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FRUIT TREES ON LATE ANTIQUE MOSAICS: FROM THE WORCESTER HUNT TO JORDANIAN CHURCHES

Esen ÖĞÜŞ-UZUN*

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the contextual meaning of a mosaic pavement from Daphne (Harbiye) near Antioch (Antakya) which depicts hunting episodes among fruit trees and a hunter in the center triumphant over various animals. The pavement, which is now in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, therefore known as the Worcester Hunt, can be dated to the last quarter of the fifth and first quarter of the sixth century AD. The pavement has never been examined with particular emphasis to the fruit trees diagonally growing from its corners. Although it is difficult to identify these trees, they are likely to be pomegranate; pear; a tree with round fruits (apple or medlar); and a tree with heart-shaped fruits (peach, apricot or citrus fruit). While diagonally organizing the space on the pavements with trees is well-known in Antioch mosaics, depiction of fruit trees with ripe fruits is quite rare. The meaning of the pavement and the fruit trees need to be sought by referring to the archaeological context and iconographic details of the mosaic pavement. Daphne, where the pavement was discovered, was the pleasant suburb of Antioch. References from Libanius suggest that Antiochenes retreated to Daphne and spent time by hunting during the warm months. In terms of iconography, the hunt scenes on the pavement are rather unrealistic, since the hunting takes place in a cultivated orchard, instead of in the wild or in the arena. Such unrealistic elements and references to Daphne suggest that the trees are ideal, not real, elements that allude to a décor of mild climate and pleasant landscape when the hunting takes place. The fruit trees, on the whole, allude to the bounty of the local landscape, pleasant climate, and the hunting events taking place at this climate. The triumphant hunter figure in the center further clarifies the meaning of the pavement. He is probably the personification of the patron or the patron himself, who generously organized hunting events at his own expense. The

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I am absolutely grateful to Kathleen M. Coleman of Harvard University, Classics Department, for initially introducing me to the Worcester Hunt pavement, and for her invaluable comments and endless support in every step of the writing and publication process. I also would like to express my deep appreciation to Rabun M. Taylor, R.R.R. Smith, David G. Mitten and Christine Kondoleon for their comments and suggestions on various versions of this paper.

overall aim of the mosaic, then, is the display of the munificence of the patron who sponsored hunting activities in a pleasant climate and landscape.

The second part of the paper presents comparable pavements in the Jordan area, mostly from church contexts, which share the same or similar fruit tree arrangement with the Worcester Hunt. Some of these pavements even have the same species of fruit trees in the same order as the Worcester Hunt. The meaning of the pleasant climate and bounty of the earth was repeated in some churches, while in others, the fruit trees gained a religious meaning and meant to represent the pleasant climate of the paradise. Although it is difficult to suggest that the Worcester Hunt pavement made a direct impact on the development of paradisiacal iconography on the church pavements, it is undeniable that the Worcester Hunt and church mosaics in Jordan share a common language and iconography centered on fruit trees.

Key Words: Antioch, mosaic, hunt pavement, fruit trees, Jordan, church pavements.

ÖZET

Geç Antik Dönem Mozaiklerinde Meyve Ağaçları: Worcester Av Mozaik'inden Ürdün Kiliselerine

Bu makale, Antakya yakınındaki antik Daphne'de (Harbiye) ortaya çıkarılmış, meyve ağaçları arasında av sahneleri ve ortasında hayvanlara karşı zafer kazanmış bir avcuyu betimleyen mozaik döşemesinin arkeolojik kontekst içinde anlamını incelemektedir. Mozaik, bugün ABD'nin Massachusetts eyaleti Worcester şehrinde ve bu sebeple Worcester Av Mozaik'i olarak bilinmektedir. Mozaik 5. yüzyılın son çeyreğiyle 6. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğine tarihlenmek mümkündür. Mozaik hakkında bugüne kadar, döşemenin köşelerinden ortasına doğru çapraz biçimde uzayan meyve ağaçlarına dikkat çekecek bir açıklama yapılmamıştır. Bu ağaçların türlerini saptamak zor olsa da, ağaçlar büyük ihtimalle nar; armut; yuvarlak meyveli bir ağaç (elma ya da muşmula) ve kalp şeklinde meyveleri olan bir ağaçtır (şeftali, kayısı veya turunc). Mozaik döşemesini ağaçlarla çapraz biçimde bölümlere ayırmak, Antakya mozaiklerinde sık rastlanan bir yöntem olmasına karşın, olgun meyvelerle dolu ağaçların betimlenmesi oldukça ender rastlanan bir durumdur. Mozaik'in ve meyve ağaçlarının anlamı, arkeolojik kontekste ve ikonografik detaylara bakılarak anlaşılabilir. Mozaik'in keşfedildiği Daphne, antik Antakya'nın hoş bir dış mahallesidir. Libanius'tan birçok alıntı, Antakya'luların ılıman mevsimlerde Daphne'ye çekildiklerini ve avla uğraştıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. İkonografi açısından, mozaikteki av sahneleri oldukça gerçek dışıdır, çünkü vahşi doğada ya da arenada değil, bakımlı bir meyve bahçesinde geçmektedirler. Bu gerçek dışı öğeler ve Daphne'ye referanslar göstermektedir ki, ağaçlar, gerçek değil, ılıman iklimle hoş bir yeryüzüne işaret eden ideal öğelerdir. Kısaca, meyve ağaçları, yeryüzünün bereketine, hoş iklim ve bu iklimde geçen av olaylarına gönderme yapmaktadır. Mozaik'in ortasındaki zafer kazanmış avcı figürü, döşemenin anlamını daha da netleştirmektedir. Bu figür, büyük ihtimalle, kendi bütçesinden av etkinlikleri organize eden mozaik'in sahibinin kişileştirmesidir. Böylece, mozaik'in genel anlamı, hoş bir iklim ve yeryüzünde av etkinliklerini destekleyen sahibinin cömertliğidir.

Makalenin ikinci bölümü, Ürdün’de kiliselerde yer alan ve meyve ağaçlarının dizilişi Worcester mozağıne çok benzeyen bir takım mozaikler sunmaktadır. Bu mozaiklerin bir kısmında meyve ağaçlarının türleri ve dizilişleri Worcester Av Mozaik’inin tıpatıp aynısıdır. Bazı kiliselerde meyve ağaçları, ılıman iklim ve yer-yüzünün bolluğuna işaret ederken, diğerlerinde dini bir anlam kazanmış, cennetin ılıman iklimine gönderme yapmak için kullanılmıştır. Worcester Av Mozaik’inin kilise döşemelerindeki cennet ikonografisine doğrudan bir etki yaptığını söylemek zor olsa da, Worcester Av Mozaik’i ve Ürdün kiliselerindeki mozaikler, meyve ağaçlarını merkeze alan ortak bir dil ve ikonografi paylaşmaktadırlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: Antakya, mozaik, av sahnesi, meyve ağaçları, Ürdün, kilise döşemeleri.

In 1935, excavations at Antioch revealed the mosaic floors of three rooms of a villa in sector 27-P in Daphne (Harbiye), 9 km south of Antioch (Antakya/ Hatay).¹ No prominent archaeological material accompanied the three floors, which were almost at ground level, and this led the excavators to the conclusion that the villa was destroyed in the earthquake of 526 CE and was abandoned.²

The three rectangular floors are connected to each other on the diagonal, with the largest room in the middle and the two smaller rooms attached to it at opposite sides. It is not entirely clear whether the rooms provided merely a spatial or also a visual continuity in antiquity (Fig. 1). The largest floor, the “Worcester Hunt”, depicts a hunt scene organized in two circular registers, one encompassing the other (Fig. 2). On the inner register, a triumphant hunter in the middle is surrounded by various beasts that he either has wounded or is about to hunt. The outer register is divided into four separate hunting scenes by the fruit trees growing diagonally out of the corners of the pavement towards the center. Three of these hunting scenes are composed each of a mounted hunter with a rearing horse and a hunter without a horse, both attacking wild beasts. In the fourth scene, a single hunter mounted on a horse tries to attract the attention of a rearing female tiger by brandishing her cub in his hand.

One of the small pavements belonging to the adjacent room, the “Honolulu Hunt”, depicts a composition of wild beasts attacking each

¹ Levi 1947, 363.

² Stillwell 1938, 200; Levi 1947, 363.

other, dominated by a lion in the middle.³ The small pavement in the third room has a medallion with a bust of Ge in the center (labeled in Greek) and various fruits placed on leaves around her.

This paper is concerned with the largest mosaic pavement at the center of the building decorated with the hunting scenes, the so-called Worcester Hunt. This mosaic pavement was taken to Worcester, Massachusetts in five pieces, was heavily restored, and was reassembled in the courtyard of the Worcester Art Museum in 1936, where it is currently exhibited. The only archaeological evidence that could help us date the Worcester Hunt is the presumed abandonment of the building in the earthquake of 526 CE. The broadest suggested date for the pavement is the last quarter of the fifth and first quarter of the sixth centuries CE, which will also be accepted in this paper.⁴

The details and the style of the Worcester Hunt have been extensively published.⁵ None of the studies, however, has interpreted the meaning of the mosaic pavement with particular attention to its fruit trees or noted that the arrangement of the fruit trees on the Worcester Hunt is shared by certain mosaics in Jordan. Therefore, the aim of this paper is: (1) to discuss the meaning of the specific composition of the pavement that combines fruit trees with figures of hunters; (2) to draw attention to a number of mosaic pavements in Jordan and explore the meaning of the fruit tree motif as it was used there.

The shapes of the fruits on the Worcester Hunt are significant for comparison with the fruit trees in Jordan. The species of the trees, on the other hand, is not critical for this analysis, although I will make an attempt to identify them. For ease of reference, the locations of the trees will be described in accordance with a bird's-eye view of the mosaic in which the central figure is viewed upright.

³ Stillwell 1938, 202; Levi 1947, 365.

⁴ C. Kondoleon has suggested this date range for the Worcester mosaic. See Kondoleon 2005, 228. J. Balty has also suggested that the hunt series in Antioch should date 480-520 CE. See Balty 2001, 314-315. Levi 1947, 626 dates the mosaic to the first quarter of the sixth century CE, but this dating is both controversial and too specific for our purposes here. For the discussion on Levi's chronology, see Lavin 1963, 190, no. 20. Lavin rejects Levi's absolute chronology but accepts his relative chronology.

⁵ The Worcester Hunt was published in Morey 1938 and Stillwell 1938. It was re-studied in Levi 1947; Lavin 1963; Kondoleon 2005; and Kondoleon 2000.

Description of the Fruit Trees

The fruit trees on the Worcester Hunt grow diagonally from the corners and divide the rectangular space into four registers. While the role of the trees in the organization of the space has been noted, there has been little or no attempt to describe the shapes of the fruits in detail, or to differentiate the fruits from each other.⁶ Not all of the fruit trees allow a reliable identification of the species for a number of reasons: the leaves, the trees, and the fruits have stylized generic shapes; the colors of the tesserae used for the fruits are identical, with pinkish tesserae placed in the center of the fruits, which are outlined with darker reddish tesserae; and intense restorations on the pavement may have changed the original appearance. It is possible, however, to suggest a few alternative species, and most importantly, to describe the shapes of the fruits in order to offer a basis of comparison with other mosaics.

To start with, two of the fruit trees have clearly identifiable fruits that cannot be confused with any other species. The tree in the lower left corner is without doubt a pomegranate (Fig. 3). The fruits are round and have crown-shaped elements at the tips with black accents. The clarity in the articulation of the pomegranate shapes must have led scholars to assume wrongly that all the other fruit trees on the mosaic are pomegranates; this tree, however is the only one on the pavement.⁷ The pomegranate tree is common in late mosaics, especially in Christian contexts, where it may symbolize the unity of multiple seeds in one, or else paradise, or even resurrection.⁸

The next tree proceeding clockwise, i.e. in the upper left corner, has typical pear-shaped fruits, narrow at the stalk end and widening out into a bulbous shape (Fig. 4). This tree on the Worcester Hunt can be compared to the pear tree on a fresco in Pompeii, in the House of the Fruit Orchard, in terms of the shapes of the fruits.⁹ Pear trees, although not as common as

⁶ Lavin 1963, 189-190. D. Levi, for instance, is content with describing their shapes as "...mostly roundish, but sometimes pear-shaped or heart-shaped, in pink and yellow colors", see Levi 1947, 364. R. Stillwell, on the other hand, suggests that they are pomegranate trees rendered with various shades of tesserae, see Stillwell 1938, 201. C.R. Morey agrees, claiming that they are stylized pomegranates, see Morey 1938, 41. Recent sources simply assert that they are fruit trees, e.g. Kondoleon 2005, 228-237; Kondoleon 2000.

⁷ Stillwell 1938, 201; Morey 1938, 41.

⁸ Ferguson 1954, 46.

⁹ Jashemski 1979, fig. 388.

pomegranates, are still frequently represented in mosaics of Palestine and Jordan in the fifth and sixth centuries. As an example, a pavement from Oum Hartaine, the Church of Saint John the Baptist, depicts wild beasts chasing other animals among three fruit trees, one of which has been identified as a pear tree.¹⁰

The next tree in the upper right corner of the mosaic pavement has round red fruits with blackish ends that look like apples or medlars (Fig. 5). Round fruits with similar colors have been identified as apples before, for instance in mosaics from Aquitania.¹¹ A mosaic dating to the second quarter of the sixth century CE from the Basilica of Dumetios in Nikopolis, Greece, depicts pomegranate, pear, and also possibly apple trees.¹² Medlar was also known in antiquity.¹³ It is difficult to specifically identify medlars in art, since they are quite similar to apples in appearance. However, sarcophagus reliefs from the second and third centuries CE in Aphrodisias in Asia Minor depict garlands with fruits that look like medlars.¹⁴

The fourth tree of the Worcester Hunt, in the lower right corner, has highly stylized fruits and is therefore the most difficult to identify (Fig. 6). There is no reason, however, why this tree should not be another species, given that the artists clearly meant to render three other species of fruits. The tree has heart-shaped fruits with pointed ends. Peach, apricot and quince are the three most likely candidates for these fruits, since they may all have heart-shaped outlines when stylized. Similarly shaped greenish-colored fruits in a still-life wall painting from Pompeii can clearly be identified as peaches.¹⁵ The difference in color of the Pompeiian and Antiochian fruits may be due to the difference in the grafting methods,¹⁶ or else the Worcester Hunt fruits may simply be depicted with the default

¹⁰ Donceel-Voùte 1988, 195. For a drawing of this mosaic, see Donceel-Voùte 1988, Hors-texte 11.

¹¹ Balmelle 1994, 267.

¹² Kitzinger 1951: 92-93, fig. 18.

¹³ For references to medlar, see Pliny, 13.19, 15.19, 15.22.

¹⁴ For example, see Işık 2007, Taf. 28 for round fruits with seeds at the bottom, which may have been medlars.

¹⁵ See Lydakos 2002, 239 and the photograph of the painting in the same book.

¹⁶ Palladius mentions how peaches turn red if grafted onto a plane tree, which may explain how the Worcester Hunt peaches were cultivated. See Palladius, 12, 24, 166. Peaches depicted on the Pompeiian wall painting demonstrate that the Romans knew the peach fruit (*prunus persica* or *malus persica*) already before the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. Pliny the Elder also mentions that the peach was recently introduced to Italy from Egypt via Rhodes. See Pliny 15, 13, 45.

coloring of the rest of the fruits. Heart-shaped fruits are also abundant in the mosaics of Palestine and Jordan from the fifth and sixth centuries. In Madaba, the New Baptistery of the Basilica (597-98 CE),¹⁷ on a pavement with five fruit trees arranged paratactically, the fruit of the fourth is heart-shaped, just like the Worcester Hunt fruits. It has been suggested that these may be apples, apricots or citrus fruits.¹⁸ There are cases, though, where heart-shaped fruits have been identified as peaches, such as on the Aquitania mosaics.¹⁹

Even though it is not possible to identify the species of the stylized fruits trees for certain, except for the obvious pomegranate and pear, it is apparent that all of these trees had ripe fruits on them, which is only possible in the warm seasons of the year, summer and autumn. None of these fruits could have been ripe in the spring or winter seasons for the simple fact that spring is the season when fruit trees bloom, and winter is when most trees shed their leaves and fruits. Moreover, on mosaic floors that depict plants to represent seasonal imagery, spring is usually symbolized with flowers, and in rare cases with date palm.²⁰ Winter, on the other hand, is conventionally represented with reeds, and rarely with olives.²¹ Obviously, none of the fruits on the Worcester Hunt look like date palms or olives.

Arrangement and Meaning of the Fruit Trees

The fruit trees on the Worcester Hunt are arranged in clockwise from the lower left corner in the following order: pomegranate, pear, tree with round fruits, and tree with heart shaped fruits. While the pomegranate and the tree with round shaped fruits are at the opposite corners on the diagonal, the pear and the tree with heart shaped fruits are placed at the opposite corners on the other diagonal.

Diagonally organizing mosaic pavements by means of trees is neither unique to the Worcester Hunt nor peculiar to sixth-century Antioch.²² The

¹⁷ Piccirillo 1989, 161-62; Saller 1941, 230-231.

¹⁸ Saller 1941, 231. For other citrus fruits in antiquity, see Courtois 1955, 98-126.

¹⁹ Balmelle 1994, 267.

²⁰ For example, on the mosaics of the baptismal pool in Kelibia, North Africa. See Courtois 1955.

²¹ Courtois 1955.

²² The diagonal organization of the pavements incorporating trees or other objects is seen in mosaics from a number of geographical areas like North Africa, Italy and Gaul, in addition to Syria and Palestine, starting from as early as the second century CE. See Dunbabin 1978, 260; K. Dunbabin

earliest pavement utilizing diagonally placed trees and an animal hunt together is the Villelaure mosaic from southeast France and dates to the third century CE. This pavement depicts four stylized trees of unidentifiable species growing out of the corners, diagonally dividing the space into four.²³ In Antioch, the diagonal tree arrangement was employed in the House of the Menander, in the Constantinian Villa, and in the Yakto Complex (Megalopsychia Hunt).²⁴ None of the trees on these pavements, however, are fruit trees full of ripe fruits like those on the Worcester Hunt.

One other pavement from Antioch, from the House of the Ktisis, poses a close parallel to the Worcester Hunt in terms of iconography and subject matter. The observations of the excavators are essential for deciphering the iconography of this poorly preserved pavement (Fig. 7). It is known for certain that the pavement has the medallion bust of Ktisis in the center and various beasts attacking other animals around her. The black and white site photographs reveal the existence of two diagonally placed trees opposite each other, one of which is clearly identifiable as a pear tree.²⁵ The shapes of the other fruits and their arrangement may never be known; however, one is tempted to assume that the arrangement is in the manner of the Worcester Hunt.

The Worcester Hunt pavement, therefore, is similar to other pavements elsewhere in its diagonal organization, but different from them in its vivid depiction of fruit trees full of ripe fruits. The provenance and the subject matter of the mosaic floor may help in understanding the meaning of the

1999, 106-10 for some North African examples; Lavin 1963, 238 for Henchir M'Rira pavement; also see Blake 1936, 175-176, Pl. 41.4 for a pavement in Rome with the Artemis Ephesus in the center and branches growing diagonally from the corners.

²³ Lavin 1963, 263, fig. 130; Picard 1983, 307-310.

²⁴ There is a dispute about the chronology of these mosaics between D. Levi and I. Lavin. Levi places the Megalopsychia mosaic in the mid-fifth century and other hunt mosaics starting from the sixth century (Levi 1947, 625-626). Lavin does not accept this gap, and considers the hunt mosaics not very wide apart stylistically and dates them to the fifth century CE (Lavin 1963, 190, n. 20). I think the relative chronology matters more for my purposes in this paper. See Levi 1947, 204-210, 625-626, and Lavin 1963, 190-191 for a discussion of these mosaics. For a photograph of the House of the Menander, see Levi 1947, Pl. XLVI; for the Constantinian Villa, Dunbabin 1999, fig. 169; for the Yakto Complex mosaic, fig. 194.

²⁵ It has been suggested that these are pomegranate trees dividing the space into four, whose fruits are stylized in a pear shaped outline. It does not, however, make sense that mosaicists who were able to render pomegranates when they wanted to, as in the Worcester Hunt mosaic, would stylize them in the shape of pears. See Levi 1947, 357.

representation of fruit trees. As mentioned before, the mosaic was found in a villa at Daphne, the suburb of Antioch.²⁶ Libanius, writing in the fourth century CE, paints a pleasant picture of the road to Daphne:²⁷

“As soon as the gates are left behind, one is struck by the variety of the gardens on the left hand side, of places of entertainment, the abundance of fountains, villas hidden among the trees As one proceeds, on either side of the road can be seen innumerable vineyards, lovely villas, rose gardens, plantations of every kind and streams.”

Libanius describes a landscape with gardens that look like the one represented on the Worcester Hunt. The Worcester Hunt landscape, however, incorporates ideal and unrealistic elements in it. The pavement depicts wild animals hunted in a cultivated garden of fruit trees, an imaginary setting for a hunt, rather than in the wilderness or in an amphitheater. The fruit trees, therefore, are not to be interpreted literally, but rather need to be explained as elements representing a mild climate and pleasant landscape within which the hunting scenes were placed. The trees in this décor are components of temporal narrative, alluding to the “ideal” seasons of a pleasant climate and the prosperity of the summer and the harvest.

This arrangement is significant, given that plants on mosaic pavements usually represent all four seasons. The aim of the fruit trees on the Worcester Hunt, however, is to refer to warm seasons with a pleasant climate. A similar representation of select seasons comes from a mosaic floor from the church in Kastri near Delphi. The floor has panels that represent the four (warm) months of May, June, July and August, and in a similar reading, refers to the pleasant climate, possibly of paradise.²⁸ The fifth century mosaic decoration of the dome of the Rotunda of Saint George in Thessaloniki presents another case of referring to warm and pleasant seasons by means of fruits.²⁹ The apex of the dome had a mosaic of Christ, now lost, surrounded by a band of rainbow colors and a garland depicting all the seasonal fruits and flowers, no doubt alluding to the pleasant climate, most probably in paradise.

²⁶ Libanius, *Or.* 11.93, 11.99, 11.234-35, 11.240, 11.243, 11.250, 31.20.

²⁷ Libanius, *Or.* 11.234.

²⁸ Caraher 2003, 179-183.

²⁹ Pazaras 1985, 42, Pl. VIII. Also see Kleinbauer 1972, specifically 68-107 for the dating.

The hunt depicted among the fruit trees is similarly associated with the pleasant climate represented by the fruit trees. This hunt contains elements that were familiar to the patron from his own hunting pursuits in the wild. Hunting was an enthusiasm for the upper classes of late antiquity, as attested by Libanius, who in one case says that hunting provides a display of intelligence fighting brute force.³⁰ Another passage from Libanius informs us that, when the villa-owning Antiochenes were in residence in Daphne, they spent their time hunting wild game. Libanius further points out that his students from Antioch retired to their villas in Daphne in summer, seeking respite from the heat of Antioch among the trees, springs and breeze.³¹ The patron of the mosaic, therefore, may have been inspired to commission the mosaic as a record of his pastime and his aristocratic pursuits (i.e. hunting) in the warm months symbolized by the fruit trees.

Similarly, the hunt scenes on the pavement may have been inspired by a real or imaginary staged hunt taking place in the arena in warm months. Again according to Libanius, a festival called the Syriarchate was organized in summer or autumn (therefore in the warm months in Antioch) by an elected Syriarch, who was normally a councilor of Antioch.³² The greatest and the most popular part of the show was performed in the arenas of seventeen cities of Syria, and it involved wild beast hunts (*venationes*). For the hunts, beasts were brought to Antioch from as far away as Bithynia and hunters from Pamphylia.³³ We last hear of the costly Syriarchate in 390 CE, and unfortunately there is no literary or epigraphic evidence that it took place after that date.³⁴ It has been suggested, however, that although the wild beast hunts were banned by Anastasius, they continued in the Eastern and the Western Roman Empire into the sixth century.³⁵ Indeed, wild beast hunts are mentioned in the *Digest*³⁶, and in an inscription from Aphrodisias, dated to the fifth or sixth centuries and refers to a bull-rearer for bull fights or bull chases.³⁷ Although the Syriarchate most probably

³⁰ Libanius, *Ep.* 217. For the pleasures of hunting in daily life in 454 CE, see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 1,2,5.

³¹ Libanius, *Ep.* 419.

³² Liebeschuetz 1972, 141-143; Libanius, *Ep.* 218.

³³ Libanius, *Ep.* 586-588, 598-599, 1509.

³⁴ Liebeschuetz 1972, 142; Libanius, *Ep.* 970-971.

³⁵ Jones 1986, 977.

³⁶ *Digest* 11.4.5.

³⁷ *Roueché* 1993, 73.

continued in Antioch, following the trends in western Asia Minor, there is no secure evidence that it was a major event in Antioch by the time the Worcester Hunt Mosaic was created.

References on the pavement to a staged hunt, Syriarchate or not, suggests that by commissioning it, the patron of the mosaic may have wanted to commemorate his munificence for bringing wild beasts and hunters to the city, and sponsoring a *venatio*. The aforementioned mosaic in the House of Ktisis in Antioch reflects a similar motive for the patron and supports this interpretation. The owner of this particular mosaic with wild animals chasing each other placed a medallion with the personification of Ktisis, “Foundation,” in the center of the pavement.³⁸ “Foundation” most probably refers to his “foundation or establishment of the hunting games” in a festival, hence his benefaction. Another hunt mosaic, the Megalopsychia Hunt from the Yakto Complex, displays the similar idea of the patron’s munificence. The pavement has a very similar composition to the Worcester Hunt, except that the diagonally placed trees are merely generic, without any fruits. On it, there are mythological hunters (such as Meleagros, Adonis, Narkissos, etc.) hunting beasts in the registers divided by the diagonal trees, and a medallion bust of “Megalopsychia,” magnanimity or generosity, in the center.³⁹ The medallion is without doubt an allusion to the benefactions of the patron of the mosaic. Moreover, the pavement has a border of topographical scenes from Antioch, depicting contemporary buildings, their names supplied in inscriptions. The border makes an association between the patron’s benefactions and the city itself; he had certainly sponsored games for the city, and perhaps also made donations towards public monuments.⁴⁰

On the Worcester Hunt, the central figure of the hunter replaces the Ktisis and Megalopsychia personifications, and expresses another virtue of the patron, his masculine courage and ability as a hunter. This figure

³⁸ Ktisis can mean either “foundation” from the verb *ktizdo* or “acquisition” from the verb *ктаομαι*, since both nouns, *ktisis* from *ktizdo* and *ktisis* from *ктаομαι* were spelled as *ktisis* in late antiquity (I am grateful to John M. Duffy of Harvard University, Classics Department for this information). The female personification of Ktisis holds a thin vertical measuring rod, which probably alludes to foundation, erection, establishment, rather than acquisition. Therefore, the translation of the word is more likely to be “foundation,” and the transliteration needs to be Ktisis. For more information, see Levi 1947, 253-256 and Leader-Newby 2005, 240-241.

³⁹ Dunbabin 1999, 181-183.

⁴⁰ Dunbabin 1999, 183.

is standing cross-legged on a piece of rock, and piercing a bear with his spear, while other animals around him, some wounded, are running away. He wears a panther skin that covers his head and ends at his knees. He is clearly differentiated from the other hunters in terms of his costume and his hunting abilities. If he was not meant to be the actual patron, he is most likely an allusion to the valor, strength and other manly virtues that the patron possessed.⁴¹ The “super-hunter” character of the patron seems to have been inspired by the motif of Artemis in other pavements, such as the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt,⁴² where Artemis stands in the center over a wounded leopard, and in the pavement in Sarrîn, where she stands over a slaughtered lion.⁴³

When the Worcester Hunt is interpreted within its archaeological context, the meaning of the fruit trees and the hunt episodes are further clarified. Similar subject matter is shared by the Worcester Hunt and the Honolulu Hunt pavements, except that the latter depicts a hunt taking place among the animals without the participation of humans. The choice of exotic animals in the Honolulu Hunt, such as ostrich, that do not naturally live in the environs of Antioch suggests that such animals were brought from elsewhere for the purpose of staging a *venatio*.⁴⁴ In addition, the species of some of the animals on the Worcester Hunt may have been chosen by influences from *venationes*. For example, the tigress represented with her cubs is the Hyrcanian tiger that lives on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea.⁴⁵ Moreover, the other adjacent pavement with the bust of Ge displays fruits on leaves, which are juxtaposed with the fruit trees of the Worcester Hunt. Together, they allude to bounty of the landscape and the fruits of “Ge” owned and offered to guests by the generous patron.

On the whole, then, the intent of the Worcester Hunt pavement is to display the prosperity of the local landscape; the patron’s magnanimous spirit; his manly virtues; his dominance over animals; his pursuit of

⁴¹ See the thorough discussion of the figure in Kondoleon 2005, 234-235; and Kitzinger 1951, 114. An Orpheus figure in the center of a pavement from Villa de Jenah has a very similar posture to the Worcester Hunt central hunter (leaning on a staff, one foot resting on a rock). See Chéhab 1957, 1-189.

⁴² Levi 1947, 358-359, pls. 85d, 86a; Kondoleon 2005, 234, fig. 10.

⁴³ Balty 1990, Pl.2.1.

⁴⁴ Bate 1939, 26-31.

⁴⁵ Levi 1947, 365.

aristocratic pastimes such as hunting; and his adoption of Roman civic values and culture by sponsoring hunting spectacles. The fruit trees set the hunting event(s) in the warm months, as well as strengthening the idea of the patron's generosity as a benefactor of games or hunting expeditions by alluding to the bounty and the abundance of the landscape.

Worcester Hunt Fruit Tree Imagery in Late-Antique Jordan

When employed in the church pavements of Jordan, just like on the Worcester Hunt, the fruit trees sometimes symbolize the abundance and prosperity of the ideal but earthly landscape, and at other times gain a religious meaning and allude to the paradisiacal landscape.

Most comparanda for fruit tree imagery in Jordan come from church contexts. There are examples where the fruit trees were evidently meant to represent the bounty of this world, not the next. One example is from the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius in Khirbet al-Mukhayyat, Mount Nebo (mid-sixth century CE).⁴⁶ The western pavement of the nave has four diagonal fruit trees emerging from the corners of the rectangular panel (Fig. 8). The tops of the trees join in the center of the panel and the trees divide the space into four triangular parts. On the compartments divided by the trees, animals are represented in confronting pairs: two bulls with a flaming altar between them, two deer drinking from a small pond between them, and two hares with rocks. Only the curved horns of the animals in the fourth section remain; hence they could be antelope or wild goats. The shapes of the fruits on the trees are exactly the same in Worcester Hunt, placed in the diagonal composition in exactly the same order. Proceeding clockwise, starting from the tree next to the bull on the left, they are a tree with heart shaped fruits (peach, apricot or quince); another with round fruits with blackish tips (apple or medlar); pear; and pomegranate. Just as on the Worcester Hunt, the opposite diagonal corners match: the tree with the heart shaped fruits is matched with the pear, and the tree with the round fruits is matched with the pomegranate. The inscription below the triangular section with bulls is from Psalm 51:21, and reveals the incentive for this image:⁴⁷ "Then they shall offer calves upon Your altar. Lord have mercy on the lowly Epiphania". The secular fruit-tree arrangement is

⁴⁶ Piccirillo 1993, 164.

⁴⁷ For the original inscription and translation, see Piccirillo 1989, 185, 187.

now transferred to the religious realm, and represents the abundance of the landscape with fruit trees and animals, the latter offered to God as a sacrifice. A comparable pavement with fruit trees in the Basilica of Dumetios in Nikopolis, Greece, also depicts the landscape of the earth, as understood from the accompanying caption of the panel written in a *tabula ansata*:⁴⁸

Here you see the famous and boundless ocean⁴⁹

Containing in its midst the earth

Bearing round about in the skillful images of art everything that breathes and creeps

The foundation of Dumetios, the greathearted archpriest

Another pavement from Madaba demonstrates a different use of the diagonal tree arrangement and conveys a religious meaning: the House of Farid el-Masri (second half of the sixth century CE)⁵⁰ has a similar arrangement to that of the church of Lot and Procopius, except that this time the tops of the highly stylized trees converge around a small male bust in the center of the rectangular panel (Fig. 9). The triangular sections formed by the trees are filled with stylized animals confronting one another: two geese, a lion and a zebu, two hares, and two rams. The fruit trees again match in diagonally opposite corners in the manner of the Worcester Hunt.

The images of the lion and the zebu are crucial for the interpretation of the mosaic as a representation of paradise. The two confronting animals face a plant to which they both extend their heads as if to eat it. The same imagery occurs in the chapel of the Church at Ma'in, in Madaba, where a bull and a lion face each other with an inscription on top:⁵¹ "The lion shall eat straw like cattle", a verse from Isaiah 11:7. Isaiah describes a future paradise, the Peaceful Kingdom;⁵² hence the pavement in the House of

⁴⁸ Kitzinger 1951: 100.

⁴⁹ The reference here is the wave-band surrounding the panel.

⁵⁰ Buschhausen 1986.

⁵¹ For the translation and the original inscription, see Levi 1947, 318. In context, the passage reads: "Then the wolf shall live with the sheep, and the leopard lie down with the kid/ the calf and the lion and the yearling together and a little child shall lead them/ the cow will feed the bear and their young shall lie down together. The lion shall eat straw like cattle/ the infant shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the young child dance over the viper's nest".

⁵² Campbell 1994, 125-126. The iconography of lion and ox eating straw and the reference to the Peaceful Kingdom are not unique for the Church at Ma'in. The same imagery occurs in three churches in Turkey: Karlık, Korykos, and Anemurium.

Farid el-Masri with the lion and the zebu images must also represent the Peaceful Kingdom.⁵³

The pavement from the House of Farid el-Masri demonstrates how the diagonally placed fruit tree motif was extended beyond its preliminary secular meaning and became an allusion to a biblical landscape. Early Christian writers have often emphasized the timelessness in paradise, the lack of seasons, and the continuous mild climate.⁵⁴ St. Basil the Great serves as an example:⁵⁵ “. . . neither does the heat, perhaps coming unseasonably early, ruin the flowers of spring; nor do the fruits of summer and autumn waste and perish as a result of being burnt by frequent disturbances of the atmosphere.”

Aside from the composition of fruit trees, the pavement from the House of Farid al-Masri exhibits another similarity to the Worcester Hunt: the central motif on the pavement is a medallion with a male portrait head inside. The stylized head has a “mop hairstyle” which is typical of the late fifth and sixth centuries.⁵⁶ The head almost certainly depicts the benefactor of the mosaic pavement, and reflects a similar concern of self-display that is conveyed via the central hunter on the Worcester Hunt.

A third pavement with similar diagonal fruit tree arrangement like the Worcester Hunt is from Chapel B of the St. Apostles Church in Madaba (578-9 CE)⁵⁷ (Fig. 10). Although the pomegranate and the tree with round fruits match on the opposite corners of this arrangement, the counterpart of the tree with heart-shaped fruits is not identifiable because of the damage in this part of the mosaic; it is of course tempting to think of that tree as a pear.

The Madaba mosaicists did not confine themselves to the fruit trees arranged diagonally in the manner of the Worcester Hunt. Some of their mosaics feature variations in the square or rectangular panel arrangements involving four trees. An example is from the Church of Deacon Thomas (first decade of the sixth century CE), where a rectangular pavement from

⁵³ Levi 1947, 318.

⁵⁴ See a thorough survey of these writers in Maguire 1987, 25.

⁵⁵ Basil the Great, 30:64, 2. The translation of the text is from Maguire 1987, 25.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the “mop hairstyle” of the honorary statue of Flavius Palmatus from Aphrodisias that dates to late fifth and early sixth centuries. Smith 1999, 168, fig. 9.

⁵⁷ Piccirillo 1989, 104.

the presbyterium is decorated with fruit trees and animals.⁵⁸ This time, the area is filled with trees placed not diagonally but in two registers, two trees for the upper register, and two for the lower (Fig. 11). There is also a variation in the tree species: those in the upper row have round fruits and heart-shaped fruits; and one tree in the lower row has round fruits, while the other is a pomegranate. A lion and a zebu are facing each other beneath the lower row of trees, and a ram is standing in the middle of the whole composition. Although there is no inscription to help us identify the meaning of the scene, it most likely represents the Peaceful Kingdom, given the confrontation of a lion and a zebu.

There is even a case in Madaba where the fruit trees grow from the sides rather than the corners of the large rectangular panel. In the presbyterium of the Saint Theodoros Chapel (562 CE)⁵⁹, highly stylized fruit trees grow from the middle of each side of the pavement, this time leaving the corner spaces open (Fig. 12). The available four corners were occupied by confronting animals, one on either side of two of the four trees, in other words the trees and the animals swap places. The species of the trees remain obscure; however one can certainly say that one is a pear, and the other has heart-shaped fruits.

All these pavements in the Jordan area postdate the Worcester Hunt and employ the fruit tree motif and the meaning conveyed in it. Although it is not possible to trace the exact route of the dissemination of the fruit tree composition and meaning, it is obvious that the Worcester Hunt (also possibly the pavement in the House of Ktisis) share a common dialect of iconography centered on fruit trees with the church pavements in the Jordan area.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the meaning of the fruit trees and the hunt on the Worcester Hunt pavement. It has been suggested that the pavement depicts trees full of ripe fruits to allude to the mild climate and ideal landscape where the hunting activities took place. It has also been shown that the specific arrangement of the fruit trees was used in certain pavements

⁵⁸ Piccirillo 1993, 187, 223.

⁵⁹ Piccirillo 1989, 28.

from the Jordan area, the Church of Lot and Procopius, the House of Farid el-Masri, and most probably St. Apostles Church, Chapel B. Slightly different fruit tree arrangements are seen simultaneously in Madaba in the churches of the Deacon Thomas and the St. Theodoros Chapel, although still in dialogue with the diagonal fruit tree composition. While the initial meaning of the bountiful landscape of the earth for the Worcester hunt fruit trees was retained in some religious contexts, in others it extended beyond this meaning to allude to the landscape of paradise or the Peaceful Kingdom.

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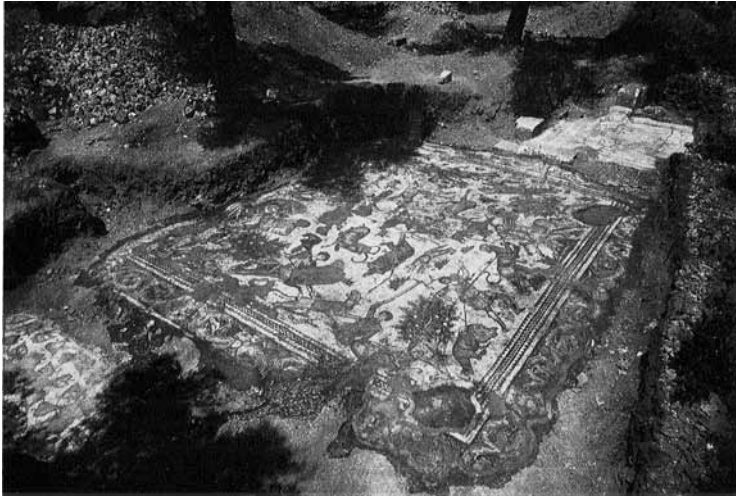


Fig. 1 General view of the House of the Worcester Hunt. The Worcester Hunt pavement is in the center; the pavement with Ge is in the front, and the Honolulu Hunt is in the background, Antioch Expedition Archives (photo courtesy of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

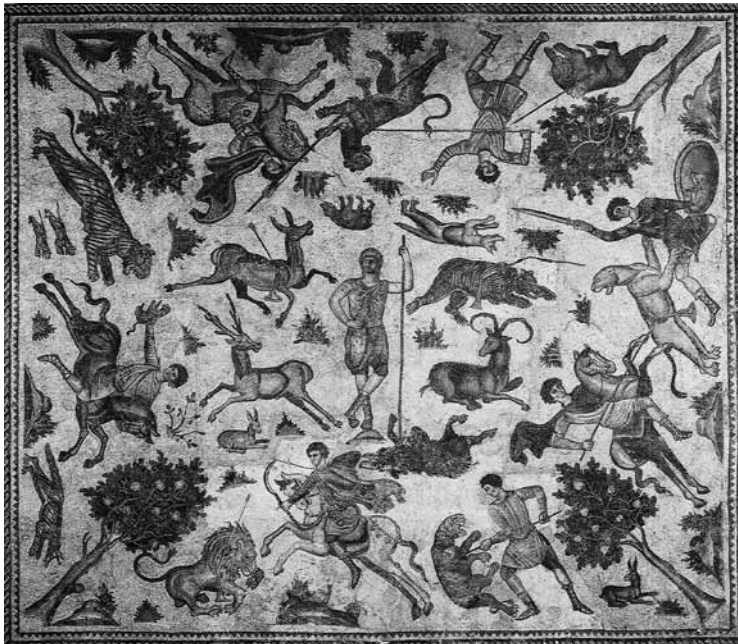


Fig. 2 The Worcester Hunt mosaic pavement, House of the Worcester Hunt, Antioch, late fifth- early sixth centuries CE (photo courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, Excavation of Antioch and Vicinity by the bequests of the Reverend Dr. Austin S. Garver and Sarah C. Garver).



Fig. 3
Detail of the Worcester
Hunt Mosaic,
pomegranate tree
(photo courtesy of
the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester,
Massachusetts,
Excavation of Antioch
and Vicinity by the
bequests of the Reverend
Dr. Austin S. Garver and
Sarah C. Garver).



Fig. 4
Detail of the Worcester
Hunt Mosaic, pear
tree (photo courtesy
of the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester,
Massachusetts,
Excavation of Antioch
and Vicinity by the
bequests of the Reverend
Dr. Austin S. Garver and
Sarah C. Garver).

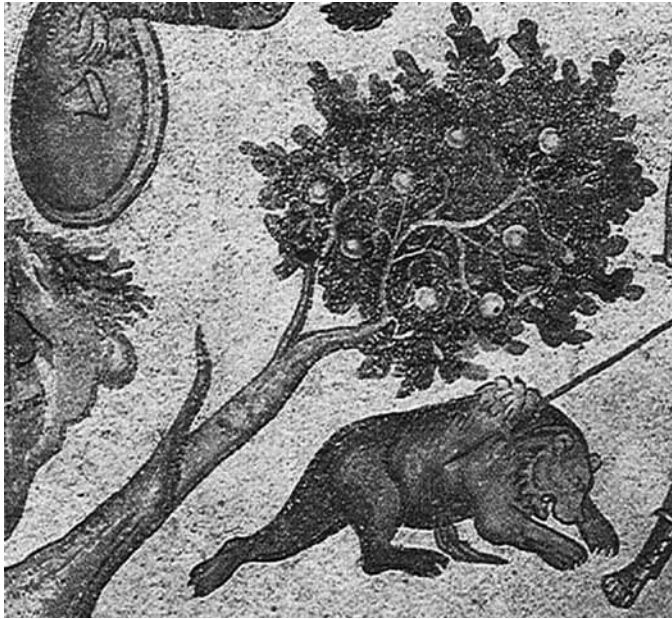


Fig. 5
Detail of the Worcester
Hunt Mosaic, tree
with round fruits
(photo courtesy of
the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester,
Massachusetts,
Excavation of Antioch
and Vicinity by
the bequests of the
Reverend Dr. Austin
S. Garver and Sarah
C. Garver).



Fig. 6
Detail of the Worcester
Hunt Mosaic, tree
with heart-shaped
fruits (photo courtesy
of the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester,
Massachusetts,
Excavation of Antioch
and Vicinity by
the bequests of the
Reverend Dr. Austin
S. Garver and Sarah
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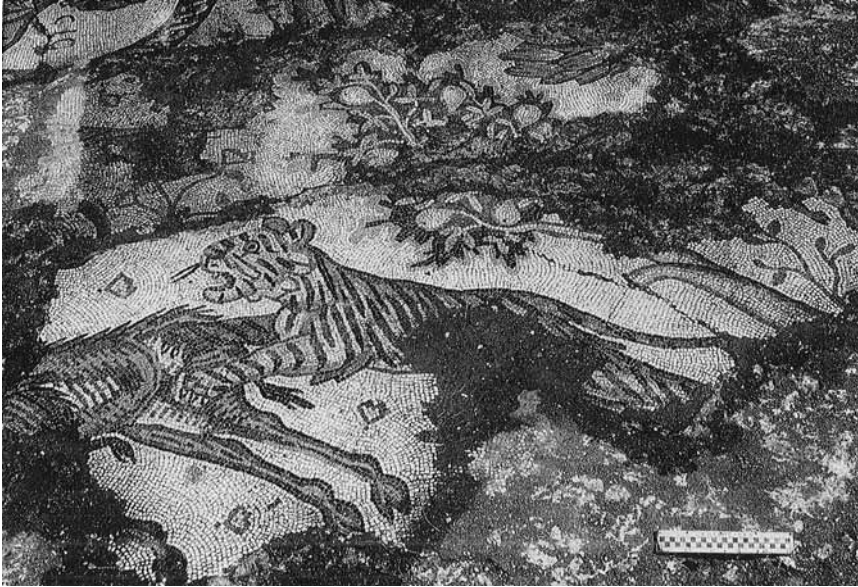


Fig. 7 Mosaic pavement from the House of Ktisis, Antioch, late fifth-early sixth centuries CE, Antioch Expedition Archives (photo courtesy of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

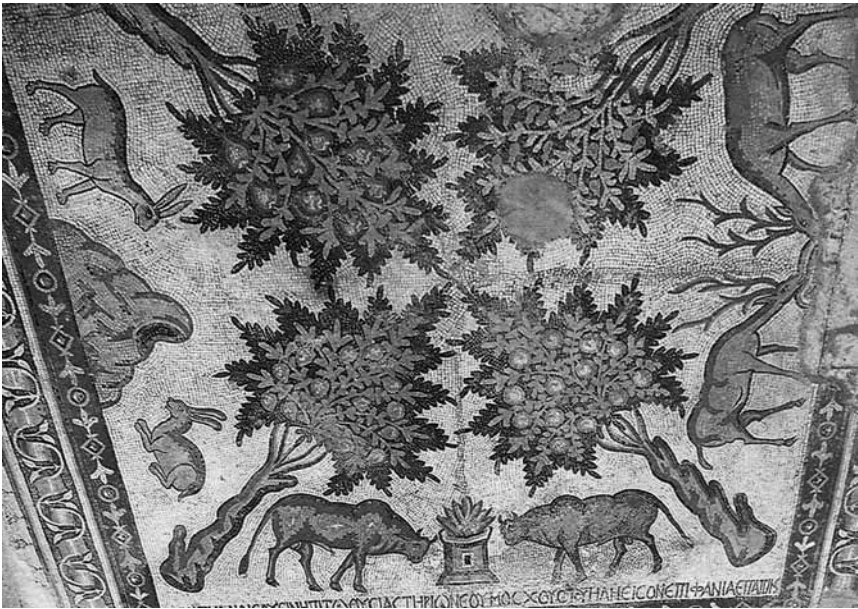


Fig. 8 Mosaic pavement from the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, western pavement of the nave, Mount Nebo, mid-sixth century CE (photo courtesy of the American Center of Oriental Research, Amman. After Piccirillo 1993, fig. 213).

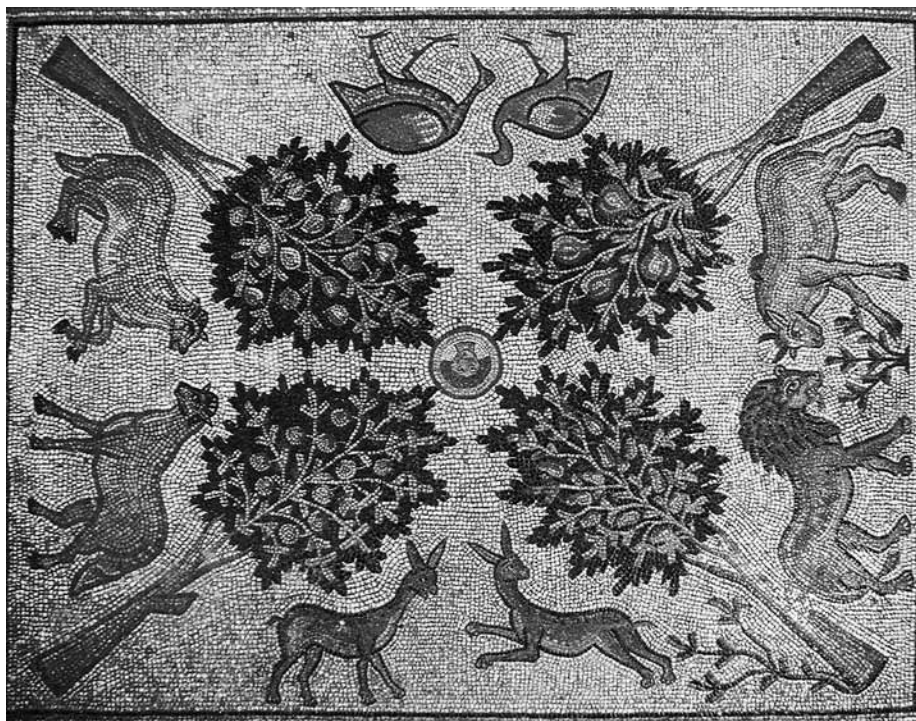


Fig. 9 Mosaic pavement from the House of Farid el-Masri, Madaba, second half of the sixth century CE (photo courtesy of the American Center of Oriental Research, Amman. After Piccirillo 1993, fig. 139).



Fig. 10 Mosaic pavement from the St. Apostles Church, Chapel B, Madaba, 578-79 CE (photo courtesy of the American Center of Oriental Research, Amman. After Piccirillo 1993, fig. 89).

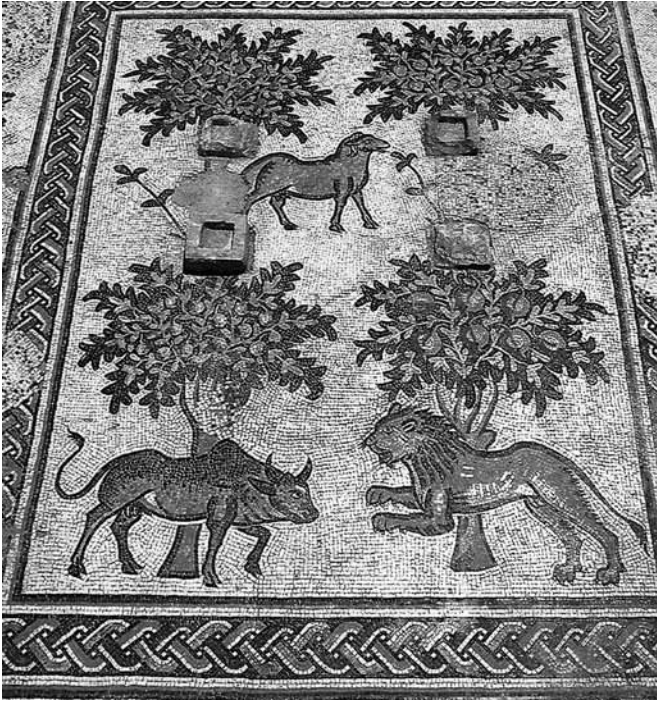


Fig. 11
Mosaic pavement
from the Church of
Deacon Thomas,
Madaba, first decade
of the sixth century
CE (photo courtesy of
the American Center
of Oriental Research,
Amman. After Piccirillo
1993, fig. 266).



Fig. 12 Mosaic panel from the Saint Theodoros Chapel, Madaba, 562 CE (photo courtesy of the American Center of Oriental Research, Amman. After Piccirillo 1993, fig. 110).