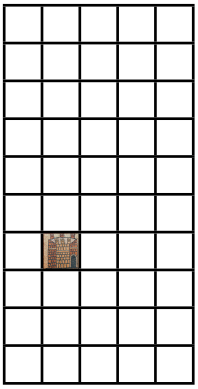


3.5.14 - Nile Festival buiding, Sepphoris

The prominence of the monumental statues in the *Pharos* panel at Qasr el-Lebia suggests that they were intended to impart more than their immediate signification. One possibility is that, if the *Pharos* in some way constitutes a counterpart to *Polis Nea Theodorias*, the figures flanking the harbour mouth may have been introduced to mirror - or balance - *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* flanking the city gate at the opposite end of the pavement; both pairs marking an entrance. However, for the time being, the identity and full meaning of this crucial part of the composition remains elusive.

Off-Axis Castellated Building

Before progressing along the pathway westwards, it is necessary to make a detour - one square to the left of the central axis - to examine an architectural representation which lacks a corresponding structure **(3.5.15)**.





3.5.15 - Castellated building and position on pavement

This building, unidentified and with no distinguishing features, does not seem to belong to the group of three architectural representations ranged along the central axis. It may simply be a generic representation of a fortified city - although the open and unprotected entrance could be seen to argue against this hypothesis.[27] A contemporaneous depiction of a six-sided fortified city wall can be found in the sixth-century Vienna Genesis[28] **(3.5.16)** and both this architectural representation, and the panel at Qasr el-Lebia, bear a close resemblance to St. Catherine's monastery at Sinai **(3.5.17)**.



3.5.16 - Vienna Genesis, folio VII

[27] Accounts of imperial initiatives in Cyrenaica suggest that, in the sixth century, imperial interest focused mainly on defending boundaries and fortifying the region against invasions. Procopius *De Aedificiis*, Stewart et al. (2005) p.155. Krautheimer comments that during the sixth century large numbers of small towns were fortified and strong-points erected, particularly in the East, which "formed a new kind of limes along the vulnerable borders" and protected the empire, Krautheimer (1986) p.258

[28] This is more of a bird's-eye view with the buildings within the walls visible, Wellesz (1960) pl.3, fol.VII, 13



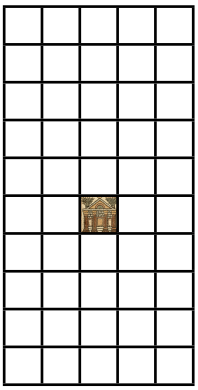
3.5.17 - St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai

The position of the fortified building at Qasr el-Lebia, adjacent to the ostrich - a creature believed to inhabit the edges of the wilderness[29]- and at the point where Oceanic imagery merges with Nilotic, may suggest that the building was simply intended to represent the built environment - a landscape inhabited by man. Alternatively, given its location adjacent to the central axis, understood as a pathway westwards, and its proximity to the horses above, the building may represent a *mansio* - an inn or stopping point for pilgrims to overnight and change horses.

Temple-like Building

Further west on the central axis and immediately in front of the mid-line of the pavement is an architectural representation of a pedimented building **(3.5.18)**.

[29] See chapter 3.7





3.5.18 - Temple-like building and position in pavement

This unidentified building has been dismissed by Alföldi-Rosenbaum as being simply ornamental.[30] Stucchi and Guarducci have interpreted it as a church,[31] Dufrenne as a synagogue[32] and Stern as a disused temple.[33] Maguire's interpretation allows the building to represent any one of these.[34] If the image had been intended to represent a specific building, it seems likely that it would have been identified by an inscription - like *Polis Nea Theodorias* to the west or the *Pharos* to the east. Equally, it could have been marked as unequivocally Christian by the addition of a cross, or as incontestably Jewish by appending a menorah, but instead, an unidentified and non-specific semi-circular object sits atop the pediment.

The four columns and three entrances of the building are reminiscent of the remains of the façade of the synagogue at Kafr Bir'im in Israel **(3.5.19)**.

[30] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.59

[31] Stucchi (1975) p.403; Guarducci (1975) p.666

[32] Dufrenne (1980) p.247

[33] Stern (1969) p.282

[34] Maguire (1987a) p.53



3.5.19 - Façade of synagogue at Kafr Birim

There are also similarities with architectural representations - which resemble depictions of the Torah shrine - in two sixth-century mosaic pavements, one at the east end of the Upper Chapel of Priest John at Mount Nebo in Jordan **(3.5.20)**, and the other in the synagogue at Horvat Susiya in Israel[35] **(3.5.21)**.



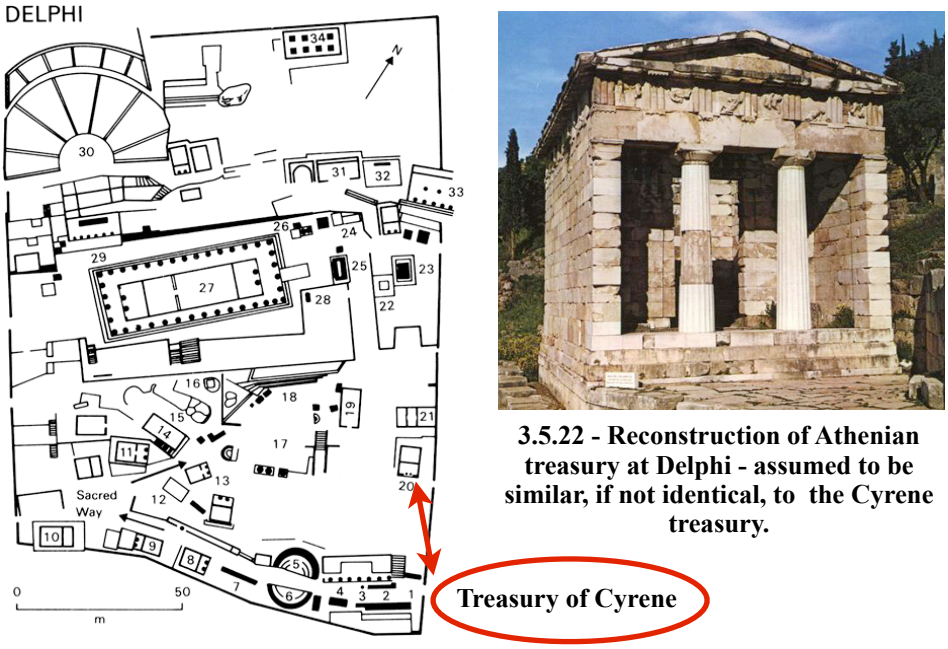
3.5.20 - Upper Chapel of Priest John, Mount Nebo



3.5.21 - Synagogue at Horvat Susiya, Israel

[35] For the cross-over of visual language between Jewish and Christian art, see Goodenough (1988); Förster (1990) esp. pp.546-7; Kessler (1997); Hachlili (2001); Elsner (2003a) esp. pp.114-28

It may also be worth noting, given Cyrenaica's historic connections with Delphi, that descriptions of the columnar pedimented façade of the Treasury of Cyrene at Delphi, suggest a similar building to our temple-like structure[36] **(3.5.22)**.



3.5.22 - Reconstruction of Athenian treasury at Delphi - assumed to be similar, if not identical, to the Cyrene treasury.

The building may have been left mysteriously and, I would argue deliberately, anonymous, but what is clear, is that it represents a building of distinction. The ceiling above the portico appears to be coffered and a close inspection of the mosaic reveals that the tesserae used for the columns include a dark-purple stone which has not been used elsewhere in the pavement. This dark stone gives the columns the appearance of porphyry - a high-status building material quarried in Egypt. The pale-blue and white lines of tesserae in the intercolumniations may represent steps leading to the tripartite entrance, in which case, they could be seen to mirror extant flights of steps lined with Proconnesian revetment, still extant in several elite buildings in Cyrenaica **(3.5.23)**.

[36] Rowe and Buttle (1956) p.41



3.5.23 - Proconnesian revetment on steps in House of Jason Magnus, Cyrene

However, columns rising from the bottom, rather than from the top, of flights of steps is a singular feature and it is worth considering whether the blue and white panels were intended to represent Proconnesian floor slabs in a hall or a walkway. Seen in this way, the building does not represent a façade, but rather a conflated representation of an internal space. This may also explain why the coffered ceiling appears to be deeper in the side recesses than the centre, possibly implying that the lateral openings are further away than the central one.

Whether or not the blue and white suggests steps or floor panels, the use of Proconnesian marble underfoot is indicative of a prestigious building. Both porphyry and Proconnesian marble came from imperial quarries and shown here, in a building which brings to mind an honorific structure - a *fastigium*[37] or a pedimented triumphal arch - and in-line with a city which may have been named in honour of an empress, these materials may have been intended to underline an imperial axis.[38]

Another oddity is that the curtains hanging in the doorways are closed. Curtains are common in early Christian art but they are almost always tied back; sometimes in a central knot and hanging in a sort of V-shape, as is the case in the entrance to *Nea Polis Theodorias*, and sometimes draped around columns, as seen either side of *Ananeosis.* Rarely are they shown covering - closing - the entrance to a building as

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[37] For a discussion on the Lateran *fastigium*, De Blaauw (2001). See also Brandenburg's reconstruction of the *fastigium* in the Lateran Basilica, Brandenburg (2005) p.261, and a *fastigium*-like triumphal arch in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Israeli and Mevorah (2000) p.38. For the so-called *fastigium* in Diocletian's s palace at Split in Croatia, see Krautheimer (1986) p.77

[38] De Blauw makes the point that: "In contrast to other objects of imperial *largitio* donated to the Christian churches, the *fastigium* was recognized from the very beginning as an explicit monument of imperial presence. Both its shape and its unusual nature in the context of Christian liturgy were responsible for this association", De Blaauw (2001) p.137

they seem to be here. The only comparable example from the same period known to the author is in a mosaic pavement in Synagogue A at Beth She'an in Israel, where a closed curtain covers the doorway of the Ark of the scrolls **(3.5.24)**.



3.5.24 - Ark of scrolls, Synagogue A, Beth She'an

Curtains or textiles were, however, frequently hung inside buildings.[39] An account of the feast day of St. Felix by Paulinus of Nola, describes the gifts brought to the church, among which were splendid curtains.[40] Both Krautheimer and Gervers write about curtains or textiles creating divisions in early Christian basilicas, making specific reference to Hagia Sophia where the Eucharist was celebrated behind the drawn curtains of the ciborium which enclosed the altar.[41] Two sources describing Emperor Valens donating gifts to the church of Caesarea in Cappodocia, record the emperor passing through curtains: Gregory of Nazianus states that Valens "passed through the curtain, thus coming within Basil's sight and hearing"; and Theodoret, describing the same episode, writes that "Basil invited him to enter the divine curtains where he was seated."[42] Lassus has noted that fittings for curtain rods can often be found above the capitals and pilasters supporting arches in the early churches of North Syria,[43] and during a visit to Cyrenaica, the author noted large stone supports for curtain rods above internal doorways in the church at

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[39] See, for example Maguire, Maguire and Duncan-Flowers (1989) p.45

[40] Gervers (1977) p.70

[41] Gervers (1977) p.70; Krautheimer (1986) pp.56, 99, 102, 168, 171 and 216. See also Toynbee and Ward-Perkins (1956) esp. p.200. Mathews, however, suggests that the celebration of the Eucharist did not take place behind closed curtains, Mathews (1971) p. 162

[42] Lassus (1947) pp.206-7

[43] Lassus, (1947) pp.177-8 and pp.205-6

Ras al-Hilal **(3.5.25)** and in the Siret el Giambi Monastery at El Beida, both close to Qasr el-Lebia **(3.5.26)**.



3.5.25 - Supports for curtain poles, doorway in south aisle, Ras al-Hilal



3.5.26 - Supports for curtain pole, east doorway, Siret el Giambi Monastery, El Beida

If the closed curtains in our building are seen as screens separating the holy from the mundane, they could be understood in a similar way to the temple veil which separated the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies.[44] This was not only a visual barrier, obscuring, protecting and honouring the mysteries beyond, but also a symbolic screen - a boundary between the transient changeable parts of the world and the heavenly region. Those who entered the Holy of Holies, entered into the presence of the divine.[45]

Either side of the pediment of the building, lush palm trees seem to grow from the outer columns **(see 3.5.18)**. In the Old Testament, the doorways of Solomon's temple are described as being adorned with palm trees,[46] and in one of Ezekiel's visions, God reveals the walled temple of Jerusalem which has palms on the 'posts' - probably meaning jambs - around the windows and gateways.[47] In early Christian iconography, palm trees - the palms of Paradise - came to be understood as symbolising the heavenly Jerusalem and Paradise,[48] and trees sprouting from architecture were associated with vigour and vitality.[49] On a sixth-century pewter ampullae from Monza[50] **(3.5.27)** and a sixth-century glass chalice from Palestine[51] **(3.5.28)**, for example, sprouting columns distinguish the Holy Sepulchre as 'life-giving'.[52]

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[44] Evidence suggests that, in Syrian synagogues, curtains replaced the carved screens previously used to veil the Torah shrine, Gervers (1977) p.69; Khouri-Sarkis (1960) pp. 363-8

[45] Philo, in *Questions and Answers on Exodus,* 2:91, writes: "By the veil inside (of the tabernacle) is set off and separated from the things outside, for the inside is holy and truly divine, while the outside, though it is also holy does not attain the same nature or a similar one. Moreover, it indicates the changeable parts of the world which are sublunary and undergo changes of direction, and the heavenly (region) which is without transient events and is unchanging", Marcus (1961) p.140. Josephus, a first-century historian, described the tabernacle as a microcosm of creation divided into three parts; the first two being sea and land and the third, entered just once a year on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest, heaven, Barker (1998) p.1

[46] 1 Kings 6:29,32,35; 1 Kings 7:36

[47] Ezekiel 40:16,22,26,31,34,37

[48] For example, imagery of the *traditio legis* and the Pola casket, Daly (2009) pp.41-3 and p.56. Grabar suggests that the palm trees on a lintel relief from the synagogue at Capernaum are the palms of Paradise, Grabar (1980) p.24, fig.47

[49] Underwood (1950) p.90. For a discussion on the symbolism of flanking tees in canon tables, see Nordenfalk (1938)

[50] Grabar (1958)

[51] Weitzmann (1977) p.609

[52] Underwood (1950) pp.101-3



3.5.27 - Sprouting columns on Pilgrim ampulla, Monza Cathedral Treasury



3.5.28 - Sixth-century glass chalice from Syria or Palestine

The trees sprouting from the architectural representation at Qasr el-Lebia, clearly mark the building as living and vibrant and, given the examples cited above, they may even have suggested an association with the Holy Sepulchre.

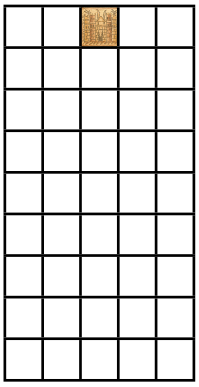
It seems then, that certain iconographic features of the architectural representation at Qasr el-Lebia could be seen to associate it with the Temple of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, and even the Holy Sepulchre. The Holy Sepulchre has been described as "the church's most ambitious attempt to supersede the destroyed

Temple"[53]- the Holy Sepulchre became the 'New Jerusalem' and the Tomb of Christ the new 'Holy of Holies'.[54]

Our building then, could, on the one hand, be understood as a manifestation of the inseparability of two pivotal monuments - the Temple and the Holy Sepulchre and on the other hand as a more general conflation of the old dispensation and the new. Its location in the pavement suggests that, both symbolically and visually, the building marks a point of transition; it is where Oceanic imagery gives way to Nilotic, where wilderness approaches Paradise, and where the ephemeral temporal world becomes the abiding heavenly realm.[55]

Polis Nea Theodorias

At the west end of the central axis - possibly the climax of the floor - an architectural representation is identified by inscription as *Polis Nea Theodorias* **(3.5.29)**.



3.5.29 - *Polis Nea Theodorias* and position in pavement



[53] Branham (1992) p.382. The fourth-century pilgrim, Egeria, equated the consecration of the Holy Sepulchre - or the new temple - with Solomon's dedication of the old temple, as described in II Chronicles 7, Wilkinson (2006) p.80; Lundquist (2008) p.156

[54] This conflation or intermingling of traditional and Christian ritual is further illustrated by Egeria's report that processions of pilgrims kissed, first the holy wood of the cross, then the ring of Solomon and then the horn or phial with which the kings were anointed, Wilkinson (2006) pp.155-6 and p.164

[55] See chapter 5.2

The panel is generally thought to celebrate the renovation of a town, possibly the former bishopric of Olbia, which was rededicated to Theodora.[56] However, as discussed in chapter 1.3, there is no collaborative evidence, beyond the mosaic itself, to suggest that *Polis Nea Theodorias* received the attention or the patronage of either Justinian or Theodora.[57]

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When viewed individually, each of the three architectural representations along the central axis - the *Pharos*, the temple-like building and *Polis Nea Theodorias* - has its own associations and meanings. When viewed as a group of interrelating images, however, the buildings nuance an exchange of signification. Positioned at intervals along the central axis, they become way-markers on a predetermined pathway which starts at the *Pharos*, passes through the veiled entrances of the building at the centre of the pavement and has *Polis Nea Theodorias* as its goal. They define a 'strait and narrow' pathway, perhaps reflecting the New Testament text, Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

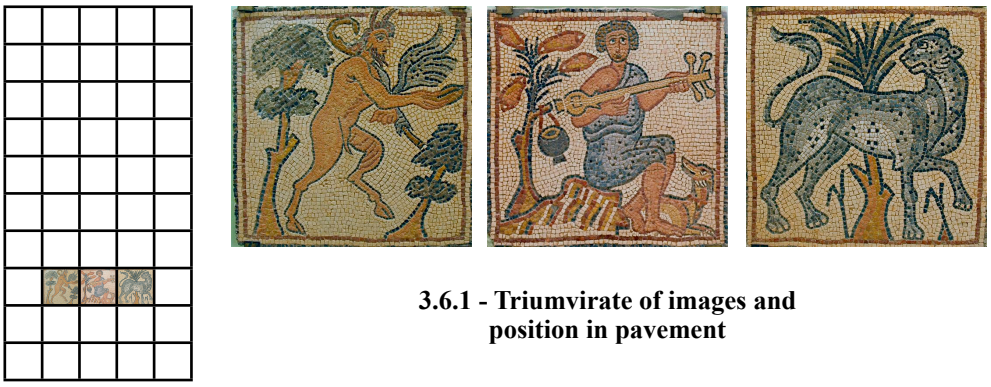
[56] For discussion on the dating and rededication of the city, see chapter 1.3.

[57] It is notable that the inscription reads *Polis Nea*, rather than the more customary *Neapolis.*

3.6: Musician - Orpheus-Christus or Dionysiac Thiasos?

Introduction

Towards the east end of the large pavement is a rather puzzling triumvirate of images - a figure playing a musical instrument flanked, on one side by a satyr-like figure, and on the other by a leopard **(3.6.1)**.



3.6.1 - Triumvirate of images and position in pavement

Musician

The central panel is a pastoral scene; the figure is seated on a rock by a tree bearing gourd-like fruits not dissimilar to those commonly shown hanging from the vine above a reclining Jonah. He wears a leopard-skin over one shoulder and is playing a long-necked stringed instrument which resembles the modern buzuq - a fretted lute related to the Greek bazouki and the Turkish saz. **(3.6.2)**.



3.6.2 - Musician and position in pavement

A similar instrument appears on a third-century sarcophagus, now in the Archaeological Museum in Naples[1] **(3.6.3)**, in a mosaic pavement from Hippo Regius in Algeria[2] **(3.6.4)** and in a wall-painting in the apodyterium of the early eight-century bath house at Qusayr Amra in Jordan[3] **(3.6.5)**.



3.6.3 - Third-century sarcophagus, Archaeological Museum, Naples



3.6.4 - Mosaic, Algiers Museum

[1] Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.115

[2] Now in a museum in Algiers. Parrish (1993) p.175; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.42

[3] Fowden (2004) p.67; Vibert-Guigue and Bisheh (2007) pls.65-6



3.6.5 - Bear with instrument, apodyterium, Qusayr Amra

Pastoral scenes with shepherds were popular in the late fifth and sixth centuries, appearing in manuscripts,[4] on textiles and silverware,[5] as well as in floor mosaics. In pavements at Beth She'an and Be'er Shema, both in Israel and both sixth-century, vine-scroll compositions include musicians or shepherds playing flute-like instruments - one figure accompanied by a dog and the other in front of a tree with a pot hanging from it[6] **(3.6.6-7)**.



3.6.6 - Musician in a vine-scroll at Be'er Shema



3.6.7 - Musician in a vine-scroll at Beth Shean

[4] For example, the late fifth-century *Vergilius Romanus* manuscript, see Weitzmann (1979) pp. 247-8; Wright (2001) p.15

[5] For example, a fifth- or sixth-century textile from Egypt, see Weitzmann (1979) p.253, and for an example of a sixth-century silver plate, now in the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, see Weitzmann (1979) p.252; Leader-Newby (2004) pp.174-6

[6] For both pavements, see Hachlili (2009) p.170-3

However, while the musician at Qasr el-Lebia seems to belong to this idiom, the imagery surrounding the panel, together with his prominent position on the central axis of the pavement, belies the idea of a simple pastoral idyll.

The musician has been variously interpreted as a shepherd,[7] as Orpheus[8] and as a syncretic Orpheus-Christus figure.[9] Orpheus regularly appeared on vaults or over *arcosolia* in early Christian catacombs and, like Christ, he too seems to have been understood as a symbol of salvation.[10] Clement of Alexandria, perhaps believing that this perceived crossover between Orphism and Christianity posed a danger to the early Church, branded Orpheus an impostor who, under the cover of music, "outraged human life, being influenced by daemons, through some artful sorcery, to compass man's ruin".[11] Eusebius of Caesarea, on the other hand, although making a distinction between the enchantment of Orpheus' music and the efficacy of the Word of God, recognised Orpheus' ability to charm ferocious beasts and tame nature as an allegory for the power that the Christian doctrine exerted on humanity.[12]

In the earliest Christian catacomb paintings, Orpheus and the Good Shepherd were clearly distinguished. Gradually, however, the two themes were conflated, making it difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between them. A fourth-century red earthenware bowl from North Africa, for example, is decorated with a figure carrying a ram on his shoulders, two sheep and a naked Jonah seated on a rock. The presence of Jonah, together with the sheep, suggests that the figure carrying the ram could be the Good Shepherd; his clothing, however - a Phrygian cap, tight leggings and paludamentum over a long-sleeved tunic – is a costume traditionally worn by Orpheus and seems to contradict this interpretation[13] **(3.6.8)**. A fifth-century mosaic pavement from the Villa of Jenah in Beirut depicts a central figure surrounded by both wild and domesticated animals, leaving it unclear whether he

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[7] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.43

[8] Grabar (1962) p.119 and p.138; Mathew (1965) p.86; Guarducci (1975) p.674; Maguire (1987a) p.53

[9] Tülek has suggested that the musician at Qasr el-Lebia was one of the last examples of "Orpheus disguised in the *Good Shepherd* figure", Tülek (1998) p.41

[10] Hanfmann (1980) p.88

[11] Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 1.4, cited in Butterworth (1960) p.9

[12] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Chapter 14 www.newadvent.org/fathers/2504.htm accessed 10.3.2013

[13] Weitzmann (1979) pp.520-1

was intended to represent Orpheus, the Good Shepherd or a syncretic Orpheus-Christus[14] **(3.6.9)**.



3.6.8 - 'Good Shepherd' plate



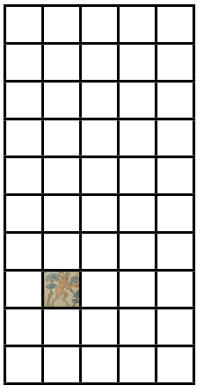
3.6.9 - Jenah pavement, Beirut - Orpheus or Good Shpeherd?

To identify the musician at Qasr el-Lebia as a so-called Orpheus-Christus figure would conveniently Christianise the image and, indeed, the pavement - particularly the central axis. However, even though the image incorporates elements of both Orpheus and the Good Shepherd, it does not conform to conventions for portraying either. If, on the other hand, the figure is seen as part of a trio of images - protagonist between satyr and leopard - the composition takes on quite a different significance.

The Satyr

To the left of the musician is a satyr. He holds a pedum over his left shoulder, which is either winged or sheathed in a cloth which billows out in twin wing-like formations, and with his right hand he proffers an object - a wine-skin perhaps - to the musician **(3.6.10)**.

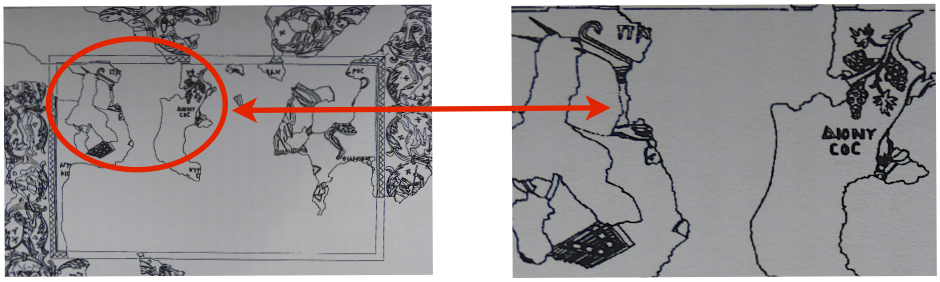
[14] Chéhab (1959) p.68; Harrison (1962) p.17



3.6.10 - Satyr and position in pavement



Satyrs were traditionally associated with revelry, debauchery and untamed nature and were often shown in the company of centaurs, creatures of lust and violence who symbolised the weakness and depravity of those living on the fringes of human society.[15] A 'winged' pedum seems to be without precedent, but satyrs were often depicted with pedums. In a fragmented sixth-century pavement at Gerasa in Jordan, a pan-like figure with a pedum follows Dionysos[16] **(3.6.11)**, a fifth- or sixth-century textile from Egypt depicts a satyr holding a pedum over his shoulder[17] **(3.6.12)** and on the fourth-century Great Dish from the Mildenhall Treasure, a satyr brandishes one pedum while several others are strewn around the outer frieze of the dish[18] **(3.6.13)**.



3.6.11 - A satyr and Dionysos in pavement at Gerasa, detail of pedum

[15] Friedman (1970) p.83; Tülek (1998) p.59; Weiss and Talgam (2002) p.73

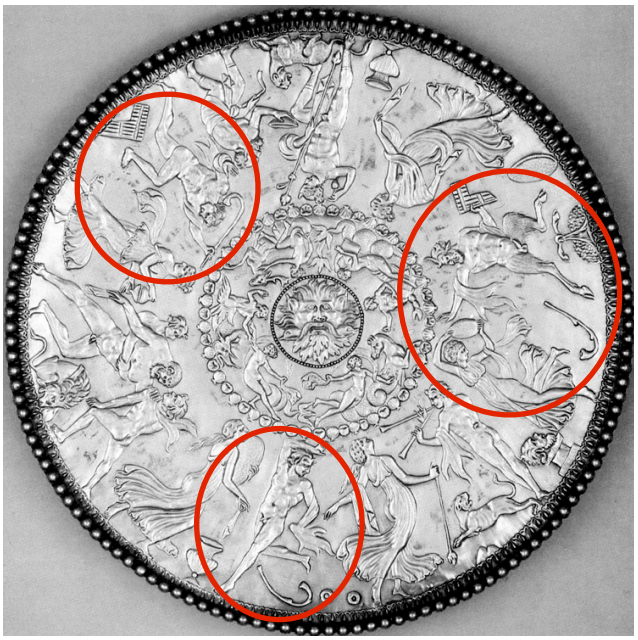
[16] Z'ubi et al. (1994) pp.543-4

[17] Weitzmann (1977) p.144

[18] Hobbs (2012)



3.6.12 - Satyr and Dionysos, Egyptian textile



3.6.13 - Mildenhall plate, showing pedums

The object held in the right hand of the satyr at Qasr el-Lebia is similar to a discarded wine-skin on an early seventh-century silver plate, thought to have come from Constantinople, on which Silenus dances with a Maenad[19] **(3.6.14)**, and to a bowl being proffered to Dionysos - who rests his left foot on a leopard - by an elderly satyr on the Mildenhall Great Dish **(3.6.15)**.

[19] The plate is now in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Grabar (1967a) pp.298-9



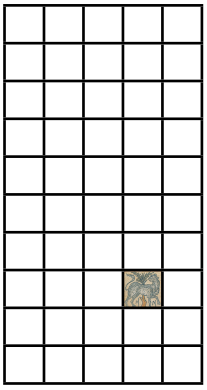
3.6.14- Discarded wine-skin, Hermitage plate



3.6.15 - Mildenhall dish showing satyr

The Leopard

To the right of the central axis, a leopard walks away from the musician, its head turned back towards the musician **(3.6.16)**.



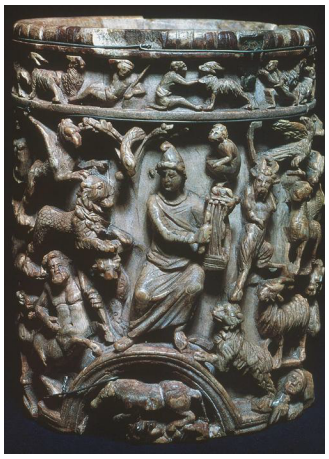
3.6.16 - Leopard and position in pavement



The leopard was a symbol of cruelty, corruption and sin[20]- sometimes even associated with the Antichrist and the Devil.[21] The satyr and the leopard then, were unlikely companions for the Good Shepherd and appeared only occasionally with Orpheus. On a fourth-century ivory pyxis in the Museo di San Columbano at Bobbio, Italy, for example **(3.6.17)**, and on a sixth-century ivory pyxis, from the Abbey of St. Julien at Brioude, now in the Bargello Museum in Florence **(3.6.18)**.

[20] Ferguson (1961) p.21

[21] Revelation 13:2 "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." See also, Payne (1990) p.22; Cooper (1992) p.147



3.6.17 - Orpheus pyxis, Museo di San Columbano, Bobbio



3.6.18- Orpheus pyxis, Bargello Museum, Florence

However, there seems to be a further reference here; one hitherto unexplored. Both the satyr and the leopard were ubiquitous companions of Dionysos - god of fertility and divine embodiment of wine.[22] This is evidenced on the Mildenhall Great Plate. Other examples include, a second-century mosaic, now in the museum at El Djem in Tunisia **(3.6.19)**, a third-century Dionysiac sarcophagus in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston **(3.6.20)**, and a mosaic pavement in the House of Dionysos at Paphos on Cyprus[23] **(3.6.21)**.



3.6.19 - Second-century Dionysiac *thiasos*, El Djem Museum



3.6.20 - Third-century Dionysiac sarcophagus, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

[22] According to Seaford, Dionysos is our oldest living symbol, Seaford (2007) p.i

[23] Michaelides (1987) p.16



3.6.21 - Detail from House of Dionysos, Paphos

Could our musician, then, represent Dionysos rather than - or as well as - Orpheus or Orpheus-Christus? Such an identification is given weight by the fact that the figure is clothed in a leopard skin - Dionysos' garment of choice - as seen, for example, in a fourth-century textile panel from Egypt[24] **(3.6.22)**.



3.6.22 - Dionysos, textile panel from Egypt

It is tempting to see the three motifs at Qasr el-Lebia - the satyr, the musician and the leopard - as constituting an abbreviated Dionysiac *thiasos*. Dionysos remained a popular figure into the Christian era, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean. He featured in texts and appeared on sarcophagi, textiles, silverware, ivories and in mosaic pavements. His presence is sometimes seen as evidence of the tenacity of the Dionysiac cult; a fifth- or sixth-century Dionysiac mosaic from Sarrîn in the north of Syria, for example, is often cited as evidence that, in the more remote

[24] Stauffer (1995) pp.30-1

regions of the empire, paganism persisted into Late Antiquity.[25] Weitzmann, making reference to a fifth- or sixth-century textile from Egypt depicting Dionysos and Pan, wrote that "the vigorous presentation of the deities and the cultic paraphernalia, show a still active appreciation of the cult".[26] Literary sources, too, attest to the persistence of a Dionysiac cult: St. Augustine discusses a public celebration held in honour of Dionysos;[27] Sozomen records that two Christian clerics in Laodicea were punished for attending a Dionysiac ritual which was the reserve of the initiated,[28] and at the beginning of the fifth century, Synesius, made reference to the rites of Dionysos "in a manner which would suggest the recent past."[29]

However, the use of Dionysiac imagery in Late Antiquity need not always indicate cultic or religious activities. It has been suggested that these images may have stopped a gap which Christian iconography did not yet satisfactorily fill[30]- its use being dictated by fashion, rather than religion.[31] It could also be understood as a mark of good taste - a sort of iconographic strategy or social manifesto aimed at raising status, strengthening social hierarchies and expressing an elitist way of life.[32] In a society in which many individuals eluded the rigid pagan-Christian dichotomy, Dionysos had become a symbol of hospitality, conviviality and well-being,[33] a visual expression of status, an aristocratic display of *paideia* and a way of articulating the good life enjoyed in the highest spheres of society.[34]

Orpheus, Dionysos, the Good Shepherd and Hermes

In her discussion of the Sheikh Zouède mosaic from Eretz in Israel, Mucznik has suggested that the presence of an oversized lyre in a frenzied Dionysiac scene could be seen as representing a merging of Apollo and Dionysos **(3.6.23)**; a

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[25] Balty (1995) pp.245-54; Dunbabin (1999) p.184

[26] Weitzmann (1977) p.24

[27] St. Augustine, *Epistula* 17.4, www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102017.htm. Accessed 18.1.2013

[28] Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.25, cited in Seaford (2007) p.126

[29] Synesius of Cyrene, *Calvitii Encomium*, 21, *De Providentia* and *De Insomiis,* Fitzgerald (1926) p.31; Pando (1940) p.141

[30] O'Connell (2008) p.10; www.digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/121/. Accessed 27.1.2013

[31] Dunbabin (1978) p.73; Talgam (2004) p.223; Zanker and Ewald (2012) p.321

[32] McMullen (1981) p.107; Harl (1990) p.16; Scott (1997) p.54; Hölscher (2004) p.5

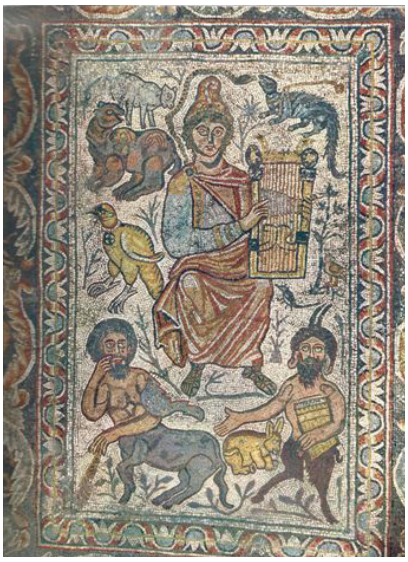
[33] Talgam (2004) p.222

[34] Török (2005) p.234

synthesis that she also sees in the Jerusalem Orpheus mosaic, where Orpheus is accompanied by a satyr and a centaur[35] **(3.6.24)**. In a similar way, the trio of images at Qasr el-Lebia, incorporates elements which viewers might well have associated with either Orpheus or Dionysos.



3.6.23 - Two scenes from the Dionysiac *thiasos* in the Sheikh Zouède mosaic, Eretz



3.6.24 - Jerusalem Orpheus Mosaic

Although seemingly polar opposites - one representing restraint and order and the other uncontrolled frenzy - Orpheus and Dionysos could be argued to be the obverse and reverse of the same idea. Firstly, both enjoyed well-established affiliations with the god Apollo and his site at Delphi. Despite being best known as Apollo's principal sanctuary, Delphi also had long-standing Dionysiac associations; as far back as the fifth century BC, Sophocles used the name *Kastalia* to invoke Delphic associations with Dionysos rather than Apollo,[36] and, according to the writings of Diodorus Siculus, the Muses of Mount Helicon travelled with

[35] Mucznik (2011) p.276

[36] Sophocles, *Antigone,* 1130, cited in Parke (1978) p.201

Dionysos, bringing him pleasure with their singing and dancing.[37] Delphi came to be acknowledged as the burial place of Dionysos, where a chthonic Dionysos/ Bacchus shared dominion with Apollo.[38] Also, according to legend, Orpheus was the son of the muse Calliope of Mount Helicon at Delphi,[39] and he was gifted his golden lyre by Apollo. Formerly a priest of the cult of Dionysos, Orpheus later abandoned his position to become a worshipper of Apollo.[40] Apollo and his oracular site are referenced in our pavement by the presence of *Kastalia*.

Secondly, Orpheus and Dionysos both have connections with Hermes, god of transitions who moved between the world of mortals and the divine world, conducting souls to the afterlife. Legend tells that Dionysos, after his birth from the thigh of Zeus, was given into the care of Hermes.[41] It was also Hermes who invented the lyre which Orpheus later perfected and used to tame the natural world.[42] Hermes *Kriophoros* - the ram-bearer - is also generally acknowledged as the figure on which Christ as the Good Shepherd was modelled.[43] The name, Hermes, comes from *hermai* and these rectangular stone pillars with male heads and erect genitalia were placed at crossroads and intersections as symbols of protection and divine blessing. This connection is particularly pertinent at Qasr el-Lebia; not only is the floor explicit in its portrayal of genitalia, but all three figures - Christ, Orpheus and Dionysos - were understood as psychopomps.[44] Furthermore, the musician, who arguably makes reference to this trio, is positioned immediately

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[37] Shorrock (2011) pp.81-2

[38] John Malalas, *Chronographia* 45. 9-10, Finch (1991) p.20; Hopkinson (1994) p.163. By the sixth century the relationship between Dionysos and Delphi was widely recognised, Jesnick (1997) p.39

[39] Friedman (1970) p.55

[40] Friedman (1970) p.6

[41] An event commemorated during the Dionysiac festival of *Anthestria*, the third day of which was known as *Chytroi,* and was shared with Hermes *Cthonios*, Evans (2010) pp. 178-9

[42] Hansen (2004) p.50 and p.110

[43] Gazda (2002) pp.47-9.

[44] A psychopomp escorted newly deceased souls to the afterlife. Friedman (1970) p.79; Tülek, (1998) p.38

below the peacock - a symbol of apotheosis and immortality[45]- and at a crossroads - an intersection - on the pavement; a position befitting one who conducts souls to the afterlife.

Finally, myths surrounding both Orpheus and Dionysos have parallels with the life of Christ. Orpheus and Christ suffered violent deaths and returned unscathed from the underworld and Christ could perhaps be seen as the Orpheus of the new covenant; in the same way that Orpheus tamed wild animals and established peace with his music and eloquence,[46] so Christ enlightened mankind with his teachings. The similarities between Dionysos and Christ were, for Justin Martyr, so strong that he believed demons, trying to deceive and seduce the unwary had mimicked the Old Testament prophets by having Dionysos fulfil that which was prophesied for Christ.[47]

Musical Harmony

Whether the musician is interpreted as the Good Shepherd, Orpheus or Dionysos, he is clearly making music. His instrument, which cuts across the composition, is not simply being held but also played with a plectrum-like object **(3.6.25)**.

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[45] Cooper (1992) p.179. The peacock was the bird of Juno and patron goddess of the Roman Empire and symbolised the apotheosis of Roman empresses and other female personages of rank, Cumont (1917) pp.86-7; Underwood (1950) p.88; Kiilerich (2001) p. 183. The peacock, whose plumage grew afresh each year and whose flesh was believed to be incorruptible, became a symbol of immortality and Christian renewal. St. Augustine found the possibility of incorruptible flesh so unbelievable that he put it to the test by keeping a slice of cooked peacock meat which was served to him in Carthage. He inspected the meat at intervals and noted that it remained unchanged and that even a year later it was in same state, "except that it was now a little more shrivelled, and drier", Augustine, City of God Book XXI ch. 4, cited in Dyson (1998) p.1048

[46] Cook (1930) p.228; Friedman (1970) p.13-39

[47] Justin Martyr, *I Apology* xxxiii, cited in Barnard (1967) p.118. See also Hopkinson (1994) pp.161-3. Mathews has suggested that Dionysiac facial traits were sometimes used for representations of Christ, Mathews (2003) p.45.



3.6.25 - Musician, with detail of 'plectrum'

In the classical world, musical harmony produced by the heavenly spheres was fundamental to the order of the cosmos; as the planets, each in its own orbit, revolved around the earth, their movements produced individual tones.[48] The musicians of the spheres, according to Plato, "utter one sound, one note" thereby creating "the concord of a single harmony".[49] Understanding the sound of the cosmos, explained Pythagoras, was key to understanding the divine order of creation.[50] Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* tells how: "learned men who know how to imitate on the string of the lyre [the harmony of the spheres] have opened up for themselves a return to that place [heaven]".[51] Musical inspiration came from the nine Muses and by learning the gifts of the Muses one became *mousikos aner* – a cultivated man – an attribute which "made you a human instead of a beast" and helped to ensure immortality and salvation of the soul.[52] The Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne and followers of Apollo,[53] provided the poet or musician with inspiration to write and a voice with which to sing; the 'poet of the Muses' came to be seen as a mediator between the divine and human.[54] In the third or fourth century, Aristides Quintilianus, making reference to the music of the

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[48] Teeuwen (2002) p.190

[49] Plato, *Republic*, X, 14, cited in Underwood (1950) p.125

[50] James (1993) p.31 and p.37. Pythagoras believed that the sounds of stringed instruments elevated the human soul to the heavenly orbits, Kartomi (1990) pp.115-6

[51] Cicero *Somnium Scipionis* 5.2, cited in Friedman (1967) p.9. See also, Bullock (1983) pp.25-6; Spitzer (1963) pp.112-3

[52] Nock and Beazley (1946) p.143; Faraone (2004) p.218. Classical descriptions of the inspiration of the Muses also regularly invoked the waters of *Kastalia,* Agosti (2003) pp. 545-6

[53] Spentzou and Fowler (2002) p.36

[54] Shorrock (2011) p.14

spheres, noted the correlation between stringed instruments, the ethereal cosmos and the soul itself,[55] and in the fifth century, Macrobius, in his commentary on Cicero's *Dream*, wrote:[56]

> Every soul in this world is allured by musical sounds ... for the soul carries with it into the body a memory of the music which it knew in the sky, and is so captivated by its charm that there is no breast so cruel or savage as not to be gripped by the spell of such an appeal.

The Muses continued to play an important role in the early Christian period.[57] In the late fifth or early sixth century, Fulgentius wrote about the continued inspiration exerted by the Muses,[58] and Zanker has observed that, in the visual arts, "there is scarcely a poet or philosopher, or scholar who does not appear along with his Muse."[59] Examples include a fifth-century ivory, now in the Louvre, which depicts poets enchanted by their Muses[60] **(3.6.26)**, and a sixth-century ivory in the Treasury Museum of Monza Cathedral showing a poet listening to the music of his Muse[61] **(3.6.27)**.

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[55] Aristides Quintilianus *De Musica* 2.18, Mathiesen (1999) pp.543-5

[56] Stahl (1952) p.195

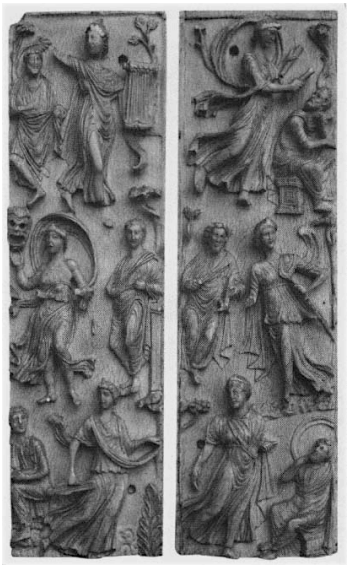
[57] Constantine installed statues of the Muses of Helicon in his palace in the newly-founded city of Constantinople, Shorrock (2011) p.47

[58] Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, *Mythologiae,* Whitbread (1971) pp.55-7

[59] Zanker (1995) pp.327-331

[60] Weitzmann (1979) p.258

[61] Volbach (1952) p.44; Zanker (1995) p.328



3.6.26 - Ffith-century ivory plaques, philosophers or poets and muses



3.6.27 - Sixth-century diptych, Treasury Museum, Monza Cathedral

In Christian eschatological thinking, the music of the spheres was gradually replaced by the harmony of the Word of God; the Evangelists, producers of the so-called harmonic Gospels,[62] became successors to the musicians of the spheres. In the first book of his *Protrepticus*, Clement of Alexandria writes about Christ as the New Musician whose song – the Logos – tames the souls of humans,[63] and Gregory of Nazianzus, perhaps with Cicero's analogy between the strings of a lyre and the harmony of the spheres in mind, compared the visible world to "a well-made and well-tuned lute (kithara)", noting that, "if one listens to the sounds it gives, one cannot fail to think of the craftsman who made it and of the musician who plays it".[64]

Maguire sees the musician at Qasr el-Lebia as symbolising both "the harmony of the congregations with the Church, and the harmony of the whole Creation".[65] I would add that the music produced by this figure, perhaps in conjunction with the bells around the necks of the gazelles in the western-most row of panels,[66] could also be seen as symbolising the harmony of the spheres and the harmony of the Word of God; an essential element in making the transition from the earthly to the heavenly realm **(3.6.28)**.

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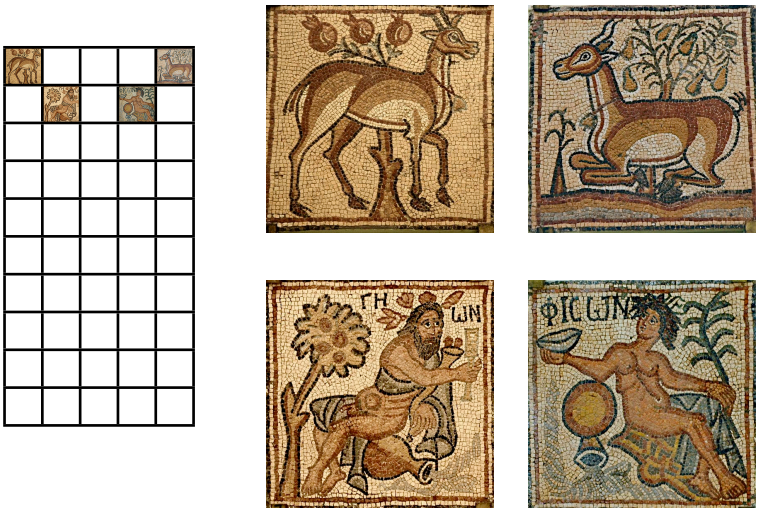
[62] Rorison (1848); Pittenger (1888)

[63] Butterworth (1960) pp.3-27; Hanfmann (1980) p.88

[64] Delivered in Constantinople in AD 380. *Homilia* XXVIII, 6, cited in Maguire (1987a) p. 18. Cicero, *Dream of Scipio*. *Somnium Scipionis* 5.2, cited in Friedman (1967) p.9

[65] Maguire (1987a) p.54

[66] See chapter 3.7



3.6.28 - Position of the harts with bells around their necks to Geon and Phison

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The musician at the centre of this trio - anonymous and ambiguous - is strategically positioned on the pavement, his music taming the implicit savagery of the creatures either side. Immediately above him a paradisiacal peacock and temple-like building mark a major transition in the pavement creating a kind of *axis mundi* which connects Heaven, Earth and Underworld, for which the musician serves as a transitus figure. He calls to mind the Good Shepherd while encapsulating the transformative qualities of Dionysos, the pacifying nature of Orpheus and the transitional qualities of Hermes. As Dionysos - embodiment of the nature of the chthonic gods and always a source of evil, never the source of blessing[67] - the musician may have evoked the negative and dangerous transformative dynamism associated with the Dionysiac cult. However, the Dionysiac maelstrom is counteracted by the taming and controlling nature of Orpheus, whose mediating presence constrains and harnesses a regenerative energy. The music, referencing the harmony of the spheres, emphasises the transition from the mundane to the paradisiacal.[68] It also echoes the harmonies apparent in the west end of the pavement - the four Rivers of Paradise and the concordant Gospels, the bells around the necks of the harts, and the harmonious symmetry of that part of the pavement. This psychopompic musician, seated beneath a tree bearing gourds similar to those frequently found hanging above the salvific figure of Jonah,

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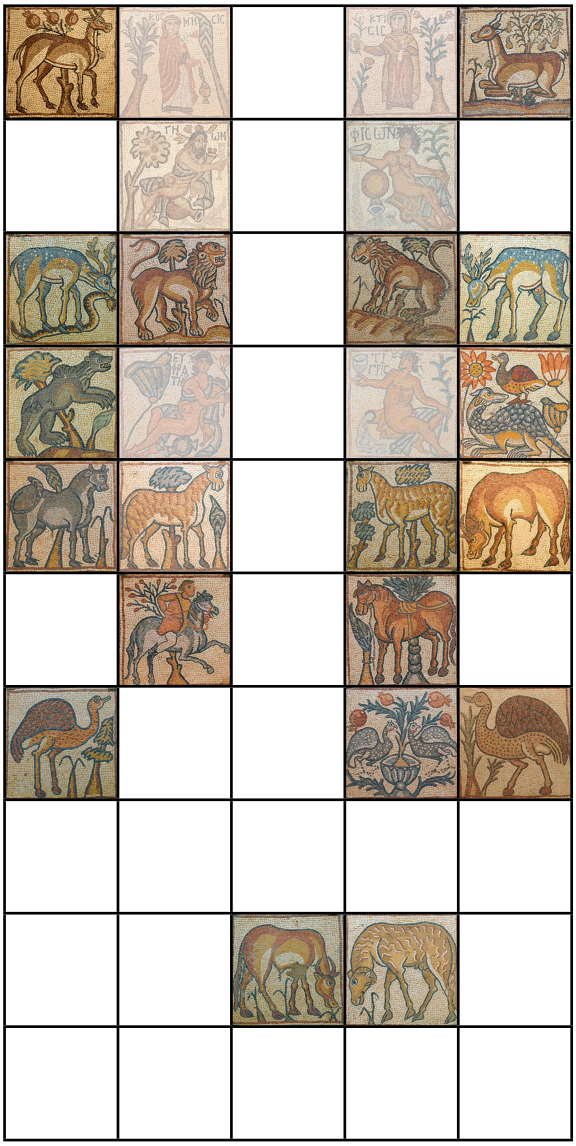
[67] Fairbanks (1900) p.241

[68] Orpheus sang a counter-song against the seductive song of the Sirens to protect the Argonauts, Stoneman (1991) pp.32-3; Hansen (2004) p.116

infuses the chaos of the east end of the pavement with a potential harmony and structure, marking the point where asymmetry gives way to symmetry and, more importantly, facilitating the passage from one realm to the next.

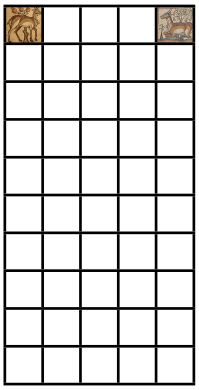
3.7: Guardians and Boundary Markers

The western part of the central axis of the large pavement is accentuated by corresponding pairs of motifs which create heraldic-like compositions, framing, guarding and reinforcing the principal thoroughfare.



The Rivers of Paradise and the personifications of *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* have been dealt with previously. This section considers the symbolic implications of the remaining pairs.

1: Harts with Bells







3.7.1

These two corresponding harts occupy the western-most corners of the pavement. Both are positioned in front of profusely fruiting trees and both have bells around their necks. Fruiting trees, especially pomegranate trees, were symbols of abundance and fertility,[1] and were often used to make reference to Paradise.[2]

In ecclesiastical settings, harts drinking from a chalice or from the Rivers of Paradise are generally accepted as making reference to Psalm 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God". The motif is understood as representing the faithful thirsting for the Water of Life. At Heraclea Lyncestis, for example, Maguire has suggested that the harts flanking a large chalice in the narthex could be seen as "open symbols of the faithful aspiring to Christ"[3] **(3.7.2)**.

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[1] The word *side* means pomegranate in ancient Greek. and in Greek mythology the pomegranate- *Side* - was a symbol of fecundity. The fruit had longstanding associations with the rituals of pagan mystery cults, Lazongas (2005) p.99. The pomegranate was also one of the most common and effective ingredients in Byzantine contraceptive suppositories, Riddle (1992) pp.25-6

[2] Maguire (1987a) pp.36, 45-6, 49-51 and 75.

[3] Maguire (1987a) p.39. For Heraclea Lyncestis, see Gjorgjievska (2008)



3.7.2 - Harts at a chalice, narthex, Heraclea Lyncestis

Harts were also used to symbolise the Rivers of Paradise - a trend which probably developed from Jerome's exegetical text, *Plures fuisse*, which talks about harts in the same manner as the four Rivers.[4]

Bells around the necks of animals are sometimes seen as a sign of domestication. Saller, for example, understood a hart in the Theotokos Chapel on Mount Nebo in Jordan as a domestic animal[5] **(3.7.3)**. A camel, now in the Art Institute of Chicago, could also be interpreted in the same way **(3.7.4)**.



3.7.3 - Hart with bell, Theotokos Chapel, Mount Nebo



3.7.4 - Camel with bell, late antique mosaic, provenance unknown

[4] Underwood (1950) p.72

[5] Saller (1941) p.233

For Philo of Alexandria, on the other hand, bells symbolised cosmic harmony.[6] The bells at Qasr el-Lebia, then, could be understood as alluding to the music of the spheres, key to understanding the divine order of creation,[7] or perhaps to the Word of God - the harmony of the Gospels which replaced the music of the spheres.[8]

However, in Late Antiquity, small bronze bells - *tintinnabula* - were often used as apotropaic devices to counteract the Evil Eye; they were hung above cradles, suspended from doorways, worn on chains around the neck and placed in graves.[9] They were "as much a part of everyday life as the cooking pot",[10] It is possible then, that the bells around the necks of the harts, strategically positioned in the corners of the pavement, may also have been understood in a protective sense.

The bells and pomegranates together, however, could have had a completely different meaning. The book of Exodus describes the vestments worn by the high priest, Aaron, as having bells and pomegranates hung around the hem:[11]

> A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

The same idea is expressed in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as the book of Sirach, which gives an account of God recognising Aaron as leader of his people and a description of his robes:[12]

> And he encircled him with pomegranates, with many golden bells all round, to send forth a sound as he walked, to make their ringing heard in the temple as a reminder to his people.

In the first century AD, Josephus Flavius described the vestments worn by high priests:[13]

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[6] Braun (2002) p.196

[7] Nock and Beazley (1946) p.143; Teeuwen (2002) p.190

[8] Discussed in chapter 3.6

[9] Braun (2002) p.196

[10] Schatkin (1978); Maguire (1995) p.42; Talloen (2011) p.597

[11] Exodus 28: 34-35

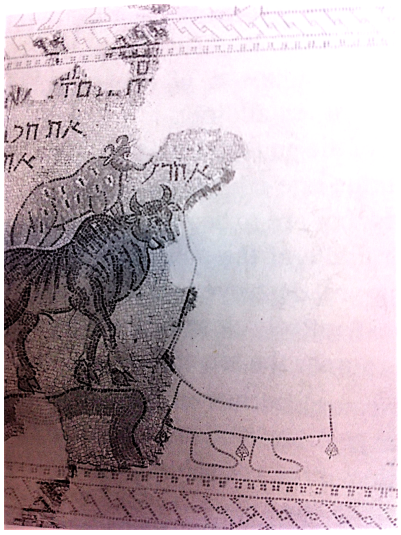
[12] Sirach 45:9

[13] Sanford (1981) p.75

> Now the vestment of the high priest being made of linen, signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightening in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder.

Plutarch also mentions numerous small bells around the hem of the high priest's robes, although he associates them with the cult of Dionysos.[14]

The remnants of a depiction of Aaron, wearing a garment with bells around the hem and identified by inscription - אהד - has been found in the nave of a synagogue at Sepphoris in Israel[15] **(3.7.5)**.



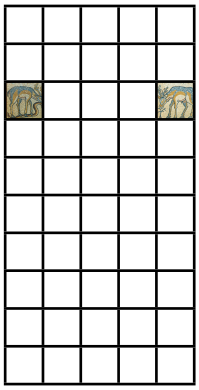
3.7.5 - Bells on Aaron's robe, Sepphoris synagogue

Could there be a correlation between the priest's vestments and the imagery in the pavement? Each component of his attire had a symbolic meaning, the importance of which was only complete when the entire ensemble was worn. In other words, were the bells and pomegranates at Qasr el-Lebia symbolically 'clothing' the church?

[14] Braun (2002) p.195

[15] Weiss (2005) p.78

2: Stags

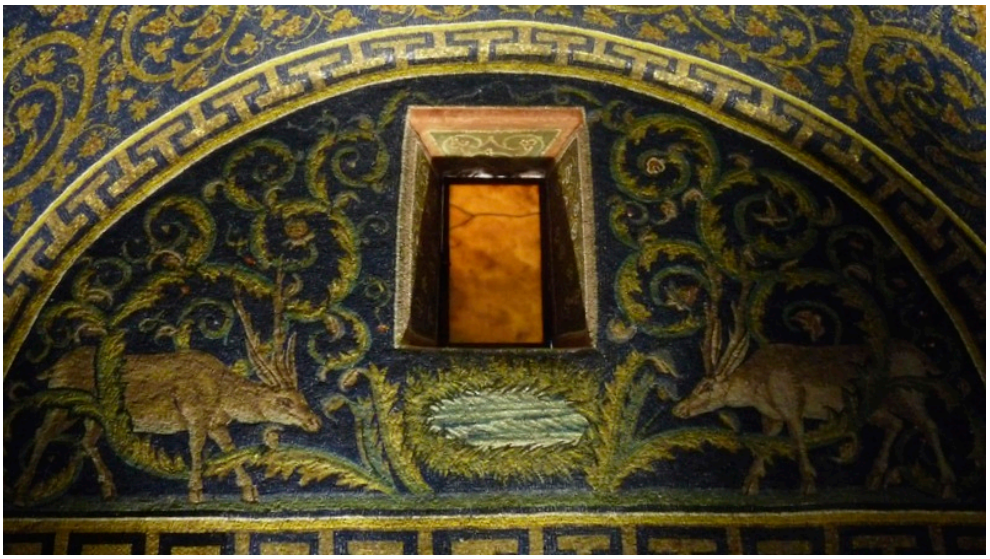






3.7.6

Jerome and Augustine, with reference to Psalm 42, used the stag as a symbol of the neophyte who attains eternal life through baptism.[16] Stags drinking the Water of Life is a favourite theme in Christian settings, a well-known example being the lunette of the mausoleum of the Empress Galla Placidia in Ravenna **(3.7.7)**.



3.7.7 - Lunette in Galla Placidia

Hanfmann has suggested that this so-called 'standard' version of stags or harts could have evolved from the established iconography of a stag devouring a snake. The process of transformation, he suggests, went from the illustrations of pseudoscientific animal lore to "Christian allegorisation of both the story and the image, and ended with the creation of a new visual symbol for one of the

[16] Jerome, *Breviarium* and Augustine, *Enarto*, cited in Puech (1949) pp.30-52

sacraments of the Christian religion".[17] The theme of a stag devouring a snake first appears in the works of early scientific and literary writers such as Lucretius (*c*. 99-55BC),[18] Pliny the Elder (*c*.AD 23-79)[19] Martial (*c*.AD 38-102),[20] and Aelian (*c*.AD 175-235).[21] In Christian art, this theme has been described as "an example of the straight survival of a classical motif".[22]

The Physiologus tells of stags extricating serpents, their arch-enemies, from crevices by applying their nostrils to cracks in the rocks and drawing the serpents out with their breath.[23] It also tells of snakes being driven from their hiding places by stags spitting water into crevices to flush them out[24]- an action which has prompted a comparison between the stag and "our Lord, who slew the great serpent (the devil) with the heavenly waters of virtuous knowledge".[25] Swallowing a serpent induced a great thirst and, in order to quench that thirst and rid its body of the poison from the snake, the stag was forced to seek out water and drink copiously. The water and ingested impurities were then regurgitated and the stag was re-purified. At the same time the animal would shed its large, heavy horns leaving it with renewed strength and vigour; an action likened to a sinner turning to Christ to shed the weight of worldly sins.[26] This theme, allegorised by early Christian writers, became an exemplification of the Christian soul overcoming evil - the devil being exorcised from a catechumen prior to baptism perhaps.[27]

The motif of the stag and the serpent continued to be used in ecclesiastical settings into the sixth century, for example in the late fifth- or early sixth-century baptistery

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[17] Hanfmann (1980) pp.83-4

[18] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, book VI, 765-766, Rouse (1937) pp.498-99

[19] Pliny the Elder, *NH*, book VIII, 118, Rackham (1940) pp.118-19

[20] Martial, *Epigrams,* book XII, 29, Ker (1930) pp.338-39

[21] *Aelian, De Natura Animalium*, II.9, IX.20, Ettinghausen (1955) p.272

[22] Hanfmann (1980) p.82

[23] Ettinghausen (1955) p.272. The Physiologus is thought to have been produced in the second century AD, possibly in Alexandria. By the fourth century it was widely known and by the end of the fifth century it had been translated into Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopian and other vernacular languages, Parrish (2005) p.1110. For general discussions on the Physiologus see, Sbordone et al. (1936); Eden (1972); Hanfmann (1980)

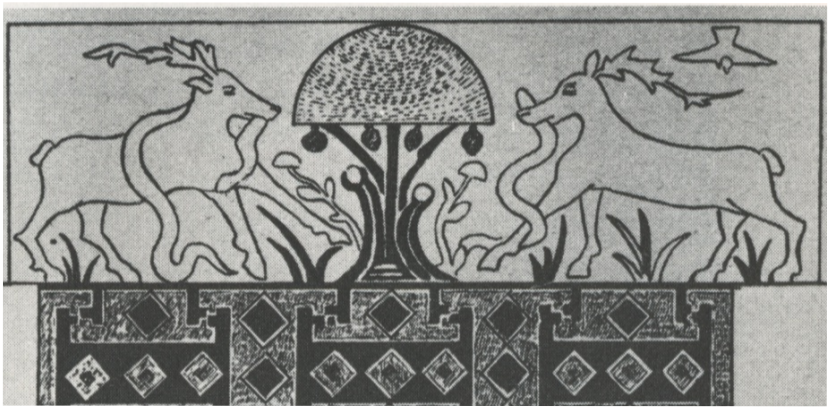
[24] Curley (1979) pp.58-60

[25] Sbordone et al. (1936) pp.97-9

[26] Rendell (1928) p.28

[27] Payne (1990) p.91; Domagalski (1990)

at Henchir Messaouda[28] **(3.7.8)** and, in a secular setting, in the Great Palace mosaic at Constantinople[29] **(3.7.9)**.



3.7.8 - Baptistery, Henchir Messaouda



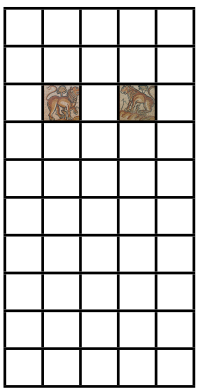
3.7.9 - Great Palace Mosaic, Istanbul

In our pavement, only one of the stags devours a snake, although the similarity in the depiction of the two animals leads them to be understood as a pair. They stand on the outer borders of the pavement but their position, in line with the eagle with its prey and mid-way between four Rivers of Paradise, is concordant with the associations made by early Christian writers between the stag with a snake and catechumens approaching baptism.

[28] Hanfmann (1980) p.83

[29] For discussion on dates of palace mosaic, see Parrish (2005)

3: Lions







3.7.10

Pairs of lions were common in pagan, Jewish and Christian visual culture, often guarding important or vulnerable sites or objects and flanking doorways and entrances. In Cyrenaica, for example, lions guarded the East Gate of the city of Cyrene **(3.7.11)**, and in Greece, a pair of lions flank a pillar above the main gate into the city of Mycenae **(3.7.12)**.



3.7.11 - Lion's Feet by East Gate, Cyrene



3.7.12 - Lion Gate, Mycenae

In synagogues, pairs of lions were often depicted either side of sacred objects or inscriptions.[30] In the fourth-century pavement in the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias in Israel, a pair of lions stand guard over an inscription comprising a grid of nine panels **(3.7.13)**, and in the sixth-century synagogue at Beth Alpha two lions protect the Ark of the Scrolls **(3.7.14)**.

[30] Avi-Yonah (1960) p.30; Goodenough (1988) pp.29-37



3.7.13 - Guarding lions, synagogue, Hammath Tiberius



3.7.14 - Guarding lions, Beth Alpha synagogue

In Christian iconography, the lion carried multivalent - and often contradictory meanings. Pairs of lions retained their protective role, as for example, in the sixth-century pavement in the church at Be'er-Shem'a, where they flank a cantharus from which an inhabited vine-scroll grows, harbouring, amongst other things, a mother and child **(3.7.15)**. In the sixth-century Basilica D at Byllis in Albania, a pair of lions guards the entrance to the nave **(3.7.16)**.



3.7.15 - Lions guarding a cantharus, nave Pavement, Be'er-Shem'a



3.7.16 - Guarding lions, nave Pavement, Basilica D, Byllis

The lion, symbol of the tribe of Judah, was sometimes associated with Christ, descendant of the tribe of Judah.[31] The Physiologus recounts how lions sleep with their eyes open - a watchfulness seen to link the creatures with an all-seeing Christ.[32] It also tells of lion cubs being born dead, only coming to life three days later when breathed upon by their sire[33] - a legend which fits with the triple immersion of baptism and Christ's three days in the tomb.[34]

On the other hand, the lion was also compared to the devil; 1 Peter 5:8 reads:

> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may.

At Qasr el-Lebia, however, the lions are not shown with cubs and their role seems more likely to have been as guardians, watching over the eagle with its prey and guarding the route westwards

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[31] Matthew 1:1-6; Luke 3:23-38. See also Revelation 5:5

[32] Rendell (1928) p.5

[33] Payne (1990) p.19.

[34] Cyril of Jerualsem, *Mystagogical Catechesis* 2.4 "... you were led to the holy pool ...and descended three times into the water...here also covertly pointing by a figure at the three days burial of Christ", Cross (1986) pp.63-7

4: Bear and Crocodile



3.7.17



Although the bear and the crocodile are an asymmetrical coupling, for the purposes of this excursus they are being dealt with as a pair.

In a Christian context, bears are largely confined to hunting scenes. Sixth-century examples include, the pavement at Kissufim in Israel[35] **(3.7.18)**, and the Old Diakonikon, Memorial of Moses, at Mount Nebo in Jordan[36] **(3.7.19)**.



3.7.18 - Kissufim, North Aisle, Kissufim

[35] Cohen (1993)

[36] Piccirillo (1997)

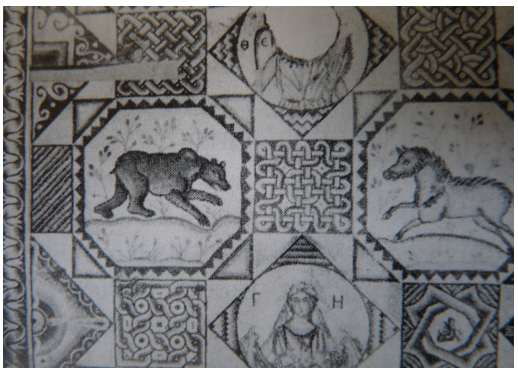


3.7.19 - Old Diakonikon, Memorial of Moses, Mount Nebo

As a stand-alone figure, the bear was not common in Christian iconography. What appears to be the hind leg of a bear has been found in the fifth-century nave pavement of the Vrina Plain basilica at Butrint in Albania[37] **(3.7.20)**, a running bear appears in an octagonal panel in a sixth-century pavement in the chapel of Beth Guvrin at el-Maqerqesh in Israel[38] **(3.7.21)**, and in Basilica A at Peyia on Cyrprus, a leaping bear is one of four animals at the centre of the atrium[39] **(3.7.22)**.



3.7.20 - Vrina Plain basilica



3.7.21- Chapel of Beth Guvrin, El-Maqerqesh

[37] Greenslade et al. (2006)

[38] Hachlili (2009) esp. pp.185-7

[39] Michaelides (1987)



3.7.22 - Atrium, Basilica A, Peyia, Cyprus

In his *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville writes that the bear's strength is in its forepaws and loins when it stands erect but that it has a weak head. The bear - *ursus* - is so-named as offspring are born unformed and are shaped in her mouth (*ore suo*):[40]

> Thus with her tongue the bear shapes her offspring
> when she has borne it.

Clark and McMunn suggest that in a Christian repertoire, the amorphous birth and the mother licking her cubs into shape may be likened to order wrought from chaos, God restoring his son to life and the heathen converted to Christianity.[41]

At Qasr el-Lebia there are no bear cubs, but the animal is standing erect in a position of power, and it may therefore have been intended as an apotropaic motif.[42] Its position in the pavement is, however, worth noting; Homer, making reference to the night sky in the *Illiad*,[43] wrote of the bear being wary of Orion the hunter, noting that it, "never ventures to enter the River Ocean (that is, never dips below the horizon)".[44] Our bear, in the western part of the pavement, is safely above the oceanic scenes to the east.

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[40] Barney et al. (2006) pp.252-3

[41] Clark and McMunn (1989) p.16

[42] In the same way, perhaps, that the ferocious animals - the bull and the lion - in the diakonikon pavement at Deir Solaib in Lebanon, have been interpreted as prophylactic symbols, Mattern et al. (1939) p.40

[43] Iliad 18.483-489

[44] Hansen (2004) p.131



3.7.23

In ancient Egypt, the crocodile was considered a sacred animal. For the Romans, it became a symbol of Egypt and the inundation of the Nile, hence its frequent appearance in Nilotic scenes. Examples include, the first-century 'Campana' relief[45] **(3.7.24)** and a second-century Nilotic pavement at Villa Silin in Libya[46] **(3.7.25)**.



3.7.24 - Crocodile in the Campana Relief, Vatican Museums



3.7.25 - Crocodile in mosaic floor at the Villa Silin, Libya

By the early Christian period, the crocodile was still a ubiquitous element in Nilotic scenes and during the later fifth and early sixth centuries the animal was regularly depicted in combat with an ox or a bull - a composition which has been associated with the mortal combat between Leviathan and Behemoth.[47]

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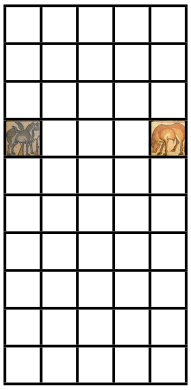
[45] Kern (1958)

[46] Abduilatif (2008)

[47] A crocodile-ox combat scene occurs in the north-east annex of the East Church complex and is addressed in Appendix 1.

It is difficult to wholly account for this apparently asymmetrical pair of motifs - the bear and the crocodile. Both creatures could be interpreted as serving an apotropaic function, although the crocodile appears to be a rather benign creature, barely threatening the duck on its back, and the bear, while its stance appears to threaten the river-god, nevertheless, leaves him entirely untroubled.

5: Bulls







3.7.26

Bulls had long-standing associations with the ritual of sacrifice.[48] They were a popular subject for the ornamentation of synagogues[49] and Mithraea,[50] but animal sacrifice was not a common theme in early Christian iconography. There are, however, a few exceptions. The mosaic pavement in the western-most section of the nave in the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mount Nebo in Jordan depicts two bulls flanking an altar and the accompanying inscription, Psalm 51:21, reads "Then they shall lay calves upon thy altar"[51] **(3.7.27)**. Similarly, the mosaic pavement in front of the altar in the Theotokos Chapel at 'Ayn al-Kanish, also in Jordan, includes the same inscription and has two bulls and two gazelles flanking a sanctuary **(3.7.28)**.[52]

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[48] Rice (1998) pp.41-61. Adherents of Mithras believed that by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the bull they would be reborn. Reynolds (1993) p.78

[49] For example in the floor mosaics in the synagogue at Sepphoris and in wall-paintings in the Dura Europos synagogue. Reynolds, (1993) p.78; Hachlili (2009) p.84

[50] Rüpke (2011) p.398

[51] Saller and Bagatti (1949) p.62

[52] Piccirillo (1997) p.151



3.7.27 - Bulls flanking an altar, Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, at Mukhayyat



3.7.28 - Area in front of Altar, bulls flanking an altar, Theotokos Chapel, Mount Nebo

A mosaic from Umm Hartain in Syria depicts two bulls flanking a chalice atop a pedestal - arguably a depiction of Eucharistic sacrifice[53] **(3.7.29)**.

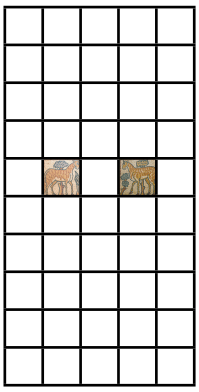


3.7.29 - Bulls flanking a chalice on a pedestal, Umm Hartaine

[53] Donceel-Voûte (1988) pp.192-210

At Qasr el-Lebia, there appears to be nothing in the iconography to suggest that the bulls were intended to have sacrificial connotations. Rather, their presence, together with the sheep flanking the central roundel, provides a sort of honour guard, drawing attention to and reinforcing the importance of the dedicatory inscription in the central panel.

6: Sheep







3.7.30

Alföldi-Rosenbaum refers to these animals as zebras, comparing them to a zebra in the mosaic pavement in the martyrium at Seleucia, near Antioch.[54] However, when compared to sheep in the sixth-century apse mosaic at Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna **(3.7.31)**, or the sheep in the late fifth or early sixth-century synagogue at Sepphoris **(3.7.32)**, the animals at Qasr el-Lebia clearly fit with a contemporary convention for depicting sheep.





3.7.31 - Sheep in apse mosaic, Sant' Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna

[54] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.56



3.7.32 - Sheep in Sepphoris synagogue

Sheep had well-established Christian associations. Christ, as the Lamb of God, was often shown as a sheep - sometimes haloed, as on the ceiling of San Vitale in Ravenna **(3.7.33)**, sometimes on an altar, as in the apse at Santa Prassede in Rome **(3.7.34)**, and sometimes standing atop the Mount of Waters, as depicted on a sarcophagus, now in Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna **(3.7.35)**.



3.7.33 - Ceiling, San Vitale, Ravenna



3.7.34 - Wall directly above the apse at Santa Prassede, Rome



3.7.35 - Sarcophagus in Sant' Apollinare in Classe,

Sheep were also used to represent the twelve apostles, usually on walls or apses as in the sixth-century apse mosaic at Ss. Cosmas and Damian in Rome **(3.7.36)**,

although a remarkable exception is their appearance in a pavement in Basilica C at Byllis in Albania, where two flocks of six lambs converge towards the altar **(3.7.37)**.



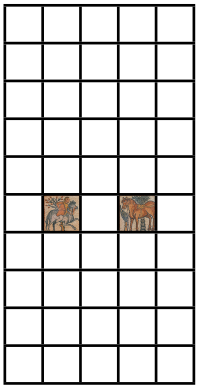
3.7.36 - Apse mosaic, Ss. Cosmas and Damian, Rome

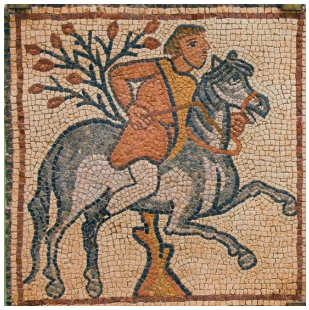


3.7.37 - Pavement in sanctuary, Basilica C, Byllis

At Qasr el-Lebia, the sheep are one of only a few motifs with a clear and immediately recognisable Christian meaning. Positioned either side of bishop Macarius' dedicatory inscription, they draw attention to its text and underline its Christian content.

7: Horses







3.7.38

Horsemen in late antique mosaic pavements are not particularly common and are usually part of a hunting scene. A mounted hunter attacks a leopard in the pavement of the north aisle in the sixth-century church at Kissufim in Israel[55] **(3.7.39)** and hunters chase a bear and a leopard in the sixth-century pavement of the Old Diakonikon at Mount Nebo in Jordan[56] **(3.7.40)**.



3.7.39 - North aisle, Kissufim



3.7.40 - The Old Diakonikon, Mount

In the so-called Nile Festival Building at Sepphoris in Israel, two horsemen, one holding a sistrum - an instrument associated specifically with the Nile - gallop towards an architectural representation of Alexandria[57] **(3.7.41)**. This mosaic represents the *sēmasia* - the ritual of sending out a messenger to announce that the optimum level of flood had been reached.[58] A border in the sixth-century Beth Guvrin chapel at El-Maqerqesh in Israel also includes a Nilotic landscape with a

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[55] Cohen (1993)

[56] Piccirillo (1997)

[57] Weiss and Talgam (2002)

[58] See chapter 3.4 For a general discussion on the *sēmasia*, Meyboom (1995) pp.72-3

horseman holding aloft an object, possibly a sistrum or a stalk of corn,[59] and this too may represent the *sēmasia* **(3.7.42)**.



3.7.41 - Nile Festival Building, Sepphoris



3.7.42 - Beth Guvrin Chapel, El-

Two rider-less horses flank a personification of Winter in a fifth- or sixth-century pavement in the diakonikon at Deir Solaib in Syria; the horses are named by inscription as Αγαθοφέρον - 'good omen' - and Νίχη - name unknown[60] **(3.7.43)**.

[59] Hachlili (2009) fig.VIII-3

[60] Mattern et al. (1939) p.35



3.7.43 - Diakonikon, Deir Solaib, Syria

The idea expressed by the inscription Αγαθοφέρον - that horses may have been considered a 'good omen' - could be seen to tie-in with the horses in the Sepphoris pavement, which are relaying the good news of the *sēmasia*. Given this possible correspondence, together with the prevalence of Nilotic imagery in the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, it may be worth considering whether the horses and rider in our pavement were, indeed, making reference to the festival of the *sēmasia.*

8: Ostriches



3.7.44

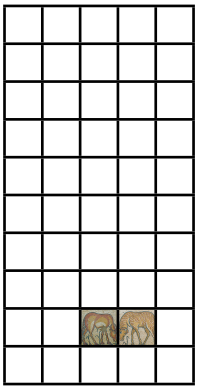
The ostrich - *struthio* - a creature imbued with dual and contradictory meanings, is described in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* as an animal with feathers like a bird but not otherwise able to rise above the ground and as a creature which neglects to incubate its eggs, its offspring being brought to life by the warmth of the earth alone.[61] In the writings of the Old Testament, ostriches, are said to live on the edge

[61] Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* XII.vii.20, Barney, et al. (2006) p.265

of the wilderness - a place of wild beasts and demons - and were considered to be cruel with no wisdom or understanding.[62] On the other hand, in the Physiologus, the ostrich's habit of only laying its eggs when the star Virgilia appeared in the constellation of the Pleiades, was held up as an example to man to take more heed of signs from God.[63] The belief that ostrich eggs were incubated by the warmth of the sand rather than by a parent allowed the eggs, already prized for their rarity, size and hardness of shell, to become a symbol of the immaculate conception of Christ and the virgin birth.[64]

At Qasr el-Lebia, however, the ostriches are not shown with their eggs and the position of the panels, on the outside edges of the pavement, is more consistent with the idea of the ostriches inhabiting, and thus symbolising, the lands bordering the wilderness - perhaps Cyrenaica itself.

9: Bull and Ram







3.7.45

The bull, as we have seen, was the quintessential sacrificial animal in classical antiquity.[65] The ram, or the he-goat, considered the natural enemy of the vine, was

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[62] Smith (1969) p.108. Lamentations 4:3- "...the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness." Job 39:14-17 - the ostrich, "which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones as though they were not her's: her labour is in vain without fear; Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding."

[63] Curley (1979) p.55; Payne (1990) p.69; Williams (2013) p.69

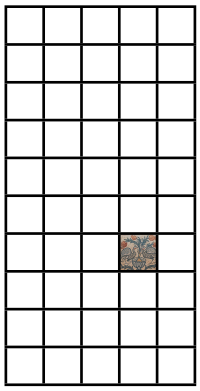
[64] In religious paintings an ostrich egg is often hung above the Virgin Mary, Meiss (1954) pp.94-5; Ragusa, (1971) p.435 and p.438. It is not clear when the association between the ostrich egg and the virgin birth was first made. One of the earliest references to the eggs in a liturgical context is in the *Liber Pontificalis* which records a gift by Leo IV of two eggs to St. Peter's in Rome around the middle of the ninth century, Flood (2001) p.42

[65] Rice (1998) pp.41-61. Adherents of Mithras believed that by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the bull they would be reborn, Reynolds (1993) p.78

named in the "Greek Anthology" as a popular choice of sacrifice for Dionysiac rituals.[66] Here, at the east end of the pavement, the sacrificial associations of these two animals seem appropriate when viewed with the triumvirate of motifs above - the satyr, musician and leopard - a potential, if abbreviated, Dionysiac *thiasos*.

The bull and ram, by being depicted head-to-head with no central image between them, break with the ordered symmetry created by other pairs of motifs. It has been argued that in this arrangement the mosaicists had made a mistake - that the bull and the ram should have been flanking the four birds with a basket of festoons - a rearrangement that would bring the composition in line with the symmetrical layout of the imagery further west.[67] However, to postulate a displacement of the imagery, apart from involving a huge and unsubstantiated assumption, is to miss the possibility that the anomaly was a calculated adjustment intended as a device to further highlight a separation between the ordered symmetry in the west and the chaotic disarray in the east.

10: Guinea Fowls and Pomegranates



3.7.46



Guinea fowl - gallinaceous birds - were often included in scenes of fruitfulness and abundance; they appear in the nave pavement of the East Church at Cyrene,[68] in the

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[66] Greek Anthology 9.75. Jay (1981) p.231; Otto (1965) p.168. Also of note, the god Ammon, sacred to the Libyans, was a ram. Maguire (1993) p.147

[67] Stucchi (1975) p.400. Guarducci suggests that no less than fifteen panels in the pavement should be re-arranged, Guarducci, (1975); Engemann (1997) p.154

[68] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980). See also Appendix 2

House of Eustolios at Kourion in Cyprus,[69] and in the pavement of a sixth-century basilica at Bir Messaouda, Carthage in Tunisia.[70] Pomegranates, as we have discussed, have a long-standing association with fertility and abundance.[71] Here, growing from a chalice-like vessel, the motif could be seen as a a sign of 'Good Life' wrought by the hand of God.[72]

But what are we to make of a panel which lacks an obvious pendant which, nevertheless has its own symmetry? It is a great temptation, when attempting to elucidate meaning from complex imagery, to assume that a full working-out of the motifs is possible and that the designer was entirely successful in every aspect of his endeavour. This was not always the case.

[69] Christou (2007)

[70] Chick in Miles et al. (forthcoming)

[71] Lazongas (2005) p.99.

[72] Maguire (1999b) p.238

Chapter 4
The Pavement at Qasr el-Lebia: its Wider Cultural Context

Introduction

In previous chapters the iconography of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia has been studied in detail. The mosaic has been situated in a Cyrenaican context and diagnostic features of the pictorial vocabulary have been compared with corresponding imagery from other fifth- and sixth-century ecclesiastical settings. The aim of this section of the thesis is to view the pavement within a broad spectrum of late antique Mediterranean culture, taking into account *spolia*, sculptural collections, small-scale luxury arts, such as silver, textiles and ivories, as well as literary texts. Within this framework, we will consider how the iconography and composition of the mosaic fit with other late antique cultural productions.

One of the most surprising elements of the floor at Qasr el-Lebia is the inclusion of apparently pagan images. Chapter 4.1 focuses on the migration of classical imagery into Christian contexts. It briefly considers the so-called pagan-Christian dichotomy and the place of pre-Christian rituals and beliefs in late antique society and questions meanings attached to pagan imagery in secular and domestic settings. It goes on to highlight some of the differences between the earliest classically-inspired Christian images, found almost exclusively in catacombs and on sarcophagi, and the imagery which began to appear in ecclesiastical contexts in the late fifth and sixth centuries. It suggests that the recontextualisation of pagan imagery in Christian contexts can be seen as indicative of more widespread social changes and that the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia should be seen in this way.

Chapter 4.2 considers the late antique penchant for *varietas* and suggests that diversity and discontinuity, rather than unity and uniformity, was the dominating aesthetic in Late Antiquity. This trend manifested itself in a proliferation of pastiches, bricolages and anthologies. I will argue that the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, and its collection of seemingly disparate images, sits comfortably within this artistic and intellectual milieu.

The final section, chapter 4.3, reflects on a late antique proclivity for hidden meanings and conundrums. It draws comparisons between artistic works and literary compositions, suggesting that it was common for both to carry multivalent messages and harbour hidden meanings. Late antique viewers and readers were accustomed to having to adopt strategies to elicit meaning from imagery and text

which could not be read in a straightforward linear manner and the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia was just such a construct.

4.1: Classical Imagery in Late Antiquity

A Pagan-Christian Dichotomy?

Before the advent of Christianity there were no pagans[1] - "pagans did not know they were pagans until the Christians told them they were".[2] From the fourth century onwards, when the authority of the Christian church increasingly permeated everyday life,[3] the early Christians, described by Averil Cameron as "quintessential outsiders",[4] were forced to articulate their identity through a series of binary oppositions. In order to exist, Kahlos claims, Christians needed their counterpart - pagans.[5]

The proselytizing hyperbole of the early Christian writers exalted the triumph of Christianity and accentuated the surrender of paganism and, over the centuries, the idea of two clearly defined and mutually exclusive groups has been perpetuated.[6] More recently, however, coexistence rather than conflict has been stressed,[7] allowing for the idea that boundaries between paganism and Christianity were

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[1] Terminology is problematic. Non-Christians were generally referred to as pagans in the west and *hellênes* in the east. The term 'pagan' carried with it negative connotations, suggesting peasants - barbarians even - Kahlos (2007) p.25; Cameron Alan (2011) p.25; Shorrock (2011) p.5. Ironically, the term 'paganism' suggests a unified system of worship, investing diverse cults with the very status which apparently set the Christian church apart - a concept largely unknown before Christianity, Wilken (2003) p.124. In reality, the Christian church, far from being unified, was a plurality of Christianities, Garsoian et al. (1982) p.37; Garnsey (1984) p.24. *Hellêne*, on the other hand, suggests the culture of the Greeks and its adoption may have been a purposeful ploy by non-Christians to lay claim to the classical culture it defined, Bagnall (1993) p.252; Dawson (2008) p.129; Kaldellis (2008) pp.129-30. For Christians, however, *hellêne* was a derogatory descriptor, applied to non-Christians and heretics alike, Chuvin (1990) p.7; Kaldellis (2008) p.122. However, other terms are equally as misleading; 'polytheism', for example, does not take account of monotheistic cults which were particularly prevalent in the east, and the title 'non-Christian' makes no allowance for religions such as Judaism and Mithraism, Athanassiadi and Frede (1999) p.1. The terminology is further confused by the fact that the Greeks, traditionally known as *Hellênes,* articulated their own identity by establishing a binary opposition with non-Greeks, who they referred to as *barbaroi,* Bowersock (1999) p.9, and in Rome, Christians were sometimes reviled by the use of the title *Graikoi*, reflecting their predominantly Greek origin, Jerome *Letters* 54.5, www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001054.htm. Accessed 29.11.2011. For the purposes of this study, the terms Hellenistic, classical and pagan are used interchangeably to suggest the emulation of earlier styles and iconographies.

[2] Beales and Best (1985) p.9

[3] Pelikan (1993) p.170

[4] Cameron, Averil (1994) p.13

[5] Kahlos (2007) p.1

[6] As far back as 1898, Dill warned against the danger of assuming that early Christian society was divided into two distinct camps, Dill (1898) p.12

[7] Cameron, Alan (2007) pp.21-46, esp. p.43

more fluid than a simple dichotomy suggests.[8] Religious allegiances, it has been argued, were easily switched; for most pagans, a conflict of religions is likely to have been incomprehensible and for the majority of Christian converts, a coalescence of practices, rather than the total abandonment of all pagan customs seems most likely.[9] Frankfurter writes about new Christian centres having to "accommodate the full range of local peoples' supernatural experiences and potentialities",[10] and Trombley describes so-called 'administrative conversions,' where whole communities were declared Christian on the strength of a few token baptisms and the installation of a local cleric, albeit that the populace continued to worship the deities familiar to them.[11] It is also clear that pagan festivals, widely attended by Christians and believed by many to be vital to the safety and prosperity of their communities, remained popular through the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.[12] The *Lupercalia*, for example, a pre-Roman pastoral festival, was celebrated until at least the end of the fifth century,[13] and the feast of the Kalends of January, a pre-Christian ceremony associated with the power and prosperity of the ruling classes, persisted into the Middle Ages.[14] Zeno of Verona wrote about Christians who openly worshipped Christ, but who were not prepared to give up the mysteries of the pagan gods.[15] Guignebert has identified Christians such as these as 'demi-Chrétiens',[16] Bonner as 'paganised Christians',[17] and Liebeschuetz as 'fragile' Christians.[18] More recently, Kahlos has coined the term *incerti* to describe those who were neither pagan nor Christian - or indeed, both pagan and Christian[19]- and Cribiore, in a discussion of late antique authors who profess one

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[8] Beard et al. (1998) p.388

[9] Harl (1990) p.14; Whitby (1991) p.114; Sandwell (2007) p.4

[10] Frankfurter (2010) p.39

[11] Trombley (1993) p.147

[12] These remnants of a classical past should perhaps be seen as attesting to an integration of practices rather than signifying the persistence of widespread paganism, Wallace-Hadrill (1982) p.17; Belayche (2004) pp.5-22

[13] In a letter to the senator Anrdomachus, Pope Gelasius announced that he had succeeded in suppressing the *Lupercalia*, Beard et al. (1998) p.*ix*

[14] Brown (1980) p.24

[15] Zeno of Verona *Tractatus* 1.35.2, cited in Kahlos (2007) p.31. Sandwell has even questioned whether people thought in terms of religious identities, Sandwell (2007) p.4

[16] Guignebert (1923) p.65

[17] Bonner (1984) p.348

[18] Liebeschuetz (1995) p.196

[19] Kahlos makes the point that, "the Christian and the pagan are inseparable in individuals and even the most convinced Christian hardliners are forced to bear both parts interwoven in themselves during their lifetime", Kahlos (2007) p.31

affiliation but whose writings suggest something quite different, talks of 'grey pagans'.[20] Alan Cameron promotes the idea of a "center-pagan group", suggesting that elite small-scale artworks with pagan themes represented common ground that allowed pagans who were more interested in culture than cult, "to slip into a respectable center-Christianity without having to give up their classicizing tastes in art and literature."[21] As Mattingly has argued, "the converted pagan could not by any possibility change his whole habit of thought, his entire mental background in a flash".[22]

Late Antiquity was, as Brown has remarked, a 'postclassical' society, not a '*non*classical' society,[23] and there was an on-going and inescapable discourse between the early Christians and the Hellenistic past; the new Christian Roman Empire, it seems, could not simply cut itself loose from its classical heritage, hence a so-called pagan culture became a backdrop of stability and continuity, against which Christianity played out its own rituals.[24]

Classical Imagery in a Christianised society

In the third and early part of the fourth century, there was no distinctive Christian iconography and in the same way that pagan rituals and traditions were appropriated and exploited by the early Christians, so classical imagery became part of a new Christian vocabulary.[25] Disassociated from their original contexts and no longer tied to literal referents, previously-pagan themes, now recommissioned

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[20] Cribiore (2013)

[21] Cameron, Alan (2011) p.706

[22] Mattingly (1937) p.114

[23] Brown (1980) p.22

[24] Lieu (2004) p.177

[25] In 1914, Dobschütz observed that the early development of Christian art was no more than an adapted form of Hellenism, Dobschütz (1914) p. 261. Cooney notes that, in Coptic art, purely Christian subjects are rarely found before the sixth century, suggesting that "classical mythology and history formed so traditional a background that it was instinctive to draw on these subjects for figural representation", Cooney (1941) p.9

as a "cultural memory bank",[26] were adopted and adapted for new uses.[27] There was a high level of artistic interchange which helped bring about a *modus vivendi* and eased the transition from Hellenism to Christianity by allowing people to embrace the new religion without having to reject too much of the past.[28]

Domestic and Secular Contexts

Classical myths and pagan imagery were gradually assimilated into "popular Christianity"[29] and were a constant in the decoration of villas and secular buildings. According to Brown, the aristocrats of the late antique world were "insensible" to the former religious overtones attached to such imagery when used in domestic contexts,[30] and the imagery was more likely to have been understood as a sign of good taste and education than an expression of religious belief.[31] Mythological figures are thought to have reflected the prosperity, generosity and hospitality of villa owners, or even, as Maguire has suggested, to have been an expression of the owner's desired wealth and status - as though the figures could attract the very things they stood for.[32] The familiarity and ubiquity of mythological heroes and personifications, Alan Cameron notes, "makes it hard to imagine them as vehicles of propaganda",[33] rather, they seem to have become "old friends developing new relationships", embodying a moral order that was made congenial to Christian

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[26] Elsner (2006) p.275. See also Lawrence (1961) p.323. This reservoir or images was not only appropriated by Christians; in the third and fourth centuries the Jews, having previously shunned such imagery, adorned graves and public buildings with previously-pagan motifs, Neusner (1963) p.286

[27] Weitzmann (1977) p.2. Stewart stresses that this adaptation was not the result of syncretism - the merging of different religious beliefs – but was the beginning of the gradual evolution of a Christian iconography, Stewart, (2008) p.140. Elsner makes the point that reproduction is interpretation and that, once appropriated, traditional imagery would have taken on new symbolic values, Elsner (1998a) p.169.

[28] Cameron, Alan (2007) p.39. Assimilating well-known classical motifs also allowed Christianity to absorb "the great accomplishments of a thousand-year-old tradition while remodelling its most displeasing elements by means of allegory and fable," Geiger (1998) p.12. See also Kessler (1988) p.167; Hannestad (1994) p.156

[29] Alexiou (2002) p.4

[30] Brown (1980) pp.19-23

[31] Cameron, Alan (1982) p.239; Harl (1990) p.16; Kiilerich (1993) p.185; Talgam (2004) p. 222

[32] Maguire (1999b) p.243

[33] Cameron, Alan (2011) p.704

interpretation.[34] Downey has commented that, by the late fifth and early sixth centuries, such was the predominance of pagan personifications depicted in the floors of Antioch, that "whatever may have been the strength of Christianity in Antioch ... pagan motifs were preferred for the decoration of private houses and public buildings."[35]

This is not to say that personifications and mythological figures never served a religious function, neither were they universally accepted by early Christians. A description of a bath-house at Avitacum in France by the fifth-century poet, Sidonius, for example, praises its decoration for an austere lack of pagan and naked imagery,[36] and Maguire has suggested that the face of a personification of *Okeanus* in a bath-house at el Haouria in Tunisia, was deliberately destroyed as a result of "the anxiety provoked by a water deity in a household that presumably had become Christian."[37] On the whole, however, classical imagery seems to have lost its pagan currency and become an elite construct; it was a way for villa owners - and their visitors - to show off their cultural maturity, confirm their social standing and justify their membership of the elite.[38] To demonstrate a familiarity with classical myths and traditions was to demonstrate a command of *paideia.*[39]

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[34] Brilliant (1994) p.171. The resurgence of personifications of abstract concepts, usually only identifiable by inscriptions, may have been the direct result of an increased enthusiasm for combining imagery and text, in itself an overt display of *paideia,* Leader-Newby (2005) p.233. Although it has also been suggested that this marked increase in labels identifying mythological figures is an indication that the subject matter was no longer universally recognised, Deckers (1986) p.163; Raeck (1992) p.139

[35] Downey (1949) p.98

[36] Sidonius *Ep.* II.ii.5-7, cited in Anderson (1963) pp. 422-3; Harries (1994) p.132. This Suggests that pagan and naked imagery were still prevalent in the fifth century.

[37] Maguire (2012) p.26. Although, in the same publication, Maguire records that in a villa near Seleucia, personifications of *Ananeosis* and *Ktisis*, were destroyed because Christian concepts could not be allowed to remain on the floor but, in an adjacent room, a sea-goddess - a figure with no Christian associations - survives, suggesting that she was an acceptable subject for a pavement, Maguire (2012) pp.30-4

[38] Liebeschuetz (1996) p.83; Sandwell and Huskinson (2004) p.141; Leader-Newby (2004) p.159; Cameron, Alan (2007) pp.33-9. This was also true of many late antique literary works; *centones*, for example, offered readers the opportunity to display their *paideia* by identifying earlier literary allusions and mythological characters, repatriating lines and verses to their original poetic landscapes, Shorrock (2011) p.126

[39] Poulsen (2012) p.183

Paideia

In Late Antiquity, *paideia*, a system of educating and training the mind in classical Greek and Hellenistic culture,[40] although still largely confined to the upper echelons of society, was no longer a trademark of the aristocracy. *Paideia* was an education for the sake of wholeness - a way of achieving inner perfection.[41] Marrou commented that, "in the deep confusion caused by the sudden collapse of ancient beliefs, it was the one true unshakeable value to which the mind of man could cling"; in other words, for many, *paideia* became "the equivalent of a religion".[42] Perhaps rather surprisingly, *paideia* was adopted by the Church as a model for the education of Christians.[43] Surprising, because not only could this quest for human perfection be seen to go against the teachings of the Church, but also because *paideia* created a frame of reference within which the elite could interact and from which others were excluded.[44] *Paideia* did, however, have the irreplaceable practical advantage of having established standards that were accepted in every corner of the Roman world - it fulfilled an overwhelmingly social function.[45]

Ecclesiastical and Funerary Settings

The majority of the earliest Christian art - that is, imagery with a specifically Christian content - is funerary in nature and known, above all, from the Roman catacombs and early Christian sarcophagi, although it is often difficult - if not impossible - to determine whether some of these images were intended to be

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[40] For a discussion on *paideia*, see Jaeger (1961)

[41] Tarnas (2010) p.42-3

[42] Marrou (1956) p.101

[43] Trombley (1993) p.147. Sermons delivered by bishops on state occasions were described as "models of classical oratory", Cameron, Averil (1993) p.72. A series of fifth-century mosaic panels, provenance unknown, dwells on the classical education of a boy named Kimbros and include a personification of *Paideia*. Scholars working on these mosaics have suggested that they underline the importance of *paideia* in Late Antiquity, Constantin et al. (2007) p.114

[44] The Church, rather than break away from this established system of education, endeavoured to reconcile it with Christian doctrine, Kaldellis (2008) p.132. The author of the Acts of the Apostle Philip, accredited the protagonist with the words, "I have come to Athens in order to reveal to you the paideia of Christ", thereby making Christianity appear to be both a continuation of and the successor to classical Greek *paideia,* Jaeger (1961) p. 12

[45] Cameron, Alan (2007) p.29. Heather comments that *paideia* created a sense of identity for landowners from Hadrian's wall to the Euphrates, Heather (1994) p.185

pagan, Christian or even Jewish.[46] The first images used by Christians were 'signitive' motifs - a dove, a fish, an anchor, a ship - symbols which had power beyond their literal denotation.[47] As Christianity and its use of representational arts evolved, the repertoire of imagery expanded to include Old Testament figures such as Noah, Jonah, Daniel and the three Hebrews, as well as the Good Shepherd.[48] Like the early signitive motifs, these figures also worked as ciphers; they were not accompanied by explanations or commentaries and referred beyond themselves to a body of spiritual knowledge which viewers, whether literate or not, were expected to possess.[49] Depictions seem to have been largely based on pre-Christian prototypes: Noah was generally shown in a box-like chest - a composition resembling images of the mythological princess of Argos, Danae, who was also cast adrift in a box; Jonah, reclining beneath the gourd tree, imitates the mythological Endymion or Ariadne;[50] and the Good Shepherd was often modelled on the ancient Greek ram-bearing *Kriophoros*.[51] It is not clear whether these figures were able to shake off all former connotations or whether the older prototypes were actually intended to influence the way the new figures were understood.[52]

The end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth, saw a short period during which aniconic imagery appears to have been favoured for the decoration of church interiors. From the second half of the fifth century, figural imagery began to

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[46] This may be attributable to the fact that "human beings are in nothing so conservative as in funeral customs," Chadwick (1967) p.278. Or, as Johnson has suggested, that the "'conflict' of pagans and Christians ended at the grave", Johnson (1997) p.59. For discussions on the hypothesis that Christian art sprang from Jewish art, see Goodenough (1988); Kessler (1997); Elsner (2003a) pp.114-28. Hachlili discusses the use of the menorah in Christian settings and references objects marked with both a cross and a menorah, Hachlili (2001)

[47] Weidlé (1950) pp.10-11; Goodenough (1988) p.46

[48] Kitzinger suggests that Old Testament subjects, like mythological figures, "stand out as carriers of the Hellenistic survival again and again", Kitzinger (1963) p.105. There is an interesting distinction between the Old Testament characters, delivered from death by the direct intervention of God, and the Good Shepherd, not saved by God, but sent by God to save mankind - an embodiment of divine forgiveness and salvation for the repentant sinner.

[49] Stewart (2008) p.140. Only Jonah appears as part of a narrative sequence. For example, in the third-century catacomb of Callixtus in Rome, Pergola (2000) p.20; in the pavement of early fourth-century basilica at Aquileia in northern Italy, Marini (2003); in the early Christian Cemetery at Pecs, Hudak and Nagy (2009); and on the upper register of both the front and the back of the Lipsanotheca at Brescia, Watson (1981)

[50] Lawrence (1961) p.324-7; Elsner (2006) p.293. Balch makes the point that Endymion does not seem to figure in the early Jonah imagery in the catacombs which could suggest that the assimilation came later, Balch (2008) pp.187-8

[51] For a discussion on the different meanings of the Good Shepherd, Bisconti (2011) p.58

[52] Mathews, for example, suggests that, by modelling Jonah on Endymion, "the sculptor transformed the story and made the prophet's rest into a metaphor of the repose of the blessed", Mathews (2003) p.33

reappear in ecclesiastical settings but there was a marked difference between the new iconographic schemes and those previously found in the catacombs. The Old Testament deliverance figures, so popular in the third and fourth centuries, did not make a reappearance; in their stead, imagery referencing baptismal salvation and the Eucharist emerged - stags drinking from a spring, Christ or a christological substitute atop the Mount of Waters, peacocks flanking a chalice, and imagery making reference to the four Rivers of Paradise - underlining a belief that it was "no longer only the intervention of God but participation in the sacraments of the Church which assures the salvation of the dead".[53] Death was no longer a fate from which one needed to be delivered - rebirth and eternal salvation were now the right of all true believers.

Also around the end of the fifth century, minor pagan deities, including personifications of Earth and Ocean, of the Seasons and the Months and of abstract concepts such as Wisdom, began to appear in mosaic floors in ecclesiastical contexts.[54] Lavan has noted that sixth-century society had become "more thoroughly Christianised… and more comprehensively anti-pagan",[55] and yet the distinctive grandeur and splendour of elite domiciles, particularly imagery associated with abundance and well-being, was now being replicated in churches. Maguire has suggested that the appropriation of this imagery may have been intended to show that the Good Life, previously the exclusive domain of the elite, was now the 'Good Life' controlled by the Church and accessible to all.[56] More generally, this development is often seen as a classical 'renaissance' - a conscious harking-back to an earlier period.[57] However, as discussed above, Late Antiquity,

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[53] Grabar (1980) p.11

[54] Arguing against Avi-Yonah's claim that the early Christians considered these images to be "shocking and immoral, and refused to allow these themes to appear in their church mosaics", Avi-Yonah (1975) p.44.

[55] Lavan and Mulryan (2011) p.*liii*

[56] Maguire (1999b) p.253

[57] For example, Kitzinger (1967) p.2; Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980); Piccirillo (1997) pp.23-26; Merrony (1998) p.460. This transferral of Hellenistic imagery from secular to ecclesiastical contexts has caused certain mosaics and buildings to be mistakenly dated to a much earlier period. The pavement in the Church of St. Christopher at Kabr Hiram in Lebanon, for example, was at first thought to be a fourth-century work intended to adorn a pagan building, but Renan made a case for it being contemporary with the inscription dating the church and its floor to AD 575. He argued that the pavement should be understood as "un fruit de la grande renaissance du temps de Justinien", Renan (1864) pp.624-5. Other examples of churches being misdated on account of their pagan decoration, include three churches at Mount Nebo in Jordan - the Church of Priest John, the Church of Ss. Lot and Procopius and the Church of St. George, Saller and Bagatti (1949) p. 86

often described as a time of transition and radical transformation,[58] was also a period during which the old coexisted with the new, different parts of the same society overlapped and merged and, as Brown has observed, inherited traditions "took a new lease on life".[59] With this in mind, it is worth considering whether these iconographic schemes could also be a reflection of the society in which they were produced.

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In the early Christian period, artists drew on existing artistic paradigms, adopting, adapting and recontextualising classical and pagan imagery. The resulting art, however, was not simply an imitation of what went before, but was a creative integration of old material - which retained a certain indeterminacy and a degree of contradictory meaning - into a new and increasingly Christianised, milieu. The classical repertoire of imagery was, as Kitzinger has observed, given "new scope and new impetus".[60] This juxtaposition of old and new was indicative of radical changes in the culture, belief and aesthetics of sixth-century society to which the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia clearly belongs.

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[58] Roberts (1989) p.38; Hannestad (1994) p.151; Cormack (2000) p.884; Elsner (2011b) p. 26

[59] Brown (1980) p.22

[60] Kitzinger (1976) p.220 (Originally publication: Kitzinger (1967) pp.1-10)

Chapter 4.2: Collections, Fragmentation and *Varietas*

Introduction

The pavement at Qasr el-Lebia presents the viewer with a rich and diverse assemblage of imagery. This section, with particular reference to *spolia* and architecture, to collections of statuary and to literary works, will consider the late antique penchant for assembling and displaying the apparently disparate - for the aesthetic of *varietas.*[1] The intention of this excursus is not to suggest that any of these productions had a direct influence on, or relationship with, the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, but to situate the pavement in a wider late antique milieu. It is designed as a prolegomenon to an explanation of the heterogeneous assortment of images in the pavement, many of which could be seen to be at odds with their ecclesiastical setting and to argue against a fully Christianised mindset.

Architecture and *Spolia*

The use of *spolia*, although not unknown in the Roman imperial period, became part of mainstream artistic activity in Late Antiquity.[2] Traditionally, the use of *spolia* has been seen as a negative *modus operandi*; Vasari described the Arch of Constantine as an "egregious demonstration of the demise of artistic capability, evidenced not only by the pathetic efforts of its fourth-century friezes but by its reuse of second-century reliefs, *faute de mieux*."[3] Perhaps following Vasari's lead, the use of *spolia* has often been dismissed as an expedient and pragmatic building practice resulting from economic necessity, an unavailability of high status materials and a decline in the skills and artistic imagination of craftsmen.[4]

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[1] A literary, rhetorical and artistic device, *varietas* was a concept already understood and used in the early Roman period. According to Cicero, *varietas* was "...a Latin word properly used of diversity of color, but by transference of many other kinds of diversity: a varied poem, a varied speech, varied character, varied fortune", Cicero, *De Finibus*, 2.3.10, cited in Roberts (1989) p.47. According to Macrobius, Virgil took great care to avoid monotony by introducing variation and "avoiding repetition as if it were a disgrace or a crime", Macrobius, *Saturnalia,* 5.15.14-15, cited in Roberts (1989) p.46. Carruthers makes the point that *varietas* is created through *mixtura* and *diversitas* and that in antiquity, *mixtura* had negative connotations - it produced chaos and discord, in contrast to variation, which involved "an elegant articulation of the familiar, a persuasive harmony of the elements as they ought to be", Carruthers (2009) pp.42-3

[2] The term *spolia* was coined in the sixteenth century by antiquarian scholars to describe marble ornaments repeatedly encountered in secondary settings, Kinney (2001) p.138

[3] Although, oddly, he was more inclined to see the reused non-Italian marble and granite in fourth-century churches as a sign of residual good taste, Vasari, *Proemio delle Vite* 14 -15, cited in Kinney (1997) p.117

[4] There is a deeply-engrained view that Roman artists lacked creativity, Buckhardt (1956) p. 35; Gazda (1995) p.122; Kinney (1997) p.117; Ward-Perkins (1999) p.226

Deichmann, for example, saw the miscellaneous capitals at Santa Constanza in Rome as an indication of a lack of matching components.[5] However, as Brenk has pointed out, Constantine introduced *spolia* simultaneously into a prominent state building and a prestigious religious building and therefore the possibility that this represented a deliberate building policy must at least be entertained.[6] In addition, recent studies have shown that to incorporate *spolia,* particularly elements which were to be on show, was neither expedient nor inexpensive.[7] Even though many *spolia* came from state-owned marble magazines,[8] not all were obtained from easily accessible stockpiles; Theodoric, for example, requested marble slabs and columns be transported to Ravenna from Rome.[9]

If not simply a pragmatic solution to a practical problem, can *spolia* be explained as carrying ideological meanings? Papalexandrou has described *spolia* as "tangible vehicles for the transmission of memory",[10] and they are sometimes understood as a means of emulating a classical heritage and creating a continuity with the past.[11] In Christian settings, *spolia,* particularly those appropriated from pagan temples or exhibiting pagan subjects, have been interpreted as symbolising the triumph of

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[5] Deichmann (1975) p.92

[6] In Late Antiquity, no one but the emperor had juridical authority to pull down dilapidated public buildings and remove the construction material, Brenk (1987) pp.105-6

[7] An examination of reused components in the bath-house at Scythopolis, for example, has concluded that adapting the columns for use in their new context would have been costly and time consuming, Saradi (1997) p.399. Harrison makes the same observations about the churches in Cyrenaica, Harrison (1985) p.232. See also Wilson-Jones (1999) pp.75-99

[8] Brandenburg has pointed out that the heterogeneity of the colonnades of St. Peters can be seen as confirmation that the material used in its construction had been stored in the state-owned marble magazines, adding that, "*spolia* obtained by plundering a grand old Roman building [of this scale] would necessarily have produced a more unified supply of architectural elements", Brandenburg (2011) p.60

[9] Cassiodorus *Variae*, III.9-10, cited in Hodgkin (1886) p.202. Previously, high-status marbles imported from afar were ostentatiously displayed, flaunting the great distance separating the material from its source; where the material came from seems to have been as important as its visual properties. Transport costs were often higher than the cost of the commodity itself, Claridge (1998) p.38; Dodge (1988) p.68. Similarly, *spolia* might have been understood to demonstrate a geographic distance - both from their original sources and their secondary sources. They may also have represented a historical distance separating their antique contexts and their new settings. For discussions on the importation of *spolia* see Esch (2011) pp.13-32, esp. p.15; Brenk (1987) pp.103-9, esp. p.107

[10] Papalexandrou (2003) p 76. See also Ward-Perkins (1999) p.226; Brilliant (2011) p.169. Eco describes architecture as "informational media, able to communicate both denotative and connotative ideas", Eco (1997) p.184

[11] For example, Ward-Perkins (1999) p.230; Elsner (2000) p.176; Elsner (2006) p.295; Liverani (2011) p.34

Christianity.[12] However, associating *spolia* with ideological meanings is problematic;[13] Brandenburg forcefully rejects the idea, stating that "it is utterly inappropriate to interpret the acquisition of older building materials from stocks in public depots for use on public buildings and important church foundations as constituting acts of "appropriation", or to attribute to it any ideological significance".[14]

It remains debatable, then, whether the increased use of *spolia* in Late Antiquity was prompted by necessity or came about for ideological reasons. What is clear, however, is that, unaltered and undisguised and juxtaposed with newer elements, the asymmetry of mismatched columns and assorted capitals stood in stark contrast to - and suggested indifference towards - the principles of a classical aesthetic of uniformity.[15] Brenk suggests that the visual impact made by these second-hand architectural elements may have been unexpected - shocking even.[16] "[T]urned into a virtue by the late antique users",[17] however, their use resulted in colourful, rich and striking architecture. *Spolia* - elements from the past - were used to create new and impressive structures which deliberately broke with tradition and which came to represent high status architecture.

The Lateran Basilica and Old St Peters, both constructed in the fourth century, are examples of monumental and prestigious buildings showcasing the aesthetic of *varietas.*[18] The same aesthetic is also evident in buildings constructed from newly quarried elements. Procopius' description of Hagia Sophia, for example, stresses

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[12] Mango (1963) pp.63-4; Saradi (1997) p.395; Papalexandrou (2003) p.61. At Palaiopolis (Kerkyra) on the island of Corfu, Bishop Jovianus demolished at least one temple to enable the building of his new church; an inscription on the tribelon announces that the Christian building was built from 'the temples of the Greeks', Bowden (2003) p.148-9; Curta (2011) p.32. Christie, however, urges caution in assuming a Christian conquest through *spolia,* reminding readers that reused material often came from stockpiles or from redundant non-pagan buildings, Christie (2006) p.208

[13] Greenhalgh (2011) p.90

[14] Brandenburg (2011) p.70

[15] Saradi-Mendelovici (1990) p.52; Saradi (1997) p.397

[16] ".. unerwartig neuartig, vielleicht sogar schockierend." Brenk (1996) p.76

[17] Wohl (2001) p.95

[18] However, where the columns in the Lateran comprise two groups of marbles, the main colonnade being granite and the outer colonnade *verde antico*, the variation and inconstancy of the elements in St. Peter's was remarkable. For discussion on *spolia* in the Lateran see, Krautheimer et al. (1977) pp.44-5; Gnoli (1988) pp.163-4; Pensabene and Panella (1993) pp.169-70; Kinney (2001) pp.144-5. For *spolia* in St. Peter's see, Kinney (1997) pp.127-9; Bosman (2013) pp.65-80

the richness and variety of the architectural elements, albeit, in this case, new rather than reused marbles:[19]

> One might imagine that one had chanced upon a meadow in full bloom. For one would surely marvel at the purple hue of some, the green of others, at those on which the crimson blooms, at those that flash with white, at those, too, which Nature, like a painter, has varied with contrasting colors. Whenever one goes into this church to pray, one understands immediately that this work has been fashioned not by human power or skill, but by the influence of God.

And a sixth-century description of the interior of the church of St. Sergius at Gaza underlines the awe and wonder inspired by the diversity that greeted visitors:[20]

> When you enter [the church], you will be staggered by the variety of the spectacle. Eager as you are to see everything at once, you will depart not having seen anything properly, since your gaze darts hither and thither in your attempt not to leave aught unobserved: for you will think that in leaving something out you will have missed the best.

These accounts, written in Late Antiquity when optical gratification was found in "coloristic and formal inconstancy",[21] celebrate and exalt the miscellany of the decoration. It is reasonable to assume that, at this time, the remarkable variation and inconstancy of the elements in Old St. Peter's would have elicited a similar reaction. By the sixteenth century, however, a time when classical ideals were once again in favour - and around the same time that Vasari wrote his damning assessment of the Arch of Constantine[22]- perceptions had changed and a description of the basilica evokes a haphazard assemblage of disparate architectural elements, rather than a glorious spell-binding collection:[23]

> ...the capitals were partly complete, partly unfinished. Many bases were unlike the columns... The lintels were of large marble blocks which were taken from the circus, or from the ruins of another building.

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[19] Procopius, *De Aedificis*, I.i, cited in Mango (1972) p. 76; Stewart et al. (2005) p.11

[20] Choricius, *Laudatio Marciani*, 1.23.61, cited in Mango (1972) p.61

[21] Kinney (1997) p.127

[22] Discussed above, f/n 3

[23] Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della Basilica Antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano.* Codice Barberini Latino 2733, cited in Kinney (2001) p.145

An interesting analogy can be drawn between the discrepancies evident in these accounts, and the way the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia may have been understood in the sixth century and how it is viewed today. Modern accounts stress the idea that the pavement is a hodgepodge of discordant imagery, a random selection of disparate images with no symbolic meaning or iconographic programme. In the sixth century, however, its diversity may have been one of its main attractions. In other words, fragmentation, discordant notes and inconsistency for which it has been criticised, would have made the work entirely modern to a late antique sensibility.

Statuary Collections

In sculptural displays too, *varietas* was desirable and for Roman audiences, "eclecticism was a virtue rife with connotations of wealth and power, and tradition";[24] it announced "membership in an exclusive world of refinement, intellectual pursuits and lofty aspirations".[25] This is evidenced by collections of statuary from elite villas: at the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis on the Bay of Naples, a series of marble centaurs were juxtaposed with a group of Julio-Claudian portraits;[26] the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum housed a collection of statuary made up of such a diverse group of figures that they have been said to "elude categorisation";[27] and in a Cyrenaican context, an elaborate residence in Ptolemais was furnished with classical Greek statues, works from Egypt and a Dionysos and Ariadne from the Imperial period.[28]

If Constantine's 'imperial art policy' made the use of *spolia* and the display of heterogeneous architectural elements fashionable, it could also be argued that, by adorning his new capital with antique statues, Constantine and his *curatores* endorsed the practice of collecting and displaying classical statuary. A practice which continued to find favour with Christian emperors throughout the coming

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[24] Bartman (1991) p.73

[25] D'Ambra (1993) p.3

[26] Caro de (1987) p.87

[27] It has been suggested that the villa's decor may have represented the Epicurean ideal of a cultural education and an active political life, as well as alluding to a paradisiacal afterlife, Bartman (1991) p.74

[28] Brinkerhoff (1970) p.54

centuries.[29] In the fifth century, for example, a member of the court of Theodosius II imported a collection of statuary, described as the "grandest display of pagan art of the time", which could not, according to Brinkerhoff, have been amassed without "the enthusiastic cooperation of the Christian emperor himself".[30] Later still, Justinian imported two equestrian statues from the Ephesian Temple of Artemis and reportedly ordered cult statues from sacrificial sites of Isis and Zeus Ammon to be transferred to the capital.[31] In addition, an equestrian statue was erected in the Augustaeum in Constantinople which presented Justinian in the guise of the Greek hero, Achilles.[32]

Despite obvious misgivings by the early Christians about residual powers embedded in pagan statues,[33] a general culture of appropriation developed. Temples, public buildings and tombs were plundered, and statuary relocated to elite private residences, municipal buildings, street corners and public squares.[34] Private collections were put together by a Christian elite who, Brinkerhoff suggests,

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[29] Mango remarks that it "constitutes something of a paradox" that Constantine chose to assemble collections of pagan statues in his new capital, Mango (1963) p.55. Jerome observed that "Constantinople was enriched through the stripping bare of almost every city founded before Byzantium", Jerome *Chronicon*, 324, cited in Bassett (2004) p.48. Eusebius excused Constantine's actions by explaining that the statues were erected in public places to be ridiculed, Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* III.54. It has also been suggested that the statuary may have served to distance the city from its local history and to claim a classical or Graeco-Roman past for itself, Bassett (1996) p.491. See also MacCormack (1975) pp. 131-50

[30] Brinkerhoff (1970) p.5. The collection included the original of the Phidian Zeus of Olympia, the Aphrodite of Cnidos and two statues by the fourth-century BC sculptor, Lysippus, Mango (1963) p.58

[31] The impetus behind these orders was probably to halt sacrifices, and yet the statues were not simply destroyed, but transported to Constantinople, Mango (1963) p.58; Brinkerhoff (1970) p.58; Harl (1990) p.2

[32] Procopius in *De Aedificis 1.2.5-15*, Stewart et al. (2005) p.13; Charlesworth (1943) p.9. It is not clear whether this was a new or a re-carved statue - it has been suggested that the horse could have been made during the reign of Theodosius I. Either way, it used the vocabulary of the pagan tradition, Downey (1940) and (1949) p.98; Cormack (2000) p.893

[33] It has been suggested that, in Late Antiquity, pagans considered statues as talismans, Saradi-Mendelovici (1990) p. 54. Christians, however, believed them to be inhabited by demons, Mango (1963) p.59. This is evidenced by the large number of statues which were 'Christianised' by the addition of a cross or Christian inscription, see for example, James (1996) p.12; Papalexandrou (2003) p.61; Caseau (2011) p.489. A panegyric in praise of statues by the Christian poet, Prudentius, although laudatory, expresses a nervousness about the residual power embedded in statues, Prudentius, *Against Symmachus* I.502-5, cited in Elsner (1998a) p.109

[34] Saradi-Mendelovici (1990) p.50; Gazda (1995) p.131; Stewart (2003) p.233-4; Lavan and Mulryan (2011) p.439; Smith (2012) p.72. Hannestad, makes the point that the reuse of sculpture was through choice, not necessity and terms the late antique era the "Indian Summer of sculpture in the Classical tradition," noting that it had its own particular strengths, Hannestad (1994) p.152

probably "understood, appreciated and interpreted much of their world in pagan terms," and for whom the statues probably held no religious significance.[35]

Rather like the heterogenous collections of *spolia* displayed in many late antique buildings, these assemblages of statuary often included old and new - originals, copies, and even fragments.[36] It seems that reproductions were not, as previously thought, only displayed when authentic antiques were unobtainable,[37] but that ancient statues, replicas of those statues and even copies of the replicas, were regularly exhibited side by side.[38] By the sixth century, it was also common for fragments of statues - many unidentifiable - to be displayed and these remnants, which made no reference to their original meaning and function, were thought to have been a general evocation of the past.[39] Copies were judged by the same criteria as authentic statues,[40] and the display of reproductions alongside originals, without the authentic being privileged, can be seen as a "conscious artistic strategy"[41] which opened the way for statuary to be curated in any number of combinations. Different genres, different subject matters and a mix of old and new were combined with no thought to uniformity or constancy and the resulting collections can be seen as yet another manifestation of the late antique partiality for *varietas*.

Poetry and Epic Myths

In late antique poetry, as in visual culture, classical and non-classical elements were regularly juxtaposed and transposed, making the categorisation of late antique literary works, and indeed their authors, problematic. The fourth-century author,

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[35] Brinkerhoff (1970) p.57 and p.64

[36] Hannestad (1994) p.107.

[37] Stewart (2003) p.232

[38] Hannestad (1994) p.117. Bassett has commented that the use of copies, many of which could have been produced at any time during the Hellenistic or Roman periods, was "a standard and expected element in ancient public works projects", Bassett (2004) p.38. Marvin suggests that Roman replicas be viewed as palimpsests recording successive layers of taste and a continued fascination with a classical past, Marvin (1997) p.28

[39] Lavan and Mulryan (2011) p.441

[40] Hunger (1969/70) p.15; Bartman, (1991) p.75. The modern-day view of authenticity- "the demonstrable connection between an identifiable creator or creators and the work of art"- as a criterion for legitimacy or aesthetic value, was not held in Late Antiquity, Brilliant (2011) p.167

[41] Gazda (1995) p.123

Claudian, praised by modern scholars as "the last classical poet of Rome",[42] is supposed by some to have been a Christian, but by others to have been a pagan propagandist - a "spokesman of the pagan aristocracy in Rome".[43] Libanius, the fourth-century sophist from Antioch, identified himself as a pagan and yet his letters and orations express Christian allegiances,[44] and the sixth-century lawyer, Dioscorus of Aphrodito, generally believed to have been a Christian, combined rhetorical, classical and Christian ways of looking at the world in his writings.[45] Perhaps most famously, Nonnus, author of both the epic mythological poem, the *Dionysiaca*, and a paraphrase of the gospel of St. John, has been variously categorised as a pagan, as a pagan who converted to Christianity between writing his two works and, more recently, simply as a Christian.[46]

In the same way that mythological imagery in domestic settings was considered a sign of good taste rather than religious belief,[47] so pagan references in late antique literature seem to have lost any religious intent.[48] Liebeschuetz sees Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* - brimming over with allusions to myths and classical works - as a kind of encyclopaedia intended to showcase the author's learning and to give his readers the pleasure of identifying a multitude of literary allusions.[49] The sixth-century Christian Antiochene writer, John Malalas, compiled a similar compendium of pagan myths charting the history of the world from creation to the reign of Justinian, in which the gods are de-paganised and portrayed as benevolent human rulers in a line of descent going back to Adam.[50] In a Cyrenaican context, Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais, wrote a hymn which appears to present Christ as a second

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[42] Hadas (1952) p.388

[43] Cameron, Alan (1970) p.189

[44] Cribiore (2013)

[45] MacCoull (1988) pp.57-8

[46] Collart (1930) p.273; Keydell, (1936) p.911; Cameron, Alan (2000) p.176; Shorrock (2011) p.52. Shorrock considers the two works -*Paraphrase* and *Dionysiaca* - as "two parts of a provocative diptych"; a combination that encourages the view that both Christ and Dionysos "belong to the same new world", Shorrock (2011) p.118

[47] See chapter 4.1

[48] Basil of Caesarea, for example, argues that profane writings - meaning Greek literature - should be used as a valuable preparatory course to understanding the Scriptures, Basil of Caesarea, *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature,* cited in Freeman (2009) p.71. See also, Liebeschuetz (1995) p.202

[49] Liebeschuetz (1995) p.208. It is thought that this work was almost certainly written for a mainly Christian audience, Chuvin (1986) p.394. Miguélez-Cavero maintains that despite the parallels between Dionysos and Christ, it was not Nonnus' intention to present Dionysos as a divinity, but rather, simply to amuse a learned Christian audience, Miguélez-Cavero (2009) p.569

[50] Malalas, *Chronographia*, Jeffreys et al. (1986); Liebeschuetz (1996) pp.87-9

Heracles.[51] These poetic works, which transport themes and characters from a classical past to a Christian present, can be compared to buildings adorned with *spolia* and mis-matched statuary collections; the characters may have been de-paganised and the narratives adapted to support Christian doctrines, but the original myths and their protagonists are still clearly recognisable.

Another genre of late antique literature which blurs the boundaries between past and present - pagan and Christian - is *cento* poetry. Patchworks of short sequences and lines taken from ancient verses, primarily Homeric or Virgilian, were rearranged to give new, often Christian, meaning to earlier texts.[52] The fourth-century poem by Falconia Betita Proba, *Cento vergilianus de laudiibus Christi*, paraphrases sections of both the Old and New Testaments; it rejects paganism, glorifies the deeds of Christ and tells the new Christian story of salvation - all in Virgilian verse.[53] Two Christian scholars, father and son, named Apollinaris, recast the Bible into *centones*,[54] and the *cento, De Ecclesia*, tentatively attributed to the sixth-century poet, Mavortius, includes extracts from nine of the twelve books of Virgil's *Aeneid.*[55] Shorrock has remarked that the "experience of reading the narrative of Christ in the light of the Aeneid is by turns stimulating and disturbing, and has the potential to change our view of both the story of Christ and the story of Aeneas".[56]

Perhaps the most famous practitioner of the *cento* was the fourth-century poet, Ausonius, author of the "wittily obscene" *Cento Nuptialis.*[57] Ausonius describes his approach to composing a *cento*:[58]

> I will expound what a cento is. It is a poem completely built out of a variety of passages and different meanings, in such a way that either two half lines are joined together to form one, or one line and the

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[51] Synesius, *Hymn IX*. Although Heracles is not actually named in the hymn, Crawford (1901) p.503; Hunger (1969-70) p.22; Bregman (1982) p.101. For other examples, see Latourette (1938) p.195

[52] Schelke (1954) pp.972-3. The earliest extant *cento* is the second-century tragedy, *Medea*, usually ascribed to Hosidius Geta, but the popularity of the *cento* reached its zenith in Late Antiquity, Hornblower and Spawforth (1996) p.309

[53] Rand made the point that Falconia's poem "suggests the womanly art of quilting...a patchwork of verses or parts of verses from Virgil", Rand (1928) p.198

[54] Treadgold (2010) p.141

[55] Shorrock (2011) pp.127

[56] Shorrock (2011) p.129

[57] Green (1991) pp.518-26; Hornblower and Spawforth (1996) p.309

[58] Shorrock (2011) pp.125-6

> following half with another half... you may say that it is like a puzzle the Greeks called *ostamachia*... by fitting these pieces together in various ways, pictures of countless objects are produced... And so this little work, the cento, is handled in the same way as the game described, so as to harmonise different meanings. To make pieces arbitrarily connected seem naturally related, to let foreign elements show no chink of light between, to prevent the far-fetched from proclaiming the force which united them, the closely packed from bulging unduly, the loosely knit from gaping.

As well as likening the *cento* to a game, '*ostamachia',*[59] Ausonius also described his *Cento Nuptialis,* as *frivolum et nullius pretii opusculum* - 'a slight work, frivolous and worthless'.[60] This self-deprecating appraisal has been picked up by scholars critiquing late antique literature. Gibbon's comment, in the eighteenth century, that "the poetical fame of Ausonius condemns the taste of his age",[61] seems to have set the standard by which *centones* and their authors were subsequently judged.[62] These literary citations, in their own way collections of *spolia* which had been manipulated and revitalised by their new settings, have been either largely overlooked or derided as fragmented anthologies and nonsensical entertainment.

It is not only *centones* which have been dismissed by modern scholars as second-rate literary works. In his doctoral thesis, Marrou criticised Augustine's compositions as having no clear structure and for containing too many digressions which distracted from the unity of the whole.[63] Traits which, at first, Marrou saw as attesting to the decline of classical culture, but which, eleven years later, in a *retractatio*, he recognised as "manifestations of the vigour and vitality of this civilisation".[64] Many late antique literary works may indeed appear to be little more than scrapbooks of backward-looking and discordant excerpts, but, as Marrou

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[59] *Ostomachion*, or *stomachion*, was a puzzle, usually made from pieces of bone, which involved juggling the pieces to create different objects.

[60] Hornblower and Spawforth (1996) p.309

[61] Gibbon, Book 3, ch. XXVII www.sacred-texts.com/cla/gibbon

[62] For example, Treadgold makes the judgmental observation that Sozomen "expresses the absurd opinion that Apollinaris' centos were just as good literature as the real classics", Treadgold (2010) p.154

[63] Marrou (1958) pp.57-9. Notably, Augustine himself, perhaps echoing the views of Vergil, Cicero and Quintilian, seems to promote the idea of *varietas* when, in *City of God*, he discusses the achievement of beauty and harmony through the use of antitheses - the "most elegant of the ornaments of speech" - adding that "the beauty of the world is achieved by the opposition of contraries", Augustine, *City of God* II.18 9.8.2013 www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu

[64] Marrou (1958) p.689-91

came to realise, these *oeuvres* should be celebrated as epitomising the aesthetic of the era. Roberts has remarked that, in literature, as in art, "disorientation and fragmentation of focus is admirable".[65] References to earlier works may appear to modern sensibilities to be intrusions, interpolations or interferences but, by late antique standards, these additions, "invested with brilliance and color by their original contexts",[66] added variety and interest to a text. Like the unexpected intrusions in the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, they became part of a new creation with multiple meanings and attested to an aesthetic which espoused variety not conformity.[67]

The Question of Style

We have discussed a late antique penchant for the cumulative and agglomerative in regard to *spolia*, statuary collections and literary composition. This propensity also manifested itself in the use of style. The use of different styles in late antique artistic productions may have been the result of combining metropolitan and provincial traditions,[68] of integrating forms and styles from different regions and cultures,[69] or of combining "the inherited styles of hallowed predecessors [and] the appropriated forms of conquered subjects".[70] Referring to what he called modes, Kitzinger saw such diversification as "different stylistic manners denoting different kinds of subject matter or different levels of existence".[71] An example, on a monumental scale, can be found in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where two

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[65] Roberts (1989) p.75

[66] Roberts (1989) p.57

[67] The aesthetic of *varietas*, it seems, endured beyond Late Antiquity and the Christian realm. Fowden makes a similar analogy between the images at Quasyr Amra and the poetic *qasā'id* - odes constructed of separate parts - "panels" - which were capable of standing alone, but which did not hang together as a coherent whole or sequence of ideas. The frescoes, described by Ettinghausen as a "mere ragbag of heterogenous images" (Ettinghausen (1962) p.29) seem to have no discernible shared subject but Fowden suggests that, just as *qasā'id* are "held together by the poet's distinctive style and character," so the disparate imagery in the bath-house is linked by the architectural framework. In accordance with the "aesthetic criteria of the eighth century", it is possible to find unities and coherence in both, Fowden (2004) pp.308-9.

[68] Rodley (1994) p.112

[69] Morey (1942); Elsner (2011b) p.26

[70] Elsner (2006) p.293

[71] Kitzinger cites an Attic sarcophagus in the Capitoline Museum in Rome which has a mythological scene on the front in a classical style and portraits of the deceased on the lid shown as "mask-like frozen, hard-edged faces... typical of third century portraiture", Kitzinger (1977) p.19

extensive fifth-century mosaic schemes decorate the nave;[72] the Old Testament scenes lining the nave are described by Cormack as as "illusionistic in a colourful and impressionist manner", and the New Testament scenes on the triumphal arch as "linear and flat."[73] The significant divergence of style in Santa Maria Maggiore is clearly divided between Old and New Testament, or, arguably, between 'narrative' and 'theological'- the more abstract imagery on the triumphal arch being the more obviously symbolic.[74] This separation has been attributed to imagery being copied from different sources - from pattern books, illuminated manuscripts and even, in the case of the nave panels, from traditional Jewish sources.[75]

A near-contemporaneous example of different styles appearing in a single context are the carvings on the fifth-century doors at Santa Sabina in Rome.[76] Here too, there is an assortment of Old and New Testament scenes and here too distinct artistic styles co-exist.[77] However, in contrast to the mosaics at Santa Maria Maggiore, the different styles on the doors are not clearly divided between Old and New Testament scenes; it is not a case of different stylistic manners being used for different subject matter, it is simply a mixing of different styles.[78] By way of explanation, Delbrueck has suggested that some of the panels were later replacements carried out in an archaising style,[79] but Brandenburg prefers to see the different panels as works by different artists, he writes: "Obviously several artists of different origins and artistic backgrounds worked side by side on this

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[72] For a general discussion on the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, Brenk (1975). The programme of Old Testament scenes lining the nave is thought to have been similar to the no- longer extant fifth-century narrative registers on the walls of Old St Peter's and at the Lateran Basilica, where pairs of scenes were arranged antithetically across the nave, Krautheimer et al.(1977) p.10; Andaloro (2006) pp.411-5

[73] Cormack (2000) p.889. The same technique, involving 190 different colour gradations, was used for both the apse and the nave mosaics, strongly suggesting that both the Old and the New Testament scenes were made at the same time, Brandenburg (2005) pp.188-9

[74] Cormack (2000) p.889

[75] Spain (1979) pp.518-40; Miles (1993) pp.115-75; Cormack (2000) p.889

[76] For general discussion of the doors, Delbrueck (1952) pp.139-45; Jeremias (1980); Brandenburg (2005) pp.175-7

[77] Described by Delbrueck as 'Oriental' and 'Nordic', Delbrueck (1952) p.143

[78] There is no discernible pattern or logic to the arrangement of the extant scenes. The doors were restored in 1835/36 under the supervision of the 'Commissione Generale Consultativa di Antichità e Belle Arti'. In 1848 the doors were damaged during civil unrest and in 1852 some of the damaged borders were replaced. In 1891 the doors were damaged again, this time in an explosion, and the borders were again repaired, Jeremias (1980) p.17. It is generally assumed that, as a result of repeated restoration, the panels are no longer in their original positions, Delbrueck (1952) p.139; Brandenburg (2005) p.175. However, illustrations by T.M. Mamachi and J.B.L.G. Seroux d'Agincourt, in 1756 and 1823 respectively - so prior to the recorded restorations - show the panels in the same sequence that they are in today, Jeremias (1980) p.13, pls.6-7

[79] Delbrueck (1952) p.143

door."[80] Jeremias has proposed that the carvings could have been carried out by two different artists who came from the same workshop at the same time but who simply worked in different styles.[81] Any, or all, of these explanations are feasible. What should not be overlooked, however, is that the doors fit perfectly with the late antique fashion for combining different styles in a single context. Brandenburg acknowledges this when he notes that it is "characteristic of Late Antiquity that a unified style is lacking, that each artist was free to work according to his own stylistic experiences and that no-one apparently attempted to ensure, at least in terms of quality, a balanced or uniform outcome."[82] Brandenburg's explanation allows that different styles coexist in a single work but, given what we have learned about the late antique affection for variety, diversity and combining old and new, why must different styles mean different hands - or, in the case of Santa Maria Maggiore, different sources? Given the artistic climate in which late antique craftsmen operated - one in which unity of style was neither aimed for nor desired - it is possible that craftsmen employed a polyvocal *modus operandi*.[83] Seen in this way, the mix of styles in the doors at Santa Sabina and in the nave of Santa Maria Maggiore, could simply have been an expression of a highly accomplished polyvocality.

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There has been a long-standing tradition of viewing the art and literature of Late Antiquity negatively - as marking the demise and disintegration of classical culture.[84] Visual production is charged with declining "through having departed from the ideal of classical antiquity",[85] and the literature, with no longer exhibiting the "careful articulation of an apparently seamless composition".[86] Kitzinger describes the art of Late Antiquity as "a coexistence or an abrupt and seemingly erratic succession of diverse and contrasting styles", stating that this

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[80] Brandenburg (2005) p.176

[81] "...sind wir zu der Ergebniss gekommen, dass an der Tür zwei Künstler ein und derselben Werkstattgearbeitet haben, die aus zwei verschiedenen stilischen Traditionen der gleichen Zeit stammen", Jeremias (1980) p.97

[82] Brandenburg (2005) p.176

[83] Similarly, in a recent conference paper, Brandt has suggested that Constantine assumed different voices or different personae - Christian or pagan - depending on his audience. Brandt (2013)

[84] Kitzinger (1977) pp.7-19

[85] Brown (1980) p.17

[86] Roberts (1989) p.3

"fragmentation must be counted among the primary characteristics of the period".[87] This opinion is echoed by Brilliant who writes that "a taste for the telling fragment, the spoliation of the past, characterised much of Late Antique literature, and a comparable attitude colored works of fine art".[88] Discontinuity, variation and mixing old and new was the dominating aesthetic of Late Antiquity - an aesthetic which espoused *varietas* and was preferable to unity, a coherent and seamless whole or a 'balanced' outcome.[89]

It seems that permission had been granted for the long-established orders to be mixed and the way was opened for a new cumulative aesthetic which was anti-classical - or at the very least non-classical. Weissner describes style as "a form of non-verbal communication through doing something in a certain way that communicates information about relative identity".[90] In a society dominated by Christian universalism, but in which "Christianity was itself the ultimate spolium, refashioned from Judaism and adapted with spectacular panache to the rituals, rhythms, and models of (pagan) Roman life",[91] the visual and textual outcomes of this new aesthetic could be seen as a coherent expression of late antique thinking. It was a striking visual correlative to a society which was itself a pastiche of old and new.[92]

Ward-Perkins has explained the pagan imagery in the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia as evidence of a post-Roman society living in the shadow of its classical past.[93] For Mohammed it represented an attempt to renew the region's Greek heritage.[94] However, as we have seen, recycled and recontextualised classical elements - their origins still perceptible - permeated every type of late antique production, contributing to a new syntax under the aegis of a Christian dispensation. In the same way, the classical interpolations in the pavement - incorporated but not subsumed by the surrounding imagery - can be seen as integral components of a new scheme. *Kastalia,* for example, recontextualised but not disguised, retains her original signification but, in this new setting, also takes on a christian meaning.

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[87] Kitzinger (1977) p.2 and p.45

[88] Brilliant (1994) p.170

[89] Brandenburg (2005) p.176

[90] Weissner (1990) p.107

[91] Elsner (2004) p.293. See also Limberis (1994) pp.2-4

[92] For the complex composition of early Christian communities see, for example, Galatians 3:27-9

[93] Ward-Perkins (1999) p.226

[94] Mohammed (2009) p.43

The personifications of the Rivers of Paradise, a pastiche of pagan river-gods, are not only recognisable as copies of classical figures, but also as late antique inventions illustrating a Christian concept. In other words, the iconography was not unconsidered or backward-looking, but reflected the late antique preference for variety and for assemblages of discordant parts. To dwell overly on the pagan content then, could be seen to be something of a red herring.

4.3: Reading the Large Pavement: Puzzles and Conundrums

Introduction

Viewed in plan, the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, with its neat rows of panels forming quasi-textual registers, cries out to be read like a book - from the top left-hand corner to the bottom right. In Late Antiquity, however, imagery was seldom, if ever, read in this way and to approach the pavement in this manner would be to misconstrue - or even completely miss - its rich interpretative potential. This section will consider crossovers between reading imagery and reading text and how a late antique partiality for puns, paronomasia - a play on words - and puzzles manifests itself.[1]

Structure and Composition in Imagery and Text

Roberts has remarked that, in Late Antiquity, "poets looked to the visual arts for inspiration; they understood composition in visual terms".[2] This section will look at parallels between late antique literary compositions and visual culture to consider whether his observation could perhaps be turned around and a claim also be made for artists looking to text.

At first glance, grid compositions - particularly where panels are surrounded by frames or borders - appear to work to separate images; each unit isolated and the gaze focused on individual scenes or motifs. However, as Trilling has pointed out, a border "both separates and connects the images which it frames, emphasising both their independence and the interdependence".[3] The border at Qasr el-Lebia does this emphatically. It runs between the panels creating a grid which separates them, but it also intersects the frame of each one - three times on each side - creating a visual link which binds them inextricably **(4.3.1)**.

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[1] Lauxtermann, in a discussion about text on lead seals, comments that the "only fanciful element being the Byzantine gusto for puns and wordplay", Lauxtermann (2003) p.162

[2] Roberts (1989) p.118

[3] Trilling (1995) p.66



4.3.1 - Detail of border intersecting a panel at Qasr el-Lebia

None of the connections between the individual panels in the pavement are privileged and the border remains unchanging over the entire floor. This has the effect of unifying the composition and giving equivalence to each of its scenes. Like text, this allows signification to spread to the outermost edges of the pavement and allows the imagery to be read horizontally and acrostically.

In his poem, *Technopaegnion,* Ausonius employs a poetic trope which he refers to as *puncta*; verses begin and end with monosyllables - the monosyllable at the end of one verse becoming the beginning of the next verse. These *puncta* - 'punctures' or 'stopping points'- have been described as links which held the poem together.[4] The border at Qasr el-Lebia, it could be argued, served a similar purpose as Ausonius' *puncta* - as a means of punctuating and unifying the floor. Individually, the framed panels can be understood as episodes - sometimes incidents from implied narratives, sometimes stand-alone panels - which are comparable to excerpts in late antique literary works in which "representational integrity...is carried by the fragment".[5] Viewed as a whole, the large pavement fits Ausonius' description of a *cento* as "continuous, though made of disjointed tags".[6]

There seems to have been a general predilection in Late Antiquity for organising images into row formations or clusters of self-contained panels.[7] This convention is particularly prevalent on sarcophagi, where continuous registers of imagery were organised into separate episodes by the introduction of columns and trees.[8] On the

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[4] Cox-Miller (1998) pp.127-8

[5] Cox-Miller (1998) pp.135-6. This, she notes is also characteristics of relics

[6] Shorrock (2011) p.127

[7] L'Orange (1965) esp. pp. 24-5, pp.85-104, pp.129-30

[8] Kitzinger (1977) pp.22-6

fourth-century sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, for example, the front is divided into two tiers of Old and New Testament scenes isolated from one another by colonettes[9] **(4.3.2)**.



4.3.2 - Junius Bassus sarcophagus

Like the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, this sarcophagus elaborates and privileges discrete parts rather than emphasising the whole. Viewing such monuments, it is tempting to focus on the isolated compositional units, identifying and interpreting only individual scenes. However, as Malbon points out, to understand the complex ideological argument of the iconography of the Junius Bassus sarcophagus, the viewer must not only interpret the individual components, but must also make sense of the whole.[10] As well as Old and New Testament imagery, a series of biblical scenes, symbolically enacted by lambs, fill the spandrels above the lower arcade, the four seasons are depicted on the ends of the sarcophagus and a secular inscription is inscribed on the lid. There is no discernible order to the biblical scenes, the imagery can not be made sense of by reading the units sequentially and, when viewed as a whole, the four seasons and the secular inscription stand out as unexpected intrusions on a predominantly Christian monument.[11]

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[9] Malbon (1990)

[10] Malbon (1990) pp.6-8

[11] Elsner argues that, by emphasising Summer and Autumn, the seasons on the ends of the sarcophagus have been given a "Christianising twist", Elsner (2008) pp.28-9. He also suggests that the pagan imagery framing the biblical scenes creates "a new scene which excludes neither pagan nor Christian themes", Elsner (1998a) p.147; Elsner (1998b) p.745

A similarly complex iconography inhabits the late fourth-century Projecta Casket, part of the Esquiline Treasure from Rome[12] **(4.3.3)**.



4.3.3 - Lid of Projecta Casket

The casket includes an image of Venus in a cockle-shell medallion as well as an inscription which reads SECVNDE ET PROIECTA VIVATIS IN CHRI[STO] - 'Secundus and Projecta may you live in Christ'.[13] Elsner makes the point that the juxtaposition of the mythological scene and the Christian invocation - the whole framed by domestic and secular imagery – changes the way each element is understood; the scenes are no longer autonomous but can be read as part of an overall programme.[14]

Brilliant and Rouselle suggest that there were established ways of reading imagery where meaning arose from a juxtaposition of motifs and which involved a complex syntax rather than a straightforward linear development.[15] The episodic and discordant nature of the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia may not have allowed an immediate reading, but viewers would, nevertheless, have been drawn towards strategies of elucidation.

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[12] Shelton (1981)

[13] It has been acknowledged that the Christian inscription could have been a later addition to a pagan object. Also, that Venus may have been intended as a personification of the idea of beauty - a flattering analogy to Projecta - rather than as a religious symbol, Shelton, (1981) p.27; Elsner (2008) p.24; Talloen (2011) p.579

[14] Elsner (2008) pp.33-35. Elsner also suggests that this object could be seen as an expression of a husband's desire for his wife as a nude woman and the woman's desire to be naked, Elsner (2003b) p.32

[15] Brilliant (1984) pp.124-65; Rousselle (2001) pp.376-85

Puzzles and Conundrums in Art and Literature

Ambiguity, allusion and fragmentation permeated late antique art and the "iconographic promiscuity" with which images could switch from one realm to another, generated a flexibility of meaning and interpretation.[16] As we have seen in the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, symbols commonly had more than one meaning - even more than one meaning simultaneously - and ludic combinations, crammed with layer upon layer of covert signification, allegory and symbolism had to be disentangled and deciphered. Meaning was fluid and open to re-negotiation and reinterpretation. Viewing was not a passive activity and understanding was dependent, above all, on a process of reception, on the knowledge and experience the viewer brought to the work.[17] The same was true of late antique literature;[18] just as viewers did not expect simply to read linear meanings in imagery, even when that imagery was laid out in quasi-textual registers, readers were prepared to search literary works for their nuances and associations.[19] In his preface to *Technopaegnion*, Ausonius forcefully argues that it is the reader who brings meaning to the work. He writes: "*You* will endow them with a certain value, for without you they will be just monosyllables"; in other words, without the imagination of a reader - or an audience[20] - the work would remain incomplete, its meanings unresolved.[21] Similarly, of biblical texts, Clement of Alexandria wrote:[22]

> But well knowing that the Saviour teaches nothing in a merely human way, but teaches all things to His own with divine and mystic wisdom, we must not listen to His utterances carnally; but

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[16] Elsner (2011a) p.381

[17] Elsner (1995) p 243; Elsner (1998b) p.747; Martindale and Thomas (2006) p.6. Stommel suggests that, in many cases, imagery could only be interpreted if the viewer possessed a certain level of knowledge and an understanding of the context, Stommel (1954) pp.64-8

[18] In a study of art and text in Byzantine culture, James poses the question: "Are works of art and writings different but parallel forms of expression?" James (2007) p.1

[19] Lauxtermann (2003) p.162

[20] It is not clear to what extent performative elements played a role in late antique literary works, but Bourbouhakis notes that "there were always a great many more listeners in Byzantium than readers", Bourbouhakis (2010) p.175. Cameron and Hall, in a study of the writings of Eusebius, make the point that "panegyrics were written for performance", Cameron and Hall (2010) p.33. If recitations did include explanatory commentary, maybe imagery too was interpreted or explained by a functionary acting as a kind of intercessor?

[21] Ausonius, *Technopaegnion*, pref.1, trans, White (1967-8). See also Cox-Miller (1998): p. 128

[22] Clement of Alexandria, *The Rich Man's Salvation*: 5 www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-richman.html. Accessed 2.6.2013

> with due investigation and intelligence must search out and learn the meaning hidden in them, For even those things which seem to have been simplified to the disciples by the Lord Himself are found to require not less, even more, attention than what is expressed enigmatically, from the surpassing superabundance of wisdom in them.

And Cyril of Jerusalem:[23]

> For to hear the Gospel is permitted to all: but the glory of the Gospel is reserved for Christ's true children only... but many things we often speak in a veiled way, that the believers who know may understand, and they who know not may get no hurt.

The analogy between reading art and reading text can be taken a step further. In the same way that imagery sometimes took on the form of quasi-textual registers, literary compositions sometimes took on characteristics of imagery. In the fourth century, the poet, Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius, produced a series of figurative works in honour of Constantine.[24] The contents of the poems have been described by Levitan as "unremarkable", but the compositions were given complex layers of meaning by the use of red ink to highlight certain letters.[25] These letters, as well as forming images and motifs across the page, could also be read in sequence, forming multiple poetic constructs within a single poem. One interpreter commented, "there are more verses in Optatianus's poetry than a mere line-count will reveal: each poem also contains a number of inherent permutations of itself, a number of potential dispositions".[26] In Poem XIX, for example, the highlighted letters outline a ship with oars and the mast takes the form of XP - the symbolic Christogram. The letters, VOT, have been interpreted as possibly standing for *Victor Oceani Terraeque*, making reference to Constantine as victor and endorsing an association between the emperor and the chi rho[27] **(4.3.4)**.

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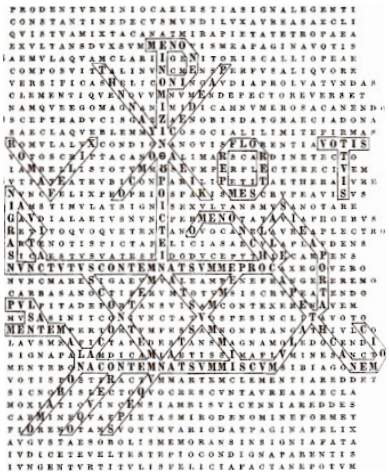
[23] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Sixth Catechetical Lecture*: 29 www.newadvent.org/fathers/310106.htm accessed 5.8.2013

[24] For a discussion on the works of Optatianus see Ernst (1991) pp.95-145. This form of poetry was made popular in the ninth century by Hrabanus Maurus' *carmina figurata*, Baxter (2009) p.287

[25] Levitan (1985) p.246

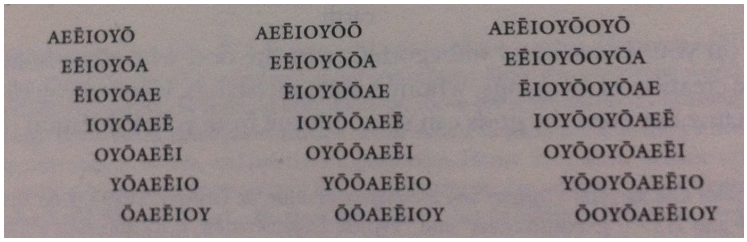
[26] Levitan (1985) p.249

[27] Ernst (1991) pp.129-31; Cox-Miller (1998) p.124



4.3.4 - Poem XIX, Optatianus Porphyrius

A different type of pictorial text appears in a fourth-century papyrus, now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. An arrangement of vowels appears in one column, the characters are repeated and added to in a second column and that permutation is then repeated and added to yet again in a third column.[28] The repetitive use of these characters forms a nonsensical verse but creates a visual formula which seems to allow the pattern to be extended indefinitely **(4.3.5)**.



4.3.5 - Fourth-century papyrus, National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

Maguire has suggested that, in the same way that the repetition of a motif in mosaics and textiles was a multiplication of its magical or apotropaic power, so the endless reiteration of letters in texts too, intensified their potency.[29] The combination of letters may have been meaningless from a literary point of view, but the form they took was eye-catching, informing the reader - or spectator - that the text held signification over and above the meaning of the actual words.

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[28] Betz (1986) p.192

[29] Maguire (1994) p.270

A more simplified form of literary puzzle was the acrostic poem.[30] Particularly popular in the sixth century, acrostics were included in prose, poetry and hymns. One of the best-known propounders was the Constantinopolitan poet, Romanos the Melodist. Many of his hymns were structured so that the initial letters of each stanza spelled out a variation on the theme of *by the humble romanos*. This formula, regularly adopted by sixth-century poets, allowed authors to claim ownership of their works while maintaining a pretence of humility.[31] The Graeco-Egyptian poet, Dioscorus of Aphrodito, used the device to pander to his client's vanity by spelling their names in acrostics,[32] and Agapetos composed a treatise on Christian kingship for Justinian in which the initial letters of the prose spell out 'To our most divine and pious Emperor Justinian, Agapetos the least [of his] servant[s]'.[33] This trend for fashioning text into a type of crossword puzzle also found its way onto the dedication page of the Vienna Dioscurides; Anicia Juliana is enthroned at the centre of an octagonal frame and around the inside of the octagon runs an eight-lined poem, the first letter of each successive line forming an acrostic which spells the name 'Juliana'[34].

Similar games were played with monumental inscriptions; texts were manipulated to carry hidden and embedded meanings which were quite different from - and in addition to - the actual script. These non-sequential messages had to be searched for and teased out. The late eighth-century black marble epitaph, commissioned by Charlemagne to commemorate Pope Hadrian I, for example, is arranged with exaggerated line breaks but no spaces between words. At the centre of one row the title, *KAROLUSREX*, announces Charlemagne's involvement with this prestigious monument.[35] The epitaph may have been dedicated to Hadrian, but it celebrated Charlemagne nevertheless **(4.3.6)**.

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[30] A text in which certain letters, commonly - but not exclusively - the first letter of each line or paragraph, spells out a word, a name or a message.

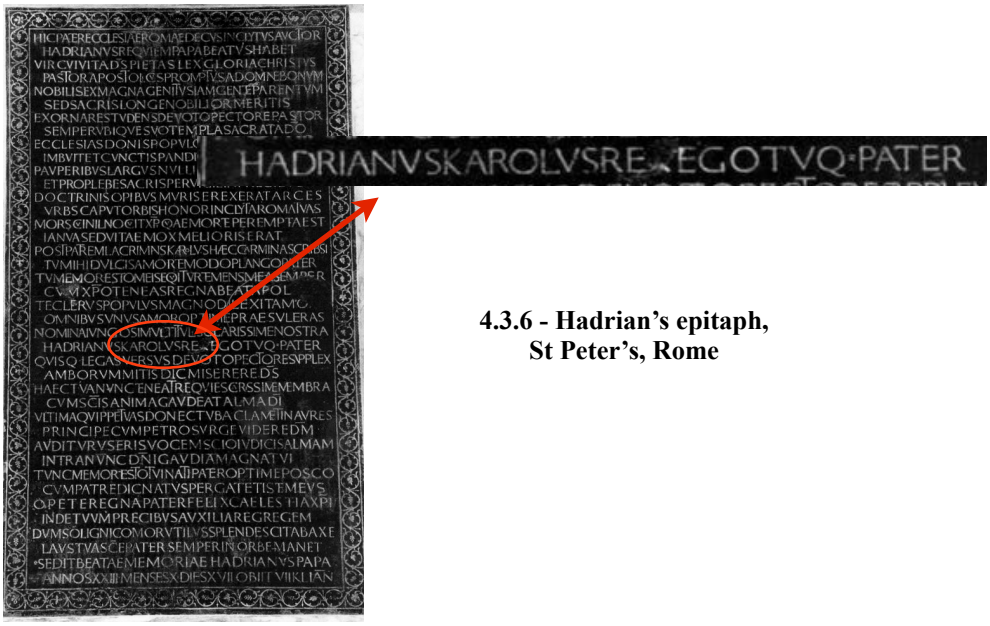
[31] Krueger (2006) p.258

[32] Krueger (2004) p.171

[33] Krueger (2004) p.172; Barker (1957) pp.54-61

[34] Connor (2004) pp.110-11; Rodley (1994) p.104. The inscription is no longer easily discernible.

[35] Story (2013) p.259



4.3.6 - Hadrian's epitaph, St Peter's, Rome

The dedicatory inscription on the interior of the west wall of Santa Sabina in Rome, which is organised so that at the epicentre of the seven rows of unbroken text, the name of the founder of the church, *PETRUS*, is flanked above by the word *FUNDAVIT*, and below by *CHRISTI*[36] **(4.3.7)**.



4.3.7 - Inscription west end of nave, Santa Sabina, Rome - with detail

[36] Brandenburg (2005) p.167. Thunø has suggested that this may reflect the New Testament verse, Matthew 16:18 "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;" Thunø (2007) p.32. It is also worth bearing in mind that, originally, the inscription would have been just one element of a much larger pictorial scheme. Krautheimer et al. (1977) p.4; Thunø (2007) p.23

The text provides visual as well as textual evidence of the importance - the centrality - of the donor, around whom the text, the imagery, and possibly the church itself, revolves. Spectatorship allows the centrality of *PETRUS* to emerge visually, while the act of reading absorbs the name of the donor into a succession of words and lines. Thunø has suggested that the mosaic panel would have been understood differently by literates and illiterates or semi-illiterates; the latter, he argues, may have been better placed to understand the overall meaning of the scheme since literates were more likely to get caught up in deciphering the literal sense of the text.[37]

Similar word games and riddles were also found in miniature. The edge of a ring depicting a nimbed Holy Rider spearing a prostrate demon, now in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, is surrounded, even protected, by a seemingly nonsensical inscription: *ogurakmareotufzezouzerbe*[38] **(4.3.8)**.



4.3.8 - Holy Rider with indecipherable inscription

James has argued that the inscription must have had significance for the owner of the amulet, but that it is not clear whether the meaning lay in words the letters might have formed, or simply in the presence of the script.[39] The indecipherability of the text is likely to have been understood as magical or apotropaic and, given the late antique appetite for puzzles, the tangle of letters could be seen as an intended word game - an unbreakable code. This inscription, albeit on a small scale, is not dissimilar to formal and monumental inscriptions in which letters appear to run

[37] Thunø (2007) p.32 and p.35

[38] Maguire (1996) p.123

[39] James (2007) p.198

continuously with little or no indication where breaks between words should be. For example, in the sixth-century churches of Ss. Sergius and Bacchus **(4.3.9)** and S. Polyeuktos **(4.3.10)**, both in Constantinople.



4.3.9 - Inscription, Ss Sergius and Bacchus, Constantinople

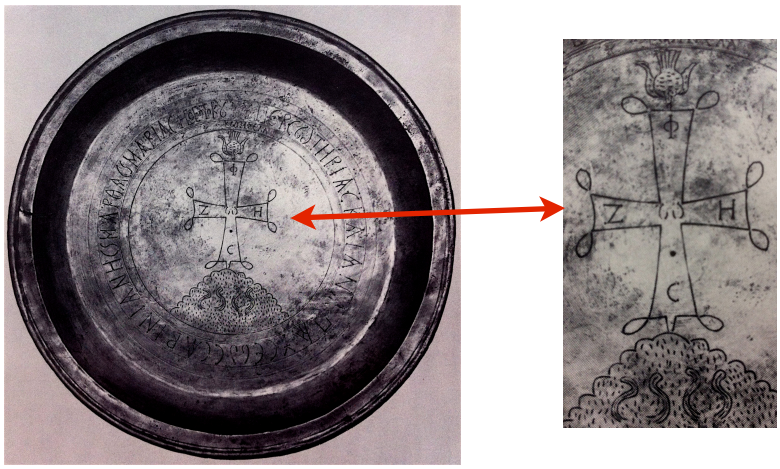


4.3.10 - Inscription above niche, S. Polyeuktos, Constantinople

Even for the literate, inscriptions such as these would have been difficult to read and, as Lauxtermann points out, "most Byzantines were illiterate, they did not read inscriptions but rather gazed at them".[40] For these viewers, script as meaning gave way to script as image, often in freize-like configurations protecting edges and boundaries much as the borders at Qasr el-Lebia protected the boundary of the overall floor and the integrity of individual panels.

[40] Lauxtermann (2003) p.273

The idea of letters or words as pictorial motifs rather than as part of a literary construct, is illustrated on a sixth-century silver paten from the Phela treasure. The platter is inscribed with a cross atop the Mount of Waters with the words ZΩH – 'life' and ΦΩC – 'light' running vertically and horizontally along the arms of the cross.[41] The words are intrinsically linked, symbolically and visually, with each other and with the cross - the meaning of the words, even if they could not be read, is illustrated by the imagery of which they are a part[42] **(4.3.11)**.



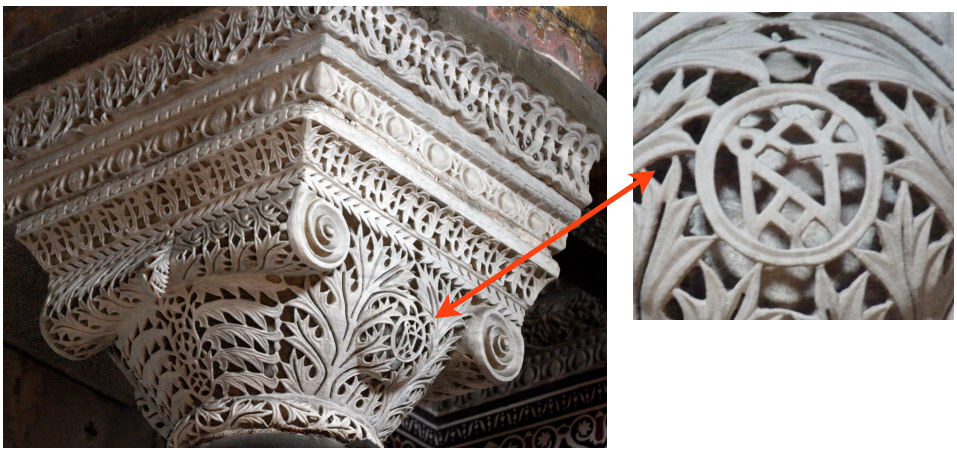
4.3.11 - Phela silver paten with inscribed cross

In monograms too, text approaches imagery; letters are intertwined to construct visual patterns, both pleasing to the eye and informative but, at the same time, teasing and quite baffling. Paul the Silentiary, writing about the imperial monogram of Justinian and Theodora, describes it as "one symbol that means many words"[43] **(4.3.12)**. James comments that monograms "translate the Byzantine's pleasure in puns and word-play to the visual sphere".

[41] Leader-Newby (2004) p.88

[42] Thunø has suggested that the reception of the written word changed with the growth of Christianity; it was no longer merely a sign of the spoken word, but "a pictorial signifer, a sign to be looked at and venerated in its own right", Thunø (2007) p.21

[43] Paulus Silentiarius *Descriptio ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae* lines 713-4, cited in Mango (1972) p.87



4.3.12 - Imperial monogram on capital in Hagia Sophia

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In this section we have examined crossovers between art and literature in Late Antiquity. As we stressed at the outset, the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia was not intended to be read like a book - from left to right or top to bottom - it was however, intended to be approached and understood in much the same way as many late antique texts. The grid-formation of the pavement is used like a literary trope; it brings order and uniformity to the floor, but it also enables the iconography to be read in multiple configurations in the manner of puzzles and conundrums. The tableaux of images which present viewers with themes and ideas, both separate from and yet integral to the overall programme of the floor, mirror the visual elements of texts and inscriptions which, although part of a larger narrative, retain their individual integrity. Like many late antique visual and literary constructs, the imagery of the floor presents the viewer with a puzzle, not to be solved, but to be involved in the solution of.

Chapter 5
Two Hypotheses, Review and Last Words

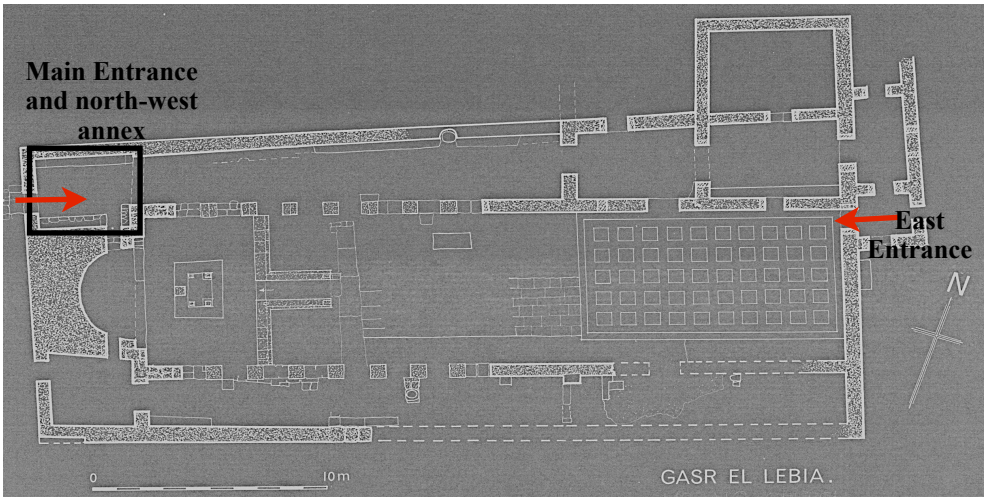
Introduction

Having looked at the widest possible context for the large pavement in the previous chapter, the first section of the present chapter turns to its most immediate and most local context - its architectural setting - and asks if that setting offers clues for an explanation of function. The second section seeks to reconstruct how the floor would have been addressed, not as a page of text - the way we have organised the discussion so far - but as a physical experience. Does a reconstruction of the journey across the floor confirm the evidence of the architecture, or does the iconography of the pavement allow an altogether different explanation?

5.1: Hypothesis 1 - Architecture

How does the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia relate to architecture of the East Church complex and what function did its immediate architectural setting serve?

The East Church complex is unusual in having neither a narthex nor a main axial entrance. The main entrance, such as it was, appears to have been in the west, opening into a small annex in the north-west corner of the complex[1] **(5.1.1)**.



5.1.1 - Entrances - East Church Complex

The annex was paved with large stone slabs and had benches to the north and south **(5.1.2)**. The remains of a carved arch leads into the north aisle **(5.1.3)**, and a lateral opening in the south wall gives access to an inscribed apse **(5.1.4-5)**.

[1] Other churches in Cyrenaica with no main axial entrance include the sixth-century East Church at Cyrene and the churches at Messa and Um Heneia el Garbia - all double-ended churches, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.135, p.304 and p.368. A plan from the SLS archives suggests that there may also have been an entrance in the south-west annex, although this seems to be no more than speculation.



5.1.2 - Benches to north and south of north-west annex - looking west



5.1.3 - Remains arch leading to north aisle



5.1.4 - Lateral opening between apse and north-west annex



5.1.5 - Inscribed apse, looking north

The north aisle, also paved with stone slabs, is separated from the nave by a raised stylobate and stone piers each constructed from two orthostats. There appears to have been a break - an entrance into the nave perhaps - between two of the stone piers and a wall-painting of a cross set in an aedicule on the north wall of the aisle may have been intended to mark this entrance[2] **(5.1.6)**.

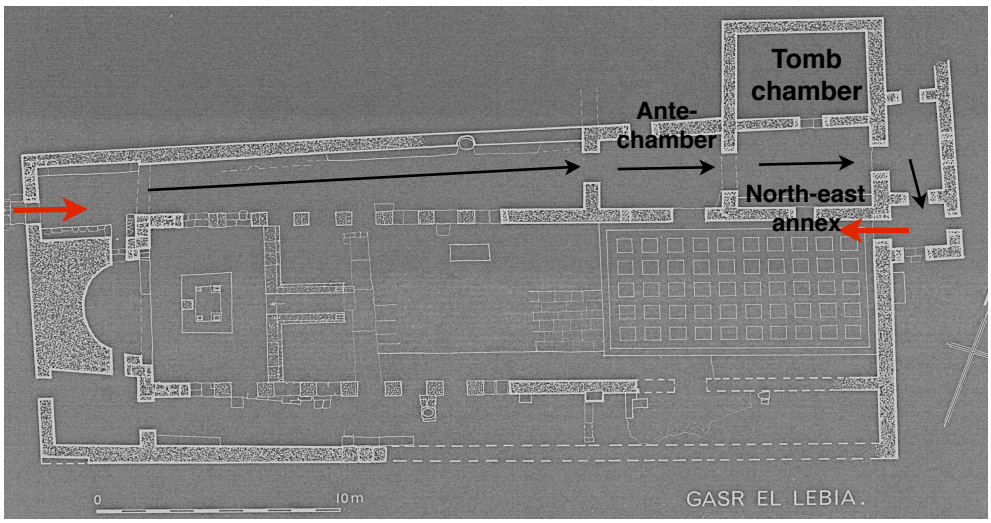
[2] This feature is now barely legible. Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) pp. 278-9



5.1.6 - Ledge over wall-painting in north aisle and detail of painting

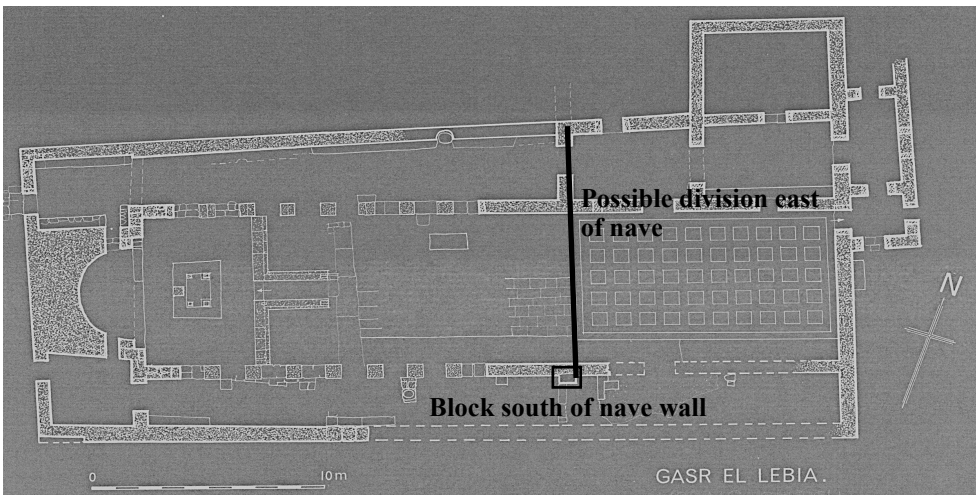
The north aisle leads into a series of small rooms; an ante-chamber, the north-east annex and a tomb-chamber to the north of it which is carved into the bedrock with a grave niche in its north-west corner. Running alongside the east wall of the tomb chamber and the north-east annex are three, and possibly more, aligned rooms: a partly excavated room to the north, a rectangular room to the south with an entrance into the north-east annex, and a small, almost square annex, with doorways in its east and the west wall, the western one leading onto the large pavement[3] **(5.1.7)**.

[3] Even though a plan from the SLS archive suggests two openings to the north and one to the south of the large pavement there is no archaeological evidence to substantiate this. Abdulhamid Abdussaid, archaeologist at Shahat, and Ahmed Adhafy, archaeologist at Ptolemais worked with Goodchild at Qasr el-Lebia and both confirmed that the openings shown on the plan were purely speculative, *pers. comms* April 2010.



5.1.7 - East Church complex. Proposed route through the complex

Previous studies have, without exception, assumed that the large mosaic pavement was part of the nave.[4] However, the extant archaeology argues against such an interpretation as there appears to have been a wall or screen of some kind separating the pavement and the nave. This division is aligned with the wall dividing the aisle from the antechamber on the north side and the fragmentary remains of a wall on the south. **(5.1.8)**.



5.1.8 - Plan of East Church complex - possible division at east end of nave

There are indications of similar divisions in other churches in Cyrenaica; in the East Church at Apollonia **(5.1.9)**, the East Church at Taucheira **(5.1.10)**, the church

[4] Grabar (1962); Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980); Maguire (1987a); Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003); Agosti (2003); Saradi (2006)

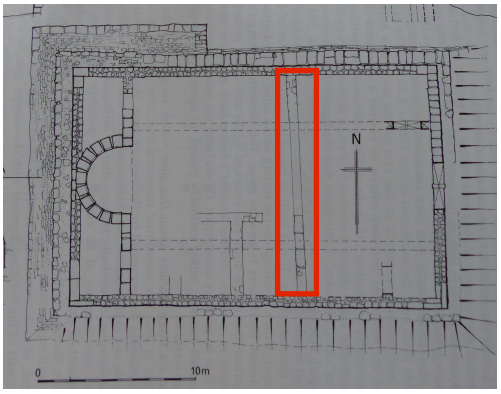
at Siret el Craat **(5.1.11)** and, possibly, if the building was indeed a church, in the fortified building at Zawiet el Argub[5] **(5.1.12)**.



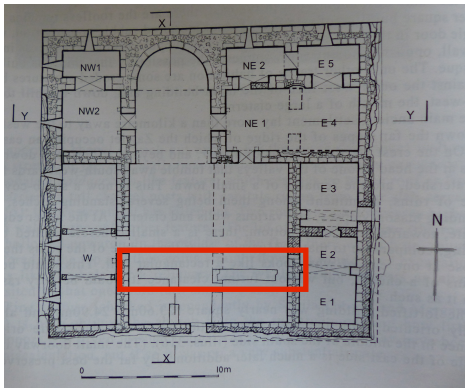
5.1.9 - Division in nave, East Church, Apollonia



5.1.10 - Division in nave, East Church, Taucheira



5.1.11 - Division in nave, Siret el Craat



5.1.12 - Division in nave Zawiet el-

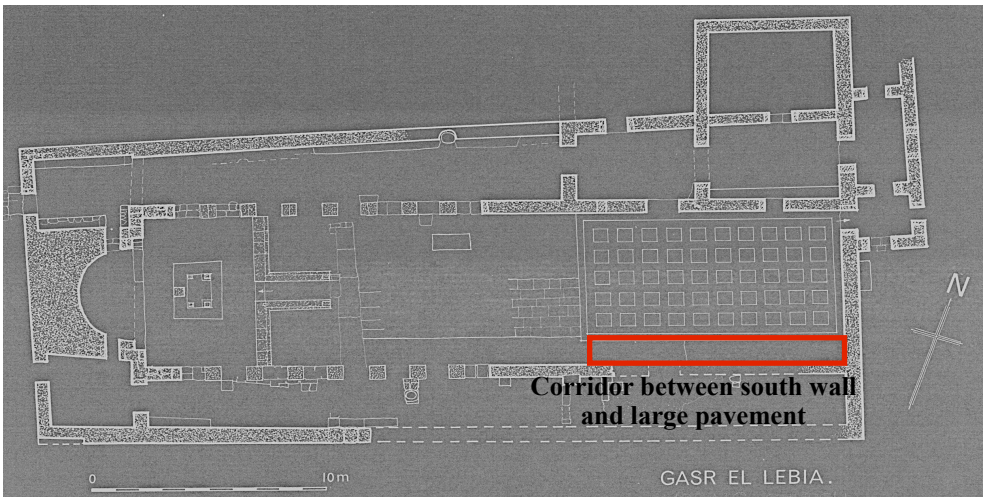
[5] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.68, p.204. p.352 and p.374

It is not altogether clear whether the divisions in these buildings continued unbroken across their naves, neither is it possible to discern whether they constituted proper walls or were simply screens of some kind. There is no longer any indication of the flooring either side of the walls at any of the sites, with the exception of Qasr el-Lebia, where there is a marked change in the flooring either side of the division - to the east, the large mosaic pavement, and to the west, a mixture of large marble slabs and smaller marble tiles [6] **(5.1.13)**.



5.1.13 - Off-cut marble tiles to south of solea

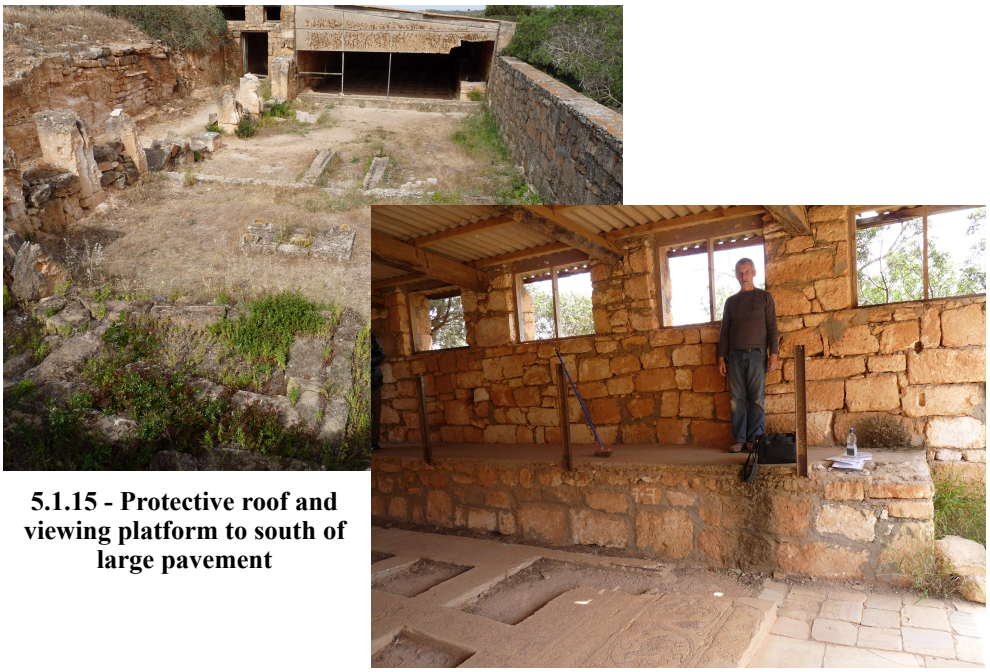
The change in flooring could be an indication that, at Qasr el-Lebia at least, the division served to separate the two areas to the extent that each served a different function. Furthermore, the axis of the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia lies to the north of the axis of the nave and to its south a narrow corridor-like space runs the length of the pavement, abutting what is now the south wall **(5.1.14)**.



5.1.14 - Corridor south of mosaic

[6] The large slabs had already been robbed at the time of excavation but were evident from the imprints they had left in the ground Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.277

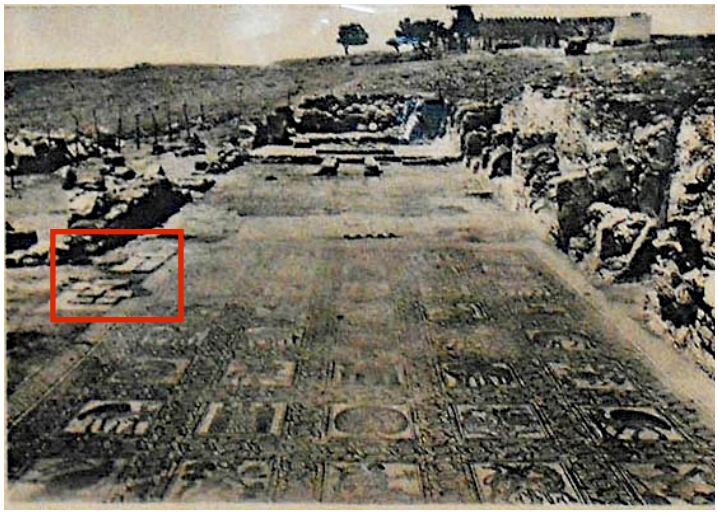
A viewing platform and protective roof structure have since been built over the area, destroying - or at least covering - any remaining archaeological evidence **(5.1.15)**.



5.1.15 - Protective roof and viewing platform to south of large pavement

The function of this strip is unknown, but Goodchild and Ward-Perkins were of the opinion that the building and the mosaic were contemporary and that, therefore, the pavement was not added to an already extant structure.[7] That being the case, the corridor to the south of the pavement must have been part of the original design. A photograph published in the Illustrated London News, December 14th 1957, shows that the west end of this strip was paved with small marble off-cuts but there seems to have been no evidence of paving further east **(5.1.16)**.

[7] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.273



5.1.16 - Illustrated London News, Dec. 1957

Accepting that the division to the west of the mosaic separated this space from the nave, one possibility is that the corridor-like strip to the south of the pavement housed a staircase leading to an upper storey. The area is just over 1m wide at the west end, tapering very slightly to just under a metre at the east end, and roughly corresponds with the width of staircases at Ras al-Hilal, the East Church at Cyrene, the Central Church at Cyrene, the East Church at Taucheira and the West Church at Ptolemais.[8]

Hypothesis 1: The Large Mosaic as the Pavement of the Ground Floor Reception Room of an Episcopium

Accepting that the pavement is not part of the nave, and that it is feasible that there may have been an upper storey accessed by a staircase to the south of the mosaic, what function might this part of the building served? One possibility is that it belonged to an episcopal palace, a hypothesis given weight by the dedicatory inscription to bishop Macarius in the centre of the floor.[9]

Little is known about episcopal residences in Cyrenaica,[10] but there seems to have been a trend in the first half of the sixth century in the eastern Mediterranean for bishops to commission lavish polychrome mosaics. These elaborate and sophisticated works commonly featured imagery from the natural world and were

[8] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.326, p.135, p.158, p.204 and p.182

[9] For inscription, see chapter 1.3

[10] It has been suggested that a pavement at Taucheira may have been part of an episcopium, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.221. For details of pavement at Taucheira, see Appendix 2

often accompanied by inscriptions identifying the bishop as patron.[11] Seen as a means of self-aggrandisement and thought to have been motivated "as much by the bishop's worldly ambitions as their spiritual inspiration",[12] opulent pavements were commonly displayed in the most public parts of buildings ensuring maximum visibility. The narthex of the sixth-century Episcopal Basilica at Stobi in Macedonia has a rich and elaborate mosaic pavement; above the entrance to the narthex an inscribed lintel, associates the building with bishop Philip.[13] We might also cite the pavement of the sixth-century basilica at Tegea in Greece, which, like Qasr el-Lebia, has an elaborate grid mosaic with, in this instance, an inscription identifying a bishop Thyrsos.[14] Of particular interest, in the context of the large pavement, is the complex of rooms adjacent to the Large Basilica at Heraclea Lyncestis which has been identified as an episcopal residence.[15] The richly-decorated main reception room comprises a series of panels filled with a variety of flora and fauna and includes numerous paradisiacal references. At least three of the panels contain canthari overflowing with water and, by the main entrance, a cantharus with sprouting vine-scroll is flanked by two harts symbolising the faithful drinking from the Fountain of Life **(5.1.17)**.

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[11] Kolarik (2005) pp.1265-7

[12] Kolarik (2005) p.1264

[13] The inscription references the "most holy Bishop Philip [who brought about] a building for the holy church of God." Kolarik (2005) p.1259. Interestingly, the narthex pavement is a grid composition with a border of interlocking roundels almost identical to the border at Qasr el-Lebia, although here, the roundels are inhabited by a variety of figural imagery.

[14] Karivieri (2012) p.221. Here too, the pavement is a grid composition and, in common with the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, it contains personifications of the Rivers of Paradise.

[15] Gjorgjievska (2008)



Entrance to episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis



Detail - episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis



Detail - episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis



Detail - episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis

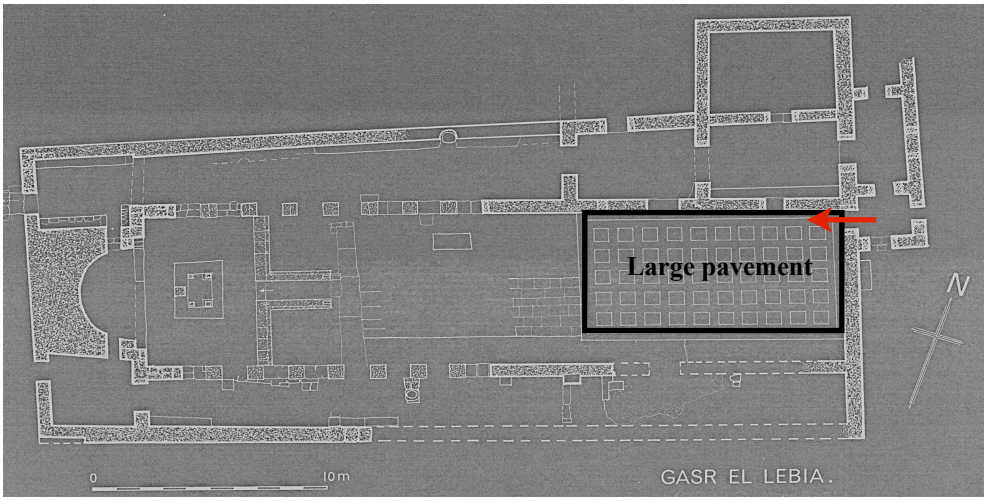
5.1.17 - Details of panels from episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis, Macedonia

At Qasr el-Lebia, then, the architectural setting of the large pavement, the abundance of imagery from the natural world, together with the inscription to bishop Macarius, could be indications that this part of the East Church complex was part of an episcopal residence.

5.2: Hypothesis 2 - Iconography

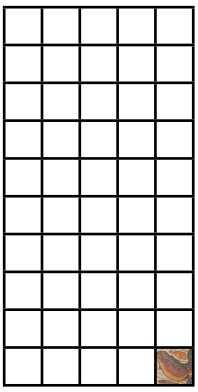
Having examined the immediate architectural context for the pavement, let us now turn to how the floor may have been experienced by those entering the building. Would visitors have been confronted with an incomprehensible jumble or would they have been able to establish a larger coherence? Does the iconography offer alternative evidence for how the space functioned?

The journey across the pavement commences at the doorway in the north-east corner of the room **(5.2.1)**.



5.2.1 - Entrance onto large pavement

Stepping directly onto a monstrous fish straining to escape the confines of its panel, visitors would have found themselves in an unsettling, liminal space in which they would be metaphorically treading water. **(5.2.2)**.





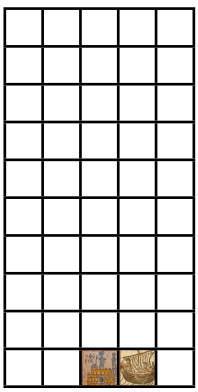
5.2.2 - Large fish by doorway in north-east corner

Unlike many fifth- and sixth-century ecclesiastical buildings, the entrance here is not protected by formal apotropaic imagery - by cross motifs, peltae, Solomon's knots or intricate interlacing. Neither are visitors greeted by reassuring paradisiacal imagery or any of the well-known eucharistic or salvific motifs that offer a promise or foretaste of what is to come. To add to a sense of disorientation, the room was entered asymmetrically, the off-centre doorway challenging visitors to find a route to an elucidating axis. Completely encompassed by Oceanic imagery and inhabited by strange and potentially dangerous creatures, to move straight ahead, would have meant stepping into a space dominated by a terrifying sea-monster which, together with its counterpart immediately to the south of the *Pharos*, evoked the predatory and deadly *Scylla* and *Charybdis* - a two-fold malevolent presence, threatening the safety of all who entered **(5.2.3)**.



5.2.3 - Two sea-monsters - *Scylla* and *Charybdis*

Clearly the east end of the pavement demanded to be traversed with extreme caution. This treacherous journey did not, however, have to be undertaken alone. The monstrous fish in the doorway, its head twisted upwards, seems to indicate a way forward and immediately to the south of the entrance, a boat, manned by two sailors and guided by the light of the *Pharos,* offers the promise of safe passage. This marks the start of a journey - pre-determined but as yet undisclosed **(5.2.4)**.

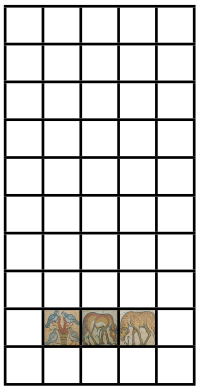






5.2.4 - Boat heading towards the *Pharos*

The *Pharos,* marks the east end of the central axis and stands as a reassuring landmark - a symbol of safety - amidst the disorder. In this part of the pavement meaning remains fragmentary, snatches of themes appear, only to disintegrate before taking form, coalescence evades the viewer and the symmetry of the west end of the mosaic is not yet evident - the bull and the ram, for example, rather than flanking a central image, stand head to head to the right of the central axis **(5.2.5)**.









5.2.5 - Trio of images

The pathway, so clearly marked in the west, is no more than a suggestion at this stage of the journey - a faint thread between the shining light of the *Pharos* and the paradisiacal imagery ahead.

Progressing westwards, visitors next encountered a musician flanked by a satyr and a leopard. The figure could, as we have seen, been understood as a shepherd, as Orpheus, as an Orpheus-Christus figure or as a reference to the transformative and regenerative qualities of Dionysos. The music of his stringed instrument, echoing the harmony of the spheres and the concord of the gospels, offers a means of transcendence from an earthly to a heavenly realm. While the gourds on the tree recall the salvific Jonah narrative, the tree itself - together with the recurrence of

trees and foliage in the rest of the floor - could be seen to evoke a Tree of Jesse, itself an image of the true vine. Immediately above the musician, a peacock underlines and seems to substantiate such a possibility. The eyes in its fully-extended tail mirror the stars in the vault of heaven like a wreath of Paradise **(5.2.6)**.



5.2.6 - Musician with satyr and leopard and peacock above

The imagery either side of the peacock - a fortified town and gallinaceous guinea fowls with a pomegranate plant - suggest that the abyss has been negotiated and that a less threatening landscape lies ahead, an idea that the ostriches, as creatures believed to inhabit the very limit of the wilderness, would tend to reinforce **(5.2.7)**.



5.2.7 - Imagery either side of the peacock marking the edge of the wilderness

Beyond the peacock stands an imposing pedimented building. The preceding images - musician and peacock - promise a transition from a dangerous, liminal space to a heavenly, paradisiacal sanctuary for which this elite building, its doorways veiled as though to obscure and protect the mysteries beyond, is the gateway. As if to highlight this as a new station and pivotal transitional point on the pavement, an Oceanic scene abuts one end of the row of images and a Nilotic the other. It is here that the waters converge and here, it could be argued, that the Ocean touches the lagoons sheltering the Isles of the Blessed **(5.2.8)**.



5.2.8 - Oceanic and Nilotic panels either side of the building

To arrive at this juncture, much as the horses and rider approach the building from either side, is to reach a kind of triumphal entrance through which those progressing from east to west must pass **(5.2.9)**.



5.2.9 - Pedimented building flanked by horses

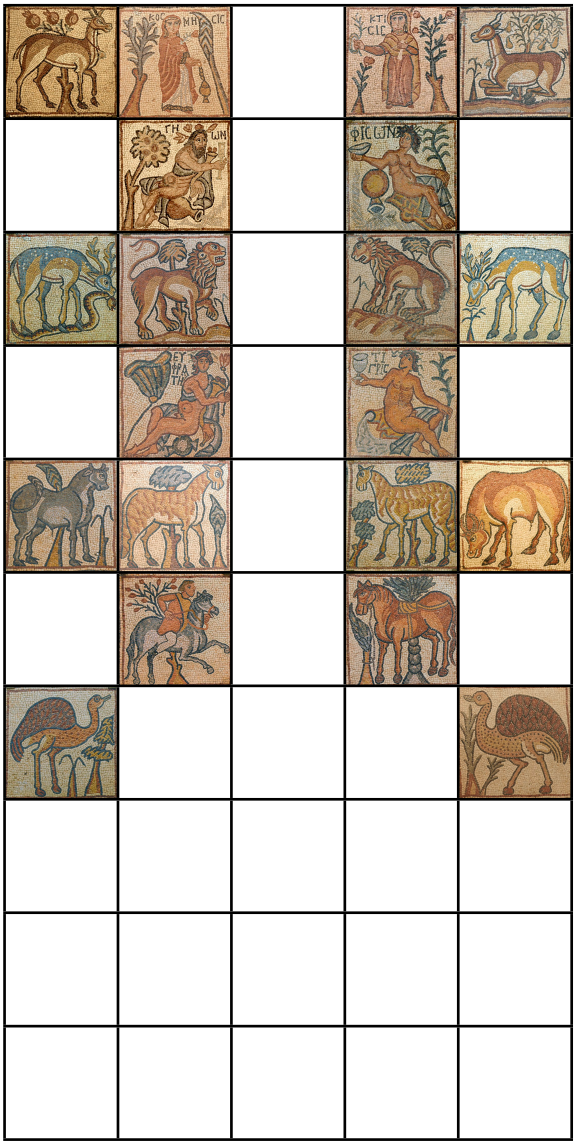
West of the pedimented building the character of the imagery changes; the seemingly random dispersal of motifs becomes more ordered and symmetrical, the four Rivers of Paradise take centre stage, wilderness gives way to the paradisiacal, and the monstrous depths of the Ocean give way to the imagery of a beneficent Nile.

The next stage of the journey is marked by a wreath of victory framing a dedicatory inscription referring to bishop Macarius. Two nearly-identical sheep either side of the wreath, make it clear, even to the illiterate, that this was a Christian dedication, **(5.2.10)**.



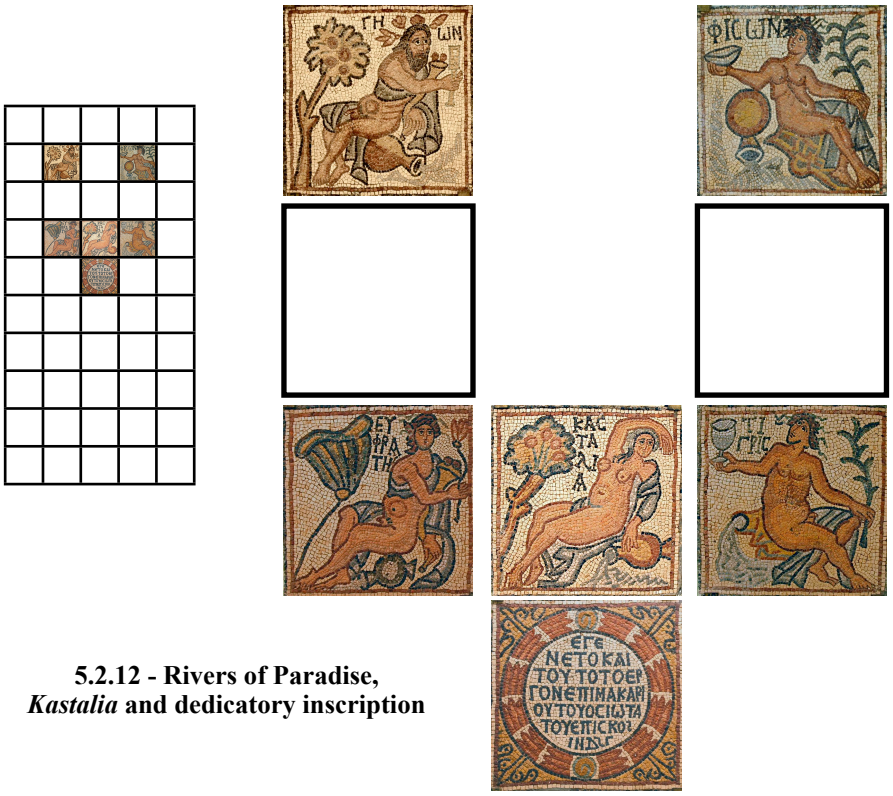
5.2.10 - Dedicatory inscription flanked by sheep

In the same way that the monstrous fish at the east end of the pavement alerted newcomers to be on their guard as they cross the threshold of the building, the dedicatory inscription informed viewers that what lay ahead should be understood within an essentially Christian framework. From this point westwards, it seems to say, the route would be sanctioned under the sponsorship of Bishop Macarius himself. From the inscription to the west end of the pavement the route becomes a *via sacra* flanked by an honour-guard of affronted pairs of beasts and figures, sentinels disposed in strict symmetry, accentuating the idea of a 'strait and narrow' pathway. The importance of the principal thoroughfare is also reinforced in the outermost panels, which, from the ostriches westwards, present affronted pairs in every alternate row **(5.2.11)**.



5.2.11 - Pairs of motifs flanking the central axis

However, the vocabulary which follows is not unproblematic. Having successfully negotiated the wilderness, the traveller encounters figures whose iconography appears to transgress overt Christian models, creating a tension with expected norms of appropriateness and decorum. Immediately beyond the dedicatory inscription, *Kastalia*, nymph of Apollo's oracular spring, reclines nonchalantly, even lasciviously, on an over-flowing urn while the Rivers of Paradise, in the guise of naked pagan river-gods, pay her homage and celebrate her presence. The composition may have taken on a more ordered and symmetrical layout, but nevertheless, coherence continues to be withheld - the pagan notes and inappropriate undertones likely challenging viewers to reassess the signification of the imagery. **(5.2.12)**.



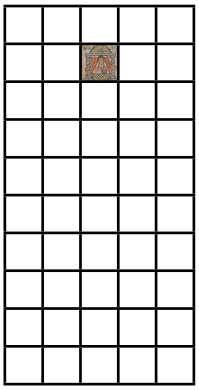
5.2.12 - Rivers of Paradise,
***Kastalia* and dedicatory inscription**

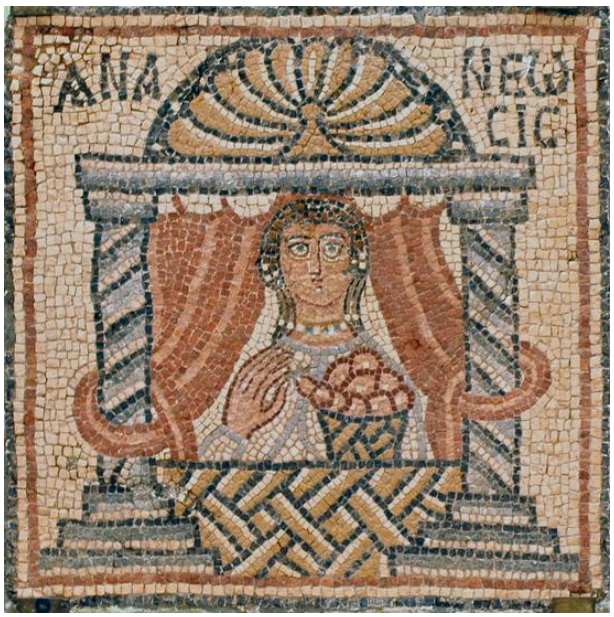
Continuing westwards, visitors stepped from the dedicatory inscription directly onto *Kastalia*, here understood as symbolising the life-giving waters of the *fons vitae aeternae.* Emerging from the fountain and proceeding on the same trajectory, the next step brought them into contact with the eagle and its prey. With its baptismal and eucharistic associations, this was a particularly apposite sequel to the *Kastalian* spring - the guarding lions either side contributing to the sense that this panel marked an important station - an entrance even **(5.2.13)**.



5.2.13 - The eagle above
***Kastalia,* guarded by two lions**

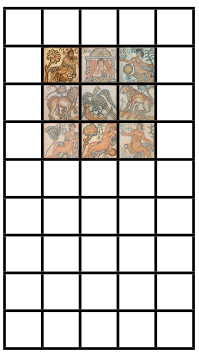
Ahead, the redemptive figure of *Ananeosis* stares straight ahead. Framed by a ciborium-like aedicule which evokes both a chancel screen and the semi-dome of an apse, her presence re-enforces the Christian ideal of spiritual renewal **(5.2.14)**.





5.2.14 - *Ananeosis*

Ananeosis oversees a tableau of nine panels, defined at the four corners by the Rivers of Paradise **(5.2.15)**.





5.2.15 - *Ananeosis* residing over group of nine panels, west end of large pavement

This tableau could be seen to represent a potential Eden for visitors now fully cognisant of, and fully subsumed in, the drama of the pavement. The flanking figures and lions provide their honour guard, and it is they - the visitors - rather than *Kastalia* or *Ananeosis*, who are the recipients of the gifts proffered by the Rivers of Paradise. The passage from Macarius' dedicatory inscription to *Polis Nea Theodorias* constitutes an axis of regeneration, its liturgical implications animated and potentiated by the Rivers of Paradise and *Ananeosis*.

Having traversed the full extent of the pavement from the disorderly to the salvific the traveller arrived at the city gates of *Polis Nea Theodorias* - the New City of Theodorias, or maybe, the New City of God - and were greeted by *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* **(5.2.16)**.



5.2.16 - *Polis Nea Theodorias*, flanked by *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*

These figures, bedecked in their elite finery and seemingly presenting their benefactions to the city, could, like the Rivers of Paradise below, also be seen to be offering their blessings to those journeying across the pavement. *Kosmesis* censing pilgrims after their long journey and *Ktisis*, invested with authority by the *mappa* she clutches, offering a wreath of victory.

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Moving westwards across the mosaic, then, a progressively coherent pictorial and theological programme emerges which both conflates space and collapses time: Egypt and Cyrenaica, Ocean and Nile, wilderness and Paradise, pagan and Christian, Old Testament and New Testament. The pavement maps out a definitive route through the floor; the goal may be non-negotiable but interpretation remains fluid. The journey could be understood to map the physical journey from Alexandria in the east to Cyrenaica in the west, for which the representations of the *Pharos* and *Polis Nea Theodorias* provide a degree of verisimilitude and added potency and pertinence. The passage could be seen as a "a microcosm of the long

journey of pilgrimage itself",[1] each accent along the spine of the floor - lighthouse, peacock, temple, inscription, *Ananeosis*, amongst others - referencing a station or holy site - a *loca sancta* or *ieroús tópous* - accents which punctuated the wider Christian landscape of late antiquity. Much as these accents constructed stations on a continuous path, they also established discontinuities which delayed progress, thereby increasing the conceptual length of the journey.

Above all, traversing the pavement constituted a simulacrum of a spiritual journey - an exegesis of the journey of the believer - the transition from an ephemeral, temporal world to the abiding heavenly realm, mediated by the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Elsner comments, in respect of the contemporaneous apse mosaic at Sinai, that it represents "a spiritual journey which those viewers could be reasonably expected to see themselves making".[2] Despite the obvious differences we might argue that the 'spiritual journey' implicit at Qasr el-Lebia belongs to a similar milieu, representing, albeit in an elaborately codified form, a journey fundamental to the faith-life of wider Christendom.

Does the architectural setting of the floor, together with its over-arching meaning allow us to make any more precise judgements about function?

Hypothesis 2: The Large Pavement as Part of a Baptismal Complex

To date, the excavations at Qasr el-Lebia have not uncovered a baptistery, but it seems likely that there would have been one - particularly given the episcopal references in inscriptions in the East Church complex.[3] A survey of known baptisteries in Cyrenaica reveals no definite pattern in the location of the font, even in different churches on the same site; at Ras al-Hilal and the East Church at Apollonia the font is in an annex adjacent to the apse while in East Church at Cyrene and the West Church at Apollonia the font is in a complex of rooms at the opposite end of the church to the liturgical apse. None are located behind apses. Assuming for the moment that the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia did include a baptistery, its most probable position would have been among the unexcavated range of rooms to the east. It is unlikely to have been to the north or south as the north wall is cut into the bedrock, and the land to the south slopes steeply away requiring retaining walls to accommodate the footprint of the church.

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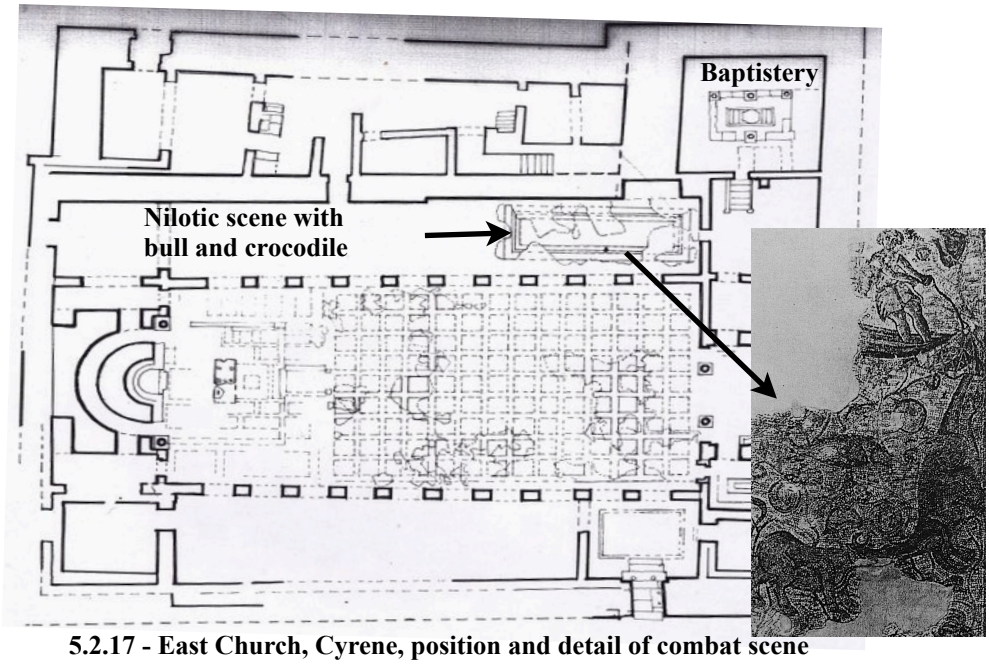
[1] Brown (1981) p.87

[2] Elsner (1995) p.88 and p.123

[3] In the large pavement, the chancel and the north-east annex

Furthermore, a local archaeologist who worked at the site with Goodchild, has confirmed that exploratory sondages to the east of the excavated buildings revealed further mosaics in this area.[4]

With this in mind, it is worth referring to a study of the pavement in the East Church at Cyrene, in which Bonacasa makes the point that catechumens *en route* to the baptistery would have passed over a Nilotic scene which included a crocodile and bull combat, evoking the idea of good triumphing over evil[5] **(5.2.17)**.



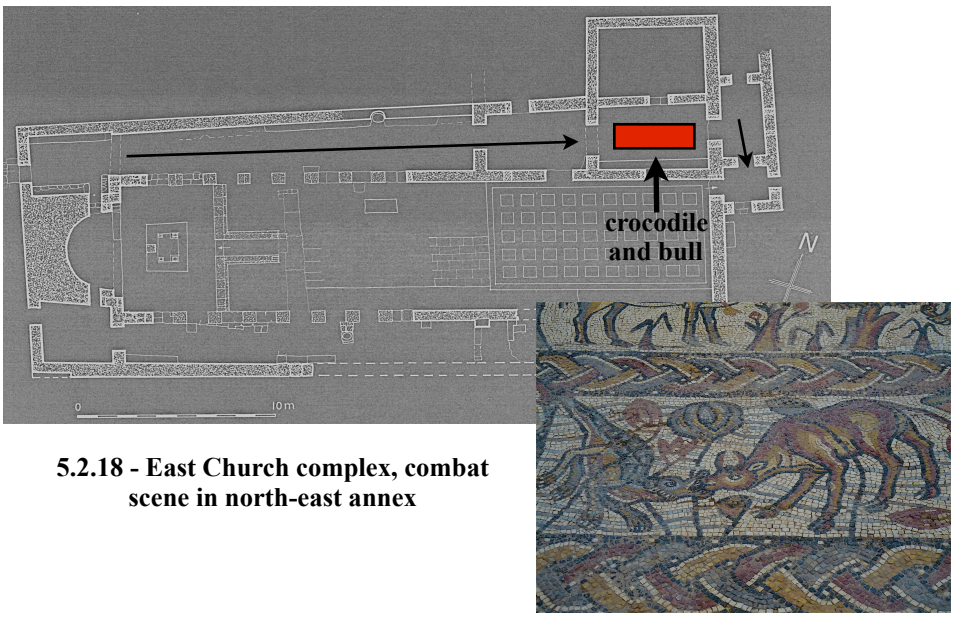
5.2.17 - East Church, Cyrene, position and detail of combat scene

At Qasr el-Lebia too, catechumens progressing through the complex would have passed over a Nilotic scene in the north-east annex which includes just such a combat scene[6] **(5.1.18)**.

[4] *Pers. comm.* April 2010, Abdulhamid Abdussaid.

[5] Bonacasa (2005) p.1352

[6] See, Appendix 1



5.2.18 - East Church complex, combat scene in north-east annex

It may also be significant that, having passed over the Nilotic scene - and before leaving the north-east annex - visitors would have encountered a pair of peacocks flanking a roundel **(5.2.19)**.



5.2.19 - Peacocks flanking a roundel by the east doorway in north-east annex

This motif - peacocks flanking a central object - was commonly used to mark sacred spaces and was particularly prevalent in baptismal settings.[7] Examples include the baptisteries at Stobi **(5.2.20)** and Butrint **(5.2.21)**.

[7] For symbolism of peacock, see chapter 3.6

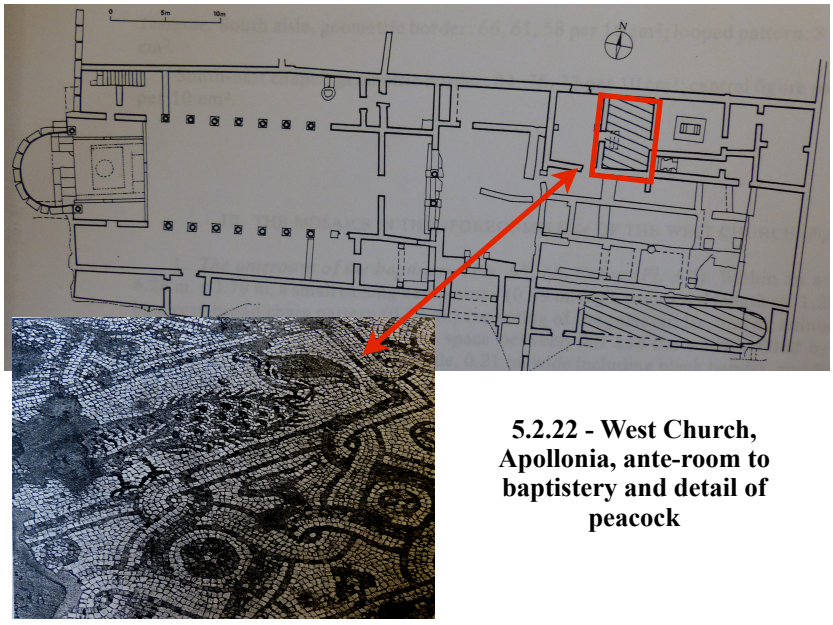


5.2.20 - Peacocks flanking a cantharus, baptistery, Stobi



5.2.21 - Peacocks flanking a cantharus, baptistery, Butrint

In a Cyrenaican context, excavations at the West Church at Apollonia have revealed fragments of a mosaic, thought to be contemporaneous with the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia on account of its border of interlocking roundels, in an ante-room to the west of the baptistery[8] **(5.2.22)**. The remains of a peacock, probably one of a pair flanking a central motif, are comparable with the peacocks in the north-east annex at Qasr el-Lebia and could suggest that, in both cases, the scheme marked an approach to a baptistery and adding weight to the possibility that at Qasr el-Lebia a baptistery was, indeed, sited at the east end of the complex.

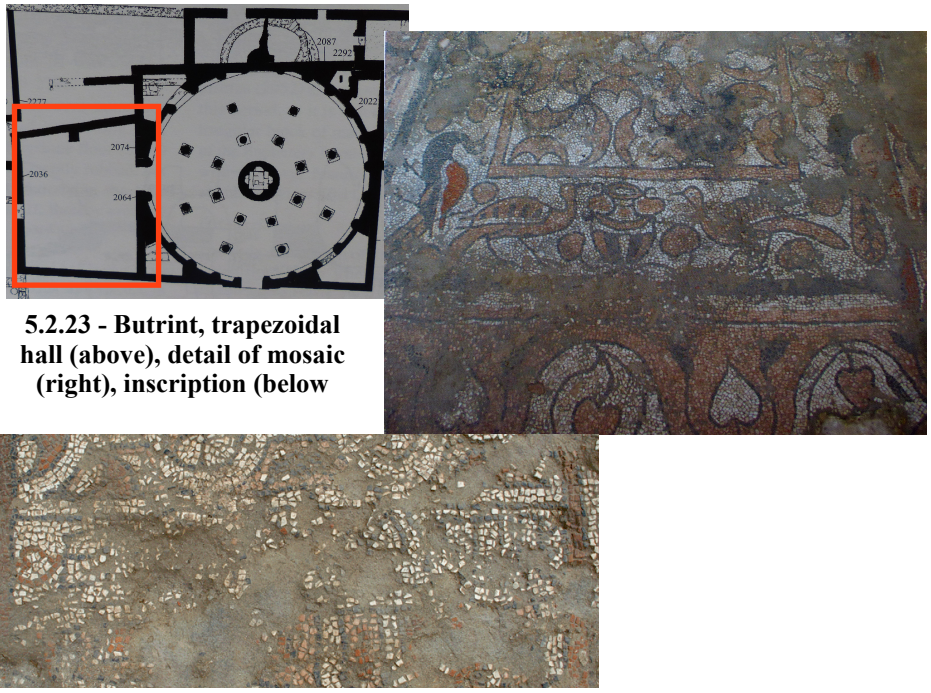


5.2.22 - West Church, Apollonia, ante-room to baptistery and detail of peacock

A baptistery located in this unexcavated suite of rooms would have had direct access into the space paved by the large mosaic. If this was the case, the room might well have served as a *consignatorium* or chrismarium. A comparison could

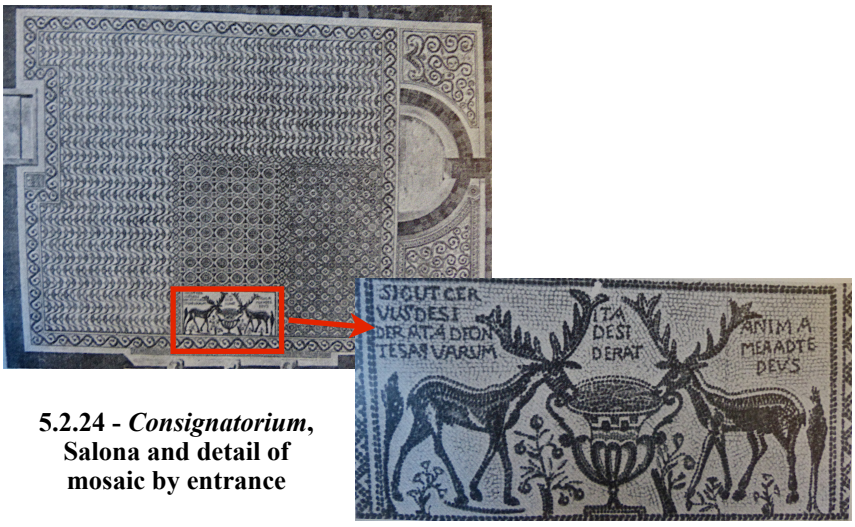
[8] See Appendix 2

then be made between this space and a sixth-century hall adjacent to the baptistery at Butrint. The trapezoidal room, paved with a complex design of interlocking patterns, ivy scrolls, birds, trees and fruits, includes the remains of an inscription which reads: "under bishop Se[rgius?]"[9] **(5.2.23)**.



5.2.23 - Butrint, trapezoidal hall (above), detail of mosaic (right), inscription (below

Comparisons have been drawn between this room, which may have served as a *consignatorium* or *apodyterium*, and the so-called *consignatorium* at Salona[10] **(5.2.24)**.



5.2.24 - *Consignatorium*, Salona and detail of mosaic by entrance

[9] Mitchell (2008) pp.53-6

[10] Mitchell (2008) p.55. See also Domagalski (1990) pp.140-1

In Cyrenaica, Stucchi has suggested that the large apsidal hall at Taucheira may have served as a *consignatorium*, even though, to date, no baptistery has been discovered.[11]

In addition, although starting from a misplaced belief that a baptistery has been discovered to the south of the East Church at Qasr el-Lebia, Saradi has suggested that, after baptism, the "newly baptized Christians walking on the image of the pagan god [the image of the satyr] are denouncing paganism".[12] The assumption that a baptistery has been identified is not correct, but the imagery in the large pavement would, nevertheless, be wholly appropriate as part of a baptismal complex in so far as it mirrors the spiritual journey of the newly-baptized. For neophytes the imagery in both the eastern and western halves of the floor would have replayed the liturgy of baptism; the rejection of chaos and the acceptance of Christ - epitomised by the Rivers of Paradise flanking *Kastalia*, here symbolising the *fons vitae aeternae*.[13]

Reinforcing this idea, are the harts with bells around their necks in the western corners of the pavement and the stags two rows below - both understood to make reference to Psalm 42 and both associated with baptism.[14] Diagonal axes between these panels focus on a regenerative *Ananeosis* **(5.2.25)**.

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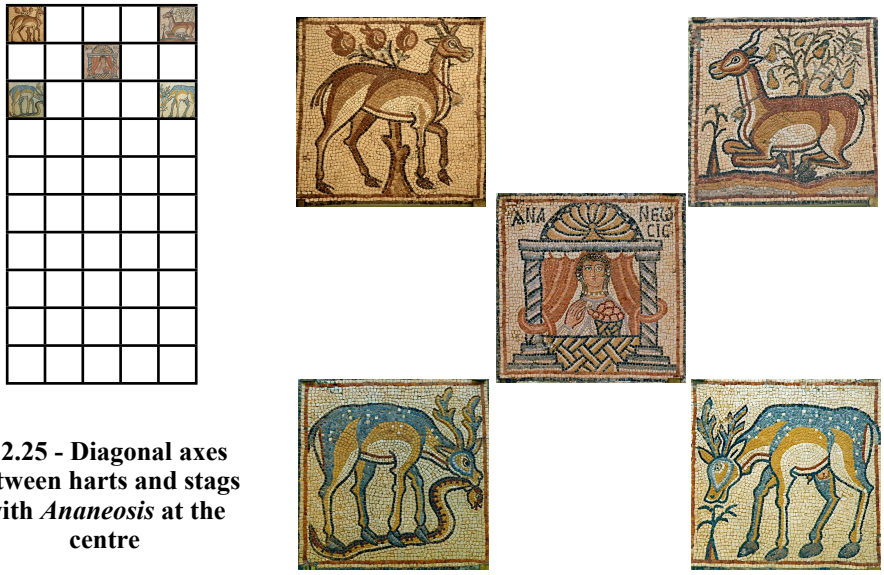
[11] Stucchi (1975) pp.426-7. Other interpretations for this building include, a martyrium, a chapel and part of a palace complex, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.218-221

[12] Saradi has written that the large pavement in the East Church "occupies the east part of the nave located off-centre towards the entrance to the baptistery." Adding that "the depiction of the god Pan on the same mosaic floor, placed slightly off-centre closer to the door of the baptistery, suggests Christian symbolism. The newly baptized Christians walking on the image of the pagan god are denouncing paganism", Saradi (2006) p.139

[13] Compare, for example, Cyril of Jerusalem's four *Mystagogical Catecheses* which were probably given at the Anastasis sometime after 382 and were addressed to the neophytes on the meaning of the initiation they had recently undergone, the first three of which deal with baptism, Ferguson (2009) p.473; Cross (1986) p.xxii

[14] See chapter 3.7



5.2.25 - Diagonal axes between harts and stags with *Ananeosis* at the centre

Had the large pavement served as the floor of a *consignatorium* we would have to allow the possibility that any wall or division immediately to the west of the mosaic, may have had some kind of portal for the newly baptised to access the church for their first communion. Had that been the case, the image of *Nea Polis Theodorias* may also have served as a city gate; alive with foliage, its curtain open, this gateway - honoured by *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* - becomes a triumphal arch for the *adventus* of those about to be enrolled in full membership of the church **(5.2.26)**.



5.2.26 - *Polis Nea Theodorias*, flanked by *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*

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There is nothing in the layout of the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, or its location in the complex, to indicate that the space was designed to serve as the nave of the East Church. The large pavement is, moreover, the only Cyrenaican grid mosaic

not adjacent to a chancel.[15] Without further excavation the context of the pavement can only be guessed, but it seems most probable that the mosaic paved a self-contained space entered through the door in the north-east corner. There seem, then, to be two hypotheses that deserve particular attention. Given the correspondences between our pavement and episcopal commissions at Stobi, Tegea and Heraclea Lyncestis, it is feasible that our mosaic, authorised by the inscription to bishop Macarius, formed part of an episcopium. However, the spiritual progression from east to west, together with the underlying soteriological argument behind the iconography, suggests that serious consideration should be given to a baptismal context, possibly a *consignatorium* where chrismation and an episcopal greeting took place - perhaps even on the inscription itself. In which case, the pavement can be seen to map out a journey from the waters of the Ocean through the waters of the Nile to the waters of baptism.

[15] In the East Church at Cyrene and the church at Ras al-Hilal the grid mosaic paves the nave and in the East Church at Apollonia ,the south transept.

5.3: Review and concluding remarks

This thesis set out to establish whether the fifty panels which make up the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia constitute a coherent programme. In order to do that we reviewed the literature, set the site in its Cyrenaican context in terms of its history, its physical geography, its settlement patterns and its principal Christian buildings. We considered the dating of the large pavement, offered a detailed panel-by-panel catalogue and then looked closely at groups of panels and correspondences between panels with a view to establishing whether they were entirely independent one of another or whether they constituted an overall programme. Having concluded that there were indeed significant levels of coherence, we then asked how a number of apparent discrepancies might be reconciled by looking at examples - in literature, sculpture and architecture - of a late antique predilection for disjunctions, puzzles and puns. After this wide-ranging review we returned to the most immediate context for the floor - its architectural setting. If the large pavement was schematically of a piece, we were left with the question of how that space, for which it delineated the ground-plan, might have functioned. Inconclusive without further excavation we, nevertheless, explored the possibility, based largely on the architectural evidence, that the pavement belonged to the ground floor of an episcopium. Finally, we examined how the architecture constrained, and how the layout and iconography of the floor contributed to, a physical experience of the space in what may have been the *consignatorium* of a baptistery.

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The immediate and overriding impression made by the pavement at Qasr el-Lebia - and the one thing that all scholars have agreed on – is that the imagery is a jumble, a hodgepodge of motifs. In a preliminary article about the newly-excavated mosaics, Ward-Perkins claimed that more than half of the fifty panels were purely decorative and that the pavement comprised a random selection of images from a mosaicist's pattern book with little or no symbolic meaning. He continued by warning against "the not uncommon tendency to seek symbolical meanings in what must often have been purely formal, generalised schemes of decoration".[1] A few years later, Goodchild, who concurred with the theory that the images were copied from pattern books, made the observation that several other Cyrenaican churches were paved with similar mosaics and that they too, were "simply a heterogeneous assembly of unrelated pictures".[2] In 1965 Mathew classed the pavement as a work

[1] Ward-Perkins (1958) p.190

[2] Goodchild (1961a) p.219 f/n2

of the "second order", suggesting that, even though some of the images - the peacock, the fish and the stag, for example - may have had Christian significance, it was most "easily explained if it is a copy of a pattern book".[3] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins reiterated the pattern-book theory and dismissed the pavement as lacking a coherent programme.[4] These opinions were echoed in 1982 by Dunbabin who noted a "lack of organised planning which invalidates any attempts to read into the mosaics a detailed iconographic programme",[5] and in 1983 Brandenburg agreed that the pavement could not be interpreted symbolically.[6] More recently, the pavement has been acknowledged by Maguire as one of the "most intriguing and puzzling of the works of art to have come down to us from the Justinianic period",[7] and yet, with a few exceptions, it has only been dealt with piecemeal,[8] and little attention has been paid to the possibility of an overall coherence - precisely the theme that this thesis has addressed.

It is easy to forget - particularly now that the panels hang like pictures on the walls of the museum - that the images, although discrete in their own frames, were integral parts of a whole. The grid allows a series of thematically-linked constellations to operate, either centripetally or centrifugally, around a longitudinal east-west axis, which are permeated by connecting threads pulling the individual panels together and giving the pavement its internal logic and soteriological structure. The meanings of the individual motifs are important, but it is as a complete work that the mosaic would have made the biggest impact. Late antique readers and spectators expected to have to unravel tangles of allusions and to extricate hidden meanings from texts and imagery and here, the self-consciously episodic structure of the pavement creates an acrostic in which the layers and interconnections have to be deciphered and interpreted. To a sixth-century viewer, accustomed to fragmentation and conundrums, the imagery would have unfurled like an extraordinary rich and intricate carpet, divulging its programme piecemeal. Maguire has commented that in the Justinianic period, artists and writers "liked to exploit the ambivalences inherent in words and images in order to saturate their

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[3] Mathew (1965) p.86

[4] For references to pattern books, Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.14, pp. 45-8, p.51, p.58, p.60. For no coherent programme, Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980); p.12, p.37

[5] Dunbabin has conceded that, "at most, the common theme would be that of richness and fertility of the earth and its products", Dunbabin (1982) p.613

[6] "Für symbolische Deutungen, die daruber hinausgehen, ist hier kein Platz" Brandenburg (1983) p.73

[7] Maguire (1987a) p.44

[8] See literature review, chapter 1.1

works with meaning".[9] The pavement at Qasr el-Lebia represents just such an exploitation.

One of the most remarkable features of the pavement is the prevalence of classical imagery. Semper has argued that the decorative devices used in a building define its space,[10] so how should these classical references be understood? Rather than considering these integrants as pagan survivals or as evidence of a Justinianic 'Renaissance', this study has suggested that the classical references were part of a late antique penchant for combining old and new. The *mentalité* which saw *spolia* included in new buildings, ancient statues and imitations of sculptures exhibited side-by-side, and classical verses fragmented and re-incorporated into new literary constructs, was fundamentally the same *mentalité* that juxtaposed the various elements which constituted the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia.

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This thesis, then, has argued that the imagery in the pavement is not a naive or random selection of disparate themes or an uninformed peripheral production. Rather, its iconography was carefully chosen for its symbolic content and appropriateness. Far from suffering from a lack of organised planning, the mosaic constituted a coherent programme of considerable complexity and sophistication. Integral to its richness is the avoidance of a definitive interpretation; the numerous permutations integral to its layout, together with the individual and collective experiences of those who encountered it, evoking multiple readings. The disjunctiveness of its combination of old and new, for which the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia has in the past been summarily dismissed, is indeed, integral to its very contemporaneity.

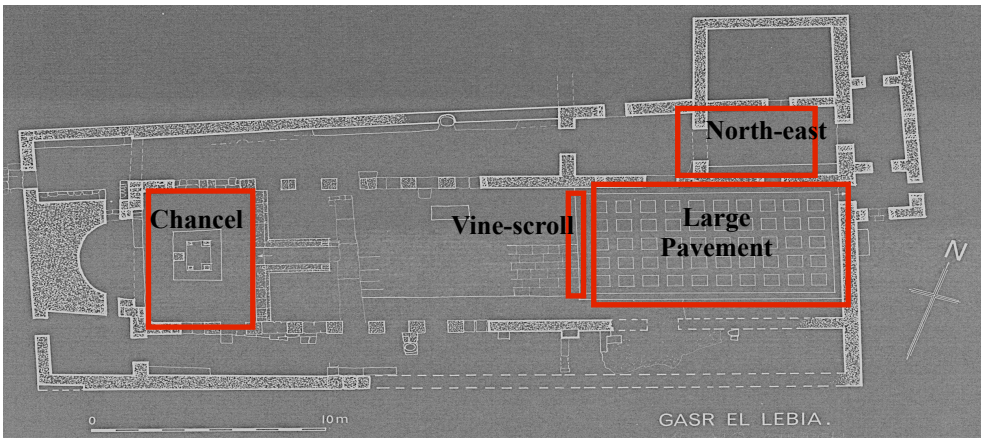
[9] Maguire (1987a) p.55

[10] Semper (1989) p.104

Appendix 1

Other Mosaics in the East Church Complex, Qasr el-Lebia

As well as the large pavement, there are three additional fields of mosaics in the East Church - in the north-east annex, the chancel and a vine-scroll to the west of the large pavement **(A1.1)**.



A1.1 - Plan of East Church complex - showing mosaic pavements

Mosaics in North-East Chapel

The north-east annex lies between the space occupied by the large pavement and a rock-cut tomb-chamber to the north. It has openings in the east, west and north walls. The mosaic, which is thought to be contemporaneous with the large pavement,[1] has been lifted and is now displayed in the museum at the site[2] **(A1.2)**.

[1] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.285

[2] The southern outer border was under a wall constructed to protect the large pavement and has been left *insitu*.



A1.2 - Pavement from North-East annex - looking

The pavement is bordered by a series of interlocking squares, diamonds and roundels, containing birds, fish, poised squares and a type of "silver plate" motif.[3] The interstices between the panels are filled with Nilotic flora and fauna **(A1.3)**.



A1.3 - Elements from outer border, North-East Annex

A wide inner border is inhabited by a variety of creatures, both domestic and exotic, including a unicorn, a camel, harts with bells around their necks and a stag holding a serpent in its mouth.[4] The animals are interspersed by flowering shrubs and fruiting trees **(A1.4)**.

[3] A descriptive term used by Levi to describe a similar motif found in the House of Ge and the Seasons in Daphne, Levi (1947) p.468

[4] Animals with bells around their necks and stags with serpents are discussed in chapter 3.7



A1.4 - Details from the wide inner border of the north-east annex

The west range of the border is dominated by a hunter with his dogs. This figure is making a gesture with the second and third fingers of his right hand - a sign which is sometimes used to suggest that a figure is speaking, or should be listened to[5] **(A1.5)**.



A1.5 - Hunter with dogs, West range of north-east annex

Several motifs in this part of the pavement have been highlighted by the use of bright green glass tesserae **(A1.6)**.

[5] For example, Paul on the fifth-century Adam diptych, Weitzmann (1979) pp.505-7, cat. 454. Also, an unknown patrician on a fifth-century ivory, Natanson (1953) p.10, pl.5



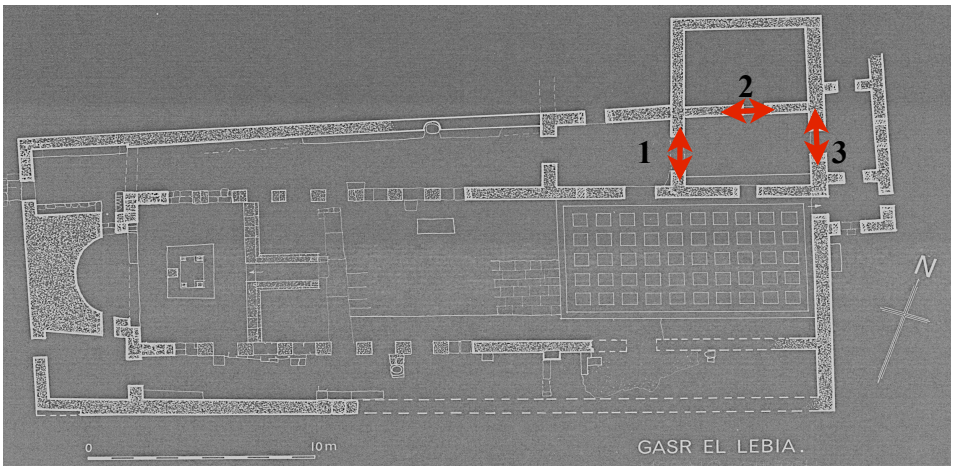
A1.6 - Bright green glass tesserae at west end of north-east annex

The east end of the wide border contains a roundel flanked by two peacocks with flowers in their beaks in front of fruiting trees **(A1.7)**.



A1.7 - Inscription with flanking peacocks at east end of north-east annex

There are three inscriptions in the north-east annex - one by each doorway **(A1.8)**.



A1.8 - Openings in North-East Annex

Inscription one - in the doorway to the ante-chamber - is orientated to be read by visitors entering from the west. It is in a large *tabula ansata* which fills the doorway rather like a door-mat[6] **(A1.9)**.



Lord of the hosts
be (*or* you are) with us, our succour,
God of Jacob, mighty
God, eternal God, be (*or* you are)
the shield of your
servant Theodorus the new deacon (?)
(translated by Reynolds)

A1.9 Inscription in doorway between north-east annex and antechamber

This inscription, together with the surrounding imagery, indicates that the north-east annex was approached from the west - along the north aisle and through the ante-chamber - an assumption which is substantiated by the fact that the partridge-like bird and the flamingo at the west end of the pavement are positioned as though to greet newcomers, whereas the rest of the birds in the border are orientated to be viewed from the centre of the pavement **(A1.10)**.



A1.10 - Birds by West Entrance to North-East Annex

The inscription would have alerted visitors to the fact that an area of particular sanctity lay ahead. It may also have been understood as an apotropaic device, safeguarding both the north-east annex and the vulnerable liminal space around the doorway. Thresholds were often the point at which the sacred and profane came

[6] Translation by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.283. This panel is laid at an angle to the main pavement suggesting that it may have been laid in an existing opening.

into contact and were therefore considered potentially perilous. The use of protective inscriptions or motifs around doorways and windows, as well as at junctions where different hierarchies of spaces met, is a well established convention in both ecclesiastical and secular buildings.[7] At the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, for example, the entrance to the stairway leading to Christ's birth place was protected by a floor mosaic containing Solomon's knots, swastikas and other cross motifs[8] **(A1.11)**. In the sixth-century basilica at Bir Messaouda in Carthage, the threshold of the main entrance into the church and the threshold between the north transept and the relic-chamber, were protected by complicated borders, intricate guilloches and perspectival boxes [9] **(A1.12)**.



A1.11 - Protective symbols by staircase - Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem



A1.12 - Threshold mosaic, Bir Messaouda, Carthage

This custom was not confined to ecclesiastical buildings. A secular example can be found in the Triconch Villa at Butrint in Albania, where apotropaic images protect the entrance to a wing of the peristyle walkway[10] **(A1.13)**. In Syria, the doorways and windows to domestic buildings were commonly adorned with protective rosettes, swirls and knots[11] **(A1.14-15)**.

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[7] Hildburgh (1944) pp.133-49; Eliade (1959) pp.25-27; Maguire, Maguire and Duncan-Flowers (1989) p.5, p.19 and p.22

[8] Kitzinger (1970) p.642

[9] Chick in Miles - forthcoming. Alfred Gell discusses the apotropaic properties of complex patterns, he writes: "Losing interest in whatever malevolent plan it had entertained previously, the demon would become stuck in the coils of the pattern and the object, person, or place protected by it would be saved." Gell (1998) p.84; Trilling (1995) pp.59-86

[10] Mitchell (2007) pp.281-283

[11] Prentice (1906) pp.137-50



A1.13 - Protective symbols in peristyle of Triconch Villa, Butrint, Albania



A1.14 - Protective symbols above doorway at Serjilla, Syria



A1.15 - Protective symbols above doorway at Jeradeh, Syria

The doorway between the ante-chamber and the north-east annex at Qasr el-Lebia has none of the commonly occurring and universally recognised apotropaic motifs found protecting thresholds in most other parts of the empire, relying instead on the dedicatory text which calls on God's protection for the benefactor, visitor and the room beyond.

Inscription two - in line with the opening into the tomb-chamber - is orientated to be viewed from the south - by those facing the entrance to the tomb-chamber[12] **(A1.16)**.

[12] Translation by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.284



Your witnesses
were
trusted;
that greatly
adorns your house
(translated by Reynolds)

A1.16 - Inscription by opening to tomb-chamber

The meaning of this inscription is ambiguous; it could refer to the mosaicists and craftsmen who had worked on the pavement or it may be making reference to a more spiritual adornment, perhaps brought about by the presence of relics housed in the tomb-chamber. This inscription is not apotropaic but, unlike the doorway to the west, this threshold - and those interred within - were protected by an intricate knot-pattern immediately adjacent to the doorway **(A1.17)**.



A1.17- Knot motif by tomb-chamber on north side of north-east annex

Inscription three - in front of the opening in the east wall of the annex - is orientated to be read from the west - by visitors moving into the suite of rooms at the east end of the complex[13] **(A1.18)**.

[13] Translation by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.284



This
good work
also came into
being
in the time of Theodorus
the most holy
new bishop.
In indiction year 3
(translation by Reynolds)

A1.18 - Inscription by opening in east wall of north-east annex

Accepting, for the moment, that the orientation of inscriptions can be taken as an indication of the direction in which visitors were expected to move through a building, the inscriptions in the north-east chapel could give an indication of how the East Church complex might have functioned. However, as indications of the directional flow of visitors through a building, inscriptions need to be treated with caution. In the south-east chapel in the East Church at Cyrene, for example - a space which has been compared to the north-east annex at Qasr el-Lebia[14] - an inscription is positioned as though to be read by visitors entering the chapel through a door in the east wall.[15] However, Ward-Perkins has reported that "there certainly never was such a door, the masonry of the first-period outer wall being intact, without any trace of an opening." [16]

At the centre of the pavement in the north-east annex at Qasr el-Lebia, is a Nilotic scene framed by a guilloche.[17] Two figures in a coracle-like boat appear to be harvesting lotus blossoms and a third figure is hanging on to the tail of a bull which is being wrested from his grasp by a crocodile **(A1.19)**.

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[14] Alföldi-Rosenbaum (1980) pp.45-9

[15] The inscription at Cyrene was found in a poor state of repair but the fragments have been interpreted as: "[There came into being] this, [good] work under Menas, our very holy, bishop who was a lover of building ……" Translation by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.155

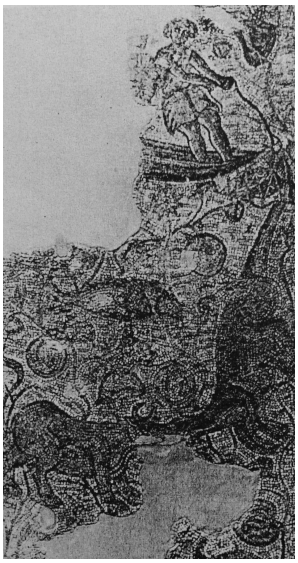
[16] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.137

[17] Nilotic imagery has been dealt with in chapter 3.4



A1.19 - Central panel of pavement in north-east annex

The crocodile-bull combat appears in several sixth-century Nilotic scenes,[18] including the north aisle and the south-east annex in the East Church at Cyrene[19] **(A1.20)**, the sixth-century ceiling beams in St. Catherine's at Sinai in Egypt[20] **(A1.21)**, the late fifth- or early sixth-century pavement of Beit Leontis at Beth She'an in Israel[21] **(A1.22)** and the sixth-century chapel at Haditha, also in Israel[22] **(A1.23)**.





**A1.20 - Crocodile and bull,
East Church, Cyrene,
south-east annex (above)
and
north aisle (left)**

[18] It has been suggested that this type of composition may have been influenced by a lost painting described in Pliny's Natural History. Pliny *NH* XXXV, 142., see Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.4; Meyboom (1995) p.100

[19] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) pp.14-5

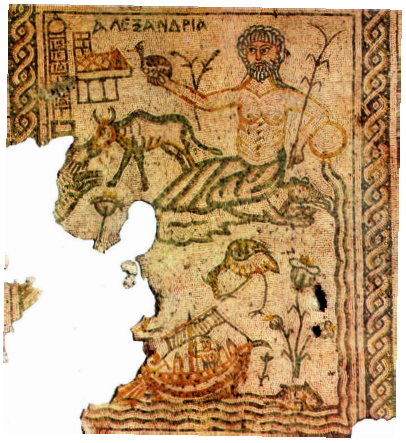
[20] Forsyth and Weitzmann (1973) pl. LXIX-A

[21] Hachlili (2009) pp.104-5

[22] Hachlili (2009) pp.104-5



A1.21 - Crocodile combat - ceiling beam, St. Catherine's,



A1.22 - Crocodile and bull, Beit Leontis, Beth She'an



A1.23 - Crocodile(?) and Bull, Haditha, Israel

Drewer has suggested that the struggle between these two animals could be seen in the light of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic imagery - as a representation of the mortal combat between the colossal biblical creatures, Leviathan and Behemoth, which marked the inauguration of the Messianic age.[23] Roussin, in a discussion of the pavement at Beit Leontis, also stresses the eschatological meaning of the scene,[24] and Bonacasa, with reference to the crocodile scene in the East Church at Cyrene, interprets the combat as the triumph of good over evil.[25]

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[23] Drewer (1981a) p.148 and p.151. Leviathan was created on the fifth day as ruler of sea animals and Behemoth on the sixth day as king of land creatures. A mythical bird, Ziz, took the same role in the air. The main role of the trio was to provide food for the righteous at the Messianic banquet and the theme is more developed in Jewish than in Christian traditions. Biblical references include: Job 40:15-24: "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox"; Isaiah 27:1: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." There is also a description of Leviathan in Job 41: 1-34 and a reference to Leviathan in Psalm 104:26

[24] Roussin (1981) pp.6-9

[25] Bonacasa (2005) p.1352

Chancel Mosaics

The chancel pavement from the East Church complex has been lifted and is now displayed in the West Church. The overall composition comprises four centrally-composed repetitive, but not identical, figured panels inhabited by a variety of birds and animals and arranged around a central altar base. The pavement and the altar base are bordered by a simple guilloche. Trees growing from the four outer corners of the tableau denote a diagonal axis and separate the four panels[26] **(A1.24)**.



A1.24 - Details of chancel pavement

Each panel features two stags flanking a decorated roundel containing, on the north, south and west sides, a jewelled cross, and on the east side an inscription.[27] Opposed birds with festoons in their beaks sit on top of the roundels with another pair of birds below[28] **(A1.25-26)**.

[26] A device which can also be seen in the sixth-century church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Mount Nebo in Jordan, Piccirillo (1997) pp.214-5, pl.213. Also in the fifth-century *Megalopsychia* mosaic in the Yakto Complex at Daphne in Syria, Hachlili (2009) pp.166-7, fig.VII-7

[27] Translation by Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.284

[28] For discussion about festoons, see chapter 3.1



A1.25 - North side of Chancel Mosaic - looking south



[This] work [too]
[came into being] in the time of
[the very holy] and pious
Bishop Theodorus
(translation by Reynolds)

A1.26 - Inscription in roundel west of altar base

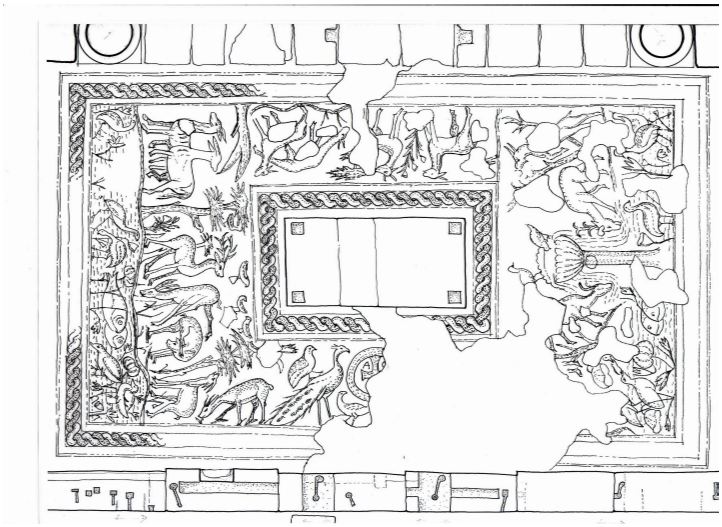
There are close similarities between this pavement and the chancel pavement in the Central Church at Cyrene[29] **(A1.27)**. Not only is the simple guilloche around the pavement and the altar base the same, but the style of the deer and the birds is analogous. Sadly, the mosaic at Cyrene has been left *insitu and* unprotected and is now barely legible but a sketch made at the time of excavation records the pavement[30] **(A1.28)**.

[29] On account of its resemblance to the chancel pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, the pavement has been dated to the mid sixth century, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p. 157, f/n 3. Mosaics were also found in the nave of the Central Church at Cyrene. See Appendix 2.

[30] Sketch by Bonacassa, by kind permission of SLS archive



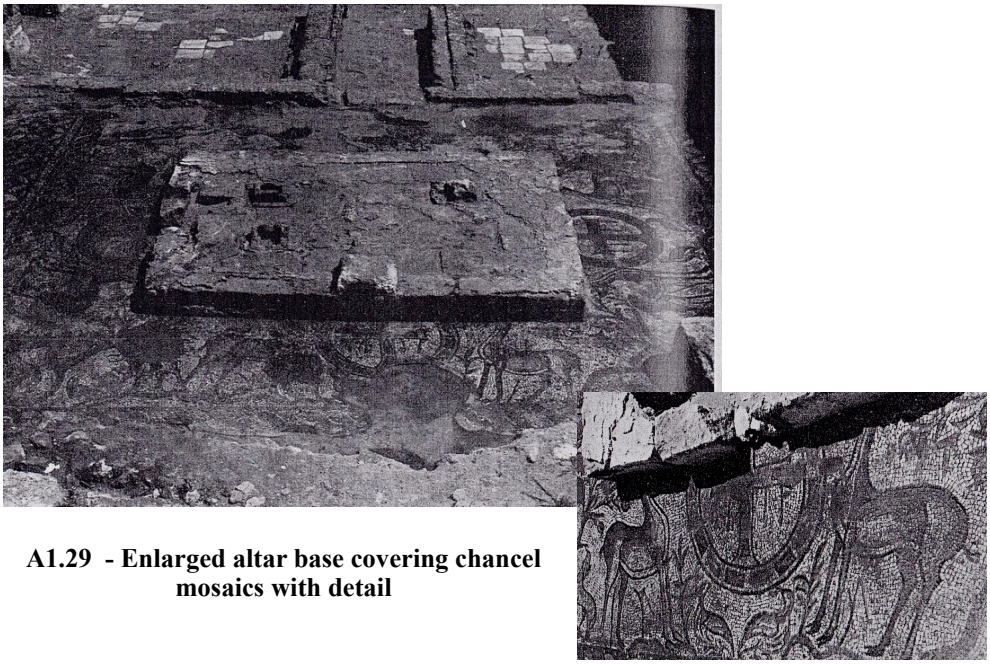
A1.27 - Chancel pavement in the Central Church, Cyrene - and detail



A1.28- Chancel mosaic - Central Church, Cyrene

The chancel pavement at Qasr el-Lebia has been is generally thought to be contemporaneous with the large pavement, so mid sixth century,[31] however, there are some problems with this dating. At the time of excavation, an enlarged altar base with a step on the west side covered part of the mosaic. This base, laid sometime after the original mosaic, covered the guilloche bordering the original altar base and obscured the heads of the stags, the doves holding festoons atop the roundels and the top part of the crosses and inscription in the roundels **(A1.29)**.

[31] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980) p.65; Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.276



A1.29 - Enlarged altar base covering chancel mosaics with detail

It seems unlikely that the church would have functioned with headless deer, incomplete crosses and a fragmented inscription directly in front of the altar. Although no more than conjecture, it seems likely that this pavement pre-dated the major renovations carried out in the middle of the sixth century and that, having been rendered incomplete by the enlarged altar base, the mosaic was covered with a new floor - marble slabs like those robbed from the nave, perhaps.

Vine-scroll

An inhabited vine-scroll, assumed to be contemporary with the large pavement, runs along the western edge of the outer border. It is orientated to be viewed from the west, that is, against the direction of the large pavement[32] **(A1.30)**.



A1.30 - Vine-scroll, west end of large pavement, Qasr el-Lebia

[32] The cantharus flanked by peacocks is not positioned centrally to the pavement, but does appear to be aligned with the centre of the apse to the west. However, when the panels from the large pavement were moved to the museum, the whole pavement - including the vine-scroll- was lifted, to enable the support to be reinforced and it is possible that this strip of mosaic is no longer in its original position.

A similar vine-scroll borders the grid of panels in the south transept at Apollonia, although, here, the creatures in the inhabited scroll were orientated in different directions **(A1.31)**.



A1.31 - East Church, Apollonia.
South Transept - laid over earlier pavement

The vine-scroll, although less regimented than a grid, was a device used to order sequences of images and bring a degree of uniformity to compositions. Vine-scroll mosaics, although fairly ubiquitous, were particularly prevalent in Jordan and Palestine and, like grid compositions, enjoyed increased popularity in the sixth century.[33] Notably, Merrony has observed that, "not one proven instance of the inhabited vine rinceau in the villa context exists in the Provinces of Arabia and Palestine", suggesting that it had an essentially religious significance.[34] An ancient sign of fecundity and regeneration, the vine is firmly rooted in biblical symbolism. In the Old Testament it was the first plant grown by Noah after the Great Flood,[35] vineyards awaited the Israelites when they crossed into the Promised Land,[36] and it is repeatedly made reference to as a symbol of fertility and plenty.[37] In the New Testament, Christ referred to himself as the true vine and to his followers as the

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[33] For a discussion on inhabited scrolls, with references to many examples, see Hachlili (2009) pp.111-47. Also Piccirillo (1997)

[34] Merrony (1998) pp.443-4

[35] Genesis 9:20 "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard."

[36] Numbers 13:23 "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff."

[37] For example, Psalm 128:3 "They wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table"; Zechariah 8:12 "For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew;"

branches of the vine,[38] the parable of the wicked husbandmen equates the vineyard to the Kingdom of God,[39] and the vine and its fruit came to signify the Eucharist. In the basilica of Chrysopolitissa in Paphos on Cyprus, a profusely fruiting vine towards the east end of the nave is accompanied by the inscription "I am the true vine"[40] **(A1.32)**.



A1.32 - Vine-scroll in nave of Basilica Chrysopolitissa, Paphos

[38] John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

[39] Matthew 21:33-43 and Mark 12:1-12

[40] Michaelides (1987) pp.34-5. Maguire has suggested that this inscription is almost defensive, as though distinguishing this vine – the true vine - from the pagan vine, Maguire (2012) pp.24-5

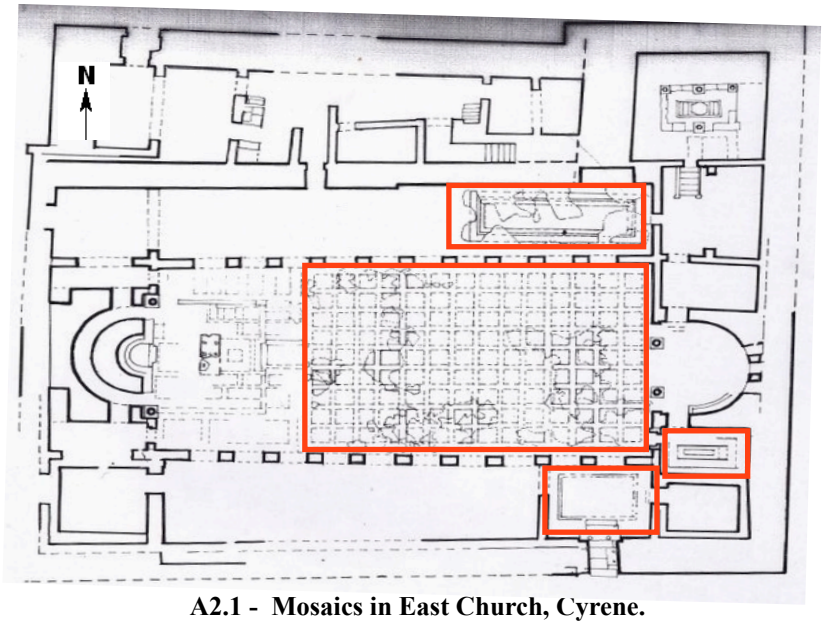
Appendix 2

Other Sixth-Century Cyrenaican Mosaics

As well as in the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia, mosaic pavements have been found in churches at Cyrene, Ras al-Hilal, Apollonia and Taucheira. Most of these pavements, with the exception of the nave pavement in the Central Church at Cyrene, have been dated according to stylistic similarities with Qasr el-Lebia - so to around AD 530-540.

Cyrene - East Church

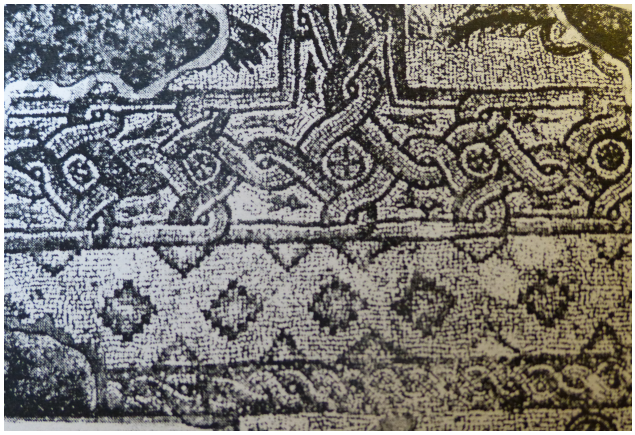
The nave of the East Church at Cyrene was paved with a grid pattern comparable to - but more extensive than - the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia. In addition mosaics have been found in the north aisle, the south-east annex and the south vestibule **(A2.1)**.



A2.1 - Mosaics in East Church, Cyrene.

Fourteen rows of nine panels filled the main body of the nave, a border of looped circles, very similar to the border at Qasr el-Lebia, ran between the panels and the spaces around the edge were infilled with stepped diamonds on a white background **(A2.2)**. At the time of excavation, less than half the 126 panels were intact and

almost none have survived.[1] Most of the extant panels are images of nature or rural pursuits, and these include: two hunters carrying their prey between them; a herdsman milking a cow; a shepherd accompanied by his dog; and several animal combat scenes, including a bear pouncing on a deer and a lion attacking a gazelle **(A2.3)**.



A2.2 -East Church, Cyrene - borders

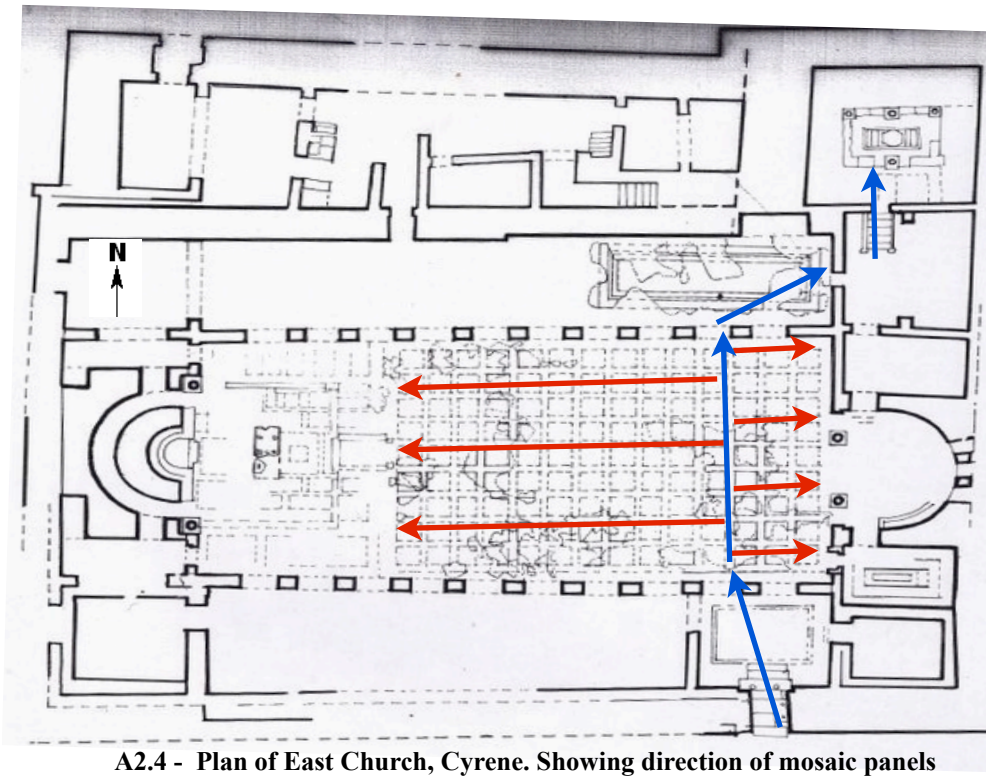


A2.3 - Details from pavement in East Church, Cyrene

The poor state of preservation of the pavement makes it impossible to discern whether there was a hierarchical arrangement of images, or an overall programme.

[1] Studies must rely on the photographic record in Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980)

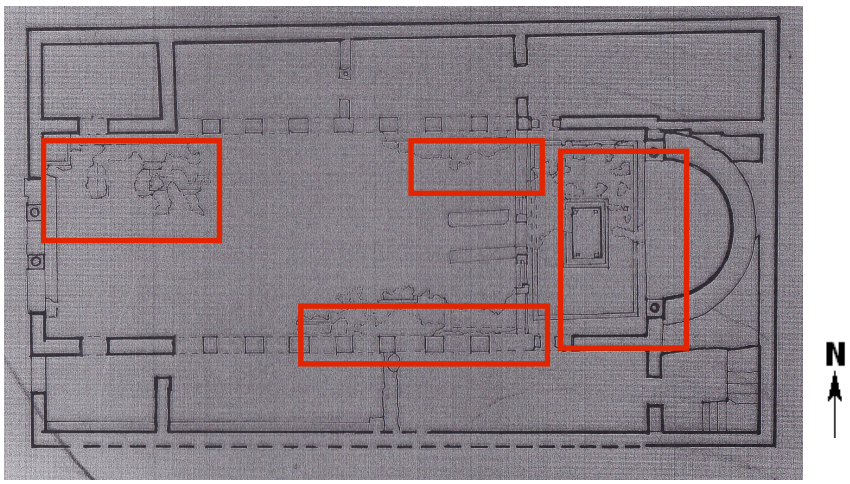
What is clear, however, is that there was a change in the orientation of the imagery three rows from the east end of the nave. The images in these three rows are all orientated to be viewed from the west but the images in the remaining eleven rows are orientated to be viewed from the east. The East Church underwent several phases of refurbishments but in the sixth century, the original plan was drastically modified; the orientation was reversed, a main apse with synthronon was added to the west end of the nave, a baptistery was added in the north-east corner of the complex, a main entrance was created in the south wall and the mosaic pavements were laid. Visitors would have entered the nave at the point where the change in the orientation of the panels occurred and this change in orientation may have indicated a path across the nave towards the baptistery **(A2.4)**.



A2.4 - Plan of East Church, Cyrene. Showing direction of mosaic panels and possible route to batistery

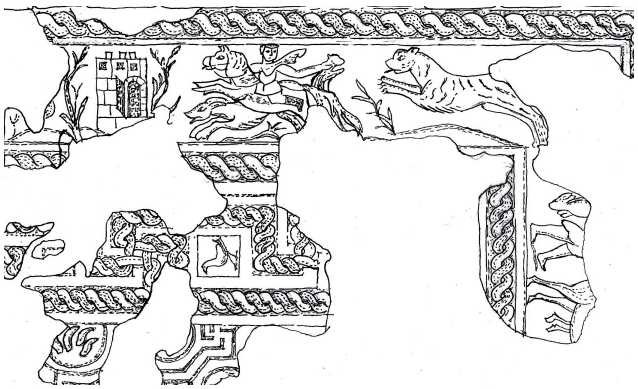
Cyrene - Central Church

The nave of the central church at Cyrene was paved with a series of different sized panels **(A2.5)**.



A2.5 - Central Church, Cyrene. Extant mosaics at time of excavation

Only fragments of the pavement survive but it is clear that this mosaic was not the same regular grid pattern used in the East Church at Cyrene, at Ras al-Hilal and at Qasr el-Lebia. A sketch made at the time of excavation gives an idea of the composition and a few extant fragments are displayed in the museum at Cyrene **(A2.6-7)**.



A2.6 - South-east corner of nave, Central Church, Cyrene

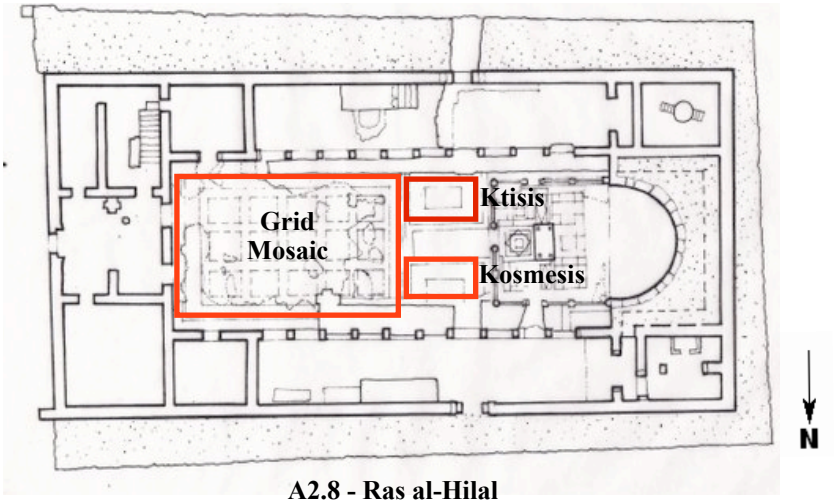


A2.7 - Mosaics from Central Church, Cyrene, now in museum at Cyrene

There are close similarities between the chancel pavement in the Central Church at Cyrene and the chancel pavement in the East Church complex at Qasr el-Lebia. For discussion and illustrations, see Appendix 1.

Ras al-Hilal

The nave of the church at Ras al-Hilal was also partly paved with a grid mosaic **(A2.8)**.



A2.8 - Ras al-Hilal

On the basis of the similarities between this pavement and the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, the church has been dated to *c*.AD 540. Most of the mosaic has been lost but extant fragments suggest that birds, beasts and trees occupied most panels **(A2.9)**.



A2.9 - Two panels from east end of nave, Ras al-Hilal

At the west end of the nave, immediately adjacent to the chancel, two full-length forward-facing orant figures, identified by inscription as *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis,* flank the solea. The panels have been lifted and are now on display in the museum at Souza. The only notable difference between the two panels is that the columns flanking *Ktisis* are spiral and those flanking *Kosmesis* are plain **(A2.10-11)**. For a full discussion about *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis*, including these panels, see chapter 3.1 of this thesis.



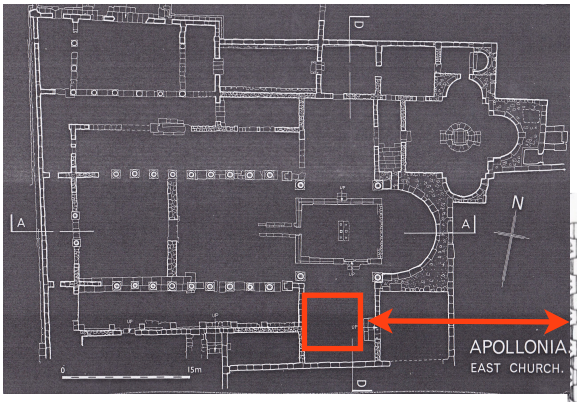
A2.10 - Ktisis - now in Souza Museum

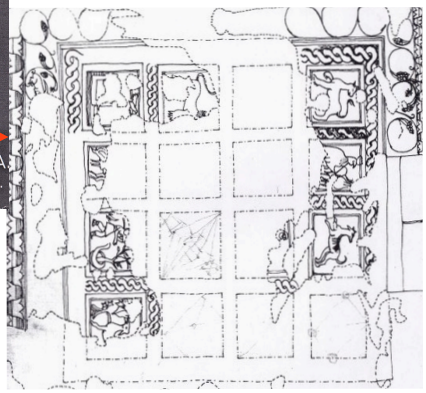


A2.11 - Kosmesis - now in Souza Museum

Apollonia - East Church

A grid mosaic of sixteen panels paved the east end of the south transept in the East Church at Apollonia [2] **(A2.12)**.





A2.12 - East Church, Apollonia - position of mosaics in south transept - with sketch

[2] Mosaics have been recorded beneath this sixth-century pavement - the only mosaics discovered in an ecclesiastical complex in the region which have not been dated to the sixth century.

Although the grid layout is analogous with the other sixth-century mosaics, in this case, the border separating the panels is a two-strand guilloche rather than a series of interlocking circles. The whole composition is bordered by an inhabited vine-scroll and a frieze of alternately inverted lotus heads runs around the outside edge **(A2.13)**.



A2.13 - East Church, Apollonia, south transept - tableau of sixth-century mosaics - earlier pavement beneath

Several panels from this pavement have been lifted and are now displayed in the museum at Souza. These include two rural scenes, a leopard, and a fragmented image with the remains of an inscription which has been interpreted as Noah. If the reading of this image is correct, it is the only biblical scene found among the Cyrenaican mosaics. **(A2.14)**.

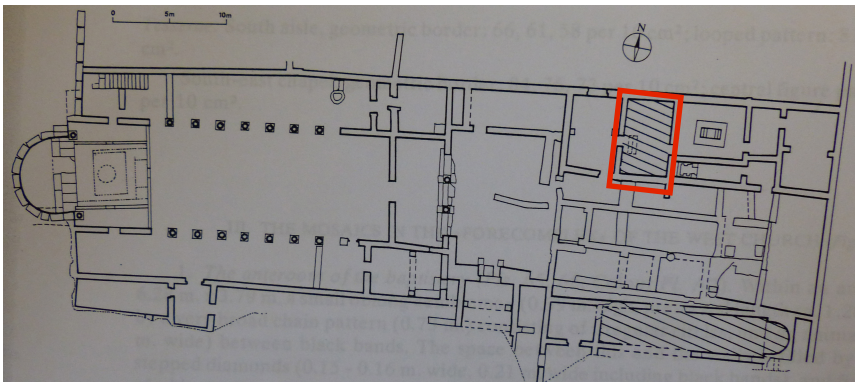


A2.14 - Four panels from the south transept at Apollonia. Now in the museum at Souza

Fragments of this tableau remain *insitu* and despite the poor state of preservation it is clear that they were orientated to be viewed from the west. It can probably be assumed that, like the north-east annex at Qasr el-Lebia and the south-east chapel at Cyrene, this space, rather than being a stational point or a destination, was a transitional space, traversed by visitors making their way towards the small chapel to the east of the transept[3] **(see A2.12)**.

Apollonia - West Church

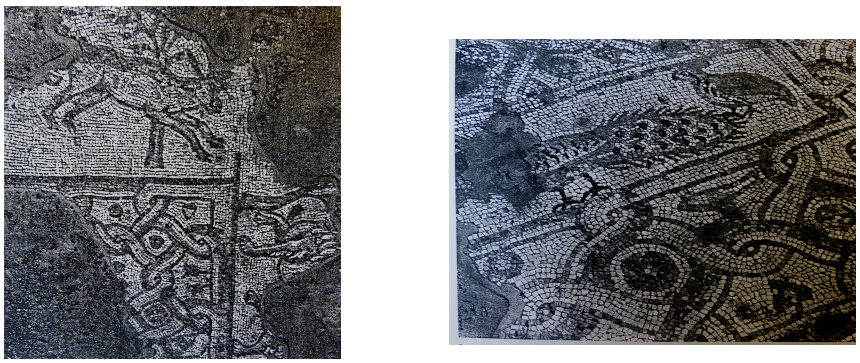
A few fragments of a mosaic have been found in an ante-room to the west of the baptistery in the West Church at Apollonia **(A2.15)**.



A2.15 - West Church, Apollonia - ante-room to baptistery

The remains of a border of interlocking circles and peacock's tail suggest that this pavement belonged with the other sixth-century mosaics found in Cyrenaica **(A2.16)**.

[3] Duval has suggested that the chapel was a *martyrium,* Duval (1989) p.2750, and Ward-Perkins has observed that the chapel and the grid mosaic seem to have been added to the complex at the same time, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.46



A2.16 - West Church, Apollonia, details of pavement in ante-chamber to baptistery

Taucheira

At Taucheira, two layers of mosaic have been found in a large apsidal hall. The earlier pavement - a large grid mosaic - has been variously dated to the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.[4] Even though the composition of this pavement is similar to other sixth-century grid mosaics in Cyrenaica, the simple guilloche border, the smaller panels and the simple contents, suggest that it does not belong to this group of pavements. It is also notable that certain diagnostic features, absent from the other pavements, are repeated throughout this mosaic, for example, a roundel in a square panel, fleur de lys in the resulting interstices and abbreviated tendrils around the animals **(A2.17)**.



A2.17 - Apsidal hall, Taucheira - earlier pavement, diagnostic features

An inscription, which reads: "Your entry [coming?] is peace, high priest, the seer [who sees/]", is bookended by two crosses, suggesting Christian use[5] **(A2.18)**.

[4] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.218

[5] Reynolds in Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003), p. 220



A2.18 - Crosses flanking inscription

This building has been identified as a possible martyrium, as a chapel and as part of a palace complex.[6] Stucchi has interpreted the hall, together with the tank-like room to the east of the structure, as part of a baptismal complex and the Christian inscription as marking the entrance to a *consignatorium* - a room used by the bishop to confirm the newly baptised.[7]

The hall was re-paved, probably in the sixth century.[8] There are marked similarities between the imagery in this mosaic and the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia, most notably, the presence of three figures identified by inscription as *Ktisis*, *Kosmesis* and *Ananeosis,* and personifications of the four Rivers of Paradise depicted in the manner of classical river-gods[9] **(A2.19-20)**.



A2.19 - Ktisis, Kosmesis and Ananeosis. Taucheira

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[6] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.218-221

[7] Stucchi (1975) p.427

[8] The pavement has been excavated but not published, Michaelides *pers.comm.* October 2012. Stucchi recorded the three personifications as being in front of an apse, Stucchi (1975) p.427. For further comments see Michaelides (1982) p.117; Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.221

[9] My thanks to Will Wootton who managed to snatch a few photographs of the pavement which is now largely buried under rubble in a dangerous structure.



A2.20 - Personification of the Euphrates River. Taucheira

Gasr Bandis

At Gasr Bandis, a hill-top village south of Cyrene, there is evidence of an ancient settlement, including a fortified building, cisterns, dwellings, rock-cut tomb-chambers and a small limestone column with capital **(A2.21-22)**.



A2.21 - Gasr Bandis, Talus and arch of door in south wall of building



A2.22 - Gasr Bandis, Small limestone column with carved capital

In a nearby field, the fragmentary remains of a mosaic pavement have been found but not excavated. The pavement, which is in a grid composition and has a border almost identical to that at Qasr el-Lebia, has, accordingly, been dated to the sixth-century and is assumed to have been part of a church or ecclesiastical complex[10] **(A2.23)**. Of particular note is the fact that four of the five recorded panels have inscriptions - a feature which aligns the pavement with the large pavement at Qasr el-Lebia.

[10] Three of the panels have been published, Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (2003) p.393-4. During a visit in 2010 another couple of panels were photographed, see chapter 2.2







A2.23 - Fragments of mosaic at Gasr Bandis

Abbreviations

AB *The Art Bulletin*

AJA *American Journal of Archaeology*

AJP *The American Journal of Philology*

AT *Antiquité Tardive*

BCH *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique*

BSNAF *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*

CA *Cahiers Archéologiques*

CP *Classical Philology*

DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*

GR *Greece and Rome*

GRBS *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*

HSCP *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*

HTR *Harvard Theological Review*

IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*

IJCT *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*

JAC *Jahrbuch Für Antike und Christentum*

JDAI *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*

JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*

JHS *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*

JR *The Journal of Religion*

JRS *The Journal of Roman Studies*

JWCI *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*

LA *Liber Annus*

LibA *Libya Antiqua*

LMGR *La Mosaïque Gréco-Romaine*

PBSR *Papers of the British School at Rome*

PP *Past and Present*

QAL *Quaderni di Archeologia della Libia*

RAC *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*

SLS *Society for Libyan Studies*

TAPA *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*

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List of Illustrations

Inside back-cover - plan of pavement from Illustrated London News

Chapter 1.2 - Cyrenaica and Qasr el-Lebia: Historical Overview

1.2.1 Map of Libya (public domain)
1.2.1 Map of Cyrenaica (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
1.2.3 Qasr el-Lebia - from the south (photo Jane Chick - hereafter JC)
1.2.4 Approach to Qasr el-Lebia - from the south (JC)
1.2.5 View from Qasr el-Lebia - looking north (JC)
1.2.6 View from Qasr el-Lebia - looking south-east (JC)
1.2.7 Map of Cyrenaica (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
1.2.8 Roman roads in Cyrenaica (Goodchild 1976)
1.2.9 Qasr el-Lebia (Google earth)
1.2.10 Rock-cut tomb, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
1.2.11 Inscription in rock-cut tomb (JC)
1.2.12 'Lower Church', Lamluda and plan of basilica above (plan Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
1.2.13 'Underground Church', Umm Heneia Garbia and plan of basilica above (JC) (plan Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
1.2.14 Hypogeum, Messa and plan of basilica above (JC) (plan Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
1.2.15 West Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS archive)
1.2.16 West Church - exterior (JC)
1.2.17 West Church, Qasr el-Lebia - interior looking east (JC)
1.2.18 Plan of West Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS archive)
1.2.19 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS archive)

Chapter 1.3 - The Large Pavement - Dating, Grids and Borders

1.3.1 Byllis - nave of Basilica D, narthex of Basilica A, nave of Basilica E (Ceka and Muçaj 2005)
1.3.2 Stobi - narthex of Episcopal Basilica, nave of Extra Muros Basilica (JC)
1.3.3 Heraclea Lyncestis, Large basilica, north aisle (JC)
1.3.4 Deir Solaib, diakonikon (Hachlili 2009)
1.3.5 Tegea, Basilica of Thyrsos (Maguire 2012)
1.3.6 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - border *insitu* and details of inner and outer borders (JC)

1.3.7 Ras al-Hilal - detail of nave pavement (JC)

1.3.8 East Church, Cyrene - detail of nave pavement (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)

1.3.9 West Church, Apollonia - detail of pavement in antechamber to baptistery (JC) (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)

1.3.10 Apsidal hall, Taucheira - detail of pavement (photo W.Wootton)

1.3.11 Monastery at Siyagha - interlocking roundels (Piccirillo 1997)

1.3.12 Church of Küçük Tavşan Adsi, Bodrum - interlocking roundels (Andaloro and Pogliani 2009)

1.3.13 Basilica at Hermione - interlocking roundels (Spiro 1978)

1.3.14 Episcopal Basilica, Stobi - interlocking roundels, narthex (JC)

1.3.15 Large Basilica, Heraclea Lyncestis - interlocking roundels in north aisle (JC)

1.3.16 Plaosnek Basilica, Ohrid - interlocking roundels in narthex (JC)

Chapter 3.1 - Personifications

3.1.1 Grid of Large Pavement

3.1.2 *Horae* being led by Dionysos, Louvre Museum (public domain)

3.1.3 Four Seasons, Zliten Mosaic, Archaeological Museum Tripoli (JC)

3.1.4 Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna - detail of Theodora (JC)

3.1.5 Map of Cyrenaica (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)

3.1.6 Ras al-Hilal - *Kosmesis* (JC)

3.1.7 Rasl al-Hilal - *Ktisis* (JC)

3.1.8 Taucheira - *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* (photo W.Wootton)

3.1.9 Bath house, Kourion - *Ktisis* (JC)

3.1.10 House of Ktisis, Antioch- *Ktisis* (Kondoleon 2001)

3.1.13 House of Ge and the Seasons, Antioch *Ktisis* (Becker and Kondoleon 2005)

3.1.14 Beittedine Palace, Lebanon - *Ktisis* (public domain)

3.1.15 Metropolitan Museum of Art - *Ktisis* (public domain)

3.1.16 Church of Ss. Cosmas and Damian, Gerasa - Theodore (JC) (detail of destroyed head from Piccirillo 1997)

3.1.17 Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg, Gerasa - Elias (Piccirillo 1997)

3.1.18 Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg, Gerasa - Soreg (Piccirillo 1997)

3.1.19 Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg, Gerasa - Maria (Piccirillo 1997)

3.1.20-21 Church of Bishop Sergius, Umm er-Rasas - figures flanking church (JC)

3.1.22	Jerusalem Orpheus Mosaic - with detail of female figures, Archaeological Museum Istanbul (JC)
3.1.23	Kissufim church - *Kalliora* and 'The Lady of Sylto' (Hachlili 2009)
3.1.24	Yakto complex, Antioch - *Megalopyschia* (Cimok 2000)
3.1.25	Vienna Dioscurides - Anicia Juliana (public domain)
3.1.26	Hippolytus Hall, Madaba - Tyches (JC)
3.1.27	Upper Chapel of Priest John, Wadi'Afrit, Jordan (plan Piccirillo 1997)
3.1.28	Vrina Plain Basilica, Butrint (photo J.Mitchell)
3.1.29	Consular diptych - Probus Anastasius (public domain)
3.1.30	Consular diptych - Aerobindus (public domain)
3.1.31	Tapestry - *Ge* (Stauffer 1995)
3.1.32	Tyche, Cyprus Museum, Nicosia (JC)
3.1.33	Consular diptych - Valentianus (public domain)
3.1.34	Coin of tiberius II Constantine (public domain
3.1.35	Empress steelyard weight (Kalavrezou 2003)
3.1.36-37	Empress steelyard weights (McClanan 2002)
3.1.38	Grid of Large Pavement
3.1.39	Jerusalem Orpheus Mosaic with detail of Theodosia (JC)
3.1.40	Kissufim - detail of 'The Lady of Sylto' (Hachlili 2009)
3.1.41	St. Demetrius, Thessaloniki - donor (Grabar 1970)
3.1.42	Gasr Bandis (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
3.1.43	Taucheira - *Kosmesis* and *Ktisis* (photo W.Wootton)
3.1.44	Ras al-Hilal - *Kosmesis* (JC)
3.1.45	Ras al-Hilal - *Ktisis* (JC)
3.1.46	Grid of Large Pavement
3.1.48	Constantinian Villa, Antioch - *Ananeosis* (Cimok 2000)
3.1.49	Tyche, Amman Citadel Museum (JC)
3.1.50	Tyche, Hadrian's Temple, Ehpesus (JC)
3.1.51	Kh.Sheikh, Ali Malikina - Tyche medallion (Piccirillo and Alliata 1999)
3.1.52	Grid of Large Pavement
3.1.53	Dura Europos - *Gaddes* votive reliefs (public domain)
3.1.54	Dumbarton Oaks Collection - *Hestia Polyolbos* tapestry (public domain)
3.1.55	Grid of Large Pavement
3.1.56-57	Pilgrim ampullae, Cathedral Treasury, Monza (Grabar 1958)
3.1.58	Detail of chancel pavement, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
3.1.59	Grid of Large Pavement

3.1.60 Details from Large Pavement, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)

3.1.61 *Ara Pacis,* Rome - detail of swag (JC)

3.1.62 Coin from Augustan period (public domain)

3.1.63 Temple of the Sun, Baalbek - basin in court of the altar (public domain)

3.1.64 Tomb relief, Ostia Antica (Zanker and Ewald 2012)

3.1.65 Tombstone, Grosvenor Museum, Chester (public domain)

3.1.66 Catacomb of Domitilla, cubiculum of Good Shepherd (Pergola 2000)

3.1.67 Catacomb of Domitilla, cubiculum of Cupid and Psyche (Pergola 2000)

3.1.68 Catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter - reconstruction inVatican Museums (JC)

3.1.69-70 Via Latina catacomb (public domain)

3.1.71 Anatolikos, Thessaloniki (Breytenbach and Behrmann 2007)

3.1.72 Tomb of Haterii, Gregoriana Profano Museum, Rome (Zanker and Ewald)

3.1.73 Sarcophagus lid, Vatican Museums (Zanker and Ewald)

3.1.74 Sarcophagus with festoon workshop, Florence baptistery (Zanker and Ewald 2012)

3.1.75 Noah sarcophagus, St Matthias, Trier (public domain)

3.1.76 Necropolis under St. Peter's, Rome (Buranelli 2010)

3.1.77 Early Christian cemetery, Pécs - Daniel in the lions den (JC)

Chapter 3.2 - The Four Rivers of Paradise

3.2.1 Grid of the Large Pavement

3.2.2 Tyche of Antioch, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.2.3 Arch of Galerius, Thessaloniki - (public domain)

3.2.4 Cosmas Indicopleustes world map (public domain)

3.2.5 Lateran baptistery, Rome, - inscription above font (JC)

3.2.6 Hosios David, Thessaloniki, - apse mosaic (public domain)

3.2.7 San Vitale, Ravenna, - apse mosaic (JC)

3.2.8 Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, - sarcophagus (JC)

3.2.9 Milan Cathedral - gospel book cover (Natanson 1953)

3.2.10 Vatican Museums - 'Capsella Africana' (public domain)

3.2.11 Dumbarton Oaks Collection - pilgrim ampulla (Vikan 1982)

3.2.12 Byzantine Museum of Phthiotis, Hypati, - composite capital (Lazaridou 2011)

3.2.13 Episcopal Basilica, Stobi - baptistery pavement (JC)

3.2.14 Plaosnek baptistery, Ohrid - pavement in font (JC)

3.2.15 Apsidal Hall, Taucheira - Euphrates (photo W.Wootton)

3.2.16 Plaosnek church, Ohrid, - pavement (JC)

3.2.17 Mariana baptistery, Corsica - details from pavement (pubic domain)

3.2.18 Jabiliyah - baptistery pavement (Piccirillo and Alliata 1999)

3.2.19 Basilica of Thyrsos, Tegea - detail of Tigris (Maguire 2012)

3.2.20 Chapel of Martyr Theodore, Madaba - Rivers of Paradise (Piccirillo 1997)

3.2.21 Church of St Paul, Um er-Rasas - Rivers of Paradise (Piccirillo and Alliata 1999)

3.2.22 Basilica at Hadrianoupolis, Paphlagonia - Rivers of Paradise (Pataci et al. 2012)

3.2.23 Baptistery, Oued Ramel - reconstruction (Underwood 1950)

3.2.24 Church of the Holy Martyrs, Tayibat al Imam - chancel pavement (JC)

3.2.25 Basilica D, Byllis - narthex pavement and plan (Ceka and Muçaj 2005)

3.2.26 Leptis Magna - apotropaic carving on street corner (JC)

3.2.27 Basilica A, Nikopolis - border detail (photo S.Curtis)

3.2.28 Mosaic of Achilles and Patrocles, Madaba (JC)

3.2.29-32 House of Banche and Satyr, Madaba (plan Piccirillo 1997)

3.2.33 Sarcophagus of Daniel,Vatican Museums (JC)

3.2.34 Loculus cover of Daniel, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.2.35 Basilica of Aquileia - details from Jonah scene (JC)

3.2.36 Jonah sarcophagus, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.2.37 Endymion sarcophagus, Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome (JC)

3.2.38 Grid of the Large Pavement

Chapter 3.3 - *Kastalia*

3.3.1 Grid of Large Pavement

3.3.2 Nymphaeum column at Cyrene (JC) and Column of the Dancing Girls, Delphi (Nikopoulou-de-Sike 1978)

3.3.3 *Kastalia* and *Pallas,* Yakto complex, Daphne (Levi 1947)

3.3.4 Endymion sarcophagus, Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome (JC)

3.3.5 Sleeping Ariadne, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.3.6 Grid of Large Pavement

3.3.7 Hosios David, Thessaloniki - apse mosaic and detail (public domain)

3.3.8 Grid of Large Pavement
3.3.9 Grid of Large Pavement
3.3.10 Grid of Large Pavement
3.3.11 Panaghia church, Kavala - carving (Maguire 1991-2)
3.3.12 Episcopal Basilica, Stobi - baptistery pavement (JC)
3.3.13 Baptistery, Henchir Ounaïssia - detail of pavement (Fantar 1994)
3.3.14 Baptistery, Butrint - detail of pavement (photo J.Mitchell)
3.3.15 Bardo Museum, Tunis - mosaic pavement from Carthage (JC)
3.3.16 Bardo Museum, Tunis - mosaic from Iunga (Fantar 1994)
3.3.17 'Armenian Pavement' (Hachlili 2009)
3.3.18 Jabaliyah, baptistery pavement and detail (Piccirillo and Alliata 1999)
3.3.19 Petra basilica - south aisle
3.3.20 Jabiliyah, Petra and Qasr el-Lebia (Jabiliyah from Piccirillo and Alliata 1999)

Chapter 3.4 - Ocean and Nile

3.4.1 Grid of Large Pavement
3.4.2 Cosmas Indicopleustes world map (public domain)
3.4.3 Sarcophagus with marine *thiasos,* Camposanto, Pisa (JC)
3.4.4 Strigilated sarcophagus,Camposanto, Pisa (JC)
3.4.5 Church of the Apostles, Madaba - detail of *Thalassa* (JC)
3.4.6 Church of Bishop Sergius, Umm er-Rasas - *Ge* and *Abyss* (JC) (plan from Piccirillo 1997)
3.4.7 Ain Témouchent - *Okeanus* (Maguire 2012)
3.4.8 Church of the Multiplication, Tabgha (Hachlili 2009)
3.4.9 Chapel of el-Maqerqesh (Hachlili 2009)
3.4.10 Church of Zay al-Gharby (Hachlili 2009)
3.4.11 St. John the Baptist Church, Gerasa (Piccirillo 1997)
3.4.12 Apsidal Hall, Taucheira (photo W.Wootton)
3.4.13 North aisle, East Church, Cyrene (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)
3.4.14 South porch, East Church, Cyrene (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)
3.4.15 North-east annex, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
3.4.16-17 Teatro Marittimo, Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli (JC)
3.4.18 Basilica A, Nikopolis - north transept (photo S.Curtis)
3.4.19 Santa Constanza, Rome - reconstruction of central dome by Pietro Santi Bartoli (public domain)

3.4.20 Basilica of Eufrasius, Porec - apse and detail of intarsia panel (JC) (main photo Terry and Maguire 2007)

3.4.21 St Catherine's Monaster, Sinai - details of beams (Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973)

3.4.22 Grid of Large Pavement

3.4.23 Grid of Large Pavement

3.4.24 Sarcophagus with sea-monster, Conservatori, Museo Nuovo, Rome (public domain)

3.4.25 Jonah sarcophagus,Vatican Museums (JC)

3.4.26 Loculus slab of Jonah, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.4.27 Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter - Jonah scene (public domain)

3.4.28 Catacomb of Priscilla - Jonah scene (public domain)

3.4.29 Aquileia basilica - Jonah scene and details (JC)

3.4.30 Odysseus scene, Synagogue(?) Beth She'an (Hachlili 2009)

3.4.31 Grid of Large Pavement

3.4.32 *Phorkys* and *Keto,* Antakya Museum, Antioch (public domain)

3.4.33 *Okeanus* from Utica, Bardo Museum, Tunis (JC)

Chapter 3.5 - Architectural Representations

3.5.1 Grid of Large Pavement

3.5.2 Grid of Large Pavement

3.5.3 Begram cup, Kabul Museum (McKenzie 2007)

3.5.4 Haemetite gem, British Museum (Goodchild 1961a)

3.5.5 Fort Qait Bey, Alexandria - papyriform columns (McKenzie 2007)

3.5.6 Circus maximus mosaic with *metae,* Bardo Museum, Tunis (JC)

3.5.7 Loculus cover, Vatican Museums (JC)

3.5.8 Grid of Large Pavement

3.5.9 Mosaic, Beth Leontis, Beth She'an (Talgam 2004)

3.5.10 Coin from reign of Antoninus Pius (public domain)

3.5.11 Coin from reign of Marcus Aurelius (public domain)

3.5.12 Ostia Antica - mosaic pavements showing the *Pharos* (JC)

3.5.13 Coin from reign of Commodus (public domain)

3.5.14 Nile Festival Building, Sepphoris (public domain)

3.5.15 Grid of Large Pavement

3.5.16 Vienna Genesis, folio VII (Wellesz 1960)

3.5.17 St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai (JC)

3.5.18 Grid of Large Pavement

3.5.19 Synagogue at Kafr Birim (public domain)

3.5.20 Nave of Upper Chapel of Priest John, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1997)
3.5.21 Synagogue at Horvat Susiya (Hachlili 2009)
3.5.22 Athenian Treasury, Delphi and plan of site (Nikopoulou-de-Sike 1978)
3.5.23 House of Jason Magnus, Cyrene - steps (JC)
3.5.24 Synagogue A, Beth She'an - mosaic (Hachlili 2009)
3.5.25 Ras al-Hilal, south aisle - curtain supports (JC)
3.5.26 Siret el Giambi Monastery, El Beida - curtain supports (JC)
3.5.27 Pilgrim ampullae, Cathedral Treasury, Monza (Grabar 1958)
3.5.28 Glass chalice from Syria or Palestine (Weitzmann 1979)
3.5.29 Grid of Large Pavement

Chapter 3.6 - Musician

3.6.1 Grid of Large Pavement
3.6.2 Grid of Large Pavement
3.6.3 Sarcophagus with musician, Archaeological Museum, Naples (Zanker and Ewald)
3.6.4 Musician in pavement Algiers Museum (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)
3.6.5 Bear with instrument, apodyterium, Qusayr Amra (JC)
3.6.6 Church at Be'er Shema (Hachlili 2009)
3.6.7 Monastic building, Beth She'an (Hachlili 2009)
3.6.8 North African plate with 'Good Shepherd' (Weitzmann 1979)
3.6.9 Villa Jenah, Beirut - pavement (Friedman 1967)
3.6.10 Grid of Large Pavement
3.6.11 Pavement with satyr, Gerasa (Z'ubi et al. 1994)
3.6.12 Egyptian textile - Dionysos and satyr (public domain)
3.6.13 Mildenhall plate, British Museum (public domain)
3.6.14 Silenus and Maenad plate, Hermitage Museum (public domain)
3.6.15 Mildenhall plate, British Museum (public domain)
3.6.16 Grid of Large Pavement
3.6.17 Orpheus pyxis, Columbano Museum, Bobbio - (public domain)
3.6.18 Bargello Museum, Florence - Orpheus pyxis (public domain)
3.6.19 El Djem Museum - pavement, Dionysiac *thiasos* (JC)
3.6.20 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston - sarcophagus, Dionysiac *thiasos* (public domain)
3.6.21 House of Dionysos, Paphos - detail of Dionysiac *thiasos* (JC)

3.6.22 Egyptian textile - Dionysiac *thiasos* (Stauffer 1995)
3.6.23 Mosaic pavement, Sheik Zouède, Eretz (Mucznik 2011)
3.6.24 Jerusalem Orpheus mosaic (public domain)
3.6.25 Grid of Large Pavement
3.6.26 Philosopher and Muses diptych, Louver Museum (weitzmann 1979)
3.6.27 Philosopher and Muses diptych, Cathedral Treasury, Monza (Volbach 1952)
3.6.28 Grid of Large Pavement

Chapter 3.7 - Guardians and Boundary Markers

3.7.1 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.2 Narthex, Heraclea Lyncestis (JC)
3.7.3 Theotokos Chapel, Mount Nebo - hart with bell around its neck (Piccirillo 1997)
3.7.4 Art Institute of Chicago (provenance unknown) - camel with bell around its neck (public domain)
3.7.5 Sepphoris synagogue - bells on Aaron's robe (Weiss 2005)
3.7.6 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.7 Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna - stags drinking (JC)
3.7.8 Henchir Messaouda baptistery - stags with snakes, reconstruction (Hanfmann 1980)
3.7.9 Great Palace Mosaic, Istanbul - a stag with a snake (JC)
3.7.10 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.11 East Gate, Cyrene - lions feet (JC)
3.7.12 Lion Gate, Mycenae (public domain)
3.7.13 Hammath Tiberius synagogue - lions guarding script (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.14 Beth Alpha synagogue - lions guarding the Ark of the Scrolls (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.15 Be'er Shem'a church - lions guarding a cantharus (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.16 Basilica D, Byllis - lions guarding a portal (Ceka and Muçaj 2005)
3.7.17 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.18 Church, Kissufim - bear in hunting scene (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.19 Old Diakonikon, Mount Nebo - bear in hunting scene (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.20 Vrina Plain Basilica, Butrint - detail of bear (Photo J.Mitchell)
3.7.21 Beth Guvrin, el Maqerquesh - bear in nave (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.22 Basilica A, Peyia, Cyprus - bear in atrium (JC)

3.7.23 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.24 ‘Campana’ relief, Vatican Museums (JC)
3.7.25 Villa Silin, Libya - crocodile in Nilotic scene (JC)
3.7.26 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.27 Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mount Nebo, Jordan
3.7.28 Theotokos Chpael, ‘Ayn al-Kanish, Jordan (Piccirillo 1997)
3.7.29 Umm Hartaine, Syria (JC)
3.7.30 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.31 Sant’Apollinare in Classe, apse mosaic - details of sheep (JC)
3.7.32 Sepphoris synagogue - detail of sheep (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.33 San Vitale, Ravenna, ceiling mosaic (JC)
3.7.34 Santa Prassede, Rome (JC)
3.7.35 Sarcophagus, Sant’Apollinare in Classe (JC)
3.7.36 Ss. Cosmas and Damian, Rome (JC)
3.7.37 Basilica C, Byllis - sheep as twelve apostles in chancel pavement (Ceka and Muçaj 2005)
3.7.38 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.39 Kissufim, north aisle - mounted hunter (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.40 The Old Diakonikon, Mount Nebo - mounted hunter (Piccirillo 1997)
3.7.41 Nile Festival Building, Sepphoris - *Semasia* riders (public domain)
3.7.42 Beth Guvrin, el- Maqerquesh - possible *Semasia* rider (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.43 Deir Solaib, diakonikon - horses flanking ‘Winter’ (Hachlili 2009)
3.7.44 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.45 Grid of Large Pavement
3.7.46 Grid of Large Pavement

Chapter 4.3 - Reading the Large Pavement: Puzzles and Conundrums

4.3.1 Illustrated London News - detail of pavement
4.3.2 Junius Bassus sarcophagus, St. Peter’s Rome (public domain)
4.3.3 Projecta Casket, British Museum (public domain)
4.3.4 Optatianus Porphyrius’ poem XIX (Ernst 1991)
4.3.5 Papyrus, National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden (Betz 1986)
4.3.6 Hadrian’s epitaph, St. Peter’s, Rome (public domain)
4.3.7 Santa Sabina, Rome - inscription and detail (JC)
4.3.8 Holy Rider medallion (public domain)

4.3.9 Ss. Sergius and Bacchus, Constantinople - inscription around nave (JC)
4.3.10 St. Polyeuktos, Constantinople - inscription above niche (JC)
4.3.11 Phela plate and detail (Mango 1986)
4.3.12 Hagia Sophia, Constantinople - imperial monogram (JC)

Chapter 5.1 - Hypothesis 1: Architecture

5.1.1 Plan of East church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.1.2 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - benches in north-west annex (JC)
5.1.3 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - remains of arch between north-east annex and north aisle (JC)
5.1.4 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - lateral opening in north side of apse (JC)
5.1.5 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - detail of apse, looking north (JC)
5.1.6 East Church, Qasr el-Lebia - wall-painting, north aisle (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
5.1.7 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.1.8 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.1.9 East Church, Apollonia, division (JC)
5.1.10 East Church Taucheira, division (JC)
5.1.11 Siret el Craat, division (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
5.1.12 Zawiet el-Argub, division (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
5.1.13 Marble off-cuts, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
5.1.14 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.1.15 Viewing platform and roof, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
5.1.16 Illustrated London News
5.1.17 Pavement in episcopal residence, Heraclea Lyncestis (JC)

Chapter 5.2 - Hypothesis 2: Iconography

5.2.1 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.2.2-16 Grid of Large Pavement
5.2.17 Plan of East Church, Cyrene (SLS)
5.2.18 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (SLS)
5.2.19 North-east annex, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
5.2.20 Baptistery, Stobi (JC)
5.2.21 Baptistery, Butrint (Mitchell 2008)
5.2.22 Plan of West Church, Apollonia (SLS)
5.2.23 Trapezoidal hall, Butrint and plan of baptistery (Mitchell 2008)

5.2.24 Salona *consignatorium* and detail (Domalgalski 1990)
5.2.25 Grid of Large Pavement
5.2.26 Grid of Large Pavement

Appendix 1 - Other Mosaics in the East Church, Qasr el-Lebia

A1.1 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
A1.2 Mosaic, North-east annex (JC)
A1.3 Outer border of north-east annex (JC)
A1.4 Details of inner border, north-east annex (JC)
A1.5 Figure in north-west corner of north-east annex (JC)
A1.6 Detail of green glass in north-east annex (JC)
A1.7 East end of north-east annex (JC)
A1.8 Plan of East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
A1.9 Inscription in west door of north-east annex (JC)
A1.10 Orientation of birds at west end of north-east annex (JC)
A1.11 Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, (public domain)
A1.12 Basilica at Bir Messaouda, Carthage (JC)
A1.13 South peristyle,Triconch Villa, Butrint (JC)
A1.14 Lintel, Serjilla, Syria (JC)
A1.15 Lintel, Jeradah, Syria (JC)
A1.16 Inscription by north doorway, north-east annex (JC)
A1.17 Protective knot, north-east annex (JC)
A1.18 Inscription by east door, north-east annex (JC)
A1.19 Nilotic scene, north-east annex (JC)
A1.20 Nilotic scenes, East Church, Cyrene (JC)
A1.21 Ceiling beam, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai (Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973)
A1.22 Beit Leontis, Beth She'an (Hachlili 2009)
A1.23 Chapel at Haditha (Hachlili 2009)
A1.24 Chancel pavement, East Church Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
A1.25 Cross in roundel, chancel pavement, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
A1.26 Inscription in roundel, chancel pavement, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)
A1.27 Chancel pavement, Central Church, Cyrene (JC)
A1.28 Sketch of chancel pavement, Central Church, Cyrene (SLS)
A1.29 Altar base covering mosaic, chancel, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003)
A1.30 Vine scroll, East Church, Qasr el-Lebia (JC)

A1.31 Vine scroll, East Church, Apollonia (public domain)

A1.32 Vine scroll, Chrysopolitissa, Paphos, Cyprus (JC)

Appendix 2 - Other Sixth-Century Mosaics, Cyrenaica

A2.1 Plan of East Church, Cyrene (SLS)

A2.2 Nave border, East Church, Cyrene (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)

A2.3 Details of nave pavement, East Church, Cyrene (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)

A2.4 Plan of East Church, Cyrene (SLS)

A2.5 Plan of Central Church, Cyrene (SLS)

A2.6 Sketch of nave pavement, Central Church, Cyrene (SLS)

A2.7 Mosaics from Central Church, Cyrene (JC)

A2.8 Plan of Ras al-Hilal (SLS)

A2.9 Nave pavement, Ras al-Hilal (JC)

A2.10-11 *Ktisis* and *Kosmesis*, Ras al-Hilal (JC)

A2.12 East Church, Apollonia and sketch (SLS)

A2.13 Vine in transept of East Church, Apollonia (public domain)

A2.14 Details of mosaic from East Church, Apollonia (JC)

A2.15 Plan of West Church, Apollonia (SLS)

A2.16 Details of pavement from West Church, Apollonia (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980)

A2.17 Mosaic, Taucheira (JC)

A2.18 Inscription in mosaic, Taucheira (JC)

A2.19-20 Sixth-century pavement from Taucheira (photos W.Wootton)

A2.21 Fortified building, Gasr Bandis (JC)

A2.22 Column, Gasr Bandis (JC)

A2.23 Unexcavated mosaic, Gasr Bandis (JC)