Ute Possekel

Orpheus among the Animals

A New Dated Mosaic From Osrhoene

The figure of Orpheus has inspired the imagination of people throughout the ages. Orpheus was the lover who went down to Hades to bring back his wife Eurydike. Orpheus was the musician who charmed the animals by his song and caused trees to move. Orpheus was the mystical poet who revealed the world's origins.[1] In antiquity, artistic representations of Orpheus motifs were rendered in diverse media, including wall paintings, mosaics, stone reliefs, jewels, coins, textiles, and terracotta, and they functioned in both secular and sacred contexts.[2] In Roman imperial times, by far the most popular scene was Orpheus playing the lyre among the animals. This motif was chosen to decorate ancient villas, such as one excavated in Pompeii, to adorn walls and ceilings of the catacombs, and to embellish a temple in Britain.[3] The religious dimension of the scene was sufficiently universal

1 On the figure of Orpheus in antiquity, see K. Ziegler, "Orpheus," *PRE* 18,1 (1939), 1200-1316; DNP Gruppe Kiel, "Orpheus," *Der neue Pauly* 9 (2000), 54-57; C. Calame, "Orphik, Orphische Dichtung," *Der neue Pauly* 9 (2000), 58-69; L. Brisson, "Orphée et l'Orphisme à l'époque impériale. Témoignages et interprétations philosophiques, de Plutarque à Jamblique," *ANRW* II 36.4 (1990), 2867-2931, reprint in L. Brisson, *Orphée et l'Orphisme dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine* (London: Variorum, 1995), no. IV; W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement* (New York: Norton, 1966); A. van den Hoek and J. J. Hermann, "Celsus' Competing Heroes: Jonah, Daniel, and Their Rivals," in: *Poussières de christianisme et de judaïsme antiques* (Lausanne: Zèbres, 2007), 307-339, Pl. 1-19, esp. p. 327-331. References to Orpheus in the classical literature are discussed by these authors. A useful overview of classical and patristic references is provided by L. Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée dans l'antiquité tardive. Les mutations d'un mythe: du héros païen au chantre chrétien* (Paris: de Boccard, 2003), 195-210. On the Orphic hymns, see A.-F. Morand, *Études sur les* Hymnes Orphiques, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 143 (Leiden: Brill, 2001). On Orpheus in the Middle Ages, see for example J. B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). The ongoing fascination of Orpheus in the modern era is illustrated by R. M. Rilke's *Sonnette an Orpheus* (1922).

2 A comprehensive overview of Orpheus motifs in classical and late antique art is provided by M.-X. Garezou, *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC) 7.1 (1994), 81-105, vol. 7.2, Pl. 57-77. For Orpheus representations on textile, see B. Madigan, "An Orpheus Among the Animals at Dumbarton Oaks," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 33 (1992), 405-416 (with further literature).

3 The wall painting of the villa in Pompeii (Casa d'Orfeo) is depicted in LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 91. For the Orpheus representations in the catacombs, cf. LIMC 7.1-7.2, Orpheus 164a-164e (with further literature). The building with Orpheus mosaic found in Littlecote (LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 121) might have been an Orphic temple, cf. B. Walters, "The Restoration of an Orphic Temple in England," *Archaeology* 35 (1982), 36-43.

to allow pagans, Christians, and Jews to adapt it.[4] Most of the surviving ancient depictions of Orpheus among the animals were executed in mosaic – more than ninety examples have been catalogued[5] – and to these can now be added another one: a mosaic representation of Orpheus and the animals with a Syriac inscription, acquired in 1999 by the Dallas Museum of Art in the United States.[6] This Orpheus mosaic is dated to the year 194 of the common era and is thus more ancient than many other Orpheus mosaics. Moreover, the new Orpheus mosaic is the oldest of all known mosaics of any motif that bear a dated Syriac inscription. The iconography and the inscription of this mosaic shall be the subject of this paper.

1. The Iconography

Composition

The Orpheus mosaic measures about 164 cm by 152 cm.[7] It was produced in a polychrome technique and depicts the figure of Orpheus, sitting and playing the

4 Most ancient Orpheus depictions seem to be of a pagan nature. Christians most notably used the motif of Orpheus among the animals (occasionally these were sheep) in catacomb wall paintings and on sarcophagi, see LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 164-166. Examples of Jewish adaptations of the motif include a wall painting in the synagogue at Dura-Europos and a floor mosaic from the Gaza synagogue (LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 170). The painting at Dura-Europos is difficult to interpret and has generated a significant amount of scholarly literature: H. Stern, "The Orpheus in the Synagogue of Dura-Europos," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes* 21 (1958), 1-6; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 9: Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 89-104; J. Goldstein, "The Central Composition of the West Wall of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos," *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1984-1985), 99-142; P. V. M. Flesher, "Rereading the Reredos: David, Orpheus, and Messianism in the Dura Europos Synagogue," in: *Ancient Synagogues. Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, vol. 2, ed. D. Urman and P. V. M. Flesher, Studia Post-Biblica 47,2 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 346-366. At Gaza, the Hebrew inscription דויד clearly identifies the musician as David. On this mosaic, cf. P. C. Finney, "Orpheus-David: A Connection in Iconography Between Greco-Roman Judaism and Early Christianity?" *Journal of Jewish Art* 5 (1978), 6-15. The interpretation of Psalm 151, found in Cave 11 at Qumran, and its possible allusion to Orpheus is discussed for instance by A. Dupont-Sommer, "Le Problème des influences étrangères sur la secte juive de Qoumrân," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 35 (1955), 75-94; J. A. Sanders, "Ps. 151 in 11QPSS," *ZAW* 75 (1963), 73-86; M. Smith, "Psalm 151, David, Jesus, and Orpheus," *ZAW* 93 (1981), 247-253.

5 A good overview of Orpheus mosaics is provided by I. J. Jesnick, *The Image of Orpheus in Roman Mosaic. An exploration of the figure of Orpheus in Graeco-Roman art and culture with special reference to its expression in the medium of mosaic in late antiquity*, BAR International Series 671 (Oxford: Archeopress, 1997), 128-147. See also the maps marking the distribution of Orpheus mosaics, Fig. 103-104. A catalogue of Orpheus depictions is also provided by Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 159-194. See also H. Stern, "La mosaïque d'Orphée de Blanzy-les-Fismes," *Gallia* 13 (1955), 41-77.

6 A section of this mosaic is depicted in S. P. Brock and D. G. K. Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl. The Syrian Orthodox Church and its Ancient Aramaic Heritage*, 4 vols. (Rome: Trans World Film Italia, 2001), vol. 1, 177. The text of the inscription is discussed by J. F. Healey, "A New Syriac Mosaic Inscription," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51 (2006), 313-327. The acquisition date is implied by the cataloging information contained in the Camio database (DMA 1999.305).

7 This information is provided in the Camio database.

lyre, surrounded by animals (Fig. 1). Approximately the central third of the panel is occupied by Orpheus and his instrument. The remaining two thirds are filled with colorful wild animals (not to scale), four of which are located on either side of the player, with an additional small bird near the left side of his head. A branch is visible on the left side of the composition. The mosaic contains two Syriac inscriptions. The first, consisting of three lines, is located immediately to the left of Orpheus' head, beneath the small bird just mentioned; the second one, consisting of six lines of text, is located in the lower part of the composition, attached to the left margin. The second inscription is surrounded by a rectangular black frame, whereas the upper text has no border. The entire image is framed with black tesserae, of which three rows remain. It is unknown whether the original had a more elaborate border, as do many of the extant mosaics from Osrhoene.[8] The mosaic is thus a unified, rectangular panel and is not of the compartmentalized type, as are many of the British mosaics, which often have a central roundel depicting Orpheus, surrounded by panels with the animals.[9] With regard to its almost square shape and its basic compositional type, the Orpheus mosaic from Dallas bears a certain resemblance to the mosaics from Paphos on Cyprus, Sparta, Tarsus, Chahba-Philippopolis (Syria),[10] Palermo, Oudna (Tunisia), and Edessa (Fig. 3).[11] The Jerusalem mosaic has a similar composition, but includes mythological figures (a centaur and Pan).[12] All of these consist of a unified panel and depict the

8 Plates of the Edessa mosaics can be found in J. B. Segal, *Edessa "The Blessed City"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, reprint Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001); H. J. W. Drijvers and J. F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene. Texts, Translations and Commentary*, Handbuch der Orientalistik 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1999). The borders of the Edessa mosaics are discussed by M. A. R. Colledge, "Some Remarks on the Edessa Funerary Mosaics," in: *La mosïque gréco-romaine IV. IVe Colloque international pour l'Étude de la Mosaïque Antique, 1984*, ed. J.-P. Darmon and A. Rebourg (Paris: Association internationale pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique, 1994), 189-197, Pl. CV-CXIV.

9 The categorization of Orpheus mosaics, a somewhat controversial subject, is addressed by Jesnick, *Orpheus*, 45-51. We need not here enter into this debate. On the British mosaics, see D. J. Smith, "Orpheus Mosaics in Britain," in: *Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1983), 315-328, Pl. CCIII-CCXI.

10 The Chahba mosaic has been studied in detail by J. Balty, "La mosaïque d'Orphée de Chahba-Philippopolis," in: *Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1983), 33-37, Pl. XXI-XXIV.

11 Photographs or drawings of the mosaics mentioned can be found in the following publications: Paphos (LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 98; , Fig. 141); Sparta (Jesnick, Fig. 59); Tarsus (now in the Antioch Museum, LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 103; Balty, "La mosaïque d'Orphée," Pl. XXIV.2); Chahba (Balty, "La mosaïque d'Orphée," Pl. XXIV.1; Jesnick, Fig. 112); Palermo (Jesnick, Fig. 20); Oudna (Jesnick, Fig. 139). A photograph of the now lost Edessa Orpheus mosaic is reproduced below as Fig. 3, from J. B. Segal, "New Mosaics from Edessa," *Archaeology* 12 (1959), 150-157, Fig. on p. 157. It was reproduced in Colledge, "Some Remarks," Pl. CVI.2. A drawing of this mosaic is reproduced in Segal, *Edessa*, Pl. 44; Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Pl. 53.

12 The mosaic found in Jerusalem is now located in Istanbul. LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 171. Cf. J. Strzygowski, "Das neugefundene Orpheus-Mosaik in Jerusalem," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins* 23 (1901), 139-171, Pl. 4. More recent literature is listed in LIMC 7.1, p. 97. The presence of Pan and the centaur on this Orpheus representation is somewhat unusual and

animals on either side of Orpheus, occasionally also in front of the musician. The mosaics from Chahba and Tarsus strive for a three-dimensional depiction, whereas none of the other ones just enumerated does. A further difference between the above-mentioned mosaics and the Dallas mosaic is that the former often depict the animals as standing on small platforms. Ground-lines are visible in the scenes from Paphos, Sparta, Palermo, and Oudna, but not in the ones from Chahba, Tarsus, and Edessa. Overall, the composition of the Dallas mosaic most closely resembles the Edessa mosaic.

Orpheus

On the mosaic from the Dallas Museum of Art, Orpheus is seated upon a rock, his lower legs crossed. The rock is indicated by the grey area adjacent to his legs. Many Orpheus mosaics depict the singer as sitting on a rock, which is sometimes ragged, as in this case, and at other times more stylized as a cube, as for instance in the Edessa mosaic. Similarly shaped, ragged rocks can be observed on the mosaics from Paphos and from northern Syria, now located in Hanover, Germany.[13] On the mosaic now in Dallas, Orpheus' upper body is upright, turned towards the viewer. The instrument is facing forward and rests on his left thigh, or possibly on the rock to his left – the loss of tesserae in this area does not allow a final judgment on this matter. The fingers of his left hand are playing the strings while also stabilizing the instrument. The right arm is bent at the elbow, and in his right hand he holds a white plectrum. Orpheus is clothed in a long-sleeved brown upper garment that falls in deep folds around his upper body and arms. Golden-yellow bands of cloth, the so-called *clavi*, are fastened around his chest and his upper and lower arms. Around his neck, the musician wears a red mantle (the *chlamys*), fastened with a fibula over his right shoulder and loosely falling down over his left shoulder. His legs are clad in a more fitted type of trousers (*anaxirides*), rather than the loosely fitting style of Parthian trousers with which men usually are depicted on the Edessan mosaics.[14] The color of the pants is visible near the ankles: they are of the same brown hue as the upper garment. Two red tassels fall over each of his shoes.[15] His legs are draped by a mantle – a typical feature of Orpheus representations – yet its yellow and red cloth does not entirely conceal the contours of his body. It is not entirely clear how long the upper garment was, since the mantle covers it from the waist downward, but it appears to be of the shorter, Per-

has been connected with Egyptian Orpheus textiles by Madigan, "Orpheus Among the Animals at Dumbarton Oaks," 415-416.

13 Hanover mosaic (Jesnick, Fig. 131).

14 See the Tripod mosaic (Fig. 5 below; Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Pl. 50-51; Segal, *Edessa*, Pl. 3; this is a color painting); Zaidallat mosaic (Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Pl. 54; Segal, *Edessa*, Pl. 2; color painting); Muqimu mosaic (Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Pl. 49; Segal, *Edessa*, Pl. 1).

15 A striking parallel can be observed on some of the Edessa mosaics, see below p. 10.

sian style. Orpheus' dark and curly hair surrounds his face (Fig. 2). On his head, he is wearing a red Phrygian cap, the typical head gear for Orpheus. The cap is folded on top and decorated with a vertical stripe. His eyes are large and gazing upward, the nose straight, and the mouth closed.

This depiction of Orpheus shows many elements of the standard representation on late antique mosaics. The sitting posture is virtually ubiquitous on mosaic representations, as is the position of the instrument on his left thigh. The forward-facing, almost frontal posture of Orpheus on the Dallas mosaic has parallels in many other mosaic representations, but the position of his legs and body bears greatest similarity to the depictions in Edessa, Chahba, and Tarsus. The latter two, however, show Orpheus positioned slightly more sideways than does the new mosaic.[16] The dark, curly hair of Orpheus is a feature which he shares with the Orpheus from Chahba, among others. As in the mosaic under consideration, Orpheus almost always wears a red Phrygian bonnet, the exact shape of which, however, varies. On the new mosaic, his cap closely resembles the cap, decorated with a vertical band in the center, worn by the figure on the mosaic from Chahba. The deep red color of the Phrygian cap occurs on many representations.[17]

The Musical Instrument

Orpheus is playing a lyre with four strings. Due to loss of tesserae, the sound box is only partially visible, but one can still recognize its elongated shape, resembling the sound box of the instrument played by the Tarsus Orpheus (Fig. 4). A lyre's sound box originally was made from tortoise shell, over which a cow hide was stretched. In later times, it could also be crafted from wood. The side arms were made either from animal horn or from wood, and they were connected by an upper cross bar to which the strings were fastened. The tuning mechanism usually was attached to this cross bar.[18] The number of strings varied greatly; often there were seven strings, but at times as few as four or as many as twelve.[19] When the instrument was played, the tortoise shell would typically face the musician, not the audience, but in spite of this several Orpheus mosaics show the shell facing outwards (e. g., Oudna in North Africa, Palermo, and Adana in Asia Minor).[20] The

16 For plates, see above n. 11. The singer on the Chahba mosaic turns his head to the left. The Orpheus in Tarsus has his legs crossed to the viewer's left, rather than to the viewer's right side.

17 Head of Orpheus on Chahba mosaic (Balty, "La mosaïque d'Orphée," Pl. XXI; Jesnick, Fig. 63). Orpheus also wears a deep red bonnet on the mosaics from Littlecote, Barton Farm, and Vienne. On the subject, cf. Jesnick, *Orpheus*, 72-73.

18 Albert, "Lyra.1," *PRE* 13 (1927), 2479-2489.

19 Pliny, *Naturalis historia* VII 56, 204, notes that there could be four, seven, eight, or nine strings, ed. H. Rackham, *Pliny, Natural History*, vol. 2, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1942), 642.

20 Adana (LIMC 7.2, Orpheus 110). For the other mosaics, cf. n. 11. On the musical instruments in Orpheus mosaics, cf. Jesnick, *Orpheus*, 74-76 and Fig. 27a. On lyres and citharas in antiquity, see B. Lawergren, M. Bröcker, R. Lorenz *et al.*, "Leiern," *MGG, Sachteil* 5.1 (1996), 1011-1050.

new mosaic depicts the instrument correctly. The long side arms here are made from animal horn (antelope or goat), and they are connected by the upper cross bar to which the four strings are attached. The tuning mechanism on the cross bar is indicated, but not furnished with any details. The lyre played by the Dallas Orpheus most closely resembles the instruments on the mosaics from Tarsus, Edessa, and northern Syria (now in Hanover).[21] Orpheus' lyre also looks very similar to the instrument played by Achilles in one of the recently found mosaic panels from Osrhoene with mythological scenes.[22] One of the panels depicts Patroclos and Achilles seated on a bench; Achilles is playing a lyre with four strings.[23]

The Animals

The animals which surround Orpheus are, from the upper right corner in a clockwise direction: a wild boar, a leopard, a panther, a lion, a goat, a horse, a gazelle, a raven, and a small bird (perhaps a swallow). All the animals on the right – the boar and the three wild cats – are in a jumping position and have their mouths wide open, revealing sharp teeth and tongue, which gives them a dangerous and frightful appearance. The creatures on the left are, by contrast, much less intimidating. The raven sits on the tree branch, the horse appears to be standing on top of the border of the second inscription, and the goat and the gazelle have their hind legs curved and their front legs bent, indicating their lying posture. The animals on the left are listening attentively to the music and are charmed by it. The artist drew a stark contrast between those creatures that are still wild and threatening and those already tamed, an artistic arrangement that appears to be unique to this composition. To be sure, tame and wild animals often occur side by side on Orpheus representations, but they are not elsewhere arranged such that dangerous and docile creatures occupy different sides of Orpheus.

Regarding the choice of animals depicted, it can be observed that the wild boar, the leopard and the lion commonly occur. Likewise, the horse, goat, gazelle, raven, and small bird are found relatively frequently on Orpheus mosaics.[24] The only animal on this mosaic not commonly found on Orpheus representations is

21 Hanover mosaic (Jesnick, *Orpheus*, Fig. 131).

22 On these, see J. Balty and F. Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques inscrites d'Osrhoène," *Fondation Eugène Piot. Monuments et mémoires publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 79 (2000), 31-72, esp. 59-62. One of the five panels that seem to have belonged together depicts Achilles and Patroclos (Fig. 8, p. 60).

23 Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 9, 186-191, ed. with Engl. tr. A. T. Murray, rev. by W. F. Wyatt, *Homer, The Iliad*, vol. 1, LCL 170 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

24 The animals on Orpheus mosaics have been studied in detail by Jesnick, 77-90. On animals in Roman art and literature more generally, see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; first publ. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), esp. 131- 136 (boars and pigs), 143-147 (deer and antelopes), 273-282 (crows and ravens).

the panther, which the artist may have included in order to enhance his composition by alternating between dark-colored wild animals (boar, panther) and those of a tawny hue (leopard, lion). The choice of animals on the Dallas mosaic also has commonalities with the literary description of such a picture by Philostratus the Younger, who mentions a lion, boar, deer, hare, daw, crow, eagle, wolves, and lambs. In Philostratus' literary portrait, the animals are peacefully intermingled.[25]

Comparison with the Orpheus Mosaic from Edessa and Other Edessan Mosaics

The Syriac inscriptions in the new Orpheus mosaic indicate that it originated in the Syriac-speaking territories around Edessa, so that a closer comparison with the previously known Orpheus mosaic from Edessa seems in order. The Edessa Orpheus mosaic was discovered by J. B. Segal and first published in 1959. A photograph of this mosaic *in situ* exists (Fig. 3), but often a later drawing is reproduced.[26] Both mosaics consist of a unified, rectangular panel with Syriac inscriptions. As was already mentioned above, the compositional outline of the new mosaic closely resembles the design of the Edessa mosaic. The Edessa Orpheus occupies the center of the panel, as does the Dallas singer, but the former seems to be seated on a cubic object, not on a ragged rock as does the Dallas Orpheus.[27] The posture of the musician and his hand position are very similar in both representations, except that the Dallas Orpheus is more forward-facing and has his legs at the same height, whereas the right leg of the Edessa Orpheus is placed lower than his left. The musical instrument in the Edessa mosaic has a round sound box (not elongated as in the Dallas one), but the side pieces of the two lyres are shaped very much alike. The lyre on the new mosaic shows four strings, whereas the Edessa mosaic only has three. Furthermore, the two Orpheus figures are clothed similarly: both are wearing a long-sleeved upper garment that is banded around the chest, trousers (those of the Edessa Orpheus have wider legs), and a mantle over the legs. Unfortunately, the head of the Edessa Orpheus has not been preserved, so that a comparison of facial features and cap are not possible. Both mosaics show a tree branch of nearly identical design to the left, and animals on either side of the singer. The tesserae in the upper left corner of the Edessa mosaic are missing, so that the only animal that is visible to the left is a gazelle in a resting position, just as on the Dallas mosaic. On the right side appear a lion (again, as on the new mosaic) and three birds. The smallest of the three birds

25 Philostratus the Younger, *Imagines* 6, ed. with Engl. tr. A. Fairbanks, *Philostratus, Imagines; Callistratus, Descriptions*, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1931), 308-313.

26 The photograph appears on p. 157 of Segal, "New Mosaics from Edessa" and is reproduced by Colledge, "Some Remarks," Pl. CVI.2. For reproductions of the drawing, see above n. 11.

27 The cubic object appears to protrude in front of the Edessa Orpheus, which raises the question if it was intended to signify something else, not the rock on which he is seated.

closely resembles the little bird on the Dallas mosaic; it might be a swallow. The large bird on the Edessa mosaic is not black, as on the new mosaic; it is not a raven. The lion in the Edessa mosaic is standing, not jumping, and it is shown as tamed.

Both mosaics have a short Syriac inscription near Orpheus' head and a longer one, surrounded by a black frame, in the lower section of the composition. In the Edessa mosaic, the panel with the inscription is located at the bottom center and is held by two cupids. In each case, the inscription identifies the mosaic as funerary art, a notable feature since most of the extant Orpheus mosaics do not show any inscriptions at all, and only two other Orpheus mosaics are known to have decorated tombs (Cherchel and Constantine in Algeria).[28] The Orpheus motif appealed as sepulchre imagery to the early Roman Christians, who used it to adorn walls and ceilings in the catacombs. The new mosaic and the Edessa mosaic thus resemble one another in several regards: the outline of the composition, the Syriac inscription, the funerary context. Overall, however, the new mosaic seems to be of artistically superior quality: the musician and the animals are beautifully executed in a polychrome technique; they are lively and expressive – in either their fierce or docile way – and they fill out the entire panel.

Since both mosaics are dated, one would think it fairly simple to determine which of the two was produced first and therefore could potentially have influenced the artist of the other, but this is not the case. The new mosaic is dated to Nisan 505. As will be explained below, this must be the year 505 of the Seleucid era (which commenced in October 312 B. C.). Hence its date is April 194 of the common era. The Edessa mosaic is dated to "the month Tammuz of the year thirty-nine."[29] Different theories have been articulated as to how this date is to be interpreted. Most scholars have assumed that the artist left out "five hundred," i. e., that this mosaic was laid in the year [five hundred and] thirty-nine of the Seleucid era, corresponding to July 228 A. D. If this were the case, the Edessa mosaic would postdate the Dallas one by thirty-four years. Yet A. Luther recently pointed out that there are very few arguments in favor of the hypothesis that "five hundred" ought to be supplied, and he suggested two other possible readings of the date. First, it is possible that not the words "five hundred," but "four hundred" could have been left out, for such cases have been found among the Palmyrene inscriptions.[30] If this were so, the Edessa mosaic would have been produced in

28 Jesnick, *Orpheus*, 105.

29 For the text of the inscription, cf. Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am7, p. 178f.

30 A. Luther, "Das Datum des Orpheus-Mosaiks aus Urfa," *Die Welt des Orients* 30 (1999), 129-137, esp. 132f. Luther refers to the inscriptions PAT 923 (=CIS 2, 4562) and PAT 1397 (= Inv. 10,81). There are two other known Syriac inscriptions that lack the number of hundreds, namely Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As9 and the mosaic inscription Am1. Only a somewhat inaccurate drawing exists of this mosaic and its inscription. Most scholars read the date as "the month Šebaṭ of the year seventy." If the words "five hundred" were left out, the mosaic

128 A. D., thereby predating the new mosaic by sixty-six years. A second possibility contemplated by Luther is that the artist could have used the local dating method according to the year of the "liberation" of Edessa, employed in two legal parchment documents from the early third century.[31] The conjunction of this dating method with other frames of reference in these parchment documents make it clear that the year of Edessa's "liberation" refers to its incorporation into the Roman Empire in 213 A. D. In this case, the Edessa Orpheus mosaic would date to the year 252 A. D.[32]

In addition to the Orpheus mosaic, a number of other mosaics have survived from late antique Edessa.[33] Several of these are dated: the mosaic with geometric design is dated to Nisan 535 (i. e., April 224 A. D.), the Phoenix mosaic to 547 (i. e., 235/6 A. D.), and the Funerary Couch mosaic (also known as Zaydallat mosaic) to either 218 or 228.[34] The commemorative inscriptions on Edessan

would date to 259 A. D. Colledge, "Some Remarks," 192, however, suggests a reading of the year as *'rb'yn* (forty) instead of *šb'yn* (seventy), arguing that the mosaic was produced in 229 A. D.

31 These two parchment documents (designated as P1 and P3) are ed. with Engl. tr. by Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, 232-236, 243-248. Document P1 is a sale contract, written in Edessa, and it is dated to the year thirty-one of the liberation of Edessa, as well as to the year six of Emperor Gordian's reign and to the year 554 of the former reckoning, that is the Seleucid era. It thus was composed in 243 A. D. Document P3 is dated to the year thirty of the liberation of Edessa, to the fifth year of Emperor Gordian, and to the year 553 of the former reckoning. It thus was written in 242 A. D. A third document (P2) was drawn up in 240 A. D., but it does not include a date according to the year of the liberation of Edessa. These documents have been studied by J. Teixidor, "Deux documents syriaques du IIIe siècle après J.-C., provenant du Moyen Euphrate," *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus* (1990), 144-166; S. Brock, "Some New Syriac Documents from the Third Century AD," *Aram* 3 (1991), 259-267; H. Kaufhold, "Zum Inhalt einer syrischen Vertragsurkunde aus dem Jahre 240 n. Chr.," in: *After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers*, ed. G. J. Reinink and A. J. Klugkist, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 89 (Louvain: Peeters, 1999), 173-184; M. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze. Palmyra – Edessa – Dura-Europos – Hatra. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian*, Oriens et Occidens 9 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 256-269.

32 Luther, "Das Datum des Orpheus-Mosaiks aus Urfa," 136.

33 All of these mosaics bear Syriac inscriptions. They are edited and depicted in Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, with catalogue numbers Am1-Am11. They will be referred to by these designations. Studies of the Edessa mosaics include J. Leroy, "Mosaïques funéraires d'Édesse," *Syria* 34 (1957), 306-342; Segal, "New Mosaics from Edessa"; J. Balty, "La mosaïque antique au Proche-Orient I. Des origines à la Tétrarchie," *ANRW* II 12.2 (1981), 347-429, esp. 387-390; H. J. W. Drijvers, "Ein neuentdecktes edessenisches Grabmosaik," *Antike Welt* 12/3 (1981), 17-20; H. J. W. Drijvers, "A Tomb for the Life of a King: A Recently Discovered Edessene Mosaic with a Portrait of King Abgar the Great," *Muséon* 95 (1982), 167-189; K. Parlasca, "Neues zu den Mosaiken von Edessa und Seleukia am Euphrat," in: *III Colloquio Internazionale sul mosaico antico. Ravenna 6-10 Settembre 1980*, ed. R. F. Campanati (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1983), 227-234; Colledge, "Some Remarks"; A. Desreumaux, "Une paire de portraits sur mosaïque avec leurs inscriptions édesséniennes," *Syria* 77 (2000), 211-215; Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques."

34 The inscriptions are edited and the mosaics depicted in Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am9 (Geometric mosaic); Am6 (Phoenix mosaic); Am8 (Funerary Couch mosaic). The case of the Funerary Couch mosaic is difficult, for here the date is only partially legible as

mosaics indicate that most of these originally functioned as funerary art. The new Orpheus mosaic thus fits well into this group, for it, too, originated from a sepulchre context. Moreover, the style of the Dallas Orpheus resembles those of the Edessan mosaics, whose figures have distinctive facial features quite similar to the Dallas Orpheus. Orpheus' large, dark eyes and long, straight nose resemble the upper-class persons depicted on the Tripod mosaic or the Muqimu mosaic.[35]

One more feature that connects the new Orpheus mosaic with early Edessan art can be noted, namely the two red tassels over each of Orpheus' shoes. The exact same decorative tassels embellish the shoes of Adona, son of Gabbai, the main figure on the Tripod mosaic, which was found by Segal in 1956 northwest of Edessa (Fig. 5).[36] A similar ornamentation beautifies the footwear of Muqimu and his three sons on the Muqimu mosaic, except that here only one tassel falls over each shoe.[37] This artistic detail strongly supports the thesis of an Osrhoenian, presumably Edessan, origin of the new mosaic, for none of the Orpheus mosaics surveyed for this study shows such tassels (Orpheus often wears sandals or plain shoes). Such decorative accents to the footwear may have been fashionable in Edessa in the late second and early third centuries, or – if they do not reflect the Osrhoenian mode – they may reflect the style of the artist and his workshop.

2. The Inscription

The text of the inscriptions reads as follows:[38]

Text:

1 ܬ ܗܠ
2 ܫܢ
3 ܫ

4 ܕܢ ܒܪ ܒܪ ܐܒ ܒܪ ܒܪ
5 ܬ ܒܪ ܒܪ ܒܪ
6 ܒܪ ܒ ܐ ܒ
7 ܒ ܒ ܒ
8 ܒ ܐ ܒ
9 ܒ ܒ ܒ

"... hundred and ... nine." Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, 180-183, suggest a date of 218 or 228 A. D.

35 For plates, see above n. 14. The iconography of these mosaics has been studied by J. Rumscheid, "Familienbilder im Haus der Ewigkeit. Zu Grabmosaiken aus Edessa" (Vortrag anlässlich des Edessa-Symposiums in Halle/Saale am 17. Juli 2005). I would like to thank Dr. Rumscheid for sending me a copy of her paper.

36 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am5 and Pl. 50-51. Here, the surviving fragments and a drawing of the entire mosaic are shown. The drawing is reproduced in color in Segal, "New Mosaics from Edessa," Fig. on p. 150.

37 Muqimu mosaic (Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am4, Pl. 49).

38 I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. J. F. Coakley (Harvard University) for discussing and improving my reading of the text.

Translation:

1 Bar SGD [SGR]
2 the (mosaic) paver
3 set (it).

4 In the month Nisan, in the year five hundred
5 and five. I, PP' , son of
6 PP', built for myself
7 this habitation. For me,
8 and for my sons, and for my heirs. Blessed be he
9 who will see and will bless.

Textual Notes

Line 1. The name can be read as either Bar SGD or Bar SGR, since this Syriac script, like the writing in contemporaneous Syriac epigraphs, does not distinguish between *resh* and *daleth.* Diacritical points were introduced only in the fourth century. The more likely form of the name is Bar SGD, since it may be derived from the Syriac root ܣܓܕ, *sgd*, to worship, adore, or do obeisance.[39] The name Bar SGD does not appear in any of the early Syriac inscriptions catalogued by Drijvers and Healey,[40] nor does it occur in the corpus of Aramaic inscriptions from Hatra.[41] The somewhat similar Semitic name Σαγαδεος, however, has been documented.[42]

Line 2-3. The root meaning of ܪܨܦ, *rṣp,* is to set closely, pave. Here it refers to the setting of the mosaic. The artist designates himself as ܪܨܦܝܐ, a term corresponding to the Latin *pavimentarius* which occasionally was employed in artist's signatures.[43]

Line 4-5. The date is legible, although it appears that the letters are dislodged. The date clearly reads "in the month Nisan, in the year five hundred and five," which must refer to the Seleucid era, the standard reference for dating in Edessa and Osrhoene. That date corresponds to April 194 A. D.[44] Occasionally, other

39 J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903; Neudruck 1988), s. v. ܣܓܕ.

40 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions.*

41 K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

42 This name is listed in H. Wuthnow, *Die semitischen Menschennamen in griechischen Inschriften und Papyri des vorderen Orients,* Studien zur Epigraphik und Papyruskunde I,4 (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930), 100.

43 M. Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung. Eine Quellenstudie,* Erlanger Forschungen. Reihe A, Geisteswissenschaften 48 (Erlangen: Universitätsbund Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1989), 26.

44 The date of 204 A. D., listed in various databases and online catalogues, is thus erroneous. This date is given in the Amica database (Jan. 2007) (http://www.davidrumsey.com/amico/amico 887887-42483.html) and in the Artstor database (Jan. 2007).

dating methods were used by Syriac-speaking authors, but none of these could have been employed in this inscription. As was mentioned above, some of the legal parchments written in Osrhoene in the early third century of the common era include a date "from the liberation" of the city Edessa, which refers to the year 213 A. D., the time when Edessa became part of the Roman Empire under Caracalla. This dating method was used only briefly – and not for five centuries! – and solely in conjunction with several other points of reference, such as Roman imperial rule or the "former reckoning" (ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܚܫܒܢܐ), i. e., the Seleucid era.[45] Some of the Syriac chronicles include dates from the time of Abraham or from the beginning of the world (in conjunction with other points of reference),[46] but this is obviously not meant here either. By far the most common dating method used by Syriac authors is the Seleucid era, and this must be meant in the Orpheus mosaic inscription as well. It is certain, then, that this mosaic and its inscription were produced in April of 194 A. D.

The dating formula is typical for early Syriac inscriptions; indeed it is the most common pattern used.[47] The dating formula appears at the beginning of the text, as is usual in Syriac inscriptions. For example the inscription of Am9 (Geometric mosaic, from Edessa) commences with the exact same dating formula.[48]

Line 5-6. The name of the donor is Papa, son of Papa. The Syriac word ܦܦ, *pp'*, corresponds to the Greek πάππας and is later used as title for a priest or bishop, especially for the patriarch.[49] It is also a Syriac proper name. The name Papa does not appear in any of the Syriac inscriptions catalogued by Drijvers and Healey, but it does occur as a proper name in an Aramaic inscription from Hatra. In this undated commemorative epigraph, found on an altar, PP' designates the person who made the altar, presumably the donor rather than the artist.[50] Perhaps the best known person carrying this name was Mar Papa, bishop of Seleucia-

45 Sale contract from 243 A. D., ed. Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, P1, line 3 (p. 232); cf. P3, line 2-3 (p. 243).

46 Dating from the time of Abraham can be found in the chronicle of Ps.-Dionysius, ed. with Latin tr. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronicon anonymum Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, CSCO 91, 121; Syr. 43, 66 (Louvain: Durbecq, 1927 and 1949), e. g., p. 123, see also below note 77). *Anno mundi* dates are, for example, found in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian, ed. with French tr. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899-1910, reprint: Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963). See also W. Witakowski, *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē. A Study in the History of Historiography*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1987), esp. 67-89 on chronology in Syriac historiography.

47 S. P. Brock, "Some Notes on Dating Formulae in Middle Aramaic Inscriptions and in Early Syriac Manuscripts," in: *Intertestamental Essays in Honour of Józef Tadeusz Milik*, ed. Z. J. Kapera (Krakow: Enigma Press, 1992), 253-264, esp. 255, 258 and table on p. 260-161.

48 ܒܢܝܣܢ ܝܘܡ ܫܒܥ ܒܗ ܫܬ ܡܐܐ ܘܫܠܝܫܝܐ ܫܢܬ, in the month Nisan, in the year five hundred and thirty-five (Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am9).

49 R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879), s. v. ܦܦ.

50 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, H 9c.

Ctesiphon in the early fourth century.[51] In the *Acts of Mari*, composed after the early fourth century, Papa is one of Mari's disciples and becomes his successor.[52] In the fourth century, an Armenian king was named Papa (Para according to some manuscripts), as recorded by the historians Ammianus Marcellinus and Moses of Chorene. This Papa was the son of King Arsaces of Armenia and later assumed the throne himself. He was involved in confrontations with both Rome and Persia and died, according to Ammianus, through poison handed him by a Roman general at a banquet.[53]

Line 7-8. Papa bar Papa had the tomb built and mosaic laid for himself (ܠܗ), a situation corresponding to that of most other funerary mosaics: Am1, Am2, Am3, Am5 (here the dedicator is listed in the third person singular), Am6 (Phoenix), Am7 (Edessa Orpheus), Am8, Am10 (Barsimya, Abgar). Some funerary mosaics do not specify the donor, such as Am4 (Muqimu, family portrait style) or Am11 (Barhadad), but one can assume that the main figure represented sponsored the production. Among the extant Syriac inscriptions, a fair number honor not a family member, but an influential person of high social or political rank, and in these usually both patron and honoree are named.[54] In the funerary epitaphs, on the other hand, usually the patron commemorates himself or herself.[55]

The assertion that Papa commissioned the mosaic, and presumably the tomb, "for himself" is reiterated in line 8, where the text adds that his sons (i. e., children) and heirs are included as well. This repetition of the word ܠܗ ("for me"), and the phrase ܠܗ ܘܠܒܢܝ ܘܠܒܢ̈ܝ ("for myself and for my sons/children and for my heirs), are quite common on mosaic funerary inscriptions.[56]

51 J.-B. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil de synodes nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902), 46-48, tr. p. 290-292. The letters attributed to Papa are spurious, cf. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1922), 124. On Mar Papa, see J.-M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq*, CSCO 310, Sub. 36 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1970), 72-75 and passim.

52 Ed. and tr. A. Harrak, *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). Papa occurs in *Acts of Mari* 33 (p. 70,15) and 33 (p. 76,10-11; 78,1).

53 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* XXVII 12,9-11; XXX 1,1; XXX 1,18-19, ed. with Engl. tr. J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, vol. 3, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1939), 82, 294, 302-304. Moses of Chorene, *History of the Armenians* III 24, 29-30, 35-36, 38-39, tr. R. W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 279-280, 284-286, 292-295, 298-301. Thomson translates the name as "Pap." In Moses' account the details of Papa's death differ from Ammianus' version. According to Moses, Papa was a Christian. For further references to this Papa in ancient sources, see A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (A. D. 260-395) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 665-666.

54 E. g., Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As1, As49, As50, As51, As52.

55 A woman named Gayyu made the tomb inscription As20.

56 This very phrase is found on Am2,6-7; Am3,1; Am7,5. Similar formulae (usually mentioning the children, but not the heirs) occur on Am1, Am6, Am8, and Am10.

Line 7. Papa built for himself and his descendents this ܒܝܬ ܡܫܟܢܐ, *beth maškna*, habitation.[57] The word *maškna* can designate a tent, tabernacle, or generally a place of habitation, and is derived from the root *škn*, to settle. Here, the expression *beth maškna* designates the eternal resting-place of Papa. An alternative reading would be ܒܝܬ ܡܫܟܒܐ, *beth maškbā*, derived from *škb*, to rest, as J. F. Healey suggests.[58] However, the letter beth in this inscription is usually curved more to the left than is the case here, so that a reading of nun seems preferable. Perhaps the slight bend to the left of the upward stroke in the nun is due to a dislodging of the uppermost tessera.

In the context of this inscription, *beth maškna* refers to the tomb, the dwelling place of the person after death, a terminology which lacks parallels among the early Syriac funerary epitaphs. The more common designations are either "tomb" (ܩܒܪܐ, ܒܝܬ ܩܒܪܐ, or ܒܝܬ ܩܒܘܪܐ) or the euphemism "house of eternity" (ܒܝܬ ܥܠܡܐ).[59] One Syriac inscription refers to the tomb as ܒܝܬ ܡܬܒܢܐ ("dwelling").[60]

The term *maškna* does not appear in any of the known Syriac inscriptions, but it occurs three times in the Aramaic inscriptions from Hatra, where it carries a range of meanings. One inscription from Hatra curses anyone who steals objects from the building site of a temple, be they *mašknē*, tools, or vessels. *maškna* here presumably means "tent."[61] The word *maškna* is also found in the dedicatory inscription for a statue of Sanatruq II, king of Hatra in the early third century, where it has the meaning of "residence."[62] A third occurrence of *maškna* is found in a commemorative epitaph for *ʿBeḏmāran bàr Raḥaballā*. Here, the three main deities of Hatra (our Lord, our Lady, and the son of our Lords) are called upon to bestow on him good and beautiful things. The text reads as follows:[63]

[1] dḵīr ʿBeḏmāran bàr

[2] Raḥaballā lṭāḇ walšappīr qḏām ga[dd]ā

[3] qḏām māran wmārtan wḇàr mārēn ʾ... ḏmašknā.

57 The term ܒܝܬ ܡܬܒܢܐ, dwelling place, occurs on a Syriac funerary inscription as a euphemism for tomb (see below n. 60), but is not a possible reading here. The third letter is clearly connected to the left and can therefore not be a *resh*.

58 Healey, "A New Syriac Mosaic Inscription," 316, 321-322. He translates the phrase as "chamber of repose."

59 ܩܒܪܐ occurs in As10,1; ܩܒܘܪܐ is As59,3; ܒܝܬ ܩܒܪܐ or ܒܝܬ ܩܒܘܪܐ in As55,6; As20,2; As56,1; Am8,3; Am9,6. "House of eternity" (ܒܝܬ ܥܠܡܐ) is often used in the inscriptions on the Edessa mosaics: Am1,4; Am2,4-5; Am3,1; Am5,9; Am6,5; Am7,4; Am10,3.

60 As5,2, a tomb inscription from the southern cemetery of Edessa. Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, 54f. note that this is the only epigraphic occurance of ܒܝܬ ܡܬܒܢܐ as euphemism for "tomb."

61 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, H 281,3, p. 81.

62 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, H 79,10, p. 47-48. Beyer translates "(heilige) Wohnung." On the history of Hatra in this era, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa. Die Städte der syrisch-mesopotamischen Wüste in politischer, kulturgeschichtlicher und religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung," *ANRW* II 8 (1977), 799-906, esp. 823.

63 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, H 50, p. 41-42.

K. Beyer translates:

[1]Gedacht werde des SKLAVE-UNSERES-HERREN des Sohnes des
[2]WILLKOMMEN-DER-(ARABISCHEN-GÖTTIN)-ALLĀT zu Gutem und zu Schönem vor (=von) dem Glücksgott,
[3]vor (=von) unserem Herren und unserer Herrin und dem Sohn unserer Herrschaften ... der (heiligen) Wohnung!

This inscription seems to be a funerary epitaph, and it is possible that the term *mašknā* here refers to the tomb, just as in the Orpheus mosaic.

In the Peshitta Old Testament, the word *mašknā* occurs relatively frequently. It can designate either a tent in general, or the "tabernacle," the dwelling-place of JHWH.[64] It also occurs several times in the Syriac version of Acts, the Letter to the Hebrews, and Revelation, often in quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures.[65] The usage of the expression *beth mašknā*, with its biblical connotations, raises the question whether the donor of the tomb might have been a Jew or Christian.

Line 8-9. Papa bar Papa's epitaph closes with a blessing formula: "Blessed be he who will see and will bless." While most Syriac funerary inscriptions do not contain such a formula, there are some that do include a blessing or a curse. The Tripod mosaic, with which iconographic parallels were noted above, closes with a blessing, but one worded rather differently: "Whoever removes the sorrow of (his) offspring and mourns for (his) forefathers will have a happy afterlife."[66] Another example of a blessing comes from a tomb-tower in Serrin at the left bank of the Euphrates, dated to 73 A. D. This inscription commemorates the founder and his family and includes a blessing formula not unlike the one on the Orpheus mosaic: "Whoever gives thanks, may all the gods bless him and permanence and life may he have."[67] If one includes for comparison also the Aramaic inscriptions from eastern Mesopotamia, one finds that blessing terminology was employed there with regard to the person to be commemorated, such as "blessing and remembrance for NN" (*dḵīr waḇrīḵ*), but not generally with regard to those who commemorate the deceased.[68]

By contrast, three Syriac inscriptions contain curses. A tomb inscription for the woman Gayyu (As20) threatens potential vandals: "And whoever removes my

64 For example Gen 12:8; Ex 26,7; 33:8; 35:11; Lev 15:31; Num 24:5; Dt 5:30; Judg. 4:21; 1 Sam 4:10 ; 2 Sam 18:17 ; 1 Kings 8:66 ; Ps. 15:1 ; 19:5 ; 83:6 (7). *The Old Testament in Syriac, According to the Peshiṭta Version*, ed. Peshiṭta Institute (Leiden: Brill, 1972ff.). See also Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, s. v. *škn*, vol. 2, p. 4156.

65 For example Acts 7:43-46; Hebr. 8:2,5; 9:2,6,7,8,11; Rev. 15:5; 21,3. See G. A. Kiraz, *A Computer-Generated Concordance to the Syriac New Testament*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 2899-2900.

66 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Am5, p. 172-173. The translation quoted is by Drijvers and Healey.

67 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Bs2, line 5-6; text and tr. p. 193f.

68 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, e. g., A 14; A 27d; A 27i ; H 77; H 81; H 146a; H 146b; H 225; H 296; H 1016.

bones, may he have no afterlife and may he be cursed by Maralahe."[69] Second, the epigraph on the tomb-tower in Serrin just mentioned above includes a curse in addition to the blessing. The somewhat fragmentary text reads: "Whoever comes and destroys this work and ... these bones ... may he have no tomb and may children to throw dust upon his eyes not exist for him ...".[70] Third, the sculptor of an honorary image for the administrator Tiridates (Add. 3) hoped to avert future damage to his work of art by these words: "Whoever destroys (it), ... from evil things."[71] Cursing formulas against those who destroy a memorial can also be found on an Aramaic inscription from Assur.[72]

The cursing formulas obviously were intended to safeguard the future integrity of a tomb or monument and to deter possible destruction. Sepulchre relief art might be pillaged or vandalized, funerary mosaics might be stolen, or tesserae might be salvaged for use elsewhere.[73] The blessings, on the other hand, raise the question of whom exactly the patron might have had in mind as the object of the blessing. Whereas a tomb-tower inscription might be read and the deceased commemorated by a passer-by, such a scenario is difficult to imagine in the case of funerary mosaic inscriptions of cave tombs, which are not likely to have been publicly accessible. One may surmise that the blessings were intended for family members who came to commemorate the dead.

3. Interpretation

The iconography, funerary setting, language, and script[74] of the new Orpheus mosaic point to Osrhoene as its place of origin, perhaps even to Edessa itself. In this section, I shall first take a closer look at the region's history in the late second century. Next, the artist's signature on the new Orpheus mosaic will be studied. Finally, the possible religious background of the mosaic's patron will be considered.

The Historical Context: Osrhoene in the Late Second Century

Since 132 B. C., the city of Edessa and its environment, the Osrhoene, was ruled by a dynasty of local kings, who long managed to maintain their independence

69 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As20, line 5-6, p. 78-81.
70 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Bs2, line 6-9, p. 193-194, tr. Drijvers and Healey.
71 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Add. 3, line 5-7, p. 249-250, tr. Drijvers and Healey. Part of the inscription is illegible.
72 Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, A 14, p. 13.
73 It is known that tesserae were salvaged and reused in other mosaics. Cf. R. Ling, *Ancient Mosaics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 13.
74 The script is examined by Healey, "A New Syriac Mosaic Inscription," 319-320. On the script of other Syriac inscriptions, cf. Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, 1-19.

from the adjacent superpowers Rome and Parthia.[75] In 163 of the common era, Edessa temporarily came under Parthian political dominance. A pro-Parthian puppet monarch was installed, King Wa'el bar Sahru, whose coins depict the Parthian King Vologeses on the obverse.[76] During this period, the previous occupant of the throne, Ma'nu bar Ma'nu, sought refuge on Roman territory.[77] The interruption of his reign did not last long, for only two years later, in 165, Rome succeeded in dethroning Wa'el and reinstating Ma'nu, who now expressed his pro-Roman attitude by minting coins inscribed with ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΜΑΝΝΟC ΦΙΛΟΡΩΜΑΙ[ος].[78] Politically, this era marked a shift towards alliance with Rome, and this policy was continued by King Abgar VIII (177-212), the son of Ma'nu *philorhomaios.* Abgar's coins, which depict the king together with various members of the Roman imperial family, communicate his close association with the Empire.[79] Moreover, Abgar was granted Roman citizenship.[80] Although Roman historians often regarded eastern rulers as treacherous,[81] there are many

75 Edessa was ruled by the Abgarid dynasty from 132 B. C. to 242/248 A. D. On its political history in this era, cf. S. K. Ross, *Roman Edessa. Politics and culture on the eastern fringes of the Roman Empire, 114-242 CE* (London: Routledge, 2001); Segal, *Edessa*, 1-61; Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 225-256. Further literature is listed in these publications.

76 G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1965) (=*BMC Arabia*), p. 91 and Pl. XIII 6, commentary on p. xcvif. See also Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Co1, Pl. 75.

77 Ps. Dionysius recorded for the year 2130 (after Abraham) that Ma'nu bar Ma'nu reigned for 24 years and that he went over into the Roman empire. For the year 2154 he noted Wa'el's two-year rulership and that after Wa'el ruled Ma'nu bar Izat, after his return from Roman territory, for twelve years. Ps.-Dionysius then gave the total length of Ma'nu's kingship as thirty-six years, not counting the two-year interregnum (ed. Chabot, 123,9-11 and 125,20-25). Obviously there is some confusion in his account. The most likely solution is to assume that the chronicler got the filiation mixed up, and that Ma'nu bar Ma'nu was king both before and after Wa'el. Some scholars, however, reconstruct the chronology differently, see for example A. Luther, "Elias von Nisibis und die Chronologie der edessenischen Könige," *Klio* 81 (1999), 180-198, esp. 197.

78 Hill, *BMC Arabia*, 92-93, Pl. XIII 9-13. On the difficulties associated with identifying this King Ma'nu, see for example Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 238-239. On the title *philorhomaios*, and client kingship more generally, cf. D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King. The Character of Client Kingship* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

79 Hill, *BMC Arabia*, 93-96, Pl. XIII 14-16, XIV 1-7. These coins show Abgar with Commodus or Septimius Severus and bear a Greek legend.

80 On some coins and inscriptions, Abgar carries a Roman name. For coins, cf. Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 50. A mile stone inscription from the year 205 A. D. refers to Abgar as "Septimius Abgar." Text: J. Wagner, *L'Année Épigraphique* (1984), number 920. Cf. J. Wagner, "Provincia Osrhoenae. New Archaeological Finds Illustrating the Military Organization under the Severan Dynasty," in: *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia. Proceedings of a colloquium held at University College, Swansea, in April 1981*, ed. S. Mitchell, BAR International Series 156 (Oxford: B. A. R., 1983), 103-129, esp. 115 and Pl. 8.3c and 8.5c.

81 Tacitus, for instance, viewed Oriental rulers as treacherous and unreliable (*Annales* XII 14, ed. with Engl. tr. J. Jackson, *Tacitus, The Histories; The Annals*, vol. 3, LCL [London: Heinemann, 1937], 334-336). After the death of Pertinax in 193, several persons contended for the imperial throne, among them Septimius Severus in the West and Pescennius Niger in the East. Cassius Dio 75.1-2 (ed. with Engl. tr. E. Casy, *Dio's Roman History*, LCL, vol. 9 [London: Heinemann, 1961], 194-196) recorded that during this politically tumultuous period Osrhoenians and Adiabenians

indications of a close and amicable relationship between Abgar and Septimius Severus (193-211). For instance, Abgar did not lose his royal throne when Septimius Severus established the province of Osrhoene in 195,[82] and he even continued to hold the right to mint coins whereas other cities (such as Antioch) lost this prerogative.[83] Abgar submitted his children as political hostages to the emperor, and he gave military support in the form of his world-famous archers.[84] Moreover, accompanied by a large entourage he personally journeyed to Rome, where Severus received him with much pomp.[85] Under Severus' son and successor Caracalla (198-217), the integration of Edessa and its kingdom into the Roman Empire was further solidified. The city received the status of a *colonia*, probably in 213,[86] even though the Edessan kingship continued to exist intermittently until the 240s.[87]

Edessa's political turn to the West that began in the 160s was accompanied by a vivid cultural exchange between northern Mesopotamia and the Empire. In particular, this interchange is made evident by the many mosaics – an essentially Graeco-Roman form of art – that have been found in Osrhoene. As noted above,

besieged Nisibis – without, however, explicitly mentioning Abgar. Modern scholars have interpreted this passage as disloyalty on Abgar's part, cf. M. G. A. Bertinelli, "I Romani oltre l'Eufrate nel II secolo d. C. (le province di Assiria, di Mesopotamia e di Osroene)," *ANRW* II 9.1 (1976), 3-45, esp. 34f.; Drijvers, "Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa," 876-878; M. T. Schmitt, *Die römische Außenpolitik des 2. Jahrhunders n. Chr. Friedenssicherung oder Expansion?* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 69, interprets the establishment of the province Osrhoene as "Rache des Severus." On the prejudice of the Roman historians, see also Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 239-241.

82 The extent of the kingdom of Osrhoene after 195 can not precisely be reconstructed, a fact that has given rise to a variety of theories. In any case, new epigraphic evidence shows that even after the establishement of the *provincia* Osrhoene in 195, Abgar's territories extended considerably beyond the city limit. A boundary marker was found ca. 40 km west of Edessa, text ed. J. Wagner, *L'Année Épigraphique* (1984), number 919; cf. Wagner, "Provincia Osrhoenae," 113-114, Pl. 8.3b and 8.5b.

83 Cf. Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 51.

84 Herodian III 9.2, ed. R. C. Whittaker, *Herodian*, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1969), 316. On the submission of hostages to Rome in general, see S. Elbern, "Geiseln in Rom," *Athenaeum (Pavia)* 78 (1990), 97-140, esp. 104f., 106-109.

85 Cassius Dio 80.16.2; cf. Braund, 55-57.The relation between Abgar and Severus is also discussed by M. Gawlikowski, "The Last Kings of Edessa," in *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. R. Lavenant, OCA 256 (Rome: Pontifico Istituto Orientale, 1998), 421-428.

86 The date of Edessa's incorporation into the Empire is evident from the third-century legal documents (see above n. 31). The event is mentioned also by Cassius Dio 78.1. Numismatic evidence for the status of *colonia* dates only to the reign of Elagabalus (Hill, *BMC Arabia*, 99-112; cf. Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 59), and it is possible that Edessa gradually rose in rank, first to Roman *polis*, then to *colonia*, and later to *metropolis*, cf. J. Teixidor, "Les derniers rois d'Édesse d'après deux nouveaux documents syriaques," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 76 (1989), 219-222, esp. 219; Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 241f.; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 59.

87 On the complicated history of the later kings of Edessa, see Teixidor, "Derniers rois"; Gawlikowski, "Last Kings"; Luther, "Elias von Nisibis"; L. van Rompay, "Jacob of Edessa and the Early History of Edessa," in: *After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers*, ed. G. J. Reinink and A. J. Klugkist (Louvain: Peeters, 1999), 269-286.

the oldest of the previously known mosaics dates to the year 225, or possibly to 218 of the common era,[88] a time *after* Edessa was firmly integrated into the Empire. This dating has given rise to the assumption that these mosaics were produced in response to the changing political scene. M. A. R. Colledge suggested that "they were probably produced in response to a special need – perhaps a need among the Edessan aristocracy of the time to copy their new Roman masters and introduce a Roman fashion."[89] The new Orpheus mosaic, produced in 194 during the reign of King Abgar *before* Osrhoene became a Roman province under Septimius Severus, shows that the interchange between local Mesopotamian and Graeco-Roman culture dates to a much earlier period than was previously thought. It thereby provides extremely important material evidence for the vibrant Osrhoenian culture in the late second century.

The Artist's Signature

The text of the upper inscription identifies the artist: "Bar SGD, the mosaic-paver, set (it)." The mosaics with Syriac inscriptions often display short texts adjacent to the main figures; usually these identify the object. On the Edessa Orpheus mosaic, for example, one reads ܐܘܪܦܝܣ, *Orpheus*, next to the musician's (now lost) head. The so-called Phoenix mosaic identifies the bird as ܦܝܢܩܣ, *phoenix*. Several panels of a recently found mosaic with mythological scenes identify the depicted persons (Briseis, Polyxene, Achilles, Patroclos, Hecuba, Priam, servants, and Troilos),[90] and a large panel with Prometheus and other deities identifies them in Syriac letters.[91] The "family portrait" mosaics from Edessan funerary contexts usually identify the persons portrayed, as can be observed in the Abgar-Barsimya mosaic, the Tripod mosaic, the Muqimu mosaic, or in the newly discovered fragments of unknown provenance.[92] Such labeling of mosaic objects became popular from the third century onwards throughout the Roman world and the Near East, as mosaics from Antioch, Cologne, and Baalbek illustrate.[93]

88 The geometric mosaic dates to 225 A. D. The date of the Funerary Couch mosaic is difficult to interpret; it may be from 218 A. D. See above n. 34.

89 Colledge, "Some Remarks," 196. This thesis was rejected by Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," 32, 71-72.

90 Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," Fig. 6-10, p. 52, 60, 67.

91 On the Prometheus mosaic, see Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," 32-51; Fig. 1 on p. 33. It is also depicted in Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Cm11, Pl. 72. This mosaic is of unknown provenance, but attributed to Edessa or its vicinity by Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," 35. An improved reading of the mosaic's inscription is suggested by G. W. Bowersock, "Notes on the New Edessene Mosaic of Prometheus," *Hyperboreus* 7, fasc. 1-2 (2001), 411-416; see also G. W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History. The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam*, Revealing Antiquity 16 (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006).

92 On the new fragments depicting two male figures, see Desreumaux, "Une paire de portraits." The iconography of these family portrait mosaics has been studied by Rumscheid, "Familienbilder."

93 Ling, *Ancient Mosaics*, 55-57, discusses the topic and gives examples. Cologne: Mosaic of the Philosophers (Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne), for depiction of a detail of this mosaic,

On the Dallas Orpheus mosaic, however, not the object or person depicted is labeled, but the artist himself immortalized! It is rather unusual to find the artist's signature in such a prominent place of the mosaic. Among the mosaics found in northern Mesopotamia, four bear the artist's signature, all of them in Greek. The mosaic from Mas'udiye on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, a depiction of the river god Euphrates flanked by personifications of Syria and Mesopotamia, is dated to the year 539, i. e., 227/228 A. D. A Greek inscription identifies the god as Βασιλεὺς ποταμὸς Εὐφράτης, and underneath appears the artist's signature: Εὐτυχὴς Βαρναβίωνος ἐποίει. The main figure of the mosaic, the river-god Euphrates, is also identified in Syriac letters next to the god's head as ܡܠܟܐ ܦܪܬ, king Euphrates.[94] A second signed mosaic, dated by M. Donderer to the third century, was found in Nisibis and is today located in the Archaeological Museum of Gaziantep in Turkey. It depicts fish, centaurs, and cupids in boats. A square-shaped hole in the center of the rectangular panel and the aquatic theme suggests that this mosaic might have adorned the floor of a fountain. The artist signed his work in Greek: Ζήνων ἠργάσατο.[95] Two further mosaics, recently unearthed in salvage excavations in Zeugma at the right bank of the Euphrates, bear the inscription of the artist Zosimos. One of these mosaics depicts women at breakfast; the inscription CYNAPICTΩCAC identifies the motif as a scene from Menander's lost play of the same title. The artist signed his name below the seated women: ZΩCIMOC ΕΠΟΙΕΙ.[96] The second signed mosaic from Zeugma shows the birth of Aphrodite and was produced by a craftsman of the same name, as the inscription ZΩCIMOC CAMOCATEYC ΕΠΟΙΕΙ indicates; presumably it was one and the same person.[97]

Among the more than ninety known Orpheus mosaics, only two other ones bear the artist's signature, namely those from Oudna and Paphos. The Oudna Orpheus (dated to the late third or early fourth century) decorated the floor of a *frigidarium* and its inscription reads: LABERIUS ET PAULINUS LABERIANUS-MASURUS.[98] On the Orpheus mosaic from Paphos (early third century) the

see J. P. Darmon, "Les mosaïques en Occident I," *ANRW* II 12.2 (1981), 266-319, Pl. XXXIII.58. Baalbek: Mosaic of the Wise (Balty, "La mosaïque antique," Pl. XX).

94 Cf. Balty, "La mosaïque antique," 369-371, Pl. XII.1; see also Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Bm1, p. 200f.

95 M. Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike*, A14, p. 62 and Pl. 11. This mosaic, however, was not on display during a visit to the museum in March of 2008.

96 The mosaics from Zeugma are today on display in the Gaziantep Museum. Photograph and short description of the "Women at Breakfast" mosaic can be found in R. Ergeç, ed., *Belkis/Zeugma and Its Mosaics* (Istanbul: Sanko, 2007), 184-191. This mosaic is dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.

97 Ergeç, *Belkis/Zeugma*, 114-119.

98 Oudna I, cf. Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 163-164.

Greek inscription is located above the depiction and reads: [...]ος Πίννιος Ῥεστιτοῦτος ἐποίει.[99]

In Graeco-Roman mosaic art more generally, signed copies have been found in different parts of the Roman world, but overall such signatures rarely appear.[100] If they do, they are not generally found adjacent to the main figure, as is the signature of Bar SGD, for this space was usually reserved for labeling the object. The artist from Mas'udiye signed his work at a prominent location, to be sure, but placed it in a separate plate at the mosaic's upper margin. The mosaicist Hephaistion in the second century B. C. inscribed his name, as if on a piece of paper pinned down at three of its corners, upon a Pergamon mosaic.[101] And the artist Sophilos, who produced a mosaic representation of the city Alexandria as bust of a female figure, signed his work in the upper left corner.[102] A study of the artists' signatures suggests that they traveled to different sites and occasionally worked with the aid of local craftsmen.[103] Of great interest for the high social status of some mosaicists are two Greek inscriptions from Perinthus in Thrace.[104] The first inscription honors the artist P. Aelius Harpocration, who was also known as Proklos, of Alexandrian origin, for his decoration of the Tychaeum in Perinthus. From the second inscription, an epitaph, one learns that both Proklos and his son (also named Proklos) were traveling mosaicists, and that the younger Proklos was a member of the local senate. Perhaps it was one of these two craftsmen who signed a mosaic in Ostia in Greek as well as in Latin.[105] The inscriptions from Perinthus indicate that the artistic achievements of these two mosaicists were greatly appreciated and honored by the local community. On the other hand, several mosaics

99 Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, A31, Pl. 20; cf. Jesnick, *Orpheus*, 140; Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 179.

100 On this topic, see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Some Notes on Artists in the Roman World*, Collection Latomus 6 (Brussels: Latomus, 1951), 43-50; J. M. C. Toynbee, *The Art of the Romans* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 146-159, 179. A. Blachet, *La mosaïque* (Paris: Payot, 1928), esp. 55-56, was not available to me. The topic of mosaicists is treated in detail by Donderer, *Mosaizisten*.

101 M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941), p. 660, Pl. LXXIV.3. The inscription reads ΗΦΑΙΣΤΙΩΝ ΕΠΟΙΕΙ. Cf. Toynbee, *Some Notes*, 43.

102 Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, vol. 1, 254, Pl. XXXV.

103 Cf. Toynbee, *Some Notes*, 46; C. Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine: Roman mosaics in the House of Dionysos* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 28-29. A mosaic in Delos was signed by Asclepiades of Aradus, suggesting that the artist traveled there; cf. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, vol. 2, 793. Cf. Balty, "La mosaïque antique," 369-370, who also refers to I. Calabi Limentani, *Studi sulla societa romana. Il lavoro artistico* (Milan, 1958), 184.

104 CIG 2024 and CIG 2025. On their interpretation, see Toynbee, *Some Notes*, 43-44. The following summary is based on Toynbee's discussion and her printing of the text of CIG 2025.

105 This signature is discussed by Toynbee, *Some Notes*, 44. She notes that the Greek inscription ΠΡΟΚΛΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕΝ suggests eastern provenance of the artist rather than being an indication of courtesy to Greek immigrants. Traveling mosaicists are also discussed by R. Westgate, "*Pavimenta atque emblemata vermiculata*: Regional Styles in Hellenistic Mosaic and the First Mosaics at Pompeii," *American Journal of Archaeology* 104 (2000), 255-275, esp. 272-273.

from the Graeco-Roman world seem to have been produced and signed by slaves.[106]

It was already noted that only two mosaics from northern Mesopotamia, from Mas'udiye and Nisibis, respectively, bear artist's signatures in Greek. Yet the practice of signing one's work of art was not unknown to the regions East of the Euphrates. In Palmyra, stone-workers carved their names on buildings in the first and second centuries.[107] From the northern Mesopotamian region, there are several carved stone reliefs accompanied by Syriac inscriptions that bear the artist's name. While it is not possible in each case to specify whether a particular name designates artist or patron, there are several instances in which the sculptor evidently signed his work. In a funerary epitaph from a cave-tomb about twenty kilometers north-east of Edessa (As59), the names of both the sponsor and the artist appear: "I Satraq son of ... made this tomb for myself and for my sons and for my heirs forever. I Simeon made it."[108] Since Simeon is not the patron, who identifies himself as Satraq, he must be the artist. Not quite as clear is the case of a short commemorative epitaph from Sumatar (As34), which is signed by Bar Ma'na, the builder.[109] The artist rather than the patron also seems to be mentioned on a funerary inscription with relief sculpture that was found in a cave-tomb near Edessa (As6), the text of which reads: "This is the image of Qaymi, daughter of Arku, which 'Abdallat son of Kuza [our] ... made. Alas!"[110] Although one can not be certain, it is possible that 'Abdallat was the artist who carved relief image and inscription. This hypothesis is supported by another funerary monument from the vicinity of Edessa, on which two commemorative inscriptions are found adjacent to two figures carved in stone relief (As13, As14). The first one reads: "(Monument) which Dardu the sculptor (ܕܪܕܘ) made, an image for Mati'uzzat his aunt." The second one reads: "(Monument) which Dardu the sculptor (ܕܪܕܘ) made, an image of Addai son of 'Azzalazu, indeed and ... alas!" To be sure, Dardu the sculptor stood in a relation of kinship to one of the commemorated persons, but he seems to have signed his name here (twice!) in his professional function as artist.

Finally, a sculptor Šila signed his name on four different inscriptions in Sumatar (in one of them only "... bar Šila" is legible) . This may not be the same person in each instance, but the filiation Šila son of Šila suggests that these were pro-

106 Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, 47-49.

107 M. A. R. Colledge, *The Art of Palmyra*, Studies in Ancient Art and Archaeology (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 23, 267. Some of the artisans had Greek names, others had Palmyrene names.

108 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As59, p. 151-152. It is unclear whether this inscription originally was accompanied by a stone relief.

109 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As34, p. 102-103.

110 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As6, p. 57-58. Of one word, only the final nun is legible; Drijvers and Healey suggest the reading "our."

duced by the same man. The first of these appears on a relief bust in Sumatar and reads: "Šila son of Šila made the image in honor of Sin the god, for the life of Tiridates son of Adona, and for the life of his brothers."[111] If this inscription were read by itself, Šila son of Šila could simply be the patron, but when the evidence is interpreted in conjunction with other epigraphic sources, it becomes plausible that he was the sculptor. For the name Šila occurs also on two further relief sculptures from Sumatar. The first one of these (As47), inscribed between two figures, was made (ܥܒܕ) by the commandant Wa'el son of Mutru to honor Wa'el son of Wa'el, the governor of ʿArab, and his son, his lords and benefactors.[112] The text closes:

ܫܠܐ ܒܪ ܫܠܐ ܕ[ܥܒܕ]

[Šila] son of Šila carved (it).[113]

Since the patron of this inscription and relief carving is clearly identified as Wa'el, Šila must have been the artist. Moreover, the verb ܚܠܦ, to carve, implies the actual manufacture of image and text. In another inscription from Sumatar, today located in the Urfa Museum, Malik son of Belbana pays homage to his lord, Tiridates, governor of ʿArab (Add. 3). This inscription closes just like the previous one.

ܫܠܐ ܒܪ ܫܠܐ ܕ ܚܠܦ

Šila son of Šila carved (it).[114]

One can assume that we encounter here the same artist who carved the inscription dedicated to Wa'el, another holder of the position of governor of ʿArab. This epigram in honor of Tiridates – just as the one dedicated to Wa'el – must originally have been accompanied by a relief, for the text speaks of the image (ܨܠܡܐ) that was made for Tiridates. The fourth occurrence of the name Šila is on a Sumatar funerary stele with reliefs of three women (As43), but the inscription can only partially be deciphered. The legible part of the text states: "This image was made by [Šila] son of Šila for GD/RYW...daughter of GYW..." – presumably the three persons depicted were named.[115] This epigraphic evidence suggests that Šila son of

111 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As27, p. 89-90. The formula "for the life of" occurs repeatedly on Syriac and Aramaic inscriptions and is studied in detail by K. Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty: A Study in the Socio-Religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman Period Based on Epigraphical Evidence*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 128 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

112 Governor of ʿArab was an important administrative post that repeatedly is mentioned on inscriptions from Sumatar (As37, As47, As51). A "governor" is also known from an inscription in Birta, dated 6/7 A. D. (As55). ʿArab here does not have ethnic connotations, but refers to the nomads of the region, cf. Gawlikowski, "Last Kings," 422; Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 253-256. Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 26, suggests ʿArab designates a region around Tella or Reshaina.

113 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As47, p. 128-130.

114 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, Add. 3, p. 149-150. For this inscription, no plate is included in the volume.

115 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As43, p. 123.

Šila was a sculptor who carved four reliefs with accompanying texts in Sumatar (As27, As43, As47, Add. 3).

From the extant corpus of Syriac inscriptions we thus know of four artists who signed their work: Simeon, Bar Ma'na the builder, Dardu the sculptor, and Šila son of Šila, also a sculptor. None of these inscriptions is dated, but they seem to come from the middle of the second century, [116] about the same time in which Bar SGD laid the Orpheus mosaic. In signing his artifact, Bar SGD thus could draw on both the Graeco-Roman custom of signing mosaic works of art and on the local tradition of signing relief sculptures. By placing his signature in the highly prominent place adjacent to the figure of Orpheus, Bar SGD blended the local custom of placing explanatory inscriptions next to a mosaic's main object with the self-assured practice of signing one's work of art.

Who was Bar SGD, the mosaicist who so self-confidently signed his work? The name appears to be a native Syriac name, which suggests that the artist was a local craftsman, not a Greek or Roman artisan. Since Bar SGD is not known from any other epigraphic or literary sources, it must remain unknown where he learned his trade, if he had journeyed into Roman territory to acquire a mosaicist's skills, or if he belonged to a local workshop. Since the mosaic technique was of Graeco-Roman origin, one may assume that the artist who so expertly crafted the Orpheus mosaic must have received some training in one of the centers of Hellenistic art. A similar thesis was advanced by J. Balty and F. Briquel-Chatonnet regarding the craftsman who produced the Prometheus mosaic (to which they attribute Edessan provenance), namely that he was a local artist who had received Hellenistic training.[117] One could imagine that Bar SGD belonged to one of Edessa's resident communities of craftsmen who had their workshops on the banks of the river Daisan. The *Chronicle of Edessa* recorded that many of these workshops were destroyed by the disastrous flood in the year 201 A. D. Although mosaicists are not explicitly mentioned, we may surmise that Bar SGD belonged to the artisans of the city (ܐܘܡܢܢ̈ܐ ܕܒܪ̈ܕܥܐ) mentioned in the *Chronicle*. [118] Presumably some kind of apprenticeship could take place in these workshops, but since the new Orpheus mosaic is the earliest dated such artifact from the region, one may suppose that Bar SGD received at least part of his training elsewhere.

116 Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, suggest the following dates: As27 (mid-second century, ca. 161-165); As43 (mid-second century); As47 (mid-second century); Add. 3 (no date suggested).

117 Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," 48.

118 *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. I. Guidi, *Chronica minora I*, CSCO 1, Syr. 1 (Louvain: Durbecq, 1955), 1-13, here p. 1-3; German tr. L. Hallier, *Untersuchungen über die edessenische Chronik. Mit dem syrischen Text und einer Übersetzung*, TU 9 (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1892), 84-88. The chronicle was compiled in the sixth century but incorporates an earlier document (presumably from the Edessa archives) with a detailed account of the flood and King Abgar's rebuilding of the city.

Christus-Orpheus?

The Orpheus motif was one of very few pagan mythological themes taken over in early Christian art[119] so that there is legitimate ground to ask whether the new Orpheus mosaic could have been produced by a Christian patron. In the late second century, Christian communities were established in northern Mesopotamia, and the figure of Bardaisan (154-222), who flourished at the royal court of Edessa, illustrates that Christians came from the upper levels of Osrhoenian society and thus would have had the economic means to fund production of a funerary mosaic.[120] Several aspects of the inscription hint at the possibility of Christian patronage. First, the patron's name Papa is in later times documented as Syriac Christian name, although it also occurs in an undated (pagan) inscription from Hatra. Second, the euphemism for tomb used in this inscription, *beth maškna*, which lacks parallel in other funerary epitaphs, draws upon a term frequent in the Syriac Bible *(maškna)*, a fact that could indicate a Jewish or Christian background of the author. And third, the choice of the Orpheus motif for a funerary context might point to Christian patronage. The figure of Orpheus was associated in late antiquity with the hope of a happy afterlife, an essential aspect of the Christian faith, and it was presumably for this reason that Roman Christians chose this motif as decoration for their catacombs.[121]

If Papa bar Papa indeed had been a Christian, a possibility that can not *a priori* be ruled out, how would he have adorned his tomb? With biblical themes, perhaps, as they are found in the Christian building at Dura, but just as likely Papa might have chosen a classical motif derived from his pagan cultural context, a motif such as Orpheus with the animals that not only did not stand in direct opposition to Christian beliefs, but in fact highlighted an essential component of his religion. These considerations remain speculative, to be sure, and in order to assess the possibility of a Christian patronage more fully, an examination of the early Christian literature will be helpful.

119 Different theories have been articulated as to why this was so: Some scholars hold that the Orpheus figure had become "neutral" by late antiquity, thus enabling Christians and Jews to adapt it, cf. for example P. Prigent, "Orphée dans l'iconographie chrétienne," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 64 (1984), 205-221. H. Stern suggested Christians adapted the Orpheus theme from Judaism in H. Stern, "Orphée dans l'art paléochrétien," *Cahiers archéologiques* 23 (1974), 1-16; H. Stern, "De l'Orphée juif et chrétien," *Cahiers archéologiques* 26 (1977), 28. This theory has been rejected by several scholars including C. Murray, "The Christian Orpheus," *Cahiers archéologiques* 26 (1977), 19-27; Finney, "Orpheus-David." Orphic influence was suggested by A. Heussner, *Die altchristlichen Orpheusdarstellungen* (Kassel: Baier & Lewalter, 1893).

120 Bardaisan's presence at the royal court of Edessa is testified by Sextus Julius Africanus, *Cesti* I, 20,39-53, ed. with French tr. J.-R. Vieillefond, *Les "Cestes" de Julius Africanus* (Paris: Didier, 1970). Ephrem later commented upon Bardaisan's fanciful clothes in *Hymns against Heresies* 1,12 ed. with German tr. E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen contra haereses*, CSCO 169-170, Syr. 76-77 (Louvain: Peeters, 1957).

121 Most Christian Orpheus representations originated from a funerary context, cf. Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 85.

In the late second and early third century, several Christian authors made reference to Orpheus in their treatises.[122] Often, they regarded Orpheus as religious founder: Athenagoras mentioned Orpheus alongside Homer and Hesiod as examples of men who invented pagan deities.[123] "Orpheus was the first to give the gods names. He recounted their genealogies and their several exploits, and is viewed by our accusers as a rather reliable theologian."[124] A similar view was expressed by Tertullian, who regarded Orpheus as inventor of religious rites.[125] Tatian asserted that all Greek cultural achievements ultimately are derived from barbarians, a thesis he supported by a reference to the Thracian musician who taught the Hellenes poetry, song, and the mysteries.[126] For these apologists, Orpheus remained associated primarily with the pagan religion they opposed, but nonetheless Athenagoras and Tatian showed themselves sufficiently acquainted with the literature attributed to Orpheus that they could intersperse short Orphic quotations in their writings.[127]

Ps.-Justin expressed a more positive attitude towards the singer in his *Cohortatio*. Advocating the thesis of the cultural priority of Christianity over Hellenism by reference to greater antiquity, Ps.-Justin claimed that the ancient Greeks, including Orpheus, derived their wisdom from Moses and his ancestors during visits to Egypt.[128] Ps.-Justin quoted a substantial Orphic poem in which Orpheus confessed to his son Musaeus his conversion to monotheism.[129] Besides this so-called Testament of Orpheus, of which several versions exist,[130] Ps.-Justin included other

122 Early patristic references to Orpheus are discussed by Vieillfon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 81-108; J.-M. Roessli, "Convergence et divergence dans l'interprétation du mythe d'Orphée. De Clément d'Alexandrie à Eusèbe de Césarée," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219 (2002), 503-513; Prigent, "Orphée." E. Irwin, "The Songs of Orpheus and the New Song of Christ," in: *Orpheus. The Metarmorphoses of a Myth*, ed. J. Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 51-62.

123 Athenagoras, *Legatio* 17.1, ed. M. Marcovich, *Athenagoras, Legatio pro Christianis*, PTS 31 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 53,5-7.

124 Athenagoras, *Legatio* 18.3, ed. Marcovich, 56,19-57,1; tr. C. C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, LCC (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 316.

125 Tertullian, *Apology* XXI 29, ed. H. Hoppe, *Tertulliani Apologeticum*, vol. 2, CSEL 69 (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1939), 59,144-60,150; tr. S. Thelwall, ANFa 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997 reprint), 36.

126 Tatian, *Oratio* 1.1, ed. with Engl. tr. M. Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 2,9-10.

127 Athenagoras, *Legatio* 20.3, ed. Marcovich, 62,27-31; Tatian, *Oratio* 8, ed. Whittaker, 16,12-13.

128 Ps.-Justin, *Cohortatio* 14.2, ed. M. Marcovich, *Pseudo-Iustinus: Cohortatio ad Graecos, De monarchia, Oratio ad Graecos*, PTS 32 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 42,11-16. On this argumentation, commonly found in Christian and Jewish apologetic writings from the era, cf. A. J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

129 Ps.-Justin, *Coh.* 15.1, ed Marcovich, 43,1-44,28.

130 Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* XIII 12,5 (Eusebius here quotes Aristobulus and Aratus), ed. with French tr. É. des Places, *Eusèbe de Césarée, La préparation évangélique. Livres XII-XIII*, SC 307 (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 312-317. Clement, *Protreptikos* VII 74,3-7, ed. O. Stählin and U. Treu,

Orphic testimony, among it an excerpt with the phrase "the father's voice," that Ps.-Justin interpreted as a reference to the λόγος θεοῦ through which the world was made.[131] Theophilus of Antioch also referred to Orpheus' testament which told of his conversion to monotheism,[132] and he attributed the Thracian's insights into Judeo-Christian teachings to divine providence: "Did not the poets Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus say that they had been instructed by divine providence?"[133]

Orpheus played a very prominent role in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, who introduced this essential pagan figure already on the very first page of his *Protreptikos*. The Thracian singer was here initially cast in a negative light: Clement called him a "contriver" (σοφιστής) and one of the "deceivers" (ἀπατηλοί), and he asserted that accounts of animals being charmed by music are "vain tales" (μύθοις κενοῖς).[134] Orpheus served Clement as a foil for his portrayal of Christ as the "new song" (τὸ ᾆσμα τὸ καινόν).[135] Musical imagery permeates this section of the *Protreptikos* and functions to illustrate the superiority of Christianity over pagan myth.[136] The new song "composed the universe into melodious order".[137] The new song desires the salvation of humankind.[138] Yet the new song, the "song of salvation" (τὸ ᾆσμα τὸ σωτήριον) is not entirely new, Clement explained, for already in the beginning the Word was with God.[139] "This is the new song, the appearance of the Word, that was in the beginning and before the beginning, shining forth among us."[140] In the *Stromateis*, Orpheus functioned as a witness to the Christian truth before the time of Christ. Clement quoted from the poems of "Orpheus the theologian" to show that he knew of the invisible and ineffable nature of the Godhead.[141] In the Orphic hymns, Clement also found allusions to and

Clemens Alexandrinus. Protrepticus und Paedagogus, 3rd edition, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1972), 56,14-57,11.

131 The relevant Orphic passage reads: αὐδὴν ὁρκίζω σε πατρός ("I adjure thee by the Father's voice"). Ps.-Justin, *Coh.* 15.2, ed. Marcovich, 45,29-37; tr. M. Dods, ANFa 1, 280.

132 Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum* III 2, ed. with Engl. tr. R. M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 100,18-20.

133 Theophilus, *Ad Autol.* III 17, ed. and tr. Grant, 122-123.

134 Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* I 1,2; 2,1; 3,1, ed. Stählin/Treu, 3,6.23; 4,23; tr. W. Wilson, ANFa 8 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 171-172.

135 Clem. Alex., *Protr.* I 4,4; 6,1, ed. Stählin/Treu, 5,30; 6,27.

136 On musical imagery in patristic literature, see R. A. Skeris, *ΧΡΩΜΑ ΘΕΟΥ: On the origins and theological interpretation of the musical imagery used by the ecclesiastical writers of the first three centuries, with special reference to the image of Orpheus* (Altötting: Coppenrath, 1976).

137 τοῦτό τοι καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐκόσμησεν ἐμμελῶς. Clem. Alex., *Protr.* I 5,1, ed. Stählin/Treu, 5,33-34, tr. Wilson, 172.

138 Clem. Alex., *Protr.* I 6,2, ed. Stählin/Treu, 6,26-31.

139 Clem. Alex., *Protr.* I 6,3, ed. Stählin/Treu 7,2-7.

140 Clem. Alex., *Protr.* I 7,3, ed. Stählin/Treu, 7,26-28.

141 Clem. Alex., *Stromateis* V 12, 78,4-5, ed. O. Stählin and L. Früchtel, *Clemens Alexandrinus. Stromata Buch I-VI*, 3rd edition, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 378,4-13; cf. *Strom.* V 14,123, 2, ed. Stählin/ Früchtel, 409,20-410,5; tr. W. Wilson, ANFa 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 463, 472.

paraphrases of the prophetic writings.[142] Orpheus was thus for Clement on the one hand the "contriver" whose fables deceived humankind and whom the Alexandrian theologian contrasted with Christ. On the other hand, by frequent quotations from Orphic hymns, Clement presented Orpheus as part of the *praeparatio evangelica*, a view which later was expanded by Eusebius in his work of the same title and in his *laudatio* on Constantine.[143]

The figure of Orpheus was also known to the early Syriac-speaking Christians. The Pseudo-Clementines, composed in Greek but soon translated into Syriac, recount the Orphic myth of creation in both the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*.[144] In the Syriac *Apology* of Ps.-Melito, in which the author attempts to demonstrate how pagan deities originated from famous kings or heroes, one reads: "Regarding Nabu of Mabbug, why should I write to you, for behold, all the priests of Mabbug know that it is the image of Orpheus, the Thracian Magian!"[145]

These patristic testimonies demonstrate that the figure of Orpheus and the literary tradition associated with his name were quite well known among the early Christians. Christian theologians emphasized certain aspects of the Orphic teachings – such as Orpheus' alleged monotheism or the attributes of the Godhead – and saw these as evidence for the affinity with Christianity. Christian artists, on the other hand, stressed a different aspect of the myth, namely Orpheus among the animals, and this lack of congruence between the Christian literary and the Christian iconographic portraits of Orpheus continues to generate scholarly discussion. One should be cautious, as recently L. Vieillefon reminded us, *a fortiori* to presuppose an influence of the text upon the image. The complex relationship between literary and artistic expression may never be recovered by the historian.[146]

142 Clem. Alex., *Strom.* V 14,124,1-V 14,126,5, ed. Stählin/ Früchtel, 410,6-412,2; tr. Wilson, 472f.

143 Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* I 6,4, ed. J. Sirinelli and É. des Places, SC 206 (1974), 140; *Praep. ev.* II 1,23-24; II 2,54; III 9,12, ed. É. des Places, SC 228 (1976), 44-46, 76, 196; *Praep. ev.* XIII 12,4-5; XIII 13,49-53 ed. des Places, 312-316, 376-384 and passim. Eusebius, *Laudatio Constantini* XIV 5, ed. I. A. Heikel, *Eusebius, Werke*, vol. 1 (Leipzig : Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1902), 242,15-243,4. On Eusebius' interpretation of Orpheus, see J.-M. Roessli, "Convergence."

144 Ps.-Clement, *Recognitions* X 30, ed. B. Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen II. Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung*, GCS (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1965), 346,17-347,8; tr. Th. Smith, ANFa 8 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 200; *Homilies* VI 3-8, ed. B. Rehm and G. Strecker, *Die Pseudoklementinen I. Homilien*, 3rd edition, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 107,5-109,28; tr. Smith, 263-264.

145 Ps.-Melito, *Apology*, ed. W. Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum: containing remains of Bardesan, Meliton, Ambrose and Mara bar Serapion* (London: Rivingtons, 1855), 25,14-15.

146 "...nous avons tendance à tenir pour évidente l'influence de la littérature sur l'iconographie sans presque jamais imaginer une éventuelle réciprocité. Pourquoi les auteurs n'écriraient-ils pas leurs descriptions après avoir vu et revu une image particulièrement populaire, sortie de l'imagination d'un ou de plusieurs artistes? Bien entendu, il paraît presque impossible de retrouver aujourd'hui l'existence et à *fortiori* la direction de ces éventuelles interactions. " (Vieillefon, *La figure d'Orphée*, 108).

Conclusion

The newly discovered mosaic of Orpheus among the animals – today located in the Dallas Museum of Art – most closely resembles in its iconography the Orpheus mosaic from Edessa, but also shows some resemblance to the Orpheus mosaics from Chahba (Syria) and Tarsus. Stylistic similarities in the representation of persons with those on other mosaics from the Edessa region (especially the Tripod mosaic) can be observed. The Syriac inscription dates the mosaic to the year 194 of the common era and identifies the mosaic as funerary art. Presumably it decorated the floor of a cave tomb, as did other polychrome mosaics found in the vicinity of Edessa. The inscription commemorates the patron, Papa bar Papa, and his family and bestows a blessing upon those who remember the deceased. Although the inscription contains Syriac vocabulary not yet documented in epigraphic sources, its style and content overall resemble other Syriac inscriptions from Osrhoene, so that its provenance can be attributed to that region, perhaps even to Edessa itself.

The new find adds to the comparatively small number of Orpheus mosaics from the East and it provides the first instance of a mosaic depiction of this scene from beyond the imperial frontier. The Dallas mosaic is one of only four Orpheus mosaics known to have come from a funerary context, and it is one of only three Orpheus mosaics with an artist's signature. Moreover, it is the oldest of all heretofore catalogued Syriac mosaics that bear a date.

The new Orpheus mosaic has significant implications for our understanding of the history and culture of northern Mesopotamia in the late second century, for it demonstrates that Hellenistic media (the mosaic technique) and themes (Orpheus among the animals) had become part of the local culture prior to the full political incorporation of the region into the Roman Empire. The Osrhoene became a Roman province under Septimius Severus in 195, and Edessa was made a *colonia* under Caracalla in 213, yet this astonishing mosaic was produced by the local artist Bar SGD before those events. The Osrhoenian elite clearly did not produce mosaics merely in reaction to political dominion by Rome,[147] but freely adopted elements of Graeco-Roman culture and art before and alongside the establishment of closer political ties. The artist who laid the Dallas mosaic succeeded brilliantly in blending Hellenistic features with native stylistic elements and local funerary traditions. He thereby shows late second-century Osrhoenian society to be *weltoffen* yet very much grounded in its indigenous traditions. This Osrhoenian cultural identity is reflected also in the local artist's self-confident placement of his signature in a prominent place. It becomes evident, too, in the literature of the era, such as the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* attributed to Bardaisan of

147 This was the suggestion of Colledge, see above n. 89.

Edessa.[148] The new Orpheus mosaic thus supports the conclusion drawn by J. Balty and F. Briquel Chatonnet regarding their study of the Prometheus mosaic and the Osrhoenian mosaics with epic scenes:

> Les thèmes développés sur les panneaux récemment apparus et la variété des tendances mises en oeuvre au sein d'un même style, toujours parfaitement reconnaissable, invitent à penser plutôt que ces mosaïques sont...le reflet d'une société consciente de sa propre identité mais largement ouverte aux influences extérieures qu'elle était capable d'assimiler, sans rien perdre de son originalité.[149]

The motif of Orpheus and the animals was one of the very few pagan themes adopted by Christian artists, which raises the question whether Papa bar Papa could have been a Christian who chose the image of Orpheus to decorate his tomb because it symbolized the peace of the age to come. Yet clear indications of a Christian (or Jewish) patronage are lacking in both the inscription and the iconography of the mosaic, so that the question of the patron's religious background ultimately must remain open. But one can say that the contrasting of tame and wild animals illustrates the patron's longing for the peace of the coming aeon in which all hostilities will be overcome, a yearning not unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The prophet Isaiah envisioned the wolf as peacefully lying with the lamb at the end of days (Isa. 65:25; cf. Isa. 11:6-7). The poet Virgil (70-19 B. C.) vividly painted a picture of the Golden Age in his fourth *Eclogue*. He envisioned this paradisiacal time, in which all of nature would become harmonious, to be initiated by the imminent birth of a god-like child.

> For thee, O boy,
> First shall the earth, untilled, pour freely forth
> Her childish gifts, the gadding ivy-spray
> With foxglove and Egyptian bean-flower mixed,
> And laughing-eyed acanthus. Of themselves,
> Untended, will the she-goats then bring home
> Their udders swollen with milk, while flocks afield
> Shall of the monstrous lion have no fear.[150]

Closer in time and place to the patron of the new Orpheus mosaic, the Edessan Christian writer Bardaisan also strongly emphasized the eschatological peace that would reign in the world to come.

> And in the constitution of that new world, all evil impulses will cease and all rebellions will come to an end, and the foolish ones will be persuaded and needs will be met, and there will be tranquility and peace by the gift of the Lord of all natures.[151]

148 *The Book of the Laws of Countries. Dialoge on Fate of Bardaiṣan of Edessa*, ed. with Engl. tr. H. J. W. Drijvers (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965); also ed. F. Nau, PS 1.2 (1907; reprint 1993).

149 Balty and Briquel Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques," 71.

150 Virgil, *Eclogue* IV 18-22, ed. H. R. Fairclough, rev. by G. P. Goold, *Virgil, Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid I-VI*, LCL (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 50. Translation cited is by J. Dryden [http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/gendersextexts/texts/eclog4.html].

Such longing for a happy afterlife and the desire for a new and peaceful aeon thus was shared by pagans, Jews, and Christians, all of whom in antiquity adopted the Orpheus motif in their art. Whatever Papa bar Papa's religious affiliation might have been, his choice of imagery reflected his yearning for the soul's afterlife and a peaceful world to come.[152]

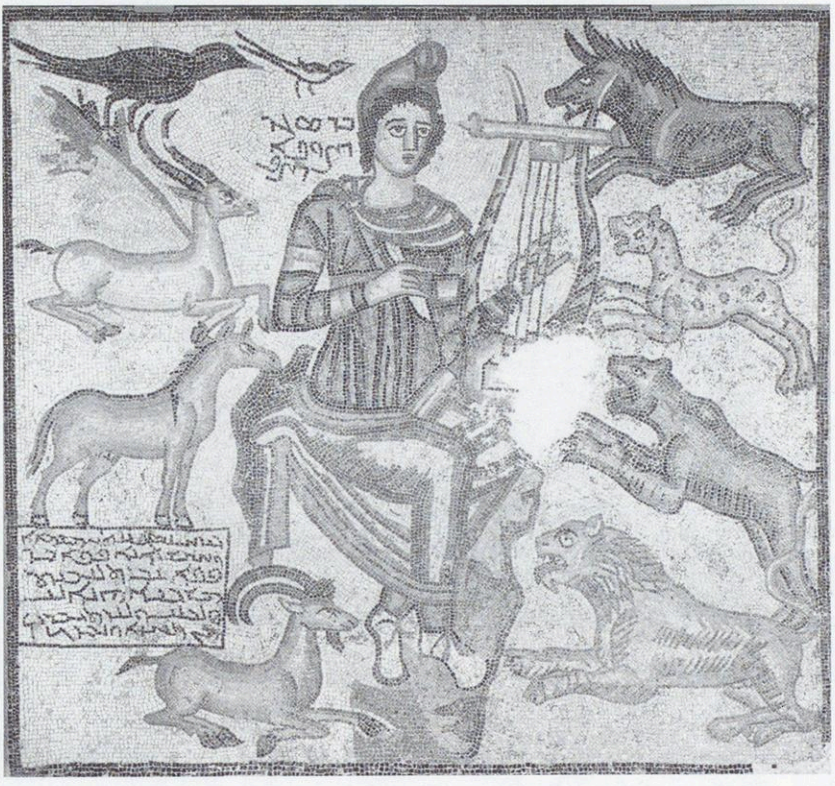

Fig. 1. Orpheus and the Animals, Dallas Museum of Art (photo: Dallas Museum of Art)

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[151] *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, ed. Drijvers, 62,15-18. ܘܒܫܘܢܝܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܚܕܬܐ ܗܘ܃ ܫܠܝܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܙܘ̈ܥܐ ܒܝ̈ܫܐ . ܘܒܛܠܝܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܪ̈ܘܕܐ . ܘܡܬܬܦܝܣܝܢ ܣܟ̈ܠܐ . ܘܡܬܡܠܝܢ ܚܣܝܪܘܬܐ . ܘܗ̇ܘܝܐ ܫܝܢܐ ܘܫܠܝܐ ܒܗ ܡܘܗܒܬܗ ܕܡܪܐ . ܕܟܠܗܘܢ ܟܝ̈ܢܐ .܀

[152] I would like to thank the Dallas Museum of Art for permission to publish an image of the new Orpheus mosaic. For helpful conversations and comments on earlier drafts of this paper I would like to thank Drs. G. W. Bowersock (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), J. F. Coakley (Harvard University), and P. C. Finney (Princeton).

Fig. 2: Dallas Orpheus, detail

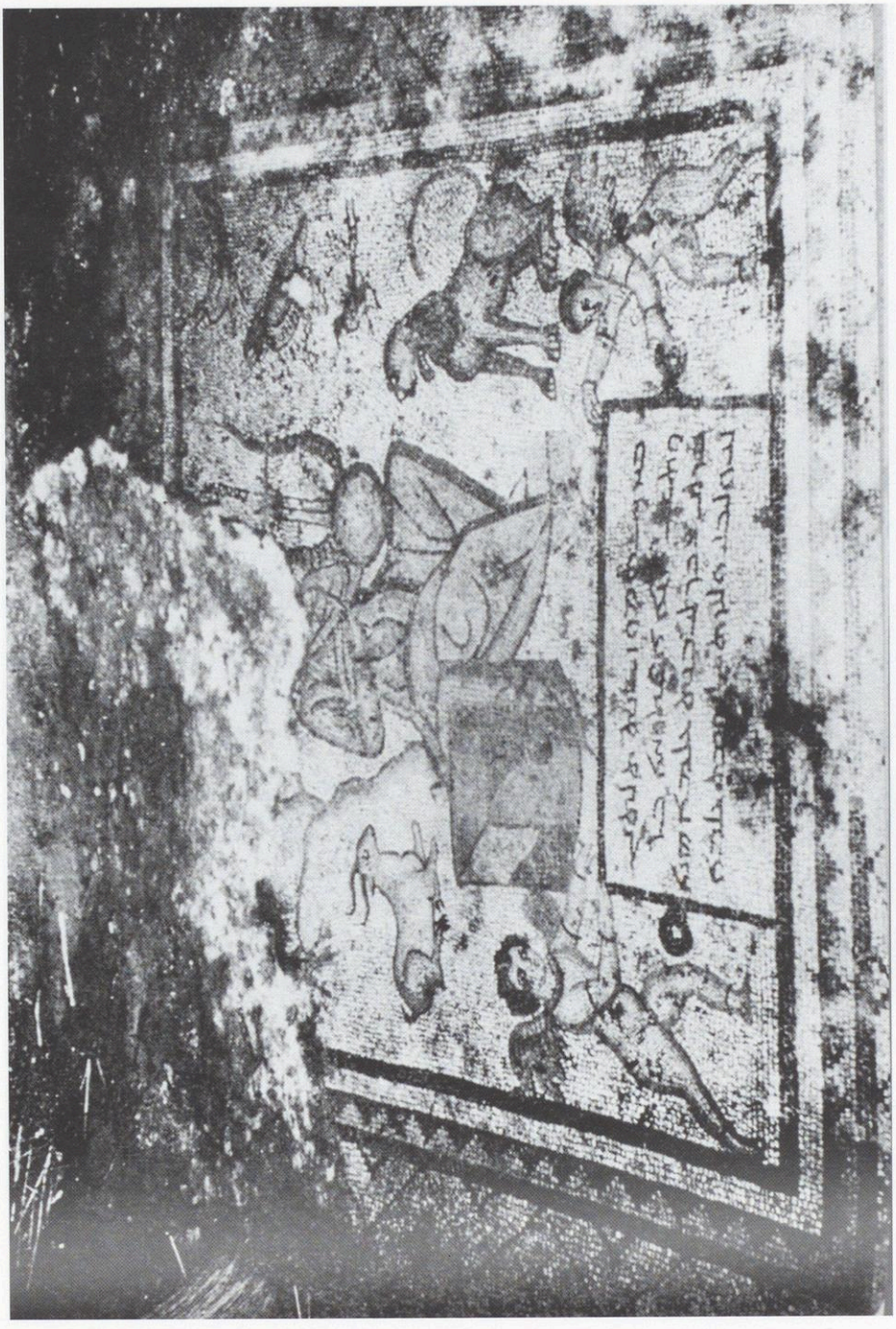

Fig. 3. Orpheus and the Animals, Edessa (after Segal, in *Archaeology* 12 [1959], p. 157).

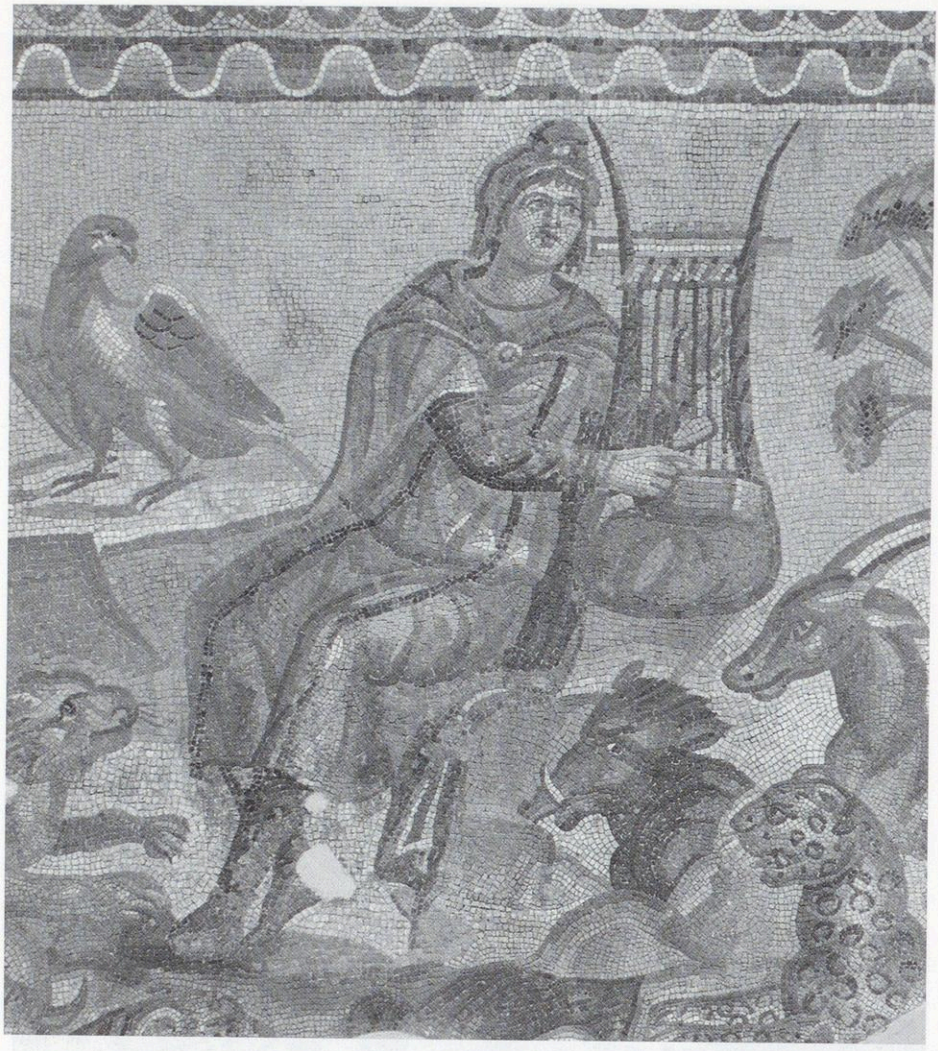

Fig. 4. Orpheus and the Animals, Tarsus, detail (Photo: Dick Osseman).

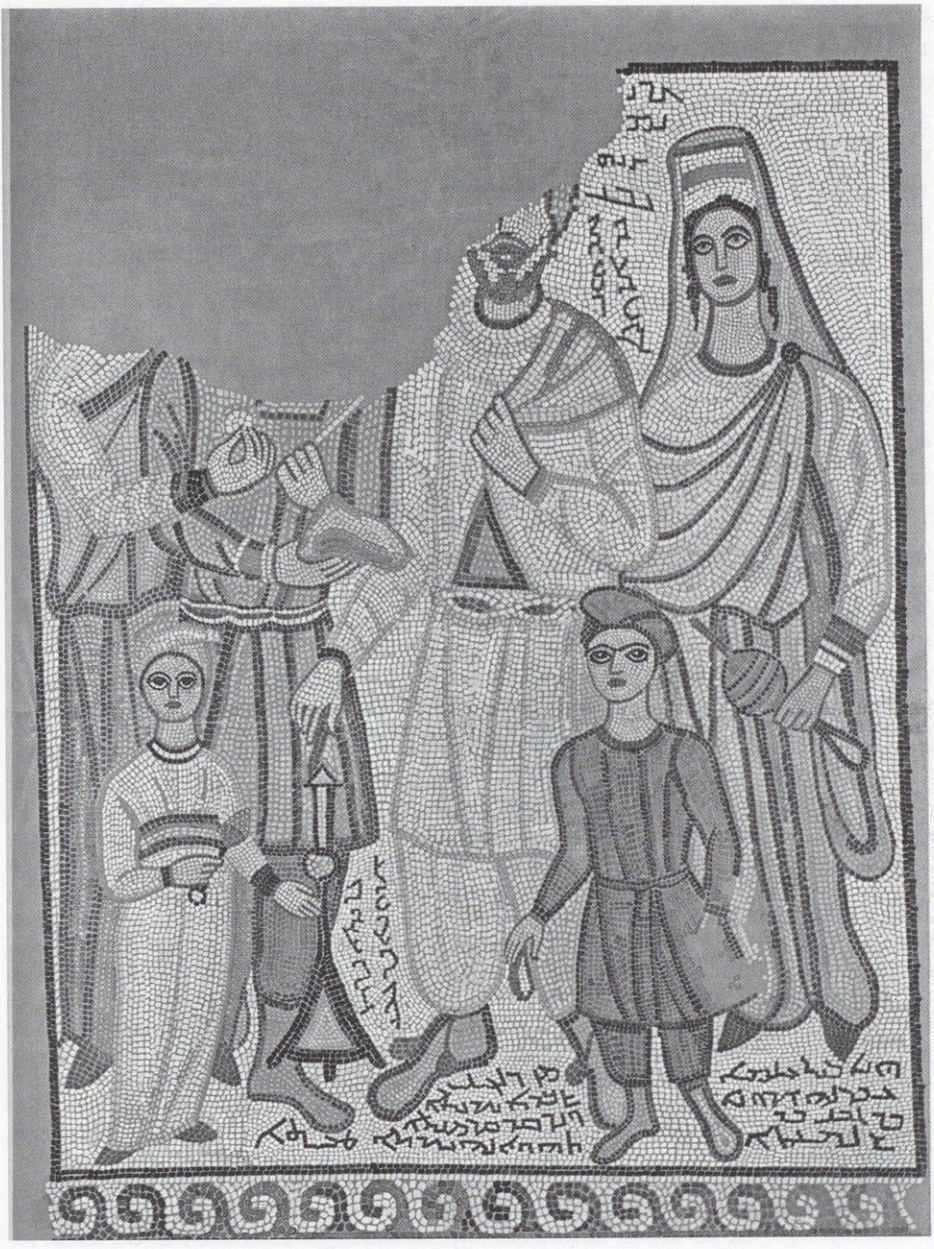

Fig. 5. Tripod Mosaic, Edessa, drawing
(after Segal, "New Mosaics," *Archaeology* 12, 1959, p. 150).