

# Looking Beyond the Obvious: Rereading the Message of the Mosaics

## Bariz Olanın Ötesine Bakmak: Mozaiklerin Mesajını Yeniden Okumak

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### Abstract

*When we look at the mosaic pavements that have come down to us over the centuries, it is easy to see that many of the patterns chosen were part of a decorative grammar that reflected a world view adapted to the geographical area, the social class and the time when the mosaic was built.*

*The dawn of Christianity in the Roman Empire was no exception: traditional patterns were “adopted” by the new religion, in a discourse adapted to the moment in time and to the local social and political evolution. An adoption which at a certain moment allowed a veiled identification as a follower of the new religion.*

*In the present intervention, the author proposes to present an analysis of the evolution of some of these patterns in the light of the Christianisation in the westernmost part of Lusitania.*

**Keywords:** Roman and Early Christian Art, Mosaics, Late Antiquity, semiotic, plurisignificant signs.


### Öz

*Yüzyıllar boyunca günümüze ulaşan mozaik döşemelere baktığımızda, seçilen desenlerin birçoğunun mozaikğin yapıldığı zamana, coğrafi bölgeye, sosyal sınıfa ve topluma uyarlanmış bir dünya görüşünü yansıtan dekoratif bir gramerin parçası olduğunu görmek kolaydır.*

*Roma İmparatorluğu'nda Hıristiyanlığın doğuşu bir istisna değildir: geleneksel kalıplar, zamandaki ana ve yerel sosyal ve politik evrime uyarlanmış bir söylemde, yeni din tarafından “benimsenmiştir”. Belli bir anda yeni dinin bir takipçisi olarak örtülü bir özdeşleşmeye izin veren bir benimsemedir.*

*Bu çalışmada yazar; Lusitania'nın en batısındaki Hıristiyanlaşmanın ışığında bu kalıplardan bazılarının evriminin bir analizini sunmayı teklif etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Roma ve Erken Hıristiyan Sanatı, Mozaikler, Geç Antik Çağ, semiyotik, çok anlamlı göstergeler.

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The analysis of the meaning and the impact of the Religious World on the daily life of Man through the centuries and different cultures has long been a theme addressed with greater or lesser incidence not only by Archaeology and History of the Art but also by many other disciplines of knowledge.

Among them, semiotics and cultural anthropology have assumed a prominent role in recent years by analysing in detail the value of “signs” in the construction of a common cultural consciousness and in social communication leading to identification as a member of a given society. According to Posner (Posner 2001: 23), the Culture of a society is, so to speak, “a collective mechanism for memorising information”, independently of whether it is textual, visual, oral, sign or other information. Above all in what concerns the memorisation and interpretation of “signs”, belonging to the same Culture, characterised by a certain system of “signs”/codes that is inherent to it, allows the individual and independent interpretation of them according to the personal “memory” linked to the cultural environment to which the receiver belongs.

The analysis of the possible incidences of faith and cult on Mosaic Art fits perfectly in this line of research and is, in itself, testimony of a different approach in the reading of mosaic pavements as carrier of a message through the centuries.

In the past, the review of the Early Christian art was, in a first phase, determined by two specific parallel optics: According to Metz (Metz 2020: 109), the first one was based on the assumption that the Christianisation of the Roman Empire constituted a radical break with the “pagan” traditions handed down over the centuries and imbued, from region to region, with the very particular characteristics of each of them: pagan Rome ended with the so-called Constantinian turn, giving rise to Christian Rome. After this cut, each and every work of art would have an exclusively Christian meaning. For its part, the second vision of the Christianization process accepted that the “pagan” artistic heritage remained materially alive in the world of artistic representation, but stripped of its pagan meaning, assuming only a Christian meaning (Metz 2020: 110).

In the present work we follow, however, the cultural-semiotic premises of cultural anthropologist Geertz’s Concept of the *Dichte Beschreibung* (Geertz 1987): “As an approach of cultural semiotic nature, it centers around the interaction of elements in a historical tradition. History is hereby seen as a process of transformation in which the old transmutes into the new without fully disappearing” (Metz 2020: 107).

This view is, in our opinion, as important as it does justice to the process of artistic creation: when planning and executing a work, the artist undoubtedly resorted to “signs” used throughout the centuries, which were naturally subject to a differentiated parallel “interpretation”, according to the cultural, religious and social environment in which the interpreter was integrated. In fact, motifs - as “signs” that convey a message - presuppose the existence of someone (the receiver of the message), who understands and interprets them. In doing so, the “interpreter” resorts to his/her “cultural memory”, complemented by personal and/or social experiences that he/she lives or has lived. In this way, the same sign allows and even facilitates the coexistence of different interpretations of a message eventually underlying the composition.

This approach is all the more significant when it takes into account the reality existing in the different provinces of the Roman Empire: the followers of the new religion were citizens belonging to a Roman or Romanised socio-cultural environment, bearers of a cultural consciousness rooted in the society in which

they integrated, with all the nuances inherent to that same society. Thus, their collective cultural memory was characterised by the use of the same language, by the practice of the same customs and by a common panoply of signifiers: a common *acquis* which, inevitably, would be used, at least in a first stage, to introduce the Christian message into the cultural memory.

According to Maciel (Maciel 1996: 108), St. Isidore of Seville, when describing the Roman World in which he lived, “the cities, the baths, the theatres or even the architectural construction and opera he used Roman models, materially present in the daily life of the Hispano-Roman majority of the population dominated by the barbarian extract, meanwhile also Romanised”. By considering Culture as “a system of signs interconnected by interaction makes it possible to see the Christianisation of the Imperium Romanum not as a rupture (in the sense of a complete or only meaningful separation), but as a slow, interactive process of transformation in which the old and the new slowly merge and intermingle, so that the old remains constantly visible to the trained eye under the new, comparable to a palimpsest” (Metz 2020: 111).

This phenomenon can be considered characteristic not only but also of the Early Christian art. The recourse to the same system of symbols, traditionally anchored in the Roman society of which it constituted the cultural memory, is used contemporaneously, especially from the III century on, in its traditional values by the pagan community and/or assuming new meanings introduced by the Christian community.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Old Testament prohibition on images described in the third commandment - “Thou shalt not make unto thee graven images, or any graven image of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...” (Ex. 20: 4,5) - the use of images was initially forbidden to the followers of the new religion, members of a society whose collective cultural memory foresaw the use of “images” to express various messages among others of worship - family or general - of expression of social position or as a portrait of daily life. The intellectual conflict inherent to this culture-religion dissymmetry was soon understood and addressed by the theologians of the time, finally allowing the use of symbols such as the dove, the fish, the dolphins, the peacock, the vine and its fruit, the rose, etc.

As a result, motifs and forms present in the collective cultural memory began to take on a meaning parallel to that which had been inherent to them until then, not always allowing an immediate generalised identification of the Christian message of works of art commissioned or acquired by the Early Christian Community.

This is a decisive phenomenon when we examine, among other genres, the mosaic pavements that have come down to us in the present-day Portuguese territory of Lusitania. In doing so, we resorted - as a term of comparison - to the testimonies clearly identifiable as Early Christian art existing in the westernmost part of Lusitania. Most of them belong to funerary art and, to a lesser extent, to Early Christian church decoration, since “the limitations which restrict the use of mosaics in pagan religious buildings do not apply to churches; there is a large number of Christian monuments, generally identifiable without possibility of

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1 A detailed reference to the multiple, multi-significant signs of late Roman mosaics and sculpture in Portugal would go far beyond the objectives and limits of the present work. For a more comprehensive analysis see Maciel 1996: 129-166.

error” (Dunbabin 1978: 188).

In the present work, we focus on a “sign/motive” present, among other monuments, in mosaics and in the certainly early Christian painting known until today in the considered territory - the vase: A sign/motive, - accompanied or not by other motifs - that, in its chronological evolution, would come to assume a relevant role in Early Christian art: “En cuanto al jarrón mismo (*kantharos*) es un motivo frecuentísimo al que se atribuyó un sentido simbólico tanto en el campo pagano como en el cristiano y que se usó también como mero elemento decorativo” (Blázquez - Mequiriz 1985: 71).

Present in the musical repertoire since always and especially in a Dionysian or Mithraic context (Fig. 1), the vase was throughout the centuries, in its relationship with wine and the banqueting ceremony, considered as a wrapping /container of happiness and joy, the preferred attribute of Dionysos, the god of the grape harvest, viticulture, fertility, orchards and fruits, vegetation. In the period that is commonly considered as a period of religious transition, the vase continues to be used both in the mosaic and architectural decoration as a container bearer of happiness, interpretable in a pagan perspective both as a merely decorative motif, without any religious implication, and integrated in a mithraic context or in the Dionysian procession as a carrier of wine or as a source for the growth of vines or hedra. Indirectly it is in this function that we see the vase on the one hand as the bearer of the earth from which the vines grow from whose fruit wine will be produced (Fig. 2). On the other hand, as an attribute of Dionysos Eleutherios (“the liberator”), it contains the drink which, together with music and dance frees its followers from fears and social norms, allowing them to fully enjoy the happiness brought by wealth and the fruits of the earth (Figs. 3-4).

In the province of Lusitania currently in Portuguese territory we find the vase represented in mosaic pavements of several *villae* and Roman domus mainly of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. In its majority, it is limited to assume either a merely decorative character, or with a very clear symbolism connected to the growth of ivy or vine.



Figure 1  
Tróia, Mithraic relief © MNA.



Figure 2  
Oudna, Mosaic of craters, vines and millet stalks, G. Dagli Orti © NPL - DeA Picture Library / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 3  
Setif, The triumph of Bacchus © <https://i.redd.it/9gdarc4a9or41.jpg>

Figure 4  
Torre da Palma, The triumph of Bacchus © Manuel Matias, IPM.

Thus, and to cite only a few examples, we find it in the *conventus pacensis*, in Fonte de Frades (Fig. 5), in Abicada (Fig. 6); In the *conventus scalabitanus*, we can see here only a few examples from *Conimbriga*, in the *Domus* of the skeletons - probably one of the oldest mosaics from this city - end of 1<sup>st</sup>, beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century D.C. (Limão 2011: figs. 11, 12), in the *Domus* of Cantaber (Limão 2011: figs. 14, 15), in the *Domus* of the fountains (Limão 2011: figs. 6, 7); of Rabaçal (Limão 2011: fig. 16), of Santiago da Guarda (Limão 2011: fig. 19), of Torres Novas (Fig. 7).



Figure 5  
Fonte de Frades © Câmara Municipal de Beja.



Figure 6  
Abicada © M. J. Duran Kremer.

Figure 7  
Torres Novas, Room H © M. J. Duran Kremer.



Figure 8  
Coriscada, Dyonisos mosaic  
© Instagram / Portugal Romano.



In a Dionysian context and in figurative compositions, we find it in Torre da Palma (Fig. 4) and in Coriscada (Fig. 8).

While these representations of the vase fit perfectly into the classical mosaic decorative repertoire, of well-defined interpretation, another set - less numerous - is already part of a moment of transition and ambiguous bivalence, in which the signs suffer the influence of a vision introduced by the new interpretation given to them: multi significant signs that do not exclude the possibility of a differentiated interpretative vision.

The vase is undoubtedly one of the signs that, little by little and in parallel with pagan art, began to be attributed another meaning by Early Christianity: that of being the bearer of living water, which purifies and allows rebirth through baptism, or as a casing for the soul reborn and purified by baptismal water.

And it is precisely this ambiguity, this multiplicity of meanings for the same signifier that demands a re-reading of some pavements. A rereading that does not aim, in any way, to attribute a Christian message to them, but that mirrors

the possibilities opened by the recourse to a collective cultural memory for a hypothesis of differentiated interpretation of the underlying message. This possibility becomes more evident when we compare the recourse to the same sign or to the same composition in “pagan” mosaic compositions and in clearly Early Christian testimonies.

One of the examples is found in the Roman *villa* of Pisões<sup>2</sup>.

In room 9 of the Roman *villa* of Pisões (Beja) there is a classic motif of mosaic art (Fig. 9) - doves quenching their thirst in a vase of water, transmitted throughout the centuries - from the Casa delle Colombe mosaic in Pompeii (Fig.10), to the Hadrian *villa* of *Tibur* (Dunbabin 1999: 28 fig. 27). A motif that soon enters the artistic repertoire of Christian funerary art in the Roman Empire (Figs. 11-12).



Figure 9  
Pisões © M. J. Duran Kremer.



Figure 10  
Pompeii, Casa delle Colombe  
© <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> For the mosaics of the Roman villa of Pisões see Duran Kremer - Serra 2022.



Figure 11  
Henchir Messadine, Christian tomb mosaic  
© André Martin. After Georges Fradier,  
Roman Mosaics of Tunisia, 188.



Figure 12  
Ravenna, Mausoleum of Gala Placidia ©  
<https://pixabay.com/de/photos/die-architektur-konstruktion-2251391/>

In Pisões, the representation of the vase filled with water, flanked by two doves, placed immediately in front of the entrance to the room and protected by a medusa head (Fig. 13) provides a bivalent interpretation, open to multiple meanings: on the one hand, as a representation of winter, on the other, and in a parallel that underlines the vase, as a container containing water, a source of life and a connection to Nature. A polyvalent interpretation underlying, moreover, two other motifs on the same pavement: birds pecking at a bunch of grapes, a basket with rose buds, a bird feeding her young in her nest. Much destroyed, this mosaic is generally interpreted as representing the seasons of the year in an allusive expression unique until today, and that uses only the attributes of the seasons and not their anthropomorphic figurative representation (Duran Kremer 1998).



Figure 13  
Pisões © M. J. Duran Kremer.

However, in the same *villa*, the mosaic in the entrance and peristyle access room (Duran Kremer - Serra 2022: fig. 9) presents a composition centred on the vase. Unique until this moment in Portuguese territory, it places the vase in a well defined space/function dialogue: the entrance room to the peristyle introduces an element of iconographic reference that, together with the motifs of room 9,

would not exclude the possibility of a plurivalent reading.

Early Christian art early integrated the vase - with or without representation of water, or of animals or vegetation from which it was the source of food - as a motif alluding to a spirituality intrinsic to Christianity. According to Maciel (1996: 254), “the vase functions as a privileged sign of this ideology (Christianity, author’s note) insofar as it became a referential elected as a signifier by almost all the religions of Antiquity and as one of the most significant cultural instruments throughout History. In the Christian concept it is the Eucharistic *potêrion*, but also the *loutrophoros* of baptismal purification”.

It is in this meaning of vase as “body-involuchre of the soul” that we find this motif as an almost omnipresent element in funerary art also in the Portuguese territory of Lusitania: in the paleo-Christian mosaic of Baião, Frende (Limão 2011: fig. 31) in the mosaic of the baptistry of the Eclesia of Montinho das Laranjeiras (Limão 2011: fig. 30), in the early Christian sarcophagus of Braga (Maciel 1996: 167-169 fig. 25). Although they are not located in the considered territory, the pediment of the lid of the sarcophagus of Itacio, from the Cathedral of Oviedo (Palol 1967: lám. XCIV, 2) and the mosaic of Baleria, from the Basilica of Son Peretó, Mallorca (Palol 1967: lám. XCVII), among others are equally interesting in the evolution of the bird / vase with water motif as a signifier of a multi interpretable message.

In this context, a more complete representation of the vase in its symbolism is given by the column shaft exhibited in the Church of Santo Amaro - Museu Regional de Beja (Museu (1961) nr. 37+38, page 27, fig. 37+38), (Fig. 14)<sup>3</sup>. With a careful decoration, it has vines and bunches of grapes on one side and a composition with a vase, two birds and a snake on the other. The significance of the vase as a carrier and inexhaustible source of life is clear from the size it was given: it occupies two thirds of the composition, the mouthpiece filled with bunches of grapes. Above it two birds (doves?) holding a snake in their beaks, preventing it from accessing the contents of the vase. For Souza (Souza 1990: nr. 17, page 15), “Kantharos, Weinranken und Panmasken bringen den dionysischen Bezug der Komposition klar zum Ausdruck”, dating it to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

In our view, this composition requires a differentiated analysis of the message inherent to it.

In fact, in Antiquity, the snake was not necessarily considered a symbol of evil<sup>4</sup>: in Roman mythology it was even considered to bring peace and well-being, and belonged to the figurative inventory of the *Lararium*, especially as a representation of the *Genius Loci*<sup>5</sup> (Figs.15-16). Its definition as a symbol of evil was, in Late Antiquity, extrapolated from the Sacred Books (Gen.3:14) and introduced into the cultural memory by Christianity, as a punishment of the tempting serpent or rather of the EVIL disguised in it.

The column shaft in the Museu de Beja illustrates the use of signs from the



Figure 14  
Beja, Museum © Junta Distrital de Beja.

<sup>3</sup> For better and detailed photographs see Souza 1990: 21; Heitlinger 2021: 2,3.

<sup>4</sup> On the role of the serpent in religious practices in pagan domestic contexts see Fugger 2017: 201-235.

<sup>5</sup> “A sumptuous lararium decorated with snakes: the last wonder of Pompeii

The ‘lararium’ is a domestic sanctuary for offerings and prayers to the *lares*, the protective spirits of deceased ancestors; on the opposite wall is a hunting scene.

Painted figures of the protective *lararii* of the house flank the lararium and, at the bottom, two large snakes stand out, representing the Agathodemon, the good demon, symbol of prosperity and good luck”, Madia Renzo Giuseppe, <https://www.facebook.com/giuseppe.madia.68>.





Figure 15  
Pompeii, Casa dei Vetti © [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic](#).

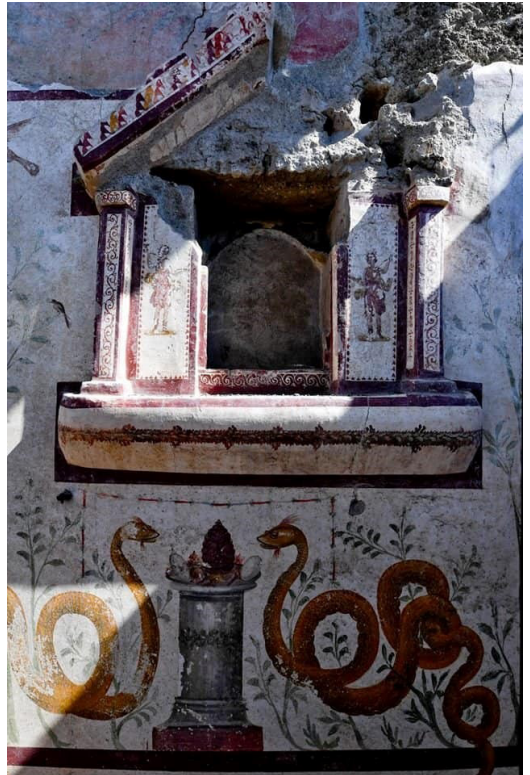


Figure 16  
Pompeii © Madia Renzo Giuseppe.

collective cultural memory to express a multifaceted message, but one that we consider clearly Christian: besides the intrinsic value of the vessel, carrying the baptismal water of liberation of souls, it contains a clear image of the strength given to the liberated souls (represented here by two birds) to remove the Christian symbol of evil - the serpent - from themselves and from the source of wisdom and spiritual liberation.

Another mosaic with the representation of a vase in a composition that clearly points to a “vase carrying water, source of life” interpretation came to us in the mosaic of Póvoa de Cós (Fig.17). Here the water of the vase overflows from

Figure 17  
Póvoa de Cós, detail © M. J. Duran Kremer.



the edges, feeding the multiple marine life. A composition that, analysed in the set of the pavement in which it is integrated, allows a certainly differentiated interpretation (Duran Kremer 2022: 314-327) (Fig. 18). Although probably inserted in a “pagan” context, this composition is strongly imbued with a symbolism and a spirituality closely linked to Christianity.



Figure 18  
Póvoa de Cós © M. J. Duran Kremer.

In fact, the closest parallel to the representation of the vase in the mosaic of Póvoa de Cós is in a Christian context, also in Lusitania in the territory of present-day Portugal, in Troia. Territory with Roman occupation at least since Augustus, Troia was an urban centre, industrial production centre, necropolis but, above all, a great port of connection to the great Roman port centres in Italy, North Africa and certainly the Mediterranean East. The intensive commercial exchanges with all regions of the Roman Empire (Troia possessed the largest factory installation of garum production of the whole Empire) are present in the innumerable finds in ceramics and in the multiplicity of rites used in the graves of its necropolis.



Figure 19  
Troia © M. J. Duran Kremer.

It is in Troia that we will find, at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a Christian basilica, whose frescoes have partially come down to us, some in a sufficiently good state to allow their study and setting in space and time. It is here that, on the west side of pillar I, we find the representation of the vase, with a water gushing out of its mouth, (Fig. 19) like “baptismal initiation that allows rejuvenation and life in the bosom of Christianity, through the regenerating water that springs from the mouth of the vase” (Maciel 1996: 254). Of a certainly Early Christian symbolism, this motif clearly belongs to the pagan symbolic heritage of the cultural memory present in Roman society: the composition chosen for the decoration of one of the mosaics of the Roman *villa* of Boca do Rio is undoubtedly an example to be considered.

The Roman *villa* of Boca do Rio is located on the seafront of the western Algarve, and has been progressively disappearing year after year due to the force of the sea. Excavated in 1878 by Estácio da Veiga, some mosaic floors were discovered, of which, today, only fragments remain. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these fragments were removed and taken to the Museum of Lagos, where they are still to be found today. Recent excavations have made it possible to raise the last mosaics, geometric, which were still under the sands of the dunes and are being studied at the moment (Bernardes - Medeiros 2016).

Among the mosaics of this *villa*, a mosaic was found with the representation of a vase at each corner of the pavement, from whose mouth a spout of water (Fig. 20) exits diagonally towards the centre of the composition. The fragment still

Figure 20  
Boca do Rio © M. J. Duran Kremer.



Figure 21  
Boca do Rio, drawing.



existing illustrates only a part of the pavement. The disappearance of the mosaic in its almost totality does not allow us an absolute attribution of it as such. However, the drawing of the pavement made at the time of the find (Veiga 1910: pl. 3C), is more elucidative and testifies the use of motives and compositional schemes that allow a pluralist interpretation of the same composition: water establishes the cross connection between opposing vessels (Fig. 21). At the point of intersection of the two water jets, a cross.

In this context, it is interesting to note the evolution of this dialog surface to decorate - decorative grammar/composition over time. In the Early Christian basilica of La Illeta del Rey (Palol 1967: 228-230 pls. XLVI-L) we find the same system of surface division - square with a vase at each corner, facing the centre, from whose bulges emerge flowers and fruits. The shape given to these - like a tree, growing in the direction of the diagonal of the drawing, narrowing

towards the canopy which points towards the centre of the drawing, follows the basic scheme we know from the water jets on the pavement at Boca do Rio. Much later than the latter<sup>6</sup>, with the spaces in between filled with animals and flowers, the mosaic of La Illeta del Rei is without doubt an example of stylistic evolution and the perennity of a motif present in the cultural memory of the society in which it was integrated (Fig. 22).



Figure 22  
La Illeta del Rei © [www.museudemenorca.com](http://www.museudemenorca.com)

In the peristyle of the Roman *villa* of Rabaçal we find another group of representations of the vase on mosaic pavements in a context of a container of water that quenches thirst and allows the continuation of life: in five of the 6 rhomboid rhombuses that separate the wings from each other (The sixth rhomboid presents a purely geometric decoration) we find a vase with two dolphins facing the mouth of the vase, in whose water they quench their thirst (Pessoa 2017: figs. 27, 41, 51, 68, 104)<sup>7</sup>.

Here too, the message of quenching thirst in the water of the vase is very present and allows a multifaceted interpretation of the composition. It should be underlined that the vase is also found on three other pavements of this villa, as well as on marble decorative plaques from the room with four apses next to the north-west corridor of the peristyle and on the triclinium. Used together with other classic motifs, without a purely Christian specificity, they clearly testify to the existence, at the same moment, of motifs which, in their expressiveness, are situated in the grey zone of interpretative dialogue between the signifier and its interpreter<sup>8</sup>.

6 Guardia 2015: 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

7 On the mosaics of the Roman *villa* of Rabaçal and their significance as an expression of a collective culture memory in a period of transition see also Pessoa 2007 and Pessoa 2008.

8 "Certain *villae*, such as that of Rabaçal (Penela, Coimbra), also founded in imperial periods, do not show so clearly the passage to moments of Christian refunctionality, although, after phases of majestic decorative application of mosaics with vigorous allegorical themes still correlative with the Roman spirit, a use has been detected, in immediately subsequent centuries, as a burial place". Patrocínio 2012: 9.

## Conclusion

The transition from classical art to Early Christian art can be considered to have been an evolutionary process without abrupt changes or exclusion of the meaning of the motifs gathered in the traditional Roman pictorial and mosaic lexicons. On the contrary, their evolution followed the general evolution of the society in which they were integrated, maintaining a continuity in form through the centuries, allowing a coetaneous, multi-meaning interpretation according to the interpreter and the socio-cultural and religious environment to which he belonged.

The parallel existence of artistic expressions linked to traditional cultural memory both in the form known and used until then and by introducing new themes and new interpretations inherent to the nascent Christian religiosity is expressed, in our view, in two 4th century glass bowls in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Trier with the representation of Hercules and Antaeus<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 23) and with the representation of the Sacrifice of Isaac<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 24).

Figure 23  
Trier, Glas bowl 1956.8n © Zeichner,  
Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.

Figure 24  
Trier, Glas bowl G.696 © Zeichner,  
Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.



This phenomenon gave rise in Lusitania, which today belongs to the territory of Portugal, to some very particular and individual artistic expressions, such as the mosaics of the Roman villa of Pisões, Póvoa de Cós and Rabaçal, among others. Expressions which, a priori, cannot be denied neither a possible Early Christian substratum nor the influence of the currents which, since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, were being felt in the westernmost part of the Empire, and which constitute a stage in the evolution of Christian representational art as we know it from Late Antiquity.

9 Inv. 1956,8n; GDKE, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.

10 Inv. GIG 696; GDKE, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.

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