



# The Mosaics of the Küçükdalyan Church in Antakya: An Iconographic Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Antakya, which is the central district of Hatay, was known as Antioch in ancient times and today it is completely under the modern settlement of Antakya. The city, which was named Theopolis - City of God in the early Byzantine period, had many religious buildings in its period as it was the first region where Christianity spread. Today, only the Church of St Peter, the Monastery of St Simeon, and the Monastery of St Barlaam have survived. In Küçükdalyan, which is the centre of the city of Theopolis, the subject of our article, the mosaics of a large church that will make great contributions to the Early Byzantine period and the art of the city were found for the first time, and the church was named Küçükdalyan Church because of its location. In the narthex of the church, geometric mosaics with depictions of various kinds of animals in vine spirals and 4 refrigerium scenes were uncovered in the central nave. In this article, the place of the church mosaics among the mosaics of Antioch will be revealed and the iconography of the floral and figurative depictions in the mosaics will be examined. Based on the Küçükdalyan Church, the political events of the period, the spread of Christianity in Antioch, and the religious structures of the Early Christian Period will be investigated in the light of archaeological excavations in the region and scientific publications. In addition, the mosaics will be compared with the mosaics of religious and civil architecture in Anatolia, North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and Balkan countries and the mosaic will be introduced to the world of archaeology from a scientific point of view.

**Keywords:** Mosaic, Antioch, Theopolis, Nave, Refrigerium

\* The potteries discussed in this study are based on a chapter from the author's doctoral thesis titled "Seyitömer Mound Potteries from the Hellenistic Period".



## Introduction

The fact that Antakya is located at a crossroads on the Silk Road on the east-west axis in terms of trade has made the city privileged in every period (İstek, 2020: 228). In the Hellenistic period, the city, which was founded in the 4th century BC by Seleucus Nicator I, one of the commanders of Alexander, was also the capital of the Seleucid Kingdom. During the Roman Empire, the Roman commander Pompei made the city the centre of the Syrian province and gave it the title of “Metropolis”. It became a very important centre for Christianity with the arrival of Christian missionaries to the city during Caligula’s reign. The biggest factor in the arrival of missionaries to Antioch was that the city, as a metropolis, was a cultural and commercial centre and had a cosmopolitan structure dominated by pagan religion (Aydın, 2003: 7). Thanks to the religious teachings of Paul and Barnabas, who took the name “Christian” for the first time in Antioch and who were the most important apostles, the first patriarch was established in the city, whose entire population became Christians in a short period of one year. Peter, the first patriarch, was also the first founder of the Church of Antioch (Malalas, 1986:1311). The church founded by St Peter gave legitimacy and prestige to Christians (Downey, 1961: 190-193). Antioch, along with Rome and Alexandria, was a factor in the spread of Christianity the collapse of the Roman Empire, and the establishment of the Byzantine Empire, which was the continuation of Rome (Yaşar, 2022: 194). Although the Roman Empire approached the religion of the people in the lands it ruled with tolerance, the atmosphere of tolerance was disrupted when Emperor Nero had Antioch Episcopal Ephudyos killed in the 2nd century when Christianity began to pose a danger to Roman rule. The wars and territories lost by the Roman Empire and the earthquakes, floods, and fires in Antioch were blamed on the people’s abandonment of pagan gods and belief in Christianity, and the Empire passed harsh laws against Christians and officially banned Christianity. Emperor Diocletian, against the Sassanids, who were a great danger to Antioch, Syria, and Anatolia, divided the administration into two, east and west, and took over the administration of the east. Diocletian came to Antioch in 312 AD to bring the pagan cults of the Empire back to the forefront persecuted the Christian people and clergy and had many churches in the city destroyed. Galerius, who later seized power in the power struggles in Rome, granted Christians the right to live their beliefs freely with the “Edict of Toleration” issued in 311 AD. Constantinus I started the construction of the Octagonal Great Church in Antioch. Antioch, the most important political and cultural city of the East, became the centre of Eastern Christianity. In the great earthquakes of 458 and 526 AD, most of the city was destroyed. Emperor Justinian named the city “Theoupolis-City of God” to put an end to the earthquakes. The people, rich merchants, clergymen, and emperors of the period, who adhered to the Christian religion established and developed in Antioch, played a major role in the spread of religion by building many churches, basilicas, and martyrions in Antioch. Since Antioch maintained its military and political importance as a gateway to the east during

the Byzantine period (Dokdemir, 2021: 840), it was subjected to invasions, and as a result of natural disasters such as earthquakes and fires, many public buildings, churches, baths, and residences were destroyed from time to time and the city became a ruin. After each disaster, the Byzantine Empire, taking into account the geopolitical position and religious importance of the city, revived the city with reconstruction works and financial aid. In the ancient sources, there are St Ignatius, Octagonal Constantine, Palaia, Kassianus, Makkabes, Theotokos, Kosmos and Damian Churches, St Romanus Martyrion, Machouka Church on the Aleppo road route of the city, St Babylas Cross Church on the Iskenderun road west of Antakya, Makkabes Martyrion in Daphne-Defne, St Michael the Archangel Martyrion, St Leontus Martyrion. There are also the Martyrion of St.Thomas, the Martyrion of St.Julian, the Martyrion of St.Stephen, the Church of St Dometius, the Church of St John, and the Church of John the Baptist, the location of which cannot be determined in the sources (Eğer, 2020: 226-227). Today, except for the Church of St. Pierre, no examples of religious architecture from this era have survived in the city center. (Plan 1).

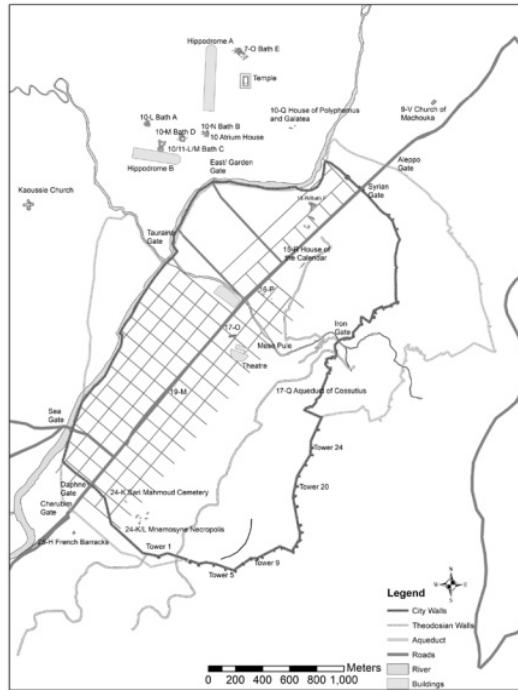


FIGURE 4.7 Antioch after Justinian's building programs

Source: Created by Stephen Batiuk

**Plan 1:** Map of Antioch (Antiokheia) Depicting Churches from the Reign of Justinian

In 2023, during the scientific rescue excavations carried out by the Hatay Museum in the Grade I archaeological site in the Küçükdalyan Quarter, mosaics belonging to the narthex and middle nave of the Küçükdalyan Church were unearthed at the level of 84.90 m<sup>1</sup>. The figured mosaic found in the naos of the church measures 9.80x7.70 m. The mosaic has survived to the present day intact. In the western part of the figured mosaic, another geometrically patterned mosaic floor measuring approximately 11.50x4.3 m was unearthed at the level of 85.05 m. A part of the narthex mosaic has been damaged by trees and plant roots over time. Apart from the mosaics, no remains of the architecture of the church have survived to the present day.

### The Mosaic of the Narthex

The narthex of the church, which is about 4 cm higher than the nave, is covered with a rectangular one-piece geometric patterned mosaic measuring approximately 11.50x4.3 m transversely in the north-south direction. The mosaic is bounded by three rows of borders narrowing from outside to inside. The outer border consists of a thin saw tooth and the second border consists of a lotus. The lotuses follow each other in an inverted-flat manner. The inner border surrounds the main composition without decoration. The outer thin border and the lotus border have disappeared in places. The main panel in the centre is composed of geometric patterns. The geometric pattern consists of circles and ellipses connected to each other and to the square in the centre by double guipure knots. The circle and ellipse forms cover the floor of the entire narthex in succession, and the circles and ellipses are connected to the squares in the centre with knots on 4 sides. In the middle of each square in the centres there are stylized flowers, each different from the other, in the middle of the circles there are identical stylized rosettes, and in the ellipses, there is a circular rosette on the axis and stylized palmette motifs with three opposite leaves on both sides of the rosette.



**Fig. 1:** The Mosaic of the Narthex

1 Since there is no inscription regarding the name of the church in the mosaics, the church was named after the neighborhood where it is located.

## The Mosaic of the Nave

The unearthed nave mosaic measures 9.80x7.70m. On the central axis of the mosaic is a peacock with its wings open from the front. There is a cantharos in the centre of the four sides of the mosaic with the peacock in the middle and peacocks, gazelles, and sheep depicted symmetrically on both sides of the cantharos. The double vine branches emerging from the cantharos in the centre of the four sides of the mosaic form spirals and spread rhythmically over the entire surface, integrating with the peacock on the axis. The vine branches and shoots are densely enriched with vine leaves and grape clusters. Domestic and wild animal species within the circles formed by the vine spirals harbour a very rich variety. The mosaic is surrounded by a thin border consisting of a double garland. There are 4 rows of Greek dedicatory inscriptions in a tabula ansata to the southwest of the mosaic.

The inscription reads:

Κ Α Λ Ω Σ Π Ε Π Ο Ν Θ Ω Σ Π Α Υ Λ Ο Σ Ε Γ Ν Ω Τ Η Ν Χ Α Ρ Ε Ι Ν  
Κ Α Π Γ Ω Ν Ο Π Α Γ Ω Ν Τ Ο Ν Ο Ι Κ Ο Ν Ω Σ Ε Υ Ε Ρ Γ Ε Τ Η Ν  
Τ Ι Θ Η Σ Ε Ι Τ Α Ι Σ Ψ Η Φ Ι Σ Ε Ι Ν Ε Υ Π Ρ Ε Π Ε Σ Τ Η Ρ Ο Ν  
Ε Ν Μ Η Ν Ι Γ Ο Ρ Π Ι Ε Ω Α Ι Ν Δ Ε Ι

Καλῶς πεπονθως Παύλος ἐγνώτην χαρὲν  
κάπων ὄπλων τὸν οἶκον ὡς εὐεργέτην  
τιθησείταις ψηφίσειν εὐπρέπεστηρον  
ἐν μῆνι Γορπίεω α΄ ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) εἰ΄

The translation of the inscription: “*The church steward and benefactor Paulos carried out the laying of the mosaic stones on the first day of the month of Gorpaios (between 24th July and 23th August) of the 15th tax period in a good and careful manner*”.



**Fig.2** The Mosaic of the Nave.

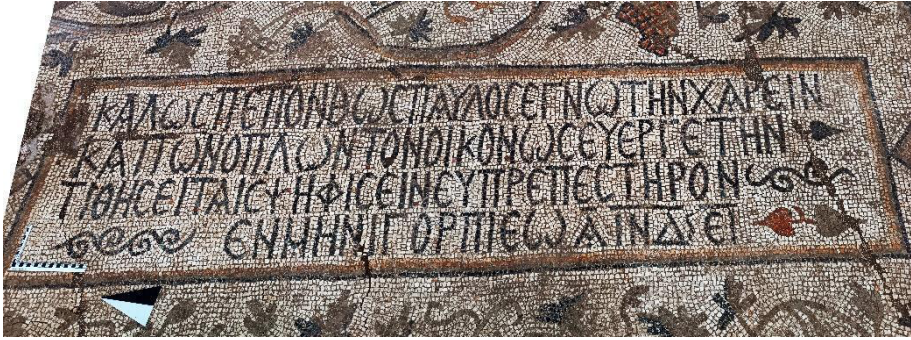


Fig. 3: Inscription on the Mosaic of the Nave

Since the vine spirals coming out of the cantharus on the four sides of the mosaic surrounding the peacock in its centre, the refrigerium scenes in the mosaic will be described in sections according to the animal depictions on both sides of the cantharus.

**Refrigerium, West Scene:** Two grapevine branches spiraling out of a cantharus with a narrow spherical neck with 8 slices in the centre and a wide mouth opening outwards, forming circles on both sides of the cantharus. Within the circles are two peacocks in profile facing each other. The one on the right of these peacocks is lower than the other. Just above the cantharus, within the circles formed by the spiraling vine branches, there is an eagle on the left with its wings open and its head turned backward, and a pelican with its head tilted forwards within the circle formed by the spiral on the right. In the space where these two spirals meet at the bottom, a deer is lying to the right with its head turned to the left. Two small birds are depicted in two thin spirals with thin branches, which are the last spirals of the vine on this side, located in the extension of the spirals where the pelican is located. In the spiral circle above the peacock to the left of the peacock on the right of the cantharus is a zebra moving to the right, in the last spiral to the east of the vine after the zebra is a bald ibis moving to the left, and in the lower spiral is a deer facing left. In the space between these two spirals there is a goose in the position of eating a vine leaf with its head tilted to the right. The left peacock in the upper left spiral circle, unlike the other animal species, is not facing left or right, but facing the peacock on the axis.



Fig. 4: Refrigeria, West Scene

**Refrigeria, East Scene with Sheep:** Two sheep are depicted facing each other symmetrically within the circles formed on both sides of the vessel by the vine branches coming out of the eight-slice flattened spherical body cantharus in the centre. The sheep on the left is damaged. In the space under the hind legs of the sheep on the left, there is a partridge towards the right, and in the space under the forelegs of the sheep on the right, there is another partridge with its head turned to the left. In the extension of this spiral, a mountain goat is lying to the right with its head facing the ostrich. The spiraling medallions formed by the spiraling spirals above the sheeps have a pheasant on the right and a dove on the left. In the last medallion formed in the extension of the spiral on the left, there is a hen and chicks, and in the spiral medallion below the hen, there is a rooster. There is a stationary horse in the spiral that is an extension of the vine branches where the pheasant is located and a duck in the spiral formed in the extension of this spiral. The spiral circle to the right of the cantharus, which is an extension of the damaged sheep, is also damaged. In the circle next to this spiral there is a basket with grapes and in the last spiral in the corner, there is a duck.



Fig. 5: Refrigeria, East Scene with Sheep

**Refrigerium, North Scene with Deer:** In the centre of the circles formed by the vine branches coming out of the cantharus in the same form as the others, a male deer is depicted on the left, and a female deer on the right. In the two circles formed by the two vine branches coming out of the cantharus in a spiral above these figures, a duck is moving to the right on the left, a goose with its head tilted to the left in the spiral behind the duck, a peacock stationary to the left in the medallion on the right, three single-headed birds rotating in the right of the spirals above these figures, and a bunch of grapes in the circle formed by two spirals opposite the rotating birds. In the circle immediately behind the doe on the right of the cantharus is a deer leaning to the right to eat grape leaves, and in the last spiral of this section is a horse turned to the left, facing the deer. In the extension of the spiral with the stag on the left of the cantharus, there is a bull with its head and body bent with a damaged head and a single horn, and in the last extension of this spiral, in the spiral in the corner of the mosaic, there is a depiction of a rabbit running with its head upwards.

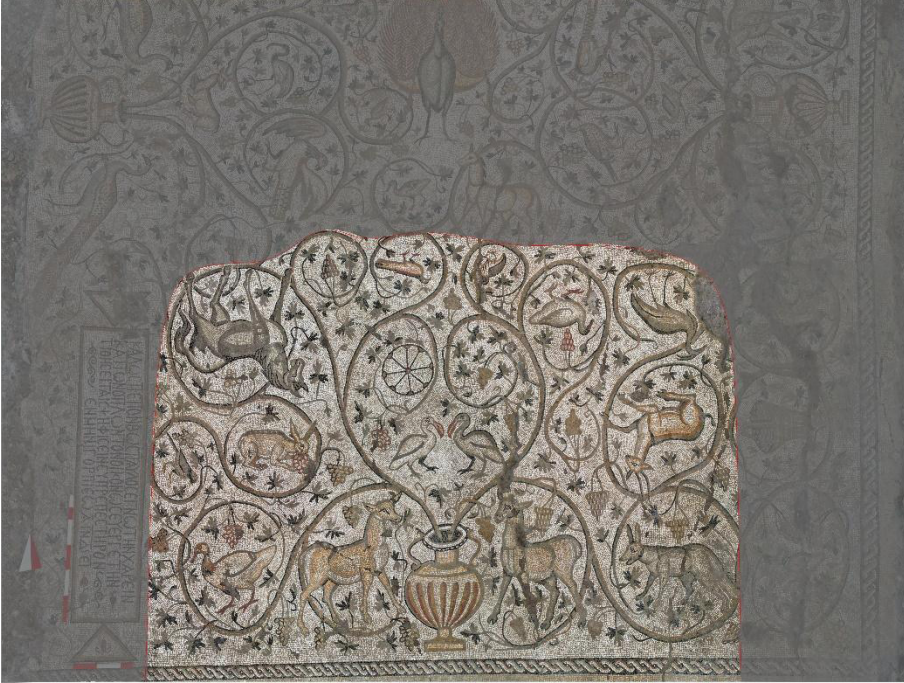


**Fig. 6:** Refrigerium, North Scene with Deer

**Refrigerium, South Scene with Sheeps:** Two sheep facing each other in spiraling circles formed on both sides by vine branches emerging from the cantharus in the centre. A goose is depicted to the left in the spiral on the extension of the sheep on the left, a fox with an open mouth is depicted to the right in the circle on the extension of the spiral of the sheep on the right, and a small duck is depicted in the last medallion in the corner of left extension. The spiral on the figure to the left of the two vine branches bears a christogram, and the last spiral opposite this spiral bears a bunch of grapes. A partridge is on the small spiral that



continues this spiral, and a dove is on the spiral opposite the partridge. In this section of the mosaic, two pelicans are depicted looking at each other in the space created just above the vine branches emerging from the cantharus. There is a horse in the spiral of the vine branch on the left coming out of the cantharus. The circle of this spiral is also connected to the vine spiral coming from the west. In the extension of the spiral depicting the horse, a rabbit eating grapes is depicted to the left, and a sparrow is depicted in the small spiral below this spiral.



**Fig. 7:** Refrigerium, South Scene with Sheep

## Evaluation

In Anatolia geometric patterns are generally seen in the mosaics in the religious buildings of the early Byzantine Period, while animal figures are seen in figurative mosaics (Çıtaoğlu, 2016: 11). While geometric patterns dominated the mosaics in religious buildings towards the end of the 4th century AD and in the first half of the 5th century; in the second half of the 5th century, mosaics with figurative patterns started to be seen in addition to geometric patterns. There is a mosaic with a geometrical pattern in the narthex of the Küçükdalyan Church and a figurative mosaic in the nave. The circles and ellipses rhythmically connected to each other with looped knots, which constitute the main theme of the geometric patterned mosaic, are frequently encountered in the churches of that period in Anatolia, especially in the borders. This geometric pattern was used as the main theme covering the entire surface

of the mosaic in the narthex of Küçükdalyan Church. The geometric pattern spread over the main panel is similar to the Artemis Mosaic found during the excavations in Erzin-Epiphaneia and currently exhibited in the Hatay Museum (Çelik, 2012: 61- 62) and the border of the mosaic belonging to the Ram's Head House found in Antioch in the 1930s. (Levi 1947: 442). In Anatolia, it is similar to the border of the prothesis mosaic of the Episcopal Church in Rhodiopolis (Tiryaki 2016: 518-519), the mosaic of the north nave of the East Basilica in Xanthos (Raynaud 2009: 63-67,69,72,73,165), and the mosaic of the western portico of the harbour street in Patara (Aktaş 2022: 25-31). The lotus motif, which also forms the narrow border of the mosaic, is found as a border on the Buffet House Mosaic in Antakya (Levi, 1947: 311-312. Pl. CXXIXd), on the naos mosaic of the Adana Karlık Church (Tülek, 2004: 124) and on the mosaics of the Ozem Church in Israel (Habas, 2018: 99). This type of lotus motif is called double lotus (Campbell, 1988: 88, fig.62a).

The motif of the vine spirals emerging from the cantharus in the nave of the Küçükdalyan Church goes back to the Hellenistic period. In the first three centuries AD in the Eastern Mediterranean and North African countries they mostly adorned borders of mosaics. The border consisting of vines and grapes surrounding the Judgement of Paris mosaic, which was found in the Atrium House during the excavations in Antakya in 1932 and taken to France and still exhibited in the Louvre Museum, is a very good example from the Roman Imperial Period (Levi, 1949: 15-16). The outer border, which consists of bird depictions within vine spirals in the Birth of Venus mosaic unearthed during excavations in Defne in 2011 and on display at the Hatay Archaeological Museum, also reflects this period. In the mosaics of the early Byzantine period, the vine spirals, which are most frequently encountered in figural depictions in Anatolia, North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and Balkan countries, especially in religious buildings, were enriched with animal figures and started to be used both in borders and as the main panel. The depictions of animals among the vine branches forming the main composition in the nave of the Küçükdalyan Church are similar to the border of the Mosaic of the Martyrium (Levi, 1947: 359-363) dated to the second half of the 5th century AD (Dunbabin, 1999: 179,181) found in the ancient city of Seleucia Pieria in 1938-1939 and still exhibited in the Hatay Museum (Levi, 1947: 359-363) and the borders of the House of Bird Spirals mosaic found during the excavations in Defne in the same years (Campbell, 1936: 7-8). In Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean, the border of the Life Mosaic and the corridor mosaic of the same villa in Kahramanmaraş-Germanicia (Ersoy, 2017: 133-164), the apse mosaic of Church B in Hadrianoupolis (Verim, 2019: 282-283), the mosaic from the church in Erzincan Altintepe (Can 2009: 5-13), the mosaic from the Church of Mersin Dağ Pazarı (Tülek 2004: 271), the mosaic from the church in Düziçi (Tülek 2004: 89), the City mosaics in Perre (Salman 2012: 195), the mosaics of the Agora Basilica in Kelenderis (Zoroğlu, 2008: 353-371), the mosaics of the Zahrani Church in Beirut (Helau, 2019: 122), the mosaics of the church in Khan Khalde in Lebanon (Helou, 2019: 61), the

mosaics found near the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem (Karademir 2021: 158-186) and in the mosaics of a Roman villa near Nymphaion (Kemalpaşa) (Tok, Talaman, Atıcı 2013: 65-71), vine spirals appear as borders and main themes.

The animal figures in the mosaic and the compositions formed by the figures generally carry iconographic meanings. Especially the sheep, deer, and peacocks on both sides of the cantharus depicting baptism and eternal life are Christian images that take their subjects from the Bible and the Torah. The scene, which is referred to as the refrigerium scene in the literature and literally means “relaxation”, also includes the meal given after the dead in pagan and Christian beliefs (Sanchez; 2015:1-45). In general, in mosaics and architecture, animals such as peacocks, deer, and sheep drink the water of life from a bowl; this symbolizes that believers will reach immortality by drinking this water and going to heaven (Hetto-Köroğlu-Çorağan 2022: 207). The early theologian Tertullian describes refrigerium as a place between heaven and hell (Goff, 1984:47). According to Tertullian, the dead wait in a place called refrigerium, located between heaven and hell, as they await the resurrection. Tertullian believes that souls experience a peaceful waiting in refrigerium until the final judgment. On this subject, Christine Mohrmann explains that refrigerium represents the temporary happiness of souls awaiting Christ’s return in the bosom of Abraham (Mohrmann, 1958: 196-214). Water, which is the most important element of the refrigerium scene, is the main source used by believers all over the world as a means of cleansing and purification (Acara, 1998:183-201). The crater used in the refrigerium scenes is associated with the calix and altar used in the Eucharist (Mercangöz, 2004: 43-52). In Christian theology, the refrigerium is also interpreted as the place where good spirits wait before heaven. This scene is e. g. depicted in the mosaic of the Incirli Village Church in Hatay Kırıkhan (Çelik, 2013: 2-3), in the corners of the border of the mosaics of the House of Bird Spirals in the ancient city of Defne-Daphne (Levi, 1947: 366), in the Balatlar Church in Sinop (Hetto,-Köroğlu,-Çorağan 2022: 203-205), in the Chora Church (Church A) of Hadrianoupolis (Verim, 2021: 105), in the Chora Church (Church C) of Hadrianoupolis (Çelikbaş 2019: 292), in the Çatalcam Basilica of Muğla-Akyaka (Özyurt, Özcan, 2013: 460), in the mosaic of the East Portico of the North Colonnaded Street in Stratonikeia, in the Second Basilica in the Han Krum Street in Varna (Popova-Lirsch 2011: 793-812). In Christian art, scenes of refrigerium can be observed in spaces and architectural elements related to death. Examples include the Via Latina Catacomb (Nees, 2002:52), the Viminacium tomb chamber (Dragana, 2011:239), the Kyustendil Basilica (Popov & Lirsch, 2011: 793-812), as well as architectural elements such as an arch found in the Konya Archaeological Museum (Temple, 2013:182) and a Byzantine-era architrave fragment repurposed as spolia on the wall of the Tuzla Hüdavendigâr Mosque in Ayvacık, Çanakkale (Türker, 2018:105).

The symmetrical peacocks on both sides of the cantharus to the west of the nave mosaic of the Küçükdalyan Church, as well as the peacocks on the main axis of the mosaic and those in the spiral in the northern part, were considered sacred in both Paganism and Christianity. Peacocks, which were commonly depicted on Roman tombstones, were believed to be sacred birds that carried the souls of the dead to the gods. In Christianity, the tradition of depicting peacocks as the most beautiful birds in Roman gardens evolved into the portrayal of peacocks as the most beautiful and immortal birds of the Garden of Eden. The depiction of peacocks drinking holy water from the cantharus in the mosaic is one of the most common motifs found in mosaics from the same period unearthed to date. It was believed that the flesh of peacocks did not decay after drinking holy water, granting them immortality, and that the spots on their wings represented the all-seeing eyes of God. In the mosaic of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Arsuz, Hatay, two peacocks are depicted following each other (Çelik, 2018: 265-276). The male peacock in the center of the mosaic, with its wings spread, can be interpreted as symbolizing the animal kingdom—believers—depicted in iconography as the all-seeing eyes of God. The depiction of a peacock with open wings from the front also appears in the mosaic of the Eastern Church of Theodorias in Libya, which is now exhibited in the Kasr Museum, in the mosaics of the Ancient City of Paphos in Cyprus, and in the apse mosaic of the caldarium section of the Ancient City of Anemurion, where it forms a half-dome (Campbell, 1998: 37).

The depictions of deer on both sides of a cantharus in the northern part of the Nave mosaic are also common in church mosaics, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean basin of the period. The deer in Psalms 42:1-2—”As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”—emphasizes the believers’ longing for God. This reflects a deep yearning for a connection with the divine (Daloğlu, 2011:78).. In Christian legends, although the deer and gazelle have a nature that fears all creatures, they are believed to kill all kinds of snakes. For this reason, the deer and gazelle are considered sacred as a symbol of Christian belief. The depictions of sheep on both sides of a cantharus on the south and east sides of the mosaic are also among the most used images in Christianity: The sheep represent either unbaptized people or Christian believers in general (Daloğlu, 2011: 80).

The canthari on the four sides of the mosaic have rectangular bases, narrow rims, segmented flattened spherical bodies, and two handles. The cantharus, which appears in almost every branch of early and middle Byzantine art, originates in the Dionysian cult of antiquity. The cantharus, which is already seen in the wall paintings of the Christian catacombs in the 3rd century, is found as a vessel with vine branches emerging from it on the church floors of the 4th-6th centuries. With Christianity, the cantharus began to symbolize the calix used in the Eucharist (Mercangöz, 2004: 43-52). In the north aisle of the Yeni yurt B Church in Hatay Dörtiyol the cantharus is depicted in the centre of the mosaic floor (Çelikay, 2018: 83-86).

There are also many species of birds in the mosaic. Since birds always fly in the sky and God is above, bird species are frequently included in early Byzantine mosaics as the souls of believers. The presence of different species of birds in mosaics represents believers with different spiritual structures (Cirlot, 2001: 28). Unlike other animals in the mosaic, the eagle, depicted majestically from the front with open wings, has had an important place in eastern and western art since ancient times. The eagle, which is frequently encountered in necropolis areas, has become a symbol of Christianity's victory over Paganism. Since the eagle flies to the highest point of the sky, unlike other birds, it was identified with Jesus (Hetto, K rođlu,  orađan 2022: 212). In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 32:11, we read, "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions." Psalm 103:5, says, "He who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Isaiah 40:31 states, "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." The depiction of an eagle with its wings outstretched in the mosaic is exactly the same as the eagle figure in the mosaic in the Balatlar Church in Sinop (K rođlu-Tok 2018:129-130).

The cross figure in feathers on the tops of the peacocks in the mosaic is unique. After the prohibition of cross motifs on the floors in the Novella of Emperor Theodosius II in 427 AD, the use of cross motifs on floor mosaics began to decrease over time, but the use of crosses did not end completely (Dalton 1911:22; Mango 1986:36; Rodley 1994:35). The fact that the feathers on the tops of the peacocks on the mosaic of the K c kdalyan Church were made in the shape of a cross and the cross depiction inside a circle on the mosaic are quite striking. Considering that Antioch was the center of the spread of Christianity, the cross, which is the most important symbol of Christianity and Jesus, was inevitably included in the mosaic. In Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean countries where Christianity spread, many cross motifs with different designs are encountered in the mosaics of the early Byzantine period. Cross motifs are e. g. encountered in the naos section of the church in B y kg k eli, Isparta (Akaslan, Demirci, Per in, Labarre 2015:159-161), in the floor mosaic of the naos of the church in G rdes  ađlayan Village (Tok 2008: 156), in the mosaics of the Chrysopolitissa Basilica and the Radolista Basilica in Nea Paphos (Hoddinot 1963:232) and especially in many church and chapel mosaics in the Near East countries. (Habas 2015: 33-34). Considering that peacocks are the symbol of resurrection, salvation, and eternal life, the fact that the sacred symbol of Christianity, the cross, is hidden on the head of the peacock is a reflection of the abovementioned Edict of Emperor Theodosius. The cross motif in the circle on the edge of the mosaic is noteworthy. The cross motif in the circle is also found on the mosaic of the East portico of the North Colonnaded Street in Stratonikeia (S g t-Aytekim 2017,224). However, the arms of the crosses in the Stratonikeia mosaic are thicker.



**Fig.8:** Peacock in the mosaic of the nave.

## Conclusion

The mosaic masters trained in the Antakya workshops played a very important role in the spread of mosaic art to Anatolia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Western world. During the Byzantine Period, Antakya, the third largest city in the Roman world, became the most important center for the spread of Christianity after Jerusalem, where Christianity was born. During this period, mosaic art continued to be made on the floors of houses, baths, churches, and martyriums. With the influence of paganism in the city, especially at the end of the 3rd century and the first quarter of the 4th century, the teachings of Christianity began to be given with personification in the center of a dignified aristocratic woman in bath and house mosaics. The Megolopsychia/Great Spirit, Ananeois/Rebirth Epikosmesis/Creative Spirit, and Ktisis/Foundation mosaics currently exhibited in the Hatay Museum are the depictions that best describe this period. As in the Megolopsychia mosaic, while depicting the main center as a well-groomed woman from a symbolic front, it also reflected the most important Christian doctrine by giving it the name of the Great Spirit. The hunting scenes of Roman heroes around the mosaic are an indication that it could not break away from its roots in pagan tradition. The Philia Hall Mosaic, found in excavations carried out in 1932-1939 when Antioch was under French mandate, was defined by Doro Levi as the first mosaic with figurative patterns in Antioch that had a Biblical influence. Geometric and plant decorations,

which mostly served as borders in the Roman Period, began to form the main mosaic base as endless compositions in the Early Byzantine Period. The subjects treated in figurative mosaics were given in a plain and simple manner based on the idea of a single God who is invisible to the eye but is omnipotent. “Mosaic Art”, which became the most important part of Byzantine art as well as in Rome, turned into an art form that served only Christianity after Christianity was accepted as the official religion by Constantius I in 313 AD. During the Byzantine period, artists began to act only within the framework of religious rules in mosaics.

In Antakya, one of the largest cities of the period when Christianity was born and spread, many large monumental and neighborhood churches were built within the urban fabric, as well as many village churches integrated with local characteristics in rural areas. Mosaics, which serve as a document in shedding light on the Byzantine period of the Ancient City and its surroundings, which are completely buried under the modern settlement today, also play a very important role in determining the locations of churches, martyriums, and baptisteries whose remains have not survived to the present day. Archaeological excavations carried out to date have unearthed the Manşuklu Church, the Kavashlı Church and Baptistery, the Defne City Square Baptistery in central Antakya, the martyrium in Samandağ in the districts, the Incirli Church and the Martyrium in Kırıkhan Incirli Village, the Karamağara Church, the Mazmanlı Church in Hassa, the Altınözü Ziyaret Village Church, the Yeniyurt A and B Church in Dört Yol, and the 5th-6th century ruins and mosaics of the Holy Apostles Church in Arsuz. The “Küçükdalyan Church” has now been added to the religious structures. The church must have been an important monumental church of the city of Antioch-Theopolis. The fact that the church is located in the center of the ancient city and that there are four refrigerium scenes in the mosaic in the nave proves this thesis.

In almost all late-period church and martyrium mosaics in North Africa, the Southern Mediterranean region, and Anatolia, animal depictions located between vine spirals are generally used as borders and rarely as the main composition covering the entire surface. Especially seen in religious structures, the vine has an important place as a tool in spreading the religious mission since it represents Jesus and the Christian spirit. The refrigerium scenes in the middle nave of Küçükdalyan Church are the result of an allegory and represent hope for reaching heaven. The narthex and nave mosaics are made on a light-colored background using the opus tessellatum technique and the animals are reflected in a realistic style. Since no remains of the church’s architecture have survived to the present day, it is possible to say that it is a monumental basilical planned church belonging to the Early Christian Period with an east-west axis when compared with the churches of the period in the city. Based on the style and technical features of the mosaics, inscriptions, and archaeological findings, the church can be dated to the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century.

The mosaic of the nave of the Küçükdalyan Church is of great importance in terms of both its visual and artistic illumination of the Early Byzantine Period of Antioch and its reflection of the iconography of Christianity with the religious teachings it carries.

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