



THE ART OF DECORATIVE MOSAICS (HUNTING SCENES) FROM MADABA AREA DURING BYZANTINE PERIOD (5th-6th c. AD)

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ABSTRACT

The study area has two main locations are included a scenes of hunting of predators in mosaic pavements from Byzantine period. The first one is in Madaba city and the second from in the Mount Nebo area near Madaba. This area very important, the artist of the scenes worked from the scenes of daily life. Here we will examine a selection of visual arts in order to detect certain important aspects of ancient society in Jordan from the Byzantine era, such as hunting scenes of predators. Whereas the respective artist was able to implement his drawings on those pavements of mosaics in accordance with the principles and rules relating to the technical work. This led to a highlighting of the aesthetic side of these works, where in the images depart from the war iconoclasms during the 8th century AD, frequently found in some of the churches in the region. Additionally, the artist was able through these scenes to give an idea of some of the devastation suffered by farm animals and trees and fruits during attacks on agricultural lands. These scenes are an important historical document of the daily lives of members of Byzantine society, especially given the scarcity of records documenting daily life during this period.

KEYWORDS: mosaic, images, hunting, predators, Madaba, Mount Nebo, Amman, Byzantine.

1. INTRODUCTION

The visual arts are important role in highlighting the social and cultural aspects of communities since ancient times until now. Drawings have played an important role in highlighting the social, economic and cultural development of ancient societies, particularly given the lack of written material relating to those aspects; hence the decision to study drawings prevalent during the Byzantine era in Jordan so as to get an idea regarding Byzantine society at the time. Particularly noteworthy in this respect is the technical mosaic; in addition to providing information regarding the community's technical progress, through their technical analysis, these drawings provide a witness to daily life in the community. The study of the historical aspect of the region during the Byzantine period, based on which we have an understanding of the technique used in carrying out the drawings of the mosaics pavements. They provide important scenes from everyday life reflective of hunting, considered as characterizing Byzantine society. Also describe the drawings and analyze them, and then compare them to similar examples in the region belonging to the same period, so as to give us an idea regarding the society's progress.

It seems that the spread of Christianity during the Byzantine era and especially during the the fifth and sixth centuries, was made possible during the reign of Emperor Justinian Justinian (527-565 AD). Has had a major role in the spread of many churches in Jordan, and in doing so managed artist Byzantine that embodies the scenes of hunting of predators that are within the subject of the study during the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

2. LOCATION AND HISTORY OF THE STUDY

The city of Madaba, located 30 kilometres southwest of Amman and the study located in Area of Madaba, Mount Nebo and

Amman (Khirbat al- Kursi), as shown in Fig. 1.(Piccirillo 1986).

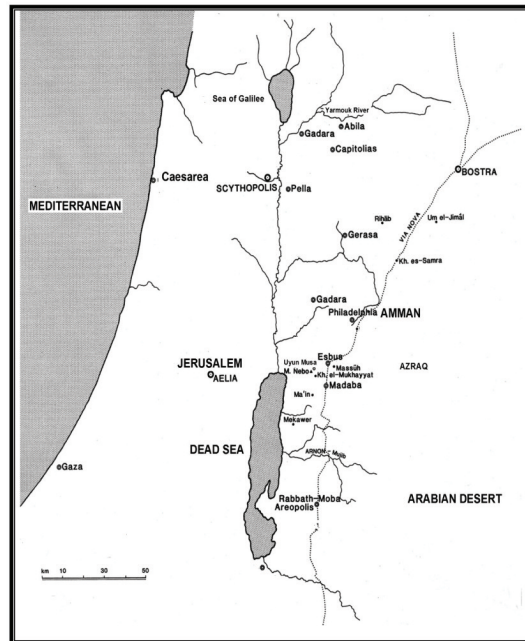


Figure 1 Map of the Study Area

The city of Madaba during the Byzantine period, were fully active in religious architecture in order to spread the Christian religion in the region that was part of the province of Arab (Devreesse 1940, 220). The writings that appeared in the floors of churches in Madaba and the surrounding area indicate that Madaba was very important in religious architecture and wide and that the oldest known church history up to now is the Church of Saint George in Nebo, dated to AD 535/536 and then we find many other churches after.

3. THE TECHNIQUES USED IN THE MOSAIC FLOORS

In general most of the mosaic pavement was used in the byzantine churches in Jordan in the same techniques. As is usually the case with large mosaic pavements used in local limestone, each consists of a bed composed of different layers. The first layer consists of

soil settled using a compacted layer of local red earth. On top of this layer is another layer, of small round pebbles packed closely together and covered with a layer of ash and lime mortar. This smooth bed covered the whole area, to a thickness of 13 cm. A layer of wet lime plaster, on average 1 cm. thick, was spread over. This was done in stages, then sketches of drawing also laid in then depending on the area, and the mosaicist had to work before the plaster dried.

Normally, the mosaicist would draw outlines of the composition in red or black. He would then start laying the tesserae into the wet plaster. The tesserae were usually cubes 1 cm square, cut from local limestone, basalt and jasper. Sometimes glass tessere were used in order to achieve brighter colours, such as green, blue, and gold (Ling 1994, 77-89; Neal 1976, 241; Piccirillo 1986, 40; Nassar and Turshan 2011, 44; 2012: 209) was used for the floor of the Churches at Madaba area.

4. IMAGES OF HUNTING SCENES

The hunting scenes are associated mainly with hunting those animals that damage fruits and crops. The artist uses scenes from daily life and reflective of the views of farmers the trapped animals are mostly predators, like lions, lionesses and bear. We focus on those drawings that deal with farmers trapping animals that are damaging crops, especially fruits, grapes and pomegranates. The scenes of the hunter through drowning known since ancient times, and it seems appears that the beginnings of the first appearance of such scenes were carried out on the North Palace of Nineveh (room C, panel 25-28) in Iraq, which dates to the Assyrian period (645–635 BC) now in the British Museum. Show here, King Ashurbanipal hunting lions by arrows in stone. While, the scenes of the hunter trapped the lions in the mosaic pavements are appeared during the Roman period, for example, Heracles slaying the Nemean lion

at Liria, Spain. Therefore, the kill of lions appeared in the bible and mentioned the names of predators such as lion in the Bible and also specify the name of the region of the Holy Land, for example, on First book of Samuel 17: 36 and on the book of Revelation 5: 5.

4.1 *The scenes of the hunter (shepherd) trapped the lions.*

The scenes of the hunter (shepherd) trapped the lion's appeared in some locations in Jordan and especially on the Madaba area, there are two main examples, the first one on the floor of the Memorial of Moses Church, the old Diakonikon Baptistryat Siyagha-Mount Nebo (figure 12), which dates to 530 AD (Piccirillo 1989: 536-586; 1997, 146, Pls.166, 167, 182).



Figure 2. Memorial of Moses, Diakonikon at Siyagha - Mount Nebo

Here, the hunter (shepherd) trapped the lion. The peasant stood between trees such as pomegranate. He is wearing a gray *chiton* with dark black outlined and front of the *chiton* decorated with white lines in different directions. The face is oval, his wide and dark eyes look to the grapes; his dark hair somewhat wavy. Holds his hands a shaft and hits the lion, but we see here, the lion attacking a stick, while we find his feet and epically his right foot stuck to the stick. The lion stood and attack on peasant. The lion and his hair are dark and white red with dark black outlined. The peasant, lion and trees are in white background. The second example is on the mosaic floor of the Church of the Deacon Thomas at Uyun Musa (Figure 13), dating to the Byzantine

period (Piccirillo 1984: 307-318; 1997,187, Pls. 252, 263).



Figure 3. Church of Deacon Thomas

Here, the hunter (Stephanos) or peasant confronts a lion with a spear, each one stood between scroll of leaves and fruits of the vine. The peasant is wearing a gray short tunic with orbicular; the face is oval, it seem his wide and dark eyes look to the lion; his dark hair somewhat wavy. Holds his hands a shaft and hits the lion, but we see here, the lion attacking a stick, while his feet and epically his right foot stuck to the stick. The lion and his hair are dark and white red with dark black outlined. The peasant, lion and trees are in white background. Moreover, the scenes of the hunter (shepherd) trapped the lion's appeared in the floor of the Hippolytus Hall, Church of the Virgin at Madaba, which dated to six century AD. (Piccirillo 1997: 66, Pl. 11; Bowersock 2006: 8, Fig. 1:3).

The scenes of hunting (hunter trapped the lions) is also known from the northern part of the Levant on the floor of the dining room of the Atrium House at Antioch, which dates back to the sixth Century (Kondoleon 2000: 65, fig. 2). Here the hunter trapped the lion from on the horse, while, the in case of the two examples of the Memorial of Moses Church, and Church of the Deacon Thomas the hunters trapped of the lions they are standing on the land.

4.2 The scenes of the hunter (Soldier) trapped the lioness

It seem the scenes of the hunter (Soldier) trapped the lioness more widespread

compared with scenes of the hunter (Soldier) trapped the lions. There are many examples from Madaba area and other locations in Jordan which dates to the Byzantine period. There are two examples at Madaba, the first on the floor of the Hippolytus Hall, Church of the Virgin (Fig. 4), which dated to six century AD. (Piccirillo 1997: 66, Pl. 11; Bowersock 2006: 8, Fig. 1:3).



Figure 4 Hippolytus Hall, Church of the Virgin, at Madaba

Here, the hunter (shepherd) trapped the lioness; each figure stands between scrolls of acanthus leaves. He is wearing a white and white red *chiton* with a dark red outline. The face is oval, with his wide and dark eyes looking towards the lioness; his dark hair is somewhat wavy. He is carrying a shield with his left hand and a spear in his right hand, with which he is striking the heart of a lioness. The lioness is attacking a peasant; the lioness and its hair are dark red with a white and dark black outline. The hunter, lioness and scrolls of acanthus leaves are set against a black background.

The second example at Madaba, is on the floor of the Cathedral-Chapel of the Martyr Theodore (Fig. 5), dating to the Byzantine period (Piccirillo 1997: 117, Pl. 101).



Figure 5. the Martyr Theodore

Here, the hunter or peasant has trapped lioness; each figure stands between a scrolls of acanthus leaves. The peasant is wearing a white and light red chiton; his face is oval, and it appears as though his wide and dark eyes are looking at the lioness; his dark hair somewhat wavy. He is holding in his hands a shaft, with which he is striking the lioness. Here, the shaft is striking the lioness's face. The lioness and its hair are dark white and red, with a dark red outline. The peasant, lioness and scroll of acanthus leaves are set against a black background.

Additionally, we find one example at Mount Nebo (Siyagha) is on the floor of the Memorial of Moses Church, Diakonikon (Fig. 6), dating from 530 AD (Piccirillo 1989: 536-586; 1997:146, Plate 168).



Figure . 6. Memorial of Moses Church, Mount Nebo-Siyagha

Here, the hunter (soldier) with a shield spearing a lioness. The soldier stands between trees, possibly pomegranate ones. He is wearing a white and dark red military uniform with a dark black outline. His head is covered by a hat, which is dark red and white on the front. His face is oval, while his wide and dark eyes are looking forward. He is carrying a shield with his left hand and a spear in his right hand, with which he is striking the heart of a lioness. The lioness is attacking a soldier. The lioness and its hair are dark red with a dark black outline. The soldier, lioness and trees are set against a white background.

Other examples of this scenes (hunter trapped the lioness) can be found in the area as well as other sites. One of these is on the floor of the Chapel of Khirbat al- Kursi at Amman (Figure 7), dating to the Byzantine period (Piccirillo, 1997: 265, Plate 479).



Figure 7. Chapel of Khirbat al- Kursi

Here, the hunter (peasant) has trapped lioness; the face of the peasant was destroyed, but we can still see the hands; the peasant is spearing a wild beast; both are standing between scrolls of leaves and fruits of the vine. The peasant is wearing a gray and white *chiton* with a dark black outline. He is carrying a shield with his left hand and holding a spear in his right hand, which he is lifting towards the lioness. The lioness and its hair are in dark red, with a white and dark black outline. The peasant, lioness, scrolls of leaves and fruits of the vine are set against a white background.

4.3 The scenes of the hunter (Soldier) trapped the bear

Going back to the Madaba site, we find a hunting scene that is different from the previous ones. Here, we find the scene of a peasant hunting a bear. There are two examples at Madaba area, the first one is on the floor of the Burnt Palace (Fig. 8), dating to the Byzantine period (Piccirillo 1997:78, Pl. 37).



Figure 8. Burnt Palace at Madaba

The hunter impales a bear with his spear; each stands between scrolls acanthus of leaves. The peasant is wearing a red *chiton*; the face is oval, and it seems that his wide and dark eyes are looking towards the bear; his dark hair is somewhat wavy. The peasant is wearing long shoes on his feet. Here, he holds in his hands a shaft with which he is striking the bear. The bear is attacking the stick. The bear and its hair are dark white and red with a dark black outline. The peasant, lion and scroll leaves are set against a white background

The second example, on the floor of the Memorial of Moses Church, Diakonikon at Mount Nebo–Siyagha (Fig. 9), which dates to 530 AD. (Piccirillo, 1997:146, Plate 169).



Figure 9. Memorial of Moses

Here, the peasant is riding a horse. The peasant and the bear are between the leaves and flowers; the peasant is wearing a black and red *chiton*; the face is oval, and it seems that his wide and dark eyes are looking towards the bear; the head is covered with blond hits. The horse is red in color, and is running towards the bear; the peasant is

holding in his left hand a halter for the horse; in his right hand, he is holding a shaft, which is sticking into the back of the bear. The bear is red and black and has a black outline. The peasant, bear and flowers are set against a white background.

Furthermore, the hunting scenes can also be found at other locations in Near East dating from the Byzantine period. There are two examples from Syria, both of which are similar to those in the Madaba Church. The first one is on the floor of Apamea Church, which dates to the mid-fifth to early sixth century AD now at the Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire in Brussels (Duliere, 1968: Pls. 1-3; Balty, 1969: 40, Pls. 1, 4, 5, 6; 1977: 104, Fig. 47; 1981: fig. 90; Dunbabin, 1999: 183, fig. 196; Hachlili, 2009: 167; Weiss, 2009: 13). Here, the hunter trapped of some animals such as the lions and tigers. The second example is in the Museum of Souweida from the Shahba-Philippopolis location, which dates to the Byzantine period (Balty 1973: 24, fig. 7; 1977: 24). Here some hunters trapped the animals such as tigers, bull and Gazelle.

The Hunting scenes are also known from northern part of the Levant, there are two examples at Antioch, both similar to those found in Madaba churches. The first is on the floor of Megahpsychia Hunt Mosaic - Daphne (Yakto), which dates to 450-469 AD (Myers 1959: 73, Pl. 71; Dunbabin 1999: 165, fig. 170; Cimok 2000: 251; Hachlili 2009: 167, fig. VII -7; Weiss 2009: 13). Here, some hunters trapped the animals such as lions and lioness by shafts. The second is on the Worcester Hunt at Antioch, dated to the late fifth or early sixth century AD (Dunbabin 1999: 180; 165; Cimok 2000: 296, 298; Hachlili 2009: 168,169, fig. VII -8; Walker 2012: 66, fig. 26). Also here, the animals are similar to those found Madaba Churches such as lions and lioness.

Significantly, the hunting scenes are a good deal older, as it was already in use during the Roman and Byzantine times. We find many examples from western

provinces, for example, on the floor of the Piazza Armerina in Sicily in Italy, which dates to the late second or early third century AD. (Carandini et al., 1982; Dunbabin, 1978: 86; 1982: 75; 1999: 130-135, fig. 137; Wilson, 1983; Sfameni, 2004: 337; Walker, 2012: 67, Fig. 27). There are one later example also from the Italian is on the floor of the Tellaro villa, dates to the second half fourth century AD (Dunbabin, 1999: 142, fig. 147; Sfameni, 2004: 341). Also, there are one example from Spain was found on the floor of the villae of La Olmeda room 1, Pedrosa de la Vega, dating to the late fourth century AD (Dunbabin, 1999: 156, fig. 160).

Finally we can mention two examples in the North African provinces at Tunisia, the first one is in the the Althiburus which dates end of the third century AD, (Fantar and Jaber 1994; Blanchard-Lemee et al 1996; Dunbabin 1999: 113, figs. 115, 116). The second example from Smirat, Amphitheatre Mosaic now in Sousse Museum which date to the mid-third century AD, (Dunbabin 1978: 69, 70, 83; 1999: 117, fig. 118; Beschaouch 1986: 677-680).

5. ARTISTIC ANALYSES OF THE DRAWINGS FOUNDED ON THE MOSAIC FLOORS PAVEMENTS

The analysis of the drawings found on the mosaic floors pavements has an important role in our knowledge of the extent to which artists used certain elements and the criteria governing works of art. Correspondingly, the study these images as found on the drawings executed on the mosaic floors in certain churches in Jordan, such as reflect the daily life of peasants during the Byzantine era.

Lines: The lines are the basic elements in the artwork. They have an important role in building a work of art; we find this is same wonderful role exists in nature. As we note, lines come in all forms, whether a simple straight line, or in as curved lines, italics, refractor parallels, orthogonal lines, and so

forth. Through a descriptive study of the drawings, we have shown that many fonts were used by the artists in drawing scenes of daily life from the Byzantine era.

Curved lines: The artist was able to form from these lines many motifs, particularly in images representing scenes of daily life, especially where plant elements are concerned. These curved lines emerge prominently in some of the sub-branches of the twigs and the leaves of the vines, acanthus leaves and flowers (Figures 2-3 and 7-9).

Semi-circular lines: Semi-circular lines are used in the formation of many motifs. Most of them are found in the scrolls as parts of vine tendrils (Figure 3). We find semi-circular lines used in the formation of the scrolls of acanthus leaves.

Circular lines: Circular lines are employed by the artists in the pictures; these lines can be seen in the formation of the scrolls, in the vine tendrils (Figure 7). In addition, we find that circle scrolls made up of acanthus leaves are used as borders for the images on some of the floor mosaics. Additionally, the artists use circular lines in drawing some of the armor worn by some of the farmers and soldiers as protection against the animals they are trying to catch.

Sharp or broken lines: Sharp lines are an important type of line employed by the artist in creating these scenes, and are evident in the forms of twigs and leaves. They appear on the vine leaves and acanthus leaves, though the lines of the acanthus leaves are sharper than those of the vine leaves.

The form: The form is one of the important elements governing works of art. It is no less important than fonts and others elements. It constitutes an important aspect of works of art. Here, the artists employed scenes of daily life on mosaic pavements. The dominant form is of drawn images of peasants and animals used in agriculture, also scenes of hunting. These are well distributed in these decorative circles. The

artists used scrolls of twigs, grapes and acanthus leaves in the design as well; these are explained through the images of farmers and animals.

The Texture: There is no doubt that texture played an important role in shaping artistic works. Here, texture was determined through the use of lines and contrast between surfaces so as to create a sense of texture. The scenes representing daily life as found on the mosaic floors are of polished stones, which give a sense of texture beautifully. The role of texture is evident with all of the drawings.

Shadow and light: Shadow and light depend mainly on the color. We find here that good colors have emerged, ranging from light to dark, and with differences generally delineated by lines. In this way, the artist was able to create the sensation of three dimensions. The scenes depicted here indicate a strong knowledge of how to use color and to distribute it, which helps to highlight shadow and light effectively.

The space: we find that the artists don't make much use of space in these scenes, which feature distributions of motifs of plants interspersed with the images of humans and animals—very little space exists between them, and what vacuum there is here is deliberate. This is also what distinguishes these drawings that were executed on mosaic floors during the Byzantine era.

Unit: Here we find a significant degree of unity, whereby the artist was able to form a thread between the different parts of the drawings and form of them a single unit in a consistent manner. This indicates the Byzantine artist's ability to distribute multiple motifs in a coherent and logical way. He creates the sense of a single unit through the distribution of motifs involving the rolls of twigs, vine leaves and acanthus in a coherent manner; the same is evident with his images of human, animal, which exist inside the scrolls. He employed the idea of integration with respect to the decorative

elements so as to create a sense unity in this work of art.

Balance or equilibrium: We find that the balance in nature evident in these scenes is wonderful; the artist benefitted from this balance, and he certainly emphasized it in his art. We see this in these drawings; the artist expressed this balance through his paintings, and sought to gain access to a configuration of an integrated professional, combining the old distribution of elements and units with a consistency and in a manner demonstrating the relationship between each and with the surrounding spaces. They included most of the spaces and surfaces. This balance is also evident in the implementation of decorative units. Particular forms of scrolls and the content of human and animal elements suggest to the viewer a sense of psychological well-being, indicating the experience and broad access enjoyed by the artist during the Byzantine era.

Rhythm: The rhythms of the important elements in these works were employed in a coordinated manner on the mosaic floors, and are reflected in the scenes of daily life. Among the elements the artist uses for inspiration are rhythm and repetition. This rhythm is highlighted through the repetition of scrolls of twigs and grapes, and acanthus leaves. Additionally, the artist used a gradient, both with respect to colors and shapes; continuity of domains is evident in the scrolls.

Sovereignty: The role of color in the drawings that appear on the mosaic floors in the scenes of daily life is strong. In these works, it is clear, for example, that the artist focused on images of humans, animals and visibility, as evidenced in the scrolls of grape leaves and twigs, and the acanthus. Thus, we find that the artist, in these drawings, found it necessary to pay attention to certain, important elements, for instance, that of sovereignty played an important role and was employed in order to highlight the aesthetics.

6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The examining the role of the images of everyday life such as appear on the mosaic floors in some of the churches in Jordan dating from the Byzantine era proved interesting remarks, a) The diversity of decorations on the mosaic floors, the living elements, inclusive of humans, animals, birds and plant elements, the leaves and twigs, and the grapes and pomegranates, show the diversity in the artistic taste of the artist's aesthetics, b) it seems the local artist or Byzantine art appears to have been interested in realistic art, inasmuch as he painted scenes from everyday life as was lived on farms during the Byzantine era with precision and clarity, and thus has given us some idea regarding the daily lives of farmers. This means that in some of his topics, the artist was drawing heavily from everyday life. Such scenes are few in neighboring areas relative to the mosaics here. This means that the artist in Byzantine Jordan had a strong understanding of daily life as represented on the mosaic floors, c) Where the artist did his drawings which appear to be in accordance with this place, most of the drawings are well-thought out and are reflective of the location, d) The artist repeated certain motifs, in particular, when implementing the picture scrolls of daily life, which are reflective of the humanitarian situation as represented in the forms of animals and plants, and sold

items. He in fact tries to highlight images that are an important part of the topic he is dealing with through these drawings, e) The artist took a particular interest in areas with water, as represented in the diversity of decorative units, for example, we find images, whether human or animal, drawn within the frames of grapes and acanthus leaves, along with fruits and flowers. We find that the artist dealt carefully with the vacuum to give the landscape an aesthetic quality, f) The influences reflect a dimension of the Byzantine civilization and cultural heritage such as prevailed in the region. Particularly noticeable is the Roman influence, which we observe in bite motifs, such as the scrolls on twigs, and the leaves and fruits of grapes and acanthuses, which were prevalent earlier in Roman art and architecture, particularly in the cities of the Decapolis; the art here benefits from Byzantine artistic traditions, which is evident in the motifs he employed in his paintings in general, g) It seems that the main aim of these scenes is to convey some of the suffering experienced on the farm in connection with attacks on agricultural lands, its impact on the fruit harvest, the transportation of goods, and on animals, trees and fruits.

h) Finally, continued to drawing scenes of hunting since ancient times to modern art and it seems that more of these scenes emerged during the Baroque.

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