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Banu ÖZDİLEK

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5803-5386>

H. Onur TIBİKOĞLU

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7046-0094>

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The Newly Discovered September Panel in the Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Calendar Mosaic of the Stoa at Issos-Epiphaneia

Issos Epiphaneia Stoa'sındaki Tarımsal Faaliyetler ve Zodyak Anlatımlı Takvim Mozağının Yeni Keşfedilen Eylül Paneli

Banu ÖZDİLEK *

H. Onur TIBİKOĞLU**

Abstract: Epiphaneia, located in the Erzin district of Hatay, is situated on the Issos Plain in Cilicia Pedias. Excavations have uncovered well-preserved Roman and Byzantine mosaics, among which the Calendar Mosaic with Rural Activities and Zodiac Imagery in the stoa is particularly noteworthy. Approximately 70 m in length, the mosaic depicts the twelve months through scenes of rural activities and zodiac representations. Its panels contain bilingual Greek and Latin inscriptions, while honorific inscriptions appear at the beginning of the composition. The mosaic is a unique example combining the agricultural calendar with zodiac iconography through poetic expression. Composed of monumental panels, its technical craftsmanship, rich variety of tesserae colors, and geometric-figurative composition place it among the distinguished works of Late Antiquity. During the 2025 excavation season, the eleventh panel, representing September through scenes of grape treading and wine production, was uncovered. This panel is accompanied by an inscription identifying the Macedonian month "ΤΟΠΠΙΕΩΣ" (September), together with inscriptions referring to Hermes and Virgo of the Roman zodiac. This study examines the agricultural activities of the Roman Period, calendar personifications, astrological symbolism, construction and honorific inscriptions, and the concept of the *euergetes*, offering new perspectives on cultural interactions in Late Antiquity through an analysis of the mosaic's bilingual inscriptions and artistic style.

Keywords: Issos-Epiphaneia • Cilicia Pedias • Roman Stoa-Porticus • Rural Calendar Mosaics • Zodiac Mosaics • Greek-Latin Inscriptions

Öz: Hatay'ın Erzin ilçesinde yer alan Epiphaneia, Kilikia Pedias bölgesinde, Issos Ovası'nda konumlanmaktadır. Kazılarda Roma ve Bizans dönemlerine ait iyi korunmuş mozaikler ortaya çıkarılmış olup, bunlar arasında stoda bulunan Kırsal Faaliyet ve Zodyak tasvirli Takvim Mozağı öne çıkmaktadır. Yaklaşık 70 m uzunluğundaki mozaik, kırsal faaliyetler ve burç tasvirleriyle yılın on iki ayını betimlemektedir. Panellerde Hellence ve Latince çift dilli yazıtlar ile mozağın başlangıcında yer alan onurlandırma yazıtları dikkat çekmektedir. Mozaik, tarım takvimi ile zodyak ikonografisini şiirsel anlatımlarla birleştiren özgün bir örnektir. Anıtsal panellerden oluşan eser; teknik ustalığı, tesserae'lerin zengin renk çeşitliliği ve geometrik-figüratif düzeni sayesinde Geç Antik Çağ'ın seçkin yapıtları arasında yer almaktadır. 2025 kazı sezonunda, Eylül ayını temsil eden, üzüm ezme ve şarap yapımını betimleyen on birinci panel ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bu panele, Makedon takvimine göre "ΤΟΠΠΙΕΩΣ" (Eylül) ayını adlandıran bir yazıt ile Roma zodyağının Başak burcu ve Hermes yazıtı eşlik etmektedir. Çalışma, bu mozaik aracılığıyla Roma Dönemi'ndeki tarımsal faaliyetleri, takvim kişileştirmelerini, astrolojik sembolizmi, yapım ve onurlandırma yazıtları ile *euergetes* kavramını inceleyerek; çift dilli yazıtlar ve mozaik üslubu ışığında Geç Antik Çağ'daki kültürel etkileşimlere yeni perspektifler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Issos-Epiphaneia • Kilikia Pedias • Roma Stoa-Porticus • Kırsal Takvim Mozaikleri • Zodyak Mozaikleri • Hellence-Latince Yazıtlar

* Prof. Dr., Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Department of Archaeology, Hatay, TÜRKİYE  0000-0001-5803-5386 | ozdilek.banu@gmail.com

** Dr., Independent Researcher, Ankara, TÜRKİYE  0000-0001-7046-0094 | tibikoglu@gmail.com

Issos–Epiphaneia: Historical Geography and Urban Development in Cilicia Pedias

Located in the Gözeneler area of Erzin district, Hatay province, Issos-Epiphaneia occupies a strategic position in the northernmost part of ancient Cilicia Pedias¹ (Fig. 1). The site lies approximately 1.5 km west of the Toprakkale-İskenderun railway line, near the Erzin/Yeşilkent station, and is identified with the ancient city of Epiphaneia. Geographically, it is bounded by the Deli Halil cone to the northwest, the Amanos Mountains to the east, and the Burnaz coast to the south-southwest². During the Roman Period, the region was known as Cilicia Pedias. Neighboring ancient cities include Nicopolis to the east, Hierapolis-Castabala to the north, Alexandria ad Issum and Antioch to the south, Anazarbus to the northwest and Aigai, Catabolos to the southwest³.

Following the Troy mythology, the hero Mopsos, associated with Cilicia, was connected with Azitawada, his hometown, in the 8th century BCE⁴. The Issos Plain has historically served as a vital corridor facilitating both land and maritime trade between Anatolia and the Syria-Mesopotamia region. Recent excavations conducted between 2022 and 2023 have uncovered evidence of prehistoric and protohistoric occupation, including ceramics and architectural remains dating back to the Late Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages⁵. These finds suggest that the settlement's origins predate the Hellenistic Period.

Historically, the region is referred to as “Izziya” in Bronze Age texts. The earliest known name, “Oiniandos,” appeared during the Hellenistic Period and may be linked to the Hittite “Winuwanda⁶. The name “Issos” gained prominence following the Battle of Issos in 333 BC, where Alexander the Great defeated Persian king Darius III⁷. Later, the city was renamed “Epiphaneia” by Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes as part of broader Hellenization efforts⁸. The Issos Plain has witnessed three major battles and a long settlement sequence from prehistory to the Ottoman period. Its fertile lands supported agriculture, viticulture, and olive cultivation, while its strategic location fostered trade along both land and maritime routes. The urban layout with a grid plan, colonnaded streets, theatre, bouleuterion-odeion, stoa-porticus, temples, basilicas, baths, and prytaneion underscores the city's importance⁹ (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). Notably, the Artemis Bath features mosaics with hunting scenes, geometric motifs, and a calendar mosaic¹⁰.

Excavations since 2022 have revealed the Stoa and Bouleuterion-Odeion, and after the 2023 earthquake, Issos was the only excavation site active in Hatay. Recent projects

¹ Ainsworth 1838, 114–117; Özdilek & Tıbıkoğlu 2023, 24–25; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2023, 29–33; Tıbıkoğlu & Özdilek 2023, 6–8; Özdilek & Tıbıkoğlu 2024, 27; Özdilek, Ersoy & Tıbıkoğlu 2024, 197–222; Özdilek 2024a, 10–11; Özdilek 2024b, 24–25; Tıbıkoğlu & Özdilek 2024, 263–300; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 335–380; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu, Sönmez & Ersoy 2025, 264–284.

² Heberday & Wilhelm 1896, 17–18; Tülek 2012, 175.

³ Str. XIV. 5. 9.

⁴ Jean 1999, 29.

⁵ Yükmén-Edens 2019, 297–320; 2020, 297–310; Özdilek & Tıbıkoğlu 2023, 45.

⁶ Gough 1976, 315; Jean 1999, 30.

⁷ Ksen. *Anab.* I. 2. 22.

⁸ Plin. *Nat.* V. 91; see also, Ramsay 1890, 386; Jones 1998, 201.

⁹ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 342, 343.

¹⁰ Tıbıkoğlu & Özdilek 2024, 263–300; Özdilek 2026, 1–13.

include documentation of temples, basilica mosaics, the Artemis Bath Archaeological Park Project, and initiatives for site management and digital archaeology¹¹ and ancient history and epigraphy studies were carried out¹². Ongoing research and conservation efforts aim to preserve and further understand the historical significance of Issos - Epiphaneia, shedding light on its role as a cultural and commercial hub in ancient Cilicia.

Although certain non-contextual finds uncovered during archaeological excavations, along with historical data, attest to the existence of the settlement from the Prehistoric Ages through the Bronze Age and into the Hellenistic Period, the current architectural remains (Fig. 2) observable on the surface and those revealed thus far through archaeological investigations predominantly reflect a context dating from the Roman Period to the Middle Ages¹³. The civic center of the settlement largely reflects the urban planning principles of the Roman Period (Fig.1). Regular plots arranged around the intersection of two wide main streets running east-west (Decumanus) and north-south (Cardo) were allocated for central public buildings. The Decumanus is flanked by a stoa (colonnaded street), extending between the Artemis Bath complex on the eastern side of the settlement and a bath complex on the western end, near a structure interpreted as a Prytaneion. Beyond this point, it continues toward necropolis areas, some of which have been partially identified. Located along the northern wing of the stoa is the Bouleuterion-Odeion complex¹⁴. A side street branching from the Decumanus provides access to the Theater situated to the North (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). On the southern side of the Decumanus (Fig. 2) lies a temple or basilica¹⁵, likely aligned along the Cardo axis. Immediately to the east of the Theater is a Nymphaeum, and just south of it are architectural remains believed to belong to another temple of the city¹⁶.

An aqueduct, which formed part of a water supply system originating in the Amanus Mountains to the east of the city, defines the northern boundary of the civic center¹⁷. It extends westward to the mound upon which the theater is situated, before turning northward. In the unexcavated areas between the public buildings, considering their spatial positioning and scale, it is assumed that key yet unidentified elements of Roman urbanism, such as an agora and a stadium, were located.

In the subsurface parcels surrounding the civic center, we expect to find residential buildings adorned with mosaic floors, based on information obtained from oral history research and testimonies from the local population. Epiphaneia maintained a strong connection with the harbor settlement of Burnaz, located approximately 9 km to the south on the Mediterranean coast. Structures identified at Burnaz, including bath complexes, a temple, a church, and an aqueduct, as well as epigraphic evidence attesting to the presence of a granarium at the harbor, suggest that the site played a strategic role in regional trade, grain supply, and transportation networks during the Roman Imperial Period.

¹¹ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2023, 29–33, 335–380; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Çelikay 2026, (in press).

¹² Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Çelikay 2026, (in press).

¹³ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2023, 29–33; Özdilek, Ersoy & Tıbıkoğlu 2024a, 197–222; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2024b, 337–370; Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu, Sönmez & Ersoy 2025, 264–284; Çelik 2018, 89–109.

¹⁴ Özdilek 2024b, 24–25.

¹⁵ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 365, 366.

¹⁶ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Çelikay 2026 (in press); Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Çelikay 2025 (in press).

¹⁷ Özdilek, Tıbıkoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 349–354; Özdilek & Tıbıkoğlu 2025a (in press).



Fig. 1 General View of the Stoa Excavations at Issos-Epiphaneia during the 2025 Excavation Season. Archive of the Issos-Epiphaneia Excavation



Fig. 2 Overview of the Ongoing Excavations in the Stoa Area during the 2025 Excavation Season. Issos-Epiphaneia Excavation Archive

The Stoa Porticus

The Decumanus, approximately 70.00 meters of which coinciding with the center of the civic area has been uncovered together with the stoa section, forms a unified architectural axis with its monumental design¹⁸. Including the pedestrian corridors extending on both sides, the colonnaded street has an average width of 14.45 meters and is paved with dark-colored, polygonally shaped basalt stones (Fig. 3, Fig. 4). The porticoes extending along both sides of the street are approximately 7.00 meters wide (Fig. 3). While the northern stoa is largely damaged, the southern stoa is relatively well preserved. Although the initial construction phase of the stoa has not yet been definitively determined, it is understood to have been used for its original function from the late 2nd century CE to the 6th century CE, and later with various modifications and different functions until the 14th century CE. The façade of the structure consists of marble columns with Attic-Ionic bases, most of which remain in situ, standing on a stylobate made of basalt and limestone blocks. The recovered column capitals are generally of the Corinthian and Ionic orders and exhibit highly refined workmanship¹⁹. Behind the façade, a series of shops are aligned side by side, with floors adorned with dedicatory inscriptions and calendar-themed mosaics.

Due to various architectural interventions undertaken during the medieval reuse of the stoa, the mosaics were significantly damaged or entirely lost. Remains of a total of two mosaic pavements have been uncovered along the floor of the south stoa, arranged in sequence from east to west (Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7). Both contain dedicatory inscriptions (Mosaic No. 1: Panel A and Mosaic No. 2: Panel B)²⁰. Mosaic No. 1 is located independently at the eastern end and is separated from the other mosaic pavement to the west (Mosaic No. 2) by a passage. Mosaic No. 2 begins with a panel bearing a dedicatory inscription (Mosaic No. 2: Panel B) and continues uninterrupted westward with calendar panels (Mosaic No. 2: Panels 1–5 and fragment of the bordure between

¹⁸ Özdilek, Tıbikoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 356-365.

¹⁹ Özdilek, Tıbikoğlu & Ersoy 2024, 344; general overview Akseven 2026.

²⁰ Sezgin & Çelik 2015, 247-248; Pamir & Kara 2019, 327; Pamir – Yastı 2020, 377; Pamir, Erdoğan & Acar 2024, 339, 353; Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.

Panels 9 -10, and newly 11 panel)²¹ (Fig. 5).



Fig. 3 The Stoa Porticus and Colonnaded Street Excavated in 2024



Fig. 4 Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Stoa of Epiphaneia. Illustration by N. Sönmez

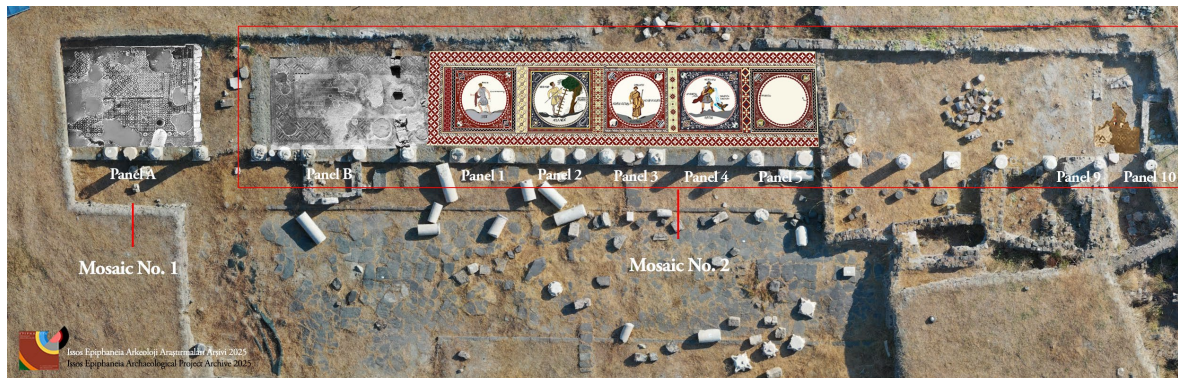


Fig. 5 The Stoa Porticus and the Newly Uncovered September Panel Depicting Grape Treading and Wine Production in the Calendar Mosaic. Illustrations by N. Sönmez 2025



Fig. 6 The Agricultural Activities and Zodiac-Themed Calendar Mosaic of the Stoa at Issos Epiphaneia, Manipulation- and Illustration by N. Sönmez, 2023

²¹ Sezgin & Çelik 2015, 247-248; Pamir & Kara 2019, 327; Pamir & Yastı 2020, 377; Pamir et al. 2022, 414; Pamir et al. 2023, 155-168; Pamir, Erdoğan & Acar 2024, 339, 353.



Fig. 7 Reconstruction of the Calendar Mosaic Depicting Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Representations in the Stoa of Issos-Epiphaneia. Illustration by N. Sönmez, 2023

Excavations in the Southern Stoa Porticus

The 2025 season focused on the western section of the southern stoa (Fig. 8). The Roman Period Stoa was excavated. The stratigraphy of the stoa excavation indicates that the upper layers belong to the 15th-14th century CE Ottoman and Principalities period, the lower layer and dense finds belong to the 14th-11th century CE Crusader Kingdom-Armenian Kingdom period, the 7th -10th century CE Abbasid Period²², the 6th and 5th centuries Byzantine Period is the period when the mosaic floor in the stoa was laid, the Byzantine era continued until the 4th century. The 3rd century CE Roman Imperial phase, based on the stoa's architectural decorations and urban urbanism, the period during which it was built is thought to belong to the 2nd century CE Roman Period, and the early phase is thought to belong to the Late Hellenistic, Early Roman Period, 1st century BCE, 1st century CE. The phase above the stoa contains workshops from the Islamic period. A pool structure associated with these workshops and a wall constructed of basalt and rubble mortar were uncovered, without damaging the mosaic floor.

The study entitled "*Issos Epiphaneia (Hatay-Erzin) Stoa: The Calendar Mosaic with Rural Activities and Zodiac Iconography*" will be presented at the RoGeMoPorTur III: Perceptions of Time in Roman Mosaics symposium, to be held in Osmangazi/Bursa, Turkey, on 19-21 June 2026. In the present article, however, the focus is on "The newly discovered September / Grape Treading Panel in the Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Themed Calendar Mosaic of Issos Epiphaneia Stoa". On May 7, a conference titled "Le panneau nouvellement découvert du mois de septembre foulage du raisin dans la mosaïque calendaire à thème zodiacal et des activités agricoles de la Stoa d'Issos Epiphaneia" was delivered at the École Supérieure, within the AOroc Research Center

²² Bahadır 2009, 163-178; Balaban 2019, 602.

in Paris. In particular, the hypothesis proposed by Prof. Pamir and Prof. Saliou²³, studies conducted prior to 2022, must now be reconsidered in light of the newly discovered evidence.



Fig. 8. Plan and Measurements of the Western Section of the Stoa Excavation Area, Issos Epiphaneia

The 2025 excavation season at Issos Epiphaneia was carried out in the southern porticus of the city's stoa (colonnaded street)²⁴. Fieldwork aimed to uncover further panels of the Calendar Mosaic an elaborate floor mosaic depicting rural activities and zodiac imagery as well as to expose the architectural continuity of the southern stoa²⁵. The excavation concentrated on the western section of the southern portico, an area previously disturbed by medieval architectural interventions, including a pool structure and associated workshop installations. During the campaign, a new mosaic panel was

²³ Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.

²⁴ Özdilek & Tıbıkoğlu 2027 (in press).

²⁵ Tıbıkoğlu & Özdilek 2026 (in press).

discovered beneath these later constructions. This panel, identified as the September / Grape Treading- Wine Production Panel in the Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Themed Calendar Mosaic (Figs. 5, 8, 9).

Issos Epiphaneia Stoa: The Calendar Mosaic with Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Iconography

The Calendar Mosaic with agricultural activities and zodiac iconography of Epiphaneia Stoa consists of twelve monthly panels illustrating seasonal rural activities, zodiac signs and associated Greco-Roman deities, accompanied by bilingual inscriptions (Latin Julian months and Greek Macedonian equivalents)²⁶ (Fig. 8). Each month is personified in the first person through short poetic verses, integrating astrological and seasonal references (e.g., the planetary associations of the zodiac signs: Mars with Scorpio (Scorpion), Jupiter with Sagittarius (Centaur Archer), Saturn with Aquarius (Water Bearer), Jupiter with Pisces (Two Fish), Venus with Taurus (Bull), Mercury with Gemini (Twin Youths), the Moon with Cancer (Crab), the Sun with Leo (Lion), Mercury with Virgo (Maiden), Venus with Libra (Scales), Mars with Aries (Ram), and Saturn with Capricorn (Sea-Goat)).

Two dedicatory inscriptions precede the mosaic sequence: Bishop Romanos of Epiphaneia, who financed the mosaic in April 596 CE, explicitly naming the city “Epiphaneia” for the first time in an inscription²⁷ (Fig. 8). An anonymous donor’s inscription, partially preserved, mentioning the offering of the mosaic as a gift to his city and expressing the hope that his children would continue this tradition²⁸.

The Newly Discovered September/The Grape Treading Process Panel (Panel 11) The mosaic depicts a Roman farmer, portrayed as a robust and youthful male figure engaged in the vintage process. He is shown barefoot, clad in a short rustic tunic that reaches the upper thighs, its folded drapery rendered in soft, rhythmic pleats. A knotted belt cinches the garment tightly at the waist, emphasizing the contours of his muscular physique, particularly the well-defined legs. The folds of the fabric are arranged in an elegant, sculptural manner that accentuates the dynamism of his posture. The farmer carries a large wicker kalathos filled with grapes, balanced against his left arm, whose bent elbow is still discernible despite damage caused by a heavy impact to the upper portion of the figure. With his torso inclined forward, the man pours the grapes over his head into a rectangular stone or wooden vat, depicted with remarkable depth and proportion. The action is captured in a moment of suspended motion, almost cinematic in its slow, narrative rhythm as clusters of plump white and dark grapes tumble from the basket (Fig. 10).

The must flows from the wooden pressing vat through a rounded channel into a collection basin below, gradually filling it with freshly pressed juice. The farmer’s left foot, bare and firmly placed on the rim of the vat, reinforces the sense of balance and physical exertion inherent in the scene. In vase paintings and mosaic panels that generally depict grape treading, the process is typically represented by figures crushing the grapes with their feet inside a treading vat; however, in this example, the figure’s feet are positioned outside the treading basin.

²⁶ Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.

²⁷ Pamir, Erdoğan & Acar 2024, 339, 353; Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.

²⁸ Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.



Fig. 9 The Stoa Porticus and the Newly Uncovered September Panel Depicting Grape Treading and Wine Production in the Calendar Mosaic



Fig. 10 The Stoa Porticus and the Newly Uncovered September Panel Depicting Grape Treading and Wine Production in the Calendar Mosaic with Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Representations

At the middle corner of the composition, the Greek inscription “Ἑρμῆ / Hermes” is visible, positioned within the circular tondo’s border. This reference links the scene to the Roman deity Mercury (Hermes), who in the astrological calendar, corresponds to Virgo, symbolized by the Maiden, representing the month of September, the time of the grape harvest (Fig. 11). It is anticipated that the continuation of this inscription, possibly with poetic or dedicatory verses, will be uncovered during the 2026 excavation season, as suggested by parallels in adjacent panels. The emblematic field is enclosed within a triangular mountain-patterned circular frame, bordered by floral vine tendrils and ivy motifs that emerge from corner. The design employs a restrained yet harmonious palette of cream, deep burgundy, and muted green tones, creating a vivid contrast against the dark red background. The outermost border features an intricate ribbon motif in black, burgundy, yellow, cream and gray, executed with refined craftsmanship and balanced rhythm (Fig. 11).

In both pose and physique, the farmer corresponds to other male figures represented in the mosaic program embodying the idealized image of the Roman rustic laborer, vigorous and youthful, a celebration of both seasonal toil and agrarian abundance under divine patronage. In Roman art, scenes such as this were often integrated into the rural calendar cycle, in which each month was represented by the appropriate agricultural activity corresponding to the season. The month depicted here, September, was traditionally associated with the harvest and pressing of grapes, the culmination of the viticultural year and a potent symbol of both labor and abundance²⁹. Beyond its purely agrarian function, such imagery also carried ritual and religious significance. In Roman belief, each month was linked to festivals honoring deities connected to the seasonal produce and the labors of the countryside. During September, festivals such as the Vinalia Rustica (August 19) and the Vinalia Urbana (April 23) celebrated the grape and the new wine, while the Vendemia, observed on 6 September, marked the ritual beginning of the grape harvest and the symbolic transition from rural toil to the enjoyment of wine’s bounty³⁰. These festivities embodied the interdependence of agriculture, religion, and civic identity within Roman society³¹.

The iconography of the present panel thus not only records the seasonal task of wine pressing, but also evokes this broader mythic and festive context the Vendemia as a moment of renewal and thanksgiving, celebrated in both domestic and sacred space³². The depiction of the youthful vintager, rendered with muscular vigor and rhythmic motion, becomes a visual counterpart to the poetic language of abundance and fertility found in Roman calendars and rural mosaics from North Africa, Sicily, and the eastern provinces³³. At the zodiac and seasonal cycles; in parallel with these agrarian calendars, Roman art frequently incorporated the Zodiac, represented as twelve circular emblems, each corresponding to a sign associated with a particular month and its agricultural rhythm³⁴. Such cycles often appear in centrally planned mosaics, where the Sun (Sol),

²⁹ Dunbabin 1999, 183-191.

³⁰ Scheid 2005, 142-145.

³¹ Toynbee 1973, 215-218.

³² Blázquez 1993, 204-210.

³³ At the Analogie part of the article we compare the rural calendar mosaics of Saint-Romain-en-Gal and Thysdrus (El Djem).

³⁴ Levi 1947, 235-243.

the Moon (Luna) and the Four Seasons were personified and arranged around the Zodiacal ring, creating a cosmic vision of time and fertility³⁵.



Fig. 11. Newly Uncovered “ΓΟΡΠΙΕΩΣ” September Panel Depicting Grape Treading in the Calendar Mosaic of the Stoa at Issos-Epiphaneia. Illustration by N. Sönmez, 2025

In this context, Hermes (Mercury) appears not merely as a divine messenger but as the astrological ruler of Virgo, the sign governing September in the Roman system corresponding to the eleventh month in the Macedonian calendar³⁶. His presence within the tondo, inscribed as Ἑρμῆϊ, thus reinforces both the temporal identification of the scene and its cosmic dimension: the grape harvest as a divinely ordained event within the eternal cycle of nature and the heavens³⁷.

Although the Roman civil calendar began in March, making September the seventh month, the sequence represented in this mosaic appears instead to follow the Macedonian calendrical system, in which the year commenced with November at Issos-Epiphaneia Stoa Calendar Mosaic. Within this framework, the present September panel corresponds to the eleventh month, a designation that aligns the scene not only with the seasonal rhythm of the grape harvest but also with the astral cycle governed by Hermes/Mercury as ruler of Virgo.

The use of the Macedonian calendrical system, within the provincial context in which the mosaic was produced, reflects the continuation of Hellenistic Macedonian traditions in the city of Epiphaneia, situated on the Issos plain the region once marked by Alexander the Great's victory. It underscores the synthesis and integration of Roman iconographic conventions with the Macedonian, Antiochene artistic tradition, as well as

³⁵ Ling 1998, 96-100.

³⁶ Samuel 1972, 82-84.

³⁷ Barton 1994, 45-47.

the adaptation of these forms to local cultural characteristics (Fig. 8).

The mosaic, dated to the 6th century CE, bears traces of deliberate damage, particularly to the facial area of one of the figural representations. Archaeological evidence indicates that this destruction occurred either during the Byzantine Iconoclastic period (8th–9th centuries CE) or in the early Abbasid phase, when the stoa once richly decorated with figural mosaics was repurposed into a series of small workshops³⁸ (Fig. 3). A wall built directly over the mosaic surface marks this transformation. While most of the surrounding figures remain intact, the intentional defacement of the face, likely struck with a rounded stone, suggests a targeted act rather than random damage (Fig. 10).



Fig. 12. The Newly Uncovered September Panel Depicting Grape Treading and Wine Production in the Calendar Mosaic with Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Representations at the Stoa of Issos-Epiphaneia. Illustration by N. Sónmez, 2026

Two possible explanations arise. The first relates to the Byzantine iconoclastic movement, during which figural imagery, particularly facial depictions, was seen as idolatrous and subject to destruction³⁹. Alternatively, the act may correspond to the early Islamic iconoclastic attitudes following the Abbasid conquest of Cilicia (late 7th–8th centuries CE), when representational art in public or semi-public contexts was increasingly discouraged in accordance with Qur’anic injunctions against figural portrayals⁴⁰. However, the preservation of other facial images within the same mosaic cycle complicates a purely ideological interpretation, suggesting that the damaged figure may have held specific symbolic or religious significance, or that its position near

³⁸ Mango 1976, 214–219; Millet 2001, 91–112.

³⁹ Mango 1977, 160–162; Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 102–108.

⁴⁰ Grabar 1980, 68–73; Flood 2002, 641–642.

the later wall exposed it to accidental or secondary acts of impact during the stoa's conversion⁴¹.

Inscriptions:

Left: Greek month name "ΤΟΠΗΙΕΩΣ" (September) (Fig. 10). It is the name of the month corresponding to September in the Macedonian calendar.

Right: Greek inscription "ΕΡΜΕΙ" (Hermes), identifying the Roman deity associated with this month.

Zodiac: Virgo, corresponding to September, completes the symbolic cycle.

This panel emphasizes the agricultural economy of Epiphaneia, particularly viticulture and wine production and highlights the integration of Roman astrology with local seasonal practices.

Dimensions: 4.25 × 4.15 m.

Border: The emblematic field is first encircled by an inner band decorated with a triangular mountain motif/ diamond, forming a continuous circular frame, 3.45 m diameter that delineates the central scene. Surrounding this is a broad ornamental zone adorned with floral vine tendrils and ivy leaves that sprout symmetrically from corner, symbolizing growth and fertility. The color palette within these inner frames is composed of soft cream tones contrasted with deep burgundy and muted green, producing a subtle yet harmonious chromatic balance against the dark red background of the panel. Encasing the entire composition is the outermost border, executed with meticulous craftsmanship, featuring an interlaced ribbon motif rendered in black, burgundy, yellow, cream, and gray hues. This carefully balanced ornamental sequence from the geometric mountain pattern to the luxuriant vegetal scrolls and the elegant ribbon frame demonstrates the mosaicist's refined sense of rhythm, symmetry and color harmony.

Dating: Based on the inscriptions and the style of the mosaic, this mosaic is dated to the 6th century CE.

The Distinctive Character of the Epiphaneia Mosaic

Within the Roman world, examples of Rural Calendar Mosaics, Monthly Calendar Mosaics and Zodiac Mosaics are well attested; however, the Epiphaneia Mosaic uniquely integrates the characteristics of all three types (Fig. 5, Fig. 8). It combines the agricultural calendar, the inscribed monthly cycle, and the zodiacal program with the features of bilingual inscriptions, creating a synthesis that unites Roman astrological symbolism, agrarian iconography and didactic poetic expression. Furthermore, one of its most remarkable aspects is the presence of honorary inscriptions referring to the patron of the mosaic, its creator and acts of civic benefaction as well as explicit references to the name of the city itself.

Rural Calendar Mosaics, Monthly Calendar Mosaics, and Zodiac Mosaics in Roman Mosaic Art

The Agricultural Calendar Mosaics⁴²

The Romans, originally an agrarian people, successfully managed their agricultural estates with remarkable efficiency thanks to their extraordinary sense of organization.

⁴¹ Kitzinger 1977, 220-223.

⁴² Hatot 2019, 21-40, Hannah 2005, 72-83.

Among their innovations was the development of the so-called “agricultural calendar” or “parapegma” a system designed primarily to resolve a fundamental problem that had arisen since the foundation of Rome: the discrepancy between the official civic calendar and the solar year. The official calendar, based on the lunar cycle, comprised 354 days, whereas the solar year, determined through the observation of the sun’s rising and setting, contained 365 days. The resulting difference of eleven days rendered the official calendar unreliable for determining the recurrence of the seasons and consequently the proper scheduling of agricultural activities throughout the year. Over time, the term “agricultural calendar” came to denote large mosaics that represented various seasonal farming tasks along with certain religious festivals, arranged in accordance with the rhythm of the seasons. One of the most celebrated examples is the Saint-Romain-en-Gal mosaic, discovered in 1891. This artwork originally adorned the floor of a wealthy villa in the ancient city of Vienne (Isère). Produced in workshops active in the region from the second century CE onward, the mosaic was initially composed of thirty-two square panels, nineteen of which are described in detail in subsequent sections.

The Months of the Year Mosaics⁴³

The ancient Roman calendar, traditionally attributed to Romulus, the legendary first king of Rome, was composed of ten months identified merely by numerical order. The two winter months, considered agriculturally inactive, were not included in the count. The year thus began in March and consisted of 304 days, creating a significant discrepancy with the 365 days solar year already known to the Egyptians as early as 4200 BCE.

This short year of early Rome soon proved incompatible with the natural seasons. To address the issue, Romulus’s successor, Numa Pompilius, introduced two additional months January (Ianuarius) and February (Februarius) extending the year to 354 days and aligning it more closely with the lunar cycle.

However, the persistent misalignment between the lunar and solar calendars continued to cause confusion in both civic and agricultural life. In response, Julius Caesar, in 46 BCE, implemented a comprehensive reform by establishing the solar-based year of 365 days, with an additional day added every four years. This Julian calendar, created with the assistance of prominent scholars, including Sosigenes of Alexandria, became the direct precursor to the modern Gregorian calendar in use today.

Roman Astrology and Zodiac Mosaics

The study of Roman astrology and its artistic manifestations, particularly in the form of zodiac mosaics, offers valuable insight into the fusion of Greco-Roman cosmology, astral religion, and imperial ideology. The Zodiac (Greek: zōidiakos kyklos), representing the twelve constellations along the ecliptic, entered Roman culture primarily through Hellenistic astronomy and astrology, which in turn had absorbed Babylonian and Egyptian elements.

By the Roman Imperial Period (1st–4th centuries CE), astrology had become a widespread intellectual and cultural phenomenon across the Roman world. Scholars such as Manilius in his *Astronomica* (ca. 10–20 CE) articulated a distinctly Roman synthesis of astrology, combining Stoic determinism with celestial divination⁴⁴.

⁴³ Hannah 2005, 97–112; Hatot 2019, 41–64; Stern 2012, 145–169.

⁴⁴ General overview for Manilius 1977.

Astrology permeated various aspects of daily life from medical and agricultural practices to political prophecy and imperial legitimation⁴⁵.

One of the most vivid reflections of this astral worldview appears in the zodiac mosaics found throughout the Roman Empire, especially in domestic, religious, and public spaces. These mosaics, typically arranged in circular or square compositions, depict the twelve zodiac signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces), often surrounding personifications of the Sun (Sol), the Moon (Luna), or the four seasons⁴⁶.

Notable examples include the mosaic of El Djem (Tunisia), where Helios stands at the center of the zodiacal circle, symbolizing cosmic order and imperial universality; and the Saint-Romain-en-Gal mosaic (France), which integrates agricultural imagery with celestial motifs, illustrating the correspondence between seasonal labor and cosmic cycles⁴⁷. In the eastern provinces, particularly in Syria and Palestine, the zodiac motif persisted well into the Late Antique Period, as seen in the synagogue mosaics of Beit Alpha and Hammath Tiberias, where Jewish and Roman iconographies intertwined in a shared visual language of cosmic harmony⁴⁸.

The recurrence of zodiacal imagery in Roman art thus reveals not only the popular fascination with astrology but also a broader intellectual effort to align human activity with divine cosmic order. Through the mosaic medium durable, decorative, and symbolically rich Roman society visually affirmed its belief in a universe governed by predictable celestial rhythms and divine reason (*ratio divina*).

Analogue: The Calendar of Philocalus⁴⁹

The closest parallel to the calendar mosaic recovered from Epiphaneia, in terms of its conceptual framework, iconographic structure, and descriptive visual language, is the manuscript known as the Calendar of Philocalus⁵⁰. The original illustrated manuscript is lost; however, several later copies have survived. It is regarded as the earliest known codex to have contained full-page illustrations. The work is also referred to as the Chronography or the Calendar of 354. The designation Calendar of Philocalus (or Philocalian Calendar) is sometimes used to describe the entire collection, while in other instances it refers specifically to its sixth section, namely the calendar itself. Alternative nomenclatures such as Philocalus Calendar, Philocalian Calendar, or Codex-Calendar of 354 are also encountered in scholarly literature.

In this context, the Calendar of Philocalus represents a crucial comparative framework for interpreting late antique calendrical imagery. It preserves a structured system in which the months are personified and accompanied by visual representations of seasonal and agricultural activities, often integrated with zodiacal symbolism. This combination of temporal, agricultural, and astronomical elements provides an important interpretative model for understanding similar compositional strategies in mosaic calendars, such as the one from Epiphaneia. In the iconography of *MENSIS*

⁴⁵ Barton 1994, 47-82.

⁴⁶ Beck 2007, 121-138.

⁴⁷ Dunbabin 1999, 271-275.

⁴⁸ Levine 1995, 45-69.

⁴⁹ http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography_of_354_06_calendar.htm (access date: 10.05.2026).

⁵⁰ Strzygowski 1888, 44-80.

FEBRVARIVS, the depiction of water pouring from a kantharos and the waterfowl beneath it closely resembles the imagery found in the Epiphaneia mosaic. Likewise, in MENSIS OCTOBER, the grape motif placed beside the figure corresponds to the grape harvest associated with that month and parallels the grape-pressing theme represented in Epiphaneia. The scenes share several common characteristics typical of calendrical mosaics: vegetal borders framing the compositions, a central figure associated with the rural product of the relevant month, the corresponding zodiac sign of the Roman calendar, and representations of Roman official personifications. The Epiphaneia mosaic appears to have been produced according to the mosaic template of this theme, which had already been attested in Roman mosaics of the 4th century CE. Elements such as the overall theme, the figures, the presence of two inscriptions, the use of Latin, and the depiction of Roman official personifications demonstrate the Roman-Latin influence of the mosaic. However, the square panels seem to have been completed with features belonging to the local mosaic repertory of Antioch, including regional geometric borders, mosaics incorporated into the honorary inscription panels, and motifs such as the gaming board pattern.

The Grape Treading Process Panel- A Detail from the Saint-Romain-en-Gal Mosaic, Early 3rd Century CE, Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye⁵¹

The grape-treading process represented one of the most essential stages immediately following the harvest in Roman viticulture. In this stage, whole grape clusters were trod underfoot, without being detached from their stems, to release their juice the must (moût) which would then undergo fermentation. In this mosaic scene, two grape treaders (calcatores) are depicted at work, rhythmically pressing grapes within a large stone or wooden vat. Their coordinated movements not only ensured balance but also maximized the extraction of juice while preserving the integrity of the process. Beyond its technical aspect, grape treading held symbolic and social significance in Roman culture. It marked the commencement of wine production and was often carried out in a festive atmosphere, reflecting both the communal nature of rural labor and the celebration of agricultural abundance.

The Month of September

Like the three months that follow it, September preserves in its name the trace of the ancient Roman archaic calendar⁵². Beginning the year in March, the Romans counted September as the seventh month (septem, Latin for “seven”)⁵³. In the Republican and Imperial periods, this month was associated not only with agricultural work but also with a series of public games and religious festivals, reflecting Rome’s deep interconnection between civic life, religion, and agrarian rhythms⁵⁴. First and Second Weeks of September; Ludi Actiaci (2 September): Games commemorating Octavian’s naval victory over Marcus Antonius at Actium in Greece in 31 BCE. These games, celebrated in Rome every five years, featured gymnastic contests, equestrian events, and musical performances, symbolizing the unity of physical and moral discipline under

⁵¹ Brun 2011, 145-162.

⁵² General overview for Cato 1960; Varro, *De re rustica*, *De Lingua Latina* VI. 33; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I. 12. 15.

⁵³ Hatot 2019, 54.

⁵⁴ Hatot 2019, 54; Scullard 1981, 197-200.

the new Augustan order⁵⁵. Furiae Festival (6 September); ritual celebrations dedicated to the Furies (Erinyes), divine personifications of justice and vengeance, who were believed to safeguard social and cosmic order⁵⁶. Ludi Romani (4–19 September); also known as the Great Roman Games, instituted by King Tarquinius Priscus in honor of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, these festivities included theatrical performances, chariot races, and religious sacrifices, reaffirming the link between divine favor and the prosperity of the Roman state⁵⁷. Agrarian Symbolism and Iconography: in Roman agricultural tradition, September was primarily the month of the grape harvest (vindemia) and wine pressing (foulage). The El Jem mosaic depicts two young men treading clusters of grapes inside a large vat. They maintain their balance on the slippery pulp by holding onto leather straps wound around a supporting pole⁵⁸. Beyond its vivid agrarian character, the scene may also evoke the festival of Vendemia, celebrated on 6 September, marking the culmination of the grape harvest and the symbolic transition from the labor of the fields to the abundance of the vintage season⁵⁹.

Mosaïque du Tennis Club de Cherchel-France

A heavily fragmented scene on the southern side depicts the treading of grapes, presenting a vivid parallel to other representations of the vinification process in late antique mosaics⁶⁰. Along the edge of the vat filled with grapes, the remains of two feet can be discerned, suggesting the presence of figures engaged in the pressing ritual. From the side of the vat, the must flows through a lion-headed spout into a dolium, emphasizing the symbolic and functional aspects of wine production⁶¹. This composition closely recalls the mosaic cycles illustrating le cycle des vendanges, such as that of the Mosaïque du Tennis Club de Chervil in Algeria⁶² and finds an even more direct analogue in the depiction of grape-treading at Epiphaneia. The correspondence between these scenes reveals a shared iconographic vocabulary of the grape harvest across the Mediterranean basin, articulating both the economic and ritual dimensions of viticulture.

Zodiac Mosaic in Ancient Palastine, Sepphoris Synagogues, House of Orpheus, Villas Huqoq, Hammarat Tiberias, Yaphia⁶³

The comparative study of zodiac mosaics in ancient Palestine notably from Sepphoris, Huqoq and Yaphia reveals a rich diversity of iconographic and stylistic interpretations, despite their shared symbolic framework. Each example features the three principal components of the zodiac motif: the twelve signs, the personifications of the months or tribes and seasonal or celestial imagery. While the overall compositional logic remains consistent, local adaptations reflect differing artistic traditions and cultural influences. In Sepphoris, the zodiac appears in a geometrically organized panel composed of twelve interlacing medallions, surrounded by winged figures representing the seasons and

⁵⁵ Cass. Dio 51. 1–3; Suet. *Aug.* 31; see also, Dürüşken 2000, 164–174; Hatot 2019, 54.

⁵⁶ Ov, *Fast.* IX. 447–460; Serv. *Aen.* VII. 324; see also, Fowler 1899, 258–260.

⁵⁷ Liv. I. 35; Dion. Hal. VII. 71; see also, Scullard 1981, 51–54.

⁵⁸ Dunbabin 1999, 146–148; Hatot 2019, 41, 54.

⁵⁹ Col. *Rust.* XII. 18; Plin., *Nat. Hist.* XVIII. 285; see also, Scullard 1981, 162–163.

⁶⁰ Brun 2004, 243.

⁶¹ Brun 2004, 243–245.

⁶² Ferdi 2005, 86–89, Pl. XXXIX.

⁶³ Weiss 2024, 261–269.

executed with refined color symmetry and spatial clarity. In contrast, Huqoq integrates the zodiac signs with personifications of the months and features decorative dolphins and guilloche motifs, while Yaphia merges the zodiac and the twelve tribes of Israel, demonstrating a hybrid religious and cosmological narrative. These variations highlight two distinct iconographic approaches: one urban and Hellenized, as seen in Sepphoris and the other rural and didactic, as reflected in Huqoq and Yaphia. When compared to the Epiphaneia Agricultural and Zodiac Themed Calendar Mosaic, the parallels are striking. Like the Palestinian synagogue examples, the Epiphaneia mosaic unites astrological symbolism, agrarian cycles and temporal personifications, yet it does so within a bilingual (Greek and Latin) cultural and civic context rather than a purely religious one. Both traditions express a cosmic order linking human labor, time and divinity but the Epiphaneia mosaic extends this symbolism beyond the sacred, merging Roman imperial ideology, astrological imagery and seasonal agricultural activities into a unified visual language. Thus, while the Palestinian mosaics emphasize communal and theological identity, the Epiphaneia mosaic represents a broader syncretism, blending art, science and agrarian life a synthesis that situates it among the most complex and conceptually rich examples of Late Antique zodiac iconography in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Zodiac-Themed Panel from the House of the Calendar at Antioch

Among the earliest examples of calendar-related mosaics in the Roman East is the House of the Calendar mosaic from ancient Antioch on the Orontes, dated to the 2nd century CE and now preserved in the Hatay Archaeology Museum, Antakya⁶⁴. The complex includes several rooms paved with mythological scenes, among which two Room 1-A (Thetis) and Room 1-B (Oceanus) are particularly significant for understanding the cosmological and zodiacal symbolism of the Antiochene mosaic tradition. The iconographic program associates marine deities such as Oceanus and Tethys with a visual conception of the cosmos structured by cyclical and elemental forces. This combination of aquatic divinities, marine fauna, and flowing compositions evokes the eternal continuity of time and nature, aligning with the calendrical theme indicated by the villa's name⁶⁵. While the precise representation of the zodiacal signs within the extant panels is fragmentary, the symbolic framework of cosmic order, cyclical temporality, and seasonal regeneration resonates with the later development of zodiac mosaics across the Roman East, particularly in domestic and ecclesiastical contexts⁶⁶. Stylistically, the House of the Calendar exemplifies the Antiochene mosaic school, noted for its refined opus tessellatum technique, naturalistic modeling, and rich color palette. The figures of Oceanus and Tethys are rendered with dynamic movement and marine attributes flowing hair, seaweed crowns, dolphins, and hippocamps serving as visual metaphors for the cosmic waters enveloping the world⁶⁷. The integration of mythological and temporal symbolism within a domestic setting anticipates the fusion of calendar and cosmological imagery that would later appear in Late Antique mosaics, such as the Epiphaneia Agricultural and Zodiac-Themed Calendar Mosaic⁶⁸. When

⁶⁴ Levi 1947, 204-206.

⁶⁵ Cimok 2000, 42-49.

⁶⁶ Balty 1995, 89-104.

⁶⁷ Dunbabin 1999, 178-181.

⁶⁸ Levi 1947, 204-206.

compared to the Epiphaneia example, the House of the Calendar mosaic reflects an earlier and mythologically grounded conception of cosmic time, where divine forces regulate natural cycles through elemental and marine imagery. In contrast, the Epiphaneia mosaic of the 6th century CE reinterprets these cosmological principles within a Christianized and agrarian framework, integrating bilingual inscriptions, zodiacal references, and depictions of rural labor as part of a broader didactic and theological narrative. Thus, the Antioch mosaic stands as a classical antecedent to the symbolic synthesis achieved in the Epiphaneia Stoa, illustrating the enduring legacy of Antioch's artistic and intellectual influence on the visual culture of Cilicia Pedias and beyond.

Zodiac Mosaics of Prusia A. O. (Bursa)⁶⁹

The zodiac mosaic pavement, dated to the 3rd–4th centuries CE, features a circular composition depicting the twelve zodiac signs encircling the sun god Sol Invictus at the center, with the four seasons personified as female figures in the corners⁷⁰. Beginning above the head of Sol Invictus and proceeding counterclockwise, the sequence of signs though partly damaged includes Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, and Aries. The animal related signs (Aries, Taurus, Scorpio, Capricorn) are rendered as zoomorphic figures, while others (Gemini, Virgo, Libra, Sagittarius) are personified, such as Virgo as Demeter (Ceres), Gemini with Heracles and the Muse Calliope, Libra with Apollo and Sagittarius as a centaur archer⁷¹. When compared with the Epiphaneia Calendar Mosaic, this example illustrates a more classical zodiacal iconography centred on Sol Invictus and seasonal personifications, whereas the Epiphaneia mosaic integrates zodiac symbols within an agricultural and didactic calendar framework combining astrological, agrarian and epigraphic elements in a bilingual and narrative program unique to Late Antique Cilicia.

Conclusion

The discovery of the September Panel/ Grape Treading Panel in the Agricultural Activities and Zodiac Themed Calendar Mosaic of Issos Epiphaneia Stoa in the Calendar Mosaic of Issos Epiphaneia significantly contributes to our knowledge of rural life, seasonal labour and religious symbolism in Cilicia Pedias during Late Antiquity (Fig. 8). The panel not only expands the known mosaic cycle but also provides: New epigraphic evidence for the month of September in Greek, an explicit reference to the god Hermes, rarely attested in comparable mosaics, Iconographic testimony to viticulture as a central activity of the region (Fig. 10, Fig. 11). Together with the inscriptions of Bishop Romanos and the anonymous donor, the mosaic attests to the city's Christian leadership, civic pride and cultural exchange between local and imported workshops.

Seasonal and zodiac mosaics depicting rural activities are well known in the corpus of ancient mosaic literature. In light of this evidence, the lost original of "the Chronography of 354" dated to 354 CE and containing illustrated representations of rural activities accompanied by zodiacal imagery, as well as depictions of Roman official personifications and Egyptian deities and cult practices appears to have exerted a long-lasting influence on later visual traditions. Although the original manuscript has not

⁶⁹ Çitakoğlu 2016, 1-32.

⁷⁰ Çitakoğlu 2016, 18-19.

⁷¹ Çitakoğlu 2016, 18-19.

survived, its iconography is preserved through Renaissance and earlier Carolingian copies containing illustrations derived from the lost archetype. The remarkable similarities in both content and iconography between these illustrations and the 6th-century CE Calendar Mosaic of Epiphaneia strongly suggest the continuity and transmission of Late Antique visual models into the Byzantine Period. At present, the Epiphaneia Calendar Mosaic constitutes the closest known parallel to this lost Late Roman codex. The existence of pictorial mosaic representations in a Byzantine context that reflect themes and compositions associated with one of the earliest illustrated codices of antiquity is therefore of considerable scholarly importance, particularly for understanding the transmission of artistic models, calendrical imagery, and visual culture from Late Antiquity into the Byzantine world.

The Epiphaneia example is of particular significance in this context, as it represents the closest known Late Antique parallel to the lost archetype of the world-famous earliest illustrated calendrical and zodiacal codex tradition. Although the original manuscript is no longer extant, its iconographic and structural influence appears to be reflected most closely in the Epiphaneia Calendar Mosaic, making this monument exceptionally important for understanding the transmission of Roman visual culture.

The Epiphaneia mosaic was produced by Roman artisans and clearly reflects a Roman conceptual and visual framework. This is evident in its subject matter, iconography, the depiction of Roman officials, and the representation of figures in Roman dress and narrative conventions. The thematic organization of the mosaic also suggests an awareness of the codex tradition that likely informed its compositional structure. Furthermore, the bilingual inscriptions in both Greek and Latin demonstrate the coexistence and administrative integration of Latin and Macedonian/Hellenistic calendrical systems, reflecting the continuity of Hellenistic cultural influence originating from the age of Alexander the Great.

The square or near-square panels, along with the surrounding geometric borders and inscriptional frames, are likely attributable to a local Antiochene workshop tradition, while the central emblematic compositions appear to derive from a different production context, suggesting a multi-workshop collaboration.

Historically, Epiphaneia's position within the broader Hellenistic, Roman, and Late Antique continuum further reinforces the importance of the mosaic. The city maintained sustained connections with central Roman authority, as evidenced by administrative inscriptions, references to Roman officials, the presence of a granary (*granarium*), and settlement by Roman veterans. Historical accounts also attest to the presence or passage of prominent Roman figures such as Cicero and Pompeius Magnus in the wider region, underscoring its integration into Roman political and military networks.

In this respect, the Epiphaneia Calendar Mosaic is not only a key monument for mosaic studies, but also a crucial visual document for understanding Roman administrative presence, cultural transmission, and the reception of early codex-based calendrical imagery within a provincial yet highly connected urban center. The Epiphaneia example, however, stands out with its unique characteristics; the Calendar Mosaic presents a full twelve-month cycle of rural activities, each panel considerably larger in scale than other known parallels, arranged in an exceptionally long and uninterrupted sequence, rendered bilingually, and enriched with zodiacal references and accompanying poetic verses.

The scenes of rural activities correspond closely to seasonal agricultural practices that have continued in the Issos Plain from antiquity to the present. The newly discovered September panel is particularly significant: it illustrates grape harvesting and wine production; activities deeply embedded in the history and identity of the region. It is well established that the origin and domestication of wild grapevines spread from the North Caucasus region (present-day Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) into Northern Anatolia and Central Anatolia, associated with Hittite culture, and subsequently reached Western Anatolia and Thrace before extending into Greece⁷². Our knowledge of Cilician wine is derived in part from Xenophon, and it is known that it was exported from the region of Cilicia to Egypt. In the *Anabasis* (*The March of the Ten Thousand*), Xenophon recounts that while passing through Cilicia with a mercenary Greek army in the service of Prince Cyrus, he observed, over a distance of ten miles, an extensive and fertile plain filled with vineyards⁷³; this plain was most likely the Issos Plain. The region of Cilicia, together with North Africa and Crete, was renowned in the Roman Period for its wines made from sun-dried grapes, known as *passum*⁷⁴. This type of wine was not forbidden to women and was believed to have beneficial effects on health, particularly due to its mild laxative properties⁷⁵. Wine also held an important place in medicine. The Cilician physician and botanist Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus, in his work *De Materia Medica*, provides information on medicinal wines infused with healing herbs⁷⁶. Another well-known Cilician wine was flavored with hyssop⁷⁷. The city of Aigai, a neighbor of Epiphaneia, is also recorded in sources as an important producer and exporter of wine⁷⁸. The homogenization of agricultural culture in Mediterranean countries became evident within the unity of the Roman Empire. In the Roman Period, agriculture resembled horticulture, and the most important cultivated plants were of Levantine origin. After the Roman Period, this tradition continued with pruning tools, rakes, water channels, cisterns, reservoirs, and carefully maintained trees, as seen in Cilicia⁷⁹. Cicero, who struggled against the famous Cilician pirates of antiquity, reports that the commander Pompey the Great settled these pirates in certain cities of Cilicia Pedias in order to pacify them. One of these cities was Epiphaneia, where the pirates were encouraged to engage in agriculture as part of their integration. As is well known, viticulture requires a stable, sedentary lifestyle and is incompatible with the customs of nomadic populations⁸⁰. The earliest known name of the settlement, Oeniandos (Gr. Oiniandos), attested in Latin sources of the 1st century CE, derives from the Greek *oinos* ("wine"), and is connected with the Hittite word *wiyanawanta*, associated with viticulture. Xenophon also highlights the abundance of vines in the Issos Plain⁸¹. After the victory of Alexander the Great, the city came under

⁷² Doğer 2023, 20-27; Hehn 2025, 40-46.

⁷³ Doğer 2023, 219.

⁷⁴ Doğer 2023, 220.

⁷⁵ Doğer 2023, 220.

⁷⁶ Doğer 2023, 40.

⁷⁷ Doğer 2023, 220.

⁷⁸ Doğer 2023, 220.

⁷⁹ Hehn 2025, 99.

⁸⁰ Hehn 2025, 103.

⁸¹ Ksen. *Anab.* I. 2. 22.

his influence, and a strong Macedonian impact was felt in the region. In particular, the use of the Macedonian calendar system and the fact that the word for September corresponds to its name in the Macedonian calendar suggest that this cultural interaction lasted for approximately 900 years. In this regard, the mosaic serves as both a visual chronicle of agricultural continuity and a cultural testament to the coexistence of Christian and classical elements during Late Antiquity. The significance of viticulture is further attested in the city's bouleuterion-odeion, where its seating steps were repurposed as a winepress in late antiquity, and by a dedicatory inscription of a Dionysian priest on a postament block, dated to the 2nd century CE Roman Period, currently under study by F. Yilmaz and S. Bönisch-Meyer. Inscribed marks appear at various points on the door blocks at the eastern and western parodos entrances of the bouleuterion-odeion. Detailed examination of these marks has shown that they depict vineyard tools such as the *falx vinitoria* and the *dolabra*. This evidence suggests that, following its original civic function in the Roman Period, the council building was likely repurposed in Late Antiquity particularly during the 5th and 6th centuries CE as a wine workshop, while the stage building appears to have been used as a glass workshop. More broadly, viticulture and wine were central to the economy of Asia Minor, alongside olive oil, cereals, marble, metals, timber, textiles, and fish, all exploited by the Romans for trade and consumption. The Epiphaneia Calendar Mosaic not only reflects agricultural cycles but also emphasizes the city's long-standing association with viticulture and wine production. In particular, the September panel illustrates grape harvesting and wine making, embodying a cultural continuity that extends from the Hittite period through the Roman and Byzantine eras. The mosaic also reflects the coexistence of 6th-century CE Christian prosperity when Epiphaneia functioned as a bishopric near the Catabolos pilgrimage harbor—and enduring local pagan traditions. In this context, the work can be interpreted as indirectly reflecting connections with central Roman authority and the iconographic influence of the earliest Roman codex tradition. The inclusion of key agricultural products highlights how Epiphaneia's local economy and daily life were integrated into a broader Roman ideological framework, creating a visual system in which inhabitants could recognize their own practices within imperial representation. Thus, the mosaic represents a synthesis of astronomical, agricultural, and poetic traditions, visualizing the harmony between cosmic and earthly order. It further reflects the cultural continuity of Epiphaneia across the Roman and Byzantine periods, combining pagan imagery, Christian symbolism, and civic identity within a unified artistic program. The bilingual Greek and Latin inscriptions confirm the city's multilingual character and underscore its cosmopolitan identity, shaped by both Hellenistic heritage and Roman political and cultural structures.

In studies conducted prior to 2022, based on the spatial arrangement of the calendar panels and epigraphic evidence, Prof. Pamir and Prof. Saliou proposed⁸² that the Epiphaneia/Antiochene calendar system began in September and that the overall sequence of the mosaic was organized according to this initial principle. According to this model, it was further suggested that the September and October panels had been removed and subsequently covered by two later dedicatory inscriptions, resulting in the loss of these sections and the disruption of the original panel sequence, leading to the hypothesis that the calendar originally began in November. The same hypothesis

⁸² Pamir & Saliou 2024, 95-111.

argued that the dates mentioned in the dedicatory inscriptions may reflect a slightly later phase than the actual production of the mosaic panels, and therefore that the chronology of the calendar cycle required reassessment. However, the 2025 excavation season conducted by our team identified border fragments belonging to the August panel, and the subsequent discovery of the September panel along the western axis of the stoa complex, positioned stratigraphically after August, provided decisive evidence against this hypothesis. This finding demonstrates that the calendar sequence does not begin in September and was not later reorganized as previously proposed. Accordingly, it is highly likely that the yet undiscovered October panel continues the original sequence following September. In this respect, the 2026 excavation season is expected to uncover the final missing panel of the stoa calendar mosaic, namely October. Once the conservation and archaeological park project currently under review is implemented, the mosaics will be accessible in situ as part of the decoration of the city's stoa-bouleuterion complex, ensuring their preservation and public appreciation.

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* Abbreviations of epigraphical editions and reference works follow the "Liste des abréviations des éditions et ouvrages de référence pour l'épigraphie grecque alphabétique (GrEpiAbbr – Version 03, Septembre 2024)" developed by the *Association Internationale d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine*.

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