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Images of Rural Activities on Mosaic Pavements in Late Antiquity in the Levant

DPhil Archaeology

Volume I

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Images of rural activities become very popular in mosaic floor decoration in the Levant during the Late Antique period. I aim to explore different categories of iconography and discuss the images of people engaged in rural activities, such as pastoralism; hunting, fishing and activities connected with the vintage. I also aim to look at imagery that is often discussed in isolation without relation to other connected iconographic categories. The symbolic meaning of the representations of the zodiac found in synagogues, for example, is often discussed in detail without also looking at the rural calendars that appear in Christian contexts during the same period in the same region.

I also want to explore the archaeological evidence for the activities that appear on the mosaic pavements. Studying both the archaeology and the iconography will, I hope, help us understand what the use of these particular categories of iconography in decorative schemes can tell us about the society that created them.

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Table of Contents

Volume 1

Volume II

Appendix

The Catalogue

Introduction

Mosaic pavements are often the best preserved of the artistic media that survive from Late Antiquity. In the eastern provinces in particular, very few wall mosaics or decorated ceilings remain in situ to be studied. A wide variety of different subjects and decorative schemes are found on these remaining floor mosaics and they have provided a range of different avenues for research. In this thesis I shall look at the images of human figures engaged in rural activities and pursuits, such as hunting, fishing and arable cultivation.

The iconography on mosaic pavements, like any other art form, can be discussed from several different viewpoints. The imagery contained on mosaic pavements can help to refine our understanding of a society and the people who commissioned them; their ideologies, daily life and economy. Adopting a comparative approach, the focus will be on the analysis of the iconography and the archaeology (and when available, the written evidence). I aim to study a particular category of iconography (rural activities) and bring together the Late Antique examples of this category found across the Levantine provinces. This is therefore a broad sweep of the evidence in which general trends and developments can be identified, and it will therefore not be a very detailed classical art historical discussion of the imagery and its style and technique. All rural genre images on mosaic pavements will be discussed, I shall not simply confine the discussion to, for example; Christian contexts. I will therefore briefly consider any difference in the use of imagery between different contexts such as churches, synagogues and villas during the course of the discussion of each group of imagery. A full discussion concerning the complex questions surrounding social identity are, however, beyond the scope of this present study.

I came to this topic through my MPhil work which was concerned with the Nilotic imagery that became popular in the region during Late Antiquity. One of the ideas that I

explored was that the appearance of these scenes in the region was a reflection of the economic links between the Egypt and the Levant. In this thesis I have widened the imagery under consideration to include the other related categories of rural pursuits and the rural economy. I aim to study the iconography as a source of information to answer a number of questions: Were these rural images a reflection of the activities of the communities who funded these pavements? Are these images a realistic reflection of contemporary rural pursuits? Does the occurrence of a specific category of iconography, such as scenes of the vintage, therefore reflect the importance of this activity in the contemporary regional economy?

Chapter 1 will consist of a general introduction to the history and peoples of the region and the corpus of mosaics. Chapter 2, on animals, is divided into three parts: in Part 1, a discussion of pastoral scenes and images; in Part 2 the many different scenes of the hunt and Part 3 the occurrences of images of the capture and transportation of exotic beasts. Chapter 3, on fish, is in two parts: in Part 1 I look at the images of people engaged in fishing and in Part 2, the Nilotic imagery that appears on mosaic pavements of the region only during Late Antiquity. The Nilotic imagery contains scenes of people carrying out activities in a rural setting and indeed many of the images of fishing found in the Levant survive within these scenes. The occurrence of Nilotic scenes in this region during Late Antiquity can perhaps shed light on the links between the Levant and Egypt, the trade in agricultural produce and wider economic links between these regions. Chapter 4, on cultivation, is also divided into two parts. In Part 1 I consider the vintage and, briefly, the vine-scroll pavement design that was extremely popular (particularly in the southern provinces of Palaestina and Arabia). Part 2 is a discussion of images of other arable activities that have survived from the period. Finally, in Chapter 5, I thought it important to discuss rural calendars: in Part 1, the small group of pavements from Palaestina that

have zodiac designs as their focal point and in Part 2 the other, more typical images of rural calendars that survive in the wider region. The zodiac only appears on the floors of synagogues, whilst the calendars consisting of the Labours of the Months exclusively decorate the floors of Christian buildings. I have included a study of the zodiac pavements as they are directly related to the rural activities of the communities that produced them; they are the Jewish equivalent of the Christian calendars of the Labours of the Months.

Methodology and material available for study

It has been necessary to limit the scope of this present work, due to the size and time limitations of a DPhil thesis. I have therefore had to closely define the geographical area and iconographical categories that I will be covering in this discussion. I have selected the Late Antique Levant as my chosen region and period. The amount of pavements uncovered in the region comprises a sufficiently large and geographically broad corpus to enable me to observe overall features and trends in the use of iconography over time.

During the Late Antique period in particular, the Levant was a cultural and economic centre: Christianity was born and formed in the region. Many large and prosperous cities were situated here including some of the wealthiest cities in the Empire, such as Apamea and of course Antioch, a city famed for wealth and luxury. Antioch had previously been the capital of the Seleucid Empire and became the capital of the diocese of *Oriens* and a patriarchal seat in the later Roman period. The emperors Julian and Valens spent substantial amounts of time in the city.[1] The cities of Gaza, Edessa and Antioch came to Empire wide prominence in this era as famous centres of learning.[2]

[1] See Hales, 2003: 171-91, who discusses the importance of the city during the Imperial period. See also Mango, M. 2011: 242-48.
[2] See Mango, M. 2011: 239-62 for a detailed account of cities in the Eastern Empire during Late Antiquity. Decker, 2001: 15-17 also gives a clear overview of the importance of this region during the period.

The Levant is a region in which enough archaeological excavation has been carried out (in the Palestinian provinces and Arabia in particular) upon which to base a worthwhile study and there is also a relatively large corpus of regional contemporary written evidence to compliment this archaeological evidence. Many mosaic pavements have survived, particularly in Palaestina and Arabia, dating from throughout the period that concerns me (although certain periods, such as the sixth century are better represented than others). The amount of evidence that survives also enables the study of the development of the iconography in the region.

The precise definitions of the term 'Levant' has varied over time. The term has often been equated with the Eastern Mediterranean, including the modern nations of Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and also part of southern Turkey (that can be roughly associated with Cilicia and Mesopotamia). The modern Levant could also be said to correspond broadly with the Roman Diocese of *Oriens*: a geographical area that encompassed the nineteen provinces of Isauria, Cilicia (I and II), Armenia (IV), Euphratensis (Euphratensis and Euphratensis South), Mesopotamia (Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia South), Osrhoene, Cyprus, Syria (I and II), Phoenicia (Maritima and Libanensis), Palaestina (I, II, III) and Arabia.[3] The Levant, as I will use the term in this thesis, will encompass much of the Diocese of *Oriens*, as stated above.

My discussions of the iconography will be almost exclusively concerned with mosaic pavements from sites located in the provinces of Syria, Phoenicia, Palaestina and Arabia. This is the result, to an extent, of the lack of systematic excavation in the other

[3] The province of Theodorias created in AD 528 by the Emperor Justinian I, was a small coastal province consisting of territory taken from the provinces of Syria Prima and Secunda. This province remained part of the Diocese of the East until the Arab invasions of the seventh century. I have decided not to use this province name, but to continue to use Syria Prima and Secunda where applicable for clarity, as Theodorias was in existence for a relatively brief period in Late Antiquity and not throughout the period that I am concerned with.

provinces in my area of study and also lack of publication. Catalogues of the surviving pavements in the other provinces of *Oriens* have not been published in the same number as the surviving examples in Syria and the Palestinian provinces. The provinces of Isauria, Armenia, Mesopotamia and Euphratensis are, in theory, contained within my area of interest, however, none of the imagery relevant to my subject (and attributed a Late Antique date) has so far been uncovered on mosaic pavements from these areas. Cilicia has yielded one relevant site and Osrhoene two sites.

This region is an enormous one and although certain zones may have received scholarly attention and been the focus of a number of excavations, other areas remain relatively unexplored and there are substantial gaps in our knowledge. Large areas of the provinces of Armenia, Euphratensis and Mesopotamia are located in countries/areas that are politically sensitive (and have been so for some decades). This has hindered investigation (both excavation and also survey work) and archaeological publications have therefore been sporadic. In contrast, Arabia and the Palestinian provinces have been the subject of continuing and organised excavation, with a range of different sites (urban and rural, city and village) having been investigated. The picture for Syria is somewhat different. Much of the work that has been carried out in the Syrian provinces has been survey work, beginning in the early twentieth century.[4] Excavations in the Syrian provinces have not been as numerous as those to the south and when excavations have occurred they were, historically, confined to certain small areas; for example the large scale excavations carried out at Antioch in the 1930s. We therefore have a large number of examples of mosaic pavements from the regional capital, but less from other areas and

[4] Amongst the earliest of these surveys were those undertaken by the University of Princeton in the early twentieth century. The findings were published in four volumes over some forty years. See Butler *et al*, 1907-49, *Syria, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria, in 1904-1905 and 1909.* The work of Tchalenko (1953) in the Limestone Massif was extremely important and forms the basis of subsequent discussion of the region, although in recent years some of his basic assumptions have been challenged.

contexts. This produces a bias in the evidence, which should be borne in mind during its discussion.

Chronologically this study's limits are simply (although with some flexibility) defined as the period of Late Antiquity. This era is often considered by scholars to begin with the reign of Constantine (and the foundation of Constantinople in AD 325 as the capital of the Eastern Empire), a period of great administrative, cultural and religious change. The end of eastern Roman rule in *Oriens* in the AD 630/40s and the Arab conquests could be considered a definite end to the period of Late Antiquity, although archaeological evidence indicates that there was cultural and economic continuation, at least for a certain period of time. The Umayyad dynasty that eventually replaced Byzantine rule was relatively tolerant and the non-Muslim population had a degree of autonomy.[5] A number of pavements from churches in Syria and the Palestinian provinces were laid after the Arab conquests and I will be discussing in detail at least two of these (the pavement of the Church of St. George at Deir al-Adas (CAT:15, p 40) in Phoenicia and the Church of the Acropolis at Ma'in (CAT:53, p 155) in Arabia). It is probably more useful to use the date of the end of the Umayyad period (c AD 750) to provide a *terminus* to my discussion.[6]

Organisation of the Thesis

I have produced a catalogue (Volume II, Appendix I) of many of the pavements that contain image/s from the iconographic categories that I discuss in detail in each chapter. Its primary function is to aid the reader in following the discussion of the imagery. The relevant details of the pavements, such as location, date, mosaic inscriptions and

[5] The judicial matters of the native populations were often left in their hands and dealt with in accordance with their own laws. See Rahman, 1999, *A Chronology of Islamic History,* for a good introduction to the early expansion of Islam (particularly pages 128-9).

[6] See Clover and Humpreys, 1989: 3-15 for an interesting discussion of the definition of Late Antiquity.

pictures/plans are included. Throughout the text of this thesis and the catalogue I use the ancient name (often Greek) of a site under discussion and the most easily recognisable modern name when the ancient name is unknown to us.

Each entry in the catalogue has been assigned a number which is inserted into the text of the thesis whenever a particular site is mentioned in the discussion. All entries begin with CAT followed by a number. To enable the reader to find the catalogue entry quickly and easily they have been given a running number sequence; therefore CAT:1, CAT:2 etc. Every time a catalogued site is mentioned in the text the catalogue number and page number in the catalogue appear beside it, so for example, the villa at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1). The catalogue itself is arranged geographically and by province, rather than in the order that the sites are mentioned in the text. This makes the catalogue itself more readable and the reader more able to easily find and flick through all the pavements of particular region mentioned in the entire thesis (not just in one chapter). I have arranged my discussion of the imagery itself geographically and it seemed sensible for the catalogue to also have this arrangement.

Certain other pavements that I only briefly mention in my discussion have not been catalogued, but a picture provided in the Figures for the Chapters (in Volume II). They are, like the catalogue entries, simply assigned running numbers; Fig 1, Fig 2 etc. They are assigned their number in the order that they appear in the discussion rather than by geographical area. The pavements of the zodiac, discussed in Chapter 5, Part 1, have also not been catalogued, as my discussion necessarily covers all aspects of these pavements in the text in such detail, that catalogue entries are not required.

The material is organised for discussion in each of the chapters of the thesis by province, starting with those in the north (Cilicia, Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia) followed

by the provinces to the south: Palaestina and Arabia. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the administrative divisions of the region influenced the character and prevalence of the decorative schemes. It is possible to identify some typical features that distinguish one province from another. For example, unified full-field hunting compositions are confined mainly to Syria and the north, whereas Nilotic scenes, although found throughout the region are generally concentrated in the provinces of Palaestina. As Sean Leatherbury, amongst others, has pointed out, although provinces are important political units, they are not always entirely helpful for the examination of artistic traditions, as political boundaries are better defined than those of culture.[7] This geographical arrangement is a somewhat arbitrary way of organising the pavements but it does work well and ensures that large amounts of evidence are discussed in a fairly concise and coherent fashion. It also allows for the identification of broad overall features and trends seen across sites and regions and provides a convenient framework within which to make comparative points.

Previous Scholarship

Much of the earliest work carried out by scholars on the mosaic pavements of the Levant was cataloguing: Collecting together the evidence, analysing and categorising it. Avi-Yonah (in the 1930s) catalogued a large number of archaeological sites and buildings containing mosaic pavements in what was then Palestine. Each of his catalogue entries consisted of a range of details such as, description of the architectural context, size of the tesserae and brief description and discussion of the imagery.[8]

Ruth and Asher Ovadiah took a very similar approach to the evidence of Israel and Palestine in 1987.[9] They catalogued the new discoveries in almost exactly the same way in

[7] Leatherbury, 2012: 18. Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford.
[8] Avi-Yonah, 1932, 1933, 1934 and 1935. Please refer to my bibliography.
[9] Ovadiah, R., and A. 1987. Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel.

which Avi-Yonah had done some decades earlier. Both Piccirillo (*The Mosaics of Jordan,* 1993) and Donceel-Voûte (*Les Pavements des Eglises Byzantine de Syrie et Du Liban,* 1988) like the Ovadiahs, compiled compendiums of pavements of particular regions which included entries for each pavement, taking a descriptive approach to the iconography. Unlike the previous cataloguing work, however, these two corpuses also (very briefly in each catalogue entry) addressed the sociological and historical importance of the imagery; the function of the rooms in which they were found, importance of the mosaics as historic sources, the inscriptions and donors and the relevance of the iconography when considering all these factors. These descriptive studies have all been extremely important in laying the foundations for further discussion. A more recent publication by Hachlili in 2009 is an enormously useful addition to the scholarship in this area. She considers many different categories of iconography, lists many of the examples so far found in Israel (primarily) and includes a chapter about the evidence for workshops and the craftsmen.

A more art historical approach was taken in the discussion of mosaics by scholars such as Doro Levi (*The Mosaics of Antioch,* 1947) and Irving Lavin (*The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch,* 1963) working in the Syrian provinces. Briefly, the focus of their work was artistic development and stylistic influence and diffusion, with a detailed treatment of the composition and style of the imagery. Their work has made an exceptional contribution to the field, furthered our understanding of the evidence and helped us to appreciate the flow of artistic style during this period. Both of these scholars were/are primarily art historians and not archaeologists.

Merrony has recently published a study of the mosaic pavements of Phoenicia and Northern Palestine, using a rather different methodological approach to those previously

employed.[10] This study instead of analysing the significance of the iconography and the development of style, addressed the socio-economic background of the mosaic pavements in a defined area.[11] The focus of this work was the analysis of the quantity (cube size, and number of tesserae, for example) and quality of the mosaics, their distribution within different types of buildings and the different types of bedding and materials used.[12] Although it is now fairly well accepted by scholars that the fifth and sixth centuries were a period of prosperity in the wider region (the Levant), the evidence for individual provinces and areas is still somewhat sketchy.[13] The main push of Merrony's argument is that by analysing the technique and the distribution of decoration, mosaic pavements can provide an index of economic conditions and indicate the economic resources and expenditure of patrons.[14] This is a useful addition to the study of mosaics in the region, helping to flesh out the evidence for the economic 'picture' of a particular region at a particular time. Although it has to be pointed out that many of the mosaics in the Levantine provinces are often not securely dated (by inscription, for example) and we rely to a great extent on stylistic dating which, of course, comes with a fairly large margin for error.[15] It should also be borne in mind that 'quality' is a rather subjective term when applied to artistic style.

The coverage and nature of the publications are not the same across the entire region. There has been far less art historical discussion of the mosaic pavements in the southern provinces (Palaestina and Arabia) than in the north of the region (the Syrian

[10] Merrony, 2013, *Socio-Economic Aspects of Late Roman Mosaic Pavements in Phoenicia and Northern Palestine.*

[11] This method of studying the mosaics leads on and builds on the work carried out by Dauphin (1976, 1978 and 1980), in which she discussed the technical elements (of composition, style and tesserae size) of a category (vine-scroll) of evidence and then compiled the evidence on computer and established stylistic groupings of the pavements based on the results. She also (1980, 112-35) used this technical data to speculate on the economic background of region and patron.

[12] See Merrony, 2013: 30-1 for a description of his methodology and the aims of his study.

[13] Merrony, 2013: 31.

[14] Merrony, 2013: 30.

[15] The bulk of the pavements in the Palestinian provinces and Arabia are simply attributed a date of sometime in the sixth century, for example.

provinces in particular). Much of the discussion and description in the south comes from archaeologists and in many cases from the excavators of the sites themselves. These archaeological publications often remain the only discussion of the mosaics from many sites. Even at the larger sites such as Sepphoris, the description and discussion of the imagery has remained to a large extent with the excavators. A number of catalogues (such as that of the mosaics of Jordan by Piccirillo) have been produced giving descriptive broad sweeps of the evidence. There are some exceptions, the most notable being the discussion of the zodiac pavements of Palaestina. This impressive and 'unusual' imagery has attracted the attention of a wide range of scholars (including art historians and theologians) with different approaches and interests in that specific iconography.

The picture for the Syrian provinces is slightly different. Extensive excavations took place at the sites of the major cities such as Antioch and Apamea over a long period of time. The archaeological excavations with descriptions and brief discussions of the mosaics were published ('primary' publications) and then subsequently more detailed and sophisticated art historical analysis ('secondary' publications) have been published by scholars such a Levi and Lavin. The pavements to be discussed from the Palestinian provinces and Arabia perhaps encompass a wider range of contexts and types of settlements (villages and cities, rural and urban) and have been excavated more recently in greater numbers than in the north; however the discussion often remains at the level of 'primary' publication.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the region

The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief and general introduction to my area of study, its background (settlements and the people) and mosaic pavements. It is not meant to be a detailed and thorough examination and discussion of evidence, but is designed to provide an informative backdrop for the mosaic pavements that I will go on to discuss in subsequent chapters.

Settlements and the countryside.

In the East, the fifth century saw a new phase of development in the countryside. Settlement intensified and agricultural settlements apparently flourished.[16] Villages were more dominant here than in the West and the surface surveys that have been carried out suggest that the countryside was dotted with rural settlements across Syria, Palestine and Arabia.[17] The establishment of the frontier had allowed the build-up of settlements to extend to the edge of cultivatable land by the sixth century. One such example is Kastron Mefaa, Arabia, which had been a military outpost in the third century, but by the sixth century was a substantial civilian settlement (with many churches containing mosaic pavements which I will discuss during the course of my thesis).[18]

In Syria a number of surveys have been carried out since Tchalenko's work (published in 1953) suggested an expansion in rural settlement. These later surveys have confirmed a boom in expansion during the fourth to the sixth centuries on the plains and in

[16] Chavarria and Lewit, 2004: 5
[17] Decker, 2009: 33 for the Syrian evidence and Avni, 2014: 338-9 for the survey evidence from Palestine and Arabia.
[18] Piccirillo, 1993: 205-45,

the mountain region.[19] The northern Syrian massif (the Limestone massif, between Antioch and Aleppo) has yielded the remains of approximately 780 villages of Roman and Early Byzantine date.[20] Although the epigraphic record shows that large-scale construction of public buildings stopped in that region in the early seventh century (the last dated building inscription is AD 609), the archaeological evidence suggests a continuation of the rural settlements.[21] The peak of settlement was the sixth century with decline starting by the seventh century and indication of continuity until as late as the ninth/tenth centuries.[22]

The archaeological evidence also shows a time of prosperity and expansion in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia in the sixth century: Cities expanded, as did rural settlement and this coincided with an increase in the construction of churches and monastic foundations.[23] Areas that had not been previously populated such the marginal areas of the Negev and Judean Desert began to be exploited.[24] The thriving local economy was based on the large-scale production of agricultural products such as wine, oil and wheat.[25] Palestine was also known for linen production (particularly at Scythopolis) and the areas around Gaza and Ascalon produced a large quantity of pottery (including amphorae).[26] Many villages served as production centres for agricultural goods for local and regional consumption and also export to the wider Mediterranean.[27]

There is no consensus on the question of a later decline in these provinces, although the Arab invasions and the decline in the volume of inter-regional Mediterranean trade and exchange in the seventh century does appear to have marked a downturn (at least

[19] See Chavarria and Lewit, 2004: 4-8 for a round-up of this evidence.
[20] Avni, 2014: 295.
[21] Avni, 2014: 295 and also Foss, 1997: 197-204 for a detailed analysis of the survey and epigraphical evidence.
[22] See Magness, 2003a: 196-206.
[23] Avni, 2014: 338.
[24] Avni, 2014: 204-5.
[25] Kingsley, 2001: 45-52. I discuss the agricultural production of the region in detail in Chapter 4.
[26] Kingsley, 2001: 49-51.
[27] Avni, 2014: 204.

in public building in the cities). The situation in the countryside appears to have been more stable with the continuing construction of churches, for example.[28] By the early eighth century we see a return of monumental building projects in the cities and of course, in the countryside the occurrence of the grand palaces of the Umayyad elite, for example; in Syria at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi and in Arabia at Qasr Amra (near Philadelphia).[29]

Local cultures and communities.

The social, cultural and linguistic history of the Levant during Late Antiquity is enormously complex and did not remain static throughout this period. I am not qualified to put forward any serious opinions, I shall simply give a brief overview of the evidence and arguments put forward by the experts who work on this subject.

Much of the Syrian provinces had been ruled over by a succession of Greek dynasties founded by Alexander in 332 BC and lasting until the first century BC (the Seleucids). Major Greek cities were founded at Antioch, Seleucia, Apamea and Beroea in Syria and at the time of the Roman conquest of the region in the first century AD, there were a large number of cities with Greek names scattered across the region.[30] In general the archaeological and documentary evidence for the use of language (and therefore the increasing use of Greek) is rather poor in the Hellenistic period.[31] Jewish sources are better represented than others at this period, such as the two books of Maccabees (written in the latter part of the second century BC (although Greek was the language used).[32] Documentation in various dialects of Aramaic began to emerge in the later Hellenistic period, including Syriac which is attested from the first century onwards and would appear

[28] Chavarria and Lewit, 2004: 6.
[29] See Fowden, 2004, for an introduction to such palaces and full description of the art of Qasr Amra. Greek was still in use and inscriptions appear in the frescos (see particularly 265-72).
[30] Millar, 2013: 15.
[31] Andrade, 2013: 250.
[32] Millar, 2013: 16.

to have been used in the area from the middle Euphrates eastwards to the Tigris (outside the Empire).[33] The Syriac-using kingdom of Edessa had, by the third century AD become a Roman *coloniae*.[34]

Roman control of Judea had been established by the 60s BC and was then steadily extended. Palmyra came under Roman control by the first century AD and the Nabatean kingdom (which had used both Greek and a dialect of Aramaic) was under Roman control by 106 AD.[35] Campaigns of Roman conquest were carried out between 160s and 190s AD along the eastern frontier of the Empire, along the Euphrates allowing for a network of roads to be built linking the Mediterranean coast with Palmyra and the Euphrates.[36]

The complexity of the language use in the region alone is immense. Millar summed up the situation as 'interplay of Greek with Semitic languages, whether Hebrew or various branches of Aramaic (Nabatean, Palmyrene, Jewish Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic) with the languages and scripts of pre-Islamic Arabia, and finally with Arabic'.[37] Both Millar and Bowersock have argued for the dominance of Greek as the accepted formal and public language in the eastern Roman Empire.[38] Hellenism, Bowersock believes, provides the instrument for putting the issue into a clear perspective, and that Imperial Hellenism, Greek in form and outlook, replaced the old Greco-Roman culture as the dominant way of life in the eastern Mediterranean.[39] Cameron softens this view with the comment that the culture of the Near East in Late Antiquity was a mosaic which can only be interpreted by reference to local differentiation.

[33] Millar, 2013: 16, see also Healey, 2009 for a discussion of the Aramaic material from the Hellenistic and Imperial Periods
[34] Cameron, 2012:177.
[35] Millar, 2013: 16.
[36] Millar, 2013: 16.
[37] Millar, 2009: 1.
[38] Millar, 2009 and 2013 and Bowersock, 1990.
[39] Bowersock, 1990: xii.

The question of the geographical distribution of the various population groups (pagans, Jews, Christians, for example) has been the focus of some speculation. Avni, in his evaluation of the survey of archaeological and written evidence from Palestine concluded that cities were multicultural centres inhabited by Christians, Jews, pagans and a smaller minority of Samaritans.[40] In Late Roman Eleutheropolis, the variety in the population can be seen through the necropolis in which Jewish and Christian burials are side by side.[41] The villages were, on the other hand, were usually inhabited by a single ethno-religious group.[42]

The writing of the Pilgrim of Piacenza would seem to confirm this view of village populations. This pilgrim (writing at about AD 566-8) spent nearly three years travelling across a wide area, including Syria, Palestine and Egypt. [43] He visited and described many villages and cities, including Sepphoris, Nazareth and Cana (all described as Christian).[44] Even neighbouring villages could be occupied by different population types, for example; two adjacent villages near the Carmel ridge, Shiqmona (identified as Jewish) and Castra (identified as Christian).[45] The importance of this written work in particular lies in the fact that the writer has taken the trouble to describe the people and countryside of Palestine, not just the pilgrimage route and shrines along it; the landscape is described as fertile with many agricultural settlements and also densely populated with large cities and great monuments.[46]

[40] Avni, 2014: 197.
[41] Avni *et al,* 2008: 173.
[42] Avni, 2014: 197.
[43] See Wilkinson, 2002: 129-51, for a translation and discussion.
[44] See Wilkinson, 2002: 129-51.
[45] Wilkinson, 2002: 141.
[46] Avni, 2014: 2.

In his article concerning the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius (late third/early fourth century), Isaac came to an entirely different conclusion about the populations of villages.[47] In the *Onomasticon,* Eusebius refers to twenty-nine cities and hundreds of villages in Palestine mentioned in the Bible. Isaac focuses his discussion on the settlements which Eusebius assigns to a specific ethno-religious group (in only a few cases does Eusebius actually do this), for example; only eleven Jewish villages and four Samaritan villages are identified (entirely pagan settlements are not mentioned).[48] Isaac concludes that the overwhelming majority of villages had mixed populations and that Eusebius, considering this the norm, therefore only mentioned if a settlement had a homogeneous population (was purely Jewish, Christian or Samaritan).[49] This is I think, rather a flawed way of looking at the evidence, and the focus should be on what Eusebius does mention rather then what he doesn't. He mentions that some villages are indeed inhabited by single ethno-religious groups. Archaeological evidence can be used to supplement these written texts, with the identification of religious buildings such as synagogues and churches.

The written accounts are, of course, sometimes influenced by the writers own backgrounds (social and religious). Not all (perhaps not the majority) of the different sections and ethnicities of society were represented in the surviving contemporary written evidence and some that are, are being described through the eyes of strangers. Archaeological evidence can help to flesh out the evidence for settlements and religious identity and the economic conditions and contacts of a particular area. By using these first-hand pilgrimage writings in conjunction with the other written and the archaeological evidence, we can perhaps attempt to build up a picture of the ethnicities, religions and

[47] Isaac, 1998: 65-75.
[48] Isaac, 1998: 68.
[49] Isaac, 1998: 72-3.

languages of the communities of the region and also their settlements and economic prosperity.

Mosaics

In this section I shall discuss two subjects that need to be introduced before I start my main discussion of the mosaic pavements. I will first consider the mosaic pavement of the Great Palace at Constantinople. This pavement is from outside the Levant, however the stylistic and iconographical similarities between this mosaic and certain pavements from my own area make it necessary to address. Finally I shall bring together the evidence for pattern books and workshops, which will inform the discussion of the iconography in subsequent chapters.

The Great Palace mosaic.

The question of the Great Palace mosaic of Constantinople (Fig 1) and its connection to the hunting pavements of Antioch and Apamea and also the pavements of the wider region (such as those sited in and around Gaza), is an important issue to briefly address. This pavement is located outside my chosen area; however, the possible connection to pavements that I will go on to discuss in detail needs to be explored at the beginning of my thesis.

From the discovery of this impressive pavement, its date has been fiercely argued. Joint archaeological excavations and study carried out by Austrian and Turkish archaeologists during the 1980s and 90s finally settled the debate, or at least narrowed the period in which the mosaic could have been laid. The mosaic was discovered to have been laid on top of a layer of quarry stone and pottery sherds. Many fragments of Gaza amphorae of fifth and sixth century date were discovered in this ‘insulating’ layer as was

North African pottery dating to the second half of the fifth century and some pieces of fine ware from the last quarter of the fifth century.[50] The conclusion of the archaeologists was that the Palace mosaic was therefore laid in the first half of the sixth century during reconstruction work at the Great Palace.[51] This excavation work has therefore given us a *terminus post quem* for the pavement of the early sixth century, but does leaves room for speculation as to exactly how much later it was laid. Much of the scholarly work carried out since these excavations has concentrated on three periods; the reign of Justinian I (AD 527-65), Tiberias (AD 578-82) and Justinian II (AD 685-95 and 705-11), the three known subsequent periods in which alterations were carried out at the palace.

The pavement (that covered the floor of a peristyle courtyard) contains a wide variety of subjects, the overwhelming majority of which belong to the rural genre category of iconography, including agricultural, pastoral and hunting imagery spread across a cream background (the pavement itself is unfortunately very fragmentary). There are certain similarities in style, design and subject matter between this pavement and the hunting pavements that I will discuss from Antioch and Apamea. In his discussion of the origins of the hunting mosaics of Antioch, Lavin considered these similarities. As he pointed out, it would be tempting to conclude that the changes appearing in pavement design in Antioch were a reflection of developments at the court in Constantinople.[52] The Palace pavement is, however, almost certainly at least half a century later than the pavement of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) at Antioch (the earliest of the large hunting pavements from the city) and, as Lavin stated, a number of important pavements from Apamea also dating to the fifth century, show the same iconographical and stylistic approach seen at Antioch.[53] We also have no evidence of a development of style and design that would have

[50] Jobst, 2000: 58-61.
[51] Jobst, 2000: 61.
[52] Lavin, 1963: 269.
[53] Lavin, 1963: 270.

culminated in the pavement of the Great Palace at Constantinople itself (although this could of course be an accident of preservation). The later hunting figures from the pavement of the Triclinos (dating to approximately AD 539) are also reminiscent of those of the Great Palace, being similarly well modelled and executed. It may well be that the developments that are seen across Syria in the fifth century, although originally rooted in the traditions of North Africa, were a product of the region itself and independent of the Imperial capital of Constantinople.

Lavin pin-pointed the development of the stylistic changes that culminated in the pavements of Antioch and Apamea to the coastal regions of Syria, with influences travelling to this area from the great cities of North Africa.[54] These influences took root in Syria and evolved and spread. In Palestine, although we do not have evidence of a clear evolution of style based in the North African traditions, we do see occasional evidence of North African influence. At Lydda (Lod, Fig 2 and 3) a large pavement has been uncovered, probably once belonging to a villa (attributed a late third/early fourth century date).[55] This pavement consists of three panels; a large central panel flanked by two smaller panels. The large central panel contains a scene of exotic animals at the centre consisting of amongst others, an elephant, lions and a giraffe. All these figures are well modelled and anatomically correct, and they are set within a naturalistic landscape (almost certainly supposed to be representing Africa). One of the two flanking panels contains a large and detailed marine scene that bears very strong similarities to those of contemporary North Africa (meticulous depictions of different species of fish filling all available spaces and detailed representations of boats, for example). In the other small panel is the image of

[54] Lavin, 1963: 273.

[55] See Talgam, 2014: 65-70. This pavement was uncovered in 1996 and yet has not until now been the subject of a proper study in its entirety. Often the only part of the pavement previously mentioned by scholars has been the central panel containing the scene of exotic animals. In addition to Talgam's excellent overview (only recently published) a book devoted to the pavement is currently in press (Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers Ltd) authored by Avni, G., Bowersock, G., Gorzalczany, A., Schwartz, J., and Talgam, R.

a basket full of fish, a motif that is characteristic of North African pavements.[56] The style and iconographical content of this mosaic is antecedent of later styles in the region, but does not seem to have been the origin of a turning point in development in the way that the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) of Antioch (fourth century) had been. The other surviving contemporary pavements in the vicinity are classical in style and remained so until long after the Lydda example was produced.[57] As Talgam states, the close imitation of models from North Africa suggests the possibility of direct contact with Africa Proconsularis at this early period.[58] It seems clear that the whole of the Levantine coast from North Africa, Palestine (particularly Gaza), Syria to Constantinople were in very close contact throughout the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.

Lavin also raises the possibility that the art of the Imperial capital could have been influenced by artistic changes coming from the Greek East.[59] It is interesting to me that as well as the stylistic similarities, there are certain iconographical elements that appear both on the pavements of the Great Palace and a number of pavements in the Levant. The image of a water wheel appears at the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21) of Apamea (AD 469) and the pavement at Constantinople, for example.[60] At the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah (CAT:22, p 65) (near Gaza, dated to AD 451) an image of a man fowling/gathering fruit with a basket on his shoulder and a stick in his hand is found on the pavement of the nave, a similar image can be found on the pavement of the sixth century Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79). This same model is also used at the later pavement at Constantinople, except there the man is substituted for a monkey. At the sixth century church of St Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4), south of Gaza, there is an image of a woman breast feeding on the nave pavement. The

[56] Talgam, 2014: 69.
[57] Talgam points out that it is not clear whether this pavement can be treated as an isolated example or the beginning of a comprehensive trend, Talgam, 2014: 70.
[58] Talgam, 2014: 70.
[59] Lavin, 1963: 273.
[60] See Dulière, 1974: 8 for the dating of the pavement of the Grand Colonnade, Apamea..

only other example of this image in mosaic (of any period) is found on the pavement of the Great Palace.

There have been a number of interpretations offered for the meaning of the scheme at the Great Palace and the origins of the imagery used.[61] The most complex and lengthy of these interpretations has come from Trilling. To summarize, he has suggested that it represented a response to Virgil's *Georgics* (in which agriculture functions as a political metaphor of a golden age) and that the imagery of the pavement therefore illustrated the social and political ideas that underlie the Byzantine Imperial order. This mosaic he attributes to the reign of Heraclius (AD 610-41), commissioned and possibly even devised by the emperor himself; the iconography reflecting his African background.[62] Specifically, the iconography (the animal violence and hunting) may be seen as the struggle for the safety of civilization in general and the Empire in particular.[63] The apparently random placement of the images argues for a personal scheme for the emperor in which the imagery also represents the emperor's soul and conflicts (and is therefore an allegory of human nature).[64]

There are a number of points that Trilling made that I would like to discuss, as they directly concern the pavements in my area. The general subjects of the scenes themselves (animal hunt, pastoral and other rural images) were, he argued, conventional models but the exact images themselves were not: Close visual parallels, if they exist at all, were with much older works.[65] When he chose examples with which to illustrate the rural life category, he picked amongst others; a breast feeding woman, a man milking a goat and a

[61] Weitzmann argued that the mosaic has a consistency derived from its dependence on a single literary text and cited the *Cynegetica* of Oppian (written in Syria) as that text. Marlia Mango (in an as yet unpublished paper) expands this idea and matches scenes and animals to descriptions in the text and discusses the various connections between Syria and Constantinople (including the similarities between the pavement of the Triclinos of Apamea and that of the Great Palace).
[62] Trilling, 1989: 57-8.
[63] Trilling, 1989: 57-8.
[64] Trilling, 1989: 58.
[65] Trilling, 1989: 37.

monkey with a basket.[66] Close visual parallels to all these images can be found on the pavements of Palestine and Arabia dating to the fifth and sixth centuries (mentioned above). The figure of a man milking a goat (discussed in my section of pastoral scenes, below) occurs repeatedly in Roman art. The examples of this image from North Africa are indeed much older works (first/second century AD),[67] but the examples from the Levant are much closer in date to the Great Palace pavement, for example; from the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8), Antioch (fourth century) and the Church of the Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4), near Gaza (AD 573).

Trilling pointed to the earlier mosaics of North Africa for the antecedents of the Great Palace mosaic, believing that Heraclius' North African origin could best explain any similarities.[68] The pavements, the iconography of which he uses to confirm this theory (such as the villa at Zilten, Fig 5) are almost all much earlier in date than closer iconographic parallels to the Constantinople pavement found in the Levant. The pavements of Antioch, Apamea, Palestine and Arabia are, I think, too easily discounted as a possible source of influence. The pavement of the Old Diakonikon (CAT:49, p 145), Mount Nebo (AD 530) Trilling identifies as being, owing to its design, a possible close antecedent of the Great Palace pavement.[69] This idea is then dismissed as unlikely due to the pavements iconographic heritage (from the development culminating in the hunting pavements of Antioch).[70] As I mention in my discussion of the hunting pavements in Chapter 2, the development in the pavements of Antioch probably originated in the pavements of North Africa. The one pavement from North Africa of sixth century date that he identifies as having similarities to the mosaic at Constantinople is a Nilotic pavement from Qasr el-

[66] Trilling, 1989: 57.
[67] Found at the villa at Zilten (75-100 AD) and Villa di Orfeo, Leptis Magna (second century). See Dunbabin, 1978: 109.
[68] Trilling, 1989:45.
[69] Trilling, 1989: 47.
[70] Trilling, 1989: 47.

Lebia (Fig 35).[71] Interestingly, the bulk of the Nilotic pavements dating to Late Antiquity are found in the Levant, attributed to the fifth and sixth centuries (see my discussion of Nilotic imagery). Trilling identifies three basic categories of subject matter on the Great Palace mosaic; rural/idyllic life, animal violence and protection/hunting.[72] All three of these categories frequently appear together on the pavements of the Levant, and the pavements of the sixth century churches of Palestine and Arabia, in particular.

The Question of Pattern Books and Workshops

It would also be useful to briefly discuss the evidence of pattern books and workshops before I begin my main discussions of the mosaic pavements. Evidence for the way in which mosaicists worked and were organised is very limited. Most of the discussions and arguments concerning these issues have been based purely around the style and execution of the mosaics themselves, as references to mosaicists in the contemporary written evidence (inscriptions and literary sources) are extremely rare. As Dunbabin has pointed out, mosaicists were most probably regarded by Roman society as craftsmen, rather than artists; their work closely connected to the architectural form and purpose of the building in which it lay.[73] There is only one contemporary literary reference to a celebrated individual mosaicist, in a famous and often quoted passage in Pliny's Natural History (36.184), in which Pliny praises the 'unswept floor' design of Sosos of Pergamon. Inscriptions set into the mosaic pavements do occasionally name the craftsmen responsible, although again these are rare. Dunbabin noted between seventy and eighty signatures contained within mosaic inscriptions from across the Greco-Roman world spanning the period from the fourth century BC to the eighth century AD. Donderer, in his

[71] Trilling, 1989: 40. See Alfoldi-Rosenbaum, 1971: 149 for description of this site.
[72] Trilling, 1989: 57.
[73] Dunbabin, 1999: 269. The Edict of Diocletion in AD 301 listed the maximum wages that different categories of craftsmen could charge. Mosaicists received the same wages as (amongst others) carpenters, bakers and blacksmiths and less than painters. See Giacchero, 1974: 1510-1.

study of the subject, put the number of signatures at ninety-two (although he included other inscriptions contained within the buildings).[74]

The way in which these craftsmen were organised and worked (including the origin and transmission of the repertory) has been the subject of some speculation amongst scholars. We do know from the few surviving inscriptions that there were organised workshops of some kind: The formula '*ex officina'* appears occasionally (particularly in the North African and Hispanic provinces).[75] Dunbabin has stated that such a signature ('from the workshop of…) may be taken to constitute an advertisement for the particular workshop concerned.[76] When there is only one signature we can perhaps assume that it is that of the master-craftsman or head of the workshop (who had assistants/apprentices), however, the division of labour within a group of craftsmen is indicated in several inscriptions. In these inscriptions a painter (or draughtsman) is mentioned and then the person who executed or laid the pavement, for example; in a building (context unknown) at Thebes the inscription of a pavement states that Demetrios thought out the drawing and Epiphanes executed it.[77]

The similarities of the style, execution and form of certain groups of pavements have led some scholars to propose that the same workshop was responsible for their production. Hachlili, for example, identifies a number of workshops or teams of mosaicists working in specific areas of Palestine at specific times. She believes that the evidence points to a number of workshops and schools each with their own tendencies and preferences. The workshops in rural communities and villages may have been established by and run from large centres. Many of the mosaics of the Gaza region and the Negev (at

[74] Donderer, 1989.
[75] Gómez Pallarès, 1991: 76-8.
[76] Dunbabin, 1999: 272.
[77] See Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974:121 and Dunbabin, 1999: 276.

sites such as Shellal, Gaza, Kissufim, Ma'on and Jabaliyah) could, she argues, have been produced by a workshop centred on Gaza with teams working on mosaics at these sites during the fifth and sixth centuries.[78] This may explain the similarities in the use of imagery and design between the mosaics at these sites, although, as she then points out, a local trend, artistic connections and exchanges of themes and motifs could have been the source of any of these similarities.[79] Some mosaicists may even have been itinerant, travelling through a region for work. Dunbabin suggests that with the boom in the construction of churches in the Holy Land from the late fourth century the craftsmen needed to meet demand may have come from centres in the north, bringing with them the fashions that can be seen on the Syrian pavements.[80]

The question of how designs and iconography could be transmitted between craftsmen and how particular examples could be repeated over a long period of time and at a long distance from one another is very difficult to determine. Hachlili, in her chapter concerning this problem, listed several ways in which this transmission of imagery could have occurred: Model or pattern book; taste or choice of the artist, examples of depictions in other media,[81] practice of designs passed down through a family of mosaicists or workshop,[82] visual ideas supplementing the remembered images of the mosaicist.[83] The training of apprentices would probably have entailed the learning of schemata enabling them to go on to construct specific scenes. The figured repertory (including mythological

[78] Hachlili, 2009: 264-9.
[79] Hachlili, 2009: 269.
[80] Dunbabin, 1999: 194. The pavement of the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah near Gaza is, however, almost certainly earlier (AD 451) than the Syrian pavements (from Antioch) that Dunbabin compares it to, which date from the late fifth and early sixth centuries. See Humbert, 2000: 124 for a description of Jabaliyah pavement.
[81] I note in my discussion of the hunting imagery in Chapter 2 that scenes similar to those on mosaic pavements from Antioch can be found decorating silver ware from the same period.
[82] We know that family members did work together as a team of mosaicists, for example; the father and son team of Marianus and Anina who were responsible for the laying of the zodiac pavement of Beth Alpha and the pavement (possible zodiac) at the Samaritan synagogue at Scythopolis. I discuss this in Chapter 5, Part 1.
[83] Hachlili, 2009: 275.

scenes in which certain figures had set attributes) could be handed down with little change. It is unlikely that this is the whole explanation, as Dunbabin has pointed out certain repeated details (she notes the trumpeters found in scenes of Achilles) are too close to simply be the product of training.[84] Craftsmen may have used a model or pattern book giving the outline of figures and groups (possibly very schematic images), from which they chose and combined to create scenes and overall designs.[85]

The possibility of the use of pattern books as a means for the spread of motifs and artistic schemes has been the source of some controversy and argument. As with the question of workshops, any theories are founded upon indirect evidence such as stylistic analysis, as there is an almost complete lack of material evidence. Many scholars have argued that the frequent use of identical compositions, motifs and designs found in mosaics, sculpture and funerary art point to the use of pattern books.[86] Dauphin, in her article concerning the inhabited scroll motif, advanced the idea that a pattern book was a collection of motifs, independent of any iconographical context.[87] A workshop or craftsman may then have possessed and passed down a set of basic iconographical models from which to use as a starting point from which to work (and from which a patron could choose).

To date no fragment of a model or pattern book dating to antiquity has survived. One reference to the use of a pattern in the creation of a mosaic can be found in ancient written sources: A fragmentary papyrus contract (now in Cairo) for the laying of a mosaic dating to the third century BC, gives instructions to the workmen to use a model of a

[84] Dunbabin, 1999: 302.
[85] Dunbabin, 1999: 302.
[86] Including Hachlili, 1987:55 and 2009: 275, Dauphin, 1978, Dunbabin, 1978: 23 and 1999: 302-3, Roussin, 1985:45 amongst others. Although other scholars have come out against the idea of model books, including Bruneau, 1984: 241-72 and Zohar, 2008: 123-40.
[87] Dauphin, 1978: 408.

flower to be supplied by the royal palace.[88] Model books may have been made of highly perishable materials such as papyrus or parchment (making them also more easily portable). Several papyrus pages illustrating the canon of painting have survived from Ptolemaic Egypt and such an arrangement may have existed for later mosaicists of the wider region.[89]

[88] Daszewski, 1985: 6-14 for a full discussion of this evidence.
[89] Scheller, 1963: 44-5.

Chapter 2.

Animals

Pastoral scenes; the hunt; and the capture, transportation and use of 'exotic' wild beasts

In this chapter I aim to look at and discuss the images of rural activities connected with animals. Part 1 discusses pastoral scenes and images; Part 2 examines the many different scenes of the hunt and Part 3 concerns the occurrences of images of the capture and transportation of exotic beasts (led in some cases by equally exotic human figures).

Part 1: Pastoral scenes

Pastoral scenes and images are those images that illustrate the raising and keeping of livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep and pigs. Although examples from this iconographic category are not particularly rare, their use was by no means widespread on floors in the region during Late Antiquity and cannot be compared with the popularity of scenes of the hunt (discussed in Part 2). There are twenty-one pavements dating from the fourth to the eighth century containing pastoral imagery in this section (shepherds depicted either alone holding a stick/crook; watching or defending animals or engaging in other activities such as milking), with a further six pavements making up a smaller sub-category (depictions of the Four Seasons and the Months that contain some pastoral elements). Of the five pavements found in the Northern provinces, three decorate the floors of villas and two are from churches (dating from the fourth to late fifth/early sixth centuries). The picture is very different in the south where only two pavements come from villas and the rest (fourteen) from churches. In general the pavements of the south are also later in date (almost all have been attributed a sixth century date) than those of Syria and Phoenicia. See **Map 1** (Catalogue, p 158) for the sites of this section.

I want to look at the differences between the examples from the north and the south (and differences between villa and church) and how they relate to the archaeological evidence that has survived from the region. Did the style and meaning of the pastoral images (and most particularly that of the shepherd) change through time and according to context?

The role of livestock (their milk, wool or hide, meat, other products and manure) in the rural economy varies from region to region. As with any agricultural practice, the role of climate and geographical location is very important and will affect the amount and type of animals that can be supported. Several classical authors, such as Varro, Virgil and Columella wrote about animal management in different areas of the Empire (particularly Italy and also North Africa) and these written accounts help us to understand the differing methods and ideas that were in use at the time and also help us to formulate theories about the pastoral practices of a particular region.[90]

Archaeological evidence is an extremely important tool to use when analysing the role of animal husbandry in a particular area at a particular time. This evidence is, unfortunately, rather piecemeal. Not every area has seen extensive excavation or survey and many excavations were carried out at a time in the past when the preservation and quantification of animal bones (and other evidence of their presence) was not considered an important area of study. This imbalance in the available archaeological evidence should be considered. The majority of the examples of pastoral images and scenes on the mosaic pavements come from the southern provinces.

Important surveys of the archaeological evidence have been made and can give us some insight into the probable importance of certain breeds of animal in a particular area.

[90] See White, 1977: 74-83 for a collection of these authors' writings on various aspects of animal husbandry. White, 1970:272-329 also uses the contemporary sources to piece together information about the use of animals and their care during the Roman period.

Henriette Kroll recently published the evidence of animal bones discovered during excavation from across the Byzantine Empire.[91] She has quantified the bones found at certain sites and areas of Syria and Palestine and calculated the percentages for different animals.[92] At Upper Zohar approximately 86% of the animal bones (dated from the fifth to the seventh centuries) were sheep/goat and 2% cattle. At Caesarea, the animal bones dated to the fifth and sixth centuries were only 42% sheep/goat and 19% cattle. The evidence across the sites listed from the Syrian and Palestinian provinces does in general show a significantly higher proportion of sheep/goats than other species. It is also interesting that although I will be discussing no images of pigs in this chapter (none have survived in the floor mosaics of the Levant), they do appear in the archaeological record. At Caesarea (fifth and sixth century finds) pig bones make up some 38% of the animal bones identified, for example (with 1% of the bones unidentified). At Androna in Syria, 25% of the animal bones so far uncovered are those of pigs.[93]

Some surveys of the landscape in other areas of the Levant have also been carried out and the information obtained used to calculate the numbers of various different species of animal that could have been supported. Finklestein and Rosen made use of a pasture survey carried out in 1956/7 in the Negev to theorise about animal husbandry during particular periods. [94] The Sede-Boqer (an area of some 200km^2) could, they calculated, theoretically sustain some 2186 sheep per year or 3700 goats. Cattle, it was decided, would probably not have been able to survive in this type of environment.[95] They also concluded that during the Byzantine period agriculture in this area and the wider region consisted of a

[91] Kroll, 2010, *Tiere im Byzantinischen Reich: Archäozoologische forschungen im überblick*, Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums: Mainz.
[92] Kroll, 2010: 103.
[93] Personal discussion with the excavator of the site Marlia Mango.
[94] Finkelstein and Rosen. 1992: 42-58.
[95] This conclusion would make sense as there are no historical or archaeological evidence for herds of cattle in the Negev. See Finkelstein and Rosen, 1992: 47.

mixture of dry farming, horticulture and herding.[96] Any herds of domestic animal were probably generally of goats with some sheep, cattle and other animals kept in smaller numbers.

Jones-Hall (using evidence gathered in an unpublished PhD thesis by Marfoe, 1983) considered the evidence for animal husbandry in Late Antiquity in the region around Beirut and determined that there was more emphasis on goat pastoralism and moving these animals along regular tracks on the valley sides in Late Antiquity than the earlier Roman period.[97] Stevens[98] also concluded that animal husbandry around Caesarea in Palaestina was based primarily on trans-humance, as large areas of meadow were comparatively rare.[99] Transhumance was probably present in most areas, with flocks grazing in the countryside away from villages and settlements for lengthy periods of time.[100]

The archaeological evidence (animal bones, animal pens, and survey evidence) suggests that animal husbandry was relatively common across the wider region of the Levant (even in those areas that were relatively arid). Sheep and goats were the main domestic species, with some pigs and cattle. Animals were an important element of the mixed (livestock and crops) farming system that was in use across the region. Michael Decker in his discussion of animal husbandry across the landscape of Late Antique *Oriens* takes as an example the Limestone Massif: animals grazed among the olive trees during the day (depositing their dung and fertilising the trees) and were then put in folds or stables over-night (where their dung could be collected to fertilise the kitchen gardens).[101] Livestock pens and troughs have been found in large numbers throughout the villages of

[96] Finklestein and Rosen, 1992:56.
[97] Jones-Hall, 2001: 63-77.
[98] Stevens, 1966: 92-126.
[99] Stevens, 1966: 94.
[100] See Decker, 2009: 218.
[101] Decker, 2009: 217.

the Golan, Negev and indeed the Limestone Massif suggesting that this was a widespread practice.[102]

The Northern provinces: Syria and Phoenicia

The earliest of the Late Antique mosaic examples come from the Northern provinces, dating from the early fourth to the late fifth century. The pavement of Room One at the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8), Daphne (early fourth century), contain the earliest examples of pastoral imagery in a number of panels bordering the main field.[103] The pavement of this room also contains the earliest depictions of a contemporary hunt, rather than a purely mythological hunt found in the region (which will be discussed fully in the following part of this chapter).[104] Many elements of this pavement have long been acknowledged as being without forerunners in the wider area (that we know of, certainly at Antioch) and have been identified as representing the beginning of a move away from the use of purely mythological iconography in the region to the use of genre imagery and the imagery of everyday life.[105]

Panel K (the central panel on the left side of the pavement) contains a scene of a figure milking a goat with a kid standing close by and a pavilion. Panel E (the central panel on the opposite, right side of the pavement) also contains a pastoral landscape: A small building is shown and a shepherd stands with a stick in his left hand, stretching out his right arm towards his flock of (four) grazing sheep. Two more pastoral scenes are contained within the panels of the western side of the pavement. The left panel shows another building with a shepherd in front (this time holding a basket and a horn) watching three sheep and a goat. The second panel shows a much more idealised and possibly

[102] Decker, 2009: 217.
[103] Levi, 1947: 250.
[104] See particularly Lavin, 1963: 189, Duval, 1970: 99-103 and also Huskinson, 2004: 141.
[105] See Levi, 1947: 250.

mythological scene: A man wearing a tunic and holding a stick approaches a female figure weaving a garland in a rural landscape.

Some of the imagery of these panels still shows the influence of the idyllic and mythological landscapes of the Hellenistic and earlier Roman periods (for example the pavilion/temple buildings and the female figure weaving garlands).[106] Taken as a whole, the type and style of the images (combining the contemporary hunting scenes, pastoral scenes, and the seasons) on the pavement of Room 1 constitute a step towards the genre category of imagery that became so popular in the wider region in Late Antiquity. The imagery of the pastoral scenes itself, unlike those of the hunting scenes does not appear to be explicitly moving away from the idyllic and mythological or to be aiming to show more 'lifelike' depiction of contemporary pastoral activities. The figures are naturalistic and engaged in activities familiar to their audience, but the idealised landscapes in which they are set (and the possible mythological associations of the female figure) do not really constitute a definite attempt to show a more realistic picture of contemporary rural life.

Although genre scenes depicting the business of everyday life appeared on earlier pavements than that of the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8), they are not located in the Levant. These genre scenes (particularly depicting rural life) were very popular in the North African provinces from the late first century into the fourth century AD. The mosaics of the villa of Zilten (Fig 5, c AD 75-100) show a shepherd watching a flock of sheep and another figure milking a goat.[107] Levi pointed out that certain images from these North African genre scenes re-occur throughout Antiquity. [108] This image of a peasant milking a goat appears subsequently on a number of pavements throughout the Late

[106] As Levi (1947: 250) pointed out, representations of rural life appear in the earliest Imperial art and even on official monuments such as the Arch of Triumph at Reims.
[107] Merrony, 1998: 455. Also Dunbabin, 1978: 109.
[108] Levi, 1947: 251.

Antique period: at the Villa di Orfeo, Leptis Magna (second century),[109] Kissufim (Fig 6, AD 573) in Palaestina Prima and at Constantinople on the pavement of the Great Palace (possibly sixth century in date) (See Fig 1). A number of aspects of daily contemporary life (not only pastoral and hunting scenes) are depicted in the early North African mosaics. As Lavin has stated, the pastoral and hunting genre scenes can therefore be placed into a much larger category of iconography.[110] The appearance of certain elements of this iconographic category at fourth century Antioch could, Lavin argued, represent an outgrowth of a tradition rooted in North Africa.

The Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) pavement, in a villa at Daphne, Antioch, has been attributed to the late fifth/early sixth century.[111] At the centre of this impressive and detailed hunting scene (which contains such exotic animals as tigers) stands a shepherd/hunter. He stands with his weight on one leg, carrying a spear/staff. The imagery of this pavement is unlike the other pastoral scenes. Hunting imagery appears in conjunction with pastoral scenes in many cases; in the borders, in other panels of the main field or in other pavements contained within the same building. The pavement of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) is slightly different as the figure is standing at the centre of the hunting scene (well-equipped men in fine contemporary dress fight fierce beasts in the outer registers). The way in which this figure is posed, however, is very similar to many of the representations that appear on the other mosaic floors, both in the north and in the later pavements of the southern provinces. The figure at the centre of this particular hunting scene may have mythological associations, rather than representing a hunter or shepherd defending his animals in a contemporary rural landscape.[112] Levi argued that this figure

[109] Dunbabin, 1978: 109.
[110] Lavin, 1963:205.
[111] See Levi, 1947 and Lavin, 1963: 272.
[112] There is a dead boar near the feet of the figure. Mango, M., 1995: 276, suggested that this scene may refer to the myth of Meleager.

was a personification of the concept of *virtus* (virtue) in the aspect of a victorious prince at the hunt with whom the patron of the pavement wished to be identified.[113] Hunting iconography had become popular as an illustration of the *virtus* of the patron/*dominus* in the Roman period.[114] The composition is focused on the figure that stands in the centre surveying the many fierce scenes of combat. This figure is possibly a representation of an ancient regional god of the hunt with whom the patron and his social circle would have been familiar. The patron and contemporaries may well have wished to be identified with the brave hunting figures surrounding the mythological figure, hence the contemporary clothing and other realistic details of these figures.

At Beirut in Phoenicia Maritima, a pavement at the Jenah villa (CAT:11, p 28, attributed a late fifth century date)[115] shows the figure of a shepherd standing with his weight on one foot and carrying a stick.[116] Many different species of animals surround this figure and seem to be oriented towards him; he is the definite focus of the scene. Lavin raised the prospect of a relationship between the imagery of this pavement and the traditional iconography associated with Orpheus; possibly being used here to illustrate the 'Good Shepherd'. Lavin also linked this pavement with that of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) at Antioch, stating that the iconography of the two pavements was linked in some way.[117] This pavement comes from a villa rather than an ecclesiastic building and the figure of the shepherd may not therefore have meant to portray the Good Shepherd, but rather a mythological character, possibly either Orpheus (using as a model that of a local

[113] Levi, 1947: 344-5.
[114] Poulsen, 2012: 167-189. See particularly pages 176-7.
[115] See Lavin, 1963: 271, for a description and discussion of this pavement and its similarities to the pavement of the Constantinian villa and the Worcester Hunt.
[116] This pose is similar to that of the central figure of the pavement of the Worcester Hunt of Antioch.
[117] Lavin, 1963: 272.

deity associated with animals) or this local deity itself.[118] The imagery at Beirut and at Antioch (both the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) and at the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) still has a classical feel to it (all these floors are also located within villas).

Another pastoral image, on a fragmentary pavement at a church at Khalde (CAT:12, p 33), south of Beirut, Phoenicia (attributed to the late fifth century), shows a man holding a long stick. [119] A shepherd (or hunter) is shown surrounded by animals (although they are not oriented towards him as at Jenah) and the other pavements of the church contain animal chase and hunt imagery (as is the case in the pavements at Antioch and Beirut above). The shepherd here does not appear in an explicitly mythological context and the other imagery in this pavement (and the others decorating the building) is naturalistic and contemporary in style and subject matter.

Finally, at the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) (AD 576/7) at Qabr Hiram (near Tyre) there are figures armed with spears that chase wild beasts (lions) apparently to protect their livestock.[120] These scenes are contained within a detailed vine-scroll design pavement that decorates the nave. This pavement also includes scenes of the vintage (with a screw press, the most up-to-date technology) and animals (both wild and domestic). Saller and Bagatti, in their discussion of the pavements at this church, state that the use of an image of a shepherd confronting fierce beasts (even if it is copied from an ancient

[118] Levi's identification of the figure from the Worcester Hunt pavement as the personification of *Virtus* is an interesting one, given the similarity between the poses of the figures of that pavement and pavement of the villa at Beirut and also those images of shepherds that follow. The figure of a shepherd (with its associations with Christ) in a pose perhaps associated with the personification of *Virtus* would be an attractive one.

[119] Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 359, describes and discusses the pavements from this church.

[120] Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 411-21, full description of church and all pavements. Also Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 93.

model) reveals the Christian desire to record in art the efforts which they made to safeguard and improve their temporal welfare.[121]

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia.

The examples of pastoral mosaics that have been found in the southern provinces are more numerous (sixteen) than those found in the Northern provinces and none of them are attributed a date earlier than the fifth century. Although more pastoral images have been discovered in the south, they still do not constitute a significant percentage of the iconographic repertory. Most of the examples are repetitive (usually that of a shepherd leaning on his stick) and they certainly don't show the range of differing pastoral activities that were being undertaken in the countryside or their importance to the economy. Of the sixteen pastoral images, the majority (fourteen) are found on the pavements decorating churches, whilst only two come from secular contexts (both private villas).

The image of a shepherd leaning on his stick is a popular one. Ten of the examples are images of a shepherd with his stick. A significant period of time separates the earliest surviving example from the latest surviving example; these pavements range in date from the late fifth to the mid eighth century. It seems clear that a conventional model was being used. The shepherds depicted in the earlier pavements of the Northern provinces (for example: pavement of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) and at the Jenah villa (CAT:11, p 28), Beirut, are shown leaning on their sticks whilst carrying their weight on one leg, elements that appear in the majority of representations of shepherds in the later pavements of the south.

The earliest of these images decorates the border of a pavement from a villa at Eleutheropolis (CAT:16, p 43) (Palaestina Prima), the date of which is uncertain.[122] The

[121] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 93.

excavator (Père Vincent) dated the pavement stylistically to the end of the third century.[123] The shepherd raises one arm towards his flock (two sheep) and leans upon a stick held in his other hand. This small scene is the most classical in style of any of the southern examples; the figures of the shepherd and his sheep are relatively finely modelled and they are placed in an attractive and naturalistic landscape. In style, pose and dress this motif is somewhat reminiscent of the pastoral scene from the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) at Antioch. There are no direct indications that this scene has any particular religious mythological associations and most of the imagery contained on the four sides of this running wide border is naturalistic in appearance. On one side of the border there is a bust of a personification (probably of winter) and to her left a man on horseback holding an object in his right hand (a rattle?) surrounded by Nilotic plants. In the panels of the main field there are classical personifications; busts of Ge, Summer and Spring (all labelled in Greek). The pavement does bare more similarities to the idyllic landscapes of earlier Roman art (and the pavement of the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8)), rather than to the repetitive images of the shepherd and the other pastoral scenes from the churches of the south.

This image of a shepherd dressed in a short tunic, one arm raised (usually his left), leaning on a stick held in his other hand and often with legs crossed (carrying his weight on one leg) with a cloak draped over his shoulders, is repeated almost exactly on nine pavements from across Palestine and Arabia. Seven of these nine examples are also contained within a scroll of a vine-scroll design pavement.

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[122] Described by Avi-Yonah, 1981: 293 and Hachlili, 2009: 170 and 185

[123] Père Vincent, 1922: 259. Hanfmann, 1951: 153 (Vol II) stated that the pavement could be later and compared the hunting scenes from the border (to be discussed in Part 2 of this chapter) to the figures of the Worcester Hunt pavement, Antioch, which is believed to be late fifth century.

At Birsama (Be'er Shem'a), Palaestina Prima at the Church of St Stephen (Fig 4, sixth century),[124] he appears (without a cloak) in one of the scrolls of the vine-scroll pavement of the nave. He appears again (this time with his cloak) contained within one of the vine-scrolls of the pavement of Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary at Scythopolis, Palaestina Secunda.

At the church of Petra, Palaestina Tertia (CAT:26, p 79, sixth century) the shepherd wearing a cloak is accompanied by a hunting dog in adjoining vine-scrolls (part of the long and well executed vine-scroll pavement of the north aisle).[125] At the chapel of Suwayfiyah (CAT:51, p 150), Philadelphia, Arabia (with cloak, sixth century) he is again contained within a vine-scroll pavement.[126]

The shepherd appears again on the pavements of two churches at Mount Nebo, Arabia: at the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139), Uyan Musa (sixth century) in one of the vine-scrolls of the pavement of the nave (a dog in the scroll to right and sheep and a goat in scrolls below) and at the church of SS Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123), Mukhayyat (village of Nebo, AD 557) also in a vine-scroll of the pavement of the nave but here he has a beard and is shown as an elderly man, although both wear cloaks. The image also appears at two sites at Madaba, Arabia: the sixth century Church of Al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) in the pavement of the nave (which is arranged in registers rather than in a vine-scroll design) he is shown in his usual pose watching a small flock of sheep and goats.[127] A pavement of a villa called the 'Burnt Palace' (CAT:27, p 82), late sixth/early

[124] Gazit and Lender, 1993: 276 and Hachlili, 2009: 170 for brief descriptions of this pavement.
[125] Waliszewski, 2001: 421.
[126] Piccirillo, 1993: 133 and 187, for discussion.
[127] See Piccirillo, 1989: 108-115 and 1993: 129-131.

seventh century, has an acanthus-scroll pavement, one scroll of which contains the shepherd (wearing only a loincloth) and a dog at his feet. [128]

The last example comes from the church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (CAT:41, p 119), Arabia (a late pavement dating to AD 756). The main pavement of the nave, arranged in a vine-scroll design, has been heavily damaged by iconoclasts; however it is possible to make out the outline of the shepherd with his stick.

There are also a small number of pavements from the southern provinces that contain other pastoral scenes. In a mosaic panel at the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah (CAT:22, p 65) (Palaestina Secunda, not far from Gaza), a goatherd catches one of his goats by the horns as two other goats eat fruit from a tree and graze. This pavement is relatively early in date, AD 451.[129] I have already mentioned the pavement of the north aisle of the church at Kissufim, in which a man milks a goat (the other imagery of this aisle pavement is of hunting and animal combat scene). At the chapel of Suwayfiyah (CAT:51, p 150) (again mentioned above) in a border of the main pavement, a goatherd watches over his flock of goats. Another goatherd, this time sitting on a rock, watches over his flock grazing in an olive grove in the second register of a pavement from the chapel of the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145), Mount Nebo.[130] In the upper register of the same pavement, a man armed with a spear defends a bull (obviously a domestic animal) tied to an olive tree from a ferocious maned lion. This pavement is dated securely by inscription to AD 530.[131] Also at Mount Nebo, is the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (CAT:44, p 130) (dedicatory inscription dates the mosaics to AD 565). On the acanthus pavement of

[128] Piccirillo, 1989: 119-128, 1993: 78-9 and 1996: 27-8.
[129] Humbert, 2000: 124.
[130] Goats grazing around (and indeed in) fruit tree groves are still a very common sight across the modern Middle East and North Africa.
[131] The depictions of the olive trees on this pavement are, surprisingly, some of the very few that survive on mosaics from the region.

the nave a man in simple dress uses a sling shot against a fleeing boar in the scroll to his right; the sheep he is defending sits placidly in the scroll to his left. Men defending their livestock are also depicted in the vine-scroll border at the church of Beth Loya (sixth century): A lion advances towards a goat and two men, one of whom carries a stick on his shoulder and the other waves his arms.

These images seem to me to be the most likely to have been drawn from life rather than conventional models, and to be a reflection of activities of members of the congregations. The images are not formulaic and repetitive like those of the shepherd, and they have natural and realistic details (use of slingshot, goats amongst fruit trees and the behaviour and physical responses of the figures, for example). Although possibly taken from life and reflecting contemporary reality, the iconography may also have served the symbolic function that Saller and Bagatti outlined for the images from the Church at Qabr Hiram (mentioned above), in that they reveal the Christian desire to record the efforts they made to safeguard and improve their temporal welfare.[132] As I stated in the introduction, pig bones make up a significant percentage of the animal bone finds in the region, but representations are absent from the mosaics, so although there are scenes that do apparently reflect the contemporary pastoral activities of the region, they only reflect certain aspects of those activities (that filled the purpose of the artists/patrons).

The last group of images is a small group of six pavements in which elements of pastoral imagery appear as attributes in representations of the Months and the Seasons. At the monastery of the Lady Mary at Scythopolis the mosaic of the main hall has at its centre an impressive and detailed calendar. Personifications of the Sun and the Moon stand in the central circle and personifications of the twelve months stand in the radial compartments of the outer circle. The personification of April is a youth carrying a goat on his shoulders

[132] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 93.

and a bucket of milk in his left hand. April (the time of the year when the lambs and kids are born) is often portrayed as a shepherd in Roman art. April is shown as a shepherd in the mosaic calendars of the Chapel at El-Hammam (CAT:19, p 54) and the Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg at Gerasa (CAT:33, p 98, both sixth century).[133] Two personifications of the season of spring holding a shepherds crook/stick survive in Palaestina, at the synagogues of Beth Alpha (CAT:23, p 67, mid sixth century) and Na'aran (Fig 47, late sixth century).[134] There is one personification of Spring that holds a shepherds crook/stick that survives from Syria in the north at Deir es Sleib (See Fig 7) and this dates to the fifth century (and therefore earlier than those found in Palaestina).[135]

The image of the shepherd with crossed legs and leaning on a stick first appears on villa pavements in the north, at Antioch and Jenah. Nine examples are found in the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina, only one of which in a villa, the others are found in Christian churches. It would appear that an earlier mythological model has been revived. All the examples from the south are formulaic and repetitive, with very little variation between them. They do not seem to have any of the mythological associations that may be present in the northern examples. The image of the shepherd at the Burnt Palace (CAT:27, p 82) of Madaba, may also have lost its pagan and mythological significance, but retained any earlier association to *virtus* and the land owning elite (through the depiction of activities taking place on great estates). It is also possible that the patron of this mosaic was Christian. Merrony (in his discussion of Dionysiac imagery on the pavements of villas belonging to Christian owners), argues that these Dionysiac scenes may have lost their pagan religious and mythological significance, but by retaining their symbolic association

[133] Piccirillo, 1993: 172.
[134] See Hachlili, 2009: 184-5, for brief descriptions of the personifications of the Four Seasons found in Palaestina and Arabia.
[135] See Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 322.

with wine and the vine would have been agreeable to the Christian patron.[136] This shepherd may, therefore, have lost its mythological associations in this context at the Burnt Palace but retained its link to *'virtus'.* It is possibly significant that the pavement is of acanthus scroll design, rather than vine-scroll design. All the other examples of this image in the south are found within churches and all within pavements of vine-scroll design, a design that probably had special significance in a specifically Christian context. At a sixth century villa in Caesarea, however, a vine-scroll pavement does appear (discussed in Part 2 below), but does not contain the image of a shepherd. The use of a vine-scroll design in combination with the image of a shepherd at a villa may have been considered too closely associated with specifically Christian imagery and symbolism (the Good Shepherd and Christ as the vine). The use of the acanthus-scroll and shepherd would not have caused such confusion.

It has been suggested that images of shepherds on mosaics from Christian contexts were representations of the Good Shepherd and that in the Christian (post-Constantian) period, pastoral scenes took on a symbolic meaning.[137] Merrony suggests that pastoral scenes on church pavements in Arabia and the Palestinian provinces can be viewed as specifically evoking Psalm 23 that begins:

> 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want'.[138]

The image of the Good Shepherd had been extremely popular in the art of the early Christian period; over three hundred images have been identified in all artistic media dating to the late fourth/early fifth century alone.[139] There was, however, a fairly rapid

[136] Merrony, 1998: 465.
[137] For example see Merrony, 1998; 476.
[138] Merrony, 1998: 476.
[139] See Ramsey, 1983: 375.

decline in the popularity of this image at the beginning of the fifth century and it didn't regain its former level of popularity until the Middle Ages.[140]

The Good Shepherd from the wall of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna (early fifth century) is one of the latest Late Antique survivals.[141] This image is very different from the simple shepherd of earlier examples and from the later mosaic pavements: He is clothed in a gold tunic with a purple cloak and is very much a royal figure. There appears to have been a general shift in the perception of Christ among Christians from simple shepherd to king.[142] Images of Christ, the angels and evangelists tended to be reserved for the walls and the ceiling of churches instead of the floor.[143] Only one wall mosaic is still preserved in *situ* in the east, in the apse of the church in the Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai.[144] Portraits of the Apostles decorate the frame of the apse and Christ stands in the centre. A panel containing the story of Moses receiving the holy tablets of the Decalogue sits above the triumphal arch.[145] Rather than being an explicit image of Christ as shepherd, the images in the churches of the southern provinces used an earlier mythological iconographic model to perhaps evoke the concept of the church as shepherd and the congregation as sheep.

Part 2: <u>The hunt</u>

Images of the hunt constitute one of the largest of the iconographical categories that will be considered. See **Map 2** (Catalogue, p 159) for the sites discussed in this section. There are at least seventy images/scenes related to hunting that have been discovered so far in the

[140] See Ramsey, 1983: 375 for a brief discussion and round-up of the sources and various scholarly opinions.
[141] See, Rizzardi and Angiolini Martinelli, 1996 for a full discussion of the mosaics from this building.
[142] Ramsey, 1983: 376. Ramsey suggests that this change may have been as a response to Arianism and to therefore stress the divine majesty of Christ.
[143] From the fifth century there were laws prohibiting the use of religious imagery on the floors of churches, such as the Edict of Theodosius II, AD 427. See Pharr (ed), 1952 for translation of the Theodosian code.
[144] See Talgam, 2014: 178-9 for description.
[145] Talgam, 2014: 178-9.

provinces of Osrhoene, Syria, Phoenicia, Palaestina and Arabia. The images from the Southern provinces are, in the majority of cases, part of the decorative schemes of churches, whilst there are more examples from secular contexts in the north. The dates of the Southern pavements cluster around the mid to late sixth century and the majority of the pavements from Syria and Phoenicia are attributed a slightly earlier date. I wish to see if the hunting imagery of these pavements reflects the contemporary reality of the regions in which they were laid. I also wish to look at the differences between the imagery (and meaning of such imagery) found on the floors of villas and those of churches and whether the iconography and style of the villa pavements remain more firmly rooted in classical tradition. Do any differences (in different contexts, such as villa and church) in the hunting imagery itself give us any indication of the motivations of the patrons in using it? Could the patron of a villa have been using different types/styles of hunting iconography to illustrate the same ideas as the patron of a church?

I will first consider the pavements of the Syrian provinces (starting with the great cities of Antioch and Apamea) then onto Osrhoene and Phoenicia, before moving onto Arabia and Palaestina. I have organised the discussions slightly differently due to the differences in the nature of the imagery and design of the pavements. The volume of examples, repetitive nature of the imagery and relatively close dating of the pavements of the South have meant that it is easier and more coherent for the pavements to be grouped by pavement composition (such as vine-scroll) in which the hunting images are arranged, rather than iconography. The examples from the North are arranged and discussed by site and location.

I will briefly discuss the purely mythological hunting pavements that survive from the region to give a complete picture of the evidence and contrast them with the other contemporary hunting imagery. There are five mythological hunting scenes from the

northern provinces; a panel of hunting Amazons from the Yakto complex at Antioch (CAT:5, p 16), a pavement containing Amazons at the Triclinos building of Apamea (Fig 16), another pavement with hunting Amazons from a villa at Edessa (Fig 8) (Osrhoene) and several different mythological panels from a villa at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1). All of these pavements come from secular contexts, most probably villas. Another panel (of uncertain context) was discovered at Apamea containing a classical hunting scene. Most scholars have identified the two figures as Meleager and Atalanta (Fig 15). In the south only one pavement contains any explicitly mythological hunting imagery and this also decorates the floor of a villa, the Hippolytus Hall (CAT:28, p 84) at Madaba, Arabia.

The Northern provinces: Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia

There are seventeen pavements from sixteen different sites (two pavements were uncovered at the Triclinos at Apamea) containing hunting imagery that have survived from the Northern provinces of Syria and Phoenicia, dating from the fourth to the eighth centuries. Eleven of these pavements come from secular contexts (nine villas and one public monument) whilst six decorate the floors of churches. It is worth noting that none of the hunting imagery found on church pavements are part of large unified hunting panels as found in villas at Antioch and Apamea; they are small elements of designs containing other categories of iconography (such as a single hunting dog with collar or a few examples amongst vintage and pastoral imagery).

Many of these hunting pavements were discovered at the great cities of Antioch and Apamea. This is in part due to the extensive excavations that have been carried out at these two centres. This enables us to build up a picture of the changes in style and use of iconography over time in these cities and, to an extent, fit other pavements from the wider region into that chronology. I will start my discussion with the pavements from Antioch

and then Apamea before moving onto those pavements discovered elsewhere in Syria, Osrhoene and Phoenicia.

The hunting pavements at Antioch

During the extensive excavations that took place at Antioch before the Second World War a large number of mosaic pavements were uncovered (some 300 in total, many decorating the floors of impressive villas and domestic dwellings).[146] The earliest of the pavements date to the first and second centuries AD with production continued into Late Antiquity.[147] Among the numerous classical subjects present here from the early period are depictions of mythological hunts, such as the panel showing Meleager and Atalanta in Room 1 of the House of the Red Pavement (mid second century AD).[148] The imagery contained in this panel and the other imagery of this pavement is purely classical in subject, style and placement. Although mythological themes were not entirely abandoned at Antioch in Late Antiquity, changes in the iconography were certainly beginning to occur and apparently at an earlier date here than elsewhere in the eastern provinces.[149]

There are four Late Roman pavements in which images of figures hunting are present: Room 1 of the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) at Daphne (a coin of Constantine the Great was discovered in the mortar of this pavement and gives us a *terminus post quem*);[150] the pavement of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) (Room A, Sector III) at the

[146] Eight campaigns of excavations were carried out between 1932 and 1939, primarily by Princeton University with the collaboration of the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Worcester Art Museum and the Musées Nationaux de France.
[147] A small number of pavements are dated to after the catastrophic earthquake of AD 526, although none could be with any certainty dated to after the Persian invasion and sack of AD 540 by the excavators. See Levi, 1947: 2.
[148] Full description in Levi, 1947: 68-89.
[149] In fact many of the mosaics of Antioch retain classical elements of both style and subject matter further into Late Antiquity than elsewhere in the wider region.
[150] Levi, 1947: 226.

Yakto complex (AD 450-75),[151] the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18) (from a private dwelling and attributed to approx. AD 500/20)[152] and the pavement from the House of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14), also at Daphne (AD 520/30).[153] One other hunting scene survives from Antioch, a panel containing hunting Amazons decorating Courtyard 2 in Sector III of the Yakto complex at Daphne (attributed stylistically to the mid fourth century by Doro Levi).[154]

Among the publications concerned with the mosaic pavements of Antioch and the hunting designs in particular, publications by two scholars, Doro Levi and Irving Lavin stand out. Doro Levi in his exhaustive 1947 publication of the corpus of mosaics uncovered during the excavations of the 1930's, placed these pavements into their setting within classical and late classical art and produced a chronology for them that is still considered to be generally reliable.[155] The chronology established by Levi has, as Lavin stated, demonstrated that the known pavements form a substantially uninterrupted sequence and we can be confident that the main steps in the development of mosaic pavements at Antioch are represented in the excavated material.[156] Levi's approach to the study of the evidence was one of stylistic analysis of the individual motifs and groups of motifs present in the pavement designs, dividing the evidence into 'Ornamental' and

[151] In the right hand corner of the topographical border of the Megalopsychia pavement next to the spring of Kastalia stands 'to pribaton Ardabouriou', which has been interpreted as 'the private bath of Ardabur'. It has further been suggested that this refers to Ardabur(ius), son of Fl. Ardabur Aspar and that either he or his grandson Areobindus (husband of Anicia Juliana) commissioned the mosaics of the Yakto complex. This name gives us a relatively precise date, as Ardabur was *magister militum per Orientem* from AD 450 -7 and was apparently still living in Antioch in AD 459. See Levi, 1947: 323, for a detailed and clear discussion. Also see Mango, M., 1995: 269-74 for a round-up and discussion of the evidence, and Morley, 1938: 18.
[152] See Levi, 1947: 358. He dates the pavement on the basis of style.
[153] No archaeological material that would have indicated the date of this building was discovered during the course of the excavations. Levi, 1947: 363 places the pavement directly after that of the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt due to its general composition and the style of the figures. The dates that Levi proposed for most of the mosaics of Antioch are still accepted as broadly correct, but see following note.
[154] Levi, 1947: 279-83.
[155] Some scholars have since proposed slight alterations to the dates Levi assigned to some of the pavements, including the hunting mosaics. I will discuss these views in my final discussion of this group of pavements.
[156] Lavin, 1963: 182.

'Figural' style with various subdivisions (such as Geometric decoration, Human figures, Animals etc.). There has been some subsequent criticism of this detailed stylistic approach to the iconography,[157] however, there is no doubt that Levi's precise, methodical and detailed study, in which a wealth of information was brought together and discussed, is the starting point for any thorough examination of the subject.

Lavin focused on the hunting imagery found on the pavements in great length in his article 'The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch and their Sources'.[158] He traced the origins of the changes in this imagery, their placement and style. His discussion is an extremely detailed account of the comparative evidence from across the Roman world (particularly North Africa and also Rome and Constantinople) and the evolution of the 'classical' to the 'non-classical' arrangement of imagery in the designs of the Antioch mosaic pavements. He argued in his opening observations that many of the innovations seen in the figural pavements at Antioch are associated with genre subjects involving animals and particularly hunting scenes.[159] He also identified a number of pavements as belonging to a distinct and innovative group dating to the latter half of the fifth century: The Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) pavement; the pavement of the House of Ktisis,[160] the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18), the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) pavement, the Honolulu Hunt[161] and the pavement of the nave of the Martyrium of Seleucia Pieria (CAT:7, p 19).[162] These

[157] For example; Lavin, 1963: 182-3

[158] 'The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch and their Sources: A study of compositional principles in the development of early mediaeval style', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17, 1963: 184-269.

[159] Lavin, 1963: 189.

[160] This pavement shows scenes of animals chase and combat with a central medallion containing the bust of a personification of Ktisis, labelled in Greek. See Levi, 1947: 357 and Kondoleon, 2005: 208-15 for discussion. The archaeological evidence suggests a date just prior to AD 526, Levi, 1947:359. As this pavement contains only animals, rather than human hunting activities I will not discuss it in any detail.

[161] The Honolulu Hunt, like the pavement of the House of Ktisis, shows only animal chase and combat. It is a small pavement in the same villa as the pavement of the Worcester Hunt. See Levi, 1947: 365, for description.

[162] Levi, 1947: 359-63. Campbell and Stillwell give a very detailed description of all the mosaic pavements discovered in the building in the original publication of the excavations, 1941: 214-19. As with the pavements of Ktisis and Honolulu Hunt this mosaic contains only the images of animals, although in the

pavements, he argued, were the result of an evolutionary process in which the pavement of Room 1 of the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) was the first step.

The pavement of Room 1 of the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) at Daphne (mentioned above in Part 1) contains four hunting scenes (within four separate trapezoidal panels) which are the main focus of one of the two main panels of the floor. There is a wide acanthus scroll border and in its corners are acanthus heads upon which stand full length personifications of the Four Seasons. An octagonal space forms the centre of the panel and creates four trapezoidal panels out of the remaining space of the square. This design would appear to reflect the design of a ceiling.[163]

The panel between the personifications of Winter and Autumn, contains a classical scene that has been identified by some scholars as the tale of Meleager, Atalanta and the Calydonian boar.[164] 'Atalanta' strides forward with bow and arrow ready to strike, but is pointing her arrow at a lion that leaps from the far side of the panel behind the charging boar. She wears a long veil or cloak forming a long loop flowing behind her and a radiate crown in her hair. 'Meleager' (completely nude save a pair of boots and a cloak) stands behind, with his spear pointing at the boar. Ellis argues that there was a revival of interest in the heroes of classical mythology in Late Antiquity.[165] Meleager was a hero directly associated with hunting and was therefore a popular choice for a patron wishing to incorporate hunting scenes into the decorative scheme of one of his important public rooms (most often the *triclinium*). The figures here are not named, however, and a lion has been added to the story. The scene is still very much in the classical tradition and certain

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case of the Martyrion of Seleucia, these are not scenes of the chase; the animals are placed in long registers.

[163] Levi, 1947: 228-230 discusses in great detail the possible use of architectural forms and the evolution of this type of decorative scheme, both on floor mosaics and in ceiling decoration.

[164] Dunbabin, 1999: 164.

[165] Ellis, 1991: 117-134.

attributes (radiate crown and classical dress, for example) do suggest a mythological character.

The panel opposite would have been seen first by those entering the room as it is placed directly opposite the entrance. This panel is very detailed and shows a sacrifice to Artemis and preparations for a hunt. A statue of Artemis (in her typical classical hunting dress) is depicted, in front of which a man holds a spear in one hand and a hare raised in offering in the other. To the left of the scene, a man in a short tunic sits on a rock and laces up his boots, his dog in front of him. To the right of the statue two men stand, carrying spears in their right hands; their left hands are raised as if to hurry the seated man along. All these figures wear contemporary dress. The entire scene is very natural in its details (the shield resting against the base of the statue, for example) and may have been designed to illustrate various stages in a day's hunt.

The two panels of the southern and northern sides are very similar in their imagery; men on horseback armed with spears facing ferocious beasts (one a tiger).[166] Both scenes are naturalistically set amongst trees, shrubs and sometimes rocky terrain. Although these scenes are set in the countryside, and the hunters are also lifelike contemporary representations, tigers at least were certainly not native to the area around Antioch or indeed native to any province of the Roman Empire. As I mentioned in my brief discussion of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) in the Pastoral section, Levi argued that the central figure in the centre of the hunting scene may have been a personification of '*Virtus*' or a victorious prince of the hunt, processing the right qualities to rule. The rather impressive

[166] All the men are well dressed, armed and of course mounted. The central rider of the southern panel has a large brooch holding his cloak at his shoulder. These images are certainly not meant to represent rural labourers or peasants defending livestock or hunting for the pot.

hunting scenes of the southern and northern panels may therefore have been designed to show the owner and the class to which he belonged as personifying '*Virtus*'.[167]

These panels are designed to show scenes familiar to the owner of the building and his contemporaries. Naturalistic scenes of the activities of the elite are not uncommon in the art of the later Empire. In North Africa (from at least the second century) scenes of the hunt were amongst the most common subjects depicted. The mosaic of the Carthage Boar Hunt[168] (Fig 10, attributed to the early third century) shows a boar being captured in a way practiced at the time of its creation (chasing it into a net) and shows ordinary little details similar to the panel at Antioch (such as the shield propped against the base of the statue waiting to be picked up). This repetition in small details may also suggest a common model. There are also a number of fourth century North African pavements that show hunts departing from in front of a villa or at a great estate. A particularly famous example is the mosaic of Dominus Iulius at Carthage (See Fig 11).[169]

The Small Hunt pavement from the villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily (Fig 12, fourth century and the product of a workshop from Carthage) is similar to the panels at Antioch in certain aspects of the use of imagery and style.[170] The pavement is arranged in registers showing different stages and scenes from a day's hunting. One of the upper registers shows the hunters making a sacrifice to a statue of Diana/Artemis (a hunter holding a hare stands to the right of this scene). At the centre of the mosaic, amongst many realistic hunting scenes, five well-dressed men are seated on couches with a table laden with food, enjoying a picnic (their horses are tethered to a tree, with servants making preparations). This pavement was designed to show a scene that guests would be familiar

[167] Levi, 1947: 344-5.
[168] See Dunbabin, 1978: 48-9.
[169] Dunbabin, 1978: 62. The hunting mosaics of the region are discussed and compared by her in detail, Dunbabin, 1978: 46-64.
[170] Dunbabin, 1999: 130-43, gives a good, coherent overview of the mosaics pavements discovered in this villa.

with and show the wealth and prestige of the owner/patron. Such representations are not confined to the medium of mosaic pavements: The silver hunting plate from the Sevso treasure (mid/late fourth century) shows hunting parties setting out from a villa (in the border), more scenes of the hunt and possibly the figures of Sevso and his wife entertaining guests at an outdoor feast.[171]

Ellis in his discussion of a pavement from the villa at Halicarnassus depicting the Hunt of the Calydonian Boar in a 'realistic' manner, argues that the characters can in fact, only be identified by their name labels. Without these helpful labels it would have been difficult to distinguish these characters from local sportsmen or aristocrats at the hunt.[172] The Halicarnassus mosaicist, Ellis argued, reduced the mythological event to the level of an everyday occurrence and may be giving heroic attributes to the owner of the villa and his friends. The theme of the hunt could therefore be used in Late Antiquity to record and promote the achievements of the owner of a villa (overtly as in some of the North African examples mentioned above) or more subtly with the use of myth.[173]

The next pavement to be discussed comes from the Yakto complex at Daphne,[174] a somewhat complicated structure (or series of structures) that has yielded a number of important mosaics including the panel of the hunting Amazons and the pavement of Megalopsychia.[175] The pavement of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) (AD 450-75 approx.),

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[171] See Mango, M., 1994: 55-98 and 2006: 2-12. Dunbabin, 2003: 142-50, discusses the imagery of the hunting plate and images of the hunt in the wider context of the importance of dining to the Roman elite.
[172] Ellis, 1991: 126.
[173] Ellis, 1991: 125.
[174] See Lassus, 1938: 95-147, for full discussion of the excavations and interpretation of the evidence.
[175] The archaeological evidence for the architecture and layout of the building is not clear and it is uncertain whether all the foundations discovered belonged to the same building. Lassus, 1938: 95, originally believed that the entire group of structures uncovered belonged to a single villa dating for the most part to the fifth century. Unfortunately there has been extensive destruction to the foundations and there are gaps between groups of rooms. Both Lassus and Levi (1947: 279) have admitted that the archaeological evidence from the site could be interpreted as several private dwellings overlooking a street rather than one unified building or villa.

is a complex, 'full scene' pavement. Four short trees placed diagonally in each corner of the rectangular panel and divide the action into four scenes that run along each of the sides (this enables the pavement to be viewed from all four sides). The pavement is densely covered with different images of the hunt and animal chase. The two longer sides of the panel have two different registers of imagery and there is a central medallion.

Named hunters (in Greek) face differing wild animals. The names given to the hunters are classical and have mythological associations. Along the bottom edge of the panel, Narcissus spears a lion and is attended by his hunting dog. He is not nude but fully clothed with short tunic, boots and a cloak fastened by a brooch/clasp. Unfortunately the opposing south-western edge of the pavement has been lost and only the top of the hunter Hippolytus is visible, in both a similar pose (with a spear) and dress as Narcissus. Meleager attacks a leaping tigress with his spear: two cubs are pictured running underneath their mother.[176] In the second scene of this south-western side Adonis confronts a wild boar with his spear; his hunting dog at his side. The final north-eastern side shows two hunters with spears (again in the typical pose, bracing themselves onto their forward left leg). Teiresias faces a leopard and Acteon a brown bear. The second inner registers of the two longer sides show various scenes of animal combat and chase.

In the centre is a personification of Megalopsychia who holds a pot of gold coins in one hand whilst coins fall from the open palm of her other hand.[177] One possible suggestion for the iconography of this pavement and the fact that these hunters are

[176] This image of a leaping/running tigress with two cubs placed underneath her appears at on the Dumbarton Oaks pavement and the Worcester Hunt pavement both from Antioch and discussed below.
[177] Levi, 1947: 339, compares this to Roman consuls opening the shows at the arena throwing coins. The use of this image was probably to demonstrate the wealth and generosity of the patron of the mosaic. Interestingly, Levi also points out that the only other personification of Megalopsychia that has survived from Antiquity is shown on the title page of the Vienna Dioscurides, commissioned by Anicia Juliana, the wife of Areobindus.

named[178] and in contemporary dress with a personification of Megalopsychia (Magnanimity) distributing gold coins, is that this is a depiction of a staged hunt during games in which professional hunters or *venatores* faced captured animals in the arena. The border of this mosaic is a continuous running topographical scene that shows Daphne, the area of Antioch in which this mosaic is located. This border shows many of the public buildings (most named in Greek) and people going about their daily business. This informal and detailed depiction of the location in which the mosaic was laid and the probability that it was placed in an important room (as is the case with many of the North African pavements showing scenes of the arena and circus), strengthen the view that this could have been a depiction of a staged hunt similar to those that took place in the amphitheatres of Antioch itself. The owner of this villa may have, therefore, commissioned the Megalopsychia mosaic to commemorate games that he had himself paid for and organised.

It is true that in the Levantine provinces images of the arena or the circus on mosaic pavements are extremely rare in this period. The literary and archaeological evidence (as I will discuss fully in Part 3 of this chapter) indicates that games did continue in the eastern provinces into Late Antiquity. Domestic (lions, bears and leopards native to the eastern regions) and exotic beasts (such as elephants and zebras, for example) were being transported through the region for use in the local amphitheatres and, in the case of certain of the exotic animals, transported on to the great cities of the Empire such as Rome and Constantinople.

[178] These names are mythological, but this is not surprising for men fighting in games or for an idealised depiction of a staged hunt. We know that professional hunters and gladiators of the arena often took stage names and that mythological scenes were also often recreated in the arena.

The lack of explicit images of the arena is in complete contrast to the North African provinces where the circus and the games were popular subjects for pavements.[179] These pavements frequently decorated the public areas of villas and often the entire mosaic field became a vehicle for the depiction of events.[180] As well as the images of chariot racing and the combat between and display of various different animals, there are pavements showing staged hunts between hunters (often named) and various types of ferocious beasts. Several mosaics apparently record real moments from the games. A particularly complete example of a staged hunt survives on a pavement from Smirat (Fig 13, approx. AD 240/50).[181] This shows four *venatores* (named) fighting four leopards (also named) and in the centre is Magerius accompanied by a long inscription telling the viewer that he has paid for both the leopards and the *venatores*. Kondoleon suggests that such pavements were intended as honorific commemorations of the munificence of the benefactor.[182]

There are no other pavements in the northern provinces of Syria and Phoenicia that would appear to explicitly show hunts in the arena with which to compare the pavement of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16). Looking further afield, there are also no full field pavements in Palaestina and Arabia that contain the imagery of a staged hunt that compare to the pavements of North Africa or this pavement at Antioch. A named hunter does appear in the vine-scroll pavement of the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) at Uyun Musa, Mount Nebo (early/mid sixth century): 'Stephanos' attacks a lion with a spear. It is impossible to say whether this is a portrait of a *venator* or of a donor of the church. In this case there may have been a connection to the local community. He is not wearing dress typical of a professional hunter as he is bare foot and his tunic is that of a

[179] The bulk of the pavements from North Africa date from between the second and fourth centuries before declining in number just as there starts to be a boom in the production of mosaic pavements in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia in the fifth and sixth centuries.
[180] Brown, 1992: 187.
[181] See Dunbabin, 1978: 67-9.
[182] Kondoleon, 1991: 108.

rural labourer. His tunic is open from under his arm to his waist on his right side and the fabric gathered and knotted behind his neck, for ease of movement whilst working. This would therefore suggest that he has been surprised by the lion during the course of his work in the fields.

It is interesting to note that at the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145) (also at Mount Nebo) in a register above the exotic animals and men (discusses in more depth later in Part 3); a figure in a Phrygian cap (foreign dress) hunts a lion. Hunters wearing Phrygian caps appear also on pavements at the Church of the Upper Priest John on Mount Nebo (CAT:44, p 130, fighting a bear) and the Church of Al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba (in the acanthus scroll border of the pavement containing the scene of exotic animals and men). In these hunting poses, the figures in Phrygian caps could be representations of specialist foreign *venatores* fighting beasts in the arena or capturing them for games. The pavement of Megalopsychia bears stronger similarities to the North African examples. The topographical border and the possible ownership of the villa in which it was laid indicate that this may be a unique example of a full field depiction of the arena in the eastern provinces.

The mosaic of the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18) belonged to a villa uncovered in the Kharab area of Antioch on Mt. Staurin. Unfortunately most of this pavement has been destroyed. Only the north side of the main field of the pavement survives, along with part of the border and a fragment along the eastern edge. From what remains we can see that in certain respects both the iconography and the design of the mosaic is similar to the pavement of Megalopsychia. Hunters are arranged along the edges of the panel so that the pavement could be viewed from all sides of the room, as they are in the earlier pavement at the Yakto complex (although the trees dividing the scenes have been removed here).

Along the surviving northern edge there are two separate scenes in which hunters armed with spears face wild beasts. Neither of these hunters has a name label and they are both clothed in the familiar short tunic and boots. The hunter on the eastern side faces a leaping tigress, whose two cubs' shelter underneath her. The second hunter faces a charging boar. Most of the figure of a hunter, also with a spear, survives from the eastern side of the pavement. He is standing with his feet on the edge of the panel with his head towards the centre, which confirms that the basic design (scenes along all four sides) was the same as that of Megalopsychia.

In the centre of the pavement Levi identified the figure of a huntress (with bow and arrows) as a personification of Artemis. This part of the pavement is fragmentary, but it is plain that there was an inner register of animals (although unlike the pavement of Megalopsychia, these were not arranged in scenes of chase and combat). The animals of this inner register appear to have been killed by the central figure and are arranged around her. Although this pavement may have a mythological element, in the presence of a possible representation of Artemis, this pavement does not appear to be a purely mythological or fantastical scene. The inclusion of the figure of Artemis may be interpreted as fulfilling the same function as the statue of Artemis in the pavement from the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) discussed above. Artemis brings luck to the hunters and also in this pavement represents the victorious and successful hunt. As with the hunting scenes from the pavement of the Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16), the hunters are again wearing dress that would be familiar to the contemporary audience and the iconography that does not entirely reflect the reality of hunting in the local countryside. In this pavement tigers have been included.

The pavement from the House of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) at Daphne is a large and relatively complete pavement found together with two other, smaller pavements

that flank it. These pavements are assumed to have belonged to the same building, a villa.[183] A personification of Ge (Earth) surrounded by foliage and holding a cloth filled with fruit[184] decorates the smallest of the two pavements and the other pavement (the mosaic of the Honolulu Hunt), is covered with scenes of animal chase. The Honolulu Hunt (no human figures, only animals) contains at its centre the image of a large, impressive lion with a shaggy mane, with other animals chasing each other around the edges of the panel (the arrangement is a much simplified version of the other hunting mosaics of Megalopsychia, Dumbarton and also Worcester: Figure in centre, animals/hunters around the edges).

The design of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) pavement is the same as those of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) and the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18): A central figure and two registers of action (an inner 'circle' and outer 'circle') along all four sides. The inner register and the figure are more similar in the use of imagery and iconography to the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18) as there is a full length figure surrounded by slain and wounded animals.[185] The identity of this central figure is something of a mystery as it does not have a name label to identify it or any familiar physical attributes (pose, dress, etc.) that would enable it to be associated with any particular mythological character. It is very similar to the image of a shepherd that appears with relative frequency on a number of pavements from the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina dating to the sixth century (see Part 1, above).

[183] Levi, 1947: 363. Kondoleon, 2005: 228, suggests that the thematic interrelation of the pavements of these three rooms would indicate that they functioned as a suite of reception rooms, similar to those found in earlier villas uncovered in the city.
[184] This image of Ge holding a fruit filled cloth appears on a number of other mosaic pavements from Late Antiquity, including a group dating to the sixth century from the province of Arabia. This group includes two examples found at Nebo at the Church of St. George (AD 535/6) and Upper Chapel of Priest John (AD 565).
[185] Kondoleon, 2005: 234, considers the Worcester Hunt so similar to the Dumbarton Oaks Hunt that they must have been carried out by the same craftsmen.

In total there are seven hunters facing various animals in the outer register. In the scene directly underneath the central figure, a man on horseback fires an arrow at a maned lion, while to the right a man with a spear (in the conventional pose seen in the earlier hunting mosaics) confronts a leopard/lion. On the right of the pavement two hunters (one mounted, the other on the ground about to be mauled) confront the same feline. The scene above is also a single unified scene: A spearman has already wounded a bear and now turns to attack a lion leaping towards a mounted hunter with a spear riding from the opposite direction.

The last side contains a single hunter. He is on horseback and carries a tiger cub which he dangles behind him for the pursuing tigress to see.[186] The scene of the tigress following a mounted hunter who has taken one of her cubs is reminiscent of the advice given by Pliny, in which he claimed that a tigress would follow a hunter who has taken her cubs. [187] There are a number of examples in which mosaicists (perhaps at the insistence of their patrons) have used images of methods of hunting mentioned in literary sources that cannot have been actually used with any frequency in reality. In the Great Hunt mosaic of Piazza Armerina (Fig 14, to be discussed in more detail below in Part 3), for example; a tigress stares in fascination at her own reflection in a mirror enabling the mounted hunter to take the cubs and return to his ship without risk to himself.[188] These scenes are formulaic models. There are no name labels or other explicit imagery such as the Megolapsychia personification, that identify the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) and Dumbarton Oaks pavements as being representations of staged hunts or the arena, although

[186] The tigress is in a leaping pose with two cubs sheltering underneath her and, as I earlier stated, these same images are found on the Megalopsychia and the Dumbarton Oaks pavement. On the Honolulu Hunt pavement the tigress is shown with only one cub.
[187] Pliny, *Natural History,* Book VIII: 66. See Rackham and Jones (eds), 2012.
[188] It was thought that when staring at her reflection in a convex mirror the tigress would mistake her own reduced image for her stolen cub and give up the chase. This method is mentioned by, amongst others, Claudian (writing in the late fourth/early fifth centuries) in his De Raptu Proserpinae, Book III, lines 260-8.

they are very similar in design to the Megolapsychia pavement and the imagery in both shows contests between human and animal opponents.

Kondoleon, in her discussion of North African examples, stated that the benefaction of these spectacles of the arena was a public display of privilege and a duty of citizenship and political power.[189] Compositions became codified in time as artists relied on intermediary sources for their execution.[190] The pavement of Megolapsychia was inspired by a real event and perhaps the subsequent pavements of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) and Dumbarton Oaks Hunt (CAT:6, p 18) were inspired by it, in order to depict the same 'high status' subject.

Lavin slightly altered the dating for these pavements at Antioch, as set out by Levi. The dates assigned by Levi created a gap between the Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) pavement (dated to the mid fifth century) and the other pavements of this group, which were assigned dates in the first quarter of the sixth century. Lavin saw no stylistic discrepancies that would justify this gap and preferred to distribute the pavements evenly throughout the second half of the fifth century. [191] He further pointed to the pavements of the Worcester and Honolulu hunts as demonstrating the closeness of the development within the group. Both these rooms are contained within the same building and yet the design of the Honolulu Hunt does not contain trees at the corners to divide the scenes on each side, whereas the pavement of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) does.[192] Most of the subsequent publications have agreed with a closer dating of these pavements.[193] Balty proposed that the pavements dated to a relatively short period, the last quarter of the fifth century.[194] In her earlier publication of the mosaic of the Triclinos of Apamea in 1969, she

[189] Kondoleon, 1991: 112.
[190] Kondoleon, 1991: 112.
[191] Lavin, 1963: 190.
[192] Lavin, 1963: 190 (footnote 20).
[193] Kondoleon, 2005: 232-3, briefly rounds up the various opinions concerning the dating.
[194] Balty, 2001: 315.

felt that the pavement of the Worcester Hunt was the result of a progressive development of this pavement design, separated by some time from the Megalopsychia pavement and could be compared favourably with the Great Palace mosaic of Constantinople. [195]

Finally, the so-called panel of the hunting Amazons was discovered in the centre of Courtyard 2 in Sector III of the Yakto Complex (CAT:5, p 16).[196] Very little of this pavement survives but what does shows what must have been part of a mythological scene. A huntress is shown riding a white horse and spearing a lion that lies almost directly underneath her rearing horse. Behind this huntress is the figure of another woman on horseback who carries a fringed parasol and holds it over the head of the huntress in front. This is clearly a mythological representation. Images of women in hunting dress facing ferocious beasts are not an uncommon element of the classical repertory; Atalanta for example, appears on a number of pavements from Syria as does Artemis, and other similar hunting 'Amazons' on a mosaic panel from Apamea discussed below.

The hunting pavements at Apamea

A number of mosaic pavements containing hunting imagery have been uncovered at Apamea (all later fourth to the mid/late fifth century): the mosaic of the portico of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21) (AD 469);[197] two panels from a very large and impressive structure (most probably a private villa or possibly the governor's palace) called the 'Triclinos building' (one a detailed naturalistic hunting pavement and the other a mythological scene of Amazons, (Fig 16), of uncertain date)[198] and a large panel possibly depicting Meleager and Atalanta discovered in the south-western quarter of the city (Fig

[195] Balty, 1969, 12.
[196] Levi, 1947: 282, places this panel and the other remaining mosaics of Courtyard 2 at approx. AD 350/60.
[197] This pavement is dated exactly by a Greek inscription located in its far northern end. See Dulière, 1974: 8.
[198] Balty believes that the date of AD 539 may refer to a repair of the hunting pavement, rather than the original construction of the mosaic. See Balty, 1969: 12.

15, dated stylistically by Balty to the last quarter of the fifth century). [199] I will also briefly look at a pavement from the Cathedral of Apamea that, in common with the mosaic of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21), does not contain any human figures carrying out any hunting activities, but does depict the image of a hunting dog (with a collar).[200]

The pavement of the portico of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21) is an incredibly impressive work, running the full length of one side of the portico along the main street of the city.[201] There are a number of different panels the imagery of which was clearly meant to show familiar scenes of rural life.[202] They are remarkable for their action and vitality: Animals (such as ferocious lions) are shown running down their prey and a string of camels loaded with produce all move through a naturalistic countryside.[203] Images of animal combat and chase are given a prominent place and represent the bulk of the surviving images. The presence of human hunters is implied (although none have survived) in the presence of a hunting dog wearing a collar. The dog chases down some quarry surrounded by various birds, including pheasants. This scene may be a depiction of a hunt taking place in the countryside that surrounded Apamea (for food or sport) or indeed may have portrayed a hunt organised for members of the elite on one of the estates of the region in a park stocked specially with animals (trained hunting dogs were often a prized asset and pheasants a delicacy).[204] The imagery of this pavement is very different from the hunting imagery of the Antioch pavements; we are being shown here a picture of the local countryside. In this, I think it is similar to the pavement of the Church of St.

[199] Balty, 1977: 118-22 (especially 122).
[200] Balty, 1977: 140-3, gives a concise account of the pavements from this building.
[201] See Dulière, 1974, for full descriptions of the surviving sections of the pavement.
[202] One of the panels depicts a water-wheel and at least two men working (there are very large areas of damage). One of these men labours next to the water-wheel wearing a simple loincloth. The very rare image of a water wheel is also found on the mosaic of the Great Palace of Constantinople. See Trilling, 1989: 69-71 for a list of all the scenes contained on the latter pavement. He groups the scenes into types, the water-wheel is scene 62 (Miscellaneous scenes).
[203] Balty, 1977: 110, gives a full description of this scene. These camels may have been delivering goods to the city itself, rather than simply passing through the nearby countryside.
[204] See Toynbee, 1973: 254-5, for a brief discussion of pheasants in Roman art.

George at Deir al-Adas (CAT:15, p 40) (discussed below); both present a variety of rural activities taking place in 'realistic' or naturalistic setting, representing the local landscape. The placement of this imagery in a civic public place suggests to me the wish to show an idealised vision of vibrant, wealthy Apamea and its surrounding countryside. The pavement of Deir al-Adas, decorating the pavement of a church, uses similar imagery (rural activities, realistic in many details) in order to show the wealth of God's creation.

Two hunting pavements are located at the Triclinos building. The largest is a magnificent pavement comprising five registers of hunters in combat with various wild animals. Although an inscription has been uncovered at the entrance to the room (giving a date of AD 539), Balty had argued that this inscription dates to a later restoration of the pavement.[205] The dating of the mosaic by style alone is not easy due to the quite uniquely beautiful quality of the composition and execution. This pavement is significantly finer than any of the other late antique pavements so far found at Apamea. As Dunbabin has pointed out, the panel of the Amazons contained within the same building is not a very useful tool of comparison, as it is noticeably inferior in both quality and conception.[206] Balty in a revision of her earlier dating of the pavement to the first quarter of the fifth century,[207] now attributes it to between the middle of the fifth century and AD 539, with which view there is some agreement.[208]

There is no narrative sequence to the imagery, as in some of the contemporary North African pavements. In these earlier North African examples, the events of a day's hunt are either shown in a sequence with the viewer 'reading' the story as it continues from the top to the bottom (or bottom to top) registers or different activities from the same

[205] Balty, 1969: 26-35 (especially 28-9).
[206] Dunbabin, 1999: 184.
[207] Balty, 1995: 22-3.
[208] Dunbabin, 1999: 184, would also put the date sometime after the middle of the fifth century and before the presumed restoration of AD 539.

hunt are shown in each register.[209] The registers in the example from Apamea do not rigidly divide the imagery into separate groups as there is an elegant flow and movement that links the different images and gives the impression that all the action is taking place in the same landscape at the same time. In the bottom register a leopard leaps upwards to attack a wild boar in the register above whilst a man (standing in the bottom register) raises his spear into its chest as it jumps, for example. There are seven figures in total, all of whom wear detailed and contemporary hunting dress, with each confronting a wild animal (tigers, lions, leopards and a stag).[210] The entire composition has been carefully planned and the style of the figures of the hunters is very classical (natural sense of movement, good proportions and the impression of volume). Most of the animals and men also cast shadows, a detail that is entirely absent from the other pavements discussed from Apamea, and indeed does not occur in any of the contemporary hunting compositions found at Antioch.[211]

The second pavement from the Triclinos is a mythological panel to the north of the pavement discussed above (Fig 16).[212] Dulière attributes this panel to the second half of the fifth century on stylistic grounds.[213] The main panel contains the images of two

[209] The third century Boar Hunt pavement from Carthage shows different events from a single hunt in each register, culminating in the top register with the boar's carcass tied to poles and being carried home. A hare hunt pavement from El Djem (mid third century) is very similar, showing three different scenes from the same pursuit of a hare in the three registers. See Dunbabin, 1978: 48-9.

[210] One of the figures tracks a pairs of hares and carries a net and a stick accompanied by two hunting dogs, one of which is on a lead.

[211] The animals depicted in the pavement of the Hall of Philia at Antioch also cast shadows.

[212] The superb hunting scene decorating a large apsidal room was situated just off the peristyle at the centre of the building and was certainly an important reception room. The mosaic of the Amazons decorated the floor of a much smaller room further into the building (one would have to cross at least two rooms to reach it from the peristyle).

[213] Dulière, 1968: 10-11. She detects similarities between the rendition of certain plants and elements of the human figures in the Amazon panel and the hunting mosaics of Antioch. In her opinion, the pavements containing hunting imagery found at Apamea, Antioch and the wider region are a stylistically homogeneous group and one can see steady evolution of the type throughout the fifth century. In her publication on the mosaics of the Grand Colonnade, Dulière (1974) includes a plate (Pl. LXVII) that compares the head of the human figure in the panel with the water-mill found in the Colonnade with those of Meleager (from a panel at Apamea), a hunter from the Pavement of the Worcester Hunt at Antioch and the head of an Amazon from the Triclinos at Apamea (I discuss all these pavements in this chapter). They have similar dark curly

Amazons on horseback (both in classical dress, with Phrygian caps), each hunting a feline. The figures are very similar in dress and pose to each other (even the bodies of their horses are in the same position). Although the images are relatively well modelled (indeed of better quality than those that decorate the portico of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21), the pavement is definitely inferior to the other hunting pavement of the Triclinos (CAT:9, p 23) discussed above. The difference between the two pavements does not necessarily indicate a difference in their date of production, but what it almost certainly does indicate is a difference in the craftsmen responsible for them. These rooms obviously served different functions and the owner of the building was prepared to hire expert craftsmen to carry out the decoration of the important reception room.[214]

Another mythological pavement was discovered in the south-western quarter of the city and has been identified as showing the figures of Meleager and Atalanta (Fig 15) hunting wild beasts.[215] The exact context from which this pavement came is unknown, but it may have formed part of the decorative scheme of a villa. The scene depicted is simple and the imagery has been placed in a symmetric fashion across the surface of the pavement. Both of the figures are mounted and are shown riding towards each other into the centre of the panel whist each also attack a leopard. 'Atalanta' fires an arrow and 'Meleager' fends off his leopard with a spear. The identification of these figures with Atalanta and Meleager is somewhat speculative. Neither of these figures have name labels, neither are in classical dress (they are both fully clothed in tunics with trousers and caps). There are a number of similarities between the two figures in this scene and other

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hair and their faces share similarities in their rendering of the features (large eyes, straight noses). The faces are also not quite shown full face, with a very slight downward tilt to the head. I would also add the figures of Meleager and Atalanta from the pavement at Sarrin as sharing a similar execution of face, hair and positioning of the heads.

[214] Dunbabin, 1999: 184, suggested that these experts may have been imported from a more cosmopolitan centre.

[215] Dulière, 1968 and 1974. Also Balty 1969 and 1977: 118.

representations that have been identified as these mythological characters. At Sarrin (discussed below) figures identified as Meleager and Atalanta have very similar curly hairstyles and also wear the same little caps perched on their heads. Atalanta's veil/cloak flows upwards and behind her in a way similar to other depictions of huntresses in mythological settings.[216] It is possible that these are all representations of local deities or mythological characters rather than Meleager and Atalanta.

The pavement of the Cathedral of Apamea is later in date (AD 533) than the other examples discussed so far and the only example of hunting imagery to decorate the floor of a church from the city.[217] There is no full panel containing images of human figures engaging in hunting activities but simply a lone hunting dog wearing a red collar.

The dog is contained with a small panel at the centre of which is a medallion containing the dedicatory inscription. Running along the four sides are scenes of animal chase and combat; the dog chases an animal (most of the figure has disappeared). In its basic design the panel is reminiscent (although much simplified) of the earlier fifth century pavements from Antioch discussed above: A central medallion/figure surrounded by scenes running along the four sides of the pavement. It does not seem that the image of a hunting dog here was supposed to be interpreted by the viewers as part of an everyday hunting scene. The other surviving imagery from the panel, a stag confronting a snake, is almost certainly symbolic and in this context (a church) could be seen as a representation of the fight between good and evil.[218]

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[216] The drapery of the figure identified as Atalanta in one of the hunting panes from the Constantinian Villa at Antioch is arranged in very similar fashion. On the pavement from Sarrin the cloth around the shoulders of Artemis is further exaggerated to create a circle above her head.

[217] See Balty, 1977: 140.

[218] It is often a mongoose that confronts a snake, as in the vine-scroll pavement of the Church of St Christopher at Qabr Hiram. See Hachlili, 2009: 157, for a brief discussion of this image and the examples in mosaic discovered in the Palestinian provinces in particular.

There are no large unified hunting scenes of the type present at Antioch and Apamea contained within church buildings in Syria dating to Late Antiquity. The only other hunting motifs on church floors are collared hunting dogs at two churches at Huarte, mentioned below. This difference between private secular and public Christian contexts is striking.

Other hunting pavements from Syria and the Northern provinces.

Two pavements come from villas in the province of Osrhoene, a very elaborate pavement containing mythological hunting imagery was discovered at Sarrin, east of the Euphrates (CAT:1, P 1) and a mythological panel containing a hunting Amazon in a villa at Edessa (Fig 8) in the north of the province. These are the only two pavements from Osrhoene that are included in my thesis and both are firmly rooted in the classical tradition.

The pavement discovered at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1) decorated four sides of a peristyle; two long rectangular panels at each end, with two small panels and each group of three panels surrounded by wide U-shaped borders (a vine-scroll containing hunting scenes and the other a continuous series of Nilotic scenes). The themes of all six of the main panels are mythological. Balty attributes this pavement to the late fifth/early sixth centuries on stylistic grounds. [219] Nothing is known of the building to which this pavement once belonged, although it seems certain that it was a secular building and possibly a lavish villa. The Nilotic border surrounds a long panel depicting a Dionysian procession and two smaller panels, one containing the story of Europa and the Bull, the other Heracles and Auge.

The running vine-scroll design border is filled with scenes of the vintage, hunt and various animals and it is similar in style, design and in the choice of imagery to a large

[219] Balty, 1990:183.

group of vine-scroll design pavements from the southern provinces, dating predominantly to the sixth century.[220] The scenes and figures contained within the scrolls are not mythological in nature but belong to scenes of daily life. Unlike the Nilotic border of the opposite side of the peristyle, the little figures are not naked *putti* but are fully clothed and are surely meant to represent human figures. There are two hunters shown (at either end of the border) one carries a spear and points it at a fierce leopard and one carries a bow in the act of firing an arrow.[221] The vine-scroll border is different in both design and choice of imagery to the panels that it surrounds. It is more 'modern' and reflects contemporary popular taste and concerns. The choice of the Nilotic theme of the opposing border is also a reflection of popular contemporary taste as pavements and borders containing this subject dating to the Late Antique period are found across the Levant.[222]

Two of the panels of the opposite side of the peristyle contain mythological hunting imagery.[223] One panel (underneath the little bowman of the border) shows figures identified as Meleager and Atalanta.[224] Atalanta is in classical dress, while Meleager is fully clothed wearing a hat (it would be more typical of classical art if he were at least partially nude). The scene is very simple: the two characters sit side by side flanked by their horses. As with the other panels acknowledged as that of Meleager and Atalanta, the connection is not obvious, as the figures have none of the obvious attributes of those characters.

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[220] Certain images of the vintage that are depicted in this border mosaic, such as the seated flute player and a basket full of grapes are repeated in numerous sixth century pavements across Arabia and Palaestina.

[221] The only animal that he could be firing at happens to be a cockerel two scrolls away, which seems rather strange. I think it more likely that this image of a man with a bow owes its existence to an earlier conventional model and has been placed in the border without thought that he is and should be firing ***at*** something.

[222] Balty, 1990: 84-5, suggested that a workshop from Antioch may have produced this pavement at Sarrin. Kondoleon, 2005:234 and 237 (footnote 20), disagrees, stating that although there are strong 'echoes' of the Antioch workshop, the technique and style are definitely provincial. I would agree with Kondoleon, in fact there are certain stylistic similarities between pavements across the wider region (at Apamea, Antioch, and Sarrin for example) that are not the work of the same workshop.

[223] The other small panel of this side shows Aphrodite emerging from a sea shell.

[224] Balty, 1990, Dunbabin, 1999 and Kondoleon, 2005.

The imagery of the other panel is more complex and detailed. Artemis stands in the centre of the scene (on top of a lion that she has already killed) and is reaching for an arrow to fire at a stag that she has already wounded. She is wearing classical dress and a radiant crown upon her head. Her top half is also encircled by a flowing ribbon/veil.[225] To the left of Artemis is a hunter with a spear and hunting dog confronting a leopard and to her right another hunter. Neither of these figures is nude in the usual fashion of mythological heroes; they wear contemporary dress of tunics and boots. The whole length of the panel is punctuated by trees, shrubs and birds, which give it the feel of a naturalistic landscape.

The imagery of the peristyle does not seem to have been chosen as part of a unified theme, each panel shows a separate mythological scene or story. The imagery of these panels is classical, although the hunters of the panels of Artemis and Meleager are all in contemporary, rather than classical dress. There seems to have been no intention of showing any vignettes of contemporary life. It seems improbable that the person/persons who commissioned the mosaics were attempting to show their own leisurely pursuits, it may be more likely that they were using the imagery as a metaphor for their virtues, character and education (however obliquely).

Dunbabin considers that the mythological scenes show none of the 'de-mythologised' elements of some later mythological pavements (all the deities and heroes appear in their appropriate recognisable contexts, in her opinion).[226] The Dionysian panel in particular, she argues, resembles several other Dionysian monuments dating to the fourth to sixth centuries which appear to allude to actual cult practice. The mythological scenes found at Sarrin are, in her estimation, documents of a paganism that was far from

[225] The figure of Europa from a different panel is similarly shown. The ribbon frame about the torso and head may have been used to show the divinity of the figures that they surround.
[226] Dunbabin, 1999: 184.

dead in these outlying and remote parts of the Empire.[227] Many of the figures are, as I have pointed out, in contemporary dress and I would not call the identification of Meleager and Atalanta a particularly obvious one. If these figures are of deities, they are perhaps more likely to be representations of local deities?

Another mythological pavement has been discovered at Edessa (Fig 8).[228] This pavement formed part of the decorative scene of a very large and luxurious villa.[229] The hunting panel shows a full-field and unified scene of hunting Amazons. The pavement is fragmentary, but we can discern the remains of two Amazons hunting wild beasts. Unlike all the other images of Amazons that I discuss from the region, one of the figures at this site has a Greek name label by her head (there is damage around the head of the other figure). This figure (riding a horse and spearing a lion) is labelled 'Melanippe'. Melanippe was, in Greek mythology, the sister of the Amazon queens Hippolyta and Penthesilea.[230] The mosaic is of beautiful quality and the figures are well formed, incredibly detailed and classical in both style and execution. There is no suggestion of landscape; the entire scene is set on a plain cream background.

In her discussion of the Amazon panel at Apamea, Dulière, suggested that the Amazons represented Roman virtues (or the virtues of Rome), due to their bravery in battle and aptitude for hunting.[231] The use of Amazons to illustrate Roman virtues would, I think, be a strange choice as Amazons had been traditionally considered in opposition to classical culture and civilization. Amazons were often associated with city foundation, for example; the Amazon Clete gave her name to the city of Clete, Ephesos to Ephesus and Themiscyra

[227] Dunbabin points out that there is evidence to show that pagan communities still existed in the surrounding region well beyond the proposed date of this pavement.
[228] This discovery was made in 2006. Little has been published in English. See Merola, 2010: 29-37 for a brief round-up of the discoveries so far.
[229] The excavators have speculated that it was perhaps the home of a very important Imperial administrator. See Merola, 2010: 29.
[230] Merola, 2010: 31.
[231] Dulière, 1968: 10.

was the eponym of the Amazon capital.[232] At Edessa, the villa containing the panel of the Amazons also contains a personification of Ktisis (foundation, often of buildings and cities), who holds a measuring rod.[233] The villa is also thought to have belonged to an important Imperial official (as was the Yakto complex), perhaps these Amazons, rather than being representations of virtues, symbolised foundation.[234] These representations have thus far only been found in large cities during Late Antiquity and always in secular contexts (these mythological figures would not have been considered as decoration for church or synagogue floors).

Although the examples so far discovered in the Northern provinces are found most often in secular contexts (usually decorating the floor of a villa), there are some examples of hunting imagery depicted on the pavements of contemporary churches. At the South Church of Huarte (AD 485/6)[235] north of Apamea, a hunting dog wearing a collar appears among the other imagery of animal chase and combat. The collar implies human ownership and therefore implies human presence.[236] A hunting dog also appears in the animal pavement of the southern aisle of the North Church at Huarte (AD 486/7) (See Fig 17) which has been compared in its composition to the pavement of the portico of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21), although inferior in its execution.[237] The dog chases a stag, and a leopard (positioned slightly above the dog) also chases a stag. Above the dog and below the leopard there is an inscription in Greek reading 'lion'. Both Balty and Donceel-Voûte believe this to have been a mistake by the mosaicist, who has misidentified

[232] See Amad, 1975: 6.
[233] Merola, 2010: 31.
[234] See also Amad, 1975: 6.
[235] Dated by inscription, see Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 90-102.
[236] Scenes purely of animal chase are found relatively frequently on the mosaic pavements of churches dating to the fifth and sixth centuries in Syria and Phoenicia, for example at Huarte, Soran, Zahrani. Depictions of Animal chase have also been discovered at the Ancient, South and North churches of Huarte.
[237] Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 114.

the leopard.[238] It seems to me that the label was not meant for the leopard, but was the name of the dog below. There are a number of examples of hunting dogs (and indeed other favoured animals such as horses) being identified with name labels on mosaic pavements.[239] The image of a hunting dog chasing another animal appears with some frequency in Roman mosaics and appears in earlier Roman mosaics in Syria. At Shaba-Philippopolis a panel showing the story of Dionysos and Ariadne (third century) is surrounded by a vine-scroll border in which a dog chases a hare.[240]

This motif of a dog chasing a hare became a very popular motif in the scroll design pavements (particularly of sixth century date) from Arabia and Palaestina. Hachlili, lists many of the examples of this iconographic element found in both Arabia and Palaestina (I will briefly mention these pavements in the discussion of these provinces below).[241] She points to the North African examples (such as the mosaic of the hare hunt at El-Djem) as being a probable influence on the later Byzantine examples. It is also clear that this motif was present in Syria from a relatively early date in secular contexts and then placed into the scroll design, the combination of which was repeated so often in the later church pavements of the South.[242]

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[238] Balty, 1977: 128 and Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 104.

[239] For example, a pavement from the Maison des Laberii at Oudna, two dogs are given names and at Thuburbo Maius one dog is labelled as SAGITTA PERNICIES LEPORUM. Both these pavements date to the early fourth century. See Dunbabin, 1978: 60-1.

[240] See Balty, 1977: 50-7 for detailed description of this pavement.

[241] Hachlili, 2009: 157-8.

[242] The inhabited scroll (usually acanthus) design border in which little mythological *putti* hunt different animals also appears in the earlier Roman period in the region. For example, an acanthus scroll border with little hunters that surrounded another panel of Dionysos and Ariadne, again from Shaba-Philippopolis, dating to the middle of the third century. Balty, 1977: 24, gives a brief description. These *putti* become more lifelike human hunters in the later pavements.

Phoenicia Libanensis

At the Church of St George at Deir al-Adas (CAT:15, p 40),[243] the pavement of the nave contains the hunting scene (an inscription gives a date of AD 722, therefore after the Arab conquest and into the Umayyad period). The panel is divided into three registers, the top two of which depict scenes of the hunt. In the upper register a man gestures towards his dog, which pursues three hares. Underneath, another man and his dog are apparently being chased by a bear (or are hunting the bear, it isn't clear as this section has suffered some damage). In the bottom register one man collects grapes whilst another catches birds. At the top of the panel in the wide border a man leads a string of camels laden with goods (similar to the group of camels in the pavement of the portico of the Grand Colonnade (CAT:8, p 21) of Apamea). The man is named in Greek, 'Mouchasos'.

This pavement is different to those discussed above from Antioch, Apamea and Sarrin, not least of course, because this panel decorates the pavement of a church rather than a luxurious villa. The imagery is not arranged into a unified hunting scene as in the majority of examples from Antioch and Apamea and instead the pavement is divided into registers. The arrangement (and certainly the effect) is still very different to that of the hunting pavement of the Triclinos (CAT:9, p 23) of Apamea, (although that also is divided into registers) as there are no images connecting the registers together. The design of the pavement is more similar to the earlier North African examples mentioned above and the general aim of the mosaicists may have been the same here; the imagery is divided into registers in order to show the different activities taking place in the countryside (possibly at the same time, as in the North African examples). Whereas in the North African villa examples, these hunting genre pavements were designed to display the wealth and status of

[243] See Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 45-55, for a detailed description of all the mosaics discovered in this church and a translation and discussion of the inscriptions (including the dedicatory inscription, p53).

the patron and his estates, at Deir al-Adas the aim was to display the wealth of God's creation. The camel driver in the border above the main field has a name label. It seems probable that this was a portrait of a patron of the church, who more specifically donated money for the pavement itself. The depiction of a donor at the head of his laden camels suggests that this (the transport of goods) was how he earnt his living and was therefore the source of the money that he gave to the church. He has chosen to be shown engaged in his work, the source of his income, as a prayer for continued prosperity. The hunting, fowling and vintage scenes beneath are illustrations of the wealth of the natural world that was the foundation of the local community's prosperity.

The quality of the execution is notably less fine than the earlier pavements discussed and the work was evidently carried out by local craftsmen. The choice of imagery is also more similar to the pavements of the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina and also some examples from Phoenicia[244] than to the other Syrian pavements (although I think it shares some similarities with the Cardo mosaic at Apamea): Scenes of the vintage and other rural activities appear in the same panel as the imagery of the hunt.[245] The pavement more closely resembles those of other contemporary churches rather than those from villas.

Phoenicia Maritima

Two pavements are located in Phoenicia Maritima (both briefly discussed in Part 1). In the vine-scroll pavement of the Church of St Christopher at Qabr Hiram (CAT:13, p 36) it is difficult to tell whether the small human figures are hunting for sport or defending their livestock (they all face lions). In addition, also in the main pavement, is a hunting dog

[244] Deir al-Adas is located in Phoenicia Libanensis, some 75km to the east of Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia Maritima.

[245] These two iconographic categories (vintage and hunting) often appear together in the pavements of sixth century churches in Arabia such as, for example, the Churches of Bishop Sergius and St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa.

wearing a collar and chasing a lion. Another hunting dog chases a hare in an intercollumnar panel. It is probable that these images show both the protection of livestock and organised hunting for sport (as a form of 'pest' control).

At the Church of Khalde (CAT:12, p 33), north of Qabr Hiram, the main panel of the sacristy contains the image of what may be a shepherd as he is shown in a similar pose as the other representations from the region (legs crossed and leaning on a stick). In this example he also carries a hare. The image of a man carrying a hare is a familiar image in the hunting repertory and the pose, typical of the later shepherd, has been borrowed at Khalde (CAT:12, p 33) to depict a hunter (as at the pavement of the Worcester Hunt). As with all the other examples of hunting imagery from churches in the northern provinces, the images here are not part of large unified hunting scenes as we see on villa pavements, the images are merely elements in a composition consisting of motifs from a number of different iconographical categories. No examples of mythological scenes or characters are present in the church pavements, although it is clear that mythological scenes were still in favour in secular contexts in the region. Older mythological models are 'borrowed' and used, although 'de-mythologised'; the cross-legged pose of the shepherd/hunter of Khalde has its origins in the earlier mythological repertory, but has been re-purposed for use in a church.

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia

The evidence from Arabia and Palaestina presents a somewhat different picture to that of Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia. There are seven pavements located in the Palestinian provinces (all in Palaestina Secunda). One of these pavements is a full field panel divided into registers; three are full field vine-scroll designs and one contains men hunting in an acanthus scroll border of the pavement of the nave of a church. The final two examples are

found within running borders. Five of these are from Christian contexts (three churches, a monastery and a tomb) and two are from villas. As with Arabian examples below, the majority of the pavements are sixth century in date (six), whilst one is certainly earlier.[246]

In the province of Arabia the evidence is rather similar, some twenty-three pavements containing hunting imagery at twenty-two sites have survived. Only two of these pavements comprise a full field panel either divided into registers or a unified scene. The overwhelming majority of the hunting imagery contained on the mosaic floors of Arabia are simply small iconographic elements contained within inhabited scroll design pavements; seven full field vine-scroll pavements, six full field acanthus scroll pavements, one vine-scroll border and six acanthus scroll borders. Twenty of these mosaics decorate the floors of churches or ecclesiastical buildings and only two come from secular contexts (villas). As one might expect (due to the fact that most of the mosaics are from Christian buildings), the number of mythological hunting scenes in Arabia is very low. Only at the Hippolytus Hall (CAT:28, p 84) (once part of a villa) at Madaba are there any mythological elements: an acanthus scroll border containing spear-men and bow-men hunting felines surrounds a mythological scene (the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra).[247] The dates of these pavements almost entirely fall within the sixth century; eighteen of the twenty two sites are sixth century, one is dated to the fifth century and two to the eighth.[248]

I will approach and organise this section in a slightly different manner to those of Syria and Phoenicia. Due to the number of examples, it makes more sense to arrange and discussion of the pavements of the south according to pavement design (first the pavements Arabia and then those of the Palestinian provinces).

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[246] The pavement of a villa at Eleutherpolis, mentioned above in the discussion of pastoral imagery.
[247] Piccirillo, 1993: 66, describes all the pavements that have survived from this building, with extensive illustrations.
[248] One pavement, that of the Church of St Kyriakos at Al-Quwaysmah (near Philadelphia) remains undated. It is probably no earlier than the sixth century.

In addition to the human figures engaged in different hunting activities, there are many examples of hunting dogs (most with collars) chasing a variety of different animals on pavements from across this region. There are at least twenty-three pavements that contain this image, evenly distributed across the provinces: thirteen in the Palestinian provinces and eleven in Arabia.

In the Palestinian provinces: the Church at Shellal (AD. 561, vine-scroll pavement, dog chases hare); church of St Ellias, Kissufim (Fig 6, AD 576, vine-scroll, chases hare), two examples at the church of St Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4, sixth century, vine-scroll, one chases rabbit, one chases fox), the Martyr Church at Scythopolis (sixth century, intercolumnar panel, chases hare), Synagogue at Scythopolis (sixth century, vine-scroll border, chases hare), Tomb at el-Hammam (CAT:19, p 54), Scythopolis (sixth century, chases hare), Church at Beth Loya (sixth century, vine-scroll border, chases hare), Church at Hazor-Ashdod (AD 512, vine-scroll, chases gazelle), the Diakonikon chapel at Jabaliyah (CAT:22, p 65) (AD 451, a panel, rabbit),[249] Church at Khirbet el Wazia (sixth century, acanthus scroll border, chases hare), a villa at Caesarea (CAT:17, p 45) (sixth century, vine-scroll, chases hare), building at Caesarea (villa, running animal chase border, chases gazelle) and finally at the villa at el-Maqerqesh (third-fifth century, panels in the main field, dog in panel opposite gazelle in panel).

In Arabia: Church of SS Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat, Nebo (AD 557, vine-scroll, dog has collar and a broken lead chases rabbit);[250] Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139), Nebo (sixth century, vine-scroll, chases gazelle), Lower Church at

[249] The dog wearing a collar sits and turns its head to watch a rabbit running away. Hachlili, 2009: 157-8 lists and discusses many of these images (I have added some further examples to her list) and includes some bibliographical references.

[250] In the scroll to the left of the dog a man stands with his hands stretched towards it. The man is fully dressed, unlike the bare foot men wearing only tunics carrying out other agricultural activities in the surrounding scrolls. It may be that this man and dog were on a hunting expedition (hare chase) and the dog slipped his lead too early. This scene is quite lifelike in appearance.

Kaianus (early sixth century, vine-scroll, fleeing animal has not survived), Lower chapel of Priest John, Nebo (late fifth century, vine-scroll, chases hare),[251] Upper chapel of Priest John, Nebo (later sixth century, acanthus scroll),[252] Chapel at Suwayfiyah, near Philadelphia (sixth century, acanthus scroll border, animal being chased has not survived), Upper Church of Massuh, east of Hesban (date unknown, acanthus scroll, chases hare),[253] North Church at Esbus (date unknown, floral grid design, chases bird, Fig 18),[254] the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg (CAT:33, p 98) at Gerasa (sixth century, vine-scroll, there is no animal and dog is simply shown running),[255] the Burnt Palace (CAT:27, p 82) villa at Madaba (sixth century, acanthus scroll, chases rabbit) and several examples at the church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba (sixth century, vine-scroll, chases fox;[256] vine-scroll chases un-identified animal, acanthus scroll border, chases un-identified animal).

The great majority of the buildings in which these pavements were laid were Christian churches (seventeen in number). Only four images of dogs chasing their prey were found on floors from villas, one from a synagogue and one from a tomb (Christian). As with the other imagery associated with the hunting repertory, almost all the examples are dated/attributed to the sixth century; eighteen, in fact (six by inscription and the rest with a combination of stylistic analysis and archaeological evidence). Three pavements have not been dated with any certainty and two are fifth century in date. Half of the images

[251] The dog appears in the vine-scroll pavement of the nave. Hachlili, 2009: 158, argues that it should be linked to the running hare in the vine-scroll pavement of the sacristy.
[252] The dog, wearing a collar, sits in a scroll and is not obviously chasing another animal. It is possible that it is meant to belong with the images in the vine-scrolls above, a shepherd protecting his flock.
[253] See Piccirillo, 1993: 252-3, for description. There is a dedicatory inscription stating that the church was built in the time of the Bishop Theodose of Esbus. The dog here also has a long lead attached to its collar suggesting that it has escaped its master (although there are no human figures in the surrounding scrolls).
[254] In the two diamonds behind it a gazelle and a hare run towards the dog. See Piccirillo, 1993: 250-1 for a description and plan of the church and its mosaics.
[255] Piccirillo, 1993: 296, dates the pavements of the chapel stylistically to the sixth century.
[256] The animal is identified by Piccirillo, 1993: 131, as a fox. The pavements of this church have suffered extensive iconoclastic damage. Although the outlines of figure are sometimes quite clear it is still quite tricky to identify the exact species of all the animals.

appear in vine-scroll design pavements, another third are found in acanthus scrolls and only five are found within running borders or pavements divided into registers.

The hare is by far the favourite animal for a dog to be chasing; ten of the animals being chased are hares (four are rabbits, three gazelle, two foxes, in six cases the animal has been lost and one dog does not have an animal to chase). The hare makes frequent appearances in Roman hunting scenes, where they are often shown as hunting trophies (the representation of a successful hunt). Mentioned above was the panel from the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) at Antioch in which a hare is being carried near the scene of a sacrifice to a statue of Artemis. A very similar scene is depicted on the pavement of the Small Hunt at Piazza Armerina, Sicily (Fig 12, fourth century) and at the Church at Khalde (CAT:12, p 33) a man also carries a hare. Hares were a delicacy, and many great Roman estates contained *leporia* filled with animals bred for the table and hunted for sport.[257] They were also, of course, known for their prolific fertility and are well suited to convey abundance and wealth.[258] Toynbee suggests that they may appear as a symbol of the afterlife and this interpretation certainly works well in a Christian context, such as a church or tomb. [259]

Full field pavements: Registers or full scene

All four of the surviving full field pavements (that are not scroll designs) are divided into registers: The pavement of the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145) on Mount Nebo (AD 530); the panel of the nave of the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba (the use of certain imagery would suggest a date close to that of the Old Diakonikon), the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115) at Kastron Mefaa (AD 586

[257] Toynbee, 1973: 200-2, discusses the various Latin sources that mention hare hunting.
[258] Hares and rabbits eating grapes are also frequently depicted in Arabian and Palestinian mosaics. They are often contained within vine-scroll designs.
[259] Toynbee, 1973: 202.

dated by Greek inscription) both in Arabia and the long pavement of the north aisle of the Church of St Elias at Kissufim in Palaestina Secunda (Fig 6, AD 576, Greek inscription). All of these pavements come from churches.

The pavement of the Old Diakonikon at Mount Nebo is divided into four registers depicting various hunting, agricultural and pastoral imagery. The images of the hunt are contained within two registers. A hunter wearing a Phrygian cap and carrying a shield spears a lioness through the chest. This hunter is placed next to a pastoral scene mentioned in Part 1 (an agricultural labourer defending a bull) and is also standing near a grafted olive tree, although he is clearly not supposed to be a labourer surprised in his fields (he is fully dressed and well-armed). The second register contains two very similar scenes: Two men on horseback each spear a wild beast. These figures and their horses are in exactly the same poses, only the details of dress and colouring differ. They do, however, each hunt a different animal: one spears a bear, the other a wild boar. These riders are dressed for the hunt (cloaks fastened by brooches, trousers and short tunics) and are a definite contrast to the rural labourer and the shepherd in the first and third registers. The bottom register contains a procession of exotic animals and men (discussed fully in Part 3, below)

Should we perhaps see in these well dressed and armed hunting figures the idealised vision of the patrons of the building and their social circle, similar to those seen in villas in the northern provinces (such as the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8))? Baumann, put forward the idea that such hunting scenes, in whatever context they are found (secular and sacred) may be seen as general symbols of status; indications that the patron/donor belonged to the highest levels of society.[260]

[260] See Baumann, 1999: 203.

There are many hunting images spread across the panels of the nave of the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba. The nave is divided into two panels; one a vine-scroll design and the other divided into registers; both are surrounded by an acanthus scroll border. All three of these elements of the pavement contain some images of people hunting. The panel divided into registers bears strong similarities to that of the Old Diakonikon of Mount Nebo; there are four distinct registers in which figures are placed amongst regularly spaced fruit and palm trees set on a cream background. In the first register (eastern end of the panel) a figure carries a weapon and an animal runs from him.[261] The figure to the left holds a trident and leads a lion by a rope. In the third register an exotic figure wearing a Phrygian cap with ribbons riding an elephant and holding a trident pursues a feline and in the bottom register there is a fowling scene: a person beats a tree containing birds with a stick.

These figures, except possibly for the figure hunting birds (we can't see any details of the exact appearance of this figure) are obviously not meant to represent local hunters hunting in the region in which the mosaic was laid. It would appear that this scene is perhaps meant to show the hunt and capture of animals in the African provinces. There is no indication that this is a scene of the arena itself, as the landscape is naturalistic (although idealised, with many fruit trees). See Part 3 below for a full discussion of this pavement.

The pavement of the nave of the Church of Priest Wa'il at Kastron Mefaa, although also arranged in four registers, is rather different. The four different registers are not as clearly defined as those of the Old Diakonikon of Mount Nebo and the implication seems to be that all of the scenes are taking place at the same time in the same general area. There

[261] Piccirillo, 1993: 129 suggests a whip, but the damage caused by iconoclasts make it very difficult to be sure.

is a dedicatory inscription at the top that mentions the patron Priest Wa'il and the date of the building work. The inscription finishes by stating that this is the priest and his servant (apparently referring to the scene below). In the top register a figure (identified by Piccirillo as Priest Wa'il) stretches out his arms to grasp a branch from a figure seated on a stag, whilst two other figures carrying sticks stand on his other side.[262] In the scene below a red carriage/reliquary moves through the countryside drawn by a horse.[263] The bottom two registers (much of which has been damaged) contain a pack of hounds pursuing an animal/s that do not survive and underneath two horsemen chase down and spear a beast. It could be that this panel, at least in part, depicts a religious procession of some kind moving through the countryside (the carriage/reliquary, priest and the figure seated on a stag).

There are two hunting scenes from the north aisle of the Church of St Elias at Kissufim (Fig 6). The north aisle pavement was divided into at least ten different registers (a quite considerable portion of the mosaic has not survived).[264] Most of the other scenes are of animal chase/combat and one pastoral image (a man milking a goat). A soldier is wearing an embroidered tunic (leather strips hanging from the waist); boots, shield, carries a sword and confronts a very large bear. In another register a mounted figure in similar dress (also a soldier) spears a leopard. Directly above this figure is an inscription reading 'The work of Alexander'. Cohen argued that this inscription and the hunting scene below referred to the deeds of Alexander the Great, stories about whom were popular during the

[262] Piccirillo, 1993: 242.

[263] Although Piccirillo identifies this as a carriage, I believe it to be a reliquary. This image is very reminiscent of the image of the reliquary being transported through countryside (complete with accompanying scenes of animal chase) from the aisle of the earlier North Church at Huarte, (Fig 17), Syria. The image at the Church of the Priest Wa'il has been heavily damaged, while the image at Huarte has survived intact. The entire style and placement of the figures and animals in the scene are also strongly reminiscent of the wide borders of animal chase and reliquary processions that occur on a number of Syrian church pavements form the late fifth and early sixth centuries. See Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 102-116, for description of all the pavements from Huarte and also Tayibat al-Iman (Fig 28, fifth century).

[264] See Cohen, 1993: 277-83, for a detailed description of the church and its pavements, including translations of the inscriptions.

Byzantine period. [265] I think it much more likely that this inscription is simply referring to the man below, Alexander, a soldier from the area and a patron of the mosaic who has chosen to be immortalised participating in a favoured and 'high status' activity.

Vine-scroll design pavements

Much more common than the pavements divided into registers or showing complete 'scenes' are the vine and acanthus scroll design pavements, both full field and borders. There are six full field vine-scroll pavements containing some images of people hunting in Arabia. The vine-scroll pavement of the nave of the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) (attributed to the sixth century) contains mainly images of hunting, animal chase and the care of animals (pastoral scenes), with two of the eight registers filled with scenes of the vintage. There are three hunters in scrolls of the top, third and seventh rows. The top row of the pavement is somewhat reminiscent of the top register of the pavement from the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145), close by on Mount Nebo, as the scenes in the scrolls take place amongst cultivated fruit trees (one in each of the three scrolls of the row). A man with a sword and shield (unlikely equipment for a simple farm labourer) confronts a fierce bear. In the third row a fully dressed and armed man is in the act of firing at a maned lion. The final image is that of a man named 'Stephanos' in Greek spearing a lion. This image I mentioned in my discussion of the pavement of Megalopsychia (CAT:5, p 16) at Antioch above.

The vine-scroll panel of the pavement of the nave from the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) at the village of Nebo, contains a number of the same images as the pavement from the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) and the general themes of the iconography are the same: hunting, pastoral and scenes of

[265] Cohen, 1993: 280-1.

the vintage all contained within a regular and repetitive vine-scroll design. In the bottom row an archer stands, sword by his side and firing an arrow at a maned lion (it tries to remove an arrow from its mouth). Although the pose is not exactly the same as at the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139), the images are the same: an archer firing at a lion. In the second register, next to the shepherd and his hunting dog (who also appears at the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139), is a hunter spearing a bear. It is interesting that while all the vintagers of the pavement have been given curly hair, the hunters (archer, man with spear and the man beckoning to the dog chasing the hare) all have more orderly and straight chin length hair with blunt fringes.[266]

As I mentioned, the pavement of the nave of the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba contains two panels, one of which is of a vine-scroll design. Many of the animals have been rendered unrecognisable by iconoclasts, enough remains to be sure that the range of images used was similar to both the examples above. The orientation of the images show that the scene was meant to be viewed from all four sides; the figures in the outer scrolls along the four sides all have their feet pointing towards the edges of the panel as do the figures in the two 'inner circles' of scrolls (there are a small number of exceptions). In the third row an archer fires at a lion and in the bottom row a man spears a bear. Both are familiar images.

This image of the archer pictured in the act of firing an arrow also appears in the vine-scroll pavement of the chapel of Suwayfiyah (CAT:51, p 150). Again the same images appear together: the shepherd and his flock, various characters engaged in activities relating to the vintage and the hunt. These vine-scroll pavements are often also surrounded by an inhabited acanthus scroll border: for example at the Church of the Deacon Thomas

[266] This is perhaps a stylistic convention to distinguish different 'types' of people to the viewer.

(CAT:46, p 139), the church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) and here at Suwayfiyah. The similarities in the choice of the iconography (the same images appearing together), the style and indeed the execution may suggest that one workshop was responsible for their creation.

Eight miles to the north-west of Suwayfiyah at Khirbat al-Kursi (Fig 19) a small vine-scroll pavement was discovered in the chapel of a monastery.[267] Most of the scrolls are filled with images of various birds and animals. In the centre of the pavement a soldier (wearing a cloak, tunic, trousers and carrying a shield and spear) confronts a lioness. This hunter is the only human figure in any of the scrolls and the obvious focus of the composition. The main dedicatory inscription of this pavement reads simply:

'O Christ, help Anastasius and his wife. Amen'

It is possible that this image of a soldier hunting is in fact a donor portrait of Anastasius. The whole panel is surrounded by an acanthus scroll border (with a cream background, rather than the usual dark coloured background).

One rather unusual image comes from the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg (CAT:33, p 98) at Gerasa. In the small vine-scroll panel of the presbytery is the figure of a man running and holding a length of rope in both hands, which forms a lasso. In the scroll in front of him is a running gazelle (his intended quarry). This scene appears nowhere else that I know of, and would seem to have been specially designed for this pavement (at the behest of a patron?).

[267] See Piccirillo and Amir, 1988: 361-382, for a full description of the architecture, decoration and inscriptions of this structure (the mosaics, 362-5). This pavement has been dated by Piccirillo and Amir to the second half of the sixth century. There are relatively few mosaics in the immediate vicinity with which to compare it.

The last full field vine-scroll pavement containing hunting imagery from Arabia to be discussed is the main pavement of the nave of the Church of St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (CAT:41, p 119).[268] As with the pavement from the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87), the pavements of the Church of St. Stephen suffered extensive iconoclastic damage, making the identification of the individual figures quite difficult. From what remains we can at least see that most of the images belonged to the categories of hunting, pastoral (the figure of the shepherd can clearly be identified) and vintage. In the third row from the bottom a hunter spears an animal (possibly a lioness). It seems probable that a number of the other human figures, of which we can see only the crudest outlines, were also engaged in hunting.

Only three full-field vine-scroll pavements containing hunting elements have survived from the Palestinian provinces; two from Scythopolis and one from Caesarea (the first in Palaestina Secunda, the second in Palaestina Prima). On the small pavement from Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47), Scythopolis (AD 567) most of the images contained within the scrolls are associated with the vintage (and one pastoral image of the shepherd). The top row has been heavily damaged but it is possible to identify two hunters. The first (wearing a cloak and tunic) is on foot, carries a shield and spears a lioness. Interestingly, the lioness is in the same 'leaping' pose as the tigresses of the Antioch pavements. A cub also shelters underneath her, an element also frequently seen at Antioch.[269] This is an apparent re-use of an old conventional model. The second hunter is

[268] The exact date of the original laying of the mosaic is uncertain. The inscription of the presbytery mentions the date AD 756. A dedicatory inscription in the nave itself is difficult to read and may be interpreted in a number of ways (a date of AD 717/8 has been suggested by Balty, 1998: 700-2).

[269] The image of a leaping lioness with a cub placed underneath is also found on the fifth century pavement of the nave at the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah. The images of this pavement are mainly those of animal chase. There is also a representation of a man fowling (or beating fruit from a tree); he carries a basket on his back and grasps a stick with both hands. This image is very similar to one of the pavement from south aisle of the sixth century church at Petra and both are similar (in pose and placement of the basket and stick) to the

much more damaged, although it is possible to see that he was mounted and also wearing a flowing cloak. From what survives, these figures are well dressed and equipped and may even have been representations of soldiers.

The second vine-scroll pavement from Scythopolis comes from a tomb at el Hamman (CAT:19, p 54). This pavement is bigger and more complex than the example at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47). The majority of the images and scenes are of the vintage, with three surviving hunting scenes. Although the subject and images are familiar from the hunting repertory in two examples (a man with a spear attacks a lion and another man spears a wild boar), it is possible that these scenes are more properly pastoral in nature. Both of the figures are bare foot and dressed in very simple tunics (tucked up at the waist) the same as the vintagers and labourers. It seems probable that they are defending themselves or livestock. The third figure is chasing a lion (that chases two sheep) and is armed with a club.

The last example comes from a villa (fifth/sixth century) at Caesarea.[270] Amongst the animal chase and vintage scenes a man (wearing a long sleeved tunic) stands with his hands outstretched. He looks backwards towards a leopard, whilst in the two scrolls in front of him a dog chases a gazelle. The man is unarmed, but may have been engaged in a hunting trip with his dog. This entire pavement is very similar to those found in contemporary churches. There are no mythological elements and the range of iconographic categories is the same; scenes of vintage and hunt filling the vine-scrolls. Merrony has stated that vine-scroll designs never appear in secular contexts in Arabia and Palestine, as the design was essentially religious in significance.[271] This was clearly not the case. Just as

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fowling scene from the pavement of the Great Palace at Constantinople, except that here the figure is a monkey rather than a man.

[270] Hachlili, 2009:136. Also Lehmann, 1999: 147-8.

[271] Merrony, 1998: 444.

a mythological model could be ‘de-mythologised’ in a Christian context, the vine-scroll design could be without overt religious meaning in a secular context. This imagery of hunting (the vintage and other rural pursuits) contained within a vine-scroll design in a villa could, on a basic level, have the same meaning as that of a church; the portrayal of earthly abundance, but without an extra layer of religious symbolism.

Only one vine-scroll design border in the southern provinces contains a person hunting, at the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) at Kastron Mefaa (AD 587/8). The main pavement of the nave is of acanthus scroll design (and will be mentioned below, as it contains a number of hunting scenes) and it is surrounded by a vine-scroll border. Almost all the figures of this border have been damaged by iconoclasts. The only hunting scene that can be identified is a fowling scene: a hunter with a cage attempts to frighten two birds in a tree (similar to the scene at the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87)).

Acanthus scroll design pavements

Hunting scenes contained within acanthus scroll designs (both main field and borders) have survived primarily in the province of Arabia, with only two acanthus scroll borders surviving in Palaestina Secunda. There are a total of six full field pavements, three of which decorated the floors of churches in Kastron Mefaa. The main pavement of the nave of the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) is an acanthus design and like the vine-scroll border discussed above, it has suffered considerable iconoclastic damage. The pavement is particularly noteworthy because many of the human figures carrying out various activities contained within the scrolls named in Greek (donor portraits). In the fourth row from the top a figure spears a lion leaping towards him; he is named as ‘Baricha’. In the row above two men named as John and Zongon use ropes to capture a

bull. The other scrolls contain images of animals and other figures: for example, Ouadia stands near a church and carries a censer.

The Church of the Lions (CAT:38, p 113) in the eastern sector of the city, also contains an acanthus scroll nave pavement and has also been damaged by iconoclasts. It is dated by Greek inscription and is close in date the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107), AD 574 or 589.[272] Almost two thirds of the nave pavement has not survived, but it seems that the design and the images used would also have been similar to that of the Church of the Bishop Sergius (figures carrying out various activities and given Greek name labels). In the second row from the top a figure carries what may be a spear (only part of the shaft is visible) and in the fourth row another figure (leaning forward) also carries some item. At the top of the pavement a hunter with a bow fires at an animal that has not survived. The close similarities between the imagery of the churches of the Lions, Rivers and Bishop Sergius and also the close dates of their production may be suggestive of the work of the same workshop.

The final acanthus scroll pavement at Kastron Mefaa comes from the Church of the Rivers (CAT:37, p 111) (AD 579 or 594).[273] From the little of the pavement that has been left undamaged it seems that this pavement is similar both to the pavement of the Church of the Lions (CAT:38, p 113) and that of the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107). In the sixth row from the top a figure has captured and tied up a bull. Underneath, one of the scrolls contains a lion. It crouches in a similar position to those examples of lions that have been shot by an arrow (although any trace of an arrow has not survived). It is possible that there was an archer in the adjoining scroll.

[272] The dedicatory inscription could refer to either of these years. See Piccirillo, 1993: 236.
[273] See Piccirillo, 1993: 240, who concluded that the dedicatory inscription could indicate either of these dates.

Two acanthus scroll pavements come from churches in the village of Nebo. The Church of St. George (CAT:45, p 133) (AD 535/6) is earlier in date than the examples from Kastron Mefaa, but contains a number of similar images. The bottom three scrolls contain a scene in which two men use rope to capture a bull. This scene is very similar to the one mentioned above at the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107). There is a slight difference in the dress of the two figures. The men here wear flowing cloaks and short tunics (representations of soldiers, perhaps?). In the row above a lioness (with a cub sheltering beneath her, again a familiar model) crouches and holds an arrow in her mouth and in the adjoining scroll a mounted hunter fires arrows. Perhaps these are the missing elements in the scene at the Church of the Rivers (CAT:37, p 111). At the top of the pavement a personification of Ge holding a cloth filled with fruit, is offered baskets filled with fruit by two men (also wearing flowing cloaks and short tunics) in flanking scrolls.

The pavement of the nave of the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (CAT:44, p 130) contains one hunting scene in the top row of the scroll design. A man carrying a sword confronts a bear. In the three scrolls directly below there is a personification of Ge (holding a cloth filled with fruit) and in the two flanking scrolls two men offer baskets of fruit. The only difference between this scene and that of the Church of St. George is the dress of the two men: they are bare foot and wearing simple tunics. These personifications of Ge have, in the context of a Christian church, lost their classical mythological association, and instead of being personifications of a deity, are personifications of the God created bountiful world.

The pavement of the Burnt Palace (CAT:27, p 82) (a large private mansion, sixth/seventh century) at Madaba is the last full field acanthus scroll design to be discussed. The style and execution of this mosaic is slightly different from the previous

examples (the colours used are less vibrant and the figures are not as well modelled or as detailed). The top two rows and bottom three rows contain images of animal chase and a pastoral scene. In the third row a hunter (simple tunic, boots) spears a bear. In one of the medallions a lion confronts a bull. This scene, 'the Peaceful Kingdom', is known from contemporary church pavements in particular and also synagogues. They are illustrations of a passage from the book of Isaiah (11: 6-8) part of which reads:

'*The lion shall eat straw like the ox'.*

In a number of cases this passage appears next to the imagery, as at Ma'in (CAT:53, p 155). It is quite surprising to see an explicitly religious image on the floor of a villa. Talgam in her discussion of the Burnt Palace pavement argued that scholars should perhaps be more careful in attributing symbolic significance to such images.[274] The transfer of motifs from one realm to another could, she claimed, suggest that they were repeated mechanically (a mere decorative devise) and also that there was not always a dichotomous division between sacred and secular.[275] It also raises the possibility that the meaning of an image changed from one context to another. In my discussion of the hunting imagery from the same pavement (p 44, above), I looked at these same issues.

Six acanthus scroll borders also survive in Arabia and three of these come from Madaba. The acanthus scroll borders of the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore (CAT:31, p 93) (AD 562) and the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) both surround the main pavement s of the nave. Unusually, the background of the border at the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) is cream, rather than black (the only other example of this is at Khirbat al-Kursi, Fig 19, mentioned above). Both of these borders contain hunting and pastoral scenes. At the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore (CAT:31, p 93) there are two scenes in which a hunter

[274] Talgam, 2014: 354.
[275] Talgam, 2014: 354.

spears a lion. At the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) a hunter on horseback spears some animal (does not survive); another hunter carries a shield and a figure in a Phrygian cap does likewise.

The last example from Madaba decorated the floor of a sixth-century villa, the Hippolytus Hall (CAT:28, p 84).[276] Not much of the border, or indeed the rest of the pavement survives. The acanthus scroll has a black background and the four scrolls surrounding the top of the pavement contain the images of the hunt: a man in a short white tunic spears a stripy feline (possibly a tiger) and in the two scrolls to the right an archer fires an arrow at a lion. This border surrounds two mythological scenes: one shows Hippolytus and Phaedra and the other Adonis and Aphrodite. All the characters in these scenes have Greek name labels.

The last example comes from Ma'in (CAT:53, p 155) to the west of Madaba. The pavements of the Church of the acropolis are relatively late in date: AD 719/20.[277] Very little remains of the inner acanthus scroll border, only two fragments. One of these fragments contains the head and paws of a leopard with a spear piercing its breast.

Two acanthus scroll borders from ecclesiastical contexts have been discovered in Palaestina Secunda, at Mount Berenice, Tiberias and at Nahariya (CAT:25, p 76) north of Ptolemais. The border from a triapsidal church on Mount Berenice (Fig 20, late sixth century)[278] contains two figures hunting (large sections of the mosaic have been lost). A man (with cloak, boots and short tunic) spears a large maned lion. The head and part of the torso of another hunter being attacked by a bear also survives. Rather surprisingly

[276] Piccirillo, 1993: 66-7, for description and dating.
[277] A Greek inscription (beginning and ending with quotations from the Psalms) in the nave gives the date when the mosaic was laid. See Piccirillo, 1993: 201, for a full translation.
[278] See Amir, 2004: 147. An earlier mosaic underneath the acanthus scroll mosaic was dated to the early to mid-sixth century. Amir dates the later phase stylistically to the last quarter of the sixth century, before the church was destroyed by fire, possibly in the early seventh century.

(certainly for a church pavement and one dating to the late sixth century) one of the scrolls contains a centaur wielding a large club. The border of the nave at the church at Nahariya (CAT:25, p 76) (second quarter of the sixth century),[279] also a triapsidal basilica, contains two hunters spearing lions. The rest of the surviving scrolls contain scenes of animal chase and images associated with the vintage.[280]

Other pavements

The pavement of the Villa at Eleutheropolis (CAT:16, p 43) as well as the pastoral scene and the hunting dog already mentioned, also contains a number of hunting scenes placed within the same wide border in which the shepherd tends his flock. This border is naturalistic in style; there are trees, other vegetation and solid gently undulating ground underfoot. Next to the shepherd is a man armed with a spear (whose horse stands and watches). He is in a typical pose with his weight forward onto his front foot (reminiscent of the representations of spearmen from Syria). His opponent has been lost. Although much of the next two sides of the border have not survived it is clear that it was a running landscape border, probably predominantly consisting of men engaged in the hunt. One scene survives on each of the two sides; at the top of the pavement a mounted hunter with a spear charges at a leopard and on the opposite side to the shepherd another spearman on foot faces a bear. Both of these men are well dressed and armed and are clearly not rural labourers. In style and intention these hunters bear similarities to the pavements from Syria, particularly of Antioch.

[279] Dauphin and Edelstein, 1993: 49-50, dated by a reference to 'John the Archbishop' in an inscription and the style of the marble capitals in the church.

[280] There is a figure fowling. This image differs slightly from the few others that have survived in the region; the figure faces towards the viewer rather than to one side and the proportions of the figure are more similar to a child or *putti* rather than an adult male.

There is another possible hunting scene in a panel from the northern chapel in an ecclesiastical complex at Zia (sixth century, Palaestina Prima, north-west of Philadelphia). The figures have been damaged by iconoclasts, however their outlines are still quite clear: a man holding a hare by the ears and, held high in the other hand, a long blade with a handle. Piccirillo describes this as a hunting scene.[281] The scene has the feel of a slaughter or sacrifice, rather than a man out hunting in the countryside unless this was a representation of a sacrifice during a hunting expedition. This interpretation would be an uncomfortable one for the pavement of a church, not only because of any association with pagan practice but also with Jewish religious practice. It would appear most likely that an older conventional model was simply being re-used, stripped of its earlier associations and taken at face value: A hunter with his spoils for the pot, but with also and extra layer of meaning in this context (this bounty was God given).

The use of the imagery certainly differs in some ways between the pavements of the north and those in the south. What is striking about the majority of the imagery in the hunting repertory from the Southern provinces is just how repetitive it is; the same images appear frequently and often contained within the same basic pavement designs (scroll, either vine or acanthus) and the vast majority of the pavements can be dated to the sixth century. Whilst many of these images are realistic in their basic details (dress, weapons and activities), they do not appear in most cases to be drawn from life, but from conventional models. These genre images could be taken at face value (as simply being used to portray activities undertaken by members of the congregation), but it is probable that there is also an extra layer of symbolic meaning.

[281] Piccirillo, 1993: 324.

There are no full field panels containing detailed, impressive and unified hunting scenes of the type that appear at the villas of the cities of Antioch and Apamea in the fifth century. The unified full-field pavement of the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115) is much more similar to the church pavements of Syria and Phoenicia than the complex, well-designed hunting pavements from the villas of Antioch. The hunting iconography, when it appears on the pavements of Arabia and Palaestina is very rarely the sole focus of a pavement and is usually one of a number of different iconographical categories present (as is the case in the churches of the north).

The hunting mosaics of Antioch are a defined stylistic and iconographical group, different not only from the pavements of churches across the region, but also from the pavements of other villas. Kondoleon identified the mosaics of the House of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) (the Honolulu Hunt, the mosaic of Ge and the Worcester Hunt pavement) as referencing the agricultural riches and game parks on estates that taken together celebrate the luxurious lifestyle of the owner of the building and his guests. [282] All these hunting pavements at Antioch, at least on a basic level have this in common: they are a display of the wealth and status of their patrons. These themes of hunting and, in the case of at least one of these pavements the depiction of the arena, represented the interests of and were the preserve of the landed provincial aristocracy. Lavin, in his discussion of the North African examples, pointed out that being representations of the powerful and leisured classes, the imagery then became associated with this privileged class and the hunting repertory may thus have acquired value as 'a sign of status'.[283]

A difference between the church pavements of the entire region (north and south) and the pavements from villas and other secular contexts is the absence of mythological

[282] Kondoleon, 2005:236.
[283] Lavin, 1963: 277.

iconography which continue in popularity for the decoration of villa pavements even at later dates (at the sixth century Hippolytus Hall (CAT:28, p 84), for example). There are some exceptions such as the image of a centaur at a church at Mount Berenice (Fig 20) and the bust personifications of Ge being offered baskets of fruit/produce in a number of churches in Arabia. In the case of the personifications of Ge it seems clear that this classical personification had no remaining mythological association in these churches. Saller and Bagatti explained that these scenes can be seen as a celebration of the Fruits of the Earth.[284] The use of earlier iconographical models in churches is not uncommon; the cross-legged shepherd of the pastoral scenes and the spearmen of the Syrian pavements (with their weight on one foot, spears pointing to right) who also re-appear in a number of the Arabian churches, for example.[285]

Part 3: The capture, transportation and use of 'exotic' beasts

In this last section concerned with animals, I will examine the occurrence of images of exotic or unusual animals, sometimes shown moving through the rural landscape. Images of these animals appear on mosaic pavements individually (filling roundels in vine-scroll design pavements, for example) and as part of a scene often being led by a human figure in clothing foreign to the region. See **Map 3** (Catalogue, p 160) for the sites discussed in this section. Exotic beasts became an iconographical subject in their own right and were frequently placed next to images of the hunt and pastoral scenes. Zohar, argued that their depiction expresses a specific subject matter: animals for display.[286] I would like to explore their importation from their places of origin, their possible relevance to the local

[284] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 100.
[285] Merrony adds the image of the archer firing at a lion, which occurs on a number of the church pavements of the south (particularly at Kastron Mefaa, Madaba and Mount Nebo in Arabia). This image, he believes, can be traced back to the pavement of the Constantinian Villa at Antioch and the representation of 'Atalanta' firing at a lion. See Merrony, 1998: 454.
[286] Zohar, 2008: 130.

economy; their use locally and if they were transported onwards through the region or via its ports.

I will concentrate on those types of animal that were not found locally in Late Antiquity (either as native species or introduced for breeding) and that would have had to have been transported to the region in that period. I wish to look at the evidence from both the written and archaeological sources for the continuing use and relevance of exotic animals in the games, spectacles and rural economy of the Late Antique Levant. Among the pavements that I will mention from outside the Levant will be those at Piazza Armerina in Sicily, as they contain extensive imagery of the hunting, capture and transportation of exotic beasts from across and outside the Empire.

No species of lion is today found in any part of the region; a native species of lion did exist there in Late Antiquity. We have evidence to that effect in the written sources and indeed a lion bone has been found during the course of archaeological excavation at Dehes in the Syrian Limestone Massif.[287] Images of lions also appear on a relatively large number of mosaic pavements from across the region, examples of which I have already discussed from Antioch and Apamea. Leopards were also indigenous to the region in Antiquity. The *Historia Augusta* mentions that one hundred Syrian leopards (along with one hundred Libyan leopards) appeared at games organised by the Emperor Probus (AD 276-82).[288] It is also thought that there might have been a native species of ostrich, at least in the Sinai.[289]

[287] See Kroll, 2010, 191-99
[288] See Dunkle, 2008: 242, for more information about these particular games.
[289] Kroll, 2010: 191.

Use of exotic animals in earlier Roman society.

The use of exotic animals for display and in the public games from the earlier Roman period is very well documented and in fact makes horrifying reading in some cases (even allowing for inflation of the numbers of the animals by the sources). These lavish public spectacles were put on by and paid for by the state, the Emperor, state officials and the wealthy. The *venatio* had a long history in Roman society; the earliest attested were held in 186 BC by the general M. Fulvius Nobilior in Rome and included lions and leopards transported from other regions of the Empire.[290] By 169 BC the author Livy described a *ludus* in which sixty-three lions and leopards, forty bears and some elephants took part.[291] The numbers of the animals and the sheer scale and expense is apparent. On some occasions even specialist foreign hunters were brought to Rome alongside the wild beasts.[292] By the Imperial period we learn that in Titus' spectacles of AD 80, some 9000 animals (wild and tame) were killed. Foreign animals particularly exited the crowds, their appearance reflecting well on the organiser of such a display and demonstrated wealth, power and a network of contacts.[293]

In the arena these beasts were matched with one another in deadly confrontations; they were taught tricks to amuse the crowd, confronted professional hunters[294] and were used for the execution of convicts, *'damnatio ad bestias'*. These exotic animals were not solely destined for the arena. The written sources (such as the *Historia Augusta*) also

[290] See Dunkle, 2008: 208.
[291] Livy 44.18.8
[292] Strabo (17.1.44) described the games of Scaurus of 58 BC, where Egyptian crocodile hunters, *Tentryritae,* came along as keepers to the imported Nile crocodiles. Pliny also mentioned Gaetulian hunters from North Africa fighting elephants during the games of Pompey. See Dunkle, 2008: 209-10, for full description of these games.
[293] We see from the letters of Cicero, that when he was the governor of Cilicia in 50-51 BC he was continually pestered by an acquaintance, M.Caelius Rufus, for leopards from the region. Cicero would have had soldiers at his disposal and local advantage, thus saving his friend considerable expense and time.
[294] Some of whom were known to the crowd by name. Martial (Epigrams, Book of Spectacles, Book 1, verses 11, 17, 32) mentions a hunter called Carpophorus battling beasts including a rhinoceros and he compares him favourably with mythological heroes. Staged hunts included game and exotic animals, sometimes with elaborate 'natural' sets.

mention menageries of exotic beasts and game animals belonging to various emperors (Elagabalus kept a collection of Egyptian animals, for example).[295] These animals had to be captured in their place of origin and then transported to their final destination which was often quite some distance away (and in the case of elephants, giraffes and other African animals this would involve at least one sea journey on their way to Rome). We do have some, although limited, evidence for this (the images on the pavements of Piazza Armerina, Sicily, belong to Late Antiquity and will be discussed below). Tertullian describes animals being put into wooden cages reinforced with metal and loaded onto carts.[296] Units of the army were often drafted in to help, for example; Legion 1 Minervia (based at Cologne) had specialist bear hunters. Not much is known about the actual journeys (such as the details of the sea voyages), but clearly acquiring and transporting animals from distant parts of the Empire was an expensive undertaking. This was an expense too for the provincial towns and countryside that these expeditions travelled through, as they were obliged to provide shelter and fodder for the beasts.

Use of exotic animals in Late Antiquity

The capture, transportation and display of wild beasts continued into the Late Antique period and continued long after the popularity of the gladiatorial games had stopped. There were some one hundred and seventy-five holidays a year by the beginning of the fourth century for which certain officials would have the responsibility to organise and finance games and entertainment.[297] The letters of Symmachus (from the late fourth and early fifth centuries) show the continued importance of obtaining wild animals for the games at Rome. He sent his agents to collect animals in the provinces and wrote letters to numerous

[295] Ptolemy II of Egypt kept a menagerie at Alexandria in the third century BC, a possible prototype for later examples.
[296] De Spectaculis 2.1. See Auguet, 1972: 109-11, for a brief discussion on the capture and transport of the beasts.
[297] See Carandini, Ricci and de Vos, 1982 50-2.

officials asking for help: He wanted, amongst others, antelopes from the African provinces and crocodiles (presumably from Egypt).[298] The last recorded *venationes* at the Coliseum of Rome were as late as the sixth century and the games of Eutaricus Cillica (the son-in-law of Theodoric) in AD 519 and of Anicius Maximus in AD 523 to celebrate accession to the consulship.[299]

It is clear from the sources that plenty of money was not all that was necessary to stage a successful games. Political contacts across the Empire were also very important, not just for the capture of the animals themselves but also their transport. Permits and contacts were needed to use the official transport systems and gain the help of hunters attached to the army. Symmachus, for example, also used his contacts to obtain permission to use the *cursus publicus* and the Flavian amphitheatre.[300]

The popularity of these displays and games were not simply confined to the Great Imperial cities of Rome and Constantinople. Circuses were built across the Greek East at Gerasa, Tyre, Beirut and Caesarea Maritima alone during the second and third centuries AD and they continued in use for several centuries.[301] In Syria (according to Libanius in the 4th century) the animal shows were so popular that people waited in the open air overnight to make sure that they would get seats.[302] In the wider region at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor, extensive evidence has been found that the games and the use of animals in

[298] Crocodiles only appear in the Nilotic scenes (a distinct tradition of imagery) that became quite popular on the mosaics pavements of the region in Late Antiquity and which will be discussed separately later in Chapter 3, Part 2.
[299] Dunkle, 2008: 243 and Dodge, 2008, 146.
[300] Carandini, Ricci, de Vos, 1982: 51.
[301] Dodge, 2008:133-46.
[302] Roueché, 1993: 77. The presidents of the provincial assembly of Syria put on the shows that he described.

those games continued into the fifth century at least.[303] One late fifth century Greek inscription from the site reads:

"Here lies Epiphani(o)s, bull rearer"

Roueché,[304] has suggested that Epiphanios raised bulls to be used for the bull fights and chases at the arena. This evidence shows that the animal games and spectacles were still playing a part in life and economy during Late Antiquity.

There was certainly a change in the nature of the games and animal spectacles with the ascent of Christianity. The gladiatorial combats declined in favour, eventually disappearing, as did the practice of using the wild beasts of the arena as a method of execution.[305] A decree of Anastasius in AD 498 banned the slaughter of animals in *venationes* in the East.[306] It may be as Roueché has suggested, that only the most dangerous and savage of the fights between the wild beasts were stopped. [307] It does appear that *venationes* were not officially banned completely until relatively late by the Council of Trullo in AD 692. The edicts of Anastasius do not show that the exhibition of wild beasts, both domestic and exotic, or indeed their importation throughout the Empire had stopped at the start of the sixth century, but they do indicate a shift away from the ferocious combats and wholesale slaughter of the earlier period. In fact, a law of Justinian to regulate the entertainments given by the consuls, talks of the pleasure of the crowds at seeing

[303] Roueché, 1993, 'Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias', discusses the evidence, particularly in the form of inscriptions extensively.
[304] Roueché, 1993:73.
[305] Procopius of Gaza (Chapter XV, in approx. AD 501) notes that the Emperor Anastasius stopped certain spectacles in which people were killed by wild beasts. The execution of criminals using this method may have become uncomfortable for the now Christian Empire, as many revered Christian martyrs had met their ends in this fashion.
[306] In August of AD 499, according to Joshua the Stylite, Anastasius issued an edict outlawing the fights between wild beasts at the arena. See Roueché, 1993: 77.
[307] Roueché, 1993: 77.

animal shows.[308] Several of the ivory consular diptychs and panels post-dating these edicts do in fact show animal displays, such as those of Areobindus.[309] The Barbarini diptych, depicting a triumphant Emperor, has a running band at the bottom showing various figures in foreign dress with gifts and wild animals (a maned lion, elephant and a tiger).[310]

The transport of wild animals and appearance of exotic animals through the eastern provinces is also apparent from the written sources. In AD 417 an Imperial edict was issued in response to a complaint by officials in the Euphrates province about the length of time (and the extra cost of feeding and caging them) that it took wild beasts to be transported through the region by persons assigned by the ducal office staff. Instead of the seven or eight days that should have been allotted for each stop, beasts (it does not specify species) stayed for up to four months. The edict stated that if any dux of the border sends beasts to the Imperial court, they shall not be retained longer than seven days within any municipality.[311] It may be that although lions were native to Syria and to other eastern provinces and therefore did not have to be imported, these native lions were captured and transported elsewhere. Certainly beasts of some description were being moved through the eastern regions; were destined for Constantinople and cost the localities that they passed through money and other resources.

These animals going through the Levant had not always been captured on the orders of Roman officials to be used in their spectacles and games. Exotic and rare animals were, of course, sometimes given as diplomatic gifts between rulers or high officials. There are a number of examples of animals being given as gifts to emperors (and also in one instance a Roman general) in the earlier Roman period. The written sources of Late

[308] See Jennison, 1937: 180, for further details and discussion.
[309] Dodge, 2008: 145.
[310] See Hutter, 1971: 84-6, for description and image. She identifies the Emperor as Anastasius or Justinian.
[311] The Theodosian Code, Book IX, XI, ii. Translation Pharr, 1952.

Antiquity indicate that animals were still being given to the Emperor and transported over long distances. Gatier notes several occasions when this occurred, for example; in AD 573, ambassadors of the Macourites of the upper Nile gave the Emperor Justin II a giraffe and an elephant.[312] These animals apparently passed through Gaza on their way to Constantinople.[313] The giraffes and the elephant mentioned by Timothy of Gaza in the late fifth century (and discussed in more detail below) may also have been gifts from a foreign ruler, this time from the king of the Auxoumites of Ethiopia and accompanied by at least one man sent by the king.[314]

First hand eye witness accounts of wild exotic animals being transported through or delivered to the region also survive. Pseudo-Oppian of Apamea, Syria, in his work on the hunt, The Cynegetica, (dating to the third century) mentions and describes the ferocious and marvellous maned lions of Libya:[315]

> "I have seen, not merely heard of that terrible beast, when it was transported to be a spectacle for royal eyes"[316]

The writer does not specify whether the lion had reached its final destination at Apamea or whether it was being transported onwards, possibly to Antioch (Apamea being merely a stop). It could even be that the writer in fact saw this beast in Antioch itself.

The other account that survives is that of Timothy of Gaza (writing in the time of the Emperor Anastasius AD 491-518).[317] He describes a man dealing in Indian products (or from India (Ethiopia?)) going through Gaza having come from Aila (by modern

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[312] Gatier, 2005: 75.
[313] Gatier, 2005: 76.
[314] Gatier, 2005: 77.
[315] See Mair, 1928, for a brief review of the evidence.
[316] Cynegetica III, 42-7.
[317] According to the Lexicographer Sudias (in the tenth century), Timothy wrote four books on the animals of Egypt, India and Libya. Parts of this work have been passed down in the quotes and paraphrases contained in later works. See Bodenheimer and Rabinowitz, 1949 for discussion.

Aqaba) on the Red Sea. Aila was, in Byzantine times, a main harbour for the trade from India and Ethiopia. This man brought to Gaza a giraffe and an elephant onward bound for Constantinople and the Emperor Anastasius. These animals arrived at Constantinople in AD 496 according to the chronicle of Marcellus. Timothy doesn't mention exactly what route these animals had taken from the port of Aila on the Red Sea to Gaza, but it is clear that once in Gaza they were to be loaded onto a ship for the rest of the journey to the Imperial capital. Near Gaza (at Erez) a fragment of a mosaic pavement has been discovered (See Fig 23). This could be a possible representation of another group of animals being led by a man in 'foreign' dress passing through the port and then onwards to Constantinople.[318] The Great Palace mosaic (located close to the Hippodrome) in Constantinople (Fig 1) itself shows a range of different animals and indeed the bed for the mosaic consisted, in part of crushed Gaza amphorae.

The mosaic pavements of Piazza Armerina.

The mosaic pavements of Piazza Armerina in Sicily (fourth century), are further and invaluable evidence that the capture and transportation of exotic African animals was still taking place into Late Antiquity.[319] These mosaics are incredibly detailed and the Great Hunt pavement of the long corridor shows the various stages in the process of hunting, capturing and transporting such beasts. They also confirm certain important particulars, such as the use of soldiers (being overseen by state officials) and the various cages and methods of transport employed.

[318] It has been suggested that this scene may be a representation of a Dionysian procession and possibly a representation of the Indian triumph of Dionysus, see Rahmani: 1975: 21-4. Rahmani, 1975:24, also states that this scene may then have been adapted to Christian concepts.

[319] A more specific date of AD 320/30 has been suggested by Carandini, (Carandini, Ricci, de Vos, 1981: 56). The exact status and identity of the owner of the building is uncertain. When the complex was excavated the size and magnificence led the scholars to conclude that this was an Imperial villa (See Gentili, 1961). It is now thought most likely to have belonged to an aristocrat and several candidates have been put forward.

This 'Great Hunt' mosaic is an incredible work of art (Fig 14). It is divided into scenes (indicated by numerals) and panels showing a number of different ports and countries (with wildlife being trapped and loaded onto and off boats). Carandini, Ricci and de Vos in their thorough analysis of the imagery of this pavement have attempted to identify the ports and regions depicted.[320] Starting at the northern end of the corridor is an apse containing a female personification of Africa (or one of the North African provinces); the following two panels show the North African provinces and what has been identified by the authors as the port of Carthage. It is interesting that in the following panel the landscape with a port showing animals disembarking has been identified as the Italian peninsula and Rome. Animals are also shown disembarking from a ship that has sailed from the opposite direction: from several panels showing what would appear to be Alexandria and the Nile Delta.

The region depicted in the panel to the south of the Egyptian landscapes may be India. In this scene the soldiers are shown hunting both a tigress and a griffin. Ricci has pointed out that hunting griffins is not an unheard of event in art and literature and its presence should be seen as part of the 'cycle' of different hunts on this pavement.[321] It is certainly true that a number of contemporary written sources describe griffins quite seriously and detail the correct way in which to trap them.[322] The pavement then terminates at its southern end with another apse filled with a personification, this time possibly of India (which would sit well with the identification of the adjoining scene).

[320] Ricci, 1981, see pages 94-103 and 197-230 particularly for Ricci's very interesting analysis which includes breaking down the pavement into panels completed by different teams of workmen (who belonged to a workshop from Carthage).
[321] Ricci, 1981:230.
[322] Timothy of Gaza in chapter nine of his work on animals talks of griffins and states that they are a natural foe of the tigress.

The pavement shows north African animals being transported to Carthage and then to Rome, whereas the animals from India (and/or east Africa) were shipped from Alexandria before ending up at Rome. This may not entirely reflect the reality of the routes used to ship the animals across the Empire, but as it is an almost unique survival in art of such events, it is at least worth noting.

Images of exotic animals on the mosaic pavements of the Levant.

Exotic animals being led by exotic figures.

Images of exotic beasts (often at the end of a rope) being led by exotic human figures appear on four pavements found in Palaestina and Arabia and one recently discovered pavement at Edessa (Fig 9), which I will look at in detail, namely, the Church of St Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4, south of Gaza, sixth century); at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) (Room L) at Scythopolis, the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba, the pavement of the Old Diakonikon at the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145) and a panel from a villa at Edessa. The pavement in Osrhoene is the only one from the group that decorates a villa and the only example outside Palestine and Arabia. A number of these pavements have already been mentioned in relation to pastoral or hunting imagery discussed in Parts One and Two. There is also the fragment of mosaic from Erez, near Gaza (Fig 23), which is too fragmentary to really see the human figure properly (although it is clear that this figure was wearing trousers rather than a striped skirt and also wears a Phrygian cap). This figure leads two tigers, a cub and an elephant.

At Birsama (Fig 4),[323] filling two scrolls in the main vine-scroll design pavement, a black figure in a striped skirt leads a giraffe (well-proportioned and quite accurate in appearance). Further along in the row, another black figure rides an elephant. The other

[323] See Hachlili, 2009: 117-76 and 266-68 for discussion of the pavements of this church and their place in the iconography of the region. See also Gazit and Lender, 1993: 273-76 for a description of the site.

scrolls of the pavement are filled with various birds and animals (including one tiger) and scenes of vintage. A camel and a donkey laden with goods (possibly products of the grape harvest) are led by figures in contemporary clothing from the region. Interestingly at the western end of the pavement, one of the scrolls contains the image of a woman breast-feeding. This image is, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, a very rare one (the only other Late Antique example comes from the Great Palace at Constantinople).[324]

Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis (AD. 567) shows a similar scene.[325] The pavement is also of vine-scroll design and in the top row is the same black figure in a striped skirt and leading an animal by a rope. This animal is a little more difficult to identify than the one on the pavement at Birsama as its body is the shape of a camel (complete with hump) with leopard spots and horns. This is almost certainly supposed to also represent a giraffe rather than a camel. Dauphin has identified it as a bushbuck, an African species of horned spotted antelope likely to be led by an African figure (I think an unlikely identification, as we see the same African figure at Birsama with a well-proportioned and identifiable giraffe).[326] The other scrolls are filled with vintage scenes (including a wine press) and also a donkey laden with grapes being led by a figure.

The pavement of the Church of al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba is also attributed to the sixth century.[327] The imagery and design of the pavement differs from the previous examples that I have described. The pavement is organised into registers rather than a vine-scroll design. This time a man wearing a Phrygian cap leads a giraffe (in the form of a camel with leopard spots) and another man (also wearing a Phrygian cap) rides

[324] Hachlili, 2009: 117.
[325] Fitzgerald, 1939 gives a full description of all the pavements from this complex.
[326] Dauphin, 1978:407.
[327] See Piccirillo, 1993: 129-31, for a discussion of this pavement and prints.

an elephant and carries a three pronged fork. The scenes surrounding these two images are not those of the vintage, but those of the hunt.

The pavement of the Old Diakonikon, at the Memorial of Moses complex at Mount Nebo (CAT:49, p 145), AD 530, is the last of the pavements from the south.[328] This pavement is again arranged into registers and along the bottom the same black figure leads an ostrich (well modelled and detailed). He walks behind a figure wearing a Phrygian cap who leads a zebra (also well modelled) and another strange looking animal. As at Scythopolis, this animal has the body of a camel with leopard spots (again one must assume that this was supposed to portray a giraffe). Scenes of the hunt (including mounted figures armed with spears) cover the rest of the pavement.

Finally, a panel from a villa discovered at Edessa (Fig 9, hunting Amazons from the villa was discussed in Part 2, above). The villa is believed to be fifth/sixth century in date, and as I previously stated, the excavators believe it to be the residence of an important Imperial official.[329] In this panel a man leads a Zebra by a rope. As with the other scenes from the villa, the action is not set in a 'realistic' countryside and is simply set on a cream background. The mosaic is beautifully executed; the zebra is well modelled and anatomically correct with wonderful markings. The man is quite similar to those from the southern pavements, a black man stripped to the waist and wear a skirt divided into trousers. The work here is of much finer quality than any of the other examples.

These scenes, in which a man in foreign dress leads exotic animals by a rope, bear strong similarities to each other and are only found in churches in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia and one example from a villa in the far north (Osrhoene) during this

[328] Another pavement at the same complex is dated by Greek inscription to between 603/08 AD. Piccirillo, 1993: 144-51.
[329] See Merola, 2010: 29.

period. The images of a black man wearing a striped skirt found at Birsama (Fig 4, twice), Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis and the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145) at Mount Nebo and Edessa are clearly of the same figure (only the posture differs slightly between the pavements). The striped skirt is tied with a belt at the waist. At Birsama (Fig 4) the skirts of the two figures look almost to have been fashioned into loose trousers: the belt acting as a divider from back to front; it is the same at Edessa. On all three pavements in the south the figure also wears a type of spiked headdress and at Mount Nebo this includes ribbons fluttering down from either side. The example from Edessa does not wear a headdress. At Birsama and Scythopolis the figure leads a giraffe and at Mount Nebo an ostrich, whereas at Edessa he leads a magnificent zebra. The second figure from Birsama rides an elephant with a saddle. All of these pavements are fairly close in date, the examples from Birsama and Scythopolis date to the mid sixth century (the pavement at Scythopolis dated exactly), and the example from Mount Nebo slightly earlier to AD 530 (also dated exactly by inscription). The villa at Edessa (Fig 9) is as yet without a firm date, but believed to fifth/sixth century.

The striking similarity of these particular images and between the compositions of the scenes and the fact that these pavements are also dated to within a relatively short period could suggest a common origin. Is it possible that craftsmen from a particular workshop were employed to carry out the work at these sites, bringing their own model books and making certain adaptations to suit their clients and the spaces to be filled?[330] The sites where these images of exotic men leading exotic beasts occur are not all very close to each other; one of these images is near Gaza in Palaestina Prima, another at Scythopolis to the north in Palaestina Secunda and two in Arabia at Madaba and Mount Nebo. The villa at Edessa is a huge distance away from any of these sites. It just does not

[330] The hunting pavements containing exotic animals at Piazza Armerina, Sicily, were carried out by craftsmen from Carthage, for example.

seem particularly likely that craftsmen from a single workshop in the Levant (from Gaza, for example) were directly responsible for all these pavements, as not only are they located in different areas of the region, they are also quite different in the way that they are executed and also in their wider composition. The pavements of Birsama and at Scythopolis are vine-scroll designs and the imagery on the pavements at Madaba and Mount Nebo is arranged in registers, for example. At Edessa the scene fills a panel in which the background is plain cream. The examples from Arabia also include men in eastern dress with Phrygian caps (a way of marking these figures as generally foreign to the viewers), whereas those from Gaza and the surrounding area do not. In contemporary mosaics of the region the figures of Orpheus/David (taming the animals),[331] Adam[332] and Daniel (and the lion) are often shown wearing similar caps.[333]

The possibility that these scenes are depictions of a particular unusual event that took place has been put forward. Waliszewski, in his discussion of the mosaics of the Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79) has pointed out that giraffes, elephants and other exotic animals being led through the streets of cities and through the countryside would, of course, most certainly not have been an everyday part of life in the region and their depiction in contemporary art should not be seen as such.[334] They are, he suggests, reminiscences of an event that took place, such as the appearance of the giraffes and elephant at Gaza in AD 496 mentioned by both Timothy of Gaza and Marcellus. He proposes that in fact this event in Gaza could be taken as a *terminus post quem* for the mosaic of the north aisle of the Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79) in which a pair of giraffes

[331] At the synagogue of Gaza-Maiumas a pavement from a different part of the building shows David (with a Greek name label) and the animals, although this time with a headdress that recalls a Byzantine emperor. See Hachlili, 2009: 72-3, for a description.
[332] At the fifth century church of Huarte in Syria, for example. See Canivet, M-T and Canivet, P, 1974: 49-70 for a discussion.
[333] As on the pavement of a sixth century chapel at Jerusalem where the figure of Orpheus holds a lyre and is surrounded by animals, including a mongoose and a snake.
[334] Waliszewski, 2001: 240.

appears. The events of AD 496 and their subsequent appearance in the written sources has been a point of departure for scholars looking at 'foreign' animals on the mosaic pavements of Palaestina and Arabia. Whilst I would agree that the importation and transportation of rare wild animals would certainly have been a rare occurrence in the Levant, I think it unlikely that the one particular event at Gaza was the cause of all subsequent images of these animals appearing on mosaic pavements, particularly in light of the discovery at Edessa (Figs 8 and 9).

Dauphin, in in her remarks concerning the pavement of the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis stated that Africans leading exotic animals may certainly have travelled through Scythopolis in the same way that they travelled through Gaza in AD 496.[335] The appearance of exotic animals and men on the mosaics of an area or town may indicate that they passed through and were possibly sketched by one or more mosaicists who then made use of their sketches. In the case of the pavements in and around Gaza, the animals were sketched when they passed through the town in AD 496 and then the mosaicists made use of their sketches over several years. The pavement of the synagogue of Gaza-Maiumas (AD 509, Fig 21) in which two giraffes appear in a vine-scroll pavement, the pavement from Berosaba (Be'er Shema, sixth century) containing the image of a giraffe and the two elephants that appear of the pavement of the synagogue of Maon-Nirim (AD 538) were, she argues, created from these earlier sketches. As I outlined above, we do know that wild animals were also being transported through the provinces to the north during the period (the edict of AD 417, concerning animals moving through Euphrates province).

There are also a number of other pavements that contain images of exotic animals near Gaza: in a church at Abu Barakat (to the south on the coast, attributed to the sixth

[335] Dauphin, 1978: 407-8.

century, See Fig 22) a giraffe and an elephant are contained within a vine-scroll pavement. The pavement of the baptistery at another church at Jabaliyah (CAT:22, p 65) (to the north, dating to AD 549)[336] also shows an elephant and a giraffe (this time as part of a very damaged scene with fruit trees) and in the north aisle at the church of St Christopher at Kissufim (AD 576/8, south of Gaza) an elephant is shown in combat with a giraffe. The number of these pavements, differences in the imagery and the spread in their dates through the sixth century, suggests that more than one event inspired their creation.

The pavements of the church at Kissufim (Fig 6, p 170) contain images of a number of wild animals. As well as the elephant and the giraffe, a griffin is shown in the northern aisle, as are two hunters fighting a leopard and a bear (discussed above in Part 2). Two intercolumnar spaces contain a named man leading a camel laden with goods and two portraits of women, one of which lets golden coins fall from her open palm. It has been suggested that this figure is a personification of the church, by Cohen.[337] I think this image is, in fact, almost certainly a portrait of a donor to the church. The open palm with coins falling from it also shares similarities with the image of Megalopsychia from the Yakto complex of Antioch and also the portrait of Anicia Juliana from the early sixth century *Vienna Dioscurides.* It is clear that the man with his laden camel is also a donor and represented employed in his work. He carries a bunch of fruit (figs or grapes?), that he apparently either grows to sell or deals in. Gatier, associates the appearance of the giraffe and elephant here with the gift of an elephant and giraffe to Justin II from the Macourites in AD 573, a few years previous to the laying of these mosaics.[338] It is also interesting that Kissufim was contained within an Imperial domain, whose military capital was at Birsama.

[336] Humbert, 2000: 125, for a discussion of the dating of this pavement.
[337] Cohen, 1993: 277-82.
[338] Gatier, 2005: 83-4.

As I have pointed out above, the army were often involved in the capture and transport of animals destined for the arena.[339]

As Dauphin has rightly stated, Gaza lay at the junction of many caravan routes and served as an emporium for import and export with direct contacts to Egypt, the wider Mediterranean and the Arabian hinterland, trading in wine, spices, oil and grain (amongst other things).[340] Gaza was also in contact with Aila and the other ports of the Red Sea. Timothy of Gaza's account mentions that the man and the animals had come to Gaza from Aila.[341] It would appear that during the course of the sixth century exotic animals were being imported (probably still in quite limited numbers) from Ethiopia to Aila on the Red Sea and then overland to Gaza before being shipped to Constantinople. This would help to explain why a majority of the depictions of exotic animals have survived from the Levantine provinces and are concentrated in Gaza and the surrounding area. There is much less evidence for Edessa, although perhaps the Imperial officials based in the city may have sponsored games or even arranged for the importation of a number of exotic animals onto Constantinople, commissioning a mosaic to commemorate the event.

Conclusions.

The differences in the depictions of the giraffes from these scenes and in fact the depiction of giraffes on mosaics from across the region have been the cause of some discussion. Giraffes do not appear with great frequency across the Levant, although they are not rare.

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[339] I mentioned the specialist hunters of Legion 1 Minervia. The Edict of AD 417 also mentioned above makes clear the military and official involvement in the transport of animals. The Imperial domain near Gaza and the involvement of the military and officials in the trade of the region would be an interesting subject to explore.

[340] Dauphin, 1978: 408.

[341] Millar, 1998: 119-137, in his discussion of the trade routes and caravan routes in the Roman Near East, outlined the evidence for trade routes from Aila, across Arabia and through Gerasa, Damascus, and Palmyra, into Mesopotamia and also along the Euphrates. The city of Edessa could then be reached via a public highway.

It has previously been pointed out they fall into two distinct categories of images.[342] The first category is those images of giraffes that look accurate, are well proportioned, coloured and anatomically correct (as at Birsama, described above). Most of these accurate and life-like giraffes come from sites that are either in Gaza or are situated relatively close to that city. They include the floor of a synagogue at Maiumas (Fig 21, the port of Gaza),[343] the Church of St Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4), a church at Abu Barakat (Fig 22), the baptistery of the Church at Jabaliyah (CAT:22, p 65)[344] and the church at Kissufim (Fig 6).

The second category consists of images that are not anatomically correct or well modelled and these images are found at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis, the Church of Al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) at Madaba, the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses (CAT:49, p 145) at Madaba and the Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79). These giraffes are shown with the body of a camel and leopard spots (occasionally with horns, as at Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47)). The Greek word for giraffe is composed of two elements, 'camel' and 'leopard', and to an artist who had never actually seen a giraffe; a camel shaped creature with leopard spots might have seemed a reasonable way in which to depict one. Gatier made the suggestion that those images that were anatomically correct were drawn from observation and those of 'camel-leopards' are from areas where the mosaicists had to rely on pattern books circulating in the region and second-hand descriptions.[345] The representations of the 'camel-leopards' do come from Transjordan and the Galilee, whilst the more realistic images are clustered in and around Gaza on the coast.

[342] See Gatier: 2005, particularly pages 81-2.
[343] An inscription at the synagogue mentions that two donors were timber merchants.
[344] See Hachlili, 2009: 264-6, for a discussion of this pavement; others from Gaza and the surrounding area and the question of a Gaza workshop.
[345] Gatier, 2005: 91-2.

The question of whether the unrealistic representations of the giraffes were the result of a pattern circulating in the region may not be as simple as Gatier stated. Zohar argued that the 'camel-leopards' differ significantly even between examples found in the same building.[346] The camel, a familiar sight in the region, may have served as the basic model for a mosaicists, who then reproduced their own visual interpretation. Zohar concluded that there was no standard type or pattern that circulated amongst artists, with each example showing variation and being the result of independent artistic process.[347]

It is perhaps curious that the two representations of giraffes at the church of Petra are of 'camel-leopards'. If the animals travelled from the Red Sea ports such as Aila (which we are told that they did in the written sources) overland to Gaza, then Petra would seem to have been perhaps a natural place to travel through. The pavements at the Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79) not only contain images of giraffes, but also Ostriches and elephants, which would suggest that such animals may have travelled through the area.[348] Although the famous 'Incense Road' from southern Arabia came through Petra before continuing west through Oboda, Elusa and Birsama and onward to Gaza, it may have made more sense for traffic coming from Aila and the Red Sea to avoid a route directly through Petra. The landscape around the city is very rugged and consists of steep cliffs and narrow passes unsuitable for wheeled transportation and particularly for carts containing heavy, aggressive/nervous wild animals.[349] Even attempting to walk an animal such as a giraffe trough such terrain would be extremely difficult and unnecessary. It would have been easier (and probably quicker) to take a route directly west from Aila. Israel Roll suggested

[346] Zohar, 2008: 137. Zohar gives a detailed description of the differences between the representations of giraffes at the Monastery of the Lady Mary, Scythopolis.
[347] Zohar, 2008: 137. Zohar gives a very detailed and convincing argument, using a number of different examples.
[348] Although it may be that they did not travel directly through the city itself, but along the caravan routes that circled it.
[349] See Roll, 2007:122, for a brief description of the accessibility of the routes to and around Petra.

a probable course for traffic from Aila to the Mediterranean coast through the Negev via Mashash, Kuntilla, Nessana, Elusa, to Birsama and then to Gaza.[350] As Gaza was an important trading port where many caravan routes and sea connections converged it is most likely that exotic animals were a more frequent occurrence here than elsewhere. In places such as Mount Nebo, Scythopolis, even Petra and certainly Edessa, these events would undoubtedly have been less frequent.

The images of exotic animals on mosaic pavements in the Levant are clustered in certain areas around Gaza, Scythopolis[351] and Mount Nebo. Exotic animals such as elephants, giraffes, ostriches and zebras[352] are almost exclusively found in these areas, in fact. Almost all of these images also date to the sixth century.[353] These facts, coupled with the literary evidence, certainly suggest that the trade and transport of exotic beasts was taking place in the Levant at this time. The sixth century was one of prosperity and relative stability for the Palestinian provinces and Arabia in particular, in contrast to the political instability of the North African provinces. The trade and importation of exotic animals was perhaps shifting away from transportation up the Nile and then to Rome (as illustrated at Piazza Armerina, for example), towards the importation of such animals through the Red Sea ports such as Alia, overland to Gaza and onwards (to Antioch and Constantinople).

[350] Roll, 2007: 125. Also see Graf, 1995: 241-269, for a discussion of the *Via Nova Traiana* and other roads in southern Arabia.
[351] As well as the examples that I have discussed above, there is a finely modelled image of a Zebra that decorates a fragmentary pavement at the Agora of Scythopolis (c AD 515). See Tsafrir and Foerster, 1997, 85-146, particularly 121-3.
[352] Found at the synagogue of Maiumas and the Old Diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses.
[353] Although it should also be pointed out that many of the Late Antique mosaics found in Palaestina and Arabia date to the sixth century.

Chapter 3

Fish

Fishing scenes and Nilotic imagery

In Part 1, I shall discuss the pavements (all located in the southern provinces) upon which images of fishing appear, most of which have been attributed a sixth century date. This is not a particularly large iconographic category; the number of examples is certainly much smaller than the images of the hunt discussed above and the images of the vintage that I will explore in the following chapter. Although images of fish appear frequently as decorative devices on pavements in many contexts (secular and religious) and are often interspersed with other animals and plants; the images of people catching fish are rarer across the Levantine provinces. I aim to look at these images and the contexts in which they occur and how they differ from the genre images from North Africa that appeared at a slightly earlier date. In the case of the Northern Levantine provinces, no examples have been uncovered dating from after the fourth century. See **Map 4** (Catalogue, p 161) for a map of the sites to be discussed.

In Part 2, I aim to look at the occurrence of Nilotic imagery. Of the ten fishing scenes to be discussed in Part 1, four are Nilotic in nature or are associated with Nilotic or Egyptian rural scenes. It is curious that although Egyptian scenes were popular in different provinces across the Roman world at different periods, they become popular in the Levant exclusively during Late Antiquity. I will look at whether their appearance in the Levant during this period reflects particular ties between the two regions or perhaps a shift in the perception of Egypt at this time. I would like to discover what the occurrence of this particular iconographic category in this region at this particular time can tell us.

Part 1: Fishing scenes

Fishing is, of course, a long practiced and widespread human activity. Seascapes and marine imagery were among the most frequent themes in Roman art and in particular Roman mosaic art. Images of fish and fishing can be found on both floor and wall mosaics from provinces across the Roman world and from the earliest period of the Empire into Late Antiquity (although non-mythological images of fishermen are not, as I have stated, particularly common in the Late Antique Levant). Much of the marine imagery of the earlier Roman period can be found decorating 'watery' contexts such as fountains and particularly baths. The effect could be quite impressive when the imagery was used in conjunction with water (especially moving water, flowing across mosaic paved stairs for example).

The evidence for fishing and associated activities (such as fish salting, production of fish sauce and consumption of fish products, for example) is fairly good in the eastern Mediterranean, although items such as nets, baskets and lines do not survive in large numbers due to their fragility. Many of the better preserved examples were recovered from more protected contexts such as lakes and lagoons rather than the open sea. Fishing weights have also been found away from the Mediterranean coastal areas, for example at Carmel (Israel) a large variety of different types of weights, including lead sinkers in the form of tubes, rings and rectangles have been found.[354] The artistic representations of these items and their use are therefore valuable in bridging the gaps in the physical remains and the written evidence. The detailed floor mosaics of Roman North Africa have been particularly useful (discussed below), in this respect.

[354] See Galili, Rosen and Sharvit, 2002: 182-201, for a complete discussion of the various finds.

The *Halieutica* of Oppian is the most famous and detailed of the Classical sources that discuss fish and fishing.[355] A myriad of different species are mentioned, complete with their various characteristics and in some cases the best way in which to catch them. Columella in his *De Re Rustica* devotes a chapter (Book VIII, chapter XVI) to fish, although (as he states in the introduction), he regards it as far removed from the business of farmers (the activities associated with fish are only included due to their profitable nature).[356] His discussion is confined purely to the breeding and production of fish in artificial pens and ponds for market and the table. He describes the various conditions in which certain fish must be kept and mentions other fish such as the red mullet that do not thrive in captivity. The keeping of fish is described not only as a professional/commercial activity but also an activity from which the head of a household can gain a profit from a fish pond at his country estate. A number of other classical written sources describe the *piscinae* or *vivaria* in which fish were bred, including Pliny, Cicero and Varro although their descriptions often focus on the personal fish-ponds of the wealthy elite.[357]

Evidence for these fish-ponds has been uncovered at a number of sites in the Levantine provinces. Kamash brought together the evidence for these structures from sites across the Roman Near East.[358] The remains of jars/amphorae placed horizontally into the walls of reservoirs or ponds have been discovered in several areas and were almost certainly used in the breeding of fish.[359] This general type of arrangement of ceramic

[355] Believed to have been written approximately during or just previous to the reign of the Emperor Caracalla (AD 211-17). See Mair (1928) for a complete discussion of the various surviving manuscripts, the text and a full translation.
[356] He was writing in the first century AD and had spent time in the military that had included a posting to Syria.
[357] Many of the fish described appear to have been pets. See Toynbee, 1973: 209-15, for a discussion of all of these sources and other Classical references to fish and fish keeping. These written sources are a valuable resource that can help build a picture of breeding, catching and consumption of fish, although some caution should be exercised.
[358] Kamesh, 2010: 80-3.
[359] Kamash, 2010: 81. Although we can't be certain exactly of their function, for example were the jars/recesses to provide the fish with shade? Or perhaps to accommodate more territorial species?

vessels in an artificial body of water has been found across the Roman world.[360] Much of the evidence for fish ponds that have been discovered in the Near East have been found along the Mediterranean coast at sites such as Caesarea,[361] Tel Tanninim[362] and Dor.[363] The evidence for such structures further inland is sparse, although not unknown. At Androna (modern Andarin, east of Apamea, Syria) a very large structure (61m x 61m) that was fed by fresh water with many recesses in its walls has been excavated.[364] The discovery of fish bones (catfish, grey mullet and sea bream) elsewhere at the site would suggest that fish may well have been bred and kept here. Marzano points out that, as this reservoir was most probably also used for irrigation, the optimisation of a precious resource such as water by also keeping fish would have been a sensible one.[365] At Sataf (also inland, 10km west of Jerusalem) a pond with two rows of vessels was fed by a spring (running from Wadi al Sarar at the east of the settlement).[366]

The bones of many different species of fish have been discovered at a range of different sites, both located on the coast and inland. Kroll (2010) included fish bones in her discussion of the animal bones excavated at Byzantine sites. Overall she calculated that the bones of native fresh water species made up the highest percentage of bones found, followed by salt water fish native to the Mediterranean such as sea bream.[367] The remains of fresh water catfish are present not only at inland settlements such as Androna but also at

[360] A number of these examples come from the Italian peninsular, such as the remains from Montverde where ten *dolia* were discovered set into the walls of a pond. See Marzano, 2013: 221.
[361] An arrangement of some sixty jars thought to be sixth century in date. See Gibson, 1991: 41 and Kamash, 2010: 81.
[362] Tel Tanninim is located 5km north of Caesarea. In this case Gaza Amphorae were used. See Stieglitz, 1998: 63-4 and Kamash, 2010: 81.
[363] Dor is approximately 30km south of Haifa. See Raban, 1995: 343.
[364] See Mango, M., 2002: 323-330 and 2009: 73-88 (especially p75).
[365] Marzano, 2013: 210.
[366] See Mango, 2002: 325 and Kamash, 2010: 81.
[367] Kroll, 2010: 98.

coastal cities including Caesarea.[368] Tilapia bones are well represented at a number of sites, such as Caesarea and Esebus (inland, east of the Jordan, Arabia). Tilapias are a native species to the rivers and in the lakes of the Palestinian provinces and the Jordan Valley.[369] Fish were also apparently transported long distances for consumption (either smoked, salted, or in sauce form). The bones of Parrot fish (from the Red Sea) are present not only at Esebus (some 250km from the Red Sea) but also at the Byzantine forts at En Boqeq (on the southern shore of the Dead Sea) and Upper Zohar (in the dessert to the east near modern Arad).[370] These sites were evidently located on the trade routes from the southern ports like Aila. Fish products were also imported from the Mediterranean to these inland forts and in relatively high quantities; at Upper Zohar 46% of the fish bones were those of the Mediterranean Grey Mullet.[371]

Fishing scenes from North Africa.

Marine and fishing scenes had been particularly popular subjects on the mosaic pavements of the North African provinces at a slightly earlier date (during the second and third centuries AD). While many of these North African scenes retained mythological/fantastical elements popular in the earlier Roman period, there was a shift away from mythological subjects and towards genre imagery and more 'realistic' everyday scenes. Dunbabin notes that species of fish were carefully differentiated and the different methods of fishing (net, rod, line, harpoon and pots) were depicted with care, as were the different types of boat.[372] She went on to suggest that the representation of the fruits of the sea and their exploitation by man can be compared with *xenia* designs; the abundance of

[368] Catfish bones have been uncovered during two different excavations in the city, including a complete example. This suggests that at least some of these fish were caught in the local area. See Kroll, 2010: 98.
[369] See Trewavas, 1982:3-13 for a description of the habitats of these fish and their present geographical distribution.
[370] Kroll, 2010: 99. 171 parrot fish bones were excavated at Upper Zohar, of 726 fish bones overall.
[371] Kroll, 2010: 99. These Mullet may have been breed and kept in the local area, but it is more likely that smoked and salted fish were imported from the coast.
[372] Dunbabin, 1978: 125.

fish depicted was regarded as having the power to increase the wealth of the patron of the mosaic.[373] Mazano adds that this accuracy and detail in the depiction of the marine species indicates that both the artists and the patrons were familiar with them. [374] It seems clear at least, that excellent and comprehensive depictions of marine creatures, probably drawn from life (the models at least), were deemed necessary in order to please patrons during this period. This is in direct contrast to the pavements of the Levant, where although the fishing images are ostensibly realistic and a reflection of the contemporary fishing activities, they lack detail and it is certainly difficult to identify particular species or glean any useful information concerning fishing equipment. The accurate detail was apparently not demanded by patrons in the Levant, due either to lack of familiarity with different species and/or it simply being deemed unnecessary to the purpose that the imagery was serving in the iconographical scheme of the pavement.

It is difficult to say whether these depictions in North Africa were a direct indication of the source of the wealth of the patrons of these mosaics (many of them come from baths, fountains and other contexts with a watery association, the traditional 'home' of marine scenes). There are several North African pavements containing scenes in which boats are shown carrying produce (often amphorae) which imply the shipping of goods to other provinces (and therefore the generation of wealth through sea-borne trade and possibly through the trade of products of the sea such as *garum*). Only one pavement contains imagery that explicitly shows commercial activity related to sea-borne trade taking place. A pavement from a tomb at Sousse (Fig 24) depicts a harbour in which bars of lead[375] are being unloaded from a ship and then weighed when they are brought ashore.

[373] Dunbabin, 1978: 126. Dunbabin also mentions the use of fish as *apotropaea*, particularly on thresholds as good luck.
[374] Mazano, 2013: 23.
[375] Dunbabin, 1978: 126 identifies the items as such, although it is difficult to be sure.

This is almost certainly a reflection of the profession of the patron of the tomb; he was evidently a merchant whose products had a wide market, or a ship owner.

It is interesting that by the fourth century some of the more lifelike elements start to decline in popularity. The fishermen of the marine scenes begin to be replaced with the mythological *putti* common in earlier periods across the Roman world. This use of mythological characters in fishing scenes mirrors the use of imagery at Antioch and the other cities of Syria in the fourth century. Although the depiction of activities such as hunting began to be shown in a somewhat more 'lifelike' manner in the Syrian provinces at this time, the marine and fishing scenes remained almost entirely mythological, as I shall discuss briefly below. The fourth century pavements of Piazza Armerina in Sicily also reflect this trend (Fig 25).[376] The scenes from the pavement of the 'big game hunt' that I discuss in Chapter 2, are quite detailed and accurately echo the contemporary world in which they were created in many respects, such as the rendering of the tunics/dress of the human figures and the equipment and methods that they use in their hunting. This is in contrast to the large and impressive fishing scene that decorates the floor of a semi-circular portico (See Fig 25). This scene does not reflect contemporary fishing at all; little winged *putti/Erotes* in boats use nets, baskets and harpoons to catch various varieties of fish whilst an impressive series of palaces frame the shoreline.[377] The use of fishing does not seem to have a particular personal relevance to the patron of the villa in the way that the Great Hunt scene obviously did. Dunbabin categorises the fishing scene as a stock subject

[376] The pavements of Piazza Armerina were, as I have stated previously, the product of a North African workshop.

[377] The execution of this mosaic is similar to a number of fishing pavements from North Africa. The rendering of the sea (with simple straight and wavy lines) in particular is strikingly similar to many North African examples such as the Great Marine scene at Carthage (in which the shore is also framed by architectural representations) and the fishing mosaic of the Maison d'Isguntus at Hippo Regius. Wilson, 1983: 67, also points out that the *putti* fishing in the portico as well as elsewhere at Piazza Armerina have little 'x' and 'v' marked on their foreheads, marks that are found on a number of Carthaginian mosaics.

without any particular relevance.[378] I would qualify this statement. The fishing scene was not supposed to be a reflection of a pastime of the owner of the villa and his social circle. The scene was not created specifically for the patron (it is a 'stock' picture), however, this does not make it meaningless or chosen without reason. At a basic level the scene invokes wealth and abundance and compliments the other pavements of the building (such as the pavement of the Great Hunt), as they have all been chosen to emphasis and celebrate the patron, his wealth, power and taste.

The pavements of the Levant

The Northern provinces: Syria and Phoenicia

The earlier fishing and marine scenes of the Roman period found in the Syrian provinces often had mythological associations (marine deities and fishing *putti,* for instance) and this trend continued into the fourth century. At Shahba-Philippopolis, for example, part of a pavement (probably from a private villa) contains a bust representation of the goddess Tethys placed in a central *emblema* and surrounded by a border containing winged *putti* in boats (See Fig 26). The *putti* catch fish with large nets from waters teeming with sea creatures. Balty has attributed this pavement to the second quarter of the fourth century. [379]

At Antioch, where large numbers of floor mosaics dating from the Early Roman period until at least the late fifth/early sixth centuries have been uncovered, marine scenes were very popular and formed a large part of the general repertory.[380] Seascapes with mythological representations were common, as were *xenia* scenes in the earlier periods (first and second centuries AD). Levi in his discussion of fish in the Antioch floor mosaics,

[378] Dunbabin, 1978: 206.
[379] Balty, 1977: 66-8.
[380] These marine scenes predominated in the usual 'watery' contexts (baths etc.).

[381] states that the abundance of the representations of fish and the naturalism of their portrayal (albeit often in mythological scenes and settings, rather than 'everyday' scenes of the contemporary world) could enable comparison and distinguish between regional differences of representation.[382] This naturalistic rendering of sea creatures did not, however, extend to naturalistic or realistic representation of fishermen engaged in their rural pursuit, as in the pavements of the North African provinces. Any figures engaged in such an activity are inevitably *putti* or *Erotes*.[383] By the Late Antique period large aquatic scenes had all but disappeared from the pavements of the city. As Levi stated, only single fish interspersed with other animals (and plants) in decorative schemes or small panels with two fish alternating with (most often) birds, appear in the later mosaics.[384] Single fish, placed in a scene to simply 'suggest' the sea to viewers, also appear. This is the case across the Northern provinces, and although some scenes of fishermen are found at sites in the southern provinces of Palaestina and Arabia during Late Antiquity, large seascapes and fishing scenes have not been discovered. Single fish interspersed/alternating with other animals/plants or single fish as a representation of the sea are more common. There is one pavement in the North in which a small fishing scene appears, but it forms part of a mythological pavement. At Sarrin (CAT: 1, p 1**)**, Osrhoene, (also discussed as part of the Nilotic imagery below), a small *putto* holding a fishing rod is being chased by a crocodile that has stolen his catch (the fish are in its mouth).

Boats are depicted on a number of mosaics in Syria, but these vessels are usually unmanned and contain produce or goods of some description rather than figures fishing from them. These representations could be interpreted as a general indication of the

[381] Levi, 1947: 596-603.
[382] Levi, 1947: 597.
[383] *Erotes* fish from boats in a panel of Room 1 in the House of Menander, attributed to the late second century, for example.
[384] Levi, 1947: 602.

importance of seaborne trade in the production of wealth, but also function as general representations of plenty and the wish for prosperity. At the Church of Khalde (CAT:12, p 33) south of Beirut, Phoenicia) the main panel of the nave, divided into a grid pattern, contains two representations of boats (the other compartments contain various different animals). These representations can be described as votive in nature (they are unmanned). Next to one of the boats is a fragmentary Greek inscription that has been translated variously as 'the wealth of peace' or 'the boat of peace'.[385]

Single images of fish do appear on the pavements of churches in Syria and Phoenicia, but they are never shown in conjunction with fishermen. At Khalde (CAT:12, p 33), for example, in the grid pattern nave pavement (mentioned above), two fish are among the scattered images of fruit filled baskets and animals. These fish are schematic and it is impossible to tell what species they are. They can be interpreted, in conjunction with these other images, as generally representing the bounty of the natural world and in the context of a church, the bounty given by God. Maguire has stated that people in the early Byzantine period interpreted animal imagery in three possible ways. The first was a literal interpretation (the image was taken at face value); the second was an allegorical interpretation (which made symbols of the elements of nature) and the third was to see these images as having power in and of themselves (as talismans).[386] Images could, therefore, have held different meanings to different people at the same time. The images of fish on church pavements during this period may have been simply a decorative devise to one viewer, as representing plenty to another and as representing Christ/Christianity to someone else or indeed representing all these things at the same time.

[385] Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 362, brings together the different translations and their respective merits. Donceel-Voûte also speculates that the boats together with the inscription could be an indication that the patron of the mosaic was involved in sea commerce and/or was wishing for a safe sea journey.
[386] Maguire, 2007: 60-1.

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia.

Most of the images of fishermen so far discovered are located in the Southern provinces, bar the one mythological image at Sarrin. As stated above, four of the ten examples (to be more fully discussed in Part 2) are part of/associated with Nilotic scenes. Four of the pavements are located in the three Palestinian provinces and six in the province of Arabia. The majority of these mosaics have been attributed to the sixth century. Only three pavements are thought to be of an earlier fifth century date and one (that of the Church of St Stephen, Kastron Mefaa) may be have been produced as late as the eighth century. None of the images of fishing are the focus of a main scene and they are generally to be found in borders or panels peripheral to the main pavements of the buildings in which they are situated. In only three cases are they elements of a large focal pavement: At Esbus (Arabia, Fig 18) the pavement of the nave is divided into panels, one of which contains the fishing image. At the Nile Festival Building of Sepphoris (CAT:21, p 61) Palaestina Secunda) and the Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) (Madaba, Arabia) although the fisherman appear in the main pavements (both of which consist of a single scene) they are only one of a number of images, rather than being of crucial importance to the integrity of the compositions.

Palaestina

Palaestina Prima

The Church at Beth Loya (Fig 27, p 183), thought to be early sixth century in date, is located approximately 5 km south-east of the ancient city of Eleutheropolis and was part of a complex of buildings that apparently functioned as a monastery.[387] The church is decorated with mosaic pavements damaged by iconoclasts and subsequently repaired. It is

[387] Patrich and Tsafrir, 1993: 265.

in two circular panels of the northern and southern aisles that the fishing scenes are found (Fig 27). The panel of the northern aisle contains the representation of a boat with two sails and oars at the stern in which two figures stand. One of the figures has cast a line and caught a fish (one of many swimming under the boat); the other figure is busy with the oars. The panel in the southern aisle also shows two figures. The figure on the left carries a full looking net over his left shoulder and several fish in his right hand whilst the other man carries a large basket of fish. Patrich and Tsafrir have suggested that these two fishermen of the southern aisle may be Disciples converting people to Christianity on the Sea of Galilee.[388] The human figures are well-drawn and are dressed as contemporary fishermen with nets and rods, but they lack the realistic detail of the fishing representations of the North African villa pavements. These figures could certainly be an illusion to the Apostles who were called 'fishers of men' (Matthew 4: 18, Mark 1: 16-17, Luke 5: 1-11).

Palaestina Secunda

Two pavements with fishermen are found at the city of Sepphoris in Galilee. Both of these pavements have been attributed a fifth century date. At the synagogue at Sepphoris (discussed in detail in the zodiac, Chapter 5) the sign of Pisces is shown as a young man holding two fish suspended from string (looking very much as though he has just brought them back from a fishing trip). This is consistent with the style of the entire zodiac composition at Sepphoris, in which human figures accompany the zodiac signs. The other depictions of the sign of Pisces in zodiac designs found in Palaestina are without an accompanying fisherman and shown in the traditional manner of two fish usually swimming in opposite directions. The portrayal of Pisces as a fisherman fits well with the idea of the zodiac as rural/agricultural calendar.

[388] Patrich and Tsafrir, 1993: 269.

The House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61), also at Sepphoris, Palaestina Secunda, contains a number of figural mosaics, the largest of which is a very impressive and detailed Nilotic mosaic.[389] The building is centrally located within the city, east of the *Cardo* and opposite the remains of a public baths. Weiss and Netzer[390] came to the conclusion due to the location of the building, large size and richness of the decoration that it was a public building such as a municipal basilica rather than a large private villa. This conclusion has been generally accepted. The entire surface of the pavement is covered with a single scene (although a complicated and elaborate one). The scene is set very definitely in Egypt, rather than simply being a scene with 'Egyptianising' elements as is the case with a number of other Nilotic pavements from the region. Underneath the full length personifications of Egypt and the River Nile, the waters of the river itself are shown and standing in the flowing water is the figure of a fisherman. The man shown is elderly and wearing only a loincloth. Traditionally a loincloth was the usual dress of fisherman in Roman art and also in the contemporary art of Late Antiquity. The figure carries a rod over his left shoulder and his catch of two fish from a line in his left hand. He points to a spot in the river where a large woven basket has been placed in the water to trap fish/crustaceans.. The fisherman has been introduced as a genre element. The viewers of the pavement would of course be familiar with such a figure and his activities and it would help to set the scene as a whole into a familiar rural landscape. This little fishing vignette also assists in conveying the message of the prosperity of the natural world (and the force or forces responsible for its creation).

[389] Weiss and Talgam, 2002: 60, have concluded that the building and its pavements date to the early fifth century based on the recovery of a number of coin finds. See catalogue entry for more detail.
[390] Weiss and Netzer, 1996: 127.

Palaestina Tertia

The last of the examples in Palaestina comes from the desert city of Petra.[391] The northern aisle consists of rows of vine-scrolls filled with a wide variety of human and animal figures.[392] The southern aisle contains a geometric design of interlaced circles and squares that form panels that are filled with figural representations. A central square panel in each row is filled with a personification or human representation. Among the personifications of the central row are the Four Seasons and a representation of *Okeanos.*[393] The fisherman is located in one of these central square panels (second row, eastern end). He is pictured in a sitting position; holding his rod with one hand, the fish on the hook in his other and wearing a pointed hat and a loincloth.

The sitting position is also used in a number of representations of fishermen from the province of Arabia, such as at the Church of the Martyrs SS. Lot and Procopius, Nebo (CAT:42, p 123) and the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) at Kastron Mefaa, discussed below.[394] The hat is reminiscent of the fisherman at Beth Loya (Fig 27).[395] This image at Petra is not a reflection of the importance of fish in the local diet and economy, although we do have evidence of fishing (and the associated activities) from sites across the region. Many of the other representations in the central panels are personifications and it seems clear that this image of a fisherman was intended to be symbolic. Fishing does, of course, feature in the stories of the Gospels'. It therefore may seem surprising that there

[391] See Waliszewski, 2001: 23

[392] The animals are usually paired with a like animal, one in each outer scroll with an object such as a basket of fruit in the middle separating scroll.

[393] He holds an oar in his right hand. This is similar to the female personification of *Thalassa* in the central panel of the nave of the late sixth Church of the Apostles at Madaba, who also carries an oar. See Dunbabin, 1999: 200, for a brief description. In his left hand he carries a votive boat. See Friedman, 2001: 294-6, for a detailed discussion.

[394] Both of the mosaics mentioned in Arabia with similarities to this representation in Petra are dated securely (by inscription) to the latter half of the sixth century; SS Lot and Procopius to AD 557 and Bishop Sergius to AD 574/89. Waliszewski, 2001: 248, is probably correct in suggesting a date at the later end of the range (AD 500-50) generally proposed for the dating of the Petra mosaics.

[395] The depiction at Nebo also wears a hat, although it has a somewhat rounded rather than pointed shape.

are so few representations of fishermen on the Late Antique pavements of the Levant. It may be this strong association with the Bible that discouraged the use of images of fishermen on floors at this time and they may have been a more widely used image in the decoration of walls.

Arabia

The earliest depiction of a man fishing on a pavement in Arabia during Late Antiquity belongs to a fifth century church at Esbus (Fig 18, p 179) (modern Massuh/Hisban) 10km to the north of Madaba.[396] The pavement has unfortunately suffered from iconoclastic damage. The surviving remains show that the pavement of the nave is divided into two panels surrounded by an acanthus-scroll border. The outline of a fisherman with a rod and a boat with a figure inside (fishing or shipping goods?) remain inside two of the octagons created by a geometric design in the eastern panel. The figural representations have been so damaged that the individual elements filling the panels are difficult to make out.

The Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) at Madaba (sixth century, southeast of Mount Nebo),[397] contains one of the most valuable mosaics of the Late Antique period. The mosaic of the nave is in a very fragmentary condition, but it is clear from what remains that this was once a very large and impressive map of the region. Scholars have come to the conclusion from the study of the remains that it possibly covered an area from Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia to the Nile Delta and from the Mediterranean Sea to the desert.[398] Named cities and villages are shown (with various architectural representations) and rivers and lakes are depicted. Unmanned boats sail the rivers filled with fish and in the Dead Sea two large sailing boats (with sails and a pair of oars at the stern) each contain

[396] See Piccirillo, 1993: 252-3, for a description and discussion.
[397] This pavement has been attributed to the sixth century based on the style of the mosaic and the etymology of the place names shown in the mosaic.
[398] Piccirillo puts forward this idea in his detailed discussions of the pavement in 1989 and 1993.

two figures (damaged by iconoclasts) with full nets. These fishing and boating scenes have been placed in the map to give the viewers a sense of place and a sense that the map is showing a real region. Other small details fill the same purpose, such as the diminutive gazelle that are dotted in the countryside, for example. It has been a long established idea that this map is based directly on the *Onomasticon* by Eusebius.[399] More recently this view has been challenged.[400] As Bowersock has pointed out, less than twenty percent of the sites found on the mosaic can be paralleled in the *Onomasticon*.[401] The Madaba map, in Bowersock's opinion, reflects the contemporary world; the inhabited landscape and its cities, geography and topography.[402] This mosaic is a self-representation of the Christian Near East in the sixth century in which cities saw themselves in relation to other cities.[403] I find this explanation by far the most convincing of those so far put forward.

Relatively close to Madaba, is the village of Nebo where the remains of the Church of the Martyrs SS. Lot and Procopius were uncovered (CAT:42, p 123) (AD 557, Greek dedicatory inscription).[404] Of the five surviving intercolumnar panels in the nave, four of these contain Nilotic imagery including the panel containing the fishing imagery (See Part 2 for a full discussion). This panel contains an illustration of a church with two towers and a flowing river. In the river (presumably meant to be a representation of the River Nile) are two sailing boats one of which is sailed by a man with a load of amphora. The other boat contains a fisherman in a similar pose as the figure of the Petra church mosaic.

The last three pavements are located in the city of Kastron Mefaa approximately 30km southeast of Madaba. At the Church of St. Stephen (CAT:41, p 119), the inner

[399] See particularly Avi-Yonah, 1954.
[400] By Di Segni, 1999: 115-9, who believes the mosaic to be based on commentaries of the scripture and pictorial pilgrim maps. Also by Bowersock, 2006: 25-9.
[401] Bowersock, 2006: 26. He presents a very detailed argument.
[402] Bowersock, 2006: 28.
[403] Bowersock, 2006: 28..
[404] See Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 267 for description of the building, mosaics and translations of the inscriptions.

border of the pavement of the nave contains Nilotic imagery (see Part 2) and the fishing imagery. The fishing scenes here are not realistic in style at all. Little boats containing *putti* fishing with nets fill the spaces between architectural representations of Egyptian cities. These depictions are strongly reminiscent of the mythological representations of the earlier Roman period and are not in any way meant to represent a contemporary rural activity or reflect the activities of the apostles.

The Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) (AD 574 or 589) contains one intercolumnar panel with a representation of a rowing boat containing two fishermen.[405] This scene is somewhat different in composition from the others discussed. The poses of the two figures almost mirror each other: They sit with their backs to each other casting their lines into the sea at opposite ends of the boat (filled with fish) and each line has two fish dangling from their hooks. There are some small differences between the two: the man on the left wears a hat, whilst the other does not. This is evidently, at least on one level, a representation of plenty as the boat is overflowing with caught fish whilst multiple fish bite at the men's hooks. The boat is not a sea going vessel but one more suited to rural inland waterways (and therefore more appropriate to the geographical location of the pavement). This may have been placed on the floor of the church by the patron/local community in the hope that God would bless their activities and abundantly reward their work. It is in the earlier Roman tradition in which *putti* fished in waters teeming with fish: North African scenes in this tradition Dunbabin described as *xenia* designs (see discussion above), in which the abundance of fish depicted was regarded as having the power to increase the wealth of the patron.[406] In this context (a church) the reading of this *xenia* design falls into Maguire's third way in which early Byzantine Christians may have

[405] The oars are located in the middle of the small boat, separating the fishermen who sit at opposite ends of the boat.
[406] Dunbabin, 1978: 126.

interpreted an image,[407] as a power in and of itself, having the power to increase the wealth of the patron and congregation.

The last of the pavements to be discussed is that of the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115) (AD 586), also at Kastron Mefaa. The scenes of two intercolumnar panels of the nave are Nilotic in nature (and discussed in detail in Part 2 below). The north-western panel (heavily damaged) contains images of two boats, one of which carries a man wearing a hat with rod and line. The water is filled with fish and aquatic plants including papyrus, which therefore places the scene on the River Nile in Egypt. The southern panel contains personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise and the fishing scene is a complement to it.[408] The images of the everyday contemporary world (familiar to the viewers) are being used to portray a vision of paradise in understandable terms. It can perhaps be seen as a sacral-idyllic scene.

The personification of a sign of the zodiac at Sepphoris is the only example of a fisherman that decorates the floor of a synagogue. There are also no genre images of fishermen from villa pavements of the period; the only image of is a mythological *putti* in a Nilotic scene at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1). It seems clear that the few images of fishermen that are found on church pavements are primarily symbolic images. No images of fishermen survive in secular contexts or in synagogues in the South (and those that survive in the North are early in date and mythological in character). These images and marine scenes are often realistic in their basic detail, but are far removed from the earlier genre pavements of North Africa which are meticulously detailed.

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[407] Maguire, 2007: 60-1.

[408] Piccirillo, 1993: 243, identifies these figures as the Four Seasons. I think that it more likely that they are personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise as they have no seasonal attributes and water spills from their cornucopias . The imagery of two of the other intercolumnar panels are related to water: a sea monster and the Nilotic fishing scene (the Nile being one of the Rivers of Paradise).

Part 2: Nilotic Imagery

Nilotic scenes (characterised by rural activities and animals/plant-life with an Egyptian character) had a long life in classical and Late Antique art. They were depicted with relative frequency on mosaic pavements, wall paintings, reliefs and the minor arts such as silver ware. During Late Antiquity there was a peak in the popularity of these Nilotic or Egyptianising themes in the decoration of mosaic pavements in the Levant and North Africa. Many of the images of fishing (discussed above) on mosaic pavements of the Levant during this period are from wider Nilotic/Egyptian scenes; the pavements from a villa at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1, Osrhoene); the House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) (Sepphoris), the Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) (Madaba), the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) (Nebo), the Church of St. Stephen (CAT:41, p 119) (Nebo) and the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115) (Kastron Mefaa).

Although opinions have differed as to what particular images are required in a pavement for it to be specifically 'Nilotic', several iconographical elements have been universally identified as being part of the Nilotic repertory. The most striking and identifiable of these elements being: personification/representation of the River Nile, a Nilometer, a fortified building or city with (occasionally without) the Greek inscription 'Alexandria' or 'Egypt', animal combat and sailing boats. More common Nilotic elements include various water plants (such as papyrus, lotus and water lilies) and birds (including herons, ducks and cranes). Fish also commonly appear in Nilotic scenes. Pavements at Halawe (Osrhoene), Quamhane (Syria Secunda), Zahrani (Phoenicia) and Emmaus (Palaestina Secunda) have been identified by several scholars (Balty 1984, Hachlili 1998 and 2009, Versluys 2002) as belonging to the Nilotic group of pavements. These pavements contain only one or possibly two minor elements of the Nilotic repertory, such as ducks or water lilies, rather than a consciously Egyptianising scene.

Only one Nilotic pavement has so far been discovered (dating from any period) in Asia Minor: at the port of Elaeusa Sebaste in Cilicia. This pavement, decorating the floor of a small church, has a few Nilotic elements (lotus, ducks etc.). It is not a full Egyptian/Nilotic landscape and is attributed a fifth century date. The rest of the imagery (such as cattle and leopards) scattered across the pavement, is not specifically Egyptian in nature.[409]

Some twenty-two Late Antique mosaic pavements containing Nilotic imagery have so far been uncovered in the Levant, almost all of which have been attributed fifth and sixth century dates.[410] See **Map 5** (Catalogue, p 162) for the location of these sites. In the north, the pavement at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1, sixth century) comes from the province of Osrhoene. Five pavements come from the Syrian provinces: Ge and the Seasons at Antioch (fifth century, Syria Prima) [411] and the Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Iman (fifth century, See Fig 28), church at Tell Hauwash (AD 516, See Fig 29), church at Soran (CAT:10, p 26) (late fifth century) and the church at Oumnir el-Qubli (sixth century, See Fig 30) all in Syria Secunda. None of these examples from Syria contain a full Nilotic pavement or any of the major elements of the repertory; they contain a wide combination of the minor elements (birds, fish, plants and occasionally boats filled with amphorae) in a manner that was attempting to evoke an Egyptian landscape. Only one example has so far been discovered in Phoenicia Maritima: at Jiyé (fifth/sixth century) where a panel showing

[409] Gough, 1961: 131.
[410] There are only two examples that have not been assigned a fifth or sixth century date; the pavement form the House of Dionysios at Sepphoris (fourth century) and the pavement of the nave at St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa.
[411] This pavement contains a full Nilotic border. There are not, however, any of the more important elements of the Nilotic repertory present. Egyptian aquatic birds and plants are dotted along the length of the border, and a bust personification of Ktisis (foundation) is contained within a medallion in the centre of the main field. See Levi, 1947 and Versluys 2002 for more detailed description.

many of the most important repertory elements (personification of the Nile and a crocodile, for example).[412]

In the southern provinces seven pavements are located in the province of Arabia, two of which are found at Gerasa: at the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101) (AD 531) and the Church of SS. Peter and Paul (CAT:35, p 104) (AD 540). Two pavements are located at Kastron Mefaa: the Church of St. Stephen (CAT:41, p 119) and the Church of Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115). The Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) at Madaba (sixth century); the pavement of the church at Adeitha (CAT:50, p 148) (AD 634) and the pavement of the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) at Nebo (Mukhayyat, sixth century) are the other three examples come from Arabia. The final eight pavements come from the Palestinian provinces: in Palaestina Prima, the villa at Eleutheropolis (CAT:16, p 43) (discussed in Chapter 2, Parts 1and 2) and the churches at Haditha (Fig 31), Umm al-Manabi (See Fig 32)[413] and Zia (Zay al-Gharby) (Fig 33) all of which have been attributed sixth century dates. In Palaestina Secunda, the House of Dionysios (fourth century) (Fig 34) and House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) (discussed above in Part 1) are both at Sepphoris, the House of Kyrios Leontis (CAT:20, p 57) at Scythopolis (fifth century) and the Church of the Multiplying of the Loaves and the Fishes at Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73) fifth century).

Earlier Roman pavements

Nilotic scenes and landscapes had been a popular subject in Roman art from the Republican period. The earliest known mosaic pavement decorated with an Egyptian scene was uncovered at Palestrina in Italy. This pavement has been attributed a date of between

[412] The exact context is unknown, but it seems that it was from a secular context, possibly a private villa. See Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski, 2000: 165-75.

[413] As this mosaic was destroyed, the date is unknown. The approximate date of AD 500-600 has been suggested by Whitehouse, 1979: 141, based on her analysis of the surviving evidence (a drawing completed during the excavations). Very little is known about the context.

120 and 110 BC.[414] The scene is very different in style and appearance to the later Late Antique examples as it is incredibly detailed and naturalistic with a large variety of elements such as temples, boats, hunting scenes and images of other daily activities. This pavement apparently decorated a nymphaeum, cut into the rock from which water seeped and flowed across the mosaic.[415] This pavement was, unfortunately cut into sections and moved from its original location (without a plan of the original being made) sometime between 1624 and 1626.[416] The mosaic underwent a number of restorations and it was not until 1952 that the mosaic was fully restored and a concerted attempt made to identify any additions and historic restoration. It was discovered that considerable alterations had been made to the scene, and as stated, no original plan had been made of the mosaic before removal from its original site in the seventeenth century.[417] After the creation of the Palaestrina mosaic, other mosaics with Egyptian themes began to appear across the Italian peninsular, including the pavement of a triclinium at Casa del Fauno, Pompeii.[418] This scene is again characterised by its naturalistic presentation of a landscape. The Egyptian flora is quite accurately portrayed, with the various stages of the growth of the lotus shown in detail, for example.

The circumstances behind the appearance of these Nilotic landscapes on the Italian peninsular and their origin are still not entirely clear and have been the subject of some speculation. Meyboom has pointed out that most of the Egyptian animals that appear in the Palestrina mosaic were not imported into Italy until a later date and therefore the mosaicists responsible here and at Casa del Fauno must have had a model.[419] The idea that

[414] Meyboom 1995: 37.
[415] See Versluys, 2002: 54.
[416] See Meyboom, 1995: 3, who gives a full account of the removal and the seventeenth century sources.
[417] Meyboom, 1995: 4.
[418] Dated at approximately 90 BC and often grouped stylistically with the Palestrina mosaic. See Whitehouse, 1979: 4.
[419] Meyboom, 1995: 43.

ancient Egyptian and later Ptolemaic art could have offered inspiration or prototypes for the Roman Nilotic pavements has been explored by a number of scholars. Meyboom detected a strong similarity between ancient Egyptian tomb paintings (in which hunting scenes were often combined with vignettes of daily life) and the mosaic of Palestrina. The upper part of this composition and the later wall-paintings preserved at Pompeii seem also, in his opinion, to reflect an early Hellenistic style found particularly in large Egyptian hunting scenes.[420] The inspiration for the Italian Nilotic scenes would therefore be, in his opinion, rooted in a traditional Egyptian genre of Nilotic landscapes in existence from the Ptolemaic period.[421] It is possible that a prototype for the mosaics in Italy could have originated in Alexandria and the occurrence of Nilotic pavements in Italy was the result of an increase in the artistic (and economic) links between Alexandria and Rome in the late Hellenistic/Republic period. There is, however, really not much evidence to support these ideas. No such paintings have survived in Egypt itself and very few mosaics have been uncovered, of which only three were decorated with Nilotic imagery; one discovered in the Delta (first century BC), the second at Tell Roba (Thmuis, third century AD) and finally a small fragment that came to light in 1934 (no provenance, no date).[422] All the earliest comparable Nilotic scenes are found on the Italian peninsular.

Nilotic imagery continued to decorate mosaic floors throughout the Roman period. They appear in almost all provinces of the Empire (Britain is a notable exception), with a particularly large number being found in Italy. Egyptian scenes were also a popular subject for wall-paintings and decoration in the minor arts (such as bronze vessels, for example). The chronological distribution of these Nilotic pavements is not even through time and the period in which they were popular differed from region to region. Versluys compiled the

[420] Meyboom, 1995: 48.
[421] Meyboom, 1995: 96-107.
[422] Versluys, 2002: 197-200, for a round-up of the available information.

dates and locations of many examples (both mosaic and wall-paintings) from the second century BC to the sixth century AD and there are some clear patterns in the chronological and geographical distribution.[423]

In Italy the Nilotic scenes had a long period of popularity from the second century BC to the fourth century AD, with the height of popularity in the first and second centuries AD.[424] These landscapes with the images of daily life, temples, wildlife and vegetation have been described by a number of scholars as 'sacral-idyllic'.[425] Many of the earlier examples (in mosaic and painting) from Italy are in this style and even those of a slightly later date (such as the third century mosaic from St. Sabina, Rome) show many activities taking place on the Nile in a panorama. One group of later Italian pavements do differ quite considerably. A group of black and white mosaics from Rome (with some other examples from outside the city) attributed second and third century dates, are less naturalistic in style and the focus is less concerned by the geographical setting and more with activities of the human (dwarves/pygmies) figures.[426]

Nilotic scenes appear in the western provinces throughout the Roman and late Roman periods, being most common between the first and fourth centuries. Many of the earlier examples in the west come from Gaul and are similar to those of Italy: Egyptian geographical setting with genre activities taking place.[427] The theme appears at a later date in the Spanish provinces, mainly in the third and fourth centuries. These pavements are somewhat different to the landscapes of Italy and Gaul; they are less detailed and the

[423] See Versluys, 2002.
[424] The subject matter is particularly favoured in the wall-painting of Campania, although as Versluys, 2002: 289, has stated, the preservation of Pompeii is something of a distorting factor. It is difficult to say whether the relatively large numbers of Egyptianising wall-paintings found at Pompeii were indicative of the widespread popularity of the subject on the Italian peninsular or a more localised phenomenon.
[425] See Peters, 1963: 9.
[426] An example of this group was discovered near St. Stefano Rotunda, Rome and has been attributed a third century date. See Versluys, 2002: 59-60, for description and brief discussion.
[427] See Leclant, 1984: 440, for description and discussion.

imagery is often placed on a plain background, with images of people interspersed with Egyptian plants and animals rather than forming coherent landscapes. These Spanish pavements are closer in appearance to the Late Antique examples of the Levantine provinces.

Pavements of North Africa.

The chronological distribution of pavements containing Nilotic/Egyptian imagery from North Africa differs to that of both Italy and the western provinces. The imagery does not occur in the North African provinces until the first century AD, hitting a peak in popularity in the third century. Many of these mosaics are quite detailed and 'busy'. The pavement from a villa at El Alia (Africa Proconsularis, second century AD) has a wide range of imagery; Nilotic landscapes, reed huts, hunting scenes, plant and animal life are all shown. There is no real formal separation between the scenes, as the images are all placed on a continuous plain background. The same type of detailed landscapes is depicted at Leptis Magna, where Nilotic mosaics and wall-paintings decorated the public baths (the hunting baths, late second/early third century).[428] Mosaics from Thysdrus (El Djem), Hadrumetum (Sousse),[429] Zilten (Fig 5) and Uadi ez Zgaia[430] are simpler in style and execution with the images of wildlife, plants and hunting figures scattered across plain backgrounds, more in the manner of the Spanish examples.

A small cluster of Nilotic/Egyptian pavements located in the province of Cyrenaica can be dated to Late Antiquity. At Qasr-el-Lebia a Nilotic panel surrounded by an elaborate frame is located on the floor of a chapel in a church (a Greek inscription in the

[428] The Egyptian wall-paintings of the baths are divided into three registers and probably extended across all four walls. Foucher, 1965: 142, gives a detailed description.
[429] Both from private houses in Africa Proconsularis.
[430] The mosaic at Zilten decorates a floor of a villa and the pavement at Uadi ez Zgaia is located in a public baths. Both these pavements are located in Arica Tripolitania. See Foucher, 1965: 141 and Versluys, 2002: 190-2. All four of these pavements have been dated to between 200-400 AD.

mosaic of the nave contains the date of AD 539, See Fig 35).[431] The panel contains images of a crocodile attacking a cow drinking from a river as a human figure tries to save it by clinging to its tail. Other imagery includes a boat in which two men hunt and fish and various types of Egyptian flora (such as lotus) and fauna (such as ducks and fish). Other pavements in the church also contain Nilotic elements including lotus flowers, aquatic birds and a representation of the Pharos of Alexandria.[432] Several other personifications appear on this pavement. Ktisis is depicted, although instead of the measuring rod carried in earlier Roman art and the examples from Syria, she carries a wreath. When depicted in secular contexts Ktisis is still the classical personification of foundation (building), but this same personification in this Christian church, without her usual measuring rod would appear to symbolise a slightly different aspect of foundation. Maguire has suggested that here she embodies the concept of earthly creation (as part of a wider Nilotic scheme symbolising the whole of God's creation).[433]

Two pavements containing Nilotic imagery are included in the decorative scheme of the cathedral of Cyrene (also attributed to the mid-sixth century); one located in the north aisle and the other in the south east chapel.[434] In the aisle a crocodile attacks a cow, human figures fish from a boat and birds and lotus flowers are dotted across the panel. The use of imagery is very similar to that used at Qasr-el-Lebia. In the south east chapel a crocodile attacking a cow is again shown, this time a human figure holds the cow by its tail, as at Qasr-el-Lebia (lotus flowers and fish are again dotted throughout the scene). These scenes in Cyrenaica are similar to those that decorate borders and intercolumnar spaces of pavements in the Levant. It is also interesting that at Qasr-el-Lebia the Pharos, a

[431] See Alfoldi-Rosenbaum, 1971: 149, for description of the pavement and inscription.
[432] Alfoldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 1980: 47, discuss these images in detail..
[433] Maguire, 2012, 30-3.
[434] See Alfoldi-Rosenbaum, 1971: 149.

very prominent monument of the city of Alexandria is depicted. Many of the pavements of the Levant also refer (in images or inscriptions) to Alexandria.

Other Late Antique examples.

Very few examples of this subject appear outside my study area (with the exception of the North African cluster). Only one other pavement has been attributed a Late Antique date, a fragmentary pavement uncovered at Thebes, Greece. Images of papyrus, fish, ducks and large water birds are shown, as are a number of local fish and sea animals. Part of a figure holding a hydria has been preserved, including an associated inscription which may refer to a nearby water source (the figure possibly being a personification of that water source). Part of another inscription has survived, which has been argued by Versluys to read *Neilos* and therefore the label for a personification of the Nile that has not survived.[435] This pavement is similar to that of Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73) (Palaestina Secunda, mentioned below) in a number of ways; the images are scattered across the surface of the mosaic (although instead of a plain ground, undulating lines cover the pavement to indicate water) and there is also a mix of Nilotic and local elements shown, as at Heptapegon.

The Late Antique pavements of the Levant.

Rather than discuss each pavement individually in succession it would be more useful to discuss each of the Nilotic elements in turn and their significance, before drawing my conclusions. I have also compiled a table of the pavements which shows where and when each Nilotic iconographical element appears, for easy reference.[436] Please see the next page.

[435] See Versluys, 2002: 222-3.

[436] This is by far the easiest way to arrange the evidence for this subject so that the discussion is coherent; see Balty, 1984 and Hachlili, 2009. This was also the way in which I chose to arrange my MPhil thesis on the present subject.

Nilotic Imagery on Late Antique pavements in the Levant.

Date (AD)	Context	Location	Nile Personification	Nilometer	Building	Animal Combat	Boat	Plants/Fish/Birds
		Osrhoene:						
500-600	Villa	Sarrin	X	X	X			X
		Syria Prima:						
450-75	Villa	Antioch, Ge and Seasons						X
		Syria Secunda:						
412/16	Church	Hama					X	X
442	Church	Tayibat al-Iman						X
516	Church	Tell Hauwash						X
500-600	Church	Soran					X	X
400-600	Church	Oumnir el-Qubli					X	X
		Phoenicia Maritima:						
400-600	?	Jiyé	X				X	X
		Arabia:						
531	Church	St John the Baptist, Gerasa			X			X
540	Church	SS.Peter&Paul, Gerasa			X			
550-600	Church	St Stephen, Kastron Mefaa			X		X	X
586	Church	Priest Wa'il, Kastron Mefaa	X?		X			X
500-600	Church	Church of the Map, Madaba			X		X	X
500-600	Church	SS.Lot&Procopius, Nebo					X	X
634	Church	Adeitha			X			X
		Palaestina Prima						
400-500	Villa	Eleutheropolis						X
500-600	Church	Haditha			X	X	X	X
500-600	Church?	Umm al-Manabi	X	X	X		X	X
500-600	Church	Zia			X		X	X
		Palaestina Seconda						
300-400	Villa	House of Dionysos, Sepphoris						X
500-600	Public	House of Nile Festival, Sepphoris	X	X	X	X		X
400-500	Jewish	House Kyrios Leontis, Scythopolis	X	X	X	X	X	X
400-500	Church	Heptapegon		X	X			X

Personification of the Nile.

A personification of the River Nile appears on five of the Levantine Nilotic pavements (see table). There may also be an example at the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115) at Kastron Mefaa; as mentioned in Part 1, one of the panels of the nave contains four female personifications, possibly of the Four Rivers of Paradise. These figures carry cornucopias overflowing with water. In all of the other examples the figure of the Nile is male, bearded and stripped to the waist. At Sarrin, Umm al-Manabi (Fig 32)[437] and Sepphoris, the personification reclines on one elbow. The Nile on the Scythopolis pavement is similar, although Hachlili believes that it is subtly different, with a more upright posture (and is therefore seated).[438] The figure does lean one elbow backwards onto a jar overflowing with water (as the figure at Sepphoris does). It is interesting that the images of the Nile from Phoenicia and Sarrin are strikingly similar in certain details. Both reclining figures are being pulled on a wheeled carriage/chariot drawn by two animals and have little human helpers.[439] The execution and arrangement[440] of the imagery at Jiyé is not as fine as at Sarrin and more reminiscent of the sixth century church pavements from Syria in style.[441] The imagery nevertheless appears to have a common origin.[442]

[437] Only a sketch made in 1949 and written descriptions of this pavement now survives. The pavement was unfortunately destroyed in the process of removal. See Hermann, 1962, Whitehouse, 1979 and Piccirillo, 1993 for discussions.
[438] Hachlili, 1998: 109.
[439] Hachlili, 2009: 100 suggests hippopotami in the pavement from Sarrin. This may well be the case, although the animals are not well draw and look rather 'bear' like in certain details. The animals at Jiyé are exactly the same in appearance to those at Sarrin and it is clear that the same species of animal is being depicted on both pavements.
[440] The imagery at Sarrin is contained within a border; whist the imagery at Jiyé decorates a full panel in the middle of a large floor composition.
[441] The draughtsmanship of the surrounding flora and fauna is also very similar to the other Nilotic pavements of the Northern provinces.
[442] The Nilotic border of a third century Dionysian pavement from a villa at Sepphoris also bears a strong resemblance to the pavement of Sarrin, in particular. Small human figures are pulling a rope/garland through an Egyptian landscape in a very similar manner to the Nile being pulled at Sarrin. See Versluys, 2002, 232-3 and Dunbabin, 1999: 188-9 for descriptions of this mosaic.

Personifications of rivers had been popular and widespread in classical Roman and even earlier Greek art, particularly in the form of a reclining figure. Reclining river personifications appear on coins, in paintings, sculpture and relief throughout the Roman era, for example; a first century AD terracotta relief (now at the Museo Nazionale delle Terme, Rome) shows the Nile leaning on an overturned jar that overflows with water.[443] This element is replicated at both Sepphoris and Scythopolis.

It could be that some of the meanings and functions associated with river personifications in the Roman period continued to have relevance into Late Antiquity. Ostrowski has outlined three major functions that river personifications fulfilled in Roman art: The first function was as a mythological link by marking the location of a particular myth and ornamenting and complimenting a composition; the second function is of religious and cultic significance (in which role the personified Nile played a leading part) and the third is as political propaganda. The idea that the personification served the function (not necessarily its only function) of marking geographical location is of course very plausible. The presence of the personified Nile certainly helps to make clear the Egyptian context of the scene. The idea that these Late Antique examples had religious significance, in that they were images of a god that was worshipped and venerated by the people that commissioned and viewed the pavements is, I feel, less likely. The pavement at Scythopolis, for example, is certainly from a Jewish context and an inscription from the same pavement is a prayer to the Jewish God.[444] The pavement from the House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) may be the only exception.[445] The idea that the images had a

[443] See Ostrowski, 1991: 30, for a description of Nile personifications.
[444] The building was not itself a synagogue, although it adjoined one. See the publication of the excavator, Zori, 1966.
[445] This large and detailed pavement decorated a room in what was almost certainly a public building. Depressions (channels) and also drainpipes in the pavement have led some scholars to suggest that water was poured over the mosaic at certain times (during festivities, for example), see Netzer and Weiss, 1992, 1994 and 1996. It could be that this pavement is not strictly portraying a pagan religious festival that was

propaganda function is interesting, although I don't think it works for the group of pavements as a whole. The pavements come from a range of different contexts, none of which are temples or secular public buildings (possible exception being Sepphoris). The images may have served the function of economic propaganda: the personification of the Nile serving as a symbol of the economic prosperity of Egypt during this period and economic prosperity brought to these areas by links with Egypt, although I don't believe that 'propaganda' would be exactly the right term (perhaps, promotion?).

The Nilometer.

Nilometers (the device with which the heights of the Nile flood was measured) are present on all the pavements that contain a personification of the Nile, (except at Jiyé) (see table). A Nilometer also appears at Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73). Although these five images share basic similarities, there are also some significant differences between them. The general shape and form of the Nilometers is basically the same; narrow, tall structures upon which Greek numerals are inscribed at different heights. The Nilometers of the pavements at Sepphoris (CAT:21, p 61) and Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73) are the most similar in appearance as they are both quite rounded, giving the impression of being cylindrical and topped by conical roofs. Both the Nilometers from Scythopolis and Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1**)** are more schematic, being flat in appearance and less detailed. It is impossible to say exactly what the Nilometer at Umm al-Manabi looked like, although the remaining drawing shows a Nilometer in the form of a column, complete with ornamental capital. The ranges of numerals that appear are different in each case. At Scythopolis numerals from eleven to sixteen are marked; at Sepphoris fifteen to seventeen appears, at Sarrin only seventeen and eighteen, while at Umm al-Manabi (apparently) values from eleven to eighteen were

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still being celebrated in the building, rather the imagery was being used to invoke prosperity and a good harvest in a more general sense. The building was certainly not a temple, church or synagogue and the use/appropriation of classical pagan imagery therefore less likely to be frowned upon.

shown (Fig 32). The values of the numbers are much lower at Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), running from six to ten.

Nilometers had a long history in Egypt. They were connected to the River Nile and it was therefore possible to read the water level and see the progress of the annual inundation.[446] They normally consisted of a square or round well into which it was possible to descend via steps to record the level of the water and were often connected to temples, for example; the remains of a Nilometer was discovered at the Serapeion at Alexandria. Empereur has suggested that the Nilometer depicted at Sepphoris could be a representation of this Nilometer at the Serapeion.[447] Other monuments from the city of Alexandria are depicted in this mosaic, although it is unclear whether the Nilometer itself was meant to represent an actual monument. The Nilometer has no particularly distinctive features and it is not shown near or connected to any other architectural features representing the Serapeion.[448]

The flood of the Nile was a vital event that ensured the prosperity of the inhabitants of Egypt, and to a certain extent contributed to the prosperity of the Empire (as Egypt was an important source of grain). The height of the floodwaters had to reach a certain level before a good harvest could be expected; apparently a height of sixteen cubits was the best water level to achieve this.[449] On the Nilometers of the pavements (Scythopolis, Sepphoris, Umm al-Manabi and Sarrin) the numbers go up to sixteen and just beyond. Only at Heptapegon (where the highest number is ten) is this height not reached. At Sarrin and Sepphoris these Nilometers form part of scenes containing images of festivities; perhaps such agricultural festivals were still held in Late Antiquity. The Nilometers might have

[446] Versluys, 2002: 271 discusses this in detail.
[447] Empereur, 1998: 99.
[448] Weiss and Talgam, 2002: 68, are also not convinced that this is a representation of the Serapeion Nilometer.
[449] See Meyboom, 1995: 72.

been additions to the pavements to represent the wish of the patrons/community for a good crop: a general symbol of a good harvest. This image appears in a full range of different contexts (two churches, villa, possible public building and Jewish building), and rather than a specific symbolic meaning in each context it seems more likely that this was a general symbol of prosperity.

Walled cities and architectural representations.

Representations of cities and walled buildings are present on many of the pavements (see table, above). At Zia (Fig 33) and SS. Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) the architectural features look more like small church buildings rather than walled cities. In an intercolumnar panel at the Church of the Priest Wa'il (CAT:39, p 115), the Four Rivers of Paradise are represented as are four buildings. These buildings have the characteristics of churches (including curtains across their doorways), although it is possible these church representations were each meant to symbolise a city (or perhaps a cathedral).

In five of the pavements; at Scythopolis. Sepphoris, Gerasa, Madaba and St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa, a walled city (in the form of a fortified gate or building) appears with the Greek inscription 'Alexandria'. At Umm al-Manabi (Fig 32) there is also a Greek inscription next to the image of a walled city, this time reading, 'Egypt'. At Sarrin the city has been identified by Balty as a representation of Alexandria, although it is not labelled as such.[450] At Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), Haditha (Fig 31) and Adeitha (CAT:50, p 148), the walled cities are not identified by inscriptions and do not display any characteristics that could identify them as a particular city.

Images of walled cities and other architectural representations were popular in art across the Empire during Late Antiquity and indeed occur frequently in earlier Roman and

[450] Balty, 1990: 67.

Hellenistic art. The cities of this group of pavements are all relatively similar in appearance (although there are certain differences); having fortified gateways, flat perspective and a schematic design. At Umm al-Manabi; Adeitha (CAT:50, p 148), Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), the House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) at Sepphoris and at Madaba, the cities are shown as fortified gates with two towers. As Bandmann pointed out in 1951, the use of the image of a two towered gate to represent an entire city on coins, seals, *bulle* and manuscripts was known from the earlier Roman period through to the early medieval period in the West.[451] In Late Antique mosaics of the eastern provinces the two towered structure is also shown to represent a town or a city and there are many examples of this type of representation on the pavement of the Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) at Madaba as mentioned above.[452] Bandmann argued that even in the earlier Roman period this image had taken on a deeper meaning than that of a mere abbreviated representation of a city: It had become a type in which Rome and Roman *Imperium* were represented and depicted as a source of salvation. [453] I take this to mean that these two-towered schematic representations came to represent Roman Imperial power and civilisation and its protection against chaos and barbarism.

Hachlili suggests that the basic images of cities were included in pattern books with certain characteristics/landmarks that could be added to give the representation an identity.[454] The conventional models used in these Nilotic scenes are very simple and, as discussed above, had long been in use. All the representations labelled as Alexandria differ quite significantly from one another and it would seem to me that when it was necessary to 'identify' a city, the characteristics added were the responsibility of the artist rather than

[451] In *Mittelalterliche Architectktus als Bedeutungstäger*. An English edition, 'Early Medieval Architecture: As bearer of meaning', was published in 2005 and will be referenced in future.
[452] López Monteagudo, 1999: 256-58, gives a detailed analysis of the appearance of this motif on the Madaba Map.
[453] Bandmann, 2005: 90.
[454] See Hachlili, 1998: 115.

the result of a pattern book. Biebel, in his discussion of the mosaics of the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101) at Gerasa, concluded that the images of walled cities were based in Roman landscape tradition, introduced into the scene to add beauty and not to indicate geographical location as they were not very accurate or detailed.[455] Picirrillo reached much the same conclusion, arguing that the use of architectural representation was simply another revival of classical tradition, popular in Late Antiquity and adopted solely for their decorative value.[456] Hunt has pointed out that *Oriens* in Late Antiquity was prospering with a growth in both trade and pilgrimage bringing the expansion of cities and villages. These architectural representations, Hunt argues, can be seen to represent a prayer for the continuation of prosperity.[457]

It is possible that the images of walled cities and fortified buildings were simply landscape 'dressing', however, there was a real wish to indicate geographical location with these images, most often Alexandria or at least a great Egyptian city. The images could have functioned as symbols of what Alexandria and Egypt meant to the people who commissioned and viewed them. These walled cities also functioned as symbols of civilisation and perhaps can be seen as unifying images and symbols of Roman Imperial power.

Animal Combat.

Scenes of animals in combat with another animal are found on three pavements. At both the House of Dionysios (Fig 34) and the border at Sarrin (CAT:1, p1) there is combat between crocodiles and human figures rather than between animals and at Zia a crocodile is swimming under a boat (Fig 33) (but not engaging with any other figures). At both

[455] Biebel, 1938: 351.
[456] Piccirillo, 1993: 34.
[457] See Hunt, 1994: 110.

Haditha and Scythopolis the animal being attacked is a cow/bull. The animals attacking the cow has been lost at Haditha (Fig 31), however, next to the cow is a human figure waving a stick and attempting to rescue his animal. The scene is very similar therefore to the roughly contemporary scene from the church at Qasr-el-Lebia in Cyrenaica discussed above and also the image from the north aisle of the Cathedral at Cyrene. I think it is more than likely that the attacking animal at Haditha (Fig 31) is a crocodile as at Qasr el-Lebia (Fig 35). The image is also damaged at Scythopolis (CAT:20, p 57), although enough remains to be fairly certain that it was also a crocodile. The pavement at the House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) contains a number of scenes of animal combat one of which is a fight between a crocodile and another animal (damaged).

The crocodile was associated with the evil god Seth in Egyptian mythology and had come to symbolise evil.[458] In a Christian context the crocodile might have symbolised the power of Satan; animal combat involving a crocodile would therefore symbolise the struggle between good and evil. Only one of these pavements came from a Christian context, that from the church at Haditha (the pavement at Zia in which a crocodile is swimming is also from a church). The scene could, in any religious context, symbolise the struggle between good and evil and would have also been relevant in a public building: symbolising the struggle between the state and chaos (of whatever origin).

The image of a crocodile in combat with another animal has a long history in classical art. It may have originated from a design by the Greek painter called Nealkes, who apparently worked at the time of Ptolemy III and was described by Pliny the Elder in the first century AD.[459] The animal being attacked in this prototype was a donkey and Pliny makes clear that the presence of this scene (crocodile in combat) alone could be

[458] Velde, 1967: 7-13 and 91-4.
[459] Pliny, *Natural History*, Vol 35, 142. See Rackham and Jones (eds), 2012.

taken as an indication of the locality: the Nile.[460] The Romans viewed the crocodile as a symbol of Egypt, epitomising the exotic and savage nature of the country and the presence of these scenes served as another geographical indicator.

Boats, birds, fish and plants.

Sailing boats, fish and aquatic birds and plants are the most popular of the Nilotic motifs; all the pavements contain several motifs in these categories. This popularity may be due in part to the more general nature of these images as they can be used in scenes of differing contexts and are particularly suited to the decoration of borders.

Sailing boats were popular and were included in the decoration of approximately half of the Nilotic pavements. Men are depicted fishing from these boats (as at Kastron Mefaa, discussed in detail in Part 1) or the boats are sometimes shown unmanned, as at Madaba and possibly Umm al-Manabi. The boats are most often shown with a crew and cargo of amphorae or jars, as at Scythopolis, Haditha, the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius at Nebo, Hama, Tell Hauwash (Fig 29) and Qumnir el-Qubli. The presence of these boats may reflect the tradition of the Nile as a highway along which goods were transported. The images of boats laden with amphorae could have also had a more practical and relevant meaning to those who paid for and viewed them: the representation of contemporary trading links with Egypt.

A number of different Egyptian plants appear on the mosaics and the most often occurring are lotus and papyrus (the lotus being by far the most popular). During the annual flood of the Nile the lotus would bloom in large quantities, dying back when the waters receded. The lotus was therefore strongly associated with the gods connected with the flood during the Roman era (such as Isis) and their representations are often shown

[460] See Alfoldi-Rosenbaum, 1971: 151, for a detailed discussion of the origins of this scene.

holding the flower.[461] It is worthy of note that in many cases the Indian, rather than the native Egyptian lotus, is shown (as at Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), for example). The Indian lotus had been introduced into Egypt by the Persians but may have died out there some time before these pavements were produced.[462] Whitehouse argues that the form of the Indian lotus in Roman art had gradually been debased through time, becoming less botanically correct. She argues that there was a reappearance of a more correct version in these Levantine pavements as the results of direct and strong contact and influence from Egypt.[463] The lotus plants on the pavements of the Levant are not, however, very accurately drawn. At Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), for example, the lotus flowers are shown in some cases growing with long stems above the water, which, as Schneider rightly pointed out, the species does not do in reality.[464] As the Indian lotus had become extinct in Egypt, why would a 'more accurate' depiction of it appear on these pavements in the event of stronger connections between the regions? It could simply be that these connections inspired the reuse of old models, and as these flowers were not drawn from life the artist would have had to rely more on their imagination.

Fish and particularly birds are also very common elements of the Nilotic repertory, present on almost all pavements. The inclusion of fish makes the scenes feel more 'full' and perhaps that was part of the purpose: to emphasise the abundance and life brought by the Nile. A number of the species of birds are identifiable; cranes, herons, cormorants, ibis, swans, flamingos and the species most often represented, ducks. These birds were not necessarily confined to Egypt but were often associated with the country in popular imagination and they were a simple way in which prosperity and abundance could be conveyed.

[461] Versluys, 2002: 263 , looks in great detail at the meaning of the Egyptian flora and fauna.
[462] Schneider, 1937: 59, states this in his discussion of the mosaics of the church at Heptapegon.
[463] See Whitehouse, 1979: 11.
[464] Schneider, 1937: 59.

The significance of the Nile on the pavements of the Levant.

The exact significance of the Nilotic imagery has been the subject of a great deal of debate. Both general/simple explanations and extremely complex and specific arguments have been put forward for the group of pavements as a whole or for individual pavements and those in certain contexts (Christian contexts, for example). Many of the Nilotic pavements come from Christian contexts (churches) and only six of them do not.

A number of interpretations have been considered for pavements from a Christian context and these interpretations have in turn raised some interesting questions. Biebel suggested that the Egyptian elements in the decoration of St. John the Baptist could reflect a general alignment of the congregation with a religious faction in Egypt.[465] Crowfoot later identified one of the architectural images in this landscape at St. John the Baptist as being the shrine of SS. Cyrus and John at Menuthis (a major pilgrimage site in Egypt).[466] Apparently Cyril of Alexandria and his Monophysite followers worshipped at this shrine. The appearance of this image at a church in Palestine may be a sign of links between religious communities in the two regions (as suggested by Biebel) or perhaps more generally, an indication of the religious sympathies of the patron/patrons of the mosaic. Monophysitism had been repudiated at the fourth ecumenical council at Chaledon in AD 451, however, many people (including members of the clergy) across the eastern provinces (Syria, Palaestina, Arabia, Egypt) continued in their Monophysite beliefs.[467] The clergy of Egypt and in particular of Alexandria were often at the centre of doctrinal and ecclesiastical debate. In the case of the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101) direct links to Egyptian religious communities can perhaps be indicated by the specific

[465] Biebel, 1938: 353.
[466] See Crowfoot, 1947: 129.
[467] Very basically, the Monophysites believed that Christ had only a divine nature, in direct opposition to the Orthodox belief that Christ was both human and divine (called the Hypostatic union). See Barraclough, 1978: 101, for a much more detailed discussion.

Egyptian imagery used, whereas at the other Christian sites the use of the imagery (in particular the references to Alexandria) may indicate the general religious sympathies of the patrons/congregations.

Palestine and the surrounding provinces were obviously a focus for pilgrims and we have plenty of written evidence for their presence and journeys throughout the area. Alexandria was a centre where many pilgrims from the Western Empire would disembark and then continue their journey on into Palestine.[468] There is also evidence that pilgrims travelled from the opposite direction (through Constantinople) and then travelled on through Syria, Palestine and then finally into Egypt.

Two of the most famous accounts are those of the pilgrim Egeria and the Pilgrim of Piacenza (mentioned in Chapter 1). Egeria, whose trip probably took place around AD 380, appears to have spent a great deal of time in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas visiting various sites.[469] She also describes a trip to Egypt, travelling to Clysma on the Red Sea and stopping at a number of other sites including Pelusium (a site represented on the pavement of St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa and at Madaba).[470] Pelusium, the gateway to Egypt for people travelling from the west, was a place where the Holy Family was reputed to have rested during the flight to Egypt.[471] She mentions a previous trip to Egypt and Alexandria and an excursion to Mesopotamia and Osrhoene. The Pilgrim of Piacenza (sixth century) also travelled very widely in the eastern provinces. He visited Scythopolis (mentioning the miracles performed by St John) and he also detailed a visit to the site of the Miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes (Heptapegon?). The Pilgrim of Piacenza

[468] Hunt, 1982: 78.
[469] Wilkinson, 1981: 103.
[470] The pavement of the nave of St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa, contains ten representations of cities from the Nile Delta, including Pelusium. Eight cities from the west of the Jordan and seven to the east are also depicted.
[471] Discussion in Donner, 1992: 82.

describes a trip to Egypt, like Egeria before him, starting at Clysma and travelling up towards the Delta. Antinoe is visited (also represented on the pavement of the Church of St. Stephen), also the shrine of St. Menas at Abu Mena and finally Alexandria.

We do know that the Church of the Multiplying of the Loaves and the Fishes at Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73) was a pilgrimage church.[472] There is no concrete evidence to suggest any of the other churches containing Nilotic imagery had any such connections. We do, as I outlined briefly above, have a good deal of written evidence that demonstrates that pilgrims often travelled through Egypt during their pilgrimages. It is certainly possible that these churches were on routes taken by religious travellers. Kastron Mefaa is close to Mount Nebo, for example, a place of pilgrimage and a religious centre. Alliata suggests that the Church of St. Stephen may even have been a pilgrimage shrine.[473] A focal point of the church appears to be the north chapel which, he argues, may have been built to accommodate the relics of St. Stephen.

At Heptapegon (CAT:24, p 73), Schneider argued that the composition of the mosaic floor was carefully picked out and the pavement was conceived and executed especially for the church that it decorated.[474] The images on the pavement are not all Egyptian and Schneider identified one of the architectural motifs as being native Syrio-Palestinian.[475] The Nilotic repertory was being used and adapted. Schneider does not suggest that the imagery had a particular symbolic value, but argued that it was being used to suit the purposes of the context and the patron/s and congregation. Specific elements such as the Nilometer could have their traditional meaning and associations in this pavement (the coming of the flood and the associated agricultural plenty). The Syrio-

[472] Schneider, 1937: 4, outlines the evidence for this.
[473] See Alliata, 1999: 122.
[474] See Schneider, 1937: 76.
[475] Schneider, 1937: 76-7, looks at these architectural forms in detail and discusses their stylistic origins.

Palestinian elements would set the scene in the local area, rather than Egypt. It may be that the Egyptian imagery was being used to show hoped for economic prosperity and agricultural plenty for the local community.[476]

The pavement of the nave of the Church of the Map (CAT:30, p 89) at Madaba shows the Nile Delta as well as Jerusalem and the surrounding regions and this pavement has therefore been linked to the other pavements of the Nilotic category. The idea that this mosaic map was conceived as a reference for pilgrims, to show them where shrines and important religious sites were located has been raised. Shahid interprets the mosaic as a representation of the history of Christian salvation (hence the prominence given to the city of Jerusalem).[477] If this map did show the areas and sites that were important in the history, foundation and future of Christianity it therefore follows that these sites and regions would have been popular destinations for pilgrims. A number of military posts (that also served as road stations for travellers) are depicted, as are sites that had biblical associations such as Kassin (also known as Kasios). This settlement is also named on the pavement of St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa. Kassin was situated at the edge of the Sirbonic Lake, east of Pelusium (also represented in both mosaics). Other sites that are also present on both mosaics are Thennesos (a commercial town and a seaport on a small island in the *Birkat Manzala*) and probably Kainupolis. Kainupolis is shown on the map and could be identified with Kaenupolis, a settlement on the road from Sinai to Alexandria. At Kastron Mefaa an architectural representation labelled 'Kynopolis' is present that this can possibly be identified as the 'Kainupolis' of the Madaba pavement.[478] A representation of

[476] The pavement here could therefore fit Maguire's explanation of images that have power in and of themselves. See Maguire, 2007: 60-1.
[477] Shahid, 1999: 152.
[478] Alliata, 1999: 122.

Alexandria has not survived on the fragmentary Madaba pavement, but it is generally thought that such a representation existed.[479]

Bowersock's explanation for the meaning of the pavement, that it reflects the contemporary world; the inhabited landscape and its cities, geography and topography and that it was not created to only show biblical sites, is as I stated in Part 1 (above), a persuasive one.[480] Many of the cities and villages that are shown on the pavement are not either biblical in association or connected with pilgrimage. Pelusium and Thennesos were both important commercial centres. Pelusium was situated on the main road along the Mediterranean coast that stretched from Acca to Alexandria and at Pelusium there were also a number of other important roads connecting other areas of Egypt (such as the road leading to Memphis).[481] Pelusium was also famous for the export of flax and beer.[482] The evidence for trading links between Egypt and the Levant are strong throughout the Late Antique period. In Chapter 4 (on the vintage and other cultivation) I outline the evidence for the trade in Levantine wine across the eastern Mediterranean and it is clear from the finds (of pottery sherds, for example) in Egypt that the export of agricultural products was an important aspect of the economy. The Madaba Map was, as Bowersock argues, showing the inhabited world, including biblical, pilgrimage and commercial centres.

The trading links between Egypt and the Levant and particularly between Palestine and Arabia (where the majority of these Nilotic pavements are sited) and Egypt, may have at least inspired the use of the Nilotic imagery during Late Antiquity. Sailing boats carrying amphorae also appear on a number of the pavements (discussed above), for example. A number of aspects of the Nilotic repertory (such as Nilometers, the flood,

[479] Donner, 1992: 14, discusses the possible original extent of the pavement, which could he believes, once have depicted an area stretching from Tyre in Phoenicia to Alexandria in Egypt.
[480] Bowersock, 2006: 28.
[481] Roll, 1999: 111.
[482] Roll, 1999: 111.

fishing, for example) are directly associated with agricultural plenty. Maguire points out that even when Christian writers are disapproving of Egypt, they often list the conventional *topoi* of Nilotic prosperity; the rich earth and fruitful fields, abundance of food and the annual flood that teams with fish.[483]

The Nile was, of course, one of the Rivers of Paradise (the Gehon). Maguire suggests that the Rivers of Paradise can be linked with baptism (immersion in water) or rebirth.[484] The representations of the Nile particularly (with the association with fertility and renewal) may be illustrations of creation and renewal of the life cycle. In his general discussion of the Rivers of Paradise, Maguire states that they were not only symbols of spiritual gifts and blessings, but also providers of material good fortune and benefits.[485] This interpretation, renewal of the life cycle and providers of material good fortune would be suitable, at least as a secondary meaning, across the different contexts (villa, Christian, Jewish).

The depiction of the flood of the Nile and the festivities that surrounded this event (in thanks for the abundance and prosperity) may also have had a more universal appeal. Festivals celebrating the flood of the Nile continued to take place into the fifth and sixth centuries.[486] Textual evidence demonstrates that communities outside Egypt were aware of the festivals associated with the inundation. Certain fifth century Jewish religious texts mention these festivals honouring the Nile. Weiss and Talgam have raised the question of whether the familiarity of the rabbis with these festivals demonstrates the possibility that they were also celebrated in the Near Eastern provinces along with other spring or water

[483] Maguire, 1999: 182.
[484] Maguire, 1999: 179-80, discusses the representations of all four of the Rivers of Paradise.
[485] See Maguire, 1999: 181.
[486] Versluys, 2002: 280-2, for a discussion of the evidence.

festivals.[487] Weiss and Talgam speculate that a similar festival took place at Sepphoris. The pavement of the House of the Nile Festival (CAT:21, p 61) did indeed contain special drainage channels and pipes. The pagan Libanius (writing during the 380s) described the Christians celebrating the Nile festivities and sacrifices due to their desire to see an abundant food supply.[488] The presence of this imagery could indicate an annual celebration of a festival honouring water, the flood of the Nile, or more probably the harvest (an event important to people of all faiths).[489]

The other pavements from secular contexts come from villas. All of the Nilotic scenes decorate borders, except at Jiye (CAT:14, p 38), in Phoenicia. None of these buildings appear to give any indication that these scenes have a mythological religious association (although at Sarrin the iconography appears with a variety of mythological scenes). The fact that the iconography was almost entirely confined to the borders of pavements may also indicate against a detailed symbolic meaning for each pavement. At Jiye (CAT:14, p 38) there is a full Nilotic panel, although unfortunately any associated imagery has not survived. The association of the Nile with wealth and abundance is of course universally applicable.

Roussin has advanced a very specific interpretation for the pavement of the House of Kyrios Leontis (CAT:20, p 57) at Scythopolis, the only pavement from a Jewish context. She argues that the imagery of the pavement is deeply symbolic and the scene of animal combat is the most crucial element. The scene of the cow/bull being attacked by the crocodile is, she believes, a representation of the combat between Leviathan and Behemoth

[487] One text, Song of Songs Rabbah 1.1, even states that a festival in honour of the Nile took place in a theatre. See Weiss and Talgam, 2002: 71, for further discussion.
[488] *Orratio* XXX. 35. Translation Norman, 1977.
[489] Weiss and Talgam, 2002: 71.

that Jewish scriptures state will take place at the end of the world.[490] According to tradition Leviathan is an enormous fish and the ruler of the sea animals, whilst Behemoth is his counterpart on land. The ultimate struggle between these two creatures was (or is) to take place 'on the banks of the great river', which has usually been interpreted to mean on the banks of the Euphrates river. She quotes the Babylonian Talmud which describes how, after this great battle, the beginning of the Messianic era will be celebrated with a banquet at which the righteous will be served the flesh of the two combatants.[491] The panel therefore, proclaims the beginning of the Messianic Era and the reward of the faithful.

I don't think that this interpretation fits the imagery present in this panel. The scene of animal combat is not the main focus of the pavement; the personification of the Nile is the most prominent image. The other images (such as the Nilometer and the representation of Alexandria) simply do not fit into Roussin's interpretation: Can we assume that the viewers of the mosaic would have been able to pick out the element of the composition that was supposed to have this symbolic meaning? According to the religious writings in which this argument is based, the most likely location of this combat is on the banks of the Euphrates, not the Nile. The Nilotic panel is the bottom panel of three that form a larger pavement; the upper most shows the story of Odysseus and the Sirens (perhaps a surprising choice if Roussin is correct in her argument).

The scene of Odysseus and the Sirens is probably the key to understanding the Nilotic pavement here. A Roman sarcophagus (now known only from Renaissance drawings in the Vatican) was covered in a scene apparently showing Odysseus tied to the mask of a ship, to the left of which Mercury places his hand on a man in a shroud whilst

[490] See Roussin, 1981: 7.
[491] Roussin, 1981: 8.

two women gesture in grief.[492] Fragments of sarcophagi showing Odysseus tied to a mask have turned up in private collections over the years, most without provenance but some of which came from the Roman catacombs.[493] Sirens had various associations in the classical world including with the underworld and death.[494] We can perhaps see in the figure of Odysseus a wandering soul on his path towards death. In the centre of this scene an inscription reads:

'*Lord help Leontis Kloubas*'

Underneath, the dedicatory inscription reads:

'.....he paved this ...at his own expense for his own salvation'

The Nilotic scene can therefore be read as a scene of re-birth and renewal after death.

There are many different ways in which to interpret the imagery of the Nile and Egypt as it appears in the Late Antique Levant and I have discussed a number of plausible explanations for each context/pavement above. The appearance of the Nilotic pavements in the Levant during this period may have been inspired to popularity by the strong economic links with Egypt at this time. Each pavements or group of pavements (from a Christian context, for example) may have held a particular specific meaning, while also having a secondary meaning symbolising concepts such as wealth, abundance and renewal.

[492] See Van den Hoek, 2013, 399-400 for description of the drawings.
[493] Van den Hoek, 2013: 399-400.
[494] Van den Hoek, 2013: 383-405 brings together many of the literary sources in her discussion of sarcophagi and pottery.

Chapter 4

Cultivation

The vintage and other cultivation

This chapter is concerned with the images of agricultural cultivation that have so far been discovered on the mosaics of the region. In Part 1 below, I discuss the various images connected to the vintage and, very briefly, the examples of vine-scroll design pavements. There are a large number of the latter in the region and although a majority of these are to be found in Palaestina and Arabia, a number have also been uncovered in the provinces of Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia. Scenes of the vintage are by far the most common of the images of arable cultivation and the occurrence of these images is confined almost entirely to the southern provinces of Palaestina and Arabia, the vast majority of which are attributed a late fifth/early sixth century date. Only four of the pavements to be discussed in this section are located in the northern provinces (Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia); two from secular contexts and two from churches, the dates of which are spread across the Late Antique period (fourth-eighth centuries). This contrasts sharply with the evidence from Palaestina and Arabia where twenty-one pavements containing images of the vintage are located (six in the Palestinian provinces and fifteen in Arabia); all bar two of which have been attributed sixth century dates. In this section I will look at the archaeological and written evidence for viticulture and the production of and trade in wine (and other associated products) across the region. I shall consider what the iconography can tell us about the importance of the vine to the communities across the Levant and whether it supports the archaeological picture. See **Map 6**, (Catalogue, p 163) for a map of the sites discussed with vintage imagery.

Part 2 considers the few examples of images of figures engaged in activities of other arable cultivation that have survived. Seven examples of figures harvesting fruit (one in Palaestina and six in Arabia) have survived. Only one image of olive cultivation and one of wheat are currently known to exist from the assemblage of mosaic pavements so far uncovered in the Levantine provinces and both of these examples are from Arabia. All the examples of arable cultivation discussed in Part 2 are located in Palaestina and Arabia and all of them have either been securely dated by inscription, or attributed a sixth century date. Although agricultural cultivation (excluding the vine) was an extremely important element of the rural activities carried out by the population of the Levant, it accounts for a very small percentage of the repertory. See **Map 7**, (Catalogue p 164), showing the location of pavements showing imagery of other cultivation.

Part 1: The vintage

The vine and its produce were a key part of the economy and the culture of the Roman world. Wine had always had an enormous cultural significance in the classical world and was also a dietary staple. The belief that wine was a daily necessity (a vital source of calories and nutrients), made it in some ways 'democratic': It was the drink of aristocrats, women, peasants and slaves alike.[495] Wine was also considered to have medicinal value, and the classical sources recommended its consumption for the relief of ailments as diverse as depression; memory loss, bloating and urinary problems.[496] The Romans, as the Greeks before them, considered wine to be a staple of domestic life and also a viable trade

[495] Although of course the quality of the wine would vary, depending on the money that one had to spend. The term 'wine' included a rather wide range of grape based drinks. The finest pure white wines were the most expensive. *Posca*, a mixture of water and sour wine, was preferred for the rations of Roman soldiers and was codified in the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, amounting to approximately one metric litre per soldier per day. The lowest quality wine was called *lora*, which was produced by soaking the skins of grapes already pressed twice before pressing for a third time. Varro recommended *lora* for consumption by slaves. See Philips, 2000: 46-57 for a full discussion.

[496] Johnson, 1989: 68-74 rounds up the various sources including Galen (*De Antidotis)* who used a number of different wines in his ministrations.

commodity. Roman wine merchants had established trading links with native peoples across Europe even before the arrival of the Roman military and administration. During the Gallic wars, for example, when Julius Caesar arrived with his troops in Cabyllona (in AD 59), he found two Roman wine merchants already engaged in trading with the local tribes.[497]

It is a testament to the importance of the vine in Roman society that many classical writers mention wine/grape varieties and the 'correct' practices to be used in viticulture, indeed the oldest surviving work of Latin prose of any length is *De Agri Cultura*, by Cato the Elder. This work includes advice on the management of the vineyard and the optimal time to harvest the grapes. Columella, in *De Re Rustica*, also discusses the more technical aspects of viticulture (best soil types and the laying of vineyards, for example) in Books III and IV, and he goes on to consider the production of wine in Book XII. Not only does Pliny the Elder give serious advice on all aspects of the vineyard and wine (Book XIV deals almost exclusively with wine) but he is responsible for what is almost certainly one of the most famous of Latin quotations:

"*In vino veritas*" [498]

There is ample archaeological evidence that the vine and most particularly wine were major concerns in arable production during Late Antiquity in *Oriens*. Michael Decker concluded that (based on André Tchernia's calculation that an adult Roman male would consume approximately one litre of wine per day and a woman half that) the level of consumption of the 150,000 inhabitants of the city of Antioch would have been about

[497] Johnson, 1989: 82-89. The discovery of large wine craters in unconquered areas of Europe, in which to mix wine with water and drink in the Roman fashion, has been considered by some scholars as a key indicator of 'Romanisation' and Roman influence within that particular area.
[498] Pliny, Natural History, Book XIV, line 141.

15,000,000 litres of wine per year.[499] He went on to state that urban centres would have formed the loci of demand for imported wine.[500] This demand was not simply regional in scale, due to continuing trading links with the West and other former Roman provinces.[501] The Levantine coastal regions in particular formed the hub of wine production and trade in the Early Byzantine Empire.

Almost no archaeological excavation and research into wine production (and indeed olive oil production) has been carried out in the areas of the former eastern Roman provinces of Mesopotamia, Osrhoene and Euphratensis. The provinces of Cilicia, Syria and Phoenicia have been rather better served, both in the amount of archaeological excavation carried out and also the mention in some historical sources of wines produced and traded from these regions. A good deal of research has been carried out into wine production in the Levant by scholars throughout the past few decades, particularly in the provinces of Syria, Palaestina and Arabia. In my discussion here, I will be presenting a simplified round-up of the evidence.[502]

The archaeological evidence for the production of wine in Cilicia is somewhat patchy, with the purpose (oil or wine production) of the presses that have been uncovered not clearly identified.[503] There are a number of references in contemporary written sources that confirm that wine was being produced in the region and being exported. The most important is a tax inscription of sixth century date that lists the taxes levied on goods being

[499] Decker, 2009: 122.
[500] Decker, 2009: 122.
[501] As I mentioned in my discussion of the pavement of the Great Palace at Constantinople in Chapter 1 the bedding of this mosaic consisted of fragments of Gaza amphora and other eastern ceramic wares of late fifth century date. Almost all of the vintage scenes that I will be discussing from the southern provinces are attributed a sixth century date, when wine from the region was being transported across the Empire. See Jobst, 2000: 58-61 for discussion of the archaeology.
[502] For a detailed discussion of past scholarship and excavation evidence in the Levant and current thought and work, see Decker, 2009: 121-48.
[503] See the article by Decker, 'The wine trade in Cilicia in Late Antiquity', 2005: 51-9 for a full discussion and references.

transported from the eastern Mediterranean to Constantinople: Cilician wine merchants are charged less for their produce than wine merchants from other areas, for example.[504]

The LR1 amphorae type originated in the Levant (in an area covering parts of Syria, Cilicia and also Cyprus) and has been discovered at sites across the Mediterranean; along the Nile in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Greece.[505] It has also been discovered in more distant areas, such as Britain and even in India. It is widely believed that the LR1 was most frequently used for oil.[506] This type of amphorae would also almost certainly have been used to carry wine: LR1 was imitated in Egypt, at the monastery of St. Jeramia at Saqqara and at Margham in the Mareotic region, for example, where wine was produced for export.[507]

Many presses have been uncovered in the villages of the Syrian Limestone Massif and while earlier work, such as that of Tchalenko (1953), identified most of these as olive presses, this view has more recently been challenged. Although it can be difficult to be absolutely certain whether a press was for olives or grapes, some differences have been noted. Roller presses identified previously as oil presses, have been re-identified as being possible wine presses.[508] A large number of the presses in this area are relatively simple, without counter weights or special pressing equipment and Decker has concluded that these simple presses must have been for the pressing of grapes, not olives.[509] He further argues that of the approximately 10,000 presses excavated in Syria, some 6,000 should be considered wine presses, with the ability to produce a considerable surplus to bring to market. During the excavations at Dehes (Limestone Massif) fourteen presses were

[504] This inscription is known as the Abydos Tariff. See Durliat and Guillou, 1984: 581-98.
[505] See Mango, M., 1996: 145.
[506] Mango, M., 1996: 145.
[507] Kingsley, 2001: 4.
[508] See Finkle, 1999, for a complete discussion of North Syrian roller presses and comparisons with the evidence from Israel. Roller presses have been previously identified as being used for the crushing of olives (and their stones) to then enable pressing for oil (Decker, 2009: 142).
[509] Decker, 2009: 142.

discovered, of which three were identified as certainly being for oil.[510] It seems likely that wine production was an integral part of village life in the Limestone Massif.

The Phoenician provinces of Maritima and Libanensis are something of a contrast to each other: Phoenicia Maritima occupied the fertile coastal zone, while Phoenicia Libanensis occupied the more arid interior. Neither of these areas has been widely excavated, although the evidence for Maritima is certainly a little more extensive. Frankel, in his survey of the small area reaching from Ptolemais to Banias (in what is now northern Israel) catalogued some 82 presses thought to be for wine production, 64 of which were screw type presses.[511] Screw presses had only been introduced into the Levantine provinces in the Later Roman period and can be identified by a mortise cut or inserted into the middle of the treading floor.[512] Some numismatic evidence discovered in association with a number of these presses, suggests that they began to be introduced from the fourth century.[513] Kingsley, amongst others, has stated that these screw type presses were not as reliant upon man-power and their presence would therefore indicate efficient and intensive wine production (producing a surplus to be sold).[514] For such a small area of Phoenicia surveyed, this is a large number of presses, a very large number of which were of a type not long used in the region and an indication of surplus production. [515]

The evidence (both written and archaeological) from the Palestinian provinces is relatively good. As I have stated before (in the discussion of the pavement of the Great Palace, Fig 1), there is clear evidence that wine from the Palestinian coast was transported

[510] See Sodini *et al,* 1980: 1-300 for full discussion.
[511] See Frankel, 1999, catalogue entries 1424 onwards. See also Frankel, 1997, 73-84, for a good overview of the evidence of presses found in Palestine and Israel, in particular.
[512] See Frankel, 1997: 75 for a detailed description of the archaeological evidence.
[513] See Amit, 1992: 150-1.
[514] Kingsley, 1999: 94-6.
[515] The crushing of olives is more difficult than the crushing of grapes. To press olives for their oil special pressing equipment is required, whereas grapes can be crushed by people (treading). The screw press had therefore most often employed in the production of olive oil. The increase in its use for crushing grapes would seem to indicate intensification in wine production during this period.

and traded outside the region where it was produced. Recent excavations in the city of Beirut (a major port in Phoenicia Maritima) have also uncovered large deposits of amphorae from Gaza and Ashkelon, further confirmation of the shipping of wine northward towards Constantinople.[516] Wine from the region was not simply shipped north to Constantinople but also south to Egypt, where sherds of LR4 are found in enormous quantities: At Alexandria 75% of all amphorae uncovered in sixth and seventh century contexts in what was termed Sector G by the excavators were LR4.[517] Large scale trade in Palestinian wine continued to be important to Egypt after the province ceased to be part of the Empire. The evidence from the finds of the amphorae across the Mediterranean may indicate that wine began to be exported in large quantities from the late fourth century, increasing in the early fifth and remained high in many areas until at least AD 650.[518]

The remains of over 900 presses (identified as wine presses) have so far been documented in the Palestinian provinces. These presses are in the most part located north of Jerusalem, although some large installations have been uncovered in the Negev.[519] The church was, for the greater part of the Late Antique period, a major landholder in the region and also a major wine producer. Many of the ecclesiastical complexes that have been excavated contain the remains of wine presses, for example at Hesheq and Beth Loya in Palaestina Prima.[520] In Arabia, although the evidence is less comprehensive, excavations

[516] See Kingsley, 2004:13. See also Kingsley, 1999: 150 for a discussion of LR4 amphorae and the origins of its production. The popularity of wine from Palaestina contained within the LR4 amphorae is also indicated by attempts to copy these amphorae, for example in the wine producing Mareotis region in Egypt. See the article by Rodziewicz, 1998.
[517] Kingsley, 2004:53.
[518] See Kingsley, 1999: tables 12 and 13. Also see Merrony, 2013: 47, for a brief over-view of the evidence.
[519] See Kingsley, 2004: 16.
[520] See Aviam, 1993: 56 for a description of the site at Heheq. Patrich and Tsafrir, 1993: 265-76 for a discussion of the site at Beth Loya. One of the pavements of the Church at Beth Loya (discussed in Chapter 3, Part 1) is of a vine-scroll design, although there are no images of figures involved with the vintage contained within it.

at Sa'ad (some 17km from Gerasa) have produced the remains of two screw wine presses, with a capacity of approximately 4000 litres.[521]

The vintage scenes from the Late Antique Levant

I will be looking at twenty-five pavements containing images of figures engaged in the vintage. These scenes are overwhelmingly found in the southern provinces, in Christian contexts and are almost exclusively sixth century in date. Hachlili, in her description and round-up of the vintage scenes on the pavements in Palaestina and Arabia identified basic images that re-occur repeatedly and make up the vintage repertory: Vintager, grape porter, figure leading donkey carrying grapes, treading grapes/wine press, flute player.[522]

I also will very briefly discuss the frequent use of the vine-scroll design, as it is such a prominent feature of the mosaic assemblage in this region (and of surviving sixth century pavements in the southern provinces in particular) and can be associated to the images of the vintage repertory. Both Claudine Dauphin and Rachel Hachlili have catalogued and made very detailed stylistic analyses of the Late Antique vine-scroll design pavements found in the region.[523] I have compiled a table of the pavements discussed in both Parts 1 and 2 and the imagery they contain, for reference. See following page.

[521] See Rose and Burker (eds), 2004: 9-19. Screw presses were capable of higher production than the more simple presses (such as roller presses) and their occurrence at a site is a strong indication of the surplus production of wine.
[522] Hachlili, 2009: 150-6.
[523] See Dauphin, 1976: 113-150, especially 146-9 where she lists all the vine-scroll design pavements (borders and full field) that were known in Syria, Phoenicia, Palaestina and Arabia when the paper was published. See also her paper 1978: 400-11 in which she uses analysis of the design to discuss the existence of mosaic pattern books and 1987: 188-9 where she makes remarks concerning the meaning of the design. Hachlili, 2009: 111-47 collects all the pavements into groups according to stylistic similarities (such as number of scrolls in each row etc.).

Imagery of the Vintage of Other Cultivation

Date (AD)	Context	Location	Vintager	Porter	Donkey &man	Wine Press	Flute Player	Fruit Picking	Olives Wheat
		Osrhoene:							
500-600	Villa	Sarrin					X		
		Syria Prima:							
Early 4thC	Villa	Constantinian Villa, Antioch	X	X					
		Phoenicia Libanensis							
722	Church	St. George, Deir al-Adas	X						
		Phoenicia Maritima:							
576/7	Church	St. Christopher, Qabr Hiram			X	X	X		
		Palaestina Prima							
500-600	Church	St. Stephen, Birsama			X		X		
500-600	Villa	Caesarea		X					
500-600	Church	Beth Loya						X	
		Palaestina Seconda							
A.D 567	Monastery	Lady Mary, Scythopolis	X	X	X	X	X		
520-40	Tomb	El-Hammam	X	X	X	X	X		
500-600	Church	Nahariya			X		X		
525-50	Chapel	Sede Nahum	X						
		Arabia:							
500-600	Church	Al-Khadir, Madaba	X	X			X		
500-600	Church	Martyr Theodore, Madaba					X		
Late 5thC	Chapel	Priest John, Mukhayyat	X		X			X	
535/6	Church	St. George, Mukhayyat: Vine	X						
		" " " : Acanthus	X		X	X	X		X
557	Church	SS.Lot&Procopius, Mukhayyat	X	X	X	X	X		
500-600	Church	Kaianus, Uyun Musa	X	X					
500-600	Church	Deacon Thomas, Uyun Musa	X		X				
530	Baptistry	Old Diakonikon, Nebo							X
500-600	Church	St.Paul, Kastron Mefaa	X		X				
500-600	Church	John and Elias, Kastron Mefaa	X		X				
587/8	Church	Bishop Sergius, Kastron Mefaa			X	X		X	
8thC?	Church	St. Stephen, Kastron Mefaa	X		X	X	X	X	
574/89	Church	Lions, Kastron Mefaa						X	
579/94	Church	Rivers, Kastron Mefaa						X	
500-600	Church	Elias, Maria, Soreg, Gerasa		X					
500-600	Chapel	St. Kyriakos, al-Quwaysmah					X		
500-600	Chapel	Suwayfiyah			X				

The Northern provinces: Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia

Images of figures engaged in activities associated with the vintage are relatively common in the provinces of Palaestina and in particular Arabia and much less so in Syria and the provinces to the north. Only four pavements outside Palaestina and Arabia have so far been uncovered containing this imagery; the villa at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1) in Osrhoene (late fifth/early sixth century), the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) at Daphne, Antioch (fourth century, Syria Prima), the Church of St. George at Deir al-Adas (CAT:15, p 40) (AD 722, in Phoenicia Libanensis) and the sixth century pavement of the nave at the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) at Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia Maritima. The imagery of the two pavements from secular contexts, at Sarrin and Antioch is contained within vine-scroll design borders that surround the main panels. The imagery from the two church pavements is, in contrast, contained within the design of the main field: At Qabr Hiram in a full field vine-scroll design and at Deir al-Adas the imagery is divided into registers. At Qabr Hiram there are strikingly similarities in both the pavement design and the vintage imagery to the church pavements of Palaestina and Arabia. The position of this site near the Phoenician coast, not far from the major port of Tyre would have facilitated the flow of artistic ideas and craftsmen.

Osrhoene

The vine-scroll border pavement of the villa at Sarrin (CAT:1, p 1**,** east of the Euphrates) was discussed in some detail in Chapter 2, Part 2, including a brief discussion of the vine-scroll border, as images of hunting and various animals are (along with a vintage scene) contained within the scrolls. The vintage motif found in a scroll on the longest side of the border is that of the flute player. The male figure (all the examples of this figure on the pavements of the Levant are male) of a flute player is shown seated on an up-turned basket

and playing a double-piped flute. The figure is bare-foot, wearing a short tunic as he is rural worker and evidently supposed to be playing for the vintagers and treaders during the grape harvest. He is unaccompanied by any of the other motifs that depict the additional stages in the wine production process.

In several of the other scrolls there are depictions of baskets filled with grapes, a sign of a successful harvest. As with the other human figures of this border, the depiction of this flautist is quite lifelike, they are not mythological *putto* or *Erotes*. This pavement decorates the floor in a villa and as such I would say that this scene from the vintage, and indeed the imagery of the entire border was not of any religious significance to the owner, but (as I stated in Chapter 2), a way of demonstrating interest in current artistic taste, contacts with the wider region and wealth.

Syria

The only pavement in the Syrian provinces that contains any of the specific images from the vintage repertory comes from a border in Room 4 at the fourth century Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) of Antioch.[524] The remains of this pavement are fragmentary but from what survives it is possible to see that this border once surrounded all four sides of the main field. The figures of several vintagers engaged in collecting and storing grapes can be discerned. It is clear from the style and depiction of these figures, however, that they are not lifelike, they are mythological *putti.* There are two surviving *putti* collecting grapes in this border. The first is shown naked except for a loincloth and is bending forward to pick up a basket full of grapes. The second *putto* staggers under the weight of his cloak, filled with grapes.[525] As Levi pointed out, carrying fruit in a cloak is a familiar attribute of

[524] I have discussed the pavements of Room 1 of this villa in detail in Chapter 2, Part 1 and 2.
[525] See Levi, 1947 508 for a detailed discussion of these images.

personifications of Autumn (and in the southern provinces, Ge) and the personification of Autumn on the pavement of Room 1 of this same villa is depicted in this way.[526]

This is the only Late Antique pavement in Syria that contains any of these more explicit images of the vintage to thus far be excavated, although the figures are of mythological *putti* rather than human figures. There are, as I briefly outline below, a number of vine-scroll design pavements (both border and full-field) from Late Antiquity that survive in Syria and the north and there are also several pavements that contain general visual references to the vintage.[527] At the House of the Worcester Hunt (CAT:4, p 14) (sixth century), also at Antioch, one of the pavements of the villa has a vine-scroll border. This border does not contain vintage imagery; the scrolls contain representations of animals, including a pair of peacocks. It would seem that in Antioch at least (the most heavily excavated site in the region) the vine-scroll design is still confined to borders as merely a decorative device, as had been the case in the earlier Roman period.[528]

Phoenicia Libanensis and Maritima

The pavement of the Church of St. George at Deir al-Adas (CAT:15, p 40) in Phoenicia Libanensis contains a vintage scene rather than a simple or isolated motif. This scene is also placed in a register of the main pavement of the nave. The pavement of the nave is divided into three registers; the top (eastern) two registers contain scenes of hunting and the chase which I described in Chapter 2, Part 2. The vintage scene is located in the third register. The scene is that of a naturalistic landscape (although somewhat poorly drawn

[526] Levi, 1947: 508.

[527] A panel of the nave at the North Church at Huarte, to the north of Apamea in Syria Secunda contains the images of a donkey and baskets of grapes, as does the pavement of the nave at the Church of Khalde. See Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 102-16 and 359 for the descriptions of the pavements from these churches. Single images of baskets full of grapes or bunches of grapes are not uncommon on Syrian church pavements of the fifth and sixth centuries.

[528] The pavement of the Martyrion at Seleucia Pieria (CAT:7, p 19), the port of Antioch, also contains a vine-scroll border filled with animals and bunches of grapes.

and executed) in which the two figures are presented in the act of carrying out an everyday task. Three palm trees divide the scene and are draped with vine branches that yield grapes. One figure cuts off a bunch of grapes with a small pruning knife, whist the other is engaged in catching birds. The training of vines in trees is a well attested method of intensive production and such a vineyard was called an *arbustum*.[529] A number of classical writers, such as Cato the Elder, Pliny the Elder and Palladus describe this method of the laying out of vines.[530] This nave pavement, taken as a whole, is showing the rural activities of the church congregation and wider local area.

The final images to be discussed in the Northern provinces come from the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) at Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia Maritima. The main pavement of the nave consists of a detailed full-field vine-scroll design, of a type common in the south and is directly contemporary to many of them (AD 576/7). Three of the vintage motifs can be found on this pavement; the flute player, a man leading a donkey and a wine press. The pavement is divided into seven rows of scrolls. The flute player is located in the second scroll of the third row and is very similar to the example from Sarrin; he sits on an up-turned basket, plays a flute (single pipe) and is barefoot. In the same row, but further along (if one was 'reading' it left to right) is the image of a barefoot man leading a donkey carrying baskets of grapes. Finally, in the row below in the central scroll (and indeed in the centre of the whole pavement) is a screw type wine press. Two men stand either side of the screw and the crushed grape juice flows into a vat. The vintage imagery is interspersed with scenes of hunting and pastoralism: the management of the land.

[529] See Decker, 2009: 125-6 for a description of this method.
[530] See Johnson, 1989: 68-74 and Decker, 2009: 122-9 for round-ups of the sources.

A number of vine-scroll design pavements that do not contain the specific vintage scenes are found in the provinces of Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia and although they certainly do not match the number of those found in Palaestina and Arabia, they do confirm that vine-scroll design pavements were also a continuing part of the repertory in the Northern provinces. One interesting point is that there is a higher percentage of these pavements in secular contexts here than in the south, although these examples in secular contexts almost exclusively decorate borders, as had been the case in the earlier Roman period.[531] The villa at Jenah (CAT:11, p 28) close to Beirut in Phoenicia Maritima, (fifth/sixth century) mentioned in Chapter 2, Part 1, contains two vine-scroll design borders, for example. The picture for the full field examples reflects the situation found in the southern provinces, as they are predominately found in churches/religious buildings (only one decorates the floor of a villa, as in the south).[532]

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia

Six pavements containing motifs from the vintage repertory are found in the Palestinian provinces. All of these pavements are thought to be sixth century in date and the imagery at all of the sites except one is contained within a full-field vine-scroll design. The motifs from the church at Nahariya (CAT:25, p 76) are contained within an acanthus-scroll border.

The evidence from Arabia is more abundant; there are fifteen pavements to be discussed. These pavements with the exception of the Church of St. Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (CAT:41, p 119) (eighth century) and the Lower Chapel of Priest John at

[531] Approximately ten vine-scroll borders date from Late Antiquity in the region, four from villas, one from baths, four from churches and one unknown context. See Dauphin, 1976: 144.

[532] A relatively high percentage of these pavements are also attributed a sixth century date. Of the more than seventeen pavements from Osrhoene, Syria and Phoenicia catalogued by Dauphin, over half are assigned a sixth century date. Animals, birds and plants for the most part fill the scrolls of these pavements, as is the case with the vine-scroll pavements found in synagogues in Palaestina, where no images of human figures are found.

Mukhayyat (late fifth century) are all attributed sixth century dates and all the pavements, without exception, come from Christian contexts. See the table at the start of the chapter for a list of pavements and their imagery and contexts.

Palaestina

The large vine-scroll pavement of the nave at the Church of St. Stephen at Birsama (Fig 4) contains just two images of the vintage; the flute player and the man leading a donkey. The whole pavement is well executed and technically very good and the figures are well drawn.[533] A bare foot man leads a donkey laden with grapes, taking up two scrolls. The flute player is playing a single pipe, sits on a basket and is simply dressed; the standard depiction of this character.

The second pavement from Palaestina Prima is the only one in all the southern provinces to be from a secular context: a villa. The vine-scroll pavement of the villa at Caesarea (CAT:17, p 45) was discussed in the hunting section of Chapter 2.[534] Both the grape porter and the flute player have been heavily damaged, but the top half of a man playing a single pipe and another carrying a basket of grapes remains.

The small pavement from Room L at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47), Scythopolis (AD 567) consists of only three rows of four. All of the vintage elements are present on this pavement and are contained within the scrolls of the bottom two rows. There are two men collecting grapes (in separate scrolls), one carries a sickle, whilst the other simply pulls them from the vine. One porter carries a full basket of grapes and a man leads a laden donkey. The flute player is very similar to all the others so far discussed (single pipe, sits on a basket, barefoot), except a dog sits on its hind legs in front of him, as

[533] See Gazit and Lender, 1993: 274-6 for a brief technical discussion.
[534] See Hachlili, 2009: 136-7 for a discussion, in which she, on the basis of style, groups this pavement with a number of other vine-scroll design pavements from Arabia.

if moving to his playing. This dog looks towards the adjoining scroll, in which a man treads grapes in a large vat. Much of this scroll is damaged, but it is clear that this was not a depiction of a screw press.

The vine-scroll pavement from a tomb at el Hammam (CAT:19, p 54) (also at Scythopolis and discussed in Chapter 2, Part 2) contains, as at Room L at the Monastery of Lady Mary, all the motifs associated with the vintage. This pavement is larger than the example at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) and more sophisticated in its execution and design. All the vintaging figures are bare foot and dressed in simple tunics (tucked up at the waist). There are two figures harvesting (with knives) and also carrying baskets of grapes. The flute player is seated on the usual up-turned basket, playing a single pipe. A male figure drives a grape laden donkey (standing behind it and encouraging it with a whip) and in the centre of the pavement (as at Qabr Hiram) there is a wine vat. This image is not of a screw press, but shows three men treading grapes.

The vine-scroll pavement at the small chapel at Sede Nahum (attributed a sixth century date, Fig 36) has been very heavily damaged, but there is the remains of a man in a simple tunic gathering grapes.[535] Finally the acanthus-scroll border of the nave at the church at Nahariya (CAT:25, p 76), north of Ptolemais (second quarter of the sixth century), contains two images, that of the man leading a donkey and the flute player. [536] The man leading the donkey (carrying baskets of grapes) is almost naked (this little scene is set across two acanthus scrolls). The flute player sits on an up-turned basket and plays a single pipe. The difference between this example and all the others is the fact that the figure is completely naked (more classical and less in the every-day genre style). The

[535] See Zori, 1962: 3-5 for a brief description of this pavement.
[536] Dauphin and Edelstein, 1993: 49-50.

surviving scrolls contain images of hunting and discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Part 2.[537] Nahariya (CAT:25, p 76) was located on the coastal road that ran between Ptolemais and Antioch and the remains of many settlements along this route suggest that it was relatively densely populated during Late Antiquity.[538] The classicizing style and high quality of the pavement of the border from this church led Dauphin and Edelstein to state that there were parallels between this pavement and the mosaics from the areas surrounding Tyre and Beirut, further up the coast in Phoenicia. These similarities were particularly striking, in the opinion of Dauphin and Edelstein, between the Nahariya pavement and the pavements of the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) at Qabr Hiram and the villa at Jenah (CAT:11, p 28), both mentioned above (and also both roughly contemporary with the Nahariya mosaic (CAT:25, p 76)). All of the vintage iconography itself, in the Palestinian provinces are very similar to each other and are also very repetitive.

Arabia

There are fifteen pavements with vintage imagery to be considered here. The imagery from all of these pavements is extremely repetitive (as with Palaestina) and clustered in certain areas (for example, six alone come from the area of Mount Nebo and four from the city of Kastron Mefaa).

Two pavements come from the city of Madaba, from the Church at Al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87) and the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore (CAT:31, p 93) (at the cathedral building). At the Church of Al-Khadir (CAT:29, p 87), the imagery is contained within a vine-scroll panel in the nave; whist at the chapel of the Cathedral (CAT:31, p 93) one image (the flute player) is contained within an octagon of the main field. At the Church of

[537] Some of the figures in this border are more akin to *Putti*, similar to the earlier scroll design border pavements found in Syria and the north.
[538] Dauphin and Edelstein, 1993: 49.

Al-Khadir, three images of a grape porter, vintager and flute player are present. The flute player sits on his basket and plays his single piped flute and this exact image is repeated at the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore.

Six pavements are located to the north of Madaba in the region of Mount Nebo, in the villages of Mukhayyat and Uyun Musa. The Chapel of the Lower Priest John (CAT:43, p127) (the earliest of the Arabian examples, attributed a late fifth century date); two pavements in the Church of St. George (CAT:45, p 133) (AD. 535/6) and the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) (AD 557) are all in Mukhayyat. The vintage imagery of all three of these buildings is contained within vine-scroll design pavements, except one of the pavements from St. George, of an acanthus-scroll design. A vintager harvesting grapes is present at all three sites. The scene of a man leading a donkey (taking place across two scrolls) appears at the Chapel of Priest John, SS. Lot and Procopius and the acanthus-scroll pavement of St. George. The pavement of the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) contains all the other motifs of the repertory; the grape porter, the flute player (who uniquely is pictured standing) and the wine press. The Church of St. George contains the flute player and wine press. The flute player at St. George is slightly different from all other examples: The figure is seated on a stool and finely dressed (cloak, patterned tunic). This style of dress matches those of the figures engaged in hunting in other scrolls. It may be that these figures were representations of soldiers. Both images of wine presses are of the screw type.

There are two pavements from the village of Uyun Musa, at the Upper Church of Kaianus (CAT:48, p 143) and the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) and at both the vintage imagery is contained within vine-scroll designs in the nave. There are two vintage elements on each pavement: Both pavements contain a simply dressed vintager

collecting grapes and the pavement of Kaianus also has a grape porter.[539] The other image from the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) is the man leading a donkey carrying grapes. At the Upper Church of Kaianus (CAT:48, p 143) there are a number of donor portraits contained in a panel at the top of the nave. Three named figures are shown. Fidus (a churchman), John (a vintager) and a camel-driver whose name label is missing.[540] All of these figures are shown in their 'professional' costume. John has helped to pay for a pavement (vine-scroll) from the proceeds of his work in wine production, for example.

Four churches at Kastron Mefaa have vintage elements in their pavement decoration. The pavement of the nave of the Church of St. Paul has unfortunately suffered extensive damage and only parts of four scrolls of the vine-scroll pavement of the nave survive.[541] Only the arms of a vintager cutting grapes and part of a figure leading a donkey can still be identified.[542] The pavement of the Church of John and Elias (CAT:40, p 117) (at Khattabiyah, Kastron Mefaa) also survives in a very fragmentary condition and only part of a donkey carrying grapes survives.[543] The pavements of the churches of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) and St. Stephen (CAT:41, p 119) survive in more complete form and contain more vintage images, although the pavements of both churches have suffered iconoclastic damage. The vintage imagery at St. Stephen is contained within the main large vine-scroll pavement of the nave. All of the human figures have been disfigured by iconoclasts, although we can still make out their general shape (and therefore ascertain their activities). At least one figure was engaged in the collection of grapes and a man with a donkey carrying grapes can also be identified. A flute player in his usual seated pose and

[539] This nave pavement at the Church of the Deacon Thomas also contains images of the shepherd and the hunt, discussed above in Chapter 2, Parts 1 and 2 and images of fruit gathering discussed below in Part 2 of this chapter.
[540] See Piccerillo, 1993: 189, for description.
[541] Piccirillo, 1997: 386-7 outlines the remains and also includes a simple plan of the building.
[542] See also Hachlili, 2009: 150 for further references for the site.
[543] See Piccirillo, 1993: 244 for a brief discussion of the few surviving patches of the pavement and a plan of the building.

single pipe is also present; however, he is fully dressed in a voluminous tunic. Figures tread grapes with the juice flowing into a large *dolium.* A vine-scroll border of the nave of the Bishop Sergius contains a range of different imagery including a man leading a donkey through two vine-scrolls towards a press. This wine press is of the screw type and very unusually it is depicted alone, with no human figures.

The last three pavements all contain only one vintage motif each and are located in the Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg (CAT:33, p 98) at Gerasa and the Churches of St. Kyriakos (CAT:52, p 153) at al-Quwaysmah and Suwayfiyah (CAT:51, p 150) (both near Philadelphia). The pavements of Elias, Maria and Soreg and that of Suwayfiyah are both full-field vine-scroll design and that of St. Kyriakos is an acanthus-scroll border of the main pavement. At Gerasa there is merely the simple image of a vintager; at Suwayfiyah the familiar image of a man leading a donkey laden with grapes and at al-Quwaysmah the flute player is contained within one of the acanthus-scrolls. The flute player at al-Quwaysmah is, as at St. George, Mukhayyat, seated on a stool rather than a basket. These two examples also come from acanthus-scroll design pavements.

Vine-scroll designs also appear on the floors of contemporary synagogues, although the human figures engaged in the vintage activities themselves are never represented. This lack of human figures is not simply confined to the vintage imagery, but also to the other categories of rural activities, such as the pastoral scenes and hunting. These categories do still appear, but without the human element, such as domestic sheep and goats; collared hunting dogs and animal chase, exotic animals (such as giraffes and elephants), baskets filled with grapes. The vine-scroll designs found in synagogues very closely resemble those from their Christian counterparts in churches, for example the pavements of the church at Shellal and the synagogue of Ma'on Nirim (both in the region

of Gaza) are compositionally so close as to almost certainly have been carried out by the same workshop.[544] There is the obvious desire to depict the same basic categories of iconography as those in the Christian churches, but with certain important changes.

The vintage imagery from Arabia is, like that of Palaestina, incredibly repetitive and differs very little between pavements. There is little innovation (although there are occasionally slight differences in dress of the figures, for examples) and no obvious stylistic development of the repertory in the region. There is also no obvious narrative sequence to the imagery when there is more than one motif present on a pavement. For example; the images of the various activities are not often placed in the order in which they would have been carried out during the grape harvest.[545] These motifs are often interspersed across a pavement with scenes of the hunt and pastoral subjects, rather than being the main focus (except when the image of a screw press appears, which takes central place on a pavement). This fairly limited repertory appears repeatedly across a long stretch of time. The uniformity does seem to suggest that there was a standard or norm of what could and should appear on a church pavement. As Talgam has pointed out, in the public sphere of a church (more than in a private context where personal taste was clearly more important), familiarity and popular consensus was essential.[546]

Conclusion

The significance of the vintage imagery and the vine-scroll design has been discussed by a number of different scholars. In early Christianity the vine, wine and the wine press symbolised certain biblical concepts. There are many references to the vine, vineyards and

[544] See Talgam, 2014: 327-8 for the most recent discussion.
[545] The pavement of the Church of the Bishop Sergius at Kastron Mefaa does show a man and a donkey laden with grapes walking towards a wine press, however, this is one of the few examples in which the images appear in 'order'.
[546] Talgam, 2014: 186.

wine in both the Old and New Testaments and Jesus is specifically referred to as the true vine and his people the branches in John 15: 5:

'I am the vine, ye are the branches'

Saller and Bagatti argued that when congregations saw the vine decorating their churches and producing rich fruit and wine, they realized that they were beloved by God, who blessed them and the work of their hands.[547] They go on to state that both Christians and Jews believed that they were the vineyard of the Lord, therefore both communities would have been happy to have this imagery in their places of worship.[548] Merrony argued that the vine-scroll and images of the vintage do not appear on pavements from secular contexts and that this design characterised the church and synagogue pavements in sixth century Palestine and Arabia. The vine, he argued, can be viewed as a fundamentally religious symbol in this specific region and specific period.[549] This is not entirely true as there are examples in the southern provinces of secular vine-scroll pavements (such as at the villa at Caesarea).This also cannot be said for the mosaics of Phoenicia and Syria where this pavement design and vintage imagery does occur on the pavements of villas and not just in the earlier part of the era (the villa at Jenah (CAT:11, p 28) is attributed a fifth/sixth century date and the pavement at Sarrin is possibly sixth century).

Images of people engaged with tasks associated with the vintage are not found on synagogue pavements in Palaestina, although vine-scroll design pavements are fairly frequently found in synagogues (for example the pavement of the synagogue at Gaza-Maiumas dated to AD 509, Fig 21, mentioned in Chapter 2, Part 3).[550] These vine-scroll designs are usually filled with various animals, birds and plants. The Jewish community

[547] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 97.
[548] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 97.
[549] Merrony, 1998: 471.
[550] See Hachlili, 2009, chapters six and seven for detailed discussion of the origins and development of the vine-scroll design in what is now Israel.

would have been familiar with biblical references to the vine and vineyard. The vine/vineyard in the Old Testament tended to symbolise the people of Israel, as expressed in Isaiah 5: 7, for example:

'For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel'

Hachlili has argued that the appearance of the vine-scroll design in both churches and synagogues may imply that the design and the motifs contained within were merely decorative and also indicated that the mosaicists and workshops worked for both Christian and Jewish patrons.[551] She goes on to say that the vine-scroll design functioned as a decorative device rather than expressing religious imagery.[552] The use of this design in synagogues of the region during the fifth and sixth centuries may well have been, as Avi-Yonah argued in 1936 (p17), a useful decorative tool to give unity and an agreeable pattern to the surface of the pavement. It may also be that the Jewish communities chose and were using this particular popular design to counterbalance the contemporary Christian view that Jesus was the true vine, and were reclaiming their traditional meaning for the vine/vineyard.

The overwhelming majority of the vine-scroll pavements and vintage imagery is, however, from churches in Palestine and Arabia. Kingsley has suggested that the wine industry may have been boosted in part by religious ideology in the form of the invention of the Holy Land.[553] The association of viticulture with Christianity and the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia particularly with the Holy Land may well have increased the popularity of wine produced in those areas. The appearance of images of human figures carrying out activities associated with the vintage in churches of the period reflects the symbolic importance of the vine and wine and also the economic prosperity being

[551] Hachlili, 2009: 146.
[552] Hachlili. 2009: 114.
[553] Kingsley, 2004: 16.

generated in the region by the production and sale of wine. We know that in certain instances, those involved in wine production also helped to pay for the pavements, such as at the Upper Church at Kaianus (and the vintager John) (CAT:48, p 143). Many of the images also reflect contemporary agricultural practice. The screw-press, depicted on a number of pavements had only been recently introduced to the region and they are a strong indication of surplus production and the intensification of wine production during this period. There is the desire to show modern technology and production, possibly the result of the importance of the vine to the local economy. The use of the vine-scroll design symbolised connection to Christ/God and the connection between all of God's creation (the images filling the scrolls; the earth, animals/birds/plants and members of the community carrying out their activities of daily subsistence), but the popularity of this particular pavement design and iconography may have been directly inspired by the flourishing wine trade.

Part 2: Other cultivation

Images of people carrying out agricultural activities other than tasks associated with the vintage are rare in the region during Late Antiquity and almost all the examples that have so far been uncovered are located in the southern provinces of Palaestina and more particularly Arabia. See **Map 7**, (Catalogue, p 164).

Fruit harvesting

Images of figures picking and harvesting various different types of fruit (such as pomegranates, for example) are the most common of the other images of cultivation. Seven pavements show a figure engaged in the activity of picking or carrying fruit during a harvest; one from Palaestina Prima and six from the province of Arabia. See the table at the start of the chapter for a list.

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia

The Church at Beth Loya in Palaestina Prima contains the only example of fruit harvesting in the Palestinian provinces: This image is of a woman holding a basket of fruit and is located in one of the scrolls of the acanthus-scroll border of the narthex. The image of a woman carrying a basket of fruit also appears in one of the scrolls of the acanthus-scroll design pavement of the nave at the Upper Church of the Priest John (CAT:44, p 130) at Nebo. She carries a knife outstretched in her other hand. Also decorating this pavement are the figures of two rural male labourers (bare foot) flanking a personification of Ge. Each of the labourers offer a basket filled with freshly harvested fruit to the personification. The scene of the personification of Ge accompanied by the *karpoforoi* has a tradition stretching back into earlier Roman art and also appears in the contemporary pavements of the nave of the Church of St. George at Nebo (CAT:45, p 133) (discussed below) and at the Church of the Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) at Kastron Mefaa (also discussed below).

The vine-scroll pavement of the nave of the Church of the Deacon Thomas (CAT:46, p 139) at Uyan Musa contains examples of many of the scenes of rural activities that I am concerned with in this thesis: pastoral, hunting, vintage (discussed in Part 1) and also fruit gathering. The top (eastern) row of three scrolls each contain a fruit tree; in the middle scroll a man wearing only a loincloth carries a basket in one hand and picks fruit from a tree with the other.[554]

The following four pavements all come from the city of Kastron Mefaa and all decorate the pavements of churches. The laying of these pavements can all be dated to within a short space of one another. At the Church of Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107), a panel at the top (eastern side) of the pavement of the nave shows a scene of fruit trees and

[554] Piccirillo, 1993: 187, describes these fruit as pomegranates.

two figures picking the fruit and placing it in a basket, whilst another figure catches birds.[555] A panel at the eastern end of the nave at the Church of St. Stephen (CAT:41, p 119) is decorated with similar scenes of fruit harvesting; figures pick fruit from a row of fruit trees and placing them in baskets. The two pavements of Bishop Sergius and St. Stephen also contain images from other rural iconographic categories that I have discussed in previous chapters: pastoral, hunting, fishing and the vintage.

The pavement of the nave at the Church of the Lions (CAT:38, p 113) at Kastron Mefaa has been heavily damaged and, as at the previous two churches in the city discussed above, the images that do survive were mutilated by iconoclasts. The remaining sections of the border of the nave show that it was once a continuous running border of fruit trees and human figures and that these figures were picking fruit and placing them into baskets. This running scene was apparently designed to be viewed as a landscape in which the figures were moving and performing their tasks in a realistic fashion.

The final example from Kastron Mefaa comes from the Church of the River (CAT:37, p 111) and is contained within the rectangular panel in front of the altar. As with all the other pavements discussed from Kastron Mefaa, the human and animal figures were damaged by iconoclasts. Three heavily laden fruit trees (one which has been grafted) divide the panel evenly and the outline of a person remains picking fruit and putting it into a large and full basket. People harvesting fruit from fruit trees only come from churches in this period and these scenes are almost certainly symbolic in nature. Fruit trees were an important part of the Christian vision of Paradise (based on a passage from Genesis 2: 8-9). Therefore we may be able to see in the depiction of fruit trees and people harvesting the fruit a representation of salvation.

[555] All of the figures of humans and animals have been obscured by iconoclasts, but their outlines remain.

Olives and wheat

Only one image of olive cultivation and one of wheat survive from the mosaic pavements of this period and both examples are located in the province of Arabia. At the Old Diakonikon Baptistery (CAT:49, p 145), Mount Nebo, one of the registers of the main pavement shows a goatherd watching his flock amongst olives trees (discussed in Chapter 2, Part 1). The olive trees depicted are obviously being managed and tended, as they are shown as having been grafted.[556] The image of the harvesting of wheat is contained within an acanthus scroll in the nave of the Church of St. George (CAT:45, p 133): An elderly man, bare foot and wearing a loincloth, holds stalks of wheat (or perhaps barley?) in one hand and a sickle/scythe in the other.

It is an interesting point that there are so few representations of both olives and wheat, particularly when we consider the high percentage of rural scenes that decorate the pavements of the region during this period and the pavements of the churches of the southern provinces especially. Oil was a daily essential in the Mediterranean world, used in food and edible products; bath houses, lamps and lighting. Michael Decker calculated that for a city such as Edessa (with a population of some 50,000 during this period), between 182,500 and perhaps as much as 850,000 litres of oil might have been required for private lamps alone.[557] There was a continuous and high demand for olive oil across the Roman world. Evidence for the production of oil has been discovered across the Levantine provinces and has been the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny (due in part to the importance of the subject in the study of the Late Antique economy). The remains of oil

[556] This method was used to propagate viable fruit bearing trees. Several classical authors refer to this and other methods. See Decker, 2009: 153-5 for a complete round up of the sources. Decker devotes a chapter to olive cultivation in the Mediterranean (2009: 149-73) and brings together many strands of evidence, providing a good overview of the subject.

[557] See Decker, 2009: 150. Decker goes on to point out that some of the major cities (Alexandria, Edessa, Gaza, etc.) also had public street lamps.

presses have been uncovered across Syria and various surveys of the villages in the Limestone Massif suggest that almost all of the settlements contained at least one press.[558] The provinces of Cilicia, Phoenicia, Palestine and Arabia have also yielded plentiful evidence for olive cultivation and oil production.[559] As of 2004, 365 olive oil presses have been identified in the region of modern Israel (128 of these cluster around settlements in the Lower Golan).[560]

Barley and particularly wheat were, of course, dietary staples in the Levant and indeed across the Empire during Late Antiquity: riots had occurred in the great city of Antioch in the years AD 333, 384 and 385 in response to insufficient supplies and high prices of grain.[561] Decker proposed that Antioch and its suburbs with an estimated minimum population of 150,000 during the reign of the Emperor Julian would have required approximately 2,500,000 *modii* of wheat annually.[562] Why, therefore, given the importance of olive and grain cultivation, were there so few images of these activities on the mosaic floors of the region? As with representations of pigs, the portrayal of olive and grain production simply does not seem to have interested the patrons of these pavements.[563] We know that in the case of at least one pavement, wheat was an important source of the wealth of the community that commissioned it: In the dedicatory inscription of the pavement of the synagogue at Beth Alpha it is mentioned that 100 cubits of wheat were sold to pay for its construction.[564]

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[558] The work of Tchlenko (1953) and Tate (see particularly 1992) have been key foundations in furthering our understanding oil production in Syria.
[559] See Decker, 2009: 162-168 for a concise roundup of the archaeological evidence and the references.
[560] Kingsley, 2004: 17.
[561] See Stathakopoulos, 2004: 182-3 and 209-10.
[562] Decker, 2009: 84. Decker calculated an Imperial *modii* to be around 13kg.
[563] It may seemly be a case of this imagery not being picturesque, particular in the case of pigs.
[564] I also mention the importance of this inscription in my discussion of the zodiac, Chapter 5, Part 1. See Avi-Yonah, 1933: 146 for a translation of this inscription.

Chapter 5

Calendars

The Zodiac and Rural Calendars

In the preceding three chapters I have discussed various images of humans engaged in rural activities such as hunting, fishing and the vintage. In this last chapter I will discuss the depictions of rural calendars. In Part 1, I shall explore the small group of images of the zodiac found in Palestine, exclusively decorating the floors of synagogues and in Part 2, I shall go on to consider the other examples of Late Antique rural/agricultural calendars discovered in the region.

Part 1: The zodiac

In Late Antiquity the zodiac appears on the pavements of seven synagogues from a relatively small geographical area of Palestine (they appear nowhere else in the Levantine provinces at this time), dating from approximately the 4th to the late 6th centuries AD. In general, the design of the zodiac, as seen in the synagogues of Palestine, consists of two concentric circles set within a square: the inner circle contains a figure riding in a horse-drawn chariot, the outer circle has the signs of the zodiac in a radial design and in the corners of the square are the four seasons. The origins of the design, imagery and its function (as a rural calendar) are the focus of the following discussion. The zodiac is the Jewish counterpart to the Labours of the Months that are found in Christian churches of this period. See **Map 8**, (Catalogue, p 165)

Iconographic origins

A form of the zodiac (with fewer signs and with some differences in representation) had been introduced into the Greek world from Mesopotamia, possibly by the sixth century

BC. The zodiac then, over time, developed into the form that we would recognise today. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this developed form of the zodiac can be defined as:

> 'A belt of the celestial sphere…within which the apparent motions of the Sun, Moon and the principle planets take place and which is usually divided into twelve signs'.

These twelve signs are; Ares (the Ram), Taurus (the Bull), Gemini (the Twins), Cancer (the Crab), Leo (the Lion), Virgo (the Maiden/Virgin), Libra (the Balance/Scales), Scorpius/Scorpio (the Scorpion), Sagittarius (the Archer), Capricorn (the Goat), Aquarius (the Water carrier) and Pisces (the Fish).

The zodiac has a history stretching back into earlier Egyptian, Greek and Near Eastern (Babylonian) art. The earliest surviving depiction of a zodiac in circular form in the Greco-Roman world decorates, in carved relief, a stone ceiling in the temple of Hathor at Dendera (first century BC, Fig 37).[565] Also at Dendera, are two other zodiacs of a roughly contemporary date to that of the temple of Hathor, rendered in the previously most common design of a linear band. The imagery of the Dendera ceiling is very complex and detailed, showing Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek influence. A circle of the heavens is held up by four women (one at each 'corner') and inside the circle are (amongst others) representations of the signs of the zodiac and the *Dodekaoros* (stars of the hours). The zodiac does not yet appear as a circular running band, as in the synagogue pavements of Palaestina.

The earliest representations of the zodiac in a radial design appear on two carved relief stone ceilings at Palmyra; on a fragment of a ceiling and on a fully surviving ceiling

[565] Lehmann, 1945: 5, briefly discusses this ceiling and the development and transfer of ceiling design to mosaic pavements.

at the Temple of Bel (first century AD, Fig 38).[566] The fragment of a decorated ceiling shows a narrow zodiac band (with each sign in a radial compartment) and in the corner of the outer square, a personification of a wind.[567] The ceiling from the temple of Bel survived in more complete form. A central hexagon containing an image of Bel and six surrounding hexagons containing planetary deities (including a sun-god with radiate crown) are set within an inner circle. The outer circle contains a narrow zodiac band and in the corners of the outer square were images of winged creatures.[568] It has been pointed out previously[569] that this design of a central hexagon and six surrounding hexagons filled with representations of planetary deities is very similar to that found on a later mosaic pavement at Bir-Chana (late second/early third century AD) in North Africa.[570] The signs of the zodiac in this case, however, are contained within separate circular and hexagonal panels.

The similarity between the decoration of ceilings and the design of floor mosaics led scholars (such as Curtius and Lehmann) to conclude that there was an interrelationship between ceiling and floor decoration and that we see projected upon floors the schemes which were originally developed for ceilings. This view (to a greater or lesser extent) is now widely accepted and the design of a number of mosaic pavements do, it seems, have their origins in ceiling decoration. A clear example of this use of a decorative scheme originally intended for a ceiling is the pavement from Room 1 at the Constantinian Villa (CAT:3, p 8) (discussed in Chapter 2) at Antioch, where the decoration resembles that of a vaulted ceiling.[571] The zodiac imagery, as a reflection of the heavens, was perfectly

[566] Gundel, 1992, catalogue entry number 44.
[567] Hachlili, 2009: 50-51 also briefly describes this ceiling.
[568] Lehmann, 1945: 5, describes these figures as Sirens.
[569] Curtius, 1897: 349, Lehmann, 1945: 5 and Hachlili, 2009: 51.
[570] See Dunbabin, 1978: 249 for a full description.
[571] See Levi, 1947: 226-230. Although it is perhaps unlikely that the mosaicists were literally trying to depict a ceiling as though reflected on water.

suited to the decoration of domes and ceilings. This imagery was then transferred for use for the decoration of floors, keeping the shape (circular).

It would appear then that the basic design of two concentric circles set within a square, the outer circle of which contained a zodiac band was first conceived as a decorative scheme intended for a ceiling. By the third century this basic design, that now includes Helios driving his quadriga in the inner circle, appears on mosaic pavements. These earlier depictions of the sun-god in his chariot surrounded by the signs of the zodiac decorated pavements in the Western Empire, in villas at Münster-Sarnsheim (modern Germany, See Fig 39) and Avenches (modern Switzerland). These designs do not first occur (that we know of at least) in the eastern provinces and Palaestina.

A related composition that occurs in the East is the Calendar Mosaic of the second century at Antioch. The basic design of this mosaic is the same two concentric circles set within a square with the Four Seasons decorating the spandrels. The outer circle is, however, much wider than on the ceilings at Palmyra and the western pavements and it is divided into twelve large radial compartments. These compartments contain personifications of the months (the inner circle has unfortunately been lost). A number of other pavements have survived showing a similar plan to that of Antioch, for example; at the Antonine baths at Carthage in North Africa (fourth century), fragments of a pavement with radial design, personifications of the Months and the Four Seasons in the corners survives.[572] At the House of Kassiopeia (a villa, late third century, See Fig 40) at Palmyra, the basic design of two circles set within a square (with the seasons placed in the corners) also appears on a floor mosaic.

[572] See Dunbabin, 1978: 251 for a full description.

Late Antique zodiac imagery.

The only mosaic pavements dating to the Late Antique period containing zodiac imagery and Helios that also have a similar layout and design to the synagogues are three pavements from Greece. A zodiac decorates the floor of the *triclinium* of a villa discovered in Sparta (Fig 42) dating to the fourth century and consists of the familiar design of two concentric circles set within a square.[573] In the corners of the square are not the Seasons but the busts of the Four Winds. The signs of the zodiac are arranged as those of the synagogues: In large radial compartments and placed vertically (rather than placed in a horizontal position in the fashion of earlier zodiac bands). In the inner circle are personifications of the Moon (a crescent moon sits on her shoulders, rather like a pointed collar) and the Sun (no special attributes).

Another zodiac design (fifth century) decorates the floor of a room in the Tallaras baths on the island of Astypalaea in the Dodecanese (Fig 41).[574] As with the pavement from Sparta, the style of the mosaic is simple and the figures are not very detailed (See Fig 41). Personifications of the Four Seasons with various attributes are placed in the corners of the squares. The seasons of the south-west and north-east corners are both shown with a crescent shaped item with other items placed on it. These appear to be cloaks filled with fruit/vegetables (rather than cornucopia) similar to those carried by a number of personifications of Autumn dating to the Late Antique period, such as the example at the Church at Petra (CAT:26, p 79) (sixth century).[575] A cloak filled with fruit is also an attribute associated with personifications of Ge found on contemporary pavements in the Levant. The zodiac signs radial compartments and are placed in these compartments in the

[573] See Gundel, 1992, catalogue entry number 85.
[574] Jacoby, 2001: 225-230, gives a detailed description of this pavement.
[575] See Waliszewski, 2001: 244-259 for detailed descriptions of the figures of the Four Seasons, including Autumn.

same way as at Sparta (vertically, Fig 42). The inner circle contains a personification of Helios. He holds an orb/globe in his left hand, raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing/triumph and wears a crown of sun-rays. Although not executed in a classical style, this representation of Helios is shown with attributes of the classical deity Helios or Sol Invictus. Twelve square panels containing busts of the months also appear outside the zodiac design: Six busts to the west and six busts to the east (in two rows of three).

Finally, a zodiac pavement from a private dwelling was uncovered at Thessaloniki. Helios decorated the inner circle, the zodiac in the outer circle and busts of the Winds in the corners of the outer square. Busts of the Twelve Months appeared outside the zodiac panel.[576] In none of these Greek examples is Helios shown riding a chariot and at Sparta and Thessaloniki the Four Winds rather than the seasons decorate the corners of the outer square.

The zodiac pavements in the Levant.

Zodiac imagery has been discovered in seven Late Antique synagogues in Palestine at: Hammath Tiberias (late 4th century, Fig 43),[577] Yaphia (4th century, Fig 44), Sepphoris (5th century, Fig 45), Huseifa (late 5th/early sixth century, Fig 46),[578] Beth Alpha (6th century),[579] all in the Galilee, and Na'aran (late 6th century, Fig 47) and Susiya (6th century, Fig 48) in Judaea. In general the inner circle contains a figure riding in a horse drawn chariot (*quadriga).* The figure has attributes of the sun-god; a crown/nimbus with

[576] Unfortunately a short article in the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* is, as far as I can tell, all that has been published about this pavement so far. See Jacoby, 2001: 230, for a very brief description.
[577] For a discussion of the chronology of the site see Dothan, 1983: 66-70. His early 4th century date for the mosaic is disputed. Scholars now prefer a late 4th c date, for example Talgam, 2000: 101, Magness, 2003b: 369, Milson, 2004: 45.
[578] Avi-Yonah, 1934: 131, suggested that the synagogue could have been destroyed during the reign of Justinian. Hachlili, 2009: 35, prefers a late fifth century date.
[579] According to an Aramaic inscription the Beth Alpha pavement dates to the reign of Justin. This could be either Justin I (518-527) or Justin II (565-578). Sukenik, 1932: 57-58, suggested the reign of Justin I on historical grounds.

rays emanating from it and perhaps a whip or orb. The outer circle is divided into twelve segments, in a radial design, that contain a sign of the zodiac (representation or personification). In the corners of the outer square are personifications of the Four Seasons. The zodiac signs and seasons are usually named with Hebrew inscriptions, although the figure in the chariot is not (See Fig 50, for plans of all the zodiac pavements).

The remains of the pavement at Yaphia (Fig 44) have been the subject of some dispute. There have been suggestions that the imagery of this mosaic in fact represented the twelve tribes of Israel rather than the zodiac. The image of a bull (?) and three accompanying Hebrew letters contained within one of the interlaced circles of the outer circle are amongst the only remaining images.[580] Part of another circle and animal has survived, but it is very difficult to identify the animal. It is interesting to note that the only other mosaic panel (located in the nave, as is this possible zodiac) to survive intact from the synagogue at Yaphia contains a bust described by Barag as that of Helios.[581] As so little of the composition remains, this debate about the exact nature of the imagery will remain unsettled.

There is another pavement in Palaestina that may also have originally contained a zodiac panel. At Scythopolis, in the northern (probably Samaritan) synagogue (See Fig 49), the main pavement of the hall is divided into three panels. The top panel contains Jewish symbols; this imagery is often contained within a panel in the same pavement as a zodiac panel. The imagery here is very similar in content and design to other Jewish symbols panels that I will go on to discuss below (Two *menorah* flank a representation of

[580] Sukenik, 1951: 17-23, argued that the three letters were, '*resh', 'yod',* and '*mem'* and therefore the end of the name Ephraim (one of the twelve tribes), the symbol of which is an ox. Barag, 1976: 543, however, identifies the animal as a buffalo, not as an ox. Other scholars (for example Goodenough, 1953: 216-218) read the letters '*resh', 'yod'* and *'samekh',* the end of a transliteration of Aries and the imagery therefore that of the zodiac. See also Dothan, 1983: 82, note 268.

[581] Barag, 1976: 543.

the Torah shrine/Temple façade, with various cultic objects scattered across the panel). The mosaic of the middle panel has been entirely lost although it is still possible to see what the general composition of the panel was: two concentric circles set within a square. This is the basic design of all the other zodiac panels. It is also worth noting that the pavement here was laid by the same team of mosaicists (Marianus and Anina) who were responsible for the zodiac pavement of the synagogue at Beth Alpha.[582]

Outside this group of seven just mentioned, is the pavement in the synagogue at En-Gedi (late fifth/sixth century, also in Judaea), although there is no figural zodiac depicted.[583] The decoration of the pavements of this synagogue is purely aniconic and consists mainly of groups of inscriptions. One of the Hebrew inscriptions lists the names of the signs of the zodiac and then the corresponding Hebrew months.

Solar imagery

At Yaphia (Fig 44) and Huseifa (Fig 46) the inner circles of the design have been entirely lost and at Susiya (Fig 48) only part of a season and the guilloche border of the outer circle remain. The lower half of the circle has been damaged by a later wall at Hammath Tiberias (Fig 43) and iconoclasts damaged the figure of Helios and his horses at Na'aran (the signs of the zodiac at this site have also been damaged by iconoclasts, Fig 47). The inner circles at Beth Alpha and Sepphoris (Fig 45) are almost completely intact.

In each of the examples where the inner circle survives relatively intact (Sepphoris, Beth Alpha and Na'aran), a sun god/Helios is shown riding in a *quadriga*, a chariot drawn by four horses. The sun god/Helios is shown in a frontal position and the horses pull the chariot forwards (two on either side of the wheels). The body of the chariot itself is also

[582] See Tsafrir and Foester, 1997: 117 for a brief reference to the site and also the publication of the excavation by Zori, 1961: 149-67.
[583] Barag et al, 1981: 119, suggested a late fifth/early sixth century date, while Hachlili, 2009: 35, has assigned the mosaic a late sixth century date. See Levine, 1981: 141-145, for a discussion of the inscription.

shown 'face-on'. At Hammath Tiberias (Fig 43) the lower area of the inner circle has been damaged and it is therefore difficult to tell whether the chariot and horses were in profile or shown frontally. The figure of Helios is shown in profile, rather than facing the viewer.[584]

At Hammath Tiberias, Beth Alpha and Na'aran the figures riding in the chariot are shown with attributes of the sun-god Helios (although they differ in certain details and in the style of representation). At Sepphoris, however, a representation of the sun, not the sun-god, is shown riding in the chariot. Ten rays emanate from it, one of which beams down into the chariot giving the impression that the sun is 'standing' in the chariot as the sun-god does in the other examples.[585] On the sun's left hand side are the moon (shown as a circle with a crescent highlighted on it) and an eight-pointed star.

At Hammath Tiberias the Helios figure is a young man holding up his right hand in a gesture of triumph[586] and in his left hand he holds a globe/orb and a whip. He is shown with a golden crown and a nimbus. He wears a red cloak fastened at his right shoulder.[587] A crescent moon is depicted on his right and a seven pointed star on his left. The style and attributes of this depiction are similar to those of Helios in his chariot in Roman art, for example on a wall mosaic in the Tomb of the Julii, beneath the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome ($3^{rd}/4^{th}$ century). It was suggested by the excavator of the Hammath Tiberias synagogue, Dothan, that this figure at the centre of the zodiac has many of the

[584] Weiss, 2005: 107, believes that the chariot at Hammath Tiberias is shown from the side, Dothan, 1983: 40, argues for a frontal depiction. Although it is difficult to determine very much about the chariot and horses of the Hammath Tiberias zodiac, there are a few remaining details; under the left arm of Helios is the top of a mane and four hooves (of the hind legs of two horses?) at the bottom (viewers) left. The surviving part of the mane is under Helios's whip hand; perhaps the horses and chariot were in profile. Dunbabin, 1982: 66, states that examples of profile charioteers and frontal chariots are not known in Roman art. As the pavement at Hammath Tiberias is still very classical and Roman in appearance, a profile chariot is perhaps most likely.
[585] Weiss, 2005: 107.
[586] Alternatively a sign of blessing, see Weiss, 2005: 108.
[587] Dothan, 1983: 40, suggests a purple cloak.

characteristics of *Sol Invictus* (raised right hand, holding a globe and official/Imperial clothing).[588]

The Helios figure (wearing a crown with a nimbus) at Beth Alpha is directly facing the viewer and only his head and neck are visible above the front of the chariot. What appears to me to be a whip is shown to the figure's right and a small crescent moon to his left. The background is dark and many little stars are scattered across it. The schematic depiction of Helios and his *quadriga* at Beth Alpha are a complete contrast to the naturalistic depiction of Hammath Tiberias. Unfortunately, the Helios figure at Na'aran (and his horses) was damaged by iconoclasts. He is facing the viewer, his head surrounded by a nimbus emitting rays. He is wearing a clock covered with tiny stars and a small crescent moon. Very little else can be discerned (the background has also been lost).

The zodiac band

At Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth Alpha and Na'aran the outer circle is divided into twelve radial compartments, each one containing a sign of the zodiac. At Yaphia the outer circle was divided into twelve interlaced circles, not radial compartments, of which only one survives. Each sign is labelled in Hebrew (no inscriptions survive from Susiya and Huseifa) and at Sepphoris the names of the months of the year (also in Hebrew) accompany the signs. At Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris and Beth Alpha the zodiac bands run counter-clockwise and at Huseifa and Na'aran clockwise (only a circle containing a bull remains of the zodiac signs at Yaphia and none at all remain at Susiya). The signs correspond with their respective seasons only at Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris, not at Huseifa, Beth Alpha and Na'aran. At Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Yaphia and Huseifa the zodiac figures are pointing outwards (heads towards the inner circle, feet towards the

[588] Dothan 1968: 132-4 and 1983: 40-3.

outer rim). At Beth Alpha and Na'aran the signs are pointing inwards (heads towards the outer rim, feet towards the inner circle).

Although the traditional twelve signs of the zodiac appear on all the pavements where the bands survive intact (Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth Alpha, Na'aran), there is significant variation in the way in which the signs are depicted (although they all appear in the right order, whether going clockwise or counter-clockwise). At Hammath Tiberias Leo, Virgo and Scorpio are facing a different direction (counter-clockwise) from all the other signs, which all face clockwise (although the zodiac signs themselves are arranged running in a counter-clockwise direction). At Beth Alpha Sagittarius is the only sign not facing in the same direction as the other signs.

Sepphoris is unique in that each of the signs is accompanied by the figure of a man and a small eight pointed star (a smaller version of the star seen in the inner circle) in the top right of the compartment. Weiss suggested that these figures may be personifications of the months of the year (as pointed out above, a name of a month appears in Hebrew in each compartment). I agree with this view. The months of the year are often shown in Roman and Byzantine art personified, usually undertaking some seasonal activity (the Labours of the Months). In fact at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis, the Months are shown personified in a radial design, like the zodiac signs in the synagogues. The inner circle contains personifications (busts) of the sun and the moon (see Part 2 below for a full discussion of this pavement).[589]

Certain zodiac signs are also shown differently at different sites. Signs such as Leo, Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Scorpio and Capricorn are all shown in a similar manner. The signs of Virgo, Gemini and Libra, although different in certain details (for example the women

[589] See Fitzgerald (1939), Levi (1941) and Webster (1938:13-20) for descriptions and discussions.

representing Virgo have different styles of dress), are essentially the same. Aquarius, however, is shown differently on each pavement. At Hammath Tiberias a naked figure pours water from an amphora/jar and, strangely, the Hebrew inscription is written in mirror writing. At Huseifa a large amphora overflows with water. At Beth Alpha a figure draws water from a well with a bucket. The Hebrew word for Aquarius is *deli* (pail). Depictions of Aquarius as a pail drawing water from a well occur in later Jewish (and only Jewish) contexts, mainly medieval illuminated manuscripts and prayer books and later eastern European Jewish art.[590]

Sagittarius is portrayed as a centaur with a bow and arrow at Sepphoris (this sign is unfortunately lost at Hammath Tiberias). At Beth Alpha, Sagittarius is a human figure with a bow and arrow. According to Avi-Yonah the little that remains of the sign at Huseifa also shows a human figure.[591] Hachlili has suggested that the idea of an image of the pagan centaur may not have found favour with the particular congregations or simply the Hebrew word for Sagittarius, literally 'archer' was depicted exactly by the mosaicists.[592]

Pisces is usually shown in Roman art as a pair of fish facing in opposite directions (as at the mosaic of Bir-Chana, North Africa), and indeed this is how the sign is shown at Hammath Tiberias and Beth Alpha. In earlier Greek, Egyptian and Roman art the fish are often shown joined together with a ribbon or rope wrapped around their tails. At Na'aran, Pisces is shown as a pair of fish suspended from string (or a line). McKenzie pointed out the possible link to Egyptian art when discussing the second century Nabataean zodiac sculpture at Khirbet et-Tannur, in which Pisces is shown as two fish swimming in the same direction (a characteristic of Egyptian zodiac representation) and noted the image of Pisces

[590] This use of a bucket/pail to represent Aquarius is discussed in detail in Fishof, 2001: 34 and 2005.
[591] Avi-Yonah, 1934: 125.
[592] Hachlili, 2009: 42.

at Na'aran.[593] Wadeson has also suggested that evidence of Egyptian influence would not be surprising at Na'aran, due to the site's geographical location (as, she stated, it is the closest of the synagogues to Egypt).[594] An Egyptian link is an interesting possibility, although Na'aran is to the north of the Dead Sea (and, indeed, to the north of Susiya). It is also not the only one of the synagogue zodiacs to show the two fish of Pisces facing in the same direction. At Sepphoris a young man holds the two fish suspended from string (looking very much as though he has just brought them back from a fishing trip). A fisherman carrying two fish suspended from string/fishing line can also be seen on the 'Nile Festival' mosaic at Sepphoris (see Chapter 3, Part 2). While the depiction at Na'aran is without an accompanying fisherman, as at the synagogue of Sepphoris, I think it probable that the mosaicist of Na'aran wished to show prosperity and abundance and chose to portray Pisces as a catch of fish hanging from a fishing line.

The Four Seasons.

Bust personifications of the Four Seasons appear outside the two circles, in the corners of the surrounding square. The Seasons (represented as female) appear at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth Alpha, Na'aran and Susiya, all the pavements, in fact, where anything remains of these areas of the design. At Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth Alpha and Na'aran each season is accompanied by a Hebrew inscription naming them. At Huseifa only one season survives and is without a Hebrew name label. The Seasons at Sepphoris are also labelled in Greek. Hachlili has pointed out the similarities between the Greek names of the seasons at Sepphoris to those of the mosaic at the House of the

[593] McKenzie, 2008: 108.
[594] Wadeson, 2008: 3-4

Calendar from Antioch (CAT:2, P 6).[595] The seasons are also labelled *tropai* on both pavements.[596]

At Na'aran the Four Seasons have been damaged like all the other iconic images at this site. Parts of their outlines and attributes are still visible, as are the identifying inscriptions (except in the case of Summer which is almost entirely lost). At the earlier House of the Calendar pavement at Antioch (CAT:2, p 6, discussed in Part 2) the months of the year occupy the compartments of the outer circle and the Four Seasons occupy the corners of the outer square.

The styles of the personifications differ considerably between the pavements, although there are certain characteristics seen in all the examples. All the figures appear either holding or next to various items associated with the season that they represent. At Na'aran the seasons all hold a long slim object in their right hands.[597] The seasons of Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris are much more classical and naturalistic in style (classical drapery and more natural physical characteristics, for example) than the figures at Huseifa and Beth Alpha.

Comparison to the earlier zodiacs from the Western provinces.

Although there are similarities between the earlier western examples and those from Palaestina, there are also some interesting differences. At Münster-Sarnsheim there is a large inner circle in which Helios is shown frontally as is his chariot (Fig 39). As in the later examples from Palaestina (at Sepphoris, Beth Alpha and Na'aran), the horses are shown in symmetrical pairs, two to the left of the chariot and two to the right.[598] The outer circle is narrow and divided into twelve compartments filled with the signs of the zodiac

[595] Hachlili, 2009: 48.
[596] See Levi, 1947: 36-39, for a full discussion of the mosaic at Antioch and its iconographic sources.
[597] Hachlili, 2009: 48, suggests that these were wands.
[598] Parlasca, 1959: 84-9.

(placed horizontally). In the example from Avenches, the zodiac band is again narrow, but without divisions and in the corners of the square little figures hold up the outer circle.[599]

The balance of these compositions differs from the synagogue examples. The outer zodiac ring is much narrower in the earlier western examples and also on the ceiling of the temple of Bel (Fig 38); the focus is very much on the inner circle and the images contained there. In the synagogue zodiacs, the outer circle is much wider with large radial compartments containing a standing zodiac sign, rather than a running band (although at Münster-Sarnsheim there were divisions between signs, they were still placed horizontally as in the running zodiac bands, Fig 39).

Bianca Kühnel sees this change in balance between the two circles as one of the conscious adaptations of the Helios-in-Zodiac scheme for Jewish use.[600] She argues that the more balanced sizes of the two concentric circles are, particularly in the case of Sepphoris, an illustration of the dominant attitude of Rabbinic Judaism. The planets, stars, months, seasons and the signs of the zodiac are all ruled by an unseen God; there is no place for a hierarchy between the sun and the signs of the zodiac since they are all equally subject to the will of God. These synagogue zodiac schemes therefore show that God (who cannot be visualised) is behind the harmony of the universe, including heaven and earth.

Rachel Hachlili explains this difference between the earlier western examples and the later examples from Palaestina in terms of development.[601] The mosaic pavement from the triclinium of the House of the Calendar at Antioch (CAT:2, p 6), second century, shows a similar balance between inner and outer circles as the synagogue pavements. The basic design of the mosaic is the same two concentric circles set within a square and the

[599] Von Gonzenbach, 1961: 43-5, catalogue entry number 5.3, Mosaik II.
[600] Kühnel, 2009: 39.
[601] See Hachlili, 1977: 63-4 and 2009: 50-1.

Four Seasons also decorate the spandrels. The outer circle is, however, much wider than on the ceilings at Palmyra and the western pavements and is divided into twelve large radial compartments. These radial compartments contain personifications of the months (the inner circle has unfortunately been lost).

I agree with Hachlili's argument of a development of the scheme, rather than a more conscious, abrupt and specifically Jewish adaptation of an earlier Roman model. The design of these pavements had its origin in ceiling decoration and developed (the replacement of the many planetary personifications in the inner circle with the sun-god, for example). This design was adapted to suit the differing functions and contexts of the buildings that they decorated and also the differing meanings given to the imagery by the people who commissioned and gazed upon them. The design and arrangement developed in the east and continued to appear (although infrequently) and develop. In the Palestinian synagogues the subject (Helios-in-Zodiac) seen before only in the west (as far as we know) was taken and modified to suit the development that had occurred to the basic design in the east.

Associated imagery in the synagogues.

It is important to consider the imagery contained in the panels surrounding the zodiac as the synagogue pavements of the nave were apparently conceived as a single, framed panel or composition (carpet) divided into smaller panels. At Hammath Tiberias, Huseifa, Beth Alpha, Na'aran and Susiya the nave panel has a tripartite design with the zodiac panel taking the central position. At Sepphoris the nave panel is divided into seven horizontal bands (four of which are then vertically subdivided) with the zodiac panel again taking a central position in the composition. The mosaic pavement at Yaphia is very fragmentary and we cannot be sure of the overall design of the nave. This tripartite scheme appears in a

number of other synagogue pavements; at Hammath Gadara and Scythopolis, for example. This division of the synagogue nave pavement into three panels has itself been the subject of some speculation as to the significance of the composition of each panel and the three panels as a possible whole and intended decorative scheme.

On the pavements where the zodiac takes a central position there is some diversity of subject matter in the other, surrounding panels. However, at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth Alpha and Na'aran the panel above the zodiac contains Jewish symbols and a Torah Shrine/Temple façade. At Susiya, a panel to the north of the main nave carpet contains this imagery. At Huseifa, there is a panel in the north-western side of the wide border that surrounds the main carpet. Although there are some differences between the content and style of the panels, they are, in general, very similar (the panel at Huseifa differs the most from the other examples).

In five of these pavements, Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth Alpha, Na'aran and Susiya, the centre and focus of this panel of Jewish imagery is an architectural façade. At Hammath Tiberias, a set of double doors is flanked by a pair of columns. These columns support a gable/pediment. The doors are partially covered by a curtain, held up in three places and knotted. A curtain covering a doorway appears quite frequently in Late Antique mosaics, usually in the doorway of an image of a shrine or church (for example at the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius (CAT:42, p 123) at Nebo and the Church of Bishop Sergius (CAT:36, p 107) at Kastron Mefaa). The architectural façade at Sepphoris shows three columns on either side of the double doors. The columns support a pediment/gable with a conch shell in the centre.[602] The depiction at Susiya is slightly different. The double doors are flanked by two columns holding up the gable (conch shell in the centre) but there are two outer columns holding up a flat roof. At Beth Alpha and

[602] See Weiss, 2005: 65-73, for a full and detailed discussion of the Jewish images panel at Sepphoris.

Na'aran there are no columns flanking the door. At all these sites the façades are flanked by a pair of seven branched *menorot*. At Huseifa there is no architectural façade, its position is occupied by an inscription. Various items of cult equipment, such as the *shofar*, *lulav*, *ethrog*, incense shovel and tongs also appear on either side of the architectural façade in most cases.

There is some debate as to whether these panels are depicting the Temple in Jerusalem or the Torah shrine and the Ark of the Scrolls.[603] I think it most likely that the panels were intended to represent the Temple in Jerusalem, rather than the Torah shrine. In his discussion of the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic (Fig 45), Weiss describes the panelled double doors and notes that the features depicted characterise the decoration of contemporary wooden doors of the period.[604] The representations at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris and Susiya also have columns and other architectural elements (for example; steps up to the doors, as at Hammath Tiberias). The Beth Alpha example is different. The image, with its steep gable, ornate carved doors, lack of architectural elements and hanging lamp, does suggest the Torah shrine rather than the Temple. If we look at the panel as a whole, however, there are curtains on either side of the scene. Curtains appear in front of the doors at Hammath Tiberias. They also appear in other depictions of the Temple; at the 4th century Samaritan synagogues at el-Hirbeh (together with the showbread table) and Khirbat Samara, for example. It seems to me that at Beth Alpha the curtains (or perhaps the veil in front of the altar) and the doors have been opened and we (the viewers) are looking into the Temple towards the Torah shrine.

[603] Foerster, 1990: 545-552, believes the representation at Susiya to be the façade of the Temple and similar to a representation of the Temple at the Chapel of Priest John at Nebo. Weiss, 2005: 65-72, believes the image at Sepphoris to be a representation of the Temple. See Hachlili, 2009: 23-33, for a full discussion of all the images, which she identifies as Torah shrines or Arks of the Scrolls.
[604] Weiss, 2005: 65.

It is interesting to note that the two panels above the zodiac and below the Jewish symbols and Temple panel at Sepphoris depicted more imagery concerned with the Temple. The panel directly above the zodiac was divided into three smaller panels; the first small panel shows the daily sacrifice at the Temple and contained a ram, a jar of oil (identified with a Hebrew inscription), a container of fine flour (again identified in Hebrew).[605] The second small panel depicts the showbread table with twelve loaves of bread and the third panel a basket of the first fruits. The panel above this shows the sacrificial altar of the Temple, a bull and a lamb, a Hebrew inscription 'Aaron' identifying the almost entirely lost image of a human figure and a water basin.

Biblical scenes appear with the zodiac at a number of sites. The Binding (or sacrifice) of Isaac appears at both Sepphoris (below the zodiac) and at Beth Alpha (again in a panel below the zodiac). At Beth Alpha the hand of God appears above the depiction of Abraham.[606]At Susiya, the original scene to the west of the zodiac (replaced by a geometric pattern, along with the zodiac, at a later date) would have been Daniel and the lions.

The significance of the zodiac on the synagogue pavements.

Elsewhere in the Levant, zodiac imagery (despite apparent Jewish suspicion of iconic imagery and of the zodiac) had appeared previously in synagogues. At the synagogue at Dura Europos, on the Euphrates (dated by an inscription to AD 244/45[607]) amongst the decoration on the ceiling bricks/tiles, symbols of the zodiac were discovered; two examples of Pisces (two fish swimming in opposite directions), seventeen examples of

[605] Weiss, 2005: 91-4, describes this scene in detail and identifies it as the daily sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem.
[606] This 'Divine Hand' image has its origins in ancient Near Eastern art and appears in art of the Roman period, for example at the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, see Colledge, 1976, and also a number of times in the frescoes of the synagogue at Dura-Europos (of which much has been written, see Kraeling, 1979 and Gutman, 1992 for good overviews).
[607] Perkins, 1973: 56. See also Kraeling, 1979, for a full overview of the synagogue and its art.

Capricorn and twenty-one images of Sagittarius (a centaur firing a bow and arrow). This is a very limited range of signs and they were interspersed with the other decorative elements on the ceiling; there was certainly not a unified zodiac, as at the later synagogues. Kraeling suggested that these signs were perhaps associated with important phases of the agricultural year. Zodiac signs have also been discovered in bas-reliefs from the synagogues at er-Rafid, Kefr-Birim and Capernaum, all thought to date from the third century AD.[608] There was no unified composition or the radial design found at the later synagogues.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the appearance of the zodiac (pagan Hellenistic imagery) in synagogues at this period. It had been a widely held belief throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century that the Jews, during the Roman and Late Antique period, were lacking in artistic skills and creativity. Very little figurative art had been recovered from ancient Jewish contexts. This lack of artistic expression was believed to be due to the reading of the second commandment (Exodus 20: 4-5) as a strict prohibition against the creation of images of living things.[609] As with much of the rest of the 'Old' Testament and, indeed, the 'New' Testament, these lines may be interpreted in several ways; either as a prohibition on the making of images of living creatures and their worship or only a prohibition on the worship of such images. It has further been pointed out that Josephus had observed that depicting the zodiac had been completely forbidden in the Temple of Jerusalem.[610] It would appear that after a period when aniconic art dominated, there was a relaxing of attitudes and a rise in popularity in iconic art from the

[608] Kraeling, 1979: 42.
[609] *The Jewish Encyclopaedia,* 1902 outlined this view of the Jews lacking artistic skill and forbidding the creation of images. See Hachlili, 1996: p111-115, for a discussion of figural imagery in Jewish art.
[610] See Levine 2003: 102.

third century AD.[611] It is clear from the largely aniconic mosaic pavements found at the synagogues of En-Gedi (where birds are the only living creature depicted) and also of Rehov ($5^{th}/6^{th}$ century)[612] that there was continued resistance to the use of iconic imagery. This historic suspicion of iconic imagery in the east (in particular the Palestinian provinces) would later form the foundation of the iconoclasm that swept the wider Empire.

The design recurs over quite a long period of time and develops. At Hammath Tiberias (4^{th} century), the style is more natural and classical (the Helios figure is more like the Imperial Sol Invictus) and at Beth Alpha and Na'aran (both sixth century) the figures are much more stylised. The image of the zodiac does not decorate any other mosaic pavements in the Levant in Late Antiquity. In fact, the design of two concentric circles (the outer with a radial design) set within a square is also very rare in the Levant at this period, even without a zodiac at its centre. Apart from the examples from the synagogues mentioned above, there is only one other occurrence of a mosaic pavement with a radial design in the region; the pavement of Hall A at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis.[613]

Conclusion

As I stated in the introduction to this subject, the appearance of the zodiac on mosaic pavements in certain synagogues during the Late Antique period has been the cause of extensive speculation and produced many different theories and explanations. Some scholars have presented astrological or symbolic explanations for the zodiac, while others have interpreted it as a calendar or as being an allegory of the power of God or indeed argued that the Helios figure is in fact a representation of God. These differing

[611] See Hachlili, 1996: 96-126 and 2009: 18, for a concise review of the archaeological and contemporary textual evidence.
[612] See Vitto, 1981: 90-95, for a discussion of the synagogue and its decoration.
[613] Fitzgerald, 1939, and Avi-Yonah, QDAP, 1933: 143-4, 1934: 186 and 1935: 11, present good overviews and discussions of the mosaics from this complex.

interpretations have perhaps been influenced by the differing perceptions that scholars have of Judaism in Late Antiquity (and indeed occasionally shaped by how they perceive or wish Judaism to be perceived in the present day).

Levine has criticised the assumption of universally accepted meanings, when a scholar defines a precise meaning of a depiction and then applies this interpretation to similar representations appearing in other synagogues from different times and places.[614] The limited relevant literary and archaeological sources have, he argues, led to the use of a wide range of problematic literary sources (such as Philo and Josephus) and other evidence (such as contemporary Christian material and later copies of Late Antique manuscripts) being used to substantiate a theory. As he further pointed out, the meaning of a depiction of Helios would differ according to its date and location (metropolitan or rural) because differences in interpretation are inevitable over centuries and in differing social contexts. While I believe that differences in date and location are important factors to take into account and that the pavements at Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris could be (and have been) interpreted separately due to certain key differences in imagery, it is also important to consider that the zodiac motif as it appears in the synagogues does not change in its depiction or arrangement very much over time and from place to place.

One theory that has been accepted and put forward by a number of scholars is that pagan motifs and imagery when used in a Jewish context lost their original symbolism and meaning, becoming merely ornamental and decorative.[615] Any pagan or Hellenistic imagery was simply chosen for its aesthetic appeal and was not considered symbolic in any way by those that viewed it. The zodiac, by this argument, was picked and transported without major change from Roman art to simply decorate the synagogues. The figure of

[614] Levine, 2003: 92-95.
[615] Urbach, 1953: 150-51, Avi-Yonah, 1973 (although he attaches significance to the appearance of the zodiac motif) and Avigad, 1976, amongst others.

the sun-god at the centre of the zodiac was therefore not considered as a representation of an actual god or idolatrous. In some of the Rabbinic literature dating to the Late Antique period a distinction was apparently made between statues of the gods made for decoration and those created for cultic purposes.[616] I doubt, however, that the zodiac and the sun-god would have been an obvious choice of motif to place on the floor of a synagogue (a place of worship) for purely decorative purposes. We rarely see images of other pagan gods or mythological scenes on surviving floors from other synagogues. At the synagogue at Gaza (sixth century) a figure depicted in the manner of Orpheus (playing a lyre, surrounded by animals) does appear in the nave.[617] The Orpheus figure is, however, clearly labelled 'David' by a Hebrew inscription by his head. The Helios figure is never named in the synagogue mosaics, unlike the surrounding zodiac personifications and the Four Seasons. It seems to me more likely that the zodiac and sun-god imagery has been taken from the Greco-Roman artistic repertory for a reason (as the Orpheus imagery was taken and then used for a purpose) rather than as a simply decorative motif. The Helios figure remains un-named, I believe, as it is meant as a representation of the sun, not sun-god (to label the figure '*Sol*' or *'Helios'* would have been rather problematic). The personifications of the sun and the moon are also not labelled at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis, although the personifications of the months are. If the Helios figure was meant to represent a biblical character, then it surely would have been accompanied by an appropriate Hebrew name label (as happens in biblical scenes in other synagogues and in the biblical scenes in the naves of Beth Alpha and Sepphoris themselves).

[616] For example, the story of Rabbi Gamliel ben Simeon visiting the Bath of Aphrodite at Ptolemais-Acre, which contained a statue of the goddess. The Rabbi viewed the statue as a work of art and was not offended by its presence. See Avi-Yonah, 1976: 72 for a full description. Stern, 2000: 244, also draws attention to these stories to support his argument of the zodiacs ornamental function in the synagogues.
[617] See Ovadiah, 1981: 129-132, for a discussion of the mosaics.

An interpretation that continues to be popular is that the zodiac functioned as a type of calendar. Sternburg noted that, in his opinion the design of the zodiac at the synagogue of Hammath Tiberias had links to the rules for determining the (Hebrew) calendar by the Patriarch Hillel II, published in AD 358/359.[618] Talgam supported this idea and added that up until the second half of the fourth century the authority for fixing months and dates lay with the Patriarch, whose seat was at Hammath Tiberias.[619] An inscription in the Hammath Tiberias mosaic mentions Severus, described as a servant of the Patriarch. The first appearance of the zodiac on a synagogue pavement therefore, it is argued, coincided with the publication of rules governing the Hebrew calendar. This imagery then continued to be used in synagogues to illustrate this calendar. Levine has, in the case of Hammath Tiberias, gone further and suggested that this zodiac was a calendar and an illustration of the patriarchs' association with the Roman Empire and perhaps more particularly with the Emperor Julian, who had promised to restore the Temple in Jerusalem.[620] This was then, in his opinion, a statement of allegiance to the Empire. Helios in the Hammath Tiberias example does indeed have many of the attributes of the Imperial *Sol Invictus*, but I think it is a stretch to assume that this was any sort of statement of allegiance particularly when placed on the floor of a synagogue. The use of imagery associated with *Sol Invictus* can perhaps be best explained as direct lifting of Greco-Roman imagery which then over time the evolves in its Jewish context and those elements that are deemed to be inappropriate or unnecessary are dispensed with in the later examples.

Avi-Yonah suggested that each sign of the zodiac represented one of the twelve months of the year and the lists of the priestly courses probably available in a synagogue

[618] Sternburg, 1972: 72-103. See also Levine, 2003: 110-115. It should be pointed out that this publication of rules for the Hebrew calendar in AD 358/59 is first described in the considerably later writings (twelfth century AD) of Abraham bar Hiyya.
[619] Talgam, 2000: 101.
[620] Levine, 2003: 110-115.

would then be used to further divide the months into weeks.[621] This calendar was then used to calculate the days for festivals and the new moon. Hachlili has supported this theory and pointed out that in the En-Gedi inscription the signs of the zodiac are listed, followed by their corresponding months.[622] A regular calendar was important for ritual and therefore suitably placed in the centre of a synagogue floor.[623] There are a number of problems with the idea that all the zodiacs functioned as effective ritual calendars. The Hebrew calendar was a lunar one (the importance of the festival of the new moon is stressed); the Zodiac-and-Helios would suggest a solar calendar. A small moon does appear in the background but is certainly not the focus of the inner circle: Helios and the chariot are. On the mosaic floors of the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis and at the villa at Sparta personifications of both the sun and the moon appear. If a useful ritual calendar was intended wouldn't the moon been given more prominence? Also, as I pointed out in the description of the pavements above, the zodiac signs run counter clockwise in some examples and clockwise in others and the Four Seasons do not always correspond with the right zodiac signs.

A great number of astrological and mystical theories have also been put forward. Goodenough argued that the pagan images, including the Zodiac-and-Helios, found in certain synagogues were evidence for a mystical, Hellenised form of Judaism (although his theories have now been largely dismissed).[624] Sukenik considered that astrology was widespread in the Late Antique Jewish community and that the zodiacs were indicative of

[621] Avi-Yonah, 1964: 46-57.
[622] Hachlili, 2009: 54-56, for her full and detailed argument.
[623] Avi-Yonah, 1964: 56 and Hachlili, 2009: 55.
[624] Goodenough, 1958: 168-71, 214-15.

the belief in astrology and the zodiac signs.[625] This idea has been echoed subsequently in the work of a number of other scholars.

The figure of Helios himself has also been deemed of astrological or particular significance to the congregations and the focus of the zodiac panel. The image of Helios has been found on Jewish amulets, sometimes alongside the names of angels.[626] Roussin argues that the members of the congregation may have offered prayers to Helios as a minor deity.[627] Goodman makes the bold claim that the God of Jews was in fact being represented by the image of Helios.[628] It is perhaps unlikely that Helios, a figure associated with the Imperial cult and also with Christ would have been chosen for this purpose or that an image of God would have been deemed a suitable decoration for the floor. The Divine Hand motif had been used previously to represent God at Dura Europos and it is also present in the scene of the binding of Isaac underneath the zodiac panel at Beth Alpha. Wadeson proposed that the figure of Helios represented the Prophet Elijah (the signs of the zodiac perhaps representing the twelve tribes of Israel). This is certainly an interesting argument, although I think that if the figure was intended as a representation of Elijah then it would have almost certainly been given a name label to avoid inevitable (and perhaps unsettling) confusion.[629]

That the figures of Helios, the Four Seasons and the zodiac may have been representations of angels has also been discussed. Roussin describes the images in the corners of the outer squares as the 'angels' of the four seasons.[630] Ness's explanation is that the zodiacal constellations, as angels, represent the presence and power of God (who

[625] Sukenik, 1934: 64-7.
[626] For discussions about magical amulets see Rutgers 1992: 109 and 1995: 122.
[627] Roussin, 1997: 90.
[628] Goodman, 2003: 133-145.
[629] It is also interesting to note that the inscription from the synagogue of En-Gedi while listing the signs of the zodiac and the months does not list the twelve tribes of Israel.
[630] Roussin, 1997: 90.

cannot be seen).[631] Magness presents the Helios-and-Zodiac as representing the celestial sphere and the Helios figure itself as a representation of the divine super angel Metatron, who has been compelled to appear and impart Torah knowledge to the congregation (who wore a crown and was of fiery substance, therefore making the Helios imagery and even attributes of *Sol Invictus* appropriate).[632]

The continuing popularity of the Helios-and-Zodiac imagery on mosaic pavements in synagogues over a long period of time and the retention of almost all of the elements of that imagery (with only subtle changes and evolution of form) from the earliest known zodiac at Hammath Tiberias to the latest survivals from Na'aran and Susiya do indeed suggest that it held some special meaning or appeal for Jewish communities in Late Antiquity. An explanation further to those given above may be possible. The appearance of this imagery in synagogues may be linked to hopes of, and thanksgiving for, agricultural and economic prosperity. In this, they are similar to the fishing scenes that I discussed in Chapter 3, Part 1, that Dunbabin described as *Xenia* scenes and Maguire would categorise as 'talismans'.[633] I think, as I stated above, that it is certain that the sun and not the sun-god or any biblical or angelic figure was meant to be represented by the image of Helios in the inner circle. In fact at Sepphoris the personification has been replaced with a more literal depiction of the sun. The sun is being shown surrounded by the twelve zodiac constellations (or months of the year, the names of which also appear next to the zodiac signs in the Sepphoris mosaic) with the Four Seasons and their attributes and fruits of their

[631] See Ness, 1997: 92. Similar ideas that the zodiac and the Four Seasons represented the Divine Order of the universe and the power of the unseen God can be seen in Kühnel, 2000: 39, Foerster, 1987: 225-34 and Figueras, 2003: 53. Ness, 1997, further adds that the zodiac signs were representations of angels, God's deputies.

[632] Magness, 2003b: 363-89 and 2005: 1-52. She presents an extremely complex and detailed argument, perhaps overly so. Metatron appears in the *Hakhalot* texts that describe journeys into heaven in search of Torah knowledge. The date of these texts is disputed. Scholem, 1961, argued that the ideas were formed in the third century, as does Elior, 1997: 226, although Kuyt, 1995: 3, argues that no solid evidence exists before the ninth century.

[633] Dunbabin, 1978, 126 and Maguire, 2007:60-1.

bounty. The use of agricultural calendars, the Labours of the Months, the Four Seasons and seasonal and agricultural imagery were all popular during this period and I think that it may be that the congregations of these synagogues preferred to use the zodiac (that could be made more their own) to these other images of prosperity which were associated with these ideas in Christian and other contexts.

As stated above, I do not believe that these zodiacs were meant to be effective and functioning calendars that could be used to determine the exact dates of agricultural festivals or harvests, but were more of an illustration of the source of a congregation's prosperity and a reminder of the festivals and bounty of each stage of the year. On the mosaic at Sepphoris not only do the names of the months appear with each sign of the zodiac but personifications accompany many of the animal signs and are similar to the personifications of the labours of the months that we see elsewhere in this period: the sign of Pisces is being carried like a catch of fish by a human figure, for example. Roussin noted that the personification of Virgo at Hammath Tiberias carries a torch and that a female personification carrying a torch also appears on the second century pavement form the House of the Calendar at Antioch (CAT:2, p 6).[634] The torch held by Virgo at Hammath Tiberias may be, she argues, a symbol of *Succoth*, the festival of torches and the Jewish autumn harvest festival. In the Calendar of 354, the figure of June is shown holding a flaming torch and accompanying writing refers to the ripening of corn; a torch was a symbol of the rites of Ceres, signalling the beginning of the harvest.[635] At the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis, the personification of the sun also carries a flaming torch.

[634] See Roussin, 1997: 87.
[635] See Roussin, 1997: 83-96. Also Stern, 1953. *Le Calendrier de 354* and Salzman, 1990, *On Roman Time,* for more detailed descriptions and explanations.

The imagery of the surrounding panels should also be considered. Images of the Temple of Jerusalem and other ritual objects are frequently found in surrounding panels. The Temple of Jerusalem (destroyed in the first century AD) had been the only place where the sacrifices could be made to the Jewish God. Depictions of the Temple and the sacrifices and produce that would have been offered, may not only indicate a yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple (as has been previously suggested)[636] but also represent a way for the congregation to symbolically offer prayer, the sacrifice and the fruit of their hard work, giving thanks for their prosperity and reaffirming and reclaiming this part of their identity. This imagery and the imagery of the zodiac panel, with its references to the natural cycle and its bounty are perfectly complementary.

Inscriptions from a number of synagogues show the importance placed upon agricultural produce and, naturally enough, donations. An inscription in the synagogue at Beth Alpha notes that the residents of the village sold a hundred cubits of wheat to pay for the mosaic floor.[637] Tithes and the seventh-year produce were important to the Jewish communities throughout Late Antiquity, even after the destruction of the Temple. In a letter apparently from the Emperor Julian to the Patriarch Hillel II, the Emperor criticises the heavy tax burden placed upon the Jews by their own hierarchy.[638] At the synagogue of Rehov, a twenty-nine line, 365 word inscription in the mosaic floor survives.[639] It is concerned with agricultural tithes and seventh-year produce in the various districts of the Holy Land and lists the forbidden and permitted fruits. The details of these tithes had been

[636] For example, see Netzer and Weiss, 1997: 36, for detailed discussion of this idea.
[637] See Avi-Yonah, 1933: 146, for translations of all the mosaic inscriptions at the synagogue.
[638] For a description and discussion of this letter see Levine, 2003: 110-115.
[639] See Vitto, 1981: 90-94 and Sussmann, 1981:146-151. The dating of the inscription is uncertain and is usually put at some time during the 5th/6th century, although Sussmann, 1981: 150, suggests that the early seventh century is a possibility.

set down in the Bible although there had always been an on-going debate over the exact details, due to the severe burden they often imposed.[640]

It has often been noted that the zodiac does not appear on mosaic floors in Christian contexts and I will briefly discuss this issue to conclude. Roussin amongst others has attributed this to a Christian suspicion of magic and astrology and the association of these practices with Judaism.[641] That astrology was indeed regarded with suspicion by the Christian authorities is well attested; a number of laws legislating against astrology were brought in by the early Christian Emperors.[642] Astrology was believed to be opposed to Christian views of divine providence and free will and connected to the belief in the divinity of the planets and the stars.[643] Christianity was a new religion, still shaping its own identity, suspicious of paganism and Judaism, actively looking for converts and jealously guarding its adherents. It must also be pointed out that the image of Helios and Helios in his chariot had been associated by Christians with Jesus Christ.[644] Pagan imagery associated with astrology and Judaism would have been considered an inappropriate and perhaps even dangerous decoration for the floor of a church. It could perhaps be speculated that the Jewish communities were making a statement in choosing to use the zodiac for their own purposes in their synagogues; secure and confident enough in their own identity and monotheism to use pagan imagery; they were choosing a motif for their religious spaces that the wider Christian community rejected.

[640] Leviticus 25-29, Deuteronomy 14: 22-29 and 26: 12-15 and Numbers 18.
[641] Roussin, 1997: 90.
[642] In AD 357/58 by Constantius, then two more laws by Valentinian and finally in AD 409 Honorius ordered that astrologers were to be expelled from Rome and their books burnt.
[643] See Hegedus, 2007: 6-12.
[644] Helios in his chariot in a wall mosaic in the Tomb of the Julii in Rome is an example of this association and the motif worked perfectly there to represent salvation and resurrection.

Part 2: Rural Calendars

The surviving depictions of calendars on Late Antique mosaic pavements in the region are represented by the zodiac discussed above and the personification of the Twelve Months shown engaged in various agricultural activities and rural pursuits; the subject of this section. All the images of the zodiac come from Jewish synagogues, in contrast to the personifications of the Months, which only appear in Christian contexts during Late Antiquity in the Levant (the exception being at the synagogue at Sepphoris in which personifications of the Months accompany their zodiac signs). The images from the synagogue are much more uniform in design and appearance in contrast to the variation between the personifications of the Months discussed below. The two communities apparently adapted different iconographic elements from the repertory of classical art to suit their own needs. See **Map 9**, (Catalogue, p 166)

Late Antique mosaic calendars located outside the Levant

Several examples of calendar mosaics have been discovered outside the Levant dated to Late Antiquity in Greece and North Africa: Two pavements on the Greek mainland at Argos (Fig 51) and Tegea (Fig 52) can certainly be attributed a Late Antique date and two pavements from North Africa at Carthage.[645] A number of earlier pavements have been found in the North African provinces and I shall briefly outline these before the discussion of the Late Antique examples from that region.

[645] Another mosaic of the months has been uncovered at Thebes. Apparently four panels containing the personifications of July, February, May and April formed part of the border of a hunting pavement. Very little seems to have been published and no exact date for this pavement has been released, simply that it predates the ninth or tenth centuries AD. Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 121, gives a very brief description. Dunbabin (1999:276) states merely that the building is from the Christian period and mentions the inscription concerning the mosaicists (that I discussed in my introduction). I have decided not to include this pavement in my discussion.

The pavement at Argos (Fig 51) is one of a series of interesting mosaics that were uncovered in the remains of what had been a large villa. The pavements of the Months is some 13m long and divided into seven large panels, designed to be viewed from the adjoining courtyard. The first panel has been lost, but the other six contain pairs of personifications of the Twelve Months, each holding an appropriate attribute and most are shown busy with a rural task or in some cases making ceremonial offerings. All of the months are given name labels (usually placed beside their heads) in Greek (of their Latin names).[646] The personifications of January and March are not shown as rural labourers. The figure of January is dressed in a purple edged toga and dropping gold coins from his right hand; this man is apparently a consul celebrating his appointment. This figure is similar to the earlier personification of January from the House of the Calendar at Antioch, discussed below. March is a soldier (Mars?), complete with helmet, boots and spear in his left hand. He points to a bird with his right hand and in front of him is a vessel filled with a liquid.[647] The other months are engaged in the rural pursuits appropriate for their time of year, such as June as a harvester, April as a shepherd and September collecting grapes.

At a basilica at Tegea (Fig 52), the personifications of the Months are, as at Argos, busy with their respective activities. Unfortunately, the personifications of both January and March have been lost. The excavator of the site, Bérard, described the March personification before it was destroyed as being represented by the figure of a soldier carrying a shield and spear.[648] Four panels in this pavement contain personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise.[649]

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[646] All aspects of the pavements found at this site are discussed in detail by Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974. The lost first panel may have been a dedicatory inscription, see Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 23.
[647] Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 25, suggests milk.
[648] This is quoted in Levi, 1941: 257.
[649] The date of this pavement has the subject of some speculation; Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974, 121, suggests the late fourth century AD.

Mosaics containing imagery of rural activities began to increase in popularity in the North African provinces from around the third century AD and it is from this period that the first mosaic calendar appears: The Calendar Mosaic from the Maison des Mois at El Djem is attributed a date no later than the beginning of the third century.[650] This pavement consists of a series of square panels containing personifications of the Four Seasons (unusually they are male) and the Twelve Months. The design of this calendar is apparently from an earlier Roman model with minimal adaptation. The activities of the personifications are mainly (with the exception of only three months) those of religious ceremony and not the rural/agricultural pursuits that are more usually depicted in the later examples in the Levant. In the slightly earlier mosaic from the House of the Calendar at Antioch (discussed below) there does appear to have been some effort to adapt the Roman figural calendar to be better suited to the local region (with the possible illustration of local festivals). The personifications on the pavement at El Djem, on the other hand are, according to Dunbabin, depicting ceremonies from traditional Roman festivals little known outside the Italian peninsular.[651]

The remains of a calendar mosaic originally from Carthage and now in the British Museum are in a very fragmentary condition.[652] From these remains it is however clear that the design was a familiar one; a radial design with a central medallion (now lost). There was no formal outer circle, as the twelve panels were arranged to form a circle. All of the remaining personifications are female and are shown engaged in various tasks. These personifications are not shown as peasants labouring in the fields as they are all well

[650] Dunbabin, 1978: 111, brings together the various arguments and evidence for this dating.
[651] It has been suggested that the patron of this mosaic was of Italian descent and wished to contrast himself with the provincial African elite. See Dunbabin, 1978: 111, for a full explanation and discussion.
[652] The date is not certain. Stern, 1953; 215, agreed with the earlier excavators and commentators that put the date of the pavement at the middle of the fourth century AD. Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 126 believed that the similarities between this pavement and a group of pavements from Tripolitania, North Africa (dated to the third century) were indicative of an earlier third century date.

dressed and elegant. March stands next to a pail of milk with two baskets. One of the personifications, identified by Levi, Stern and Akerstrom-Hougen as April, is very clearly performing at a religious ceremony; she is dancing in front of an altar upon which stands a statue of Venus.[653] July stands picking fruit to eat from a fine dish and November seems to be holding a sistrum. It would appear that the Months were carrying out religious duties linked to festivals and also enjoying the fruits of their seasonal agricultural bounty.

The final mosaic from North Africa was also uncovered at Carthage. This pavement was displayed in Paris in the late nineteenth century then disappeared. There is now only a detailed drawing to work from. The design was of an inner and outer circle set within a rectangle. The outer circle was not divided formally into radial compartments and the personifications of the Twelve Months were placed evenly, standing with feet towards the outer edge and heads towards the inner medallion. Full length personifications of the Four Seasons holding cornucopias sit in the corners of the outer rectangle. All of the personifications had Latin name labels. All of the months in this example hold agricultural/rural attributes and are labouring at a seasonal rural activity. In the central medallion was an impressive female personification of the Earth. This pavement seems to me to be much closer in design and imagery to the later pavements of the Levant, including the zodiac panels. Levi dated this pavement stylistically to the second century AD.[654] Stern and Akerstrom-Haugen both preferred a later fourth century/early fifth century date and I would tend to agree with this later dating.[655]

[653] See Levi, 1941: 259-60, Stern, 1953: 215-6 and Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 127.
[654] Levi, 1941: 252-3.
[655] See Stern, 1953: 216 and Akerstrom-Haugen, 1974: 124.

The Northern provinces: Syria and Phoenicia

There are very few examples of mosaic calendars located in the northern provinces, in fact only one example of a Late Antique pavement containing the personifications of the Months engaged in rural labours has so far been uncovered; the fragmentary pavement from the d'Awza'i villa complex (attributed a date of AD 450-550, See Fig 53), in Phoenicia Maritima.[656] At the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) at Qabr Hiram also in Phoenicia, there are bust personifications of the Months (and the Seasons) in the side aisles. Although these figures at Qabr Hiram are not actively engaged in any agricultural activities, combined with the pastoral images, images of the hunt and scenes of the vintage found on the pavements of the church (all mentioned in previous chapters), I think it is important to include a discussion. There are no examples of calendars/Labours of the Months dating to the Late Antique period in the Syrian provinces. I will briefly discuss the mosaic from the House of the Calendar (CAT:2, p 6) at Antioch, mentioned in Part1 of this chapter. This pavement is the earliest example of this type of design in the Levant and an important starting point for the discussion of the later examples.[657]

Syria

The House of the Calendar at Antioch was a large private villa of which only the pavements of the triclinium and a corridor now survive (CAT:2, p 6). The mosaic of the calendar has been heavily damaged, but enough survives to give us a clear idea of the design. The design of the pavement is the familiar square containing an outer and inner circle from the discussion of the zodiac pavements in Part 1. In the corners of the square are female bust personifications of the four seasons; only Winter and Spring survive and

[656] The excavator, Chehab, 1957: 123-39, when assessing the evidence from the complex believed this the most likely period for the mosaics to have been laid.

[657] During the excavation of this pavement finds were discovered in the underlying deposit which fairly accurately placed the date of this mosaic to the beginning of the second century AD immediately after the earthquake of AD 115. See Levi, 1947: 36.

both figures had wings. The outer ring was divided into twelve radial compartments, each originally containing a personification of one of the Twelve Months. Very little of this outer ring survives but from the little that does survive, it appears that the Months were positioned next to the correct Season. January (located opposite Winter) is shown as a man wearing a wreath of leaves on his head, a white tunic/toga (?) and holding a bowl. Both Levi and Campbell believe that this figure is pouring a libation.[658] Levi goes on to argue that this representation is similar to the earlier western Roman era personifications of January on figured calendars in which an official is shown performing a rite during state celebrations.[659] March is shown as female and also wears a wreath of leaves and a white tunic with a red cloak. In her hands she carries a cup and a spear. This figure also appears to be carrying out a religious duty of some kind, as does the figure of May. May (male) carries a torch in one hand and a vase in the other. The last surviving month is that of April (damaged) who is barefoot and carrying an animal (probably a lamb as in so many other personifications of this month). Nothing remains of the imagery of the inner circle.

This calendar would seem to have much in common with the contemporary figural calendars in the West; the Months are engaged in activities related to the religious festivals, not agricultural labours as in the later examples from the Greek East. Levi claims that this calendar was an adaption of the western Roman figural festival calendars and that the figures in the Antioch example are celebrating special local events, rather than the festivals common at Rome.[660] The imagery from the Syrian provinces remains classical

[658] See Levi, 1947: 37 and Campbell, 1988: 61.
[659] Perhaps this figure is that of a consul assuming office on the 1st January and performing the sacrifice at the Capitol, as at the Late Antique example at Argos. See Levi, 1947: 37 and Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 73-4, who gives a detailed description of this personification and the history of the personification of January in the Roman west.
[660] Levi points out that the names of the Months and the Seasons in Greek are those of the Macedonian calendar of Antioch. See Levi, 1947: 36.

in both style but also in conception and there is no hint of the later rural labours that we see in the southern provinces.

Phoenicia Maritima

A large villa, containing a number of figural pavements was discovered south-west of Beirut and 1km away from the villa at Jenah (CAT:11, p 28), at Awza'i (Fig 53).[661] Unfortunately the mosaic of the calendar has survived in a very fragmentary condition. Only three of the panels remain; two square panels each containing the personification of a Month flank a circular panel containing the personification of a Season. To the right is the male figure of April, with curly hair and wearing a short tunic; over his shoulders he carries a lamb.[662] The circular panel in the middle contains a female bust personification of Summer who wears a wreath of fruit. The panel to the left is a personification of October (the Months and the Seasons were apparently muddled here and not placed in the correct position), carrying a hare.

At the Church of St. Christopher (CAT:13, p 36) at Qabr Hiram bust personifications of the Months and the Seasons (also the Winds) appear in small round medallions in the side aisles.[663] These personifications do not have any attributes and are identified by Greek Macedonian inscriptions (just as the personifications at the House of the Calendar at Antioch). The mosaic of the nave contains figures carrying out various rural activities, such as hunting and the grape harvest. It seems clear that although the Months are not themselves carrying out rural activities or grouped neatly together in a single panel, the imagery together with that of the nave is designed, at least on one level to

[661] Chehab, 1957: 123-139, describes all the mosaic pavements found at this site.
[662] Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 126, identifies this animal as a goat.
[663] Donceel-Voûte, 1988: 412-5, has catalogued this pavement.

invoke the agricultural and rural activities that take place during the year in the local area, bringing prosperity to the congregation.

The Southern provinces: Palaestina and Arabia

Five mosaic calendar pavements are located in the southern provinces of Palaestina and Arabia in two clusters; two pavements come from Scythopolis in Palaestina Secunda and three from Gerasa in Arabia. At Scythopolis the pavement of Hall A at the Monastery of Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) (AD 567) has, at its centre, a large radial design containing personifications of the Twelve Months. The other pavement at Scythopolis (mid sixth century at El Hammam (CAT:19, p 54)) is one of two mosaics that decorated a tomb (the other pavement is a vintage and hunting vine-scroll pavement mentioned in previous Chapters 2 and 4). Of the three pavements at Gerasa unfortunately two have been almost entirely lost; at the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101) (AD 531) and the chapel of the Cathedral (CAT:32, p 95) (AD 525-50 approx.).[664] Only at the Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg (CAT:33, p 98) (mid sixth century) does enough of the imagery survive to discuss in detail. All of these pavements from both Scythopolis and Gerasa are dated to within a relatively short time of one another.

Palaestina Secunda

The Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47) at Scythopolis contains a number of rooms paved with figural and geometric mosaics. The floor of Hall A where the calendar is placed is the largest and most impressive of these paved rooms. The calendar is of a radial design, with an inner and outer circle. These circles are not contained within a square or rectangle, but are set in the centre of a large field of octagons, squares and rhombi that are

[664] Crowfoot, 1938: 215, believed this to be the most likely date for the pavements of this building and I agree; it fits well with the style, imagery used and in comparison with the other securely dated pavements from Gerasa.

filled with various animals, fish and birds (including some rather exotic species). The outer circle is divided into the usual radial compartments, each of which contains the personification of a Month. These personifications are all male and labelled with their names in Greek with the number of days in each month in Greek. In the inner circle are female personifications (half length) of the Sun and the Moon. As with the earlier representations and the examples from North Africa the figure of March is shown as a soldier. He wears a helmet, long army cloak and what seems to be a cuirass, although he does not carry a spear.[665] Unfortunately the personification of January has been lost. All the other figures carry out various season appropriate activities; April is a goatherd, September is helping at the vintage and December is sowing a crop, for example. This design is clearly a representation of the agricultural year.

The second pavement at Scythopolis comes from the area of El Hammam to the north. The mosaic containing the calendar paved the narthex of a funerary chapel/tomb. The design is similar to that of the earlier western examples; the personifications are contained within a panel of two rows of six figures (although the figures are not formally contained within their own smaller panels). As at the Monastery of the Lady Mary (CAT:18, p 47), the Months are accompanied by labels of their names in Greek and the number of days within their month in Greek. The figures of January and March have been lost, as have June and October. All the figures are male, except December who is shown as a woman holding a mattock on her shoulder.[666] All the Months that have survived are

[665] The figure raises his right hand and points upwards. Levi, 1941: 258, interpreted this as a rhetorical gesture, and the scene as an *adlocutio*. The figure was not simply a soldier, in his opinion, but an actual representation of the god Mars. Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 123, disagrees, believing that the figure is pointing to a swallow, as in the earlier examples of this Month (such as at Argos, for example). I agree and would further suggest that the representation of Mars would be unlikely in a Christian context. The earlier model of Mars is being used but had been adapted for the context and is the herald of spring.

[666] Akerstrom-Hougen, 1974: 122, states that this figure is actually almost certainly a man. Hachlili, 2009: 192, disagrees.

shown labouring over a rural pursuit; April carries a lamb on his shoulders, September carries a jar/amphorae (filled with wine) and November hold a net and a basket (fowling?).

Arabia

The final three pavements all come from Gerasa and all three from churches: The Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg (CAT:33, 98) contains the most complete surviving example. The personifications of the Months are contained within the pavement of the nave. The field is divided into twenty square panels, in rows of four. Less than half of the panels still survive, but from what is left it appears that the personifications of the Months were contained within the twelve panels of the first three eastern rows. Each surviving figure is accompanied by their Macedonian names in Greek (as in the earlier pavement from Antioch). The other remaining figures are pictured at their rural labours; October is engaged in fowling, November is sowing. The other panels of the pavement were filled with genre scenes; two travellers and a shepherd survive, for example. These scenes added to the viewer's sense of recognition of the imagery as reflecting their own activities and concerns.

Almost nothing remains of the pavements from the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101) and the chapel of the Cathedral (CAT:32, p 95). At the Church of St. John the Baptist (CAT:34, p 101), the pavement of the chancel was surrounded by a border of square panels that once contained the personifications but now only the Macedonian names in Greek of some of the Months, such as June and July remain. The inscriptions (again the Macedonian names of the Months in Greek) are also all that remain at the chapel of the Cathedral (CAT:32, p 95). Two rectangular panels would have each once contained six personifications, but iconoclasts completely obscured them.

None of the pavements from the southern provinces are exactly the same in design or in the attributes of the personifications.[667] Hachlili has pointed out; the Macedonian names of all the Gerasa examples follow the earlier calendar at Antioch and the contemporary Qabr Hiram; whereas the inscriptions of Latin names and Greek number of days of the pavements of Scythopolis follow the examples from Carthage and the Greek East.[668] These Labours of the Months appear specifically in Christian contexts in the later southern provinces, and they are the Christian counterpart to the zodiac pavements found in Jewish synagogues.

[667] Saller and Bagatti, 1949: 284-5, state that this would indicate that the pavements were not copied from a common origin or from each other.
[668] Hachlili, 2009: 195.

Concluding remarks

The social, cultural and linguistic landscape of the Levant during Late Antiquity was, as I stated in Chapter 1, an enormously complex mosaic that changed and shifted throughout the period. In the Eastern Mediterranean there was a new phase of development in the countryside, as settlement intensified and agricultural production thrived.[669] Surface surveys suggest that the contemporary Syrian countryside was dotted with rural settlements and the evidence gathered during excavation also shows a time of prosperity and growth in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia (in the sixth century in particular). Cities and rural settlements were expanding and multiplying across the region.[670] The booming local economy was based, to a great degree, on the large-scale production of agricultural goods such as wine, oil and wheat (the evidence for which is discussed in detail in Chapter 4).[671] Many mosaic pavements have been uncovered in the region, particularly from the provinces of Syria, Palestine and Arabia. This high concentration of pavements dating from between the fourth and the seventh centuries is in itself another indicator of the prosperity of this region at this time.

In this thesis I set out to study the iconography of rural activities on mosaic pavements. I have discussed the different categories of rural imagery in great detail, drawing conclusions and presenting arguments along the way. I find it interesting how the iconography can not only help us to understand the diffusion of style and artistic influence, but can also give insights into certain aspects of the daily lives of the people who commissioned and viewed these mosaics. I have presented the surviving examples from each category of iconography and considered whether their appearance in the iconographic

[669] Chavarria and Lewit, 2004: 5
[670] Decker, 2009: 33 for a round-up of the Syrian evidence and Avni, 2014: 338-9, for a brief discussion of the evidence from Palestine and Arabia.
[671] Kingsley, 2001: 45-52. I discuss the agricultural production of the region in detail in Chapter 4.

repertory during Late Antiquity reflected their importance in the areas in which they were produced; their importance to the local economy (and therefore also as a source of wealth for the funding of the pavements) and whether they were accurate depictions of the rural pursuits that would have taken place in the contemporary countryside (and if they were not, why not).

The use of rural genre imagery continued to be very popular throughout Late Antiquity, although certain categories of imagery seem to have been more favoured than others, such as the hunt and the vintage, for example (the imagery of which could be considered to have prestigious or religious associations). Scenes of the vintage were a popular choice in the decoration of pavements in the region during Late Antiquity (Chapter 4, Part 1). The vine-scroll design was by far the most popular compositional design for church pavements, of the southern provinces in particular. Vine-scroll design pavements do appear in synagogues and also in villa contexts (such as at Sarrin), but certainly not as frequently. Although the vine did have symbolic and religious meaning to the contemporary Christian and also Jewish communities, the frequent occurrence of this iconographic category does also appear to reflect the importance of the vine and its produce to the contemporary local economy. The appearance of the Nilotic pavements in the Levant may also have been inspired to popularity by the strong economic links with Egypt during this period. Each pavement or group of pavements (from a Christian context, for example) may have held a particular specific meaning, while also having a secondary meaning symbolising concepts such as wealth or renewal, for example.

In Chapter 2, Part 3, the images of exotic animals moving in the contemporary local countryside was interesting, not just for what it could tell us about the continuation of the games in the great cities and the Imperial capital, but also for what their presence in mosaic could indicate about the movement of goods from one region to another and the

possible routes through the countryside they took. This is in contrast to the scenes of fishing found in the Levant. These genre fishing scenes are quite rare and found only in churches in the southern provinces during this period, which would suggest that they were primarily symbolic and were strongly associated with Christianity, rather than their appearance being indicative of the importance of fish and fishing to the economy and to the diet of the peoples of the region.

We must, of course, be wary of taking too literal an approach when discussing and evaluating the images that are presented to us. We are being presented with a somewhat edited and idealised view of rural labours and activities. Images of people engaged in activities that would certainly have been a mainstay of agricultural production and the economy of a region are often not represented in the repertory of mosaic pavements very frequently, if at all. The exclusion of images of people engaged in the cultivation and harvesting of olives and wheat is a perfect example of this 'editing'. We know from the archaeological evidence (presented in Chapter 4, Part 2), that olives and olive oil were a very important part of the lives and also the livelihoods of the rural population (particularly in Syria).

People also relate to art in different ways, depending upon context, time and the personal beliefs of the viewer. The use of the images of the hunt, for example, differs in many cases between the northern provinces of the region and the southern provinces. In the earlier pavements of Antioch (found in secular villas), these scenes of hunting and, in the case of at least one of these pavements the depiction of the arena, generally represented the interests of and were the preserve of the landed provincial aristocracy. In the south there was a re-use of earlier iconographical models; the cross-legged hunter of the northern pavements became the shepherd of the pastoral scenes, the spearmen of the Syrian villa pavements (with their weight on one foot, spears pointing to right) then re-appeared in the

later scroll-design pavements in the churches of Arabia, for example. The meaning of these images change between contexts and through the passage of time, they do not remain constant. In the case of the zodiac and the Labours of the Months, however, the same concept (a rural calendar) is being depicted in very different ways by two different communities, Jewish and Christian.