

## Family, Death and Afterlife According to Mosaics of the Abgar Royal Period in the Region of Osroene

Bariş SALMAN\*

*The region of Osroene is the area including Edessa (Şanlıurfa), Carrhae (Harran), and Birtha (Birecik) located east of the Euphrates (Firat) River. The Abgar Dynasty, the major power in the region, overthrew Seleukos's control and regained independence in the region in 132 BCE. Family members depicted together and at ease in mosaics of the royal period symbolize the importance of peace within the family and family unity. Of the figures portrayed next to the genearch, the wife is the most striking individual with her dignified pose. Family mosaics indicate that whole family will be together after death as they were in life. A Phoenix and two Orpheus mosaics found in the region also support the pagan notion of a new life after death.*

*Osroene bölgesi büyük ölçüde Edessa (Şanlıurfa) ile anılan, Karrhae (Harran), Birtha (Birecik), yerleşimlerini içine alan, batısından Euphrates'in (Firat) aktığı bölgedir. Bölgede önemli bir güç olan Abgar sülalesi M.Ö. 132 yılında Seleukos idaresini sona erdirmiştir. Bu sülalenin oluşturduğu krallık idareyi M.S. 242'ye kadar sürdürmüştür. Krallık Dönemine tarihlenen mozaiklerde bir aileyi oluşturan bireylerin bir arada ve özenli bir şekilde işlenmesi aile huzurunun ve birlikteliğe verilen önemi vurgular. Aile reisi yanında yer alan bireyler içinde kadın, saygın pozisyonu ile dikkat çeker. Aile mozaikleri ölüm sonrasında da gerçek hayatta olduğu gibi bir arada olunacağını göstermektedir. Ölüm sonrası yeni bir hayata inanan bölge paganlarının mezarlarında çıkan bir adet Phoenix mozaiği ve iki adet Orpheus mozaiği de bunu desteklemektedir.*

Key Words: Osroene, Edessa, Abgar, Family, Orpheus, Phoenix

The region of Osroene is the area including Edessa (Şanlıurfa), Carrhae (Harran), and Birtha (Birecik) located east of the Euphrates (Firat) River. The Abgar Dynasty, the major power in the region, overthrew Seleukos's control and regained independence in the region in 132 BCE. Family members depicted together and at ease in mosaics of the royal period emphasize the importance of peace and unity in the family. Of the figures portrayed next to the genearch, the wife is the most striking individual with her dignified pose. Family mosaics indicate that the whole family will be together after death as they were in life. A mosaic of a Phoenix and two Orpheus mosaics found in the region also support the pagan idea of a new life after death.

The Abgar Kingdom (132 BCE-242 CE) comprises the region between the Euphrates and Khabur Rivers and includes Carrhae, Birtha, Mesudiye and Serrin. Its capital is Edessa. The Kingdom which overthrew Seleukos's control and regained independence in the area attracts attention because of its special identity. In the period of freedom before Parthia and the Romans took control, the kingdom led an independent and traditional existence during the times mentioned and is remembered historically with this same character. The traditional characteristics of art in this region show themselves especially in mosaics<sup>1</sup>. Mosaics have been discovered in Mesudiye, Birtha, Serrin and especially at Edessa. Numerous mosaics were found, and some are now lost and only photos and drawings of them remain today. Others are kept in museums (see: Colledge 1994: 196, fig.114; Healey 2006: 313–327) and private collections overseas (see: Bowersock 2006: fig. 2,4; Parlasca 1984: 231; Desreumaux 2000: 212–215), while additional examples remain undocumented.

Edessa is the city where a major part of the royal period mosaics was discovered. Themes in Edessa mosaics include the family, family solidarity, and death and the afterlife, and they are products of an original local workshop(s) (Salman 2007: 242). Mosaics mentioned above whose provenance is unknown should be attributed to the site of

\* Ahi Evran University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Archaeology, Aşkpaşa Yerleşkesi, Kırşehir/TURKEY

<sup>1</sup> These traditional characteristics result from Persian and Syrian influence.

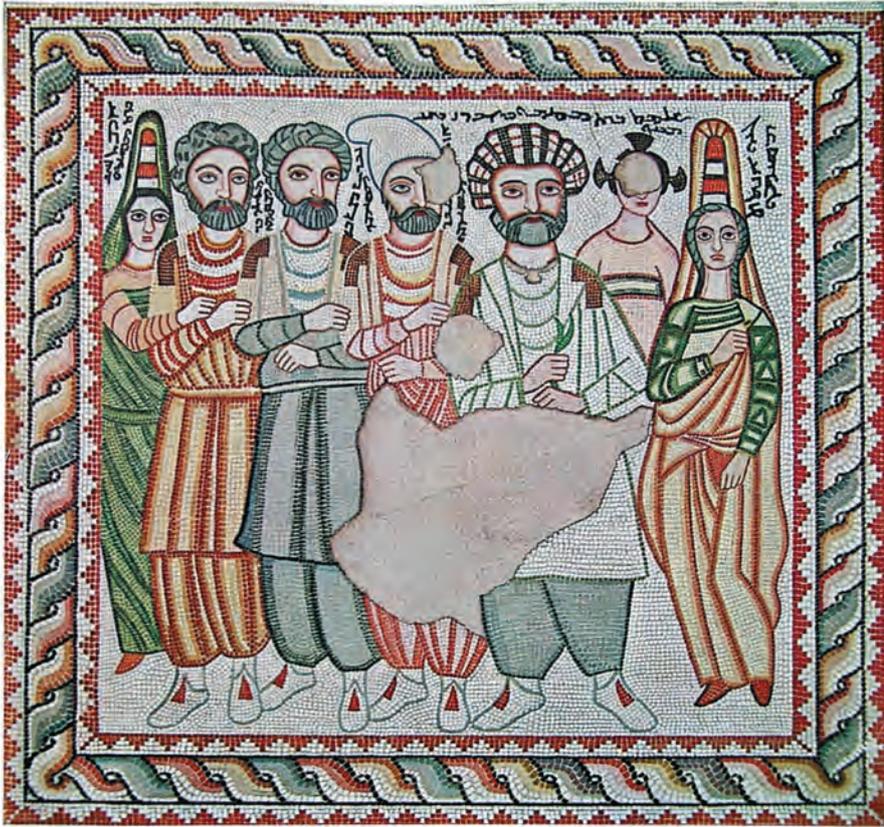


Figure 1  
Family Portrait Mosaic, Lost.  
(Segal 2002: fig. 1)

Edessa. Edessa, which is the center of the Osroene Kingdom, created an original mosaic school for a brief time. Some of the pavements have dates on them. These mosaics which use the Seleucid calendar were made between the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. In this period rulers in the kingdom were named Abgar VIII (214-240 CE), Abgar IX (177-212 CE) and Severus Bar Abgar (212-214 CE), Ma’nu Bar Abgar IX (214-240 CE) and the last king, Abgar Frahat Bar Ma’nu X. (240-242 CE) (Hayes 2005: 24–25). The reason for the manufacture of mosaics during these kings’ reigns is not the kings’ personal initiative but the intense interest in mosaic-making that existed both in Rome and locally. Many mosaics, dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE, were found in Zeugma (Ergeç 1995: 2–10), which is west of Euphrates River, and in Antioch (Campbell 1938: 205–218), which has a similar culture to other North Syrian settlements and the Osroene Region.

Even though mosaics began to be discovered after J.B. Segal’s research in the 1950’s in Edessa and the neighboring region, some earlier discoveries also have been documented too (Balty 1981: 388, fig. 23; Leroy 1957: 307–315). Mosaics in which members of the family are depicted emphasize the comfort of the family which gathers around the *genarch* or *paterfamilias*. In some examples, members are depicted standing, while in others they are portrayed as busts in frames. Another iconographic feature also preferred in family mosaics is symposium scenes, in which the *genarch* lies on a kline and other members are shown serving and honoring him. Similar scenes are present on reliefs (Drijvers 1980: fig. 17) in Northern Syrian settlements, and at Edessa and in the neighboring region, especially at Palmyra (Colledge 1976: fig. 61–62). The symposium scenes reflect an important funerary ritual in the region.

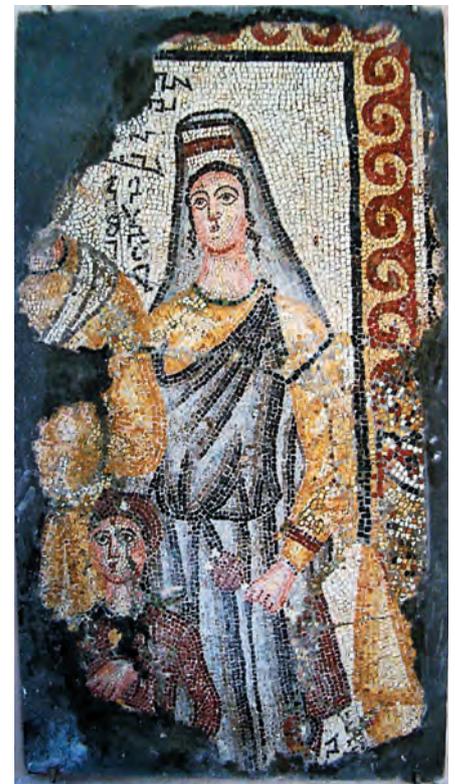


Figure 2  
A fragment of Tripod Mosaic, Aya Irini,  
Istanbul-Turkiye (Photo. B. Salman)



Figure 3  
A fragment of Tripod Mosaic, Aya Irini,  
Istanbul-Turkiye (Photo. B. Salman)

The mosaic J.B. Segal discovered in 1952 at Edessa in the city's south necropolis, in which members of the family are portrayed standing, is lost today (Balty 1995: 15, fig. 5,1; Drijvers and Healey 1999: 170–171, fig. 49; Dunbabin 1999: fig. 182; Ross 2001: fig. 5,7; Segal 1953: 117–118, fig. 12,1; Segal 1954: 29–30; Segal 2002: fig. 1). It is called the Family Portrait Mosaic and it shows a total of seven figures. Four of them are men, two are women, and one is a little girl (Fig. 1). In the Tripod Mosaic, discovered in 1956, whose two fragments are kept in Aya Irini at Istanbul (Figs. 2-3), six figures - two men, two women and two children - are portrayed (Segal 1959: 153–155, fig. 1). An object similar to a tripod, held by the genarch – possibly an incense-burner - represents a religious ritual in the family (Fig. 4). Mosaics in which members are portrayed standing emphasize the family's unity and hierarchical structure.

Similarly, Symposium Mosaics and other pavements, in which members of the family are shown as busts, display the family and its hierarchical structure. A mosaic discovered in 1901 in Edessa and on display in Istanbul today is composed of three friezes. The mosaic, which still preserves its tessera colors, has a total of six figures depicted as busts, two in each frieze (Bossert 1951: 131, fig. 415). In the top section are the genarch Aphtuha and his wife Šumu. In the middle section are two young men, and at the bottom are two young women (Fig. 5). The Abgar Mosaic which portrays family members as busts was found in 1979 in Edessa, but later the female figure was stolen and the mosaic was reburied in its original site. Today the area where the mosaic was found functions as a park. Figures are depicted in two friezes. There are a total of four men and one female figure depicted in the mosaic: in the upper register there are three bearded men, and in the lower section one man and one woman. According to the inscription, a man named Abgar stands in the middle of the upper section and has ornate clothing. He is most probably the ruling king, depicted in this mosaic to honor the family<sup>2</sup>. Right next to him is the genarch, who is probably holding a seal and was a high-ranking official (Nuhadra). In contrast to all of these men, most eye-catching figure in the mosaic is the woman. Although she is depicted in the lower register, her head reaches into the upper zone, and the scene is arranged accordingly. With her ornate clothing and headscarf, she is the largest figure in the image and the closest to the viewer (Fig. 6) (Drijvers 1981: 17–20, fig. 1).

The last group of family-scene mosaics is the Funerary Symposium group. The most famous mosaic in this group is the one discovered by J.B. Segal in 1956. This pavement disappeared after a while, and fragments of it were seen in an antique dealer's shop in Beirut<sup>3</sup>. In the mosaic, the husband, wife and six children

2 There was a discussion between H.J.W. Drijvers and J.B. Segal on the Abgar figure and his identity in the mosaic. The titles "master and patron" used for Abgar in the mosaic may indicate he is a king. Also his different and ornate clothing supports this interpretation. Drijvers dates the mosaic to end of the 2nd century -beginning of the 3rd century CE, because of the border decoration. The mosaic roughly dates roughly to the 3rd century CE. If the Abgar figure in the mosaic is one of the Abgars living in this period then he must be either Abgar VIII (172–212 CE), Abgar IX (212–214 CE) or the last king Abgar X. (240-242 CE). Because from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the collapse of the kingdom there were three kings named Abgar. Drijvers thinks that the Abgar on the mosaic is the Abgar VIII. The name Abgar is a common one in Edessa and similar cultures. On the other hand Segal, according to a coin depicting Abgar VIII, thinks that even if the Abgar in the mosaic is a king, he can not be Abgar VIII, because Abgar is depicted with a crown on the coin. On the crown there are crescent and star motifs, which are important symbols for Edessa. Also the king looks younger here. In the mosaic Abgar wears a common Phrygian cap that men from Edessa use. That is why the figure in the mosaic does not fit the normal Abgar VIII iconography. Segal believes if this man is a king, then he should be Abgar X; see, Drijvers 1982: 167-189; Segal 1983: 107-110.

3 In 6-8 September 1980, on his paper in a mosaic symposium in Ravenna K. Parlasca said he has seen two lost fragments of this mosaic in an antiques dealer in Beirut. These fragments show two little boys to be below of the scene. This paper is printed in 1984. See. Parlasca 1984: fig. 2

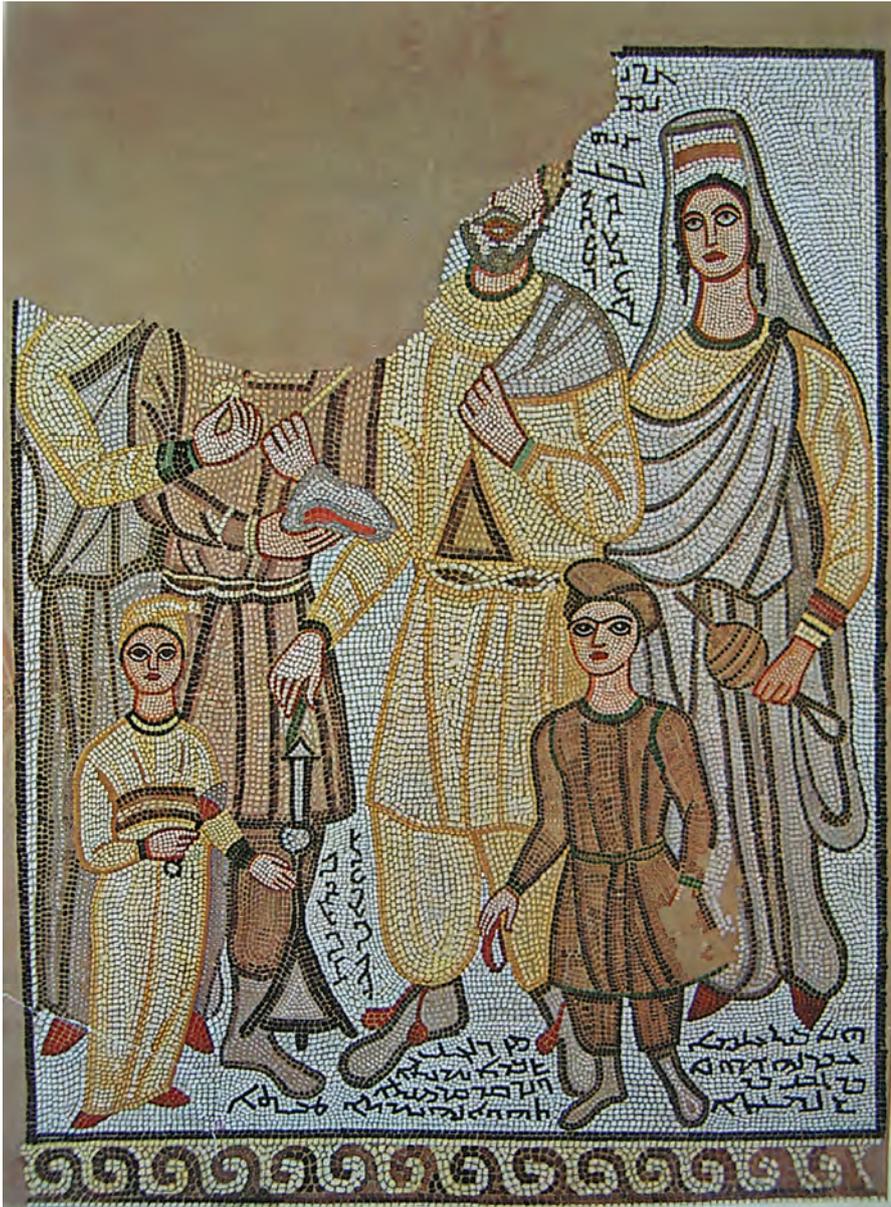


Figure 4  
Tripod Mosaic. (Segal 1959: fig. 1)

were depicted. Within the scene, the deceased (named Zaydallat according to the inscription) reclines on his side on a kline or sofa. He is holding a wine glass and resting his arm on a pillow comfortably. At the same time he is leaning his back against a cushion. Right next to him is his wife with her high headscarf shown in a respectful pose. Between him and her wife are a little girl with a headscarf, and on the left three boys serving him and finally two boys portrayed as busts (Fig. 7) (Balty 1981: 388, fig. 23; Balty 1995: 15, fig. 5,2; Colledge 1994: 191–192, fig. Drijvers and Healey 1999: 180–183, fig. 54; Dunbabin 1999: fig. 183; Leroy 1961: 165–169; Parlasca 1984: 227–229, fig. 1–2; Segal 1959: 155–157, fig. 3; Segal 2002: 93, fig. 2).

Other than this lost example, there are some other preserved examples depicting this ritual of the funerary symposium. One work kept in Aya Irini in two pieces and depicting a family of four (Fig. 8) (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 216–217, fig. 69), and another kept in the Şanlıurfa Museum, which is badly preserved (Fig. 9) (Salman 2007: 160–162, fig. 70–75), are examples of funerary symposium



Figure 5  
Aphtuha Mosaic, Archaeological Museum,  
Istanbul-Turkey (Photo. B. Salman)

mosaics<sup>4</sup>. Scenes of a funerary symposium in mosaics are always depicted in same way: the genarch lies on a sofa holding a wine cup, and next to him are the wife in a respectful pose and the children serving him. Symposium mosaics iconographically express the funerary ritual of the symposium held after the deceased has passed away, to bid him farewell. But we can be more concrete here and come to this conclusion: on symposium mosaics family members, especially children serving their father and the wife standing or seated next to him, express respect and love for the father. The genarch lying on sofa shows how comfortable and well respected he was in his lifetime and how faithful was his wife to him.

One of the most striking characteristics of the family mosaics of the region is the realistic depiction of the figures. Mosaic artists portrayed figures as realistically as possible and reached a remarkable degree of accuracy. Figures have calm facial features (Segal 2002: 68). Figures looking around with big eyes have their mouths closed and mostly portrayed with a serious look. All men, young and old, are shown with beards. The main figure in the Abgar Mosaic, Abgar himself, is portrayed with a gray-black beard to show that he is past middle age (Drijvers 1981: 18, fig. 1). The figures in the mosaics are depicted with ornate, eastern-style dress (Dunbabin 1999: 173).

4 A mosaic from the Osroene region published by S. Brock recently shows the funerary symposium iconography. This mosaic is in the mosaic style of Edessa and belongs to the royal period. S. Brock in his publication of the inscriptions in the mosaic tells that it belongs to a private collection, but he does not say who owns the work or in which country the mosaic is located. See Brock 2007: 714-721, fig: 1-3; many mosaics from this region share the same fate, and their locations remain unknown. For similar examples see, Bowersock 2001: 411-416; Desreumaux 2000: 212-215.



Figure 6  
Abgar Mosaic. (Drijvers 1982: fig.1)

The most important person among family members is the *genearch*, the man of the house. The royal figure honoring the family and the *genearch* in the Abgar Mosaic is an exception to this rule. In all mosaics in the region, all men including the *genearch* are portrayed with beards. Men have elaborate dress. Caps are the distinguishing features of the men. Even though the Phrygian cap is mostly used, sometimes it is possible to see other types of caps. For example, in the Family Portrait Mosaic, the deceased, the one in the center of the scene, wears a form of headgear similar to a turban. This is the only example of a man wearing a turban in this region's mosaics. One of the figures in the mosaic right next to him wears a high Phrygian cap. The presence of this bonnet and his placement on the man's right side could mean that he is the oldest son of the *genearch*. The other two men are portrayed without headgear and have full wavy hair (Segal 2002: 76). Another man portrayed without headgear also is present in the Abgar Mosaic. Men are portrayed with a knee-long tunic and wide trousers similar to a *shalwar*. Similarly, boys wear knee-length shirts as well as trousers. The trousers descend below the knee<sup>5</sup>. Trousers sometimes appear loose and sometimes tighter. There are two types of shoes: one with triangular clips and an open back, and another, taller shoe which is still used in the east today.

Despite the men's importance in local mosaics, the most striking figures are the women. Their positions in the mosaics, their ornate clothing and dignified poses show us how much they were esteemed. Their poses in these mosaics also show us their position of authority within the family. This also indicates to us the important status of women in the region. In local mosaics women are portrayed immediately next to the husband, and in funerary mosaics they are portrayed sitting in dignified poses with very fine dress and headscarves. One of the most important details in mosaics is the fact that each woman's face is

<sup>5</sup> This type of trousers can be considered a Persian influence, and it was first used by them.

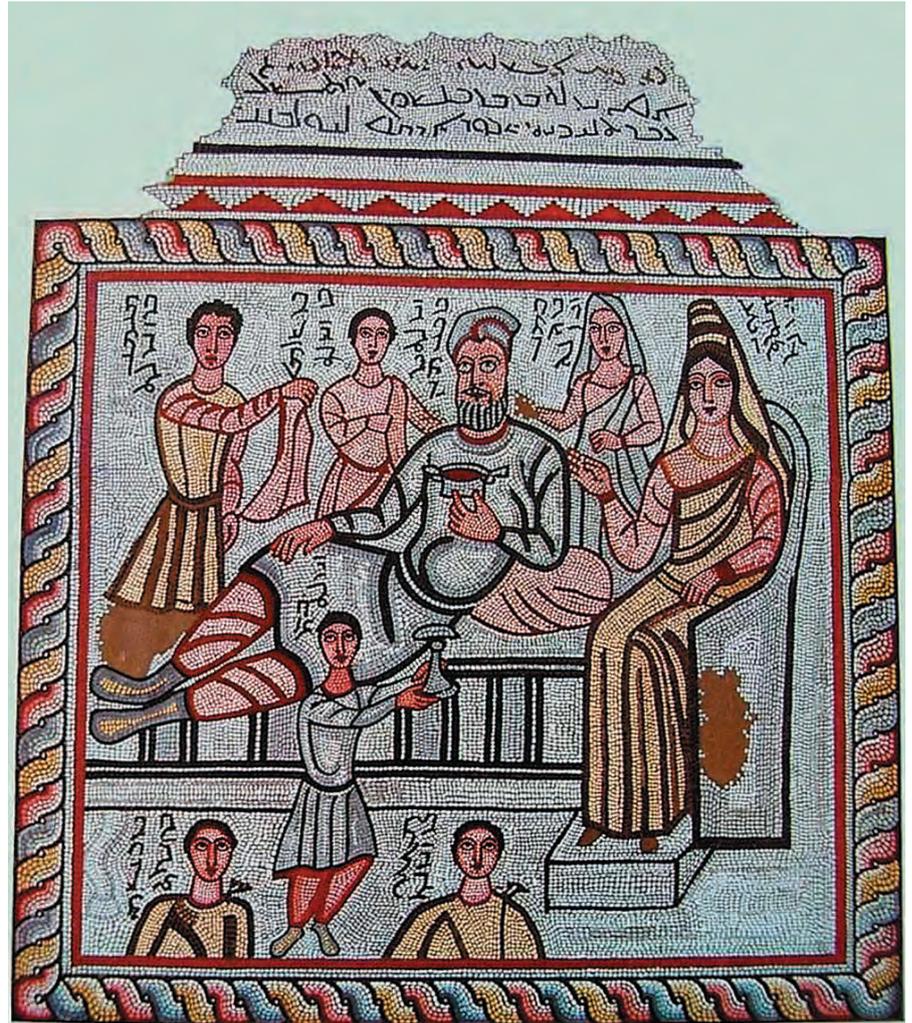


Figure 7  
Funerary Couch Mosaic, Lost  
(Dunbabin 1999: fig. 183)

always uncovered. Their headscarves hang down but do not cover their faces. Even though the headscarf is thought by some to be a veil (Dunbabin 1999: 173), the open faces do not support this notion. The headdress women use under their headscarf can still be seen today in the region. This headdress is called *Köfü* and is associated with the family's wealth (Segal 2002: 74). Accordingly, a pointed headdress with many stripes shows that the woman is rich, whereas a flatter and wider headdress with fewer stripes shows that she is from a less affluent family<sup>6</sup>. Women are portrayed with braided hair and long tunics with embroidery. Over their tunics they wear long caftans in different colors attached to the left shoulder with a brooch or a clip similar to a fibula (Segal 2002: 74). Little girls have plainer clothes. They do not wear caftans, and their tunics are fastened with a wide belt (Segal 2002: 74). Little girls who have not reached puberty wear their hair uncovered and fastened with hairpins in three ponytails, as we can see in the mosaics (Ross 2001: figs. 5,7).

Mosaics representing the family show us the period's family structure clearly. In the hierarchy of the family, husband, wife and children all seem attached to each other in life. In the mosaic in which every member of the family is presented, this attitude is conveyed by having each family member's name placed next to

<sup>6</sup> This cap is also similar to the cap used in 19<sup>th</sup>-century tower shaped headgear or the "hennin". See Segal 2002: 74.



Figure 8  
Funerary Couch Mosaic, Aya Irini,  
Istanbul-Turkiye (Photo. B. Salman)

the figure and written in Estrangelo Syriac. This devotion to each other in life can still be seen in the region. Since these mosaics were discovered in graves and bear inscriptions about death and the afterlife, including names other than family members' names, we can observe the local pagans' approach to these subjects. Family mosaics show us that people are attached to each other in death as they are in life. In other words, these scenes should be considered a reflection of the desire for togetherness in life, death and the afterlife. It seems that pagans in the region think of death as a means to bring the family together and to start a new life together after death. So an appropriate death and funerary ritual is developed in the region. From a different perspective, depiction of family members in the mosaics is the result of the solidarity of the members, alive or not. Because the grave is the place where the living and dead come together, the deceased are brought back to life in the mosaics made by their kin. Members of the family, the close kin, will remember the good old days, when they see the deceased represented in the mosaic at the time of visiting the grave.

Inscriptions in the mosaics are written in Estrangelo Syriac, which is a dialect of the Aramaic language special to this region<sup>7</sup>. One of the striking features of the inscriptions is the "House of Eternity" expression in the mosaics<sup>8</sup>. It shows us the importance of the tombs; they provide this name and indicate the importance of the grave cult for pagans. It reads: "*I, Aphtuha, son of Garmu, made for myself this tomb, for myself, for my children and for my heirs to eternity*" (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 163–164) on Aphtuha mosaic. And "*I, Barsimya, son of Ašadu, made for myself this house of eternity, for my children and for my brothers, for the life of Abgar, my lord and benefactor*" (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 185–186)

7 For the inscriptions in mosaics and graves of the region, see Brock 2007: 715–717; Drijvers 1973: 1–14; Drijvers 1993: 147–161; Healey 2006: 313–327; Segal 1954: 2–36; Segal 1957: 513–527.

8 The expression of "house of eternity" can be seen in the Zenadora Mosaic, Aphtuha Mosaic, Balay Mosaic, Tripod Mosaic, Phoenix Mosaic, lost Orpheus Mosaic, and Abgar Mosaic.



Figure 9  
Funerary Couch Mosaic, Archaeological  
Museum, Şanlıurfa-Turkiye (Photo. B.  
Salman)

appears on the Abgar Mosaic. For the one who had the mosaic and the tomb made, the now deceased, the genearch proclaims the importance of the tomb, made for all of his kin. The inscription on the Tripod Mosaic shows that the local pagans believed in life after death: “*Adona, son of Gabbay son of Šelam‘ata made this house of eternity for himself. Whoever removes the sorrow of (his) offspring and mourns for (his) forefathers will have a happy afterlife*” (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 172–173). This also can be considered an expression of belief in the hereafter (Yaşar 2003: 111-121). The family’s wish to spend life after death together causes them to be shown happy, peaceful and calm in the mosaics.

In inscriptions other than those in mosaics, tombs are said to be under the gods’ surveillance, and whoever harms them will be punished by the gods. For example, an inscription found in Sumatar (for Sumatar, see Segal 1953: 97–119) gives us information about this and life after death: “*I, Gayyu, daughter of Baršuma, made this grave for myself. Whoever comes here shall not remove my bones. Whoever does it shall not have the other world (afterlife) and Maralahe curses him*” (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 78). Another inscription from a tomb in Serrin<sup>9</sup> dated to 73 CE reads: “*..Whoever shall give praise-all gods shall bless him. Whoever comes and damages this tomb shall not have a grave and shall his children be blind*” (Yaşar 2003: 113). An inscription dated to a later period, 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. found in BIRTHA reads; “*...God bless everyone come to this tomb and give praise*” (Yaşar 2003: 113). Life after death and the wish to treat the tomb and the deceased with respect are clearly expressed in the tomb inscriptions.

Besides the inscriptions, other visual evidence expressing life after death occurs in some mosaics found in Edessa. They include two Orpheus mosaics and another pavement representing a Phoenix (Balty 1981: 389; Drijvers and Healey 1999: 176–177, fig. 52; Ross 2001: 111–113, fig. 5.3; Segal 1959: 155; Segal 2002: 93, fig. 67), which is not commonly portrayed in mosaics. The mosaic examples with Orpheus, discovered by Segal in 1956 in the city, are lost today. In one mosaic Orpheus is portrayed leaning against a tree and sitting on a rock

<sup>9</sup> Serrin is south of Edessa and northeast of Herapolis (Mabbug).

holding a lyre with horn-shaped tips. Animals are portrayed above each other in a vertical plane; a lion appears at the bottom and three birds occur above each other to Orpheus's left. At the bottom of the scene two draped figures, similar to a little girl and boy, represent the spirit and hold onto a *tabula ansata*<sup>10</sup>. The inscription on the *tabula ansata* reads: "I, Aphtuha, son of Barnay, on July of the year 39 (227-228 CE)<sup>11</sup>, made for myself this house of eternity, for my children and for my heirs" (Fig. 10) (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 178–179).

The other Orpheus mosaic was found recently but then smuggled abroad. Today this mosaic is in the Dallas Art Museum. Orpheus sits in the middle but the chair or rock on which he sits is not visible. His head and upper body are seen from the front, but his lower body is turned to the right. He wears a typical Phrygian cap. Animals are arranged in two groups: an aggressive group consisting of a lion, tiger, leopard and a wild boar can be seen on the right, and a calm group of two birds, two wild goats and a colt or mule is on the left. We are used to seeing only calm animals in Orpheus groups so this example is different. The animals in the aggressive group all have the same pose, running and jumping up as if they were attacking Orpheus. We can see the shallow perspective in the animals being placed one above the other. In the mosaic there is a short inscription next to Orpheus's head: "Bargased, mosaic-maker, laid the mosaic" (Healey 2006: 319). This is the only artist's signature in a mosaic found in the region. On the calm animals' side, above the resting wild goat is the tomb inscription in a frame: *In the month of Nisan in the year five hundred five (M.S. 194) I, Pāpā, son of Pāpā, made for myself this chamber of repose, for myself and for my children and for my heirs. Blessed be Whoever sees and gives blessing*" (Fig. 11) (Healey 2006: 316–319).

The Phoenix Mosaic was found in the south necropolis by J.B. Segal in 1956 and disappeared a short time later. In the mosaic as the main feature is an *arcosolium* tomb, which is special to the city. In the background, a column – or maybe a stele - can be seen. On the column there is a bird standing. Next to the bird there is a four-letter inscription which reads "Phoenix". This Phoenix represents the regeneration of life. The inscription in one corner of the mosaic reads: "I, Baršamaš, son of Barga, on the year 547 made this house of eternity for myself and for my children for all times" (Fig. 12) (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 176–177).

Belief about death is different in each culture. This belief is another aspect of the local religion. Art representing funerary rituals is also connected to this belief (Ross 2001: 96). In Greek and Roman society, the spirit was believed to return to the body<sup>12</sup>. Eastern Mediterranean Jews believe that the deceased goes



Figure 10  
Orpheus Mosaic, Lost (Segal 2002: fig. 68)

10 Even though some believe these figures are Eros and Psyche, that is not possible because the boy is draped, which is uncharacteristic of Eros. These figures resemble angels who will be very important in Christian art later. Angel or Greek Angelos (ἄγγελος) is a very controversial term. The biggest problem is to identify which features belong to polytheism and which to monotheism. According to one idea, Angelos, a Greek creation, is associated with the underworld. Another idea says they are from the Near East. What we are sure of is the existence of angels in both polytheistic and monotheistic religions. In polytheistic religions, angels get their revenge from sinners by punishing them in the underworld. Angels with protective features are spirits wandering in trees and groves and in the sky. At this point we can talk about a Persian influence. The sky association and the Persian influence lead us to the conclusion that pagans in the region believed in angels. They represent the spirit and protect the grave. Their existence in local religion confirms belief in life after death in this religion. See Özdemiroğlu 2004: 71-75; Sokolowski 1960: 226; Şahin 2001: 19-20.

11 A. Luther dates the mosaic to 252 CE. See Luther 1999: 137.

12 On white lekhytoi, scenes about Greek funerary rituals can be seen. According to these, the Greeks saw the dead as immortal and as a hero, and they also represent the relatives of the deceased in funerary scenes. See Şahin 1996: 143–144.



Figure 11  
Orpheus Mosaic, Art Museum, Dallas-U.S.A  
(Healey 2006: fig.1)

to the underworld, which is the last phase of life. But for Christians, death is joyful, for it brings a better life than the previous existence. It brings another way of life after death, eternity and eternal life (Akyürek 1996: 94). This belief of Christians and those of the pagans in the same region overlap each other. The Orpheus mosaics represent this best. Traditional and moral elements of the Orpheus cult, maybe under the influence of Christianity, attracted attention, and pagans respecting this cult practiced the rules of the cult. That is why they refrained from eating animals and other possible contaminants, since pureness of the spirit could only be attained by avoiding contaminants (Segal 2002: 93). In this context, Christianity and the beliefs of pagans in the region complement each other. The happy and pure spirit of the deceased will ascend to heaven in a joyful event; namely, death.



Figure 12  
Phoenix Mosaic, Lost (Segal 2002: fig. 67)

The phoenix represents the human spirit, its eternity and immortality. A phoenix standing on a grave stele and the grave in front of it suggest the notion of life after death (Yaşar 2003: 116). So looking at these features from an iconographic point of view, it seems that local pagans believed that, if the funerary rituals were performed properly, the deceased would come back to life, and regeneration.

## Bibliography

- Akyürek, Engin 1996, *Bizans'ta Sanat ve Ritüel*, İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi
- Balty, Janine 1981, "Mosaïque antique au Proche-orient I. Des origines a la Tetrarchie", H. Temporini, ed. *Aufstiegun Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 12.2: 347–429  
1995, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche Orient*, Basançon: Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne
- Bossert, Helmuth T. 1951, *Altsyrien*, Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth
- Bowersock, G.W. 2001, "Notes on the New Edessene Mosaic of Prometheus", *Hyperboreus* 7: 411–416  
2006, *Mosaics as History, The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press
- Brock, Sebastian 2007, "A Further Funerary Mosac Inscription from Osrhoene", *Aram* 18–19: 715–721
- Campbell, William A. 1938, "The Forth and Fifth Seasons of Excavations at Antioch-on-the- 1938 Orontes: 1935–1936", *American Journal of Archaeology* 42/2: 205–218
- Colledge, Malcolm A. R. 1976, *The Art of Palymra*, London: Westview Press  
1994, "Some Remarks on the Edessa Funerary Mosaics", *La Mosaïque Gréco- Romaine* 4: 189–197
- Desreumaux, Alain 2000, "Une Paire de Portraits sur Mosaïque avec leurs Inscriptions Édesséniennes", *Syria* 77: 212–215
- Drijvers Han J.W. 1972, *Old Syriac (Edessean) Inscriptions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill  
1973, "Some New Syriac Inscriptions and Archaeological Finds from Edessa and Sumatar Harabesi", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36: 1-14  
1980, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden: E.J. Brill  
1981, "Ein neuentdecktes edessenisches Grabmosaik", *Antike Welt* 12.3: 17–20  
1982 "A Tomb for the Life of A King. A Recently Discovered Edessene Mosaic with a Portrait of King Abgar the Great", *Le Museon* 95: 167–189.
- Drijvers Han J.W. and Healey John F. 1999, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Oshroene: Text, Translations and Commentary*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV
- Dunbabin Katherine M.D. 1999, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ergeç, Rıfat 1995, "Belkıs-Zeugma'da Bir Roma Villası ve Taban Mozaikleri", *Arkeoloji ve Sanat* 66: 2–10
- Hayes, E.R. 2005, *Urfa Akademisi*, trans. Y. Güneç, İstanbul: Yaba Yayınları
- Healey, John F. 2006, "A New Syriac Mosaic Inscription", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51/2: 313–327
- Leroy, Jules 1957, "Mosaïques Funéraires D'Édesse", *Syria* 34: 306–342  
1961, "Nouvelles découverts archéologiques relatives á Edesse", *Syria* 38: 159–169
- Luther, Andreas 1999, "Das Datum des Orpheus-Mosaiks aus Urfa", *Die Welt des Orients* 30: 129-137
- Özdemiroğlu, Özmen 2004, "Doğu Hıristiyan Sanatında Melekler", *Arkeoloji ve Sanat* 118: 71–75.
- Parlasca, Klaus 1984, "Neus zu den Mosaiken von Edessa und Seleukeia am Euphrat", *Colloquio Internazionale sul Mosaico Antico* III: 227–234.
- Ross, Steven K. 2001, *Roman Edessa, Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114–242 CE*, London and Newyork: Routledge Press
- Salman, Barış 2007, "Orta Euphrates Mozaikleri Işığında Edessa ve Samosata Mozaikleri", Unpublished Ph. D, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, İzmir
- Segal, Judah, Benzion 1953, "Pagan Syriac Monuments in the Vilayet of Urfa", *Anatolian Studies* 3: 97–119  
1954, "Some Syriac Inscrptions of the 2nd-3rd Century A.D.", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26: 2–36  
1957, "Two Syriac Inscriptions from Harran", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*: 513–522  
1959, "New Mosics from Edessa", *Archeology* 12: 150–157  
1983, "A Note on A Mosaic from Edessa", *Syria* 60: 107–110.  
2002, *Edessa (Urfa)Kutsal Şehir*, trans. A. Arslan, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları,.

- Sokolowski, Franciszek 1960, “Sur le Culte D’Angelos dans le Paganisme Grec et Romain”, *The Harvard Theological Review* 53/ 4: 225–229
- Şahin, Nuran 1996, “Beyaz Lekythos’lar Işığında Klasik Devirde Atina’da Ölüm İkonografisi ve Ölü Kültü”, *Ege Üniversitesi Arkeoloji Dergisi* 4: 143–167
- 2001, *Zeus’un Anadolu Kültleri*, İstanbul: Suna-İnan Kıraç
- Yaşar, Şükran 2003, “Urfa Mezar Kitabı ve Mozaiklerine Göre Urfa Paganlarında Ahiret İnançları”, *Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1: 111–121