The assembled palace of Samosata: object vibrancy in 1st C. BCE Commagene

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Chapter 8. Case study 1: The glocal genealogy of the satyr-like mosaic mask.

Fig. 8.1. The mask mosaic in room XV (ID700 - st.18-1000a+b). Source: Özgüç 2009, pl. 109, 239.

8.0 Introduction

This case study investigates the relational capacities of a mosaic fragment that adorned the centre of room XV (fig. 8.1).[1024] Although it was only partially preserved, enough elements of the fragment were still visible to identify it as the depiction of a mask of either a satyr or a figure from New Comedy.[1025] As this chapter will elaborately show, this mosaic fragment has played a pivotal role in reductive scholarly narratives keen on stressing the cultural affiliation of the palace. Andreas Kropp for instance writes: '*Especially the mosaic fragment depicting a pornoboskos from the New Comedy is a striking testimony of fondness for Greek culture and the entertainment it had to offer.*'[1026] As argued in chapters 2 and 3, such a scholarly focus on the supposed 'Greekness' of an object runs the risk of obscuring other, more-than-representational capacities of such an object. To overcome this risk, this chapter attempts to illuminate other relational capacities of the mosaic,

[1024] See also Bingöl 1997, pl. 24.1.
[1025] In paragraph 8.1.2.1, I will discuss the identification of the mosaic depiction in detail.
[1026] Kropp 2013, 363.

understanding the mask mosaic as a vibrant assemblage emerging from a variety of elements that came together in one object.

The central methodology with which it tries to unleash the many overlooked capacities of this mosaic, is by starting out from its genealogical relations, exploring how the widespread appearance of similar mask mosaics throughout the Mediterranean, especially from the 2nd c. BCE onwards, formed a glocal genealogy for the mask mosaic in Samosata in the 1st c. BCE. I establish this genealogy and investigate how it played a role in Commagene in terms of object capacities. How did the Samosata mask adhere or deviate from the universalizing and particularizing object type? And what kind of very specific object capacities emerged from the genealogy of this object type and its particularization in Samosata?

After a detailed description and discussion of the mosaic and its archaeological context (section 8.1), I will discuss previous scholarly interpretations of the mask, a critique that ties in with the overall historiographical critique of representational and reductive interpretations of material culture as dealt with in chapter 2. After this, I will analyse the glocal genealogy of the mask mosaics, assembling other examples of isolated mask mosaics in *emblemata* (paragraph 8.2). This genealogy is then used to contextualize the mask mosaic and to establish its relational capacities with regards to this universalizing object type. In section 8.3, I will explore the implications of these genealogical relations, asking how very particular, more-than-relational capacities emerged in the context of the mask mosaic in 1st c. BCE Samosata.

8.1 Description and discussion

8.1.1 Description

This paragraph provides a description of the mask mosaic and its context in room XV of the palace. After describing the mask mosaic, I will shortly recapitulate the general context of the wider mosaic and room XV as already described in detail in chapter 4.

The 'mask mosaic' is partially preserved as a mosaic fragment (ID700 - st.18-1000a+b: Length: 0.613 m.; Height: 0.045 m.; Width: 0.32 m.), found in room XV, with an east-west orientation, facing the viewer when entering the room.[1027] Nowadays, the mosaic consists of two fitting pieces (a and b), which were found *in situ* in the central roundel of the mosaic covering the floor of room XV. The entire fragment probably broke in two after it was excavated and was glued together again during modern restoration (probably conducted during the time of excavation in 1984) and is

[1027] Its orientation is nowhere mentioned by the excavators, but on the basis of the sketches and reconstructions, it seems likely that the mask faced the entrance.

therefore discussed as one fragment. It has extensive damage on top and bottom and is broken on all sides. The stone and ceramic tesserae (height: 0,007 m.) are set into rather fine mortar (height: 0,038 m.). The technique used in the mosaic is *opus vermiculatum*, using 3-8 mm2 tesserae in a wide range of reds, greys, greens, oranges, and white-yellows.[1028] There is no evidence for the use of glass or lead strips.

The mosaic depicts a face from a frontal perspective. It is set against a monochrome dark grey background. The size of the tesserae is smaller in the face (3-5 mm2) than in the dark grey background (5-8 mm2) and is particularly small in the nose of the depicted figure. The visible facial characteristics are a rounded bald head, a complete right eye and a partially preserved left eye, two eyebrows, a nose, an opened mouth, a beard and an ivy wreath with berries. I will here provide a more detailed description of each of these facial characteristics.

The bald head, executed in orange-red and light brown tesserae, is only preserved at the top and the front, which makes it unsure whether the sides of the head contained traces of hair. The outline of the widely opened eyes is indicated with a narrow line of dark grey tesserae. The white of the eye is executed in a monochrome field of white tesserae. The large dark-brown irises, delineated with a narrow line of dark-grey tesserae, are almost entirely visible, and placed in the upper part of the eyes, looking slightly upwards. Inside the dark brown irises, pupils are visible that are executed in dark grey tesserae. Underneath the eyes, a horizontal but curving black line indicates a wrinkle that ends at the nose, giving the impression of a large bag under the eye. Above the eyes are placed heavily curved non-connected eyebrows that turn upwards at their inside ends (where the nose starts). The right eyebrow curves downwards at the outside end. The left eyebrow is only preserved halfway, which makes it impossible to tell whether the brows are exactly symmetrical.

The nose is stubby, very broad at the bottom and delineated with a strong line of dark-grey tesserae. It has a much darker area of dark-brown tesserae on its upper part compared to the light-brown and orange red tesserae in the remainder of the nose. Its right nostril is clearly indicated and executed in dark grey tesserae. Three horizontal lines in dark grey tesserae are placed on top of the nose and indicate wrinkles. Underneath the nose, an opened mouth is depicted, that is almost as wide as the width of the nose. The right corner of the mouth is turning upwards. The lips are executed in dark-orange and light brown tesserae; especially the lower region of the lower lip is executed in darker tones. The inside of the opened mouth shows a monochrome field of dark grey tesserae, equal to the general background of the roundel. No indications of a tongue or teeth are suggested. The beard is rendered in several shades of white and light-orange tesserae, giving the impression of separate unkempt and perhaps greasy strains

[1028] For *opus vermiculatum*, the 'wormlike' mosaic technique which uses very small tesserae to indicate the outline of a subject, see: Daszewski 1985, 74–77; Dunbabin 1999, 23 and Zapheiropoulou 2006, 33.

of hair. Five lines of white tesserae starting at the very side of the mouth and continuing on the outer side of the beard suggest a long moustache. Above the right eye, four leaves connected to a twig are depicted in dark green tones, suggesting an ivy wreath. Above the left eye, one ivy leaf is present, which is not connected to the other four, and thus suggests that the mask was depicted wearing a wreath interrupted on the front side, right above the nose. Here, at the end of both twigs, at least five small yellow berries are indicated in light yellow tesserae.

Mosaic room XV The mask mosaic is set in a concentric border design, that covers the entire square, 11,1 x 11,1 m. sized room (fig. 8.2). This mosaic is executed in *opus tesselatum*, consisting of tesserae of ca. 10-13 mm^2, significantly larger than those of the *emblema* with the mask mosaic described above. The mosaic was almost entirely excavated, safe for the southeast corner, which was not included in the trench. In the north, a large part of the mosaic was destroyed, as well as in the central-south, right next to the roundel. The mosaic is executed in the so-called 'concentric-border-decoration style', with consecutive rectangular bands containing geometric decoration, discussed in chapter 4 and chapter 8 of this dissertation.

Fig. 8.2. Concentric border decoration in room XV. Source: Özgüç Archive.

The mosaic has 16 consecutive borders, which, from the outside inwards, can be described as follows[1029]: 1) an empty band, white 2) a band with a crenellation motif, dark grey on white, 3) a wave crest-motif (or "running dog"), dark grey on white, 4) an empty dark band, 5) a wave-crest motif mirroring the former one, white on dark grey, 5) a wide band of lozenges in perspective in dark grey, white and dark red, 6) a band with a saw-tooth motif, white on dark grey, 7) empty band, white 8) band with another saw-tooth motif, mirroring the former one, dark grey on white, 9) band with stepped pyramid-motif, dark grey on white, 10) empty band, dark grey, 11) band with meander-motif (or "Greek key"), 12) empty band, dark grey, 13) a band with wave-crest pattern, white on dark grey, 14) an empty band, white, 15) a band with wave-crest pattern, white on dark grey, 16) a wide band with vegetal decoration against a dark grey background, including

[1029] The designation 'grey on white' is relative; there is no clear hierarchy between the white and grey wave-crest motifs that result from one another. For the sake of description, I choose to give primacy to the colour first encountered when describing 'from the outside inwards'.

four symmetrical pairs of acanthus leaves in pink, yellow and white in each corner. From the top of these acanthus leaves, twigs shoot up which bifurcate and end in ivy leaves (fig. 8.3: ID701 – st.18-1001[1030]; ID702-st. 18-1002[1031]).

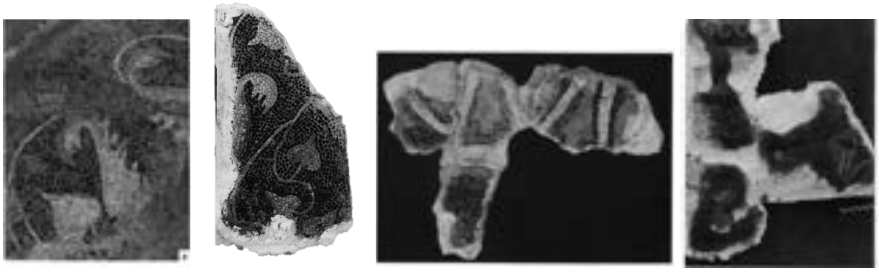

Fig. 8.3. ID701 – st.18-1001 fragment of vegetal decoration; ID702 – st.18-1002 fragment of vegetal decoration; ID703 – st.18-1003 fragment of 'Ionian cymation'; ID704 – st.18-1004 fragment of circular vegetal decoration and stylized motifs. Source: Özgüç Archive.

The circular roundel that follows and in which the Mask Mosaic is placed continues in a concentric border-style: 17) wide red band with stylized and/or vegetal motifs in dark green with (unidentified) white rectangular element with black line in its centre (fig. 8.3: ID704 – st.18-1004[1032]) 18) a simple guilloche in pink, white and red 19) a wave crest border, dark grey on white, 20) an empty band, white, 21) a wave crest border, white on dark grey 22) a 'Ionian cymation' with red, white and dark grey (ID703 – st.18-1003[1033]) 23) an empty band in white. This latter concentric border is then followed by the inner *emblema* with the mask mosaic.

[1030] *ID701– st.18-1001*: Found *in situ*. Fragment of symmetric floral decoration in *opus tesselatum* from the rectangular frame that serves as the transition to the roundel in the centre. Depicting two acanthus leaves mirroring each other. Both are rendered in yellow, pink and white. Both leaves curve outwards at the pink top and have serrated edges on the inside. The outside is smooth and is indicated with yellow tesserae.
[1031] *ID702-st. 18-1002*: Found *in situ*. Fragment of symmetric floral decoration in *opus tesselatum* from the rectangular frame that serves as the transition to the roundel. Depicting an acanthus leaf in pink and white that curves outwards on the top, where the edge is serrated. From the top shoots a twig in white that seems to bifurcate and ends in several ivy leaves in white-yellow, four of which have been preserved.
[1032] *ID704 – st.18-1004*: Found *in situ*, with decorative bands in *opus tesselatum*, surrounding the roundel. Outer band has vegetal and stylized motifs on a red background. Then follows a simple guilloche in red, yellow and white against a dark grey background. After this a wave-crest pattern, white on dark grey; an empty fillet of white tesserae; a small wave-crest pattern, dark grey on white. More detailed description of concentric border decoration, see below.
[1033] ID703 – st.18-1003: Found *in situ*. Executed in *opus tesselatum*. Stylized Ionian cymation in red, dark grey and white-yellow tesserae. Ovals in red, framed with a white border separating from the stylized lotus, again rendered in red tesserae.

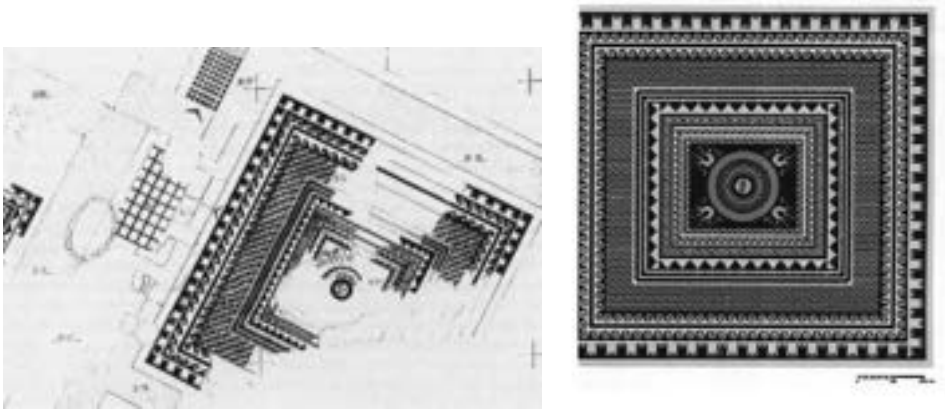

Fig. 8.4. Excavation drawing of room XV with the mask mosaic (Source: Özgüç Archive) and a reconstruction from Bingöl 2013, fig. 20. .

Room XV, where the mosaic was located, is described in detail already in chapter 4 so a concise discussion of its basic features will suffice here. Most importantly, the square room measures 11,1 x 11,1 m. and is the second largest room of the excavated part of the royal building (123,21 sq. m.; see fig. 8.4 for a map and a reconstruction). The room was entered from sector 4 of corridor A (which has the characteristics of an anteroom) through a wide, relatively monumental entrance (2, 45 m.) constructed with large limestone slabs. The mosaic floor is located 37,0 cm. lower than this entrance, which means that one would have had an elevated viewing position onto the mosaic when entering, providing an increased viewing angle and a more frontal perspective onto the mask mosaic.[1034] In chapter 4 and 5, I have suggested that the entrance was adorned with a limestone door lintel, of which several fragments have been preserved (chapter 5: ID517; ID588; ID614; ID613). The wall decoration of room XV contained Masonry Style wall painting that, in broad lines, is very similar to the wall painting decoration encountered throughout the rest of the royal building. Based on the photographic evidence, it seems that at least two different decorative *schemata* were displayed on separate walls of the room.[1035] The elaborate decoration of room XV likely points to a representative function, and, like room XIV, would have been well equipped for

[1034] The excavation map published by Özgüç provides relative depths and indicates that the limestone threshold is located at 10,26 m., while the mosaic of room XV is located on 10,63 m. See chapter 4.

[1035] The first is a decorative schema that consists of a socle of horizontal yellow orthostats with red borders, interspersed with red orthostats with yellow borders. The middle and upper parts of this decorative scheme have not been preserved. The second is a decorative schema with a socle that, from the bottom up, consists of a narrow white band, followed by a narrow blue band, a narrow red band, a wider white band, a wider blue band and again a wide white band. On top of this socle, there seem to be vertical orthostats that might be blue with a red border, interspersed with narrower red orthostats with a yellow border. Here too, the upper parts of this decorative schema have not been preserved.

banqueting, something that is also suggested by its close similarity to the 'Mosaic Rooms' in Arsameia on the Nymphaios (see paragraph 10.5).

8.1.2 Identification and connotation of the mask mosaic: a discussion

The mask mosaic has received considerable attention in earlier scholarly work on the palace of Samosata. This work has however primarily focused on the identification of the mosaic's iconography. Although the intention of this chapter is to go beyond such iconographic discussions about representation and deal with other, overlooked object capacities that are more-than-representational, it is useful to briefly discuss the scholarly debate as it might itself be seen as an illustration of the limits of representation. In this section, I will therefore first consider different scholarly interpretations concerning the identification of the mask mosaic, discussing its representation of a mask, a satyr, or a new comedy mask (paragraph 8.1.2.1). After doing this, I will move to discussions concerning the more connotative meaning of the mask mosaic, dealing with the way scholars have used their specific identifications of the mask mosaic to link it to broader concepts (i.e. to Greekness, theatre and Dionysos; see paragraph 8.1.2.2). The reductive nature of this reasoning forms the motivation for the genealogical and more-than-representational approach offered in sections 8.2 and 8.3.

8.1.2.1 Identification

Here, I will provide an overview of the scholarly interpretations concerning the identification of the mask mosaic, discussing four possibilities: a *pornoboskos* mask, a generic comedy mask of an old man, a satyr portrait and a satyr mask.

Most scholars have interpreted the mask mosaic as a depiction of a so-called *pornoboskos* ("Brothelkeeper"), a mask type pertaining to New Comedy. In his 1997 monograph on Turkish mosaics, Orhan Bingöl was to first to suggest this identification: '*In der Mitte des rechteckigen Feldes befindet sich ein von pflanzlichen Motiven umgebenes rundes Emblema. In ihm ist von einer Maske soviel erhalten, dass sie sich als die des Bordellwirtes (Pornoboskos) der Neuen Komödie bestimmen lässt. Seinen kahlen Schädel schmückt ein Efeukranz.'.*[1036] This interpretation was followed by Ruth Westgate, who suggests that the '(…) *fragment, from the centre of a floor, shows the mask of a character from Greek comedy, probably the Brothelkeeper'.*[1037] Maria Kopsacheili furthermore states that the '*tessellated mosaics depict a pornoboskos (a pimp), a character of the*

[1036] Bingöl 1997, 107. In Bingöl 2013, 76-77 this interpretation remains unaltered: '*Tüm bu özellikler burada satyr başının bir 'mask' olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır (…) En önemli özelliği olarak görülebilecek bir ayrıntı bornunda bir halka oluşudur ki bu da onun bir 'pornoboskos' olduğunun diğer bir göstergesidir*'.
[1037] Westgate 2002, 242.

New Comedy'.[1038] Andreas Kropp claims '*a fragment of the central medallion of room 6 depicted a bald head, probably a theatre mask of the New Comedy of a brothel keeper (*pornoboskos*)'.*[1039] Other authors are more cautious and stick with the more generic '(new) comedy mask' without ascribing a specific mask type to the depiction. Eric Moormann, for instance, mentions the '*flattish rendering (…) [of the] comedy mask*'[1040], Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbets writes '*Un masque de la Nouvelle Comédie ornait le centre d'un pavement de Samosate*'.[1041]

Other scholars, however, have suggested that the mosaic in room XV does not depict a mask, but should instead be understood as a figural image of a satyr. Nimet Özgüç, writes: '*Çok küçük taşlarla hazırlanmış olan merkez figürü, satır başının, üçte biri korunmuştur. Saçlarıyla yüzünün organları kırmızı zemin üzerine siyah taşlarla işlenmiştir. Alnına yeşil yapraklı, sarı dut çelengi süsler*.'[1042] Levent Zoroğlu seems to follow this line of interpretation when he states that '*Das eingesunkene und stark zerstörte Bildfeld zeigt ein von grünem Blattwerk umgebenes Medaillon, von dem zwei Fragmente einen kahlen Satyrkopf mit einem Efeukranz erkennen lassen'.*[1043] Although Maria Kopsacheili in her 2011 publication has decided on the mask-interpretation, it should be noted that in the catalogue of her 2013 dissertation, she leaves open both interpretations: *'A partly preserved medallion in the center illustrates the head of a male figure with an ivy-wreath, identified either as a satyr, or a comic mask of the type of pornoboskos.'* [1044]

Based on this overview, three different identifications are on the table: 1) a generic new comedy mask, 2) a *pornoboskos* mask, or 3) a satyr head. It is difficult to further discuss these various options based on the mentioned scholarly interpretations as virtually none of them has actually motivated the identification of their liking. To make up of this, I will discuss these identifications separately below. After this, I will add (and argue in favour of) a fourth identification, namely 4) a satyr-like mask, in which aspects of especially the first and third options are combined.

1) A generic (comedy) mask

As we have seen, most scholars interpret the mosaic from room XV as the depiction of a comedy mask. Whereas many authors are very specific about the type of comedy mask (cf. the '*pornoboskos*', see below), it is useful to first discuss why we might be dealing with a *comedy mask* in the first place. Mosaic depictions of masks - widespread in a variety of media (e.g. terracotta, pottery and glass decoration, wall paintings, and mosaics) - have received elaborate scholarly

1038 Kopsacheili 2011, 24-25.
1039 Kropp 2013, 109.
1040 Moormann 2014, 611.
1041 Guimier-Sorbets 2012b, 445.
1042 Özgüç 2009, 42.
1043 Zoroğlu 2012, 143.
1044 Kopsacheili 2012, 230-231. Anette Haug also leaves all options open by describing the mosaic as 'satyr or comic mask/pornoboskos)' (Haug 2021, no. 124).

attention over the last century[1045], culminating in T.B.L. Webster's elaborate and repeatedly revised catalogues of 'Monuments Illustrating' Old and Middle Comedy[1046], New Comedy[1047] and Tragedy and Satyr Play.[1048] This scholarly work was however mostly focused on mask depictions as evidence for 'real' theatre masks and theatre practice and less on their qualities as visual elements and objects in themselves.[1049]

Nonetheless, from these catalogues emerges a basic set of characteristics of comedy mask depictions. Like any type of mask, comedic mask iconography is first of all recognized as portraits that lack a physical connection to a neck and torso. Comedy mask depictions are furthermore characterized by their widely opened mouths, usually depicted without teeth or tongue. The facial characteristics are generally considered to be schematic, inanimate and grotesque; they do not look like normal human faces. Often, the eyes are very large and lack any pupils.[1050] Many depictions of masks, especially, as we will see, in mosaics, in fact are not really simply masks-depictions but rather an iconographic type of itself; the depiction of actual eyes (instead of the openings for the actors to look through) supports this notion specifically (see also section 8.3)

The figure depicted in the mosaic roundel of room XV more or less adheres to these requirements. It has a wide opened, gaping mouth without teeth, merely showing a black hole in the same colour as the general background. Also, the 'grotesque' features of the figure in room XV – the stubby nose, the big eyes, the bald head, the strong wrinkles and the pronounced and frowning eyebrows – match well with the general 'mask requirements'. To this, it could be opposed that the fragmentary state of the mosaic makes it impossible to say whether the depicted face indeed lacks a neck and a trunk with the further complication that a potential neck might be covered by the figure's beard.[1051] The presence of irises and pupils within the figure's eyes give the figure a more animated impression that furthermore might contradict the mask-requirements. However, on closer inspection, there are several mask mosaics where pupils and irises are clearly indicated as well (e.g. the satyr(-like) masks from the House of the Masks and the masks from the Insula of the Jewelry on Delos as well as the masks in the House of the Faun in Pompeii see below infra). We

[1045] From the early 20th century onward, scholars like C. Robert and M. Bieber have catalogued and commented on a large corpus of mask illustrations from the ancient world (including mosaic depictions). See Robert 1911; Bieber 1920.
[1046] Webster 1960. Updated and revised by Green in Webster and Green 1978.
[1047] Webster 1961, updated and revised in Webster 1969 and again updated and revised by Green and Seeberg in Webster et al. 1995.
[1048] Webster 1962, updated and revised in Webster 1967.
[1049] Or as Mieke Bahmer 2015, ii states: '*The masks are more thoroughly examined as remnants of Classical theatre than in studies of antique mosaics'.*
[1050] For a similar type of assessment, but then for the mask mosaic in Tel Dor, see Sagiv-Hayik 2011. For the Tel Dor mask see paragraph 8.2.1.
[1051] The fact that the beard is rendered with stones with a light-orange hue, similar to the figure's overall skin colour, could be understood as the skin of the neck shining through the beard.

can thus conclude that, although the lack of preservation of the mosaic prevents us from complete certainty, it seems very likely that the mosaic indeed depicts a mask.

2) A pornoboskos *('Brothelkeeper') mask*

As we have seen above, most scholars ascribe to the mask mosaic a specific type of New Comedy mask, namely the *pornoboskos*. The *pornoboskos* is known as a New Comedy stock character described in the 2nd c. CE *Onomasticon* by Ioulios Polydeukes, better known as Julius Pollux.[1052] This Roman lexicon, a product of the Second Sophistic, provides a list and short descriptions of 44 different theatre masks, among which the *pornoboskos*.[1053] *Pornoboskos* literally means 'herdsman of prostitutes', and his role in New Comedy-plays thus is that of the old male brothelkeeper. Pollux describes the *pornoboskos* as follows:*'generally like the Lycomedian, but has a slight smile on his lips and connected brows; he has receding hair and is bald'*. [1054] The Lycomedian, in turn, is described as follows: '*The Lycomedian is curly-haired, long-bearded, raises one of his eyebrows, and shows a tendency to meddle in other people's business*'.[1055] On first glance, this indeed fits well with our mask mosaic; the raised eyebrow, the long beard, slight smile and the bald head all coincide with this description. Some elements are however also lacking, as no mention is made of the figure's ivy wreath nor the greasiness and greyness of the beard. Furthermore, the eyebrows of the Samosata mask are not connected as described for the *pornoboskos*. The descriptions of the *pornoboskos* and the Lycomedian thus are problematic as definitive identifications of the Samosata mask as they remain very limited, ambiguous and unspecific. In general, the *Onomasticon* should also be considered a problematic source as the 2nd c. CE lexicon is strongly antiquarian and it is not clear how representative it is of actual theatre masks throughout the Mediterranean and across time, nor whether it bears any relation to the iconographic tradition of mask depictions.[1056]

[1052] Poll. *Onom.* 4.143–54. For a summary, see Dickey 2007, 96. It was written during the reign of emperor Commodus, to whom the ten different books the work consists of are repeatedly dedicated. The work basically consists of word lists about a wide range of different subjects, from intellectual themes to issues of everyday life. König 2016, 298 writes how Pollux's Onomasticon '*constructs an encyclopaedic panorama of Greek cultural experience*'. See also Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 177–9, 223–31; Bearzot, Landucci and Giuseppe Zecchini 2007, the latter together with the review by Rance 2008.

[1053] Note that these mask types are not necessarily connected easily either to the roles in New Comedy itself; based on Pollux's mask descriptions, inferences can however be made about their likely use for specific roles in specific plays. For such an analysis, see MacCary 1970.

[1054] Poll. *Onom.* 4.143–54.

[1055] Poll. *Onom.* 4.144, comic mask no.7.

[1056] For a convincing criticism see Poe 1996. It is important to bear in mind that no actual theatre masks were preserved from antiquity as these were made of highly perishable materials such as wood, cork or thin plaster. Poe also makes us aware that one of the main reasons the list of masks ended up in Pollux's list probably was the fact that this knowledge was by then outdated and largely forgotten. It is not clear on which ancient sources Pollux based his descriptions and how reliable these were.

3) A satyr head

As presented above, Özgüç, Zoroğlu and (to some extent) Kopsacheili suggest that the mosaic figure depicts an actual portrait of a satyr – not a mask. As we have concluded in the sub-paragraph on masks above, the objections against the mask-identification can be largely dismissed. However, it is still useful to consider the affinity of the mask mosaic to satyr iconography, which is well attested in a variety of media.[1057] Satyrs are typically male, wild and uninhibited figures that are half-human, half-animal, mostly containing characteristics of horses or donkeys. They often have horse/donkey-like tails, hooves, equine ears and sometimes horns. Many wear ivy wreaths, and often they are depicted holding other 'Dionysiac' attributes, such as the *thyrsus* and *kantharos*. The older satyrs or *papposilenoi* have particularly stubby and wild facial characteristics, they are often bald or heavily balding and have long grey beards, often appearing unkempt and greasy. Examples showing this fairly standardized set of characteristics include the painted *papposilenos* from the Villa dei Misteri, the *papposilenoi* from the Stobadeion in Delos, and the *emblemata* presenting a *papposilenos* with Dionysos *Pais* from building Z in Pergamon.[1058]

The figure depicted in the mosaic of Samosata definitely resembles such standardized *papposilenos*-iconography if we consider its ivy wreath, bald head, stubby and wild facial characteristics and unkempt beard. Due to the lack of preservation, it is however impossible to say something about the presence of horns or equine ears. We should conclude that, even if the mosaic depiction represents a comedy mask of an older man, the general features of this mask should still be described as heavily satyr-like or *papposilenos*-like.

4) A satyr(-like) mask

Taking into account our discussion of the three suggested identifications in earlier scholarship, we might consider a fourth option that is a combination of the first and third identification, suggesting that the mosaic depiction in Samosata represents a satyr mask or a comedy mask with satyr-like characteristics. Satyr masks are well-attested, especially also in mosaics, e.g. the masks from the House of the Masks on Delos and the masks from the Seven Sages Mosaic from the Villa of T. Siminius Stephanus near Torre Annunziata.[1059] Satyr-like masks, combining traits from comedy masks and satyr masks occur often in mosaics, especially in combination with comedy slave masks, e.g. the Kos Mask, the Ampurias Mask and the Centocelle Mask . It is very well possible that such satyr-like comedy mask depictions did not necessarily reflect 'real' theatre masks, functioning more as iconographical motifs in themselves than as direct reflections of theatre

[1057] Key publications about satyrs and satyr iconography are Hedreen 1992, 1994; Lindblom 2011; Lissarrague 2013, 2019, 207-220; Padgett 2003; and Heinemann 2016.
[1058] *Villa dei Misteri*: Beyen 1938; *Delos:* Zaphiropoulou 1993, 32; *Pergamon*: Salzmann 1993, 393, fig. 7.
[1059] Webster 1962, updated and revised in Webster 1967.

practice.[1060] In paragraph 8.3.2 of this chapter, I will explain why this ambiguity of satyr-like depictions – between satyr mask and actual satyr, between comedy figure and satyr – fitted well to the transformational capacity of satyr-like depictions.

8.1.2.2 Three reductions: the mask mosaic as a representation of Greekness, theatre and Dionysos

In this paragraph, we will turn to scholarly interpretations of the mask mosaic that deal with its more connotative meanings. I discuss three (sometimes overlapping) concepts or interpretative frames separately: 'Greekness', theatre and Dionysos. I will briefly discuss these interpretative frames and use this discussion to make a general point about the reductionisms the mask mosaic has been subjected to in this earlier scholarship, a point made more generally in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Cultural reductionism: Greekness

The mask mosaic has first of all been understood by scholars as a token of 'Greekness'. By selecting a mask mosaic in the palace, the Commagenean rulers would signal a Greek affiliation, a (partially) Greek cultural identity or even a Greek ethnicity. Several authors specifically highlight the mask mosaic to make an argument about the 'Greekness' of the interior decoration and often this is then linked to the cultural identity or ethnicity of the Commagenean kings. Ruth Westgate for instance argues that the mask was a reflection of the *'Greek side of their [the Commagenean dynasty's] cultural identity'*[1061]*,* typical for the overall interior décor. She juxtaposes this to the hybrid character of the public monuments of Commagene, which '*reflected the ruling dynasty's mixed Greek-Persian origins'.*[1062] Andreas Kropp argues along the same lines, but puts less stress on the actual 'origins' of the dynasty and rather sees the mask as an evocation of the dynasty's 'Greek credentials', a form of 'Hellenism' or 'doing Greek' that would have had an influential precursor in a mosaic of palace V in Pergamon: '*The comical theatre mask depicted in the floor mosaic has a tragic correspondent in the Attalid royal palace ('Raumgruppe V') of Pergamon, built by a dynasty keen to stress its Greek credentials, and reinforces this impression.'*[1063] Kropp's argument would have been stronger if he would have actually compared the Samosata mask with the Pergamene example. The mask as a pars-pro-toto for Greek culture is made even more explicit when Kropp

[1060] Cf. Bahmer 2016. See also below.
[1061] Westgate 2002, 242. Note that Westgate uses the concept of 'cultural identity' interchangeably from more ethnical understandings of the dynasty, for instance when she talks about '*a half-Greek, half-Persian dynasty'* or '*the ruling dynasty's mixed Greek-Persian origins*' (Westgate 2002, 241).
[1062] Westgate 2002, 242. Note how Westgate switches between terms like identity and origins, seemingly leaving open an ethnical understanding of the styles employed.
[1063] Kropp 2013, 109. For Attalid 'Hellenism(s)', see Schalles 1985; Smith 1991, 155-180; Schwarzer 1999; Queyrel 2003; Stewart 2005.

states: '*Especially the mosaic fragment depicting a pornoboskos from the New Comedy is a striking testimony of fondness for Greek culture and the entertainment it had to offer.*'[1064] Maria Kopsacheili states that the mask mosaic '*follows Greek prototypes*' and is a decorative element that stems '*from the Hellenistic tradition*'.[1065] These cultural reductions of the mask mosaic *a priori* link the mask to a category of Greekness, which is conveniently linked to the cultural strategies and ancestral claims of Antiochos I (see chapter 2).

Representational reductionism: theatre

Linked to the cultural reduction of the mask mosaic to an evocation of Greekness discussed above is the presupposition that a mask depiction in the first place connotes (Greek) theatre and (Greek) theatre practice. When Kropp states '*Especially the mosaic fragment depicting a* pornoboskos *from the New Comedy is a striking testimony of fondness for Greek culture and the entertainment it had to offer*'[1066] he implies that the mask depiction represented the Commagenean dynasty's enthusiasm for Greek New Comedy. Similarly, Westgate argues in relation to the Samosata mask: '*the popularity of theatrical motifs may simply reflect the popularity of drama.*'[1067] Kopsacheili furthermore claims '*the satyr or a comic mask relates to Dionysos and theatre.'* [1068]

It is definitely the case that mask depictions sometimes functioned within narrative iconographies that were directly connected to contemporary or older theatre practice, something for instance attested by the so-called Menander Mosaics discovered in Pompeii and by the much later examples from Antioch and Mytilene.[1069] Webster noticed, however, that many other theatre

[1064] Kropp 2013, 363.
[1065] Kopsacheili 2013, 24, 26-27.
[1066] Kropp 2013, 363.
[1067] Westgate 2007, 320.
[1068] Kopsacheili 2012, 232-233.
[1069] See Nervegna 2013, 264-267 (appendix 2) for a catalogue of mosaics and paintings depicting comedies by Menander. The mosaic depictions are very rare for the Hellenistic period and until the 1st c. CE derive solely from Pompeian contexts. In the *tablinum* floor mosaic of the House of the Tragic Poet (1st c. CE) in Pompeii, a choreographer (*choragos*) and actors are depicted 'backstage', preparing for a theatrical performance, most likely a satyr play. Several masks are shown lying around and one actor wears what appears to be a silenos mask. See Pernice 1938, 98, 171; Herrmann and Bruckmann 1988, 22-23; Bieber 1961, 20. Two other famous Pompeian depictions of masks being worn derive from the 'Villa of Cicero' and are both signed with *ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡΙΔΗΣ ΣΑΜΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕ* ('Dioskourides of Samos created [this]'). These are both dated to the late 2nd-early 1st c. BCE. Dioskourides may be the mosaicist who made these mosaics but it might also be the artist who produced older Hellenistic paintings that served as their inspiration or model. The first mosaic depicts four street musicians three of which are wearing theatrical masks (Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. no. 9985). The second mosaic shows a group of three seated women, who all wear theatrical masks (Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. no. 9987). On the basis of later mosaic parallels and evidence from later Roman comedies, the scene with the women is interpreted as a depiction from a largely lost comedy written by Menander, called *Synaristosai* (*Συναριστῶσαι, Women at lunch* or *The women who lunch together*). The *emblema* with the musicians is thought to depict a scene from the

depictions containing masks could not be considered direct reflections of contemporary theatre practice but instead had developed as a visual category in and of itself: '*From the second century B.C. and still more obviously in the Roman period artists can in some cases be shown to be following an artistic tradition which derives from earlier theatre practice and may therefore be out of touch with the contemporary theatre*'.[1070] As already mentioned above, the depiction of actual eyes in a mosaic depiction should further make us wonder whether we are really dealing with a truthful representation of an actual theatre mask or, rather, with a particular mosaic iconography that had become somewhat detached from theatre and theatre practice. This detached nature between theatre depictions and actual contemporary theatre practice is furthermore particularly attested for depictions of satyrs and papposilenoi: '*Satyrs, even in stage costume and sometimes even when masked, may do things which have no connection to satyr play*'.[1071] Especially when placed in a non-narrative, isolated setting, without any allusions to theatrical practice (as in Samosata), we should probably be careful in ascribing a simple theatrical representation to these depictions and allow also for other capacities. This is all the more important because we lack any contextual evidence for theatre practice in Commagene.[1072]

Again, we might say that this type of reasoning reduces the mosaic merely to the concept it is presumed to represent, without critically assessing whether the connection between the object and the concept is valid in the first place. As such, the object becomes secondary to its representation; stating that a mask depiction connotes theatre (practice) degrades the status of the mosaic depiction in itself.

Cultic reductionism: Dionysos cult

A last type of reductionism is the notion that the mask mosaic represents the dynasty's affiliation with the Dionysiac cult. This interpretation is for instance expressed by Maria Kopsacheili, who states: '*The iconography of the mosaic in room VI is associated with cult, since the satyr or a comic mask relates to Dionysos and theatre.'*[1073] She connects the mask mosaic to a limestone architrave

play *Theophoroumene* (*Θεοφορουμένη, The girl possessed by a deity*). See Bieber and Rodenwaldt 1911, 1-22.

[1070] Webster 1969, 5. Note that, for Webster, all these non-representative mask depictions mainly formed a hurdle to his actual research goal; understanding ancient theatre practice.

[1071] Webster 1962, 7.

[1072] In fact, no theatres were found in entire Hellenistic-period Syria, something that might well be a reflection of our limited state of knowledge concerning the archaeology of urban contexts there, but see Millar 1987, 117-118: '*Poseidonius' remarks on the luxury of life in Syria imply that gymnasia were common. None of these cities, however, has revealed any trace of a theatre that can be firmly dated to this period. It is surely, I think, a revealing fact that there is no certain archaeological evidence for a theatre of the Hellenistic period anywhere in the Syrian region. Given the relative indestructability of theatres built against hillsides, as Hellenistic theatres normally were (e.g. those of Priene or Delos), this is one case where negative evidence may be suggestive*'.

[1073] Kopsacheili 2012, 232-233. An example of other scholarly work that invariably connects masks to Dionysos, is Herdejürgen 1996, 22-23. The potential connection between masks, theatre and Dionysos is

block with grape and vine decoration found in the lower city of Samosata, which she stages as *'evidence for the cult of the god'*[1074] and implicitly seems to link to a small Dionsyiac temple. In a similar vein, Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbets asserts that '*Dionysos est le dieu du théâtre, et l'iconographie qui lui est attaché sert souvent à évoquer le dieu'*.[1075] The commissioner of the mosaics '*affirme ainsi son appartenance à un meme culture, dans laquelle Dionysos joue un rôle préponderant.*'[1076]

Such direct links between mosaic motifs and room use is however highly problematic; we simply cannot base the existence of a religious cult on the presence of one mosaic motif. Ruth Westgate has shown extensively how, for the many 2nd c. BCE mosaics on Delos, '[t]*here is certainly not enough evidence to identify the function of a room from the subject matter of its decoration alone'.*[1077] This furthermore applies specifically for motifs usually associated with Dionysos, which cannot be connected to cultic function and not even be necessarily confined to convivial (banqueting) practices.[1078]

This discussion of the historiography of the mask mosaic shows how the mask mosaic has been structurally reduced to singular, abstract and static notions. The reductions to 'greekness', theatre and the Dionysiac cult have diverted attention away from the mask mosaic as a contextual visual motif that had more-than-representational capacities. The underlying assumption to all these interpretations is that a mask depiction will merely mean and do *the same* in any given time or place. Also, such reductions merely serve to shed light on the supposed intentions and motivations of its commissioners, the Commagenean kings.

Following the theoretical framework of this dissertation (chapter 3), it is however crucial to shift the focus from an anthropocentric, hylomorphic analysis that 'reasons *back*' from a mosaic to its

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well-established in a number of contexts, especially of course in classical Athens. In general, see Bieber 1961; Schlesier 2011; and Pajares et al. 2013. Note however that in the next paragraph, I will argue that by the 2nd c. BCE, the connection between mask depictions and Dionysos was not self-evident anymore. See also Bahmer 2016.

[1074] Kopsacheili 2012. 232-233. Full quote: '*Evidence for the cult of the* god *comes also from the decoration of an architrave and frieze block of a small building found in the lower city in Samosata. The fragment is contemporary to Antiochos's I reign and decorated with grapes and vine, namely attributes of Dionysos*.'

[1075] Guimier-Sorbets 2012b, 445.

[1076] *Ibidem*. Note that Kropp 2013, 314 suggests that *'selected guests (…) could enjoy their banquets in great halls, decorated appropriately with imagery from the realm of Dionysos (amphoras, dolphins)'.*

[1077] Westgate 2007, 321.

[1078] *Idem*, 319-321: '*Many decorative motifs have a Dionysiac flavour, and these too are often seen as indicating a dining or reception function. However, a comprehensive survey shows that we cannot assume a simple relationship between the function of a room and the subjects represented in its decoration. (…) No clear associations can be observed between motifs and particular types of room, partly because the number of motifs with an identifiable theme is so small (…) although some decoration can be linked to activities that may have taken place in the room, some clearly cannot, and most has no obvious significance beyond a general desire to create a pleasant ambience or reflect well on the owner. The tendency to mix motifs in the same room defies attempts to identify coherent thematic programs: dolphins, for instance, are juxtaposed with the drinking satyr on the mosaic at Salemi, with victory motifs on Delos, and with gods and comic masks on Delos.*'

preceding human intentions towards an analysis that 'reasons *forward*' from the mosaic to its capacities, its potential meanings and impact - Ingold's morphogenic model. Only through this shift from human causes to relational capacities we can analyse the mask mosaic as a proper historical agent. Such an approach is at the centre of sections 8.2 and 8.3 of this chapter, in which I will analyse the impact of the glocal genealogy of isolated, non-narrative mosaic mask depictions.

8.2 The glocal genealogy of the mask mosaic

This section provides the glocal genealogy of isolated, non-narrative mask mosaics, in order to shed a different light on the relational capacities of the mask mosaic in Samosata. I will focus on isolated masks that are placed in central mosaic panels (*emblemata*), an object type that appears from the 2nd c. BCE onwards across the Mediterranean. The glocal genealogy is analysed in terms of the transformation and widening of the capacities of mask mosaics through time and, moreover, help to determine the relative adherence or innovation of the Samosata mask in relation to the universalizing object type. Isolated mask mosaics that are placed in central panels or *emblemata* start appearing in the first half of the 2nd c. BCE. The glocal genealogy of such isolated mosaics contains examples from Pergamon, Kos, Ampurias, Centocelle and Rome. This section will analyse this glocal genealogy by tracing the development of the type through its particularization and universalization, creating local deviations, altogether forming a wider context for the mask mosaic of Samosata.

Pergamon, palace V

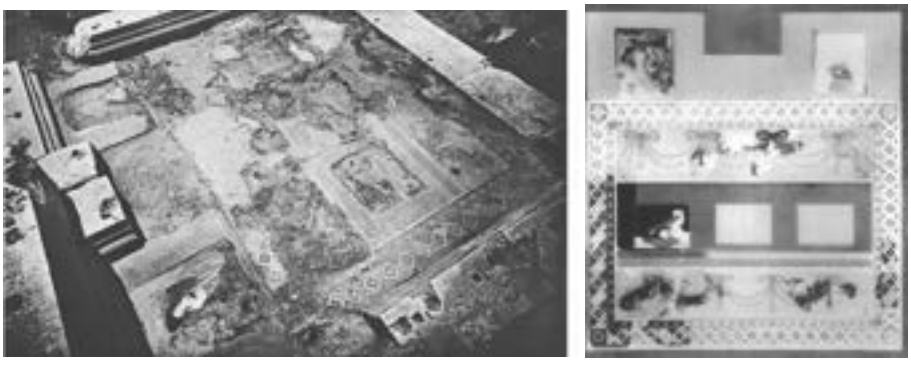

Fig 8.5. Excavation photo and reconstruction of room H ("altar-room") in palace V on the citadel of Pergamon. Source: Salzmann 1995, 108, figs. 18.1 and 19.1.

One of the earliest examples of isolated mask in an *emblema* stem from the so-called altar room (or room *H*; 10,89 sq. m.) in palace V on the citadel of Pergamon (fig. 8.5).[1079] Here, two larger than life-size mask mosaics were located in two rectangular *pinakes* (each ca. 68,0 x 58,0 cm.) against the far eastern wall of the room. Like palace V itself, these are generally dated to the reign of Eumenes II (197-159 BCE).[1080] The mosaics, executed in *opus vermiculatum*, figure in *emblemata* that are located left and right of a statue base (or altar) in the room, oriented towards the east, facing the entrance on the other side of the room in the west.[1081] The left mask mosaic showed a tragic mask, while the right one was not preserved well enough to be described but is generally expected to have contained a comic mask.[1082] The left mask is a white, female tragic mask with wide-opened eyes and mouth. The mask is shown in three-quarters against a dark background, and looks away from the viewer towards the other mask, but specifically towards the statue base in the centre. The mask panels are part of a non-concentric scheme, which consist of two garlands with ribbons, flowers, ivy leaves, corymbs, foliage fruits and birds placed on both sides of three *emblemata*. Of these, only the left (most northern) *emblema* was preserved, depicting a green parrot in profile, turned towards the right, and placed against a dark background.[1083] The wall of the room consisted of a socle of white marble (c. 23,0 cm high), above which orthostats of white-veined blue-grey marble (c. 45.5 cm high) were located, with white marble slabs on top (c. 23,0 cm. high). The room was accessible and even visible directly from the central court of the palace, only separated by a metal fence spanning the entire western side of the room.[1084]

In scholarship, the room is generally connected to Dionysos and even described as a 'Dionysiac cult room'; it has been suggested that the possible lost statue pertaining to the central statue base

[1079] Kawerau and Wiegand 1930, 30-39; Salzmann 1995, 108, figs. 18.1, 19.1, 20.1; Hoepfner 1996, 1-43; Radt 1999, 69, fig. 18. Debate exists about the character and function of palace V in relation to palace IV. Hoepfner argued for a distinction between a residential (palace IV) and an official-administrative (palace V) function, a model derived from the House of Dionysos at Pella. The distinction is problematic however – these are clearly separate buildings - and it seems more likely that both palaces satisfied a mixture of both needs. Nonetheless, it is clear that the high amount of large rooms makes palace V more suitable for semi-public banquets and receptions than palace IV. Also, the more central location of palace V in comparison with palace IV – it probably opened up towards an open space created by the *propylon* of the acropolis to the south and the Athena sanctuary to the west – makes it a more likely candidate for more official, public uses that needed visibility. Pfrommer 2004, 165 suggested that 'palaces IV and V' were not at all palaces, but rather lavish residences.

[1080] Kawerau and Wiegand 1930, 30-39.

[1081] The base was originally interpreted as an altar by the excavators – hence the name of the room – but it is now generally understood as a statue base, of which the statue has not been preserved, cf. Radt 1999, 69. The base, composed of two slabs, measured c. 1,00 x 0,60 m.

[1082] Both mosaics are unfortunately destroyed. The assumption that the right mosaic contained a comic mask is not self-evident, as the tragic-comic mask duo only became a popular motif in the Roman period. The Capitoline Mask, discussed below, however provides an early 2nd c. BCE parallel of this tragic-comic juxtaposition.

[1083] Executed in *opus vermiculatum* with stone and glass tesserae in green, blue and yellow, cf. Salzmann 1995, 109

[1084] Indicated by the threshold and cuttings in the floor, cf. Kawerau and Wiegand 1930, 31, fig. 39.

would have represented Dionysos.[1085] In the mosaic itself, the presence of ivy leaves and corymbs in the garlands as well as the depiction of the parrot and the theatre masks are considered allusions to Dionysos.[1086] Dionysos functioned as one of the patron deities of the Attalids, something attested since the 3rd c. BCE.[1087] *Dionysos Kathegemon* ("The Leader") played an integral role in the ruler cult of the Attalids of Pergamon, but clearly also was popular by non-royal strata of society.[1088] A large sanctuary for Dionysos was located on the edge of the steep western slope of the Acropolis, in close connection to the theatre, and large festivals were organized in celebration of the god.[1089] The Attalids presented *Dionysos Kathegemon* as the progenitor of the dynasty, but did not lay any stress on an actual genealogy like Antiochos I of Commagene did.[1090] The priestly office was generally obtained by royal relatives and the maintenance of the ruler cult happened through the Dionysiac artist guild.[1091]

As we have already seen in section 8.1, Andreas Kropp suggested that the Samosata mask directly capitalized on the Attalid use of mask mosaics as signs of their 'Greek credentials'.[1092] The Attalid

[1085] Kutbay 1990, 1; Kopsacheili 2012, 168: '*Judging from the iconography of the mosaics, especially the garlands and the masks, worship in this room relates to Dionysos*'.

[1086] For the parrot, see Horn 1972, 38f. Kutbay 1990, 5 n.5 suggests: '*The parrot may allude to the Oriental triumph of Dionysos'.* Note also the presence of the foundation of a large rectangular structure (6,70 x 2,60 m.) close to the 'altar room', in the western part of the central court of the palace. This might have been a socle for a large statue group, to which a statue of a female dancer or Dionysiac maenad might be connected (see Kutbay 1998, 15; Ohlemutz 1968, 94-96; Hardiman 2017, 277-278, the latter suggests the statue belonged to the statue base in the 'altar room'). The female statue (height: 1.10 m) was found in room K of the palace, which contained the famous Hephaistion mosaic that was located next to the 'altar room' H. The woman holds her chiton with her left hand and turns her head towards the right, while bringing her right hand to the front. The backside is '*only quickly finished*', suggesting that it was produced to be seen from a frontal view, cf. Winter 1908, 65.

[1087] As described by Hansen 1971, 432-433, 452, 462-463; Müller 1989, 539-553; and Chaniotis 2003, 433. After Attalos I, the grand-nephew of Philetairos (founder of the Attalid dynasty), had defeated the Gauls, he was declared a son of Dionysos by Delphi. See Evans 2012, 19-23. An inscription on a statue base from Pergamon dated to ca. 250-220 BCE, connects Attalos I and Dionysos, cf. Müller 1989, 539-553.

[1088] Pillin 1903, 18-23; Ohlemutz 1940, 90-122; Scheer 1993, 131-133; Agelidis 2011, 182.

[1089] Maischberger 2011, 242-247. The origins of the cult cannot be dated with certainty. The Hellenistic phase of the temple seems connected to Eumenes II, but underneath the structure some older traces have been discovered as well. Most of the current remains of the temple are from a temple constructed under the reigns of Caracalla or Hadrian.

[1090] Agelidis 2011, 182.

[1091] Schwarzer 2011, 115: '*Anders verhält es sich mit der Schauspieltruppe des pergamenischen Hoftheaters, die ohne Zweifel zum teischen Technitenverband gehörte und al deren Sitz wir den Nischenbau höchstwahrscheinlich identifizieren können. Der dort gepflegte Kult für Dionysos Kathegemon ging sicher mit einem Kult für die Attaliden einher (…)'.* See also Schwarzer 2008. This also serves to demonstrate the strong connection between Dionysos and theatre, closely following the Athenian model. The theatre of Pergamon was located on the western side of the acropolis and looking towards the west. It was constructed in the late 3rd c. BCE and enlarged during the reign of Eumenes II, during the same period as the construction of palace V, cf. Romano 1982, 586-589. The Attalid attempts to legitimate their power by connecting themselves to the Greek cities and the Macedonian palaces would have made the construction of a theatre indispensable and it is reasonable to suggest that it was used to perform Attic tragedies, comedies and satyr plays. Note that no evidence for mask depictions is known from either the sanctuary for Dionysos or the theatre.

[1092] Kropp 2013, 109: '*The comical theatre mask depicted in the floor mosaic has a tragic correspondent in the Attalid royal palace ('Raumgruppe V') of Pergamon, built by a dynasty keen to stress its Greek credentials, and reinforces this impression.'*

masks and the Samosata mask are however too different for this interpretation to be convincing. The Pergamene masks were placed in rectangular panels in a juxtaposing composition of a four-partite scheme, a very different setting than the isolated mask depiction in Samosata, which was placed in a central roundel surrounded by a concentric decorative scheme. The Pergamene depiction of a larger than life-size tragic mask in three-quarter perspective furthermore differs too much from the frontally depicted smaller than life-size satyr mask in Samosata for the latter to be considered a direct reference to the former. The Pergamene masks do however, in a more general sense, attest of the object types' fittingness to a royal, palatial context, and shows how, by the mid-2nd c. BCE mosaic mask depictions had acquired the capacity to participate in royal visual programs. To some extent, therefore, we can argue that this capacity was activated and further developed in the palace of Samosata, albeit without implying any direct, explicit connections between Attalid Pergamon and 1st c. BCE Commagene.

Kos

Fig. 8.6. The Kos Mask. Mosaic emblema *containing a mask depiction from Kos. Source: Welch 1998, fig. 171.*

Another 2nd c. BCE mask mosaic in an *emblema* comes from Kos, and is nowadays in the archaeological Castello Museum of Rhodes (fig. 8.6).[1093] Its re-use in a later Roman domestic context makes it difficult to say much about its presumed earlier Hellenistic setting.[1094] The small

[1093] Konstantinopoulos 1986, 147-149. pl. XXVII, who dated it to the Mid-Hellenistic period on stylistic grounds. Guimier-Sorbets and V. Giannouli 1988, 559; Guimier-Sorbets 1994, 23-37 and 1998, 287–288 who dated it to the 2nd c. BCE based on stylistic grounds and the presence of lead strips. See also Welch 1998, 40-41, 233-234, cat. 37, fig. 171.

[1094] The *emblema* was lifted from its Hellenistic context and re-used in a Roman domestic context, where it was placed in the middle of a square white field framed by a floral border. See Konstantinopoulos 1986, 149.

square *emblema* (60,0 x 60,0 cm.) is framed with a plain light green band and an egg-and-dart border in perspective with geometric decoration on the four corners. The *emblema* itself is executed in exceptionally fine *opus vermiculatum* and depicts a mask against a dark grey background. The mask is shown in three-quarters, with the face pointed towards the right, not looking directly towards the viewer. The mask has a wide opened mouth, half opened, 'drunk' eyes and generally stubby facial features, with curved eyebrows and a short grey beard. The figure wears an ivy wreath that contains fruits (perhaps grapes) and a ribbon. The reddish-brown tones of the skin colour contain a wide spectrum, which indicates in detail the shadowy and more highlighted areas of the face, creating a sense of perspective. Konstantinopoulos first interpreted the mask as a depiction of Silenos, but later changed this to an unspecified theatrical mask.[1095] Webster also interprets it as a mask, specifically the 'fat-faced slave' type.[1096] Guimier-Sorbets and Barbet describe it as a Silenos mask.[1097] Welch is tempted to follow this interpretation but concludes that, if a satyr like Silenos was intended, its pointed ears would certainly have been shown by the mosaicist.[1098]

It seems most likely, therefore, that the depiction from Kos is best described as 'a satyr-like comic slave mask', which constituted a conflation of a comic mask with a satyr mask, creating a new type of mask depiction that was confined to mosaic depictions. As such, the global genealogy of isolated mask mosaics indicates a watering down of the direct relation between theatrical practice and this distinct mosaic iconographic tradition; mask mosaics could exist autonomously from their 'real' theatrical counterparts and move beyond their presupposed representational function. This insight, in effect, deconstructs the representational reduction of mask depictions to theatre (practice) discussed in paragraph 8.1.2.2

The Kos mask has several similarities with the Samosata mask: both are executed in *opus vermiculatum* and placed against a dark grey background; both contain an old, grey-bearded comic mask with satyr-like features wearing an ivy wreath; both have stubby facial features and a spectrum of red-brown tones to indicate the skin. Differences are also plenty however: the mask from Kos is placed in a square instead of a round *emblema*, which has a light illusionistic egg-and-dart frame instead of a highly stylized Ionian kymation. The Kos mask is executed in much finer *opus vermiculatum* than the Samosata mask and the mask itself is depicted in three-quarters

[1095] Konstantinopoulos 1986, 147-149.
[1096] Cf. Webster et al. 1995, 3DM4.
[1097] Barbet and Guimier-Sorbets 1994, 26, n.25; Welch 1998, 233.
[1098] Welch 1998, 233-234: '*the beautiful full wreath of ivy and the exceptional quality of the panel invite us to believe that this is a depiction of the leader of Dionysos' thiasos, instead of a fat slave. The existing iconography, however, does not support the Silenos image, who is traditionally shown with a long beard and the trademark of his satyr nature, the pointed ears. In the* emblema *from Rhodes the beard is short and stylized and the right ear appears to be normal. In fact, the tip of the ear is covered by a loose strand of hair, a mistake that an experienced mosaicist would not have made, if his intention was to depict a satyr.*'

instead of the frontal depiction in Samosata. Importantly, the Kos mask relies heavily on the generic features of a comic slave mask, with its short grey beard instead of the 'greasy' long beard witnessed in the Samosata mask. The widening capacity of conflating a comic mask with satyr-like features witnessed in the Kos mosaic seems to have been activated also in the Samosata mask, effectively watering down the direct (representational) relation of the mask depiction with theatre (practice).

Ampurias

Fig. 8.7. The Ampurias Mask. Square mosaic emblema *with mask depiction from Ampurias (Spain). Source: Almagro 1951, 231, fig. 67.*

A good indication that the Kos mask mosaic type had become universalized is provided by a mask mosaic from Ampurias, dating to the middle of the 1st c. BCE (fig. 8.7).[1099] It was found in room (*cubiculum*) 12 of 'atrium house' *casa 1* or *casa Villaneuva* ('second phase'), located in the northern zone of the Roman city of *Emporion* (modern Ampurias). The mosaic was placed in the centre of a white mosaic floor and was framed by a black border. Like the Kos mosaic, the mask is smaller than life-size (32,0 x 32,0 cm.), and has similarly half opened eyes, a stubby nose, a short

[1099] Almagro 1951, 231, fig. 67; Aquilué et al. 1999, 87; Balil 1961, 47-50, fig 2; Santos 1991, 27, fig. 9. Webster MNC, v. 2, 4XM 1a-b; Vicente and Duran 2010, 39-42. Now located in the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya. The dating is based on stylistic grounds by Meyboom 2007, 98, who proposes comparanda from the *Casa del Fauno* in Pompeii. It is more or less corroborated by stratigraphic material from a layer right underneath the building's foundations as well as material from a cistern in the house. *Contra* Balil 1961, 41-52, who placed the mosaics of the building at the late Augustean/early Iulio-Claudian period and Santos 1991, 27 who proposes the second half 1st c. BCE.

grey beard and heavily curved eyebrows. Contrary to the Kos mask, the Ampurias mask is directed towards the left instead of the right and more (though not entirely) frontally depicted, looking more directly at the viewer. Furthermore, the background is white instead of dark grey and the lower third of the image depicts a grey pedestal on which the mask is placed. The wreath only contains sparse vegetal elements and seems to consist more of ribbons than the Kos mask.

Two other, clearly related, figural mosaics, possibly pertaining to *casa 1* as well but not found *in situ*, depict a partridge stealing a collar from a *pyxis* and a still life. According to the excavators, these pertain to the same workshop as the mask mosaic.[1100] The contemporary walls of the house were decorated in the 2nd Pompeiian style. Notably, there is no evidence for other decorative elements that are typically seen as theatrical or Dionysiac allusions. During what the excavators call the 'second phase' of the house, somewhere in the mid-1st c. BCE, the house undergoes a gradual change in architectural character, which the excavators describe as a 'hellenization process': a large peristyle is added to the south of the structure, as well as banqueting and other 'representative' rooms.[1101] Describing this change in the 'objectscape' of Ampurias as a 'hellenization process' however has little explanatory value and is a good example of the acculturative approach to 'Hellenism in the East' elaborately discussed in chapter 2. Rather, what seems to happen in mid-1st c. BCE Ampurias is a shift to a repertoire of objects with a glocal genealogy that has a wider geographical reach. The incorporation of the isolated, non-narrative mask mosaic tells us something about the widespread availability of this object type by this time, throughout the Mediterranean. Its particularization in a context where an overall stringent ideological message seems to lack, suggests that, by this time, the object type had acquired a certain malleability, developing as an object type that was suitable to particularize in luxurious settings that were not connected to Dionysos or theatre practice. This phase in the glocal genealogy of the mask mosaic is of importance to its particularization in Samosata, as it seems likely that, instead of evoking the Pergamene masks (Kropp's argument), the object capacities that were activated in Samosata were likely rather those acquired in the later and more similar particularizations of mask mosaics such as that of Ampurias.

[1100] The partridge mosaic was well preserved but the still life was only very sparsely preserved, cf. Vicente and Duran 2010, 39-42.

[1101] Vicente and Duran 2010, 42: *'A lo largo del siglo I a.C. y durante el siglo I d.C., casas como la nº1 o Villanueva, y la casa nº 2B, tuvieron un proceso de helenización, siguiendo una evolución arquitectónica similar a las casas de las ciudades del Vesubio. Las dos casas experimentarán un importante crecimiento, apropiándose de parte del terreno perteneciente a las parcelas vecinas. La primera ampliación consistirá en la construcción de grandes peristilos y nuevas estancias correspondientes a este nuevo espacio. Tanto la casa nº 1 como la nº 2B gozarán de estancias aptas para ofrecer grandes banquetes entre sus iguales y diversas salas de representación.'*

Rome: The Capitoline mask, the Villa Giulia Mask and the Centocelle Mask

a.  b.  c. 

Fig. 8.8a-c. a: The Capitoline mask (Source: Bieber 1961, fig. 329)*, b: the Villa Giulia Mask and; c: the Centocelle Mask (sources: Wikimedia Commons).*

The many similarities between the Ampurias mask and the Kos Mask suggest that indeed this object type had become glocal; its particularizations were simultaneously universalizing. This is further attested in three other examples from Rome and surroundings. A mosaic fragment from Rome, now in the Capitoline museums, depicts a satyr-like slave mask together with a female tragic mask, both placed upright against a pilaster (fig. 8.8a).[1102] It was reused in the baths of Decius on the Aventine hill, but its original context is unknown; it is dated to the 2nd c. BCE on stylistic grounds. In terms of execution, the satyr-like slave mask bears many similarities with the Kos and Ampurias mask, especially with its short rounded beard and the ivy wreath. Like the Ampurias mask, the Capitoline mask looks away from the viewer. An important difference however is that the Capitoline Mask is not placed isolated in an *emblema*, but probably only adorned the margins of a more central depiction that is now lost. The juxtaposition of the comic 'slave mask' with the tragic female mask is reminiscent of the possible juxtaposition in Pergamon.

The two other comparanda are probably from a later date: a mask mosaic from Rome without context that is now in the Villa Giulia (fig. 8.8b), and dated to the 1st half of the 1st c. CE and a mask mosaic found in a 2nd c. CE villa in Centocelle (Rome, now in de *Altes Museum* in Berlin, see fig. 8.8c).[1103] Both again show a satyr-like slave mask type with short grey hair, a short grey beard, curved eyebrows, and an opened mouth, placed in a square *emblema*. Compared to the examples from Kos and Ampurias, the eyes are more opened. The wreaths from the Villa Giulia mosaic are more like those from Kos and the Capitoline Mosaic, with more continuous ivy or vine leaves with grapes or berries instead of the haphazard tufts of vegetation tucked into the ribbon like in the Ampurias and Centocelle masks. Like the Kos mosaic, the background in the Villa Giulia mask is dark, while the Centocelle Mask has a white background like the Ampurias mask. While the

[1102] Webster et al. 1995, 3DM4a; Bieber 1961, fig. 329. The fragment was most probably part of a larger figurative scene.
[1103] *Villa Giulia*: Webster et al. 1995, 4XM1a; *Centocelle*: Webster et al. 1995, 4XM1b.

Capitoline and Centocelle masks are again depicted in three-quarter and looking away from the viewer, the Villa Giulia mask is the only example with a full frontal depiction, looking straight at the viewer.

These considerations point to a high degree of standardization of the satyr-like slave comic mask from the 2nd c. BCE onwards. Although clearly the motif was popular in and around Rome, the examples from Kos and Ampurias exemplify that the motif was much more widespread throughout the Mediterranean already in the 2nd c. BCE. Welch remarks: '*Naturally, the similarity of these panels raises again the question of a common original and again reinforces our belief in the existence of copy books*'.[1104] The existence of such copy books indeed might explain the strong similarities between mask mosaics over large distances. Variations were allowed within this standardized iconography, especially with regards to the orientation of the mask (three quarters or frontal), the background (dark or light), and the degree of elaboration of the ivy (or generic vegetal) wreath. The universalization of mask iconography (that seems to have had no direct representational relation to 'real' theatrical masks, combining traits from a comic slave mask with a satyr mask) further implies that the glocal mask mosaic lost its self-evident connection to theatre, and rather had developed a relation to its glocal genealogy. It is noteworthy also that for none of these universalizing satyr-like slave mask mosaics any type of 'Dionysiac' context can be assigned, suggesting that for this type of mask mosaic a watering down of the Dionysiac capacity had occurred. The large differences between Pergamon and these later mask mosaics - in terms of the type of masks, the style and their visual integration - underline that the Pergamene masks cannot be considered a blueprint for these later masks (as proposed by Kropp for the Samosata mask, see paragraph 8.1.2).

The mask of Samosata can be regarded as a related but deviating particularization of the universalizing satyr-like slave mask type. The similarities are specifically witnessed in the fact that also in Samosata, we see a conflation between a comic mask and a satyr-like figure wearing a wreath, creating a novel iconographic motif that cannot be directly connected to 'real' theatrical masks. Importantly also, the discussed masks offer the only evidence for isolated masks in central *emblemata* in the Hellenistic period, a category to which the Samosata mask also belongs. The use of a black background, a frontal depiction and wide opened eyes in the Samosata mask fits within the set of variations that the standardized motif allowed for (as I concluded above). The Villa Giulia Mask is clearly the closest parallel to the Samosata mask, as this is the only example in which the mask is depicted frontally like in Samosata. This relative adherence of the Samosata mask to the universalizing mask mosaic type provided the Samosata mask with its particualrized capacity; it could be understood as something distinctly non-local, not connected to any specific place, culture

[1104] Welch 1998, 234.

or region (such as 'greekness'). With the global genealogy in mind, we can conclude that the Samosata mask was *globally available and standardized* but *regionally rare*; in fact, no masks in *emblemata* were found in the entire Near East, something which it has in common with the crenellation motif (see chapter 9).

Despite the obvious adherence of the Samosata mask to the standardized motif, it also strongly deviated from it. This is observable first of all in its combination of satyr-mask characteristics with traits of the comic mask of an older long-bearded man, instead of the comic slave mask. Second, the Samosata mask is the only isolated mask mosaic that is depicted in a circular (roundel) frame instead of a square *emblema*. There is, furthermore, no evidence for the integration of mask *emblemata* in elaborate concentric designs with geometric bands such as in Samosata. These deviations can be seen as actively contributing to the glocal genealogy, adding new relational capacities to the object type which was 'in a state of becoming'. The contextual implications of these new combinations – especially the combination of a satyr-like mask with a frontal depiction placed in a roundel and surrounded with elaborate concentric decoration - is further analysed in the following section.

8.3 Exploring a more-than-representational capacity of the mask mosaic: the 'satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage'

In this section, I will explore a capacity of the mask mosaic that is more-than-representational, focusing on what it *did* instead of what it *meant*. As explained in chapter 3 and section 7.6, this analysis is meant as a move from interpretation to analytical exploration, an attempt to read the object 'forward' and ask what might have been the implication of the genealogical relations in its Commagenean context. At the end of the glocal genealogy of section 8.2, I concluded that the specific deviations of the Samosata mask from the object type caused it to assemble novel combination of elements that together afforded the object with new capacities. The combination of a satyr-like mask, depicted frontally, placed in a roundel, and surrounded by elaborate concentric border decoration created something distinctly novel that allowed it to act as something that I will coin the 'satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage'.[1105] Applying the notion of vibrant and heterogeneous assemblages presented in chapter 3, I will here explore how the glocal genealogy of satyr-like masks was particularized in a very specific type of assemblage in Samosata.

Throughout western Eurasia, we can observe a type of satyr iconography in which masking, mirroring and transformation are central themes. Although such 'satyr/mask/mirror-

[1105] For this, I rely heavily on Rabun Taylor's inspiring monograph '*The moral mirror of Roman Art*' (Taylor 2008), specifically his chapter about the Dionysiac mirror (90-136) and its relation to masks and masking.

assemblages' never occur in a similar fashion, its visual and material mechanisms recur in a wide variety of media across the Mediterranean. In its most straightforward manifestation, the assemblage involves satyrs (or figures experiencing a transformation into satyrs) that see their own transformed reflection in a mirror or a wine-filled cup, with masks thematised as the pivotal device for this transformation. In this section, I will first elaborate on the mechanisms of the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage, discussing some examples of the assemblage from a range of media. Afterwards, I will argue that the Samosata mask could potentially be experienced as such a 'satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage' because it assembles the following elements: *a satyr(-like) mask*, *frontality*, a *circular frame (roundel)*, the importance of *mirroring* as a visual device, and a viewer. In the second part of this section, I will discuss how the conceptual capacities attached to this satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage fit in the context of Commagenean modes of visuality of the 1st c. BCE and how its potential played out there. We will see that, if we take this particular capacity seriously, the Samosata mask was a more-than-representational object in Commagene in the 1st c. BCE.

8.3.1 The 'satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage'

In his discussion on the use of mirrors in the Dionysiac cult, Rabun Taylor discusses a specific iconography in which satyrs see their own reflection in a wine-filled cup.[1106] Taylor uses these example to argue for the importance of '*reflectivity'* in the cult of Dionysos*,* which *'served as both a tool and a symbol of personal transformation for members of the cult'*.[1107] Taylor connects such iconography to the Orphic tradition of the mythical child Zagreus, who was murdered through his obsession with a mirror but became reborn as Dionysos. In his analysis, Taylor suggests that the mirror was used in Dionysiac rituals as a 'ritual hallucinogen', to which also wine, song, dance, miracles and, naturally, masks belonged.[1108] These hallucinogens were essentially used as tools to achieve ecstasy or divine epiphany and allowed the users to 'become' satyrs, Zagreus, or even Dionysos himself.[1109] As such, the mirror functioned as a transformational device that allowed for personal metamorphosis and closer vicinity to the god. Taylor provides convincing evidence that masks played an important role in this transformation as well, providing an additional transformational device or hallucinogen that was worn during the Dionysiac rituals. Watching oneself in the mirror while wearing a satyr mask made the self-delusionary experience complete.

[1106] Taylor 2008, 90-136.
[1107] *Idem*, 128.
[1108] *Idem*, 90.
[1109] *Idem*, 91.

Fig. 8.9. Attic red-figured pelike *by the Louvre painter. Source: Louvre G238.*

Depictions of this principle occur in a variety of media and never in a standardized form. Taylor mentions an Attic red-figured *pelike* dating to the early 5th century BCE on which a satyr looks into a krater with great surprise, while a Dionysos mask is watching over him on the side (fig. 8.9).[1110] Taylor suggests that the surprised satyr is in fact a masked Dionysiac initiand that is caught at the moment of his transformation and his realization thereof. The manner of depiction, importantly, does however not bother to depict a mask; the viewer is not allowed to take an objective, amused perspective on the self-delusion of the figure. Instead, the transformation is depicted as real; the viewer is drawn into the personal transformation of the initiand that is now a satyr. Especially the frontal depiction of the satyr, looking at the wine but also at the viewer, makes the viewer complicit in the metamorphosis.

[1110] Salzman 1982, no. 87; Taylor 2008, 129 fig. 69. Now in the Louvre (G238).

Fig. 8.10. Pebble mosaic depicting two satyrs on either side of a krater in the Villa of Good Fortune Olynthos. Source: Robinson 1934, 509, fig. 3.

A somewhat later, 4th c. BCE example, not discussed by Taylor but nonetheless relevant, is a pebble mosaic from the entrance to what is interpreted as the *andron* in the Villa of Good Fortune in Olynthos, where we see two satyrs symmetrically placed on either side of a krater (fig. 8.10).[1111] The curious posture of both satyrs, leaning forward, can only be explained by a similar mirror function of the wine-filled amphora. In this case, there seems to be less surprise, but again the viewer is not allowed an outsider's perspective -these figures have really *become* satyrs. The threshold location of the mosaic added to a sense of personal metamorphosis, by which entering the room would imply stepping into world where wine, mirrors and masks effected *actual* transformation.

[1111] Robinson 1946, pl. II.

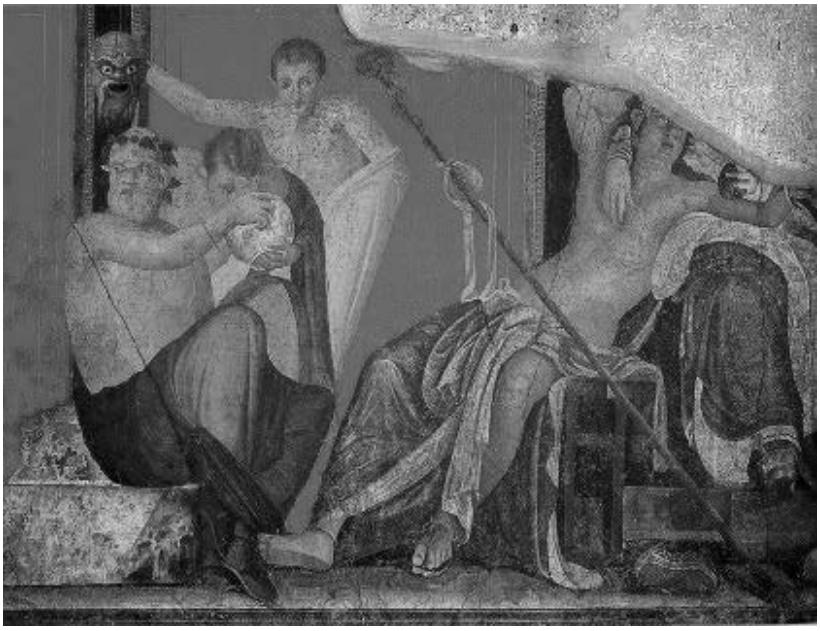

Fig. 8.11. Mask scene from the frieze of the Villa dei Misteri, left side of the focal wall. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

A last illustration of this principle is the famous and extensively discussed wall painting from the Villa dei Misteri (fig. 8.11), dated to the mid-1st c. BCE.[1112] A young satyr looks into a wine-filled jug held by a *papposilenos.* Instead of seeing his own reflection, however, the young satyr is tricked as he doesn't see his own face but a mirror-image of a mask held behind him by another young satyr. Here, the self-delusion is in fact depicted, and the hallucinatory impact of the mask (either worn or used in a game of reflection) has become a theme in itself. At the same time, however, the three protagonists of the scene are depicted as actual satyrs already, thus making the transformation much more *real* than a simple trick of (self-)delusion. The viewer is both seduced into the reality of the metamorphosis but at the same time allowed to contemplate or be amused by the trickery itself. If, like Taylor suggests, it is true that the *papposilenos* figure is depicted in the moment just after he himself looked into the wine-filled jug, the viewer is again made complicit to the metamorphosis; the old man has really turned into a *papposilenos* and his far-away stare indeed betrays his ecstatic state of mind.[1113] The last figure to be transformed by the mask is the viewer himself; the frontal depiction of the satyr masks draws the viewer into the scene and

[1112] For an extensive bibliography of the wall paintings as well as a detailed reading of its iconography, see Hearnshaw 1999, 43-50. See also Zuntz 1965; Bastet 1974, 207-240; Sauron 1998; and Cicirelli and Guidobaldi 2000. For Taylor's discussion of the frieze, see Taylor 2008, 129-133.
[1113] Taylor 2008, 132.

confronts with the mask's transformational capacity. The depiction turns the viewer into one of its protagonists. By holding the mask exactly at eye-height of the viewer in the room, we are obliged to engage with the mask as our own mirror image. This also means that the depiction breached a set of ontological separations such as those between the human subject and the painted object, between the human and the divine, and between the human and the wild animal.

Taylor discusses the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblages primarily as an iconographic phenomenon that provides information about an external notion, namely that of Dionysiac initiation rites, but I think it is useful to consider its implications for the capacity of satyr-like mask depictions in a less obviously cultic setting, such as that of Samosata, as well. This is especially the case because the impact of the imagery does not so much depend on such an external notion, but rather from the specific assemblage of visual and material elements and their combined capacity. It seems probable that, when encountered in combination with cups, mirrors and a play with visuality, depictions of satyr-like masks acquired the capacity to effectuate personal transformation with the viewer, and breach ontological divisions between object and subject, human and divine and man and animal. This in fact fits well to what we know about the evocative power of masks in anthropological research (i.e. in contexts that are not Dionysiac), where masks are attested more often as media of revelation rather than disguise and as tools for effecting transition and metamorphosis.[1114] Philippe Descola ascribes a pivotal role to masks in animist ontologies, as they are the ultimate devices to bring about metamorphosis: '*Dans la mesure où la métamorphose joue un rôle central dans l'animisme, l'on doit aussi s'attendre à ce que celle-ci reçoive une expression figurative sous la forme d'un basculement de point de vue, d'un dispositif de commutation permettant de voir un existant tantôt sous un certain angle, tantôt sous un autre. Le masque à transformation est le moyen le plus efficace et le plus spectaculaire pour réaliser cette commutation*.'[1115] I will therefore explore how the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage could have been at play in the Samosata mask, along with its capacity of personal transformation and the breaching of ontological divisions between object and subject, human and divine and man and animal. To do this, I discuss four essential elements necessary to assemble this assemblage in Samosata: *a satyr(-like) mask*, *frontality*, a *circular frame (roundel)* and the importance of *mirroring* as a visual device.

A satyr-like mask. In paragraph 8.1.1, I have argued extensively for the satyr-like characteristics of the Samosata mask, which I will not repeat here. With the examples of the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblages presented above in mind, we are urged to ask whether the Samosata mask not 'actually' depicts a human figure that *experiences* himself as a satyr through wearing a satyr-like

[1114] Napier 1986, xv-xvii; Wiles 1991, 1 13-15.
[1115] Descola 2008, 456.

mask. If we take this transformational potential of satyr masks seriously, I think we also can better appreciate the conflation of comic masks with satyr masks discussed in paragraphs 8.1.1 and 8.2.2 of this chapter. A crucial observation that points in this direction is the fact that, throughout the glocal genealogy of section 8.2, the satyr-like masks are depicted with actual eyes, suggesting that these masks were actually alive.

Frontality. With the examples of the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage in mind, the frontality of the Samosata mask becomes a crucial element of the depiction. The satyr-like mask really looks its viewer straight in the eye, and thus activates the mirroring capacity of the depiction. The glocal genealogy of section 8.2 suggests that satyr-like masks are depicted frontally or semi-frontally often; only the Pergamon Masks and the Capitoline masks do not really look the viewer in the eye, but both are deviating strongly from that object type as they are not part of an isolated and centered composition. It does not seem unlikely that these satyr-like masks had the capacity to address the viewer directly with a piercing and demanding gaze. This in itself might already indicate that such satyr-like mask depictions had the capacity to reflect. In the case of the Samosata mask, however, I would argue that there is even more reason to suggest that the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage was assembled.

A circular frame (roundel). A crucial deviation from the genealogy witnessed in the particularized mask of Samosata is its placement in a roundel. When considered in relation to the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage, I would propose that the circular shape of the frame potentially evoked the circular shape of mirrors and the inside of cups. This was definitely not always and everywhere the case with roundel mosaics: a few roundel mosaics are known for the Hellenistic period, but in many cases, these do not necessarily evoke the idea of a mirror or a cup.[1116]

[1116] Some (but probably not all) examples of roundel mosaics from the Hellenistic period include: 1) the roundel depicting the Bellerophon scene in a house of Olynthos; 2) the dog mosaic from Alexandria; 3) the Berenike mosaic from Thmuis (2nd c. BCE); 4) several roundels with stylized rosettes from Delos (e.g. House IIIN Theatre Quarter late 2nd / early 1st c. BCE); 5) the rosette from the House of Trittolemus (Pompeii, late 2nd/early 1st c. BCE) and ; 6) the geometric floral motifs from the Western Palace in Masada (1st c. BCE).

a.  b. 

Fig. 8.12. Medusa heads in a circular frame (roundel) from Alexandria (left) and Kos (right). Sources: Wikimedia Commons.

However, two other known Hellenistic-period examples of isolated heads (without a torso) placed in a mosaic roundel depict Medusa: a roundel from Alexandria and a roundel from Kos, both dated to the 2nd c. BCE (fig. 8.12a and b).[1117] In these cases, the roundel most definitely had the capacity to evoke a mirror; Medusa, after all, was defeated by Perseus, who used the polished circular shield given by Athena - Medusa's petrifying gaze was turned towards herself and killed her.[1118] By depicting Medusa frontally, gazing directly at the viewer from a circular frame, the viewer is at the same time petrified but also confronted with the question of reflection, asking whether we are perhaps Medusa herself. The visual game is about captivation, shock, self-questioning and, to some extent, also about a potential of personal metamorphosis, be it the permanent transformation from the fleeting life of the living to the eternal petrified state of the dead. The circular shape of the frame actively contributed to this mirroring potentiality of the image, as the association with the circular shield would be entangled with the concept of Medusa. Importantly, the materiality of the mosaic plays an important role here in contributing to a sense of actual petrification, making the depiction more-than-representational as it could really *become* Medusa captured in stone tesserae. This visual mechanism then also drew the viewer into the same ontological reality as Medusa; the coming together of an iconographic concept (Medusa), composition (roundel), materiality (stone mosaic floor) ánd a viewer formed one heterogeneous and vibrant assemblage in which transformation stood central.

If we accept these type of transformational capacities for these Medusa assemblages, a similar capacity for the satyr-like mask and its circular 'mirror cup' is possible. The petrifying gaze of

[1117] Guimier-Sorbets 1998; Neira 2015 for many other examples. For mosaic depictions of Medusa, see also Mckeon 1986; Panagiotopoulou 1994, 369-383.
[1118] Neira 2015, 34.

Medusa simply enacted a different type of metamorphosis compared to the satyr-like mask, but the principle of mirroring, viewer involvement and breaching of the ontological division between viewer and image functioned in a similar manner. This parallelism was enforced by the use of a roundel as a frame around the mask, a unique Commagenean addition to the glocal genealogy of mask mosaics.

Mirroring elements. The captivating effect of a delusional and somehow terrifying mirror-image was furthermore achieved in the Samosata mask because of the elaborate concentric border design around it. The complex geometric motifs repeat and mirror each other without end; black and white tesserae mirror the same motifs in combination with one another in a single border and such borders again are mirrored in opposite colouring in other borders- specifically the wave crest and the dog tooth patterns (see chapter 4 and 9). Mirroring thus is one of the central devices of the captivating effect of the concentric border.[1119]

By depicting a satyr-like mask from a frontal perspective, inside a roundel, surrounded with a complex web of mirroring geometric motifs, the Samosata mask was granted the capacity to function as a satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage, in which the viewer was obliged to be physically and mentally involved. As such, the viewer was potentially drawn into a domain where separations between subject and object, man and animal, human and divine, representation and represented, are all annulled or at least questioned. The viewer becomes an equal protagonist of the depiction; its personal metamorphosis – temporary or permanent – is always imminent. Lissarague explains that in 5th/4th c. BCE Athens, satyrs functioned as affirmative figures *ex negativo* for the Athenian symposiasts, as their orgiastic behaviour reminded the conforming Athenian citizen of what was not socially accepted or fitting.[1120] It is not unlikely that the wild, stubby and animal-like physiognomy of the satyrs allowed for the continuity of their capacity to embody alterity also beyond the specific socio-cultural context of 5th/4th c. BCE Athens.[1121] However, by framing this otherness in a frontal, mirroring context like in Samosata, its confrontational capacity became even stronger. The mirroring principle and masking concept demanded questions of identity and the Self versus the Other, and, moreover, threatened (or promised) an actual transformation of the Self into that Other.[1122] As such, the alterity of the satyr

[1119] For the captivation of geometric patterns, see Gell 1998.
[1120] Lissarague 1993, 220. For satyrs as embodiments of alterity, see also Padgett 2000, 43 and Lindblom 2011.
[1121] Kistler 2009, 193 speaks of satyrs as '*transporters of alterity'.*
[1122] Kistler 2009 comes to similar conclusions based on a distinction between preferred, oppositional and negotiated readings of orgiastic satyr iconography. He suggests that, as much as the satyrs could embody the Other as an affirmative figure *ex negativo*, at the same time they could '*animate to join the intoxicated counter-culture'*.

and the transformational capacities of mask and mirror together proved a powerful, almost alchemic combination.

8.3.2 Modes of visuality in Commagene

Here, I will contextualize the visual mechanisms and capacities of the satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage mask discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to other modes of visuality in contemporary Commagene. It will become clear that the visual mechanisms of mirroring, viewer involvement, personal transformation and breaching of ontological divisions were at play in other types of Commagenean visual culture as well, albeit in different ways. To make this point, I will particularly focus on the visual mechanisms at play in the typically Commagenean *dexiosis* stelai.

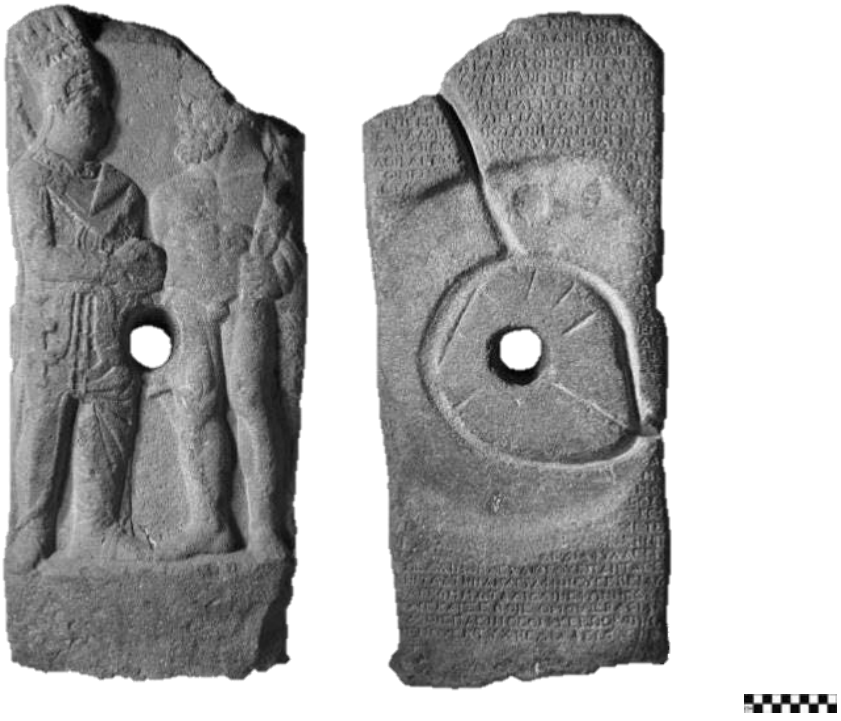

Fig. 8.13 The dexiosis stele from Selik. Source: Brijder 2014,135-136, figs. 85a-b.

A large number of *dexiosis* stelai are known from Commagene, and the following analytical exploration applies more or less to all of them. For matters of convenience, however, I will here focus on the *stele* from Selik that I described and discussed in chapter 6 (ID690), depicting Antiochos I shaking hands with Artagnes-Heracles (fig. 8.13). Here, it is not the viewer that is

confronted with a frontal depiction of something 'otherworldly', like in the Samosata mask, but rather the depicted figures themselves. This encounter between the human king and the divine subject has been interpreted often as a greeting within the context of the *apotheosis* of the king. Kropp, however, argues that the *dexiosis* rather visually evoked the divine help and assistance that Antiochos received from the gods.[1123] Kropp relies on the inscription on the back of a recently discovered *dexiosis* stele with Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes from Zeugma, in which Antiochos I proclaims*: 'I set up in sacred stone of a single compass alongside images of the deities the representation of my own form receiving the benevolent right hands of the gods, preserving a proper depiction of the undying concern with which they often extended their heavenly hands to my assistance in struggles'*.[1124] I think Kropp relies too much on the *rhetoric* modesty of Antiochos I in this case, as the supposed humility proclaimed in the inscription in no way springs from the depiction itself. Kropp's assertion that the colossal statue of Antiochos I at Nemrut Dağı '*remains a blunt expression of apotheosis'*[1125] is remarkable in this respect as it could equally be countered with passages from the Great Cult Inscription in which Antiochos I claims a more modest relation to the gods. However, as I have argued in the theoretical chapter of this dissertation (chapter 3), the intentions or explicit rhetoric of a commissioner cannot completely exhaust the capacities and vibrancy of an object or image. A closer look at the *dexiosis* relief itself - beyond concepts like 'apotheosis' and 'divine help' – brings us to an analysis of their iconography in terms of their visual techniques and ontological status, revealing mechanisms that correlate well with those of the Samosata mask.

A basic observation of the *dexiosis stele* from Selik is that the visual relation between Antiochos I and Appollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes involves a form of mirroring, something enforced by the symmetrical composition of the *stele*. The two men appear as mirror-images to the viewer but, and this is crucial, their direct gaze towards each other suggests they could also experience each other as actual mirror-images of themselves. The symmetricity invites comparison; the viewing experience cannot but observe stark contrasts between an earthly king and a divine presence and between a clothed man and a naked deity. Simultaneously, the correspondences or resonances between the two men are observed to such an extent that the two figures can even morph into each other while looking. This comparing and conflating viewing experience of the mirror-image

[1123] Kropp 2013, 182-183. Brijder 2014, 95-96 argues something similar, but more in detail, suggesting that the *dexiosis* scene represents a formal greeting and a symbolic agreement concerning divine assistance, divine approval of the reign of Antiochus I as well as a divine future alliance between the king and the gods.
[1124] Crowther and Facella 2003, 47, 52-53.
[1125] Kropp 2013, 184.

is ultimately sealed and defined by the handshake between the two men, the *dexiosis* itself. In the depiction of this handshake, the ontological separation between the seemingly different worlds of earthly and divine is breached. The king and the god exist in the same realm, their physical connection, materialized in the handshake, the mutual mirroring gaze and the symmetricity of the *dexiosis* stele, invite or even force the viewer to establish a new, alternative ontology where king and god actually co-exist in the same realm.

This reading can be seen against the background of the colossal statues of Nemrut Dağı and Arsameia on the Nymphaios, where the king too appears to exist within the same ontological domain as the gods.[1126] In this case, however, there is no visual mechanism of direct mirroring at play, and the viewer is merely invited to take part in this realm by means of celebrating and offering in the ruler cult. We might however consider how the constant visibility of Nemrut Dağı throughout the Commagenean territory not only reminded the Commagenean populace of the ruler cult and its dynastic power, but also afforded a more activating and transformational effect through the potential of constant eye-contact with the enthroned gods and king. Other Commagenean sculpture is more inviting and involving with respect to the viewer. Although its participants do not look each other nor the viewers in the eye, the ancestor gallery at Nemrut Dağı involves the viewer into a world of long-deceased kings and queens by literally 'walking along with' the visitors of these *hierothesia*, towards and away from the central colossal statue groups on the eastern and western terraces.[1127] Through the character and placement of these reliefs, the living human visitor and the deceased basalt kings co-exist in their collective movement, again drawing both into the same ontological realm.

These examples together suggests that similar modes of visuality existed in Commagene, where the coming together of human and non-human elements breached an ontological separation between the human and the divine, and activated and involved the viewer in this shared world. As part and parcel of a satyr/mirror/mask-assemblage, the Samosata mask also related to and added to these wider modes of visuality in Commagene. Just like Antiochos had eye-contact with Artagnes-Heracles and shook hands with him, the viewer of the Samosata mask was drawn into a *visual dexiosis* with the satyr-like mask in the palace. The same principle that could align a king

[1126] Something explicated in the Great Cult Inscription at Nemrut Dağı, where an emphasis on the uniform materiality of the statues enhances the idea of a singular ontological realm: *'from one and the same quarry, enthroned among the deities who hear our prayers, I have consecrated the features of my own form'* (N59-61; translation from Sanders 1996, 206-217).
[1127] Versluys 2017a, 62-68.

with a god (or even transform him into one) was put in practice to align a man with a satyr-like mask, threatening or promising the full metamorphosis of the former into the latter.

8.4 Conclusion

This case study has analyzed and explored several more-than-representational capacities of the mask mosaic in Samosata, focusing on its genealogical relations and their contextualization in 1st c. BCE Commagene. Existing scholarly interpretations of this object have overlooked these capacities, and solely reduced this object to static concepts like Greekness, theatre and Dionysos. The point of this chapter is not that these concepts had no role to play in the context of Samosata at all, but rather that such uncritical labelling of mask iconography runs the risk of creating reductive and static interpretations in which the individual object with its particular capacities and context becomes overshadowed or forgotten. It has become clear that the mask mosaic existed in relation to a glocal object type, which was simultaneously universalizing and particularizing through several mask mosaics throughout western Eurasia. In many ways, the Samosata mask adhered to the demands of this glocal object type, but in some crucial aspects (the mask type, the use of a roundel, the elaborate concentric frame) it also deviated from it. The specific geographical character of the mask genealogy afforded the mask in Samosata with the capacity to function as 'globally' available, but regionally and locally extremely rare or even non-existent; no isolated satyr-like mask mosaics are known from Syria and the wider 'Near East'. The genealogy furthermore did not provide evidence for a consistent occurrence of the mask mosaic type to function in contexts where Greekness, theatre or Dionysos played an important role, an observation that sits uneasy with the representational interpretations of previous scholarship. In section 8.3, I have explored another more-than-representational capacity of the mask mosaic, namely its assembling of visual elements into a satyr/mask/mirror-assemblage. Emerging from this assemblage are a visual mechanism of mirroring, viewer involvement, personal transformation and breaching of ontological divisions between subject and object, man and animal, human and divine, representation and represented. By drawing these explorations of the mask mosaic in relation to other modes of visuality in Commagene, the last part of this chapter demonstrated that the breaching of ontological divides between human and divine seems to recur in the royal visual culture of Commagene, albeit in different forms and with different elements. This focus on the mask mosaic as emerging from a unique coming together of elements, provides

a radically different perspective on this object that takes the very specific contextual character of the mask mosaic seriously for the first time.