Zeugma as the provenance of 12 mosaic fragments at Bowling Green State University

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Zeugma as the provenance of 12 mosaic fragments at Bowling Green State University
Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, S. Rebecca Martin & Mehmet Önal, with Rebecca Molholt

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Ohio is the current owner of 12 sections of floor mosaic dating to the 2nd-3rd c. A.D. Purchased by the university in 1965, these mosaic fragments were believed to be from the site of Antioch. In 2010-11, the mosaics were conserved and installed in BGSU’s Wolfe Center. In the following year the first-named author, organizing a symposium to celebrate the new display of the mosaics, invited R. Molholt to be the keynote speaker. During the course of preparing their respective papers for the symposium, she and Molholt uncovered evidence that an Antioch provenance for the mosaics was most unlikely, and Molholt determined that the mosaic fragments were almost certainly from the site of Zeugma. We offer here a preliminary publication of the fragments, along with evidence to support our proposed provenance.1

Description of the mosaic fragments

There are 12 figural fragments, ranging in size from 0.50 x 0.58 m to 0.91 x 0.76 m, along with smaller pieces and loose tesserae not on display and not discussed here. The fragments employ a wide variety of colors (black, white, yellows, greys, reds, greens, and browns) as well as limited use of blue and green glass or paste (noticeable especially in vegetation and plumage). The foundations appear to be preserved up to c.10 cm.2 The work is generally skillful,3 the figures being rendered illusionistically. Eleven of the fragments (nos. 1-11) were once part of the same floor, for each shares an identical square frame connected to a colorful geometric and floral pattern. The edges are otherwise irregular, suggesting that these figural elements were deliberately, if somewhat roughly, cut out from a floor. The 11 fragments depict naturalistic masks of Pans (2, although one may be a young satyr), 1 tragic mask, 1 comic mask, and birds (7).

Fragments 1-4 (figs. 1-4) show the main figural element, a mask, on a simple white background. Each mask is framed within an illusionistic design using black, pink, yellow and white tesserae, and giving a sense of depth to the frame, placed on a background shaded in greys. Two dark grey triangles were once at the diagonal corners of each frame, either at lower left and upper right (no. 1) or at lower right and upper left (nos. 2-4). The isometric frame is further enclosed within 2 rows of white tesserae followed by 2 rows of

1 While the basic story has already been released to the media, the full discovery, as well as the evidence for it, both art-historical and archival, has not been formally documented for scholarly purposes. The discovery of the Zeugma provenance was made by R. Molholt, who unfortunately was unable to take part in writing this article. Langin-Hooper conducted the archival research and authored the archival documentation analysis. Martin authored the description of the mosaic fragments. Both Martin and Langin-Hooper contributed to formally documenting, and providing additional evidence for, the proposed Zeugma provenance. Information concerning the Zeugma excavations, as well as photographic documentation, was provided by Önal.

2 More detailed inspection is hindered by the mosaic’s installation in glass floor cases in the Wolfe Center at BGSU.

3 Some of the incoherent passages may also indicate repairs were made sometime after the floor was laid.

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black tesserae and 2 more of white. The white-black-white scheme of the border, which extends diagonally from the corner of each figural frame, repeats throughout the floor. The geometric pattern is comprised of lozenge motifs rendered in dark yellow and dark green surrounded by light grey. In some parts of the floor, four of these lozenges once surrounded a square containing a floral bloom abstracted from its natural environment and silhouetted against a black background. Each of these squares was once set diagonally from a figural element, its white-black-white frame intersecting the latter at its mid-point. Thus we have here the composition of stars of 8 lozenges forming larger squares containing figural decoration and smaller ‘poised squares’ containing florals.4

1. (fig. 1). Mask of a young satyr or Pan. Max. dim. c.0.71 x 0.68 m. A few missing tesserae at the eyes. The mask is shown in three-quarter view, oriented to the viewer’s left. The shaggy hair stands stiffly upright over the head and escapes riotously from behind the jaw below. Two small horns set wide on the head frame the forelock; they turn slightly inward. The ears are pointed. The forehead is furrowed above the large, round and light-colored eyes, bulbous nose and rounded mouth. The form ends abruptly below the chin, as in nos. 3-4 below. The palette is limited to browns, blacks and reds, which sometimes results in visually confusing passages (in distinguishing hair from flesh or around the nose) but is effectively varied to create a strong sense of modeling, noticeable especially in the cheeks and jaw. The overall coloring lends the mask a ruddy appearance appropriate for a member of Dionysos’s unruly retinue. The mask lacks a close parallel. It has the facial features of a young satyr and the short horns found on some Pans and occasionally also on satyrs.5

2. (fig. 2). Mask of Pan. Max. dim. c.0.76 x 0.71 m. Both eyes damaged, especially the one on the viewer’s left. The mask is shown in three-quarter view, oriented right. The horns, set close together at the top of the forehead, are long and curved, extending so that their tips intersect with the isometric frame, one covering it (at left) and the other tucked behind (at right). The hair, moustache and beard are curled and wild in the fashion of Pan figures with a more goat-like quality. The ears are long and floppy. The facial features and palette are as above, although there is more use of grey in the hair befitting this Pan’s advanced age.6 Frame as above; a geometric design is partially preserved on 4 sides. The tip of one flower petal can be seen at bottom (for the floral type, see no. 9, below).

3. (fig. 3). Female theater mask. Max. dim. c.0.66 x 0.83m. The long and narrow mask is shown in three-quarter view, oriented left. It is of the onkos type familiar from the tragic masks in the fauces mosaic of the House of the Faun at Pompeii,7 although rendered here more simply (noticeable in the strands of hair) and with less attention given to the expressiveness of the eyes. The long hair is worn loose and parted at center to frame the face; the ends pool at the bottom and overlap occasionally the isometric frame. The brows are thin and straight, descending sharply from the nose. The eyes are large, the nose long, and the mouth gaping. The hair is

4 See the composition type in Balmelle 1985, 266-67, pl. 173b and 272-73, pl. 176e-f.
5 Beardless Pans are not unusual; see, conveniently, LIMC s.v. ‘Pan’ 926-27, nos. 36-66. A securely-dated example (no. 43) comes from a fragment of a 1st-c. A.D. wall-painting from Herculaneum (Naples Mus. Naz. 9125).
6 This Pan type can be seen in the mature, bearded, and floppy-eared example from the palace of Sapor, Bishapur of post-A.D. 260. See Dunbabin 1999, 173-75, fig. 185, far right beside the wreathed maenad. The Dionysiac grouping (of heads? masks?) has a close parallel at Antioch in Room 2 of the House of the Triumph of Dionysos: Levi 1947, 91-104, pl. XVIb.
7 Museo Nazionale di Napoli inv. no. 9994; see Baldassare 1994, 94-96, figs. 12-14. For the type of mask, see Webster 1967, NM4. Examples of the onkos mask are found in the mosaic of masks at Pergamon, Building z (Dunbabin 1999, 224-25, fig. 237) and Room 2 of Antioch’s House of the Triumph of Dionysos (Levi 1947, 91-104, pl. XVIa, at far left).
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rendered in browns, yet the left side is mostly black to emphasize a strong raking light coming from right. The light source is consistent on the face, although only moderately successful in its naturalism. The skin color is yellowish, with whites and reds used to create highlight and suggest volume. Frame as above; a geometric design partially preserved on 3 sides. Two large pink flower petals with ruffled edges are at the bottom.

4. (fig. 4). Female theater mask. Max. dim. c.0.58 x 0.83 m. Damage to a small area of hair at upper left and to the right eye.
The mask is shown in three-quarter view, oriented right. The hair is bound low on the back of the head and parted in the middle; it mostly covers the ears and extends in loose strands from either side of the jaw. A small curl extends onto each cheek. The thin curved brows frame the large and expressive eyes, short nose, and gaping mouth. The expression is one of grief. The colors are as on no. 3, but the skin is paler. The somewhat unkempt hair is less deeply shadowed. Green glass is found in the lower whites of the eyes. The type is the same as the fine mask of a flute player from the 2nd/3rd c. in the Capitoline Museums.\(^8\) Frame as above; a geometric design is partially preserved on 2 sides. More than half of the floral motif is preserved at the top. The 4-lobed flower\(^9\) has wide heart-shaped petals in alternating colors, yellows and greys or pinks and grey-greens.

The next 7 fragments depict a single bird on a white background. No two birds are identical in form, plumage or posture. With the exception of no. 11, the Indian peacock, no clear species are firmly identifiable. General comparisons with species of the E Mediterranean are suggested below,\(^10\) but it should be noted that for most of the birds pictured the anatomical details are often contradictory (seeming to combine, for instance, the wing coloration of one species with the body shape of another). Even the peacock is not rendered in a particularly accurate manner (e.g., color, the short tail). The tails of the birds are particularly lacking in naturalism: they are almost all squared and shortened, and sometimes even have their own patterns (such as tail bars) that differ from the species that the birds otherwise resemble.

While peafowl reside in forests, most of the other birds shown here (nos. 5-10) have characteristics of species inhabiting water, shoreline and marshy habitats (no. 9 is a clear wader), such as long thin bills and long toes. Despite these features, the overall rendering of the birds suggests limited interest in strict naturalism and a tendency towards creating plausible “composite” birds, perhaps due in part to the craftsman’s lack of familiarity or skill with this subject matter. All the birds have open beaks; one (no. 6) is grasping a plant stem. Browns and reds are common in the birds as in the masks (nos. 1-4), but here we see

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8 Palazzo Nuovo MC0392, found in the area the Baths of Trajan Decius but thought to be of 2nd-c. (possibly Hadrianic) date (see *The Capitoline Museums Guide* 2006, 45). The mask is a type from New Comedy that M. Bieber (1961, 93, fig. 329) associated with Pollux’s “little courtesan” (4.153), although no. 4 lacks the ribbon in her hair.
9 Balmelle 2002, 52-53, pl. 255h; see also Balmelle 1985, 196-97, pl. 129a.
10 Although the birds are almost certainly represented impressionistically (as generic or mixed types; see Tammisto 1997), nevertheless they bear some resemblance to living species of the Turkish/Syrian region: no. 5 is similar to a Eurasian Jay in body type, reddish hue, and white wingbar; no. 6 approximates either a Eurasian collared dove or European turtle dove in coloration; no. 7 resembles a See–see Partridge in coloration, but with the long beak and neck of a water bird (perhaps a duck or gallinule); no. 8 has a body type, head and neck shape, long beak, and short tail comparable to the Bittern family; no. 9 bears the distinctive breeding plumage of the Glossy Ibis, but without the characteristic curved Ibis bill; no. 10 has its squared tail raised above the wings in a posture typical of sparrows, and the thickness of the bill also indicates a sparrow identification; no. 11 is an Indian peacock with an un-naturally short tail. For their assistance in comparing the mosaic with living species, we thank SLM, ALH and JLH.
increased use of yellow, as well as blue and green glass. The overall impression is one of activity and lively color, movement, and implied sound.

All the birds have similar, but simpler, frames than nos. 1-4. Here there are only 3 (no. 7) or 4 rows (nos. 5-6 and 8-11) of tesserae in greys moving from lighter to darker away from the bird. After the grey frame, the geometric scheme is as in nos. 1-4 above (presumed for no. 5), though we note the slight variation in no. 7, which reverses the color scheme of half of the lozenges.

5. (fig. 5). Bird facing left. Max. dim. c.0.50 x 0.58m.
Bird with wings as long as its squared tail. Plumeage rendered in browns, reds, and yellows with black and white bars on the tail and wing, and a black eye line. The open black beak is long, thin and straight. Blue glass is occasionally found on the head, breast and wing. The left leg is brown and the right black, coloring choices that might suggest highlight and shadow but here seem independent of light source. Frame as described above; surround not preserved.

6. (fig. 6). Bird facing right holding a plant stem in its beak. Max. dim. c.0.68 x 0.63 m.
Bird with the elongated body shape and shorter legs indicative of dove or pigeon-related species. Plumeage rendered in browns, reds, and black with a black supercilium. The black beak is long, thin and curved. The 3 pointed leaves and stalk of the plant stem are rendered in blue and green glass; a yellow flower(?) is on the stem just below the beak. A few blue and green glass and paste tesserae are found at the shoulder and upper breast, perhaps to represent the iridescent feathers on the lower necks of doves and pigeons. The left leg is dark red and the right light red (see above, no. 5). Framed as above; geometric surround partially preserved on 3 sides.

7. (fig. 7). Bird walking to the left, bending to the ground. Max. dim. c.0.76 x 0.63 m.
Bird with the rounded body and long neck of a duck and the beak and unwebbed feet of other bird types. The head is rendered in blue and green glass and darker hues (green, brown) at bottom to suggest shadow; the eye line is black and the eye itself appears to be red with a black iris. Below the neck ring the plumage is rendered in browns, reds, yellows, and greys with occasional use of white. The open yellow beak is long, thin and curved. The very end of the tail is truncated, and the back of the left foot is partially obscured by the grey frame. The left leg is light red and the right orange-dark red (see above, no. 5). Framed as above; surround partially preserved on 4 sides. There is some variation on the color scheme here: each of the 4 sides of the geometric surround has one lozenge with the standard coloration and one with the colors inverted so that yellow tesserae frame grey.

8. (fig. 8). Bird looking upward to right. Max. dim. c.0.78 x 0.63 m.
Bird with elongated body similar to no. 6, but head and neck of equal thickness. Plumeage rendered in yellows, reds, and greys with black and blue (glass) bars on the tail and a black eye line. Blue glass is occasionally also found on the wing. The open red-brown beak is long, thin and straight. The left leg is dark red and the right light red (see above, no. 5). Figure framed as above, although partially lost at top and right; surround partially preserved at left including what was once an 8-petalled flower. The 4 outer petals are thick and infolded11 and colored in pinks and greys; they surrounded 4 heart-shaped inner petals in browns and yellows (as no. 11 below).

9. (fig. 9). Wading bird walking to the left, bending down. Max. dim. c.0.88 x 0.55 m.
Wading bird similar to a Glossy Ibis. The wing tips extend over the top of the tail. Plumeage rendered in greys, reds, browns, and yellows with blue glass above the wing. Features of the head are difficult to discern (eye?). The open dark grey beak is long, thin and curved. The left leg is dark red and the right black (see above, no. 5). The vestigial toe is very high on the leg. Framed as above, although partially lost at lower right; geometric surround partially preserved on the left side including a 12-petalled rosette12 (as no. 11 below; possibly also in nos. 1-2). The petals are arranged in a tight star pattern comprised of an upper row in shades of yellow and lower row in greys and white. At center are 4 red tesserae surrounding a single white one.

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11 See Balmelle 2002, 47, “infolded lobed”.
12 See Balmelle 2002, 77, pl. 277d.
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10. (fig. 10). Bird looking upward to the left. Max. dim. c.0.76 x 0.63 m.
The least careful of all the birds. Form as no. 5 with head as no. 8. Plumage rendered in reds, greys, browns, and white with a grey and red barred tail. Features of the head are difficult to discern (eye?). The open yellow beak is short and thick relative to the other birds. Both legs are yellow, the left slightly darker (see above, no. 5). Figure framed as above; surround partially preserved at top, right and left.

11. (fig. 11). Indian peacock facing left. Max. dim. c.0.68 x 0.76 m. Extensive damage to the left and bottom of the fragment so that lower part of the bird breast and the foot at the viewer's left are missing. There is also some damage to the head.
The peacock stands with its unnaturally short tail closed. The characteristic vibrant blue of the crest, head, neck and lower breast is here rendered in glass. The tail has 4 clear eyes rendered with passing interest in accurate coloration: yellow, reds and only occasional blue-greens (glass or paste). The body's plumage is likewise rendered in a fashion better fitting the overall palette of the mosaic than nature, particularly in terms of its arrangement. Reds, browns, blacks and dark blue-green glass are employed throughout. Encrustation and damage prohibits much description of the head, though one red tessera is visible. The open black beak is long and curved. The left leg is brown and the right black (see above, no. 5). The vestigial toe is high, though not so high as in no. 9. Framed as above, although both frame and surround are lost at left and bottom. At top is part of a 12-petalled rosette (see no. 9 for description). At right are 2 curved grey petals from part of an 8-petalled flower (see no. 8 for description).

Mosaic fragment no. 12 is larger in scale than nos. 1-11 and lacks evidence of the same geometric and floral surround. Its edges are straight and even, indicating that they were cleaned up, and possibly repaired or restored, sometime before the mosaic was purchased by BGSU. Nevertheless, for reasons explained below, we suggest that it came from the same villa and probably the same floor as nos. 1-11.

12. (fig. 12). Mask of a maenad. Max. dim. c.0.91 x 0.76 m.
The mask is shown in three-quarter view, oriented to the viewer's right. Two vines with 4 large vine leaves with compound flowers or ivy berries overlap with the hair and extend outside the preserved area of the floor. Together these features suggest this is a fragment of a mask and vine-scroll frieze, a border motif popular from the Hellenistic period, including in Asia Minor.13 Long locks of hair completely frame the face and cover most of the ears except the lower lobes that have large hoop earrings with small round pendants. The hair is centrally parted; the hair from the upper scalp is loosely gathered back in soft waves. A few curls fall onto the forehead and the ends of the hair are loose and wild, flying out from and underneath the chin. The face is round, with bold, rounded brows, a straight nose, and plump, slightly-pursed lips. The chin is slight. The color palette fits nos. 1-11, favoring browns and reds with limited use of brighter glass. The vine is rendered in reds, yellows and browns, as are the berries or compound flowers. The oak leaves are in browns, greys, blues and greens including some glass. The overall color of the hair is brown with individual strands rendered in browns, blacks, reds and yellows. The face is pale with deeper pinks, yellows and browns used for modeling. The upper left side of the face is most directly illuminated, casting the right side of the features in shadow. The earrings are rendered in white, yellow and light brown, probably to give the impression of bright gold. The fragment is framed at top and bottom by 2 rows of black tesserae and 3 (top) or 4 (bottom) rows of white. The bottom border also retains 2 more rows of black tesserae.

Archival documentation concerning the mosaic fragments

BGSU acquired these fragments in 1965 from an antiquities dealer, Peter Marks, of the gallery Peter Marks Works of Art in New York City for $35,000,14 with an additional fee

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13 Examples at Antioch include a finer (and earlier) youthful face from the “Atrium House” (Levi 1947, pl. 1b: 146b).
14 According to the financial records in the archives, these funds were supplied by the “Library Enrichment Fund, RL-2”, a fund primarily supported by the Alumni Association, supplemented
(c.$2,500)$^15$ paid for conservation. How this purchase came about is partially documented in a series of letters and notes in BGSU’s archives. A provenance of Antioch is asserted throughout all of the BGSU documentation, as well as in the letters and documents supplied by Peter Marks.

No documentation currently recovered explains how Peter Marks acquired the 12 mosaic fragments. The first mention in the archives is a letter (April 2, 1965) from Marks to BGSU Assistant Professor Hugh Broadley, dated April 2, 1965. Soon after Broadley’s arrival, the art curriculum was expanded to include a variety of art history courses, and this focus on diversifying the approach to art history was matched by Broadley’s interest in facilitating acquisitions of artifacts. In the letter, Marks thanks Broadley for his “letter of March 30th enquiring about the mosaic floor”. It is unclear whether Broadley initiated this exchange but he certainly facilitated the purchase.$^16$ How Broadley knew Marks is also uncertain; however, one clue might be offered by Marks referring to himself as a “candidate for a degree” at New York University. Broadley received his Ph.D. from New York University in 1961.

Another letter from Marks to Broadley (April 12, 1965) refers to a phone conversation in which Broadley reportedly expressed “enthusiasm” for the mosaics.$^17$ Broadley replied (April 19), reporting that he had passed along all of the information on the mosaics to BGSU’s president W. T. Jerome, whom Broadley believed was “most interested” in acquiring the artifacts. Indeed, it seems that Jerome was so interested that he made a personal visit (accompanied by his wife)$^18$ to Marks’s gallery to see the mosaics. Marks refers to this visit in a letter (April 30) addressed to Jerome, from which it seems that questions regarding the mosaics’ provenance and authenticity were raised at the meeting; in the letter Marks reiterated claims about the mosaics’ provenance that he had made during the meeting:

"I am the sole proprietor of the floor. It is not bound by any prior claims by either individuals or governments ... I attest to its authenticity and provenance as stated in the paper [on the stylistic history of the floor]."

It is unclear what “paper” this is; the only “paper” referred to in any of the letters is a document that Marks himself had authored on the mosaics for a course he was taking at New York University.$^19$ No other documents are mentioned that connect the mosaics to any excavation or export from the country of origin. It is possible that Marks was directly involved in the export; he mentions (letter of July 21, 1965 to Jerome) that he took usual summer business trips to the “East” and Europe.

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$^15$ Estimated in a letter (July 29, 1965) from BGSU Treasurer, E. J. Kreischer, to Marks.

$^16$ Broadley also seems to have seen the mosaics in person before their purchase (referred to in the same letter).

$^17$ Letter (Apr. 12, 1965) from Marks to Broadley.

$^18$ Mrs. Jerome’s father, Eugene G. Bewkes, may have facilitated purchases or donations of artifacts to BGSU (as mentioned in a letter [Dec. 4, 1964] from him to Cedric Marks; a conversation between Mrs. Jerome and Mrs. Marks on the topic of artifact donations to BGSU is also described in the letter). E. G. Bewkes was President of St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY.

$^19$ The paper authored by Marks is again mentioned in the Invoice (#179) of the mosaics shipped to BGSU on Aug. 16, 1965; in this document it is described as “The material in this collection has been described in full by me [Peter Marks] in a monograph submitted to the University through Professor Broadley, in my letter to him of April 2, 1965.”
Fig. 1. Fragment no. 1: mask of a young satyr or Pan.

Fig. 2. Fragment no. 2: mask of Pan.

Fig. 3. Fragment no. 3: female theater mask.

Fig. 4. Fragment no. 4: female theater mask.

Fig. 5. Fragment no. 5: bird facing left.

Fig. 6. Fragment no. 6: bird facing right, holding a plant stem in its beak.
Fig. 7. Fragment no. 7: bird walking to the left, bending to the ground.

Fig. 8. Fragment no. 8: bird looking upward to the right.

Fig. 9. Fragment no. 9: wading bird walking left, bending down.

Fig. 10. Fragment no. 10: bird looking upward to the left.

Fig. 11. Fragment no. 11: Indian peacock facing left.

Fig. 12. Fragment no. 12: mask of a maenad.
Fig. 13. Plan of the mosaic floor in the *triclinium* of the Maenad villa at Zeugma (1998-99) (courtesy M. Önal).
Fig. 14. The damaged floor *in situ* in the *triclinium* of the Maenad villa, Zeugma, showing inner zone and outer surround (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal).

Fig. 15. The damaged floor in the *triclinium*, showing outer surround (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal).

Fig. 16. Detail of damaged floor in the *triclinium*, showing bottom portion of face, probably a Silenos, and geometric and floral motifs (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal). It is visible near the top right of fig. 13, facing outward.

Fig. 17. Detail of damaged floor in the *triclinium*, showing head and upper body of a rooster pecking fruit (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal).
Fig. 18. Damaged floor in the *triclinium*, showing the vine scroll (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal).

Fig. 19. Detail of damaged floor in the *triclinium*, showing the face (or mask) of a maenad (known as the “gypsy girl”) (taken during the 1998 excavation; courtesy M. Önal).
In 1977, when BGSU contacted Marks for an updated estimate of the fragments’ value for insurance purchases, he gave an estimate $15,000 higher than the price BGSU paid, which, according to him, was commensurate with “the prices of individual panels which I have sold within the last years”. \(^{20}\) It thus appears that Marks continued to sell mosaic fragments. Further research might be able to trace such transactions and re-unite additional fragments of this floor.

Since their 1965 acquisition by BGSU, the mosaics’ Antioch provenance has been assumed, but the only evidence of provenance that can be found today is a document written in the style of a term-paper which is missing both a title and an author’s name. We suggest that this document is the “paper and description of the floor and its stylistic sources” that Marks authored as part of his New York University coursework and to which he refers in multiple letters (e.g., to Broadley, April 2, 1965). It asserts an Antioch provenance strictly by means of a comparative analysis that glosses over important distinctions between the BGSU mosaic fragments and excavated mosaics from Antioch; such oversimplifications and overstatements of evidence cast doubt upon any possible authority of the document. For instance, the author attempts to establish provenance by stating that the “pavement of the House of the Boat of Psyches is decorated with a border of geometric panels enclosing alternating masks and birds; these elements set in a system of octafoil lozenge stars and square panels identical with my mosaic”. \(^{21}\)

However, the similarities between the BGSU fragments and the mosaics from the House of the Boat of Psyches are only very general: the latter’s vestibule (Room 7) utilizes a geometric pattern similar to nos. 1-11, while the adjacent Room 8 features a parallel use of masks and birds as decorative zones, \(^{22}\) but these thematic and stylistic elements are hardly unique to Antioch. Rather, they show the far-reaching influence of Antiochene workshops. \(^{23}\) Such evidence establishes only that the BGSU mosaic shares thematic and stylistic influences with floors at Antioch. \(^{24}\)

The above facts led us to suspect that the fragments came from a different site and possibly were looted, a supposition suggested by their physical condition, since each appears to have been hacked out of a concrete substrate \(^{25}\) and all belong to the same larger decorative

\(^{20}\) Letter (Dec. 22, 1977) from Marks to P. Nusser, BGSU Treasurer.
\(^{21}\) Paper on the BGSU mosaics, p. 14 (copy in BGSU archives).
\(^{22}\) As documented by Molholt, pers. comm. to Langin-Hooper (Jan. 30, 2012). For the Antioch mosaics, see Levi 1947, pl. 38d.
\(^{23}\) General examples of Roman-era mosaics with masks, birds and comparable geometric patterns are legion and their distribution is very wide. For masks or florals in square frames, see, e.g., Ling 1998, 36-37, fig. 22 (from Rome); Dunbabin 1999, 224-25, fig. 37 (Pergamon Building Z). For birds in frames, see Ling ibid., back cover (Halikarnassus); Dunbabin 1999, 193, fig. 205 (Ma’an-Nirim). For comparable geometric patterns, some with florals, see Ling ibid. 16-18, fig. 8 (from Vallon); 52, fig. 36 (from Antioch); 62, fig 43 (from Ampurias); Dunbabin 1999, 76, 78, fig. 78 from St.-Romain-en-Gal). A good parallel (late 2nd-early 3rd c.) for the border program comes from the W portico of the House of Dionysos at Nea Paphos (Kondoleon 1994); the central scene is framed by guilloche and a geometric border that includes birds, masks and sympotic vessels (Dunbabin 1999, 227-29, fig. 240). This mosaic shows ties to Antioch workshops.
\(^{24}\) We thank Shari T. Kenfield, Curator of Research Photographs at Princeton University, who made a special search of Princeton’s Antioch archives for us.
\(^{25}\) Note that some of the roughness evident in the mortar substrate of the mosaics could be due to the conservation processes employed in the 1960s. Marks (letter of May 2, 1965, to Jerome) mentions that his restorer planned to remove “roughly two to three inches of the coarse mortar...
scheme. The careful preservation of figural areas at the expense of the linear borders and geometric decorative zone suggests looters operating with the art market in mind. The geometric and floral designs of nos. 1-11 in fact hold the key to Molholt’s identification of their location: the *triclinium* (late 2nd-early 3rd c. A.D.) in the “Maenad villa” at Zeugma.

**Evidence of a Zeugma provenance**

The excavation of the “Maenad villa” was conducted in 1998 by Gaziantep Museum headed by the director R. Ergeç and carried out under the responsibility of M. Önal. The *triclinium*, an adjacent room (II) whose floor featuring Akratos and Euphrosyne has a design that marks it out as a *cubiculum* or room for resting, and the corridor were fully excavated and the peristyle partially uncovered. The *triclinium* (9.25 x 13.50 m) in the N sector of the villa is oriented N–S with its main entry from the S corridor. Its mosaic (figs. 13-19) features Dionysiac figures such as Pan, Silenos and a maenad. Much of the floor had been damaged by looters. From what remains *in situ* (fig. 13), the room was surrounded by a wide zone containing stars of 8 lozenges (grey, yellow and green) (figs. 14-16); poised squares containing floral blooms on black backgrounds (figs. 14-16); rectangular frames containing illusionistic geometric designs (fig. 15); and square isometric frames containing figural imagery (figs. 16-17). Inside this wide zone is a second, thinner zone containing a vine scroll with masks and other elements such as birds (figs. 14 and 18-19); the front half of a peacock can be seen in fig. 18. This vine-scroll zone once surrounded three central scenes, now almost entirely lost.

The geometric pattern of the wide outer zone corresponds precisely to our fragments nos. 1-4 and 6-11 (no. 5 lacks evidence of its surrounding design). They are identical in scale, materials, color palette and technique. One compelling link is the lozenge and floral pattern: in the *triclinium* mosaic we can see how the overall scheme once worked, with 8 lozenges together creating a star pattern surrounded by 4 floral motifs. Note the repetition of both the 8-lobed and 12-petalled flowers (compare figs. 4, 8, 9, and 11 to figs. 14-16). The variation of color (yellows and greens) in the lozenge shapes is also matched in the *triclinium* (see figs. 14-15). In fig. 16 (photographed *in situ*) we see the bottom portion probably of a Silenos whose wispy beard and bulbous nose recall the aged Pan in our no. 2 (fig. 2) though oriented in the opposite direction; the density of the tesserae, quality of the workmanship, and grey beard and ruddy skin also correspond, while the isometric frame is identical in color and form, as is the white-black-white linear border scheme.

A comparison of our birds (nos. 5-11) to the *triclinium* floor also yields exact correspondences. Although incompletely preserved, the excavated image of a rooster (fig. 17) is similar in workmanship and style to the BGSU fragments. For instance, the rooster and our no. 6 have similar black curved beaks that are grasping plant stems; they both have a black supercilium and a white mark behind the eye. The color palettes are close, down to the occasional use of blue-green glass. As with our no. 7, the rooster in the *triclinium* is framed by three rows of grey tesserae that become progressively darker from inside to outside;

26 Ergeç and Önal 2012, 24-38.


28 Ergeç and Önal 2012, 34 pl. 3.
this frame is followed by the white-black-white scheme and (as seen at left) the lozenge pattern. It is true that several mosaics, including some from Antioch, share one or two features with our fragments, doubtless because they were selected from a wide repertoire of framing elements, but when these details are taken together they create an (almost) unique pattern that was unlikely to have been precisely duplicated in any other composition.

The maenad mask, no. 12, is clearly not part of the same geometric surround as the other 11 fragments, yet a Zeugma provenance is still likely because it has several parallels at the site. See especially the fragment of the inner zone with vine-scroll pattern of the same triclinium, a zone separated from the outer geometric surround by yet another series of geometric patterns including a wave motif, strips of solid color, and a large section of tightly-braided double guilloche between two bands of crowstep or crenellation. Published photographs of the inner zone (fig. 18) show portions of the brown vine, variegated green vine leaves, and bunches of small fruits or compound flowers. Most of the figural portions of the vine have been destroyed, while in at least two places it appears that masks have been deliberately cut out of their backgrounds. In fig. 18 it is clear that the vine motif arcs in a parabolic shape and is intertwined with a depiction of hair, the upper part of a head of Pan, with two projecting horns, in a manner similar to our no. 12. The curling and shading of the brown hair, the arching of the rough vine, the general shape of the leaves, and the parallel placement of the leaves on top of the hair are shared (though not identical) features.

The connection is strengthened by comparing our no. 12 with the only preserved visage in the triclinium’s inner border, the maenad (0.5 x 0.75 m) popularly known as the “Gypsy girl” (fig. 19). She is oriented to the viewer’s right, although her large brown eyes stare directly out at the viewer. She has a full face with a narrow forehead and protruding cheekbones. A blue and black sakkos is wrapped around her long brown hair, beneath which are visible portions of two white and brown hoop earrings with round pendants. Her thick hair parts in the middle, curls falling onto the forehead and one cheek. Loose ends escape from below and fly over the front of the sakkos. She has bold black eyebrows and a straight nose. The lower part of her face was destroyed below the full upper lip. A thick brown line, surely part of the vine motif, intertwines with her hair and leads off the edge of the fragment at lower left. Part of what seems to be a flower is seen to the right of the mask. The tendrils of the vine are partially preserved at upper left (it is present several times in fig. 18). No framing devices are preserved but it is clear that the outermost framing device of the central scene it once bordered was a black and yellow crenellation (see especially fig. 18). The in situ maenad and our no. 12 share many features: the vine motif; the overall shape and orientation of the face; the style and colors of the hair; the bold rounded eyebrows; the straight nose with delicately curved right nostril; and the hoop earrings. The intense expressions of both strengthen the link. Yet the two maenads are not identical: the maenad at Zeugma is somewhat larger, perhaps a consequence of her fuller hairstyle and sakkos. More importantly, the simple borders of our no. 12 do not match any preserved area

29 Also seen in Bağgelen and Ergeç 2000, 38; Ergeç and Önal 2012, pl. 5; Önal and Güllüc 2006, 75-77; Önal 2009, 100.
30 Cf. Balmelle 1985, 124, pl. 74e.
31 Now part of the permanent exhibition of the Zeugma Mosaic Museum at Gaziantep (inv. 3.1.04).
of the *triclinium* as excavated (compare fig. 12 and fig. 18). Thus, while no. 12 is likely to come from Zeugma, its exact placement remains unclear.

This reconstructed provenance for the BGSU mosaic fragments furthers the understanding of the program of the Maenad Villa’s *triclinium*. The zone of geometric patterning, floral elements, and framed panels of birds and masks formed a broad surround that skirted the perimeter of the room. There were probably 30 or 40 such panels depicting masks and birds in the *triclinium* and adjacent corridor. The corridor (3.10 x 7.58 m) contains 5 figured panels framed by 2 bands of wave pattern encompassing simple guilloche. The designs and subjects of figural areas are linked to the *triclinium*. The first corridor panel, nearly complete, is dominated by black-and-white geometric decoration of tangent and linked *peltae* and a pseudo-shield of triangles that converges on a maenad mask in three-quarters view similar to no. 12. The central scene, which is much damaged, shows Dionysos and Ariadne below a tent at right; at left are two members of Dionysos’s retinue: Pans, Silenoi, or perhaps one of each (only the heads are preserved). The third panel, also much damaged, has a variation on the geometric composition of the dining room with crosses surrounded by 4 pairs of lozenges forming octagons and squares. While the octagons contain floral blooms on dark grounds, the squares are identical to those in the *triclinium*. Preserved squares contain birds and a mask of a Pan/Silenos. Our no. 5, which lacks any remnant of the geometric motif surrounding it, may have come from this third corridor panel. The fourth panel is geometric (intersecting circles forming saltires of spindles and concave squares), and the fifth (unpublished) is similar to the third but with masks and florals in the figural areas.

Throughout the *triclinium* and adjacent corridor, a great variety of birds is depicted, but most seem to fall into at least one of three groups: wading/water birds, song birds, and game birds. Each of these would be especially appropriate for the particular setting of a dining room in a river-front villa, where wading and water birds were part of the natural setting, bird song was audible, and edible birds might be a part of the feast. Almost all of the depicted birds have their beaks open, reinforcing the impression of bird song and tying these wild “performances” to those signaled here by the theatrical masks. Together the birds, florals and masks evoke different facets of Dionysos, god of theater and, still more appropriate to a dining setting, god of wine and revelry. The foreign and exotic nature of Dionysos is also brought to mind in the *triclinium* mosaic through the depiction of Indian peacocks (in both the surround [no. 11] and the vine-scroll zone [as seen in fig. 18]) and in the identities of the mask characters – Pans (nos. 1-2; cf. a third example indicated by the horns in fig. 18) and Maenads (of which the “Gypsy Girl”, as well as possibly our no. 12, are a part). Note also the Dionysiac tenor of the drinking scene (Akratos and Euphrosyne) in the adjacent probable *cubiculum*.

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32 The only part of the *triclinium* floor from which no. 12 could come is the band of vine scroll; otherwise, it cannot come from this floor. One might propose that the borders at top and bottom have received modern restoration, to account for the divergence (especially at the top of the preserved mosaic); see fig. 18. If such restoration took place, it must have been carried out prior to BGSU’s acquisition of the mosaic fragments, as all known BGSU documentation refers to this fragment as having its current appearance.

33 Ergeç and Önal 2012, 34-35, figs. 7-8.


In the center of the room, three large figural panels were originally framed with a crenellation and guilloche motif. Two are totally lost; the third, furthest back in the room (topmost, on fig. 13), is heavily damaged but can be reconstructed. Two fragmentary figures, a seated male and a standing female, are shown; both wear elaborate clothing: the woman at left is wearing a bracelet, while the seated man at right wears a red cloak and sandals. Fragmentary inscriptions by the two figures identify the male as ΟΡΦ[…](probably Orpheus) and the female as either [...]Θ or [...]ΠΘ (possibly Kalliope). If these two figures indeed depict the muse and her son, the theme of theatrical performance and beautiful song, with implied or explicit connection to the god Dionysos, unites the entire program of the *triclinium* mosaic. This Dionysiac theme might have been continued in the other two (now lost) figural panels, but their exact motifs remain unknown.

No identical combination (geometric composition; birds, masks, and florals; and vine scroll) is known elsewhere at Zeugma or at other sites. Dionysiac themes, as well as some specific motifs of the Maenad Villa’s *triclinium* mosaic, are, however, found in other Roman mosaic programs, notably those at Zeugma. The geometric composition of stars of 8 lozenges forming large squares and small poised squares is seen in Zeugma’s House of Oceanus as well as the House of Poseidon’s Pasiphae and Daedalus and Triumph of Dionysos floors. A more specific connection is seen in the Satyr and Antiope mosaic from the House of Poseidon with its birds that have the approximate scale, color palette, and stylistic features of the BGSU fragments. Acanthus scrolls are found here, too, in the mosaic of Eros and Psyche, as well as in the House of Zosimos. Thus, the rediscovered context of the 12 BGSU mosaic fragments has not only resulted in an enhanced understanding of the Maenad Villa’s *triclinium* mosaic in its own right, but also offers the potential for more detailed investigation of that villa’s mosaic program within the town’s social and artistic context.

**Conclusions**

Based on this archival and art-historical analysis, we contend that the BGSU fragments can no longer be said to come from Antioch. Nos. 1-11 have identical parallels in and were almost certainly a part of the *triclinium* mosaic of the Maenad villa at Zeugma, while the maenad no. 12 is linked more tenuously to the vine-scroll zone of the same room. Zeugma was subject to intensive illegal excavations in the 1960s, just around the time when BGSU acquired the 12 mosaic fragments from Marks. In addition, 11 of the BGSU fragments would seem to correspond neatly to the roughly square cuttings left behind in the star-of-lozenge geometric zone in the outer surround of the Maenad Villa’s *triclinium* mosaic. While the 12 fragments help to fill in some of the damaged sections of the *triclinium* floor in the Maenad villa, many more sections remain missing, possibly lost to the art market. While we leave the investigation of these possibilities to others, even our preliminary study demonstrates how re-uniting fragments can clarify our understanding of the mosaic’s program. The mosaics wrap the space in the retinue of Dionysos, and the themes of theatrical performance and beautiful song pervade the room as we know it.

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36 See Ergeç and Önal 2012, 34, pl. 4.
37 Önal 2009, 14-46, 50-59 and 112.
38 Ibid. 11-12 and 50-53.
39 Ibid. 40 and 43.
40 Ibid. 48-49.
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References


