

THE ICONOGRAPHICAL EVALUATIONS OF FRUIT DEPICTIONS AT MOSAICS FROM HADRIANOPOLIS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS AT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION*

Ersin ÇELİKBAŞ** , Mehmet AKDAŞ*** 

Abstract

Hadrianopolis is located 3 km west of Eskipazar district center in Karabük province, in and around the area called "Viranşehir." Between 2003 and 2023, excavations were carried out in eight buildings dating to the Late Roman - Early Byzantine Period in Hadrianopolis. During these excavations, pavement mosaics reflecting the ornamental character of the period were found. The pavement mosaics were decorated with geometric, floral, and figurative patterns. The pavements, which were consolidated by restorers and conservators, were taken under protection in accordance with appropriate techniques. The aim of the research is to make an iconographic evaluation of the pavement mosaics in Hadrianopolis. From an iconographic point of view, fruit depictions were accepted as the symbol of the Garden of Eden in antiquity. However, approaching fruit depictions just iconographically is not enough to make a correct evaluation. It will be discussed whether the fruit depictions are related to the agricultural activities in the region at the time the mosaics were made. Modern agricultural methods, economic conditions and climatic changes have allowed some fruits to grow today, while others have disappeared. In this context, the depictions of fruits in Hadrianopolis will help us establish agricultural and cultural connections between the past and the present.

Keywords: Mosaic, Fruit, Iconography, Agriculture, Paphlagonia, Hadrianopolis

HADRIANOPOLİS MOZAIKLERİNDEKİ MEYVE TASVİRLERİNİN İKONOGRAFİK AÇIDAN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ VE BÖLGEDEKİ TARIM FAALİYETLERİNDEKİ YERİ

Özet

Hadrianopolis, Karabük ili, Eskipazar ilçe merkezinin 3 km batısında "Viranşehir" olarak adlandırılan mevkii ve çevresinde konumlanmaktadır. Hadrianopolis'te 2003-2024 yılları arasında, Geç Roma – Erken Bizans Dönemi'ne tarihlenen sekiz yapıda kazı çalışması yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmalarda dönemin süsleme karakterini yansıtan zemin mozaiklerine rastlanılmıştır. Zemin mozaiklerinde geometrik, bitkisel ve figüratif desenler işlenmiştir. Restoratör ve konservatörler tarafından sağlamlaştırma çalışması yapılan mozaikler, uygun teknikler doğrultusunda koruma altına alınmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı Hadrianopolis'te ortaya çıkarılan yapıların zeminlerinde yapılmış mozaiklerin ikonografik değerlendirmesini yapmaktır. İkonografik açıdan meyve tasvirleri antik dönemde cennet bahçesinin sembolü olarak kabul görmüştür. Fakat meyve tasvirlerine sadece ikonografik yaklaşmak doğru bir değerlendirme yapmak için yeterli değildir. Meyve tasvirlerinin mozaiklerin yapıldığı tarihte bölgedeki tarımsal faaliyetler ile ilişkisinin olup olmadığı konusuna değinilecektir. Modern tarım yöntemleri, ekonomik koşullar ve iklim değişiklikleri, bazı meyvelerin bugün de yetişmesine izin verirken, bazılarının da kaybolmasına neden olmuştur. Bu bağlamda, Hadrianopolis'teki meyve tasvirleri, geçmişle günümüz arasında tarımsal ve kültürel bağlantılar kurmamıza yardımcı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mozaik, Meyve, İkonografi, Tarım, Paphlagonia, Hadrianopolis

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** Assoc. Prof. Karabük University, Faculty of Letters, Archaeology Department, Karabük, Türkiye, e-Mail: ersincelikbas@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7630-4615.

*** Karabük University, Faculty of Letters, Archaeology Department, Karabük, Türkiye, e-Mail: mhmtakdas61@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0009-0009-0327-7375.

Introduction

The Paphlagonian Hadrianopolis is located in a deep valley between Budaklar village and Hacıahmetler neighbourhood, in a location called “Viranşehir” 3 km west of Eskipazar district center in Karabük province. “Remains are concentrated in Budaklar, Büyükyayalar, Çaylı and Beytarla villages and Hacıahmetler neighbourhood (Figure 1).”¹ The surveys and excavations carried out at Hadrianopolis since 2003 have shown that, as in other Paphlagonian settlements, Hadrianopolis had a central region and a spreading area around this region.

“Recent studies in Hadrianopolis have revealed that the first settlement activities date back to the early Chalcolithic period as a result of archaeological data.”² However, when it is considered in terms of the

city, Hadrianopolis was a city in the Late Hellenistic Period and the name of the city was transformed into Hadrianopolis during the reign of Emperor Hadrian, and it is known that the most important period of Hadrianopolis was experienced during the Roman Empire and Early Byzantine periods.

In Hadrianopolis, excavations were carried out in seven buildings dated to the Late Antiquity between 2003 and 2024, and in six of these works, floor mosaics containing many mosaic scenes reflecting the art, ornamentation and religious understanding of the period were found. The fruit depictions in the mosaics, which constitute the subject of the study, are found in the floor mosaics of the Four Rivers Church, the Northwest Necropolis Church and the Baptistry, located at the center of the city. “When the publications of the Four Rivers Church are analyzed to date, it has been

Figure 1. Map of Karabük (Hadrianopolis Archive)



- 1 Ersin Çelikbaş- Ercan Verim, “Hadrianopolis Kuzeybatı Nekropol Kilisesi’nin (Kilise C) Bema ve Apsis Mozaikleri”, *Journal of Mosaic Research*, 14 (2021), 80.
- 2 Emrullah Kalkan- Ersin Çelikbaş, “New Findings from Prehistoric Period in Western Black Sea Region: Hadrianopolis (Karabük-Eskipazar) Prehistoric Pottery”, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8/16 (2022), 423.

suggested that the church was built in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, especially based on the floor mosaics.”³ “In the Northwest Necropolis Church, when the finds were analyzed layer by layer, it was determined that the first construction phase of the church was built in the 4th and 5th centuries AD.”⁴ When the mosaic decoration on the floor of the baptistery is evaluated in the light of similar examples, the building is dated to the 5th and 6th centuries AD.

The motifs of vine leaves and grape clusters, which were first seen in the mosaics of Hadrianopolis, are depicted in the south nave of the Four Rivers Church and in the bema section of the Northwest Necropolis Church. In the south nave of the Church of

the Four Rivers, which has a basilical plan, a rectangular-square-shaped panel with sides of 82 cm shows a basket of grapes with vine branches hanging from its sides (Figure 2).

Another depiction of grapes can be seen in the Northwest Necropolis Church. The panel in the center of the bema panel with a peacock figure and a refrigerium scene measures 220 x 130 cm. In the center is a double-handled crater from which a grape vine sprouts. On either side of this are peacocks placed antithetically and depicted as static. “In Byzantine and Christian iconography, the crater-shaped vessel in the center of the panel symbolizes the fountains from which holy water comes out or is found, and

Figure 2. The Grape Depiction from Four Rivers Church (Hadrianopolis Archive)



3 Bülent Nuri Kılavuz- Ersin Çelikbaş, “Paphlagonia Hadrianoupolis’i/ Paplagonian Hadrianoupolis”, *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 2/3 (2013), 168.

4 Ersin Çelikbaş, “Hadrianoupolis Kilise C Mozaikleri Konusunda Bir Ön Değerlendirme”, *Uluslararası Geçmişten Günümüze Karabük ve Çevresinde Dini, İlmi ve Kültürel Hayat Sempozyumu*, (2019), 292.

the grapes that come out of it symbolize the blood of Christ and the wine in communion (eucharist).”⁵ (Figure 3).

In general, vine leaves and grapes have been used both as a plant and as a symbol, and various meanings have been attributed to them. When evaluated iconographically, this plant and its fruit have been attributed various meanings and brought to an important place in both human life and religious life. “In Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Aegean cultures, it is known that the grape, known as a divine fruit, was offered to the gods together with wine, the form in which it was made into a drink.”⁶

“In Greek and Roman mythology, Dionysos is known as the god identified with grapes and vine

leaves. The fact that the vine sheds its leaves in winter and reopens its leaves in summer has taken its place in Greek and Roman mythologies as a symbol of death and rebirth.”⁷ “Apart from these, it is known that in ancient sources, various medical practitioners such as Dioscurides used products such as grapes for therapeutic purposes.”⁸

“When monotheistic religions were introduced, vine leaves and grapes were first seen in Judaism, and in the Torah they are known as the prophet tree, the plant under which the prophets will sit when life on earth ends.”⁹ “In addition, the importance of the grape is emphasized in many places in the Torah, and it is stated that those who follow God’s rules will be rewarded with a fruit as abundant as the grape.”¹⁰

Figure 3. The Grape and Vine Leaves Depictions from Northwest Necropolis Church (Hadrianopolis Archive)



5 George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, (Oxford and New York, London.1961), 31-32.

6 Ersin Doğer, *Antik Çağda Bağ ve Şarap*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 33.

7 Annette Giesecke, “The Mythology of Plants Botanical Lore from Ancient Greece and Rome”, *Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum Press*, (2014), 68.

8 Ozan Hetto, *Sinop Balatlar Kilisesi Kazısı Erken Bizans Dönemi Mozaiklerinin İkonografisi*, (Kayseri, Erciyes University Master Thesis, 2021), 33.

9 Mika 4:4. Zekeriya 3:10.

10 Bahar Mammadli, *Yahudilikte Beslenme Kuralları (Kaşerut)* (Bursa, Uludağ University Master Thesis, 2013), 40.

"If you live according to my rules and carefully follow my commandments, i will cause the rains to fall on time. The soil will yield crops and the trees will bear fruit. You will thresh until the vintage, and gather grapes from your vineyards until planting time. You will eat abundantly and live in safety in your land".¹¹

"In Christianity, it is known that this plant and fruit is identified with Jesus in religious iconography. In the Gospel of John 15:1 'I am the true vine, my father is the vinedresser' and in John 15:5 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and i in him, bears much fruit.' Jesus likened himself to a vine."¹² "In some sources, in addition to Jesus, Mary is described as the untouched vine."¹³ "It is known that meanings such as death and rebirth seen in Greek and Roman societies continue in Christianity. In Christian iconography, the vine and the grape are symbols of sacrifice, and wine, which in antiquity represented the blood of Dionysos, is known to symbolize the blood of Jesus in Christianity, symbolizing both sacrifice and eternal life."¹⁴

"The depictions of grapes seen in Hadrianopolis mosaics have an important place in the ancient agricultural activities in the region. It is known that viticulture activities were widespread in the Paphlagonia region in Antiquity and the Byzantine Period, and due to the suitability of climatic and geographical conditions, it is known that Heraclea, Tios in the western parts, Prusias in the lower basins and the transition region to the Central Asia Minor highlands were engaged in viticulture activities."¹⁵

"Studies have made it clear that Hadrianopolis accompanied these cities with its chora, which has slopes suitable for wine grapes."¹⁶ There are also important finds suggesting wine production in Hadrianopolis. The wine workshops found in the Northwest Necropolis Church and the Delikli Kaya Necropolis (Figure 4), and the numerous grape presses and weights recovered during the excavations are important findings for viticulture activities and wine production in the region (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Hadrianopolis Wine Workshops (Hadrianopolis Archive)



11 Levililer, 26/3-5.

12 Hetto, *Sinop Balatlar Kilisesi Kazısı Erken Bizans Dönemi Mozaiklerinin İkonografisi*, 226.

13 Henry Maguire, "Nectar and Illusion Nature in B antine Art and Literature", *Oxford: University Press*, (2012), 34.

14 Richard Seaford, *Dionysos*, (Routledge, 2006), 127.

15 Klaus Belke, "Paphlagonien und Honorias, Tabula Imperii Byzantini", *Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, (1996), 142.

16 Namal, Rakiye, *Roma ve Geç Antik Çağ'da Paphlagonia Hadrianopolis'i*. Karabük: Karabük Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2022.

Figure 5. Grape Press Stones from Hadrianopolis and Its Around (Hadrianopolis Archive)



Figure 6. The Pears Depictions from Baptistery (Hadrianopolis Archive)



The other fruit depicted in Hadrianopolis mosaics is the pear. Pear depictions are depicted on the floor mosaics of the Baptistery. In the first panel, pear motifs are depicted on a basket with bunches of grapes. This detail shows that pears were a part of daily life and nutrition and also carried symbolic meanings. The use of white tesserae in the center and red, yellow and orange tesserae on the sides reflect the vitality and colorful nature of pears (Figure 6).

Another pear is depicted as emerging from between two branches. The pear motifs were created using yellow, red, orange, and white tesserae in the centers. The depiction of a pear emerging from its branch may refer to the cycle of nature and the continuity of life (Figure 7).

While the pear motifs depicted give a three-dimensional impression, it is observed that the lower

Figure 7. The Pears Depictions from Baptistry (Hadrianopolis Archive)



part is oval, narrowing upwards and tapering at the top and connecting to the stem section. While pears are depicted individually in some places, in another place, they are depicted together with grape clusters in a basket.

“Although there are very few iconographic descriptions of the pear, it is attributed to the symbolism of love and maternity due to the swollen flesh of the pear’s trunk, and it is known that pear trees were counted in the ancient Greek goddess Athena.”¹⁷ “In the Christian era, it has come to mean a symbol of Jesus’ love for humanity.”¹⁸

The analysis of the pear motif in Hadrianopolis mosaics shows that the city’s unique pear motif is depicted in these works. Especially the similarity of the “Göksulu” pear grown in Eskipazar to the pear motif in the mosaics suggests that this motif is a local symbol and reflects the natural and cultural heritage of the city. Furthermore, the fact that villages in Eskipazar, such as Kabaarmut Village, are named after the city’s

pear variety indicates that the pear is an important part of the region and has become a symbol of local identity. The use of the pear motif in the mosaics, not only as a natural object but also as a symbol reflecting the character and social fabric of the city, helps us understand the cultural and geographical context of Hadrianopolis. In this context, the pear motifs in the mosaics not only reflect their artistic value, but also the city’s commitment to its local identity and natural environment.

The other fruit depicted in Hadrianopolis mosaics is the apple. The apple is depicted in the mosaics of the baptistry. It is depicted as emerging from between two branches and was created using red, green, white, yellow and orange tesserae. The use of these colored tesserae increases the vibrancy and aesthetic appeal of the motif and emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the apple. This motif not only attracts attention as an artistic detail but also shows that the apple is an important symbol in religious and cultural contexts (Figure 8).

17 Kathryn Wilkinson, *Semboller ve İşaretler*, çev. Seda Toksoy (İstanbul: Alfa Basım Yayın, 2010), 98.

18 Ferguson Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 39.

Figure 8. The Apple Depiction from Baptistery (Hadrianopolis Archive)



“Throughout history, the apple is known as one of the fruits that often appears in stories and mythologies, and in these mythologies and stories, the apple has meanings such as love, beauty, attraction, completion and wholeness.”¹⁹ “In Greek mythology, the apple, given by Gaia to Zeus and Hera as a wedding gift, has acquired the meanings of fertility and sexuality.”²⁰

“In another mythology, Eris, who also played a role in the contest of the three beauties, throws the golden apple on the wedding table of the gods because he was not called to make a scene at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and the decision of who will be given the golden apple on which he wrote ‘the most beautiful’ is left to the initiative of Paris, and this fight goes down in history as the source of a great conflict such as the Trojan War.”²¹

As a result, the apple, which is used as a wedding gift in Greek mythology and society, is known to be used to declare love to the other party.²²

When we look at monotheistic religions, it is seen that the apple has two meanings. It is seen that the apple gains opposite meanings such as good and evil in the events mentioned.

“In the Torah, the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, whose fruit Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat, was an apple tree, and in the pictures showing Eve’s seduction by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, Eve is usually shown with an apple in her hand, offering it to Adam, and for this reason, the apple is known as a symbol of sin when it falls into Adam’s hands.”²³

19 Emet Egemen Aslan- Zehra Arda, “Mitolojide Elma- Seramik ve Resim Sanatındaki İzduşümleri”, *Tarım Bilimleri Araştırma Dergisi* 2 (2009), 99.

20 Azra Erhat, *Mitoloji Sözlüğü*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi 1972), 175-176, Giesecke, “The Mythology”, 109.

21 Erhat, *Mitoloji*, 116.

22 Giesecke, “The Mythology”, 109.

23 Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 28.

Figure 9. The Pomegranate Depiction from Baptistry (Hadrianopolis Archive)



"In the transition to Christianity, the apple took on different meanings in their iconography. Jesus, who is identified with the apple in Christianity, is considered a symbol of salvation when Jesus, who is defined as the new Adam according to another belief, receives an apple."²⁴ "Apples, which are seen in the depictions of Adam and Eve in the Torah texts, are known as a symbol of salvation when depicted with Jesus and Mary, known as the New Adam and Eve in Christian iconography."²⁵ "In Islamic art, apples are known to be used to have children and women who do not have children are known to eat apples for healing."²⁶ "Known as the fruit of paradise, apples are placed next to the deceased during funeral ceremonies and it is believed that they will also go to paradise."²⁷

The other fruit depicted in Hadrianopolis mosaics is the pomegranate. It is depicted as emerging between two branches on the floor mosaic of the baptistry. Red, yellow, orange, green, and white tesserae were used in the center. The fact that the pomegranate is depicted in various colors shows the artist's mastery and attention to detail in mosaic art. The careful selection of colors and patterns further emphasizes the aesthetic and symbolic meaning of the pomegranate (Figure 9).

"In the period from the 9th century BC to the 4th century BC, pomegranate-shaped pendulums were seen in jewelry specific to settlements such as Greece and Western Anatolia, and the pomegranate, which symbolizes the use of opposite meanings such as birth and death, is used in various fields in later periods and appears in various mythologies."²⁸

24 Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 28.

25 Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 28.

26 Esmâ Şimşek, "Ölümsüzlük İlâcı Elma", *Electronic Turkish Studies*, 3/5 (2008), 194.

27 Şimşek, "Ölümsüzlük", 195.

28 Altan Türe, *Takılar ve Süs Taşlarında Sembollerin Dili*, (İstanbul: Goldaş Kültür Yayınları, 3, 2004), 66.

"Pomegranate is known as the symbol of Aphrodite and the sacred fruit of Athena in Greek mythology."²⁹

"In the abduction of Persephone, one of the most well-known myths of Greek mythology, the pomegranate, known as the forbidden fruit in the abduction of Persephone, became the symbol of eternal life and the spell of Hades, and in this story, Demeter's daughter Persephone, who was born to the god Zeus, was abducted by Hades while she was picking flowers, whereupon Demeter was very angry when she could not find her daughter and missed the fertility of the land and as a result, a great famine began."³⁰

"When Zeus learned about the situation, he intervened and sent Hermes to Eros and asked him to bring the girl and Hades, who complied with Zeus' request, fed his wife pomegranate and decided that Persephone would spend the winter underground with her husband and come to the surface in the spring."³¹

"According to another belief, it was believed that those who dreamed of pomegranates would die, and in one of the myths related to this belief, the pomegranate was born from the blood flowing from Dionysus, who was wounded in the battle with the Titans, and in another, it sprouted from the body of Menoikeus, who sacrificed himself to the gods."³²

"In another mythology that explains the movement of the seasons, the pomegranate is known directly as a symbol of death."³³ "Another meaning of the pomegranate is that it is a symbol of fertility and, in connection with this, fertility, and in the mythology related to this, it is known that the Goddess Cybele became pregnant from a pomegranate seed and gave birth to Attis, the God of fertility."³⁴ "In Christian sym-

bolism, the pomegranate points to the church as the union of countless seeds in one and the same fruit."³⁵

"From pagan symbolism, the pomegranate symbolism in Christian art has been used as a symbol of the hope of immortality, resurrection, etc. It also symbolizes fertility due to the large number of seeds in the pomegranate."³⁶ As it is known, pomegranate is a temperate vegetation fruit. It grows in wetlands. Pomegranate is famous in Eskipazar and still continues to be produced.

Conclusion

When we look at the depictions of fruits in the mosaics of Hadrianopolis, it is possible to associate them with various iconographic interpretations and also with the agriculture of the city. These mosaics stand out not only as aesthetic but also as important iconographic elements reflecting the daily life, beliefs and symbols of the period. In the first evaluations, it is thought that the fruit depictions seen in Hadrianopolis mosaics were produced in the city. The production of these fruits still continues today. It is not possible to say anything in terms of density, but the fact that approximately 25 grape presses were found as a result of the surveys and excavations carried out in the city clearly reveals that intensive viticulture and viticulture activities were carried out in the ancient period. In addition, the fact that Eskipazar still produces fruits such as apples, pears and pomegranates today indicates that these productions have been carried out uninterruptedly since antiquity. Walkens suggests that the floral motifs frequently encountered in ancient cities are related to the flora of the cities.³⁷ Future studies will contribute to the elucidation of these issues. When the fruit depictions of Hadrianopolis were analyzed, it was determined that these depictions were made differently from the fruit depictions

29 Sevgi Kayaloğlu, "İkonolojik Bir Biçim Olarak Nar ve Sanatsal Temsillerde Kadın-Nar Alegorisi", *Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi*, (2023), 169.

30 Kayaloğlu, "İkonolojik Bir Biçim", 169-170.

31 Kayaloğlu, "İkonolojik Bir Biçim", 170.

32 Seaford, Richard. *Dionysos*. London, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 66.

33 Türe, *Takılar ve Süs Taşlarında*, 66.

34 Türe, *Takılar ve Süs Taşlarında*, 66.

35 Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 37.

36 Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 37.

37 Marc Waelkens, *Die Kleinasiatischen Türsteine: Typologische und Epigraphische Untersuchungen der Kleinasiatischen Grabreliefs mit Scheintr*, (Mainz, 1986), 11.

in other ancient cities and that these depictions were depicted in the same shape and form as the fruits grown in the region. As a result, it is clear that they depict the products grown. When these fruit depictions are generally evaluated iconographically, it is known that they were also used to depict symbols such as life, rebirth, immortality, fertility, and Jesus Christ.

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