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# ADALYA

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# ADALYA

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# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Gizem Kartal<br><i>The Neolithic Cave Settlements of the Antalya Region in Southwestern Anatolia:<br/>A Comparative Perspective in Terms of Chipped Stone Assemblages</i> .....                                    | 1   |
| Derya Yalçıklı<br><i>Two Neolithic Ritual Centers in East Mysia (NW Turkey): The Baltalın and İnkaya Caves</i> .....   | 19  |
| Nurcan Kayacan<br><i>Oval Points and Cattle-Hunting Practices in Central Anatolia during the 8<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC</i> .....  | 45  |
| Yalçın Kamış<br><i>Acemhöyük Buluntuları Işığında Erken Tunç Çağında Orta Anadolu'nun Güneyinde<br/>Çark Yapımı Seramiğin Ortaya Çıkışı</i> .....  | 63  |
| Murat Akar – Demet Kara<br><i>Into the Hinterland: The Middle Bronze Age Building at Toprakhisar Höyük, Altınözü<br/>(Hatay, Turkey)</i> .....   | 85  |
| Gonca Dardeniz – K. Serdar Girginer – Özlem Oyman-Girginer<br><i>A Pottery Kiln from Tatarlı Höyük (Adana, Turkey) and its Implications for Late Bronze Age<br/>Pottery Production in Cilicia and Beyond</i> ..... | 117 |
| S. Gökhan Tiryaki<br><i>The Sanctuary with the Relief of the “Twelve Gods” in the Elmalı Highlands: On the Iconography<br/>of “Leto, her children, and the Nymphs” in Ancient Southwest Anatolia</i> .....         | 135 |
| Elif Özer – Murat Taşkiran<br><i>The Sillyon Main City Gate</i> .....  | 151 |
| Şükrü Özudođru – Düzgün Tarkan<br><i>Kibyra Geç Antikçağ Hamamı</i> .....  | 175 |
| Mustafa Adak<br><i>Die Melas-Brücke bei Kotenna und die Familie des Stanamoas</i> .....  | 211 |
| Urs Peschlow<br><i>Die Gabriel-Platte in Antalya. Rekonstruktion und ursprünglicher Kontext</i> .....  | 229 |
| Ünal Demirer – Nilgün Elam<br><i>Lead Seals of the Kibyra Excavations</i> .....  | 245 |
| Aytaç Dönmez<br><i>Xanthos West Agora II: Alteration and Transformation in the Byzantine Period</i> .....  | 277 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Hüseyin Metin – Salih Soslu<br><i>The Altıkapılı Cave Church at Pisidia</i> .....  | 315 |
| Merih Erol<br><i>Becoming Protestant: Greek Orthodox Responses to Conversion in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Ottoman Anatolia</i> ..              | 335 |
| Evren Dayar<br><i>1853 Antalya İsyanı</i> .....  | 363 |
| Funda Solmaz Şakar – Neriman Şahin Güçhan<br><i>Building System Characterization of Traditional Architecture in Cappadocia, Turkey</i> ..... | 379 |

## The Altıkapılı Cave Church at Pisidia

Hüseyin METİN – Salih SOSLU\*

### Abstract

The single-naved rock-cut church located near the village of Avdancık in Bucak District of the province of Burdur has dimensions measuring 10.50 x 10.50 m. What makes Altıkapılı special for the Pisidia region are the mural paintings found on its apse that portray scenes of salvation/liberation from the Bible. The surviving mural paintings include icons of Orthodox Christianity such as scenes of the Annunciation to Virgin Mary, the Nativity of Jesus, and the Baptism of Jesus. The painting program and the stylistic features of these murals provide important information that indicates that the structure belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. The Angel painting on the ground in an open area in the Annunciation scene is a feature that belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The linear shadings and the depth created on the dress with helical curves are also seen in the monumental drawings of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Thin and long arms and legs, compressed bodies of the figures, and the energetic general structure of their bodies are also features that appear in church mural paintings from this period.

**Keywords:** Byzantine architecture, Church architecture, Cave Church, Pisidia, Cremna

### Öz

Burdur İli, Bucak İlçesi, Avdancık Köyü yakınındaki tek nefli kaya kilisesi 10.50 x 10.50 m ölçülerindedir. Altıkapılı'yı Pisidia Bölgesi için özel kılan tarafı apsisinin üstünde İncil kaynaklı kurtuluşa ilişkin temaların işlendiği freskoların bulunmasıdır. Bu freskoların sağlam olarak günümüze gelenlerinde Meryem'e Müjde (Tebşir), İsa'nın Doğumu ve İsa'nın Vaftizi gibi Ortodoks kaynaklı konular kullanılmıştır. Freskoların resim programı ve üslupsal özellikleri yapının 11-12. yy.'lara ait olduğu konusunda önemli bilgiler sunar. Şöyle ki, Müjde Sahnesi'nde Meleşin açık bir alanda zemin üzerinde resmedilmesi olayı 11. yy. özelliğidir. Kat kat yoğun helezonik kıvrımlı elbisenin çizgisel gölgelemeler yaparak derinlik oluşturması 11. yy. anıtsal resimlerinde görülür. Figürlerin kol ve bacakların ince ve uzun, gövdenin basık, vücudun genel yapısının ise enerjik verilmesi de yine 11.-12. yy. kilise freskolarında katı bir şekilde uygulanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bizans Mimarisi, Kilise Mimarisi, Kaya Kilisesi, Pisidia, Kremna

### Introduction

The Altıkapılı Cave Church – the subject of this study – was discovered during research carried out for the surface surveys for Kremna and the nearby region in 2015<sup>1</sup>. The church is situated

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<sup>1</sup> Metin – Becks – Becks – Soslu 2016a, 215; Metin – Soslu 2016b, 18.

near the city of Burdur in the district of Bucak to the northwest of the village of Avdancık (Fig. 1). Research that began in 2013 and still continues is focused on determining and registering the rural settlement areas around the ancient city of Kremna. While it was not possible to obtain much data regarding the Late Antique and Byzantine periods at the northern borders of Kremna due to the mountainous nature of the region, important data were obtained regarding the Late Antique period and the Middle Ages at the borders of the modern villages of Boğazköy, Gündoğdu, Avdancık, Karapınar, and Kızıllı situated on a plain to the south. In particular, it is of significant importance that the cave church reviewed here for the first time provides specific information relating to the Middle Byzantine period.

The Altıkapılı Cave Church is located at an approximate altitude of 1040-1050 m on the southern margin of the steep rocks facing Avdancık village (Figs. 2-3). Since the church has six doors, the area where it is situated is named Altıkapılı, which literally means “with six doors”. According to information given by the villagers, three of the doors were intact until 40-50 years ago. However, as a result of illegal excavation work, they are completely ruined today.

There are two features that make the church important. First, it proves that a cave church was situated in the Pisidia region, and second, in its apse there are mural paintings belonging to the cycle of Jesus that reflect the artistic style of the period of Komnenos (1081-1185). Another feature that makes the Altıkapılı Cave Church important is the delicate and painstaking work exhibited on the mural paintings, most of which have been ruined.

## Plan

The church is situated on a plane that lies at the front of a natural cave and has a square plan with dimensions of 10.50 x 10.50 m (Fig. 4). Just like Güzelöz-Başköy<sup>2</sup>, Uçar<sup>3</sup>, Çıplaklı<sup>4</sup>, Tabae (Kale-i Tavas)<sup>5</sup>, Yusufeli<sup>6</sup>, and Gelveri (Otlu, Güvercinli, Sümer I-II, Çömlekçi, Son Hacı Saadet Koç-Caferler, Yalnız, Kümeler, Küçük ve Sarı)<sup>7</sup>, it is a single-nave structure that lies in an east-west direction. Its apse, hollowed into the main rock on the east side, is partially ruined. To the left of the apse, on which there are reddish- and brown-colored paint traces, there are two different-sized naves hollowed into the main rock. To the right side, there is another another two-stepped nave.

Even though the remains on the surface create uncertainties regarding the positioning of the doors, certain partially readable traces can be observed on the base structure of the church. These are considered to be associated with the door structures on the southern and western sides. The northern and eastern fronts are formed by using the main rock<sup>8</sup>. To the north of the church, there is a 2-3 m-wide natural cave entry. It is believed that this section, whose function is not understood, was closed with rubble stones when the church was constructed. The mortar and paint traces on the stones show that the walls were completely plastered with colorful mortar. Three of the doors on the southern side – which help to give the church its name

<sup>2</sup> Peker – Uyar 2013, 114.

<sup>3</sup> Bayram – Yazar 2006, 462.

<sup>4</sup> Doğan 2006, 541.

<sup>5</sup> Aydın 2012, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Kadiroğlu 2003, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Pekak 1993, 123-160.

<sup>8</sup> Metin – Soslu 2016c, 316.

– were apparently standing in the 1970s, but later completely ruined due to illegal excavation work. Even though a rubble mass with plaster can be observed at this section, the basic remains are partially significant. Among the remains were found round-headed studs measuring 3 cm in diameter, which are documented for use in the decoration of the wooden door. On its northwest corner, a grave was found similar to those at the single-nave churches in Erdemli<sup>9</sup>, Harım B in Gelveri, Yalnız<sup>10</sup>, and Yatık<sup>11</sup>. The traces found at the edges of the 1.60 x 0.80 m grave show that the rock was flattened and then plastered with colorful paint.

Our information about the upper structure is limited. Since the main rock on which it is situated curves from the top towards the outside and a portion remains outside this curve, it is believed that the sections on the main rock and those that remain open on the plan were covered with tiles over wooden material. Since tesserae pieces can be observed at the base, it appears that the base section was covered with mosaic. At the entrance, as in Gelveri Height-Saint Mamas<sup>12</sup>, there is a cistern. What is different, however, is that the opening of the cistern at the Altıkapılı Cave Church is round and the internal part is plastered (Fig. 5).

### Iconographic Evaluation

On the iconographic evaluation, themes relating to salvation/liberation with specific emphasis on the Bible are dominant. By explaining the events in chronological order in scenes under three topics, namely, the Annunciation to Virgin Mary, the Nativity of Jesus, and the Baptism of Jesus, a teaching technique has been used. By using architectural structures and geometric ornamentation with twelve figures including Jesus, Virgin Mary, three Angels, three Prophets, Salome, and three men whose identities are not specified, the painting program of the church is formed (Fig. 6). Since the remaining scenes were completely ruined, we will avoid making further interpretations. While a background of red and blue was dominant in the painting schema, colors of claret red, light gray, black, blue, and pink were also used.

### Annunciation to Virgin Mary

The account of the annunciation in the Gospel of Luke defines this didactic icon of Orthodox Christianity. It is among the vital topics of Orthodox iconography that is often reviewed. The icon's main theme is composed of the angel Gabriel appearing to Virgin Mary<sup>13</sup>. He announces that Mary will become pregnant by the power of God<sup>14</sup>. God's coming down to earth in the flesh (the Incarnation) is expressed as the Good News to Mary, and the birth of Jesus is initiated with this event<sup>15</sup>. In other words, the Annunciation (from the Latin *annuntiatio*) heralds the birth of Jesus and the liberation of humankind. The Annunciation presents itself to us with two types of explanations. The first is at the space where the scene is located within the architectural structure, while the second is the painting of an angelic figure giving the announcement to Mary on the ground<sup>16</sup>. Virgin Mary is pictured in different scenes: sometimes she is

<sup>9</sup> Karakaya 2003, 17-29.

<sup>10</sup> Pekak 1993, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Pekak 1994, 193.

<sup>12</sup> Pekak 1993, 135.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 1:26-38; Serdar 2008, 227-245.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 1:35; Mathews 1983, 343-356; Geisler – Mackenzie 2004, 309.

<sup>15</sup> Bornovalı 2008, 7; Özcan 2008, 169; Peker 2010, 576.

<sup>16</sup> Bornovalı 2008, 72.

shown standing in a garden, sometimes as sitting or praying, and sometimes she was spinning. The second element of the Annunciation is the angel who is generally winged, energetic, and young. Gabriel is depicted holding a spear in his left hand and a lily in his right hand<sup>17</sup>.

On the scene situated at the northern section of Altıkapılı's apse, there is an angel at the left (Fig. 7-1). Shown from half profile, the figure is directed towards the right as being parallel to the turning movement of the body. His left foot is moving towards the front with the support of the other foot, or shown as if he is walking. His legs are long in comparison to the upper part of the body. As the ground line is not flat and since there is a blue color between the wings, the event is taking place in the open. The right hand raised to shoulder level is shown as if he is speaking or blessing. This movement gives the impression that there is at least one person next to the angel and that he is striving to transmit the news he receives to the required place. Features related to the description are the same as those regarding the angelic figure who has been assigned to fulfill God's order in the Annunciation scene. For instance, directing his hand towards the right as if making a blessing gesture is similar to the ritual of the angel found in the scene of the Annunciation<sup>18</sup>. A partially visible Virgin Mary situated opposite the angel is another vital element of the scene. She is sitting with her right hand raised upwards and meeting the angel who is approaching her. Even these two figures can be accepted as the most important elements, thus proving the existence of the Annunciation scene in the painting program of the church.

Both figures move with integrity as it relates with the subject. This feature could be interpreted as the reflection of understanding of a common theme at the beginning of a dialogue. The blessing gesture of the angel adds a mystical power to the scene. The movement of the angel's feet and the smaller reflection of Virgin Mary, who is sitting on a throne, add perspective to the scene. Reddish brown, black, and light gray are the predominant colors in the scene. Light blue is used in the mid-sections of the wings. Reddish brown and light gray colors are preferred on the dresses with helical curves.

## Nativity of Jesus

The Nativity of Jesus is another widely used Orthodox icon that also originates from the Gospels<sup>19</sup>. According to Orthodox Christians, Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus in a cave, whereas Catholics assert that the event took place in a barn<sup>20</sup>. Characteristic features in Orthodox icons that explain the Nativity of Jesus show Jesus with a donkey and an ox, being bathed by Mae and Salome, an affectionate Virgin Mary, shepherds herding the animals, Joseph<sup>21</sup>, and the Magi Kings<sup>22</sup>. Only in a few scenes are these elements different<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Speake 1994, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Thierry 1967, 161-175; Özbek – Arslan 2008, 1265, fig. 8; Soykan 2017, 96; Thierry 1974, 193-206; Koçyiğit 2009, 141-164; Pekak 2010, 203-218; Ousterhout 2005, 37-46; Peker 2010, 578; Petzold 1976, 45-58; Karakaya 2005, 287-309, fig. 1-32; Stierlin 1988, 175; Gough 1964, 147-161; Akyürek 2001, 226-395.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 2:6-7; Matthew 1:18-25; Aydın 2009, 285.

<sup>20</sup> Akkaya 2014, 73.

<sup>21</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne 1975, 210.

<sup>22</sup> Rott 1908, fig. 63; Özbek-Arslan 2008, 1263, fig. 5; Jolivet – Levy 1991, 137-141; Jerphanion 1925-1942, I. 199-242, 2.44-58; Restle 1969, 18, 22, 57, 130, 133; Epstein 1986, 32; Özbek – Arslan 2008, 1269, fig. 6; Ötügen 1987, 131-132; Özil 1984, 78; Koçyiğit 2009, 141-164; Pekak 2010, 203-218; Jerphanion 1925-1942, I. 2.431-454; Epstein 1980, 27-45; Öcal 2013, 40; Stierlin 1988, 175; Gough 1964, 147-161; Akyürek 2001, 226-395.

<sup>23</sup> Ötügen 1987, 131-132; Koçyiğit 2009 141-164.



The Nativity scene is situated on the northern side of Altıkapılı's apse (Figs. 8-12). The scene is composed of a crowded group of figures who have integrity within themselves, even though they create the impression of a complex painting program with interwoven figures. The first scene is composed of figures on a single frieze zone without empty space and is allocated to the Child Jesus (Fig. 8-2). Here Jesus is in the manger<sup>24</sup>. Although it is partially ruined, the remaining part enables an interpretation for the general scene. Accordingly, it is clearly seen that the Child Jesus is lying on the bundle with a diamond pattern. Although part of his face is ruined, the head of Jesus is shown within an aureola (*mandorla*). A monogram written as IC (Greek Ἰησοῦς, Jesus) shows that he comes from a divine origin<sup>25</sup>. Episodic figures other than Jesus are a donkey and ox<sup>26</sup>. There is no monotony in these two descriptions since the donkey figure is placed at the manger's foot and the ox is situated at its back.

On the second scene, the figure of Virgin Mary is seen lying on a cover with geometric and plant ornaments (Fig. 9-3). The upper part is preserved, whereas the other section is ruined. Her head and body are directed slightly to the right, whereas her legs are directed towards the left. Her eyes are big, brows have expression, face is plump, and the lips are fleshy. This structure with expression reflects the *eleousa* (affectionate/tenderness) feature of Virgin Mary who is shown on scenes with this characteristic. She wears a claret-red cloth *maphorion*<sup>27</sup> with concentric lines that come down to her shoulders from her head. Her right hand, which she raises up to her chest, creates integrity with the expression on her face. Her fingers are thin and long. Like the Child Jesus, a monogram with ΘΥ (θεοῦ, of God) has been placed near her head<sup>28</sup>. Both her facial expression and body movement demands that a meaning be attributed to the scene. When the connection is made with the third scene, it is seen that Jesus monitors his First Bath with the affection of the Virgin. Thus, it is thought that second and the third scene complete one another.

The First Bath, where Jesus is cared for, makes up the third scene (Fig. 10-4). Here Jesus is inside a circular scheme with blue background. In the middle, there is a light beam reflecting that Father God has descended from the sky onto Jesus as the Holy Spirit (dove). This reflection is another version of the mystical relationship between Virgin Mary and the angel that is portrayed on the Annunciation scene. On the Orthodox painting program, the First Bath is composed of the figures of Jesus, Mae, and Salome who bathe him. Other additions originate from periodic interpretations<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, although there is only one apparent figure on the third scene, it enables us to give precise information about the general scene. Accordingly, at the right, there should be Salome carrying water and on the other section, there should be Jesus and Mae. Salome's head is bent slightly towards the front. Stylistic features of Virgin Mary are reflected here again. Furthermore, unconnected with the painting program is an eight-pointed star (with edges). This figure associated with Seljukian culture and art has been carved and shows that the political balance of the period has changed<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> In some painting programs, expressions of pillows and baskets are also used see Schiller 1966, 59.

<sup>25</sup> This is a general feature of icons. The missing section would have contained the second part of the monogram, XC (Χριστός, Christ). Depending on the general scheme, they are explanatory expressions written at the upper part of icons; see Akkaya 2014, 74

<sup>26</sup> It is thought that the ox represents innocent people and the donkey represents sinful people; see Schiller 1966, 60.

<sup>27</sup> Schiller 1971, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Ünal 2011, 75. The missing section would have contained the first part of the monogram, MP (μήτηρ, mother).

<sup>29</sup> In the Protoevangelium of James, the names of Mae and Salome are introduced. However, it has an apocryphal origin; see Coşkuner 2002, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Figure and symbol will be evaluated as a separate study topic.

When compared with the others, the fourth scene is rather complex. Two human and animal figures are apparent (Fig. 11-5). Scenes of the birth where human and animal groups are described on icons are generally interpreted as the Annunciation for the shepherds<sup>31</sup>. The episodes on the fourth scene are believed to be also related to this. However, since they are ruined to a great extent, it is not possible to make a precise judgment. Similar to the third scene, deer and goat motifs, which are also carved during the following periods, are found on the figures.

The subject at the very right is allocated to the Kings with Horses (Fig. 12-6). It is the icon at Altıkapılı which can be most uniquely interpreted. The main theme is composed of three figures with horses and a door. While two cavaliers are moving symmetrically on the ground, the third one is just exiting the door. The first group is pictured from profile, while the second one is pictured from a 4/3 front. Geometric and concentric circles and the decorated door are monumental with bastions on them. Relevant architectural features are from Jerusalem as being seen on documents reflecting the exit of the Kings with Horses. When compared with other icons, the descriptions are reflected with an active presentation rather than facial expressions. The use of figures and architectural elements in the same painting program adds deepness to the expressions. Due to the ruined nature, the Star of Bethlehem, which enabled the Kings to reach Jerusalem as they followed it, could not be specified.

## Baptism of Jesus

Baptism, which means that a person gets a new identity and joins the kingdom of God<sup>32</sup>, is an icon originating from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke<sup>33</sup>. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove creates the main theme of Jesus, John, and the angel. Besides, they are complementary elements facilitating the perception of ax, tree, and river iconographies. It is not an icon that is described as widely as the scenes of the Annunciation and Nativity<sup>34</sup>.

Two angel figures moving in the opposite direction than the messenger angel in the Annunciation provide information about the general status of the icon (Fig. 13-7). The other section is completely ruined. As stated above, the subject is not only made up of angels. All of it is based on expressions where small hints provide information about the general status of the icon with respect to subject discrimination. Accordingly, in this scene, the garment in the hands of angels means that Jesus is being dried after he is baptized in the Jordan River<sup>35</sup>.

Both angels have stretched out their hands parallel to their body movements, and their heads are moving towards the front. The dress, which is left natural in accordance with the movement, is given depth with thin lines. The eyes of the angel are directed toward the front as if witnessing an event. In other words, the angel is standing as if waiting for a convenient moment to fulfill the task being undertaken. In didactic and descriptive icons, waiting angels who hold garments in their hands<sup>36</sup> are generally recognized because of their facial expressions<sup>37</sup>. This is also accepted as representative evidence that the Baptism icon for Jesus

<sup>31</sup> Mathew 1:18-25; Luke 2:15-17.

<sup>32</sup> Bertholet 1962, 550.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-21.

<sup>34</sup> Epstein 1986, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Meslin 2005, 779; Mckeinzie 1965, 79.

<sup>36</sup> Ousterhout 2005, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Restle 1969, 28-302; Rodley 1983, 301-339; Restle 1967, figs. 21-22, 24; Epstein 1986, 69; Jerphanion 1925-1942, I, 2, 393-430, fig. 95, 431, 454, figs. 113-124; II, 96-110, 11, 1-3, 112; Özil 1984, 75; Peker 2010, 578.

has been realized<sup>38</sup>. With respect to its structure and style, it shows similarity to icons of the Annunciation and the Nativity.

## Dating

Altıkapılı's simple structure with a single nave shows similarity to Güzelöz-Başköy<sup>39</sup>, Uçar<sup>40</sup>, Çıplaklı<sup>41</sup>, Tabae (Kale-i Tavas)<sup>42</sup>, Yusufeli<sup>43</sup> and Gelveri (Otlu, Güvercinli, Sümer I-II, Çömlekçi, Son, Hacı Saadet Koç-Caferler, Yalnız, Kümeler, Küçük and Sarı)<sup>44</sup> churches in terms of its plan. These churches are believed to have been built between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the doors, which Altıkapılı is named after, differentiates this church from the other examples. Similarly, the cistern in the form of a bottle, frequently seen in cities within the mountainous region of Pisidia, is also seen at Gelveri Height-Saint Mamas<sup>45</sup>.

The painting program and the stylistic features of the mural paintings seen at Altıkapılı provide important information that indicates that the structure belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century period. The angel painting on the ground in an open area in the Annunciation scene is a feature that belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>46</sup>. The linear shadings and the depth created on the dress with helical curves can also be seen in the monumental drawings of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>47</sup>. A similar example is also observed in Eski Gümüş<sup>48</sup>. As for the body mass index of figures, just as seen in Karagedik and Soğanlı Karabaş, their arms and legs are thin and long; their bodies are compressed; and the general structure of their bodies is energetic. These features are reflected strictly in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>49</sup>.

In Orthodox icons, the Nativity scene began to develop starting from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The First Bath was added to the scene in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the Kings with Horses were added in the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>50</sup>. The architecture seen in the Kings with Horses is also present in the icon, and this can be evaluated as a reflection of the eastern tradition<sup>51</sup>. With this presentation, the scenes have gained depth with their attempt to transmit to the spectators the place-space relation where the events took place. According to the Orthodox belief, the Kings with Horses are eastern characteristics related to following the Star to Bethlehem to worship Jesus. The Kings also symbolize the three stages of human life<sup>52</sup>. While they were pictured separately in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, they later became part of the Nativity<sup>53</sup>. In line with these data, it is possible to

<sup>38</sup> Benz 1964, 134.

<sup>39</sup> Peker-Uyar 2013, 114.

<sup>40</sup> Bayram-Yazar 2006, 462.

<sup>41</sup> Doğan 2006, 541.

<sup>42</sup> Aydın 2012, 47.

<sup>43</sup> Kadiroğlu 2003, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Pekak 1993, 123-160.

<sup>45</sup> Pekak 1993, 135.

<sup>46</sup> Schiller 1966, 38-42.

<sup>47</sup> Çorağan 1998, 329.

<sup>48</sup> Stierlin 1988, 175; Gough 1964, 147-161; Akyürek 2001, 226-395.

<sup>49</sup> Mouriki 1980, 77-124; Chatzedakes – Grabar 1965, 16-19; Weitzman 1966, 224; Soykan 2017, 96; Thierry 1967, 161-175; Pentcheva 2000, 34-56.

<sup>50</sup> Ötügen 1984, 131.

<sup>51</sup> Özcan 2008, 178.

<sup>52</sup> Jerphanion 1925-1942, I. 78.

<sup>53</sup> Ötügen 1987, 131-132.

state that the painting program of Altıkapılı does not belong to a period before the 10<sup>th</sup> century. While the Kings with Horses are depicted as worshipping with or without gifts at Soğanlı Karabaş<sup>54</sup>, Eski Gümüş<sup>55</sup> and Saklı<sup>56</sup> in Cappadocia, in Altıkapılı they are shown with horses as they are moving. This feature belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and its most important representatives are Helena Constantine<sup>57</sup> and Tagar<sup>58</sup>.

An important point to consider regarding the dating is that the Baptism of Jesus shows variation periodically. Hence, though it was one of the essential scenes in icons of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was slowly phased out by the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>. In 11<sup>th</sup> century baptism icons, the way the angels hold the garment seems as if they had been created using the same template, and their body movements repeat one another. From this point of view, it is possible to compare the cave church in Altıkapılı with the churches in Çavuşin, Güvercinlik<sup>60</sup>, Saklı<sup>61</sup>, Tokalı<sup>62</sup>, Elmalı<sup>63</sup>, and Karanlık<sup>64</sup>.

In light of the above information regarding the church plan, the painting program, and the iconographic and stylistic features of the Altıkapılı Cave Church, the church dates to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Relevant information also observed in the Middle Age settlement areas near Avdancık-Asartepe and Karapınar-Asartepe was also useful in that respect<sup>65</sup>.

## Conclusion

Even though traces belonging to the Byzantine period are observed in the cities of the Pisidian region, studies that reveal Byzantine settlement order in rural areas are insufficient. In this respect, the Altıkapılı Cave Church enlightens the Middle Byzantine period in the region. The most important feature at Altıkapılı, which presents a church plan with a single nave frequently observed in the Cappadocia region, are the didactic mural paintings seen on the north section of the apse. The location of these mural paintings proves that the traditional approach we see in Cappadocia had been left aside and that a new style had begun to be used. On the painting program of the church – dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries because of its stylistic and iconographic features – descriptive and didactic icons were used to portray the life of Jesus. From this respect it is the single example at Pisidia where three of the twelve feasts of Orthodox Christianity are completely pictured.

The painting program at Altıkapılı starts with the scene of the Annunciation to Virgin Mary in clockwise direction and finalized with the scenes of the Nativity and Baptism of Jesus. This order frequently repeats itself in cave churches of the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, as seen in Altıkapılı, the inclusion of the Kings with Horses in the Nativity icon was not much preferred

<sup>54</sup> Özbek – Arslan 2008, 1269, fig. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Öcal 2013, 40; Stierlin 1988, 175; Gough 1964, 147-161; Akyürek 2001, 226-395.

<sup>56</sup> Rott 1908, fig. 63.

<sup>57</sup> Ötügen 1987, 131-132.

<sup>58</sup> Koçyiğit 2009, 141-164; Pekak 2010, 203-218.

<sup>59</sup> Ötügen – Bulgurlu – Yandım – Peker 2007, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Restle 1969, 302; Rodley 1983, 301-339.

<sup>61</sup> Restle 1969, 28; Restle 1967, figs. 21-22, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Epstein 1986, 69.

<sup>63</sup> Jerphanion 1925-1942, I. 2, 431, 454, figs. 113-124.

<sup>64</sup> Jerphanion 1925-1942, I. 2, 393-430, fig. 95; II. 2. 96-110, 11, 1-3, 112; Özil 1984, 75.

<sup>65</sup> Metin-Soslu 2016c, 315-317.

during this period. This data helped both in dating the church and in specifying the uniqueness of its painting program. Furthermore, depicting the Kings on horses is another feature that makes Altıkapılı different. Since the angels in the Annunciation and Baptism move in different directions and no elements are used in subject discrimination, a perception is created that the scene continues without interruption. However, as they are investigated one by one, it is clearly seen that the subjects represent two different icons. Similar to the figures forming the mural paintings in churches dated to the period of Komnenos, the figures in Altıkapılı are described as thin and tall physiologically. The linear curves of the dresses are quite dense, and motion scenes are at the forefront. For this reason, it is clear that similarities are the product of interaction.

The church's time of usage provides important information about political developments of the Pisidian region during the Middle Byzantine period. In this period, the dominating power of Byzantine had passed to Komnenos (1081-1185). I. Alexios Komnenos (1081-1118)<sup>66</sup> was the first emperor of the dynasty to fight the Normans in the west and the Seljuk Turks in Anatolia<sup>67</sup>. When his struggles with the Seljuk Turks are evaluated, during the Second and Third Crusades, Komnenos used Pisidia as a different route. According to surface surveys carried out for Kremna and the nearby region, it is thought that Avdancık-Asartepe and Karapınar-Asartepe were surrounded with ramparts and situated on a dominating hill to the south of Altıkapılı. Boğazköy Örentepe was situated in the southwest region. These, especially the Balama Castle in Kızıllı, were settlement areas during the Middle Byzantine Period. In short, it is assumed that Komnenos or the communities related with him were settled in southwest Pisidia and that Altıkapılı was a place of worship for them. In other words, political developments in Pisidia during the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries played an important role in the formation of socio-cultural and religious events.

It is quite difficult to give precise information about the period during which the church was used. However, the eight-pointed star figure as well as the deer and goat figures provide some ideas for us. For this reason, as Seljuk Turks in Anatolia began dominating the region, the function of the church was lost. Susuzhan Caravansary, which is situated nearby, shows especially that the Turkmen population began to grow denser in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and that the church lost its basic function thereafter.

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<sup>66</sup> Mango 2011, 61; Gregory 2011, 251; Khoniates 1995, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ostrogorsky 2015, 329-347; Gregory 2011, 251-258; Khoniates 1995, 65-67.

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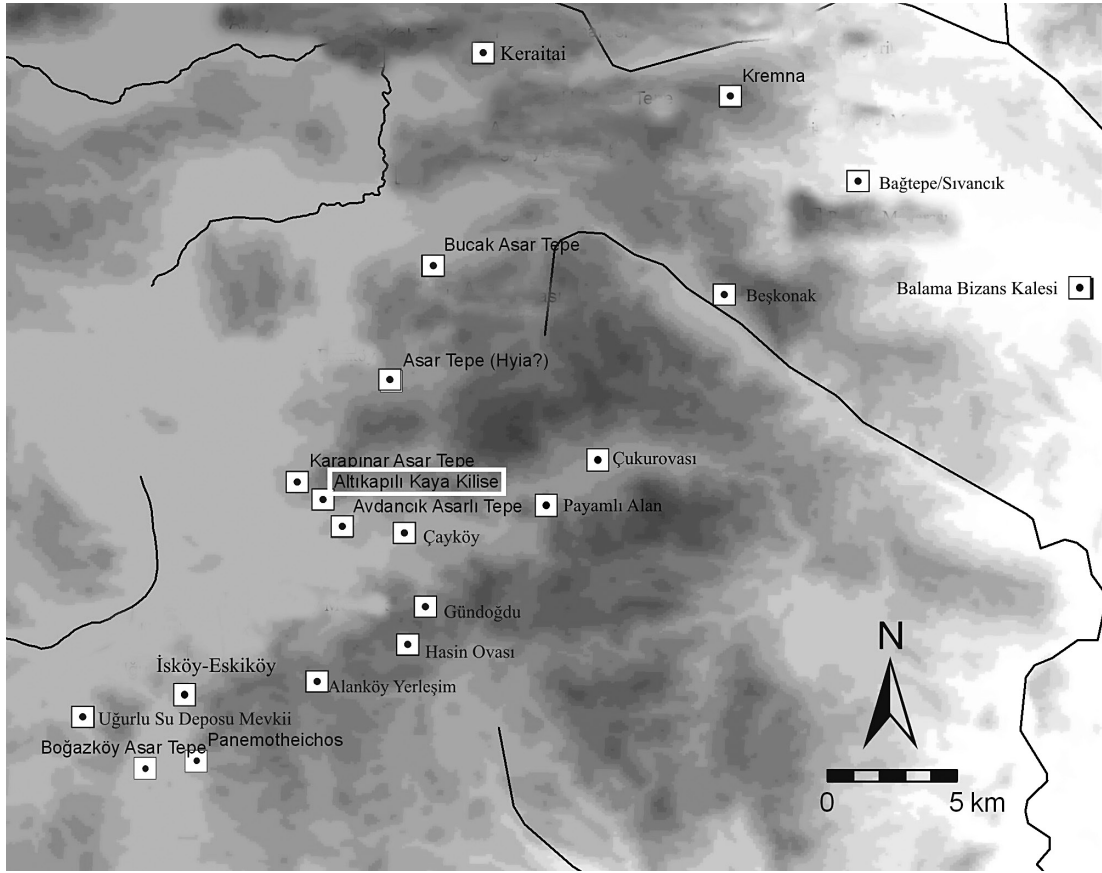


Fig. 1 Ancient cities near Kremna and settlements from the Middle Ages to the south



Fig. 2 Image of Altıkapılı Cave Church from south



Fig. 3 Altıkapılı Cave Church

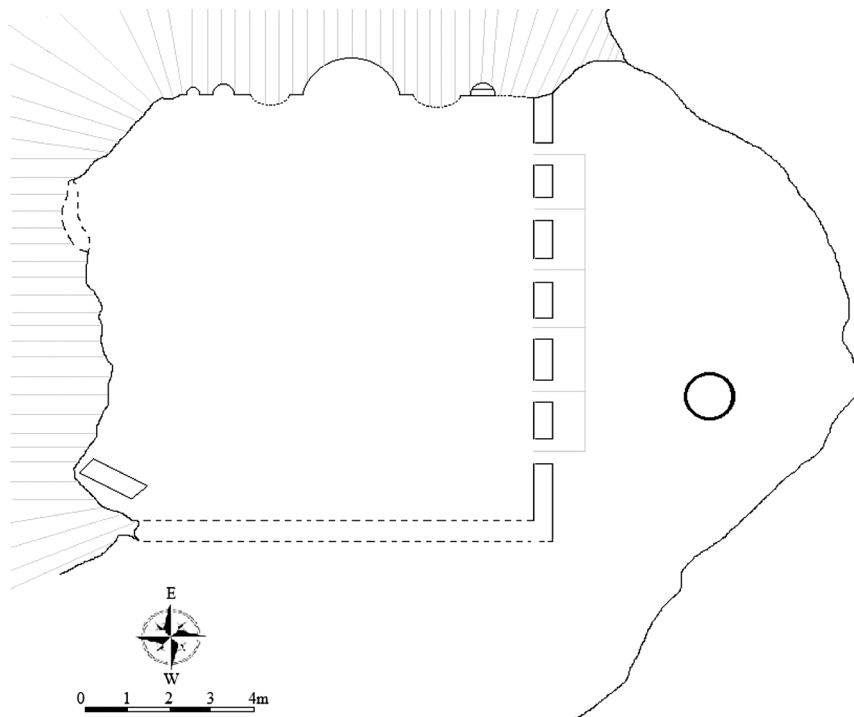


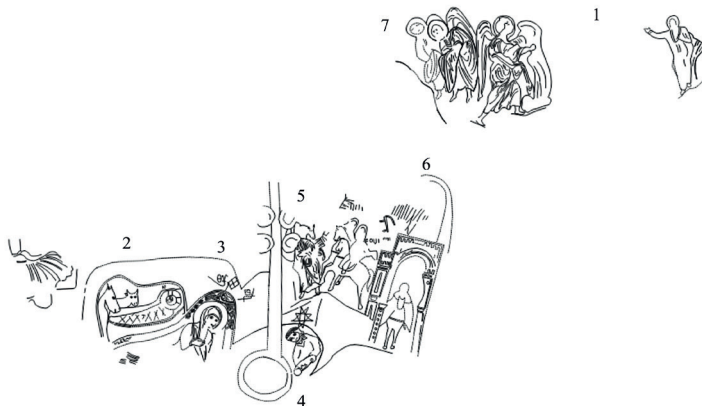
Fig. 4 Plan of Altıkapılı Cave Church



Fig. 5 Cistern



Fig. 6  
Mural Paintings  
of Altıkapılı  
Cave Church





1



Fig. 7-1 Scene of Annunciation with Angel on the left and Virgin Mary on the right

2

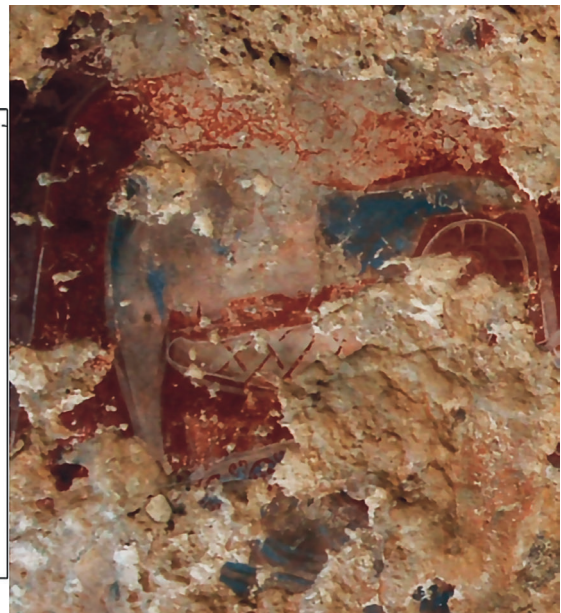
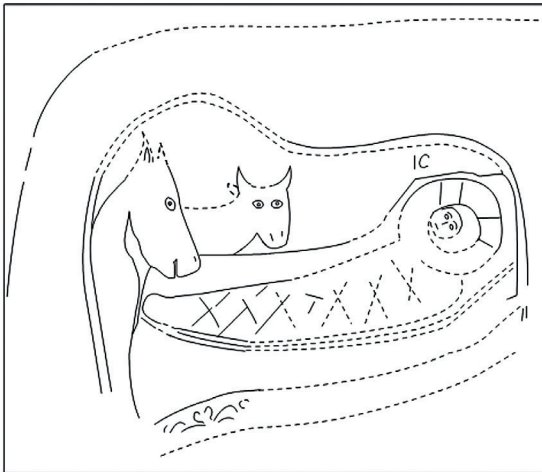


Fig. 8-2 Scene of Nativity, Figures of Jesus and Animals



Fig. 9-3 Scene of Nativity, Virgin Mary

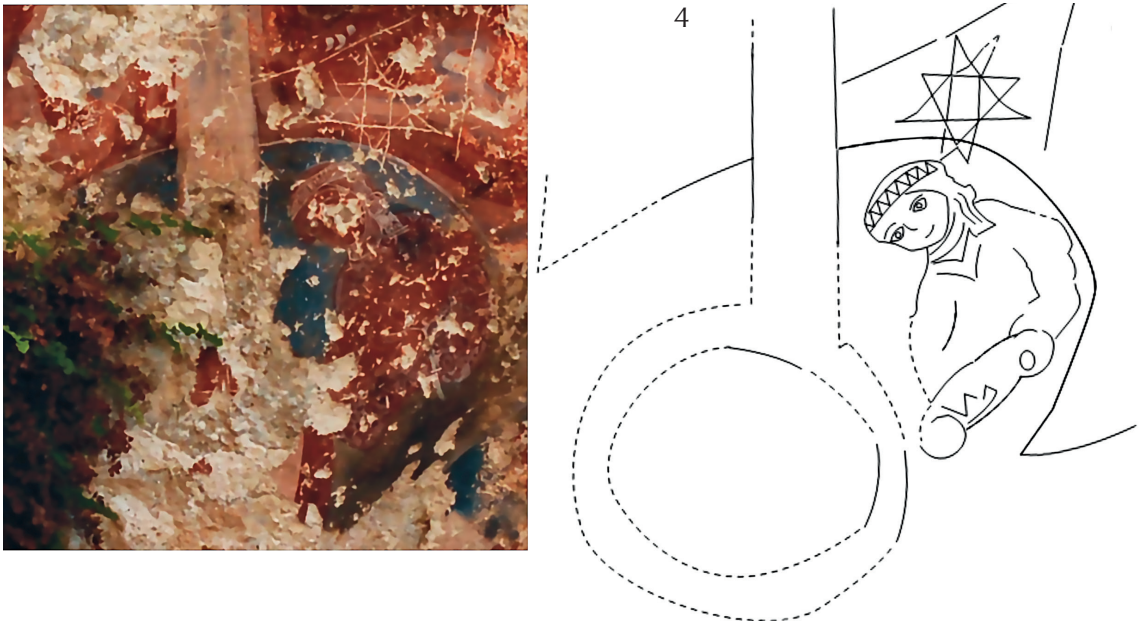


Fig. 10-4 Scene of Nativity, First Bath



Fig. 11-5 Scene of Nativity, Annunciation to Shepherds

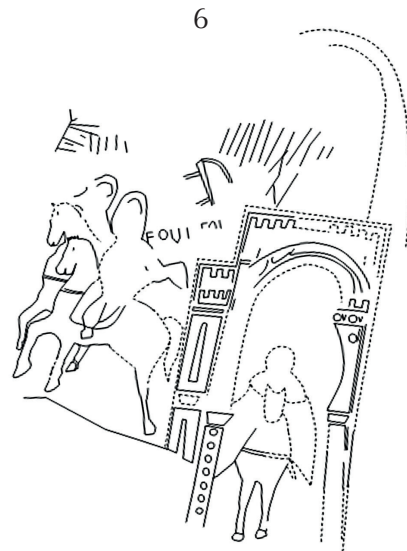


Fig. 12-6 Scene of Nativity, Kings with Horses



Fig. 13-7 Scene of Baptism

