Tatian’s Diatessaron: The Arabic Version, the Dura Europos Fragment, and the Women Witnesses

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Abstract

Tatian’s Diatessaron (c.180 CE) does not survive in its original form but only in later versions. Its content and wording, even its original language, can then be debated. However, there is a small, 3rd-century fragment written in Greek (P. Dura 10), discovered in Dura Europos, identified as coming from the Diatessaron. Some, however, have disputed this identification. The difficulty is that reconstructing the Diatessaron on the basis of later versions has proven problematic, so there is no agreed text with which the fragment can be compared. This study presents current understandings of the Diatessaron and reviews the situation in regard to the Arabic version: a translation of the Diatessaron done in the 11th century from a Syriac text. It is argued that the Arabic Diatessaron manuscripts offer readings that are close to the Dura parchment, and this can be shown particularly in regard to the women's presence as witnesses to the crucifixion, though there is a slightly different ordering of component parts. It is observed that the Dura fragment itself is not a perfect copy of any master text, but contains significant errors of reading, and thus it may be a writing exercise. As such it cannot be considered a definitive version of the Diatessaron, made by an expert scribe. It does, nevertheless, attempt to copy the Diatessaron, given that its content significantly overlaps with the Arabic version. This analysis uses more manuscripts than ever before assembled of the Arabic Diatessaron, so as to provide a reliable reading of the section that overlaps with the Dura fragment, and calls for a new edition, given that it provides a reasonably accurate representation of the content of Tatian’s work.
It is well known that Tatian’s Diatessaron, influential in the early Eastern churches, does not survive in its original form but only in later versions. Its content and wording, even its original language, can then be debated. On the other hand, there is a small fragment in Greek discovered in Dura Europos identified as coming from the Diatessaron (P. Dura 10) and dated to the early 3rd century. But there is controversy concerning this identification. Behind this controversy lies a methodological problem: how can we know the fragment comes from the Diatessaron if we cannot compare it to a reliable text of the Diatessaron? In the present study, we will present current understandings of the Diatessaron and attempts to define it, and, in particular, review the state of knowledge in regard to the Arabic version. We will make a case that the Arabic Diatessaron holds a key position in terms of the original readings of Tatian’s work, even though one cannot assume complete accuracy. We will use more manuscripts than ever before assembled of the Arabic Diatessaron, so as to provide a reliable reading of the section that overlaps with the Dura fragment. We will make direct comparisons with the Dura fragment, in order to determine the correlation between this text and the Arabic Diatessaron. In this study, importantly, we will also offer a new understanding of the nature of Dura fragment as a writing exercise or poor copy: this complicates its analysis, but aids us in making an identification.
1. Tatian’s Diatessaron

The Diatessaron, written by Tatian, an ‘Assyrian’ (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 42; and see Eusebius, *Hist. eccles.* 4.16.7-8; 4.29.1-7; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 46.1.8-9), sometime around the years 160-180 CE, has long been a mystery. Scholars have been unsure even whether it was originally written in Syriac or Greek. Whatever the original language, Tatian himself appears to have operated in linguistic fields that could stretch both East and West, and his work did likewise, though the balance was weighted heavily East. The Greek title, ‘Diatessaron’, is not really a title, but simply means a story told ‘via four’, here synthesized into one, and Tatian cannily chose the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at a point when the canon was apparently still in formation, indicating a clear appraisal about which gospels had the most authority.

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1 Eusebius’ positive statement that Tatian was ‘in early life was educated in the learning of the Greeks and gained great reputation in it’ (*Hist. eccles.* 4.16.7) suggests he was very skilled in Greek. Strong arguments for a Greek original have been presented: e.g. U. Schmid, ‘The Diatessaron of Tatian,’ in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, eds. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 115-142, especially 137 and now I. M. Mills, ‘Zacchaeus’ Fruiting Perch: A New Argument for the Original Language of Tatian’s Diatessaron,’ Paper presented to the SBL Meeting in Denver, 2018, and forthcoming in [to be added when known]. Mills argues for a Greek original on the basis of an omicron spelling of the word for ‘sycamore’ in Luke 19:4 (συκομοραία/συκομορέα) leading to a pun (‘pale’ or ‘unripe’) that is at variance with the Syriac reading based on a omega spelling (συκομωραία/συκομωρέα), leading to the pun ‘foolish’ or ‘deaf’. We are grateful to Ian Mills for allowing us to see a pre-publication version of this paper. Nevertheless, there are strong reasons to assume that the initial text of the Diatessaron was in Syriac. For discussion see W. L. Petersen, ‘The Diatessaron of Tatian,’ in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, eds. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 77-96, at 77-8. The Diatessaron’s Old Testament quotations seem to relate better to the Syriac Peshitta than to the Greek Septuagint: Jan Joosten, ‘Tatian’s Diatessaron and the Old Testament Peshitta,’ *JBL* 120 (2001): 501-23, and id. ‘Diatessaron Syriac,’ in *Le Nouveau Testament en syriaque*, ed. J.-C. Haelewyck (Paris: Geuthner, 2017), 55-66.

2 For bilingualism among Eastern scholars see N. J. Andrade, ‘Assyrians, Syrians and the Greek Language in the Late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial Periods,’ *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 73.2 (2014): 299-317. There is clearly a dearth of attestation of Tatian’s work among the Greek Christian authors of the first centuries (see Joosten, ‘Le Diatessaron Syriac,’ 56), which suggests that either they did not know the work in Greek or else chose to ignore it.

3 However, Joosten argues that Tatian also used an Aramaic ‘Fifth’ Gospel: ‘Diatessaron Syriac,’ 65-66.

While it is often called a ‘harmony’, one needs to be careful about this term. Later on, there were ‘harmonies’ that set out quite plainly to harmonise, by showing the correlations between the canonical gospels, often in tabular form, as canon tables. Eusebius of Caesarea tells us that Ammonius of Alexandria (2nd-3rd century) produced a harmony that influenced his own gospel canon tables, which he refers to as τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον. According to Eusebius, Ammonius took Matthew’s gospel as the basis, and then placed corresponding sections of each canonical gospel beside it. Jerome, in his Letter 121, to Algasia, mentions another such work made by the 2nd-century Bishop Theophilus of Antioch. However, Tatian’s Diatessaron does not seem to have been motivated by an attempt to harmonize in any apologetic way and is not a set of tables, but rather it appears to be an exercise in cutting and pasting, done in order to create one coherent narrative, with definitive choices made about what should be included. In the case of any contradictions between the Gospel accounts Tatian selected one version, and his narrative followed a sequence all of his own. While then it is standard to talk about the Diatessaron as a ‘harmony’, this is in some ways a misnomer; we may better call it a ‘synthesis’, or a ‘conflation’, in which there is a blending of various sources into one coherent work: a definitive Gospel.

There are clear precedents. Whether one adopts the Two or Four Source hypothesis or something else to solve the Synoptic Problem, we generally accept that two of our canonical gospels are essentially synthetic: the Gospels of Matthew and Luke both blend the Gospel of Mark with other written material in order to create new narratives out of separate works. The Lucan prologue (1:1-4) announces an aim to fuse existing accounts together, made by ‘many’, in consecutive order, designed to be helpful to Theophilus in distinguishing the truth. It now seems that Luke was probably

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finalized around early 2nd-century, \(^8\) when others were also undertaking similar projects. Around the same time the Egerton Gospel seems to blend (proto-)Johannine work with something quasi-Synoptic.\(^9\) From his quotations, Tatian’s Palestinian teacher Justin, in Rome, apparently had (or made) such a synthesis himself, preceding the work of his student.\(^10\) The Fayyum fragment (Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek 2325 [P. Vienna G. 2325]), found in 1885, is from a work that blends Matthew 26:30-34 and Mark 14:26-30; 22:34, 39. Given this activity in the 2nd century, Tatian’s Diatessaron appears not so much an innovation but rather an example of a particular literary practice.

Shortly after Tatian’s work was done, however, synthetic Gospels appear to have stopped being produced. Irenaeus and Tertullian would champion the view that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John should be considered both authoritative and individual (Irenaeus, Haer. 3.1; Tertullian, Marc. 4.3). Each should be read as distinctive, since each one provides a different perspective on Christ, blowing through the world like the four winds, with the church now spread into the four corners (Adv. Haer. 3.11.8-9). This was a cosmic template. Four was the language of

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wholeness as well as holiness, as revealed in the vision of Ezekiel (1:5-14) and Revelation (4:7-12).

By implication, a single work that wove them together was implicitly not what Irenaeus could support. Single Gospel use could lead to heresy, after all (Haer. 3.11.7, 9). We see the success of this thinking in a 3rd-century codex already containing all four Gospels separately: \( \mathcal{P} 45 \) (Chester Beatty 1). The mentality behind this is exemplified in the Muratorian canon, where named individual authors and their rationales for writing things down are carefully presented.

Thus, while Tatian himself is not singled out for condemnation by Irenaeus, Irenaeus’ rhetoric undermines any single gospel being used exclusively. Moreover, Tatian is attacked specifically elsewhere in Irenaeus’ work: he is an encratite (‘abstainer’, ‘ascetic’) who – after his teacher Justin’s martyrdom – established his own teaching, advocating a rejection of marriage, espousing vegetarianism and esteeming variant doctrines (Haer. 1.28; and see Eusebius, Hist. eccles. 4.29.1-7; Epiphanius, Pan. 1.46). His alleged views are indicated as being not far from those of his teacher’s opponent, Marcion,\(^{11}\) though none of these accusations of heresy against Tatian are necessarily true.\(^{12}\) They may simply indicate that the Roman church at this time advocated a more world-friendly mode than he did.\(^{13}\) Nevertheless, such attacks on Tatian would have affected negatively the circulation of his works in the West, including the Diatessaron.

But what was known of Tatian’s work in the West? It was thought that it may have circulated in an Old Latin version, reflected in a mid-6th-century Latin Diatessaron, found in the Codex Fuldensis.\(^{14}\) Discovered in the Fulda monastic library in Germany, it was commissioned by Bishop Victor of Capua, who provided a Preface, thus also known as the Victor Codex. Victor tells of how

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he found an ancient gospel which he himself identified as the work by Tatian.\(^\text{15}\) Nevertheless, it is clear that Victor’s source text used the Vulgate standard, but the arrangement appears to reflect Tatian’s ordering. It begins with the Lucan prologue (Luke 1:1-3) before going to the Prologue of the Gospel of John (John 1:1-5), then jumps back to Luke 1:5 and the Lucan Nativity, into which the Matthaean nativity is folded, after Luke 1:80, but the subsequent order corresponds to no one canonical gospel. There was at least something on which the Fuldensis tradition was based. There may have been an Old Latin version, or it may have been that a Greek Diatessaron was directly translated into Vulgate Latin, or it may be that it came to the West directly from Syriac.\(^\text{16}\) Whatever the case, Tatian’s work was not totally obliterated.

Meanwhile, in the East, it was popular. In Syriac, the Diatessaron – the *Euangelion da Mehallele* (Gospel of the Mixed) – was the text used for the lectionary in numerous churches. It was quoted in the works of Aphrahat and was so entrenched in Syriac-speaking communities\(^\text{17}\) that in the 4th century the celebrated Syriac scholar Ephrem wrote an extensive commentary on it (extant in Syriac in Chester Beatty 709 and in Armenian). With the rise of the Peshitta, however, it was pushed aside, and actively destroyed. In the 5th century, Theodoret of Cyr noted that the Diatessaron was widely circulated in his diocese, and he had to collect some 200 copies and ban it (Theodoret, *Haer.* 1.20). Given Theodoret’s language of Greek, it may be that some of these copies were also in Greek, though the milieu was Syriac-speaking,\(^\text{18}\) especially considering well-attested bilinguality of


\(^{18}\) Though Joosten considers these to have been Syriac examples (‘Diatessaron Syriaque,’ 58).
large parts of Syria, the Roman Near East. It has long been observed that in Syriac and in the Arabic version (see below), Tatian is generally referred to as ‘the Greek’. Evidence of such a Greek text of the Diatessaron being used in Syria was presented with the remarkable discovery of a small fragment in Greek in Dura Europos, identified and published by Carl H. Kraeling. The fragment has just 14 lines, but dates before 256 CE (the year of the destruction of the site). Some scholars have doubted this fragment derives from the Diatessaron, but these arguments have been rejected. We will consider the nature of this text further below. Suffice to say here that even if this does not constitute a Greek form of the Diatessaron, it would still be reasonable to presume that one existed, given the strength of Greek in the East.

The suppression of the Diatessaron in the East was efficiently done, and the work does not survive intact in either Greek or Syriac. Theodore Zahn produced a reconstruction of the text of the Syriac Diatessaron in 1881, using primarily the Armenian translation of Ephrem’s Commentary. The Syriac Commentary, with an English translation, has been published by Carmel McCarthy. The Commentary raises intriguing questions. For example, McCarthy notes a passage that would appear to combine Mark 16:15 with Matthew 28:19 (VIII.1b). “After they had crucified him, he commanded his disciples, ‘Go out into the whole world and proclaim my Gospel to the whole of

20 Petersen, Tatian’s Diatessaron, 51 n.54. In the Arabic, this is made explicit in the incipit of the manuscripts B, E, O, Q, S, T (see further below): ‘Tatian the Greek (طﻈﯿﺎﻧﻮس اﻟﯿﻮﻧﺎﻧﻲ).’
23 T. Zahn, Tatians Diatessaron (Erlangen: Deichert, 1881).
creation, and baptize all the Gentiles.’” 25 In the case of John 8:57, Tjitze Baarda had already noticed that Ephrem’s Commentary provided a reading found in a number of early gospel manuscripts, whereby rather than ‘You are not yet fifty years, and you have seen Abraham?’ the text reads: ‘You are not yet fifty years, and Abraham has seen you?’ 26 In other words, study of Tatian’s work leads scholars on towards exploring thorny questions of originality in gospel readings. 27 However, while most of the Diatessaron would presumably have reflected the gospel texts Tatian knew, the actual Diatessaron wording can only be successfully reconstructed for sure when it deviates from the gospel texts, whether in Greek or Syriac. 28

Given we have no full Greek or Syriac version – veritably nothing of the former and only a ‘snippet view’ of the latter – the Latin of the Fuldensis has played an important role in presenting Tatian’s Diatessaron in some form to Western scholars. But it cannot be said to represent Tatian’s original work exactly, especially given its ‘Vulgatisation’, and all its correlations and non-correlations with the Syriac or other versions have yet to be fully explored. 29

In the late 1990’s through to the mid 2000’s a group of scholars worked on a project in Amsterdam which aimed to study other different gospel harmonies in the West which could lead to the reconstruction of the Old Latin Diatessaron. Due to the enormity of the task, they narrowed it down to the Western European medieval vernacular examples. This project, aimed at sorting out the history of Latin, Dutch, German and Italian ‘harmony’ traditions. 30 The participating scholars collected more than 100 harmony witnesses, mostly on microfilms. They produced two monographs and several articles on all these traditions. The production of the team made their task successful in

25 McCarthy, Ephrem’s Commentary, 145. Yet, one may wonder why this version of Matthew 28:19 is so truncated. Did Tatian know a Markan ending no longer extant?
28 Petersen, Tatian’s Diatessaron, 369.
29 In his dissertation, Zola shows the dire need for a new critical edition of the Latin Fuldensis for future scholarship, Tatian’s Diatessaron in Latin, 6-25. His further work will be extremely helpful.
30 U. Schmid, ‘In Search of Tatian’s Diatessaron in the West,’ VC 57:2 (2003): 176-99, at p.178, the study focused on ‘prominently western vernacular ones, whose combined testimony is intended to bypass the Vulgate text of Codex Fuldensis, and reach back to its unvulgatized, more Tatianic model.’
numerous respects, in regard to studies, but they concluded that “the efforts to reconstruct this text by using later western harmony witnesses, especially in the vernacular, have not been successful”\(^{31}\). These Western witnesses are complex. Fuldensis itself spawned numerous further Latin copies and commentaries, and was used as the basis of the 9th century Codex Sangallensis, which has the Latin text known from Fuldensis in one column and then a parallel Old High German in another.\(^{32}\) Perhaps the most interesting and useful of their vernacular manuscript studies concerns the Diatessaron in Old Dutch, from the 13th century, now in Liège (University Library 437).\(^{33}\) This was considered by Daniel Plooij to have similar readings to the Old Latin Gospels and Ephrem’s *Commentary*,\(^{34}\) though the studies of Hollander and Schmid indicate this to be a false supposition. The issue is complicated by the fact that Plooij reviewed marginal glosses and comments in his analysis; rather, it seems that the scribe could have incorporated readings from a ‘vulgatized, Fuldensis-type harmony’ circulating in the 13th century.\(^{35}\)

The present textual situation of the Diatessaron is very complex, with numerous variants in existing manuscripts and possible citations, and numerous versions. To explore all of these properly, one would need mastery not only of Latin, Greek and Syriac but Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Coptic, Parthian, Georgian, Italian, Old Dutch and Old High German.\(^{36}\) The main problem for Western scholars is that the Diatessaron survives in its earliest form in Eastern languages, and these are not a normal part of a degree in Western theological studies, though Syriac, Coptic and Armenian can


\(^{35}\) Schmid, ‘In Search of Tatian’s Diatessaron in the West,’ 194-6.

\(^{36}\) Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 445-556.
be included in language training. All the extant versions of the Diatessaron are developments of an original lost text that scholarship cannot successfully reconstruct in full. The Diatessaron versions all show idiosyncratic modifications and tendencies to accommodate the text to Gospel manuscripts with which they were familiar.

Regarding Syriac, Ephrem’s Commentary has already been mentioned. In terms of Coptic, it has been argued that the Gospel of Thomas, most fully evidenced in Coptic, was dependent on the Syriac Diatessaron.37 No full text of the Diatessaron survives in Armenian, but Frederick Conybeare and Robert Casey have suggested that a number of early Armenian authors refer to this source in their texts: Eliseus (5th century), Eznik (5th century), Agatangaelos (4th/5th century), historian Lazar Parpec’i (6th century) and others.38 Casey furthermore suggests that in Eznik’s polemical work, On God, referred to a version of the Diatessaron used by Armenian Marcionites when he refuted Marcionism in Chapter 4 of his discourse.

More intriguing is the Persian version, now in Florence (Bib Laurent Cod Ms. Or. XVII [81]) and dated to 1547, highlighted by Bruce Metzger in 1950,39 and published in a critical edition in 1951.40 This was made by one Īwānnis ʿĪzz al-Dīn, of Tabriz, in the 13th century, and it initially elicited some interest,41 though it is apparently translated from a late, developed, Syriac form of the Diatessaron.42

The quest for the most authentic Diatessaron tends to go up many side alleys. Some of the readings have crept into the recent New Testament critical edition of the NA28 Greek New

Testament, through Ephrem's Syriac Sinaiticus, but establishing the original text is extremely difficult even in best case scenarios. As Baarda explains, “A long time ago, I was asked … to provide all the textual Diatessaronic data for the apparatus of the first edition of the UBS Greek New Testament. I really tried to fulfil that task, but after several months of study I had to withdraw: my investigation of the various texts involved led me to the conclusion that it was not – or hardly – possible to arrive at a decisive conclusion about the precise text of the Diatessaron in many of the cases where it was required for the GNT apparatus. The reason was that I found too many conflicting readings in the witnesses of the Diatessaron.”

However, of all the various versions in multiple languages one above all stands out as requiring particular attention: the translation into Arabic by Abū 'l Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, made from Syriac in the early 11th century. Al-Ṭayyib was an expert scholar in the flourishing intellectual milieu of Baghdad at this time, a Nestorian in the service of Elias 1 and a brilliant writer on Greek philosophy and medicine as well as on biblical texts. It has been identified that his version of the Diatessaron appears to derive directly from a reasonably early form of the largely lost Syriac text.

Ulrich Schmid, so closely involved in the cutting-edge findings in the Western Diatessaron project, ends his essay of 2013 by stating as follows:

What, then, is the future of Diatessaron studies? At least two venues for further research stand out. On the one hand, scholarship should concentrate on Eastern sources, most notably Ephraem's Commentary and the Arabic harmony with its presumptive Syriac Vorlage. The Diatessaron has a track record in Eastern, most notably Syriac, Christianity from the end of the

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second until the fifth century, whereas there is no such evidence for comparable impact in the Western parts of the Roman Empire. 47

Baarda has also noted the great importance of the Arabic manuscripts, urging scholars to focus on them in their study,48 since they are not late developments but the best we have for this work. Thus, “it is about time to consult the Arabic Diatessaron.”49 Since then Amsterdam has assembled the major manuscripts of the Arabic Diatessaron, which led Schmid to state that:

research in the relevant Syriac (Armenian) and Arabic sources should be intensified [...] now that the known manuscripts of the Arabic Diatessaron have been collected in one place (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and an appreciation of the specific blend of the Arabic translation with its many “Syriacisms” seems to have won the day, a new edition of the Arabic Diatessaron with partial Syriac retroversion is ripe.50

There is also the Arabic Diatessaron Project (ADP) in Digital Humanities, presented in an article by Juliano Lancioni and Pieter Joosse.51

While we eagerly await further results from such initiatives, we will here discuss the Arabic Diatessaron ourselves in a preliminary way and support the conclusions made that it is a vital version to analyse in order to make progress towards reconstructing Tatian’s original work.

2. The Arabic Version of the Diatessaron: The Manuscripts

The ‘Arabic version’ of the Diatessaron is not one thing, but all extant Arabic manuscripts appear to derive from the single Arabic translation made by Abū’l Faraj Ibn al-Tayyib in the 11th

47Schmid, ‘The Diatessaron of Tatian,’ 142. See the team’s project website:
https://nias.knaw.nl/theme/tatians-diatessaron/
49 Ibid.
century. We begin with a review of where we are now in terms of these manuscripts and their publication.\textsuperscript{52}

The earliest publication of an Arabic version was by the Augustinian monk, Agostino Ciasca, who in 1883 published a sample from an Arabic manuscript found in the Vatican library: the Vatican Arabo 14 (A), dating from the 12\textsuperscript{th} to 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{53} This had been brought to Rome in 1719 and likely originated in Egypt, given the presence of Coptic letters. Its opening verse is from Mark 1:1 rather than from Luke and John’s prologues as in the Fuldensis.\textsuperscript{54}

However, soon after this Borgian manuscript (Vatican Borgianum Arabo 250 or B) was obtained by the Vatican from a prominent Coptic Catholic family. Dated to the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, it includes the name of the Arabic translator of Tatian’s work, Abū’l Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib. Ciasca published it as a better version in 1888, with an introduction, Latin translation and listing of comparative Gospel texts, using A for comparison.\textsuperscript{55} There are interesting differences in the narrative sequence and content between A and B, including the genealogy texts. A has the Matthaean genealogy in Chapter 2 and the Lucan one in Chapter 4. B contains the genealogy of Jesus at the very end of the work, as an ‘appendix’.\textsuperscript{56} This is interesting because Theodoret of Cyr (\textit{Haer.} 1.20) stated that the Diatessaron omitted the genealogies. Indeed, these two manuscripts seem to witness two independent struggles to put them in, subsequent to the original Arabic translation. For

\textsuperscript{52} For detailed introduction to the manuscripts, with the exception of Q, see N. P. Joosse, \textit{The Sermon on the Mount in the Arabic Diatessaron} (Amsterdam: Centrale Huisdrukkerij VU, 1997), 3-55 and also id., `An Introduction to the Arabic Diatessaron,’ 72-179; id. `From Antioch to Bagdād, From Bagdād to Cairo: Towards an Archetype of the Arabic Diatessaron,’ \textit{Parole de l’Orient} 37 (2012), 67-84; Lancioni and Joosse, `Arabic Diatessaron Project,’ 207-12.

\textsuperscript{53} A. Ciasca, `De Tatiani Diatessaron Arabica Versione,’ 465-87.


\textsuperscript{56} As noted in Lancioni and Joosse, `Arabic Diatessaron Project,’ 208. This is also the case in all other manuscripts from the same family (E O Q S T, see below).
comparison, in the Fuldensis the Matthaean genealogy appears, with part of Luke blended in, following the Lucan order of placement (Chapter 5).  

The differences between the two Arabic manuscripts were not explored by Ciasca in any detail. The 1888 edition, with its useful Latin translation, became widely known as definitive, and translations of the Latin were produced in other European languages. English and German translations appeared by early twentieth century. However, the translations inherited the same deficiencies of their source (Ciasca's Latin translation).

With A and B, the Vatican has two of the most important Arabic manuscripts, but further manuscripts soon came to light after Ciasca's 1888 edition. A further manuscript was discovered by A.-S. Marmardji in the 1930s in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo, dated to the 18th century, and named ‘E’ after the institution in which Marmardji was a professor: the École Biblique in Jerusalem’s Dominican monastery of Saint Étienne. While it is not a quality copy, it is interesting in preserving a similarity to B, with the genealogies at the end. In 1935 Marmardji published an edition of the Arabic Diatessaron that aimed to present a more rounded presentation of the Arabic manuscripts, with close attention also to Syriac fragments. In doing this, he worked largely on E, but with reference to A and B in the footnotes. Marmardji’s edition then became the standard ‘Arabic version’, in French translation. However, the edition of Marmardji knows nothing of manuscripts discovered later (namely O, S, T, and Q, see below). Besides, Marmardji’s base text (E) was at times

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58 An English translation was made by J. Hamlyn Hill, The Earliest Life of Christ ever compiled from the Four Gospels being the Diatessaron of Tatian [c. A.D. 180] literally translated from the Arabic Version and containing the Four Gospels woven into One Story (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894); it appeared in German in E. Preuschen, Tatians Diatessaron, aus dem arabischen übersetzt von Erwin Preuschen; mit einer einleitenden Abhandlung und Textkritischen Anmerkungen herausgegeben von August Pott; unter Beihilfe der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften (Heidelberg: C. Winters, 1926); cf. id. Untersuchungen zum Diatessaron Tatians, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse Jahrgang 1918, 15; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1918).
60 A. S. Marmardji, Diatessaron de Tatien (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1935).
altered in preference to readings in A and B, which means his final text is composite, based on his choices and judgment of what is more authentic, though not necessarily with explanation.

Manuscript O owes its name to ‘Oxford’, found in the Bodleian Library, MS Arab e163. It is stated that a copyist named Antūnī Sa’d completed the work (in 1806) from a manuscript dated to 13 Rajab A.H. 500 (= 15 March, 1107). Associated with a Coptic family in Egypt, it includes the preface found also in manuscripts B and E (and also in others: S and Q). Manuscript S (Salem Ar. 218 in the Library Paul Sbath 1020) is an 18th century copy originally in Cairo, likewise Library Paul Sbath 1280 (Salem Ar. 446), which is given the siglum ‘T’ by Joosse.\textsuperscript{61} There are also originally Egyptian fragments preserved in the University St.-Joseph (\textit{Bibliothèque Orientale} 429) in Beirut, from 1897, dated to the 14th century, which have a strong affinity with A, and based on manuscripts dating to the 13th century, designated as ‘C’. The final manuscript is that of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, originally in Cairo, designated as ‘Q’, which was microfilmed by Brigham Young University in 1984 and obtained by Joosse in 2012. It also has the genealogies at the end, as in B and E, and it is closely related to the latter.\textsuperscript{62} It is important to note that the sigla chosen for these manuscripts do not reflect a chronological order or sequence of discovery.\textsuperscript{63} Further, the age of any given manuscript does not solely decide its significance.\textsuperscript{64}

The surviving manuscripts are divided into two families:

1. a family that shows in its preamble the name of the Arabic translator Abū’l Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, following B;

2. a family which shows no reference to the translator and follows A.

\textsuperscript{61} Lancionis and Joosse, ‘Arabic Diatessaron Project,’ 210.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 211.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid. For example, the sigla S and T are the first and the penultimate letters of the surname of the priest who held these manuscripts (Sbath), Q stands for \textit{al-Qahira} (Cairo in Arabic) and E as noted is derived from the name of the Dominican monastery (St. Étienne) where Marmardji, who first used it, sometimes lived.
\textsuperscript{64} For example, the copyist of the youngest manuscript O (completed in 1806 CE) reports that it is a copy made by the prominent Coptic scholars Awlad al-Assal who finished it in March 1107 CE, while C from the Beirut fragments was completed in the 14th century, based on one from the 13th century. This means that manuscript O is a witness of an older edition than C.
Of the first family we have the majority of the manuscripts: B, E, Q, S, T and O while A is followed only by the fragmentary C. Joosse has identified the first family as the ‘Baghdad Group’ deriving from a lost archetype designated ‘Y’ from the 11th century. He defines the second family as the ‘Antioch Group’ deriving from a lost archetype ‘Z’, based on the text of ʿĪsā Ibn ʿAlī al-Mutaṭabbib in the 10th century.65

Until now, while the digital project sounds promising, there has not been any single analysis of the Arabic Diatessaron that is based on the entire body of the surviving texts and therefore the significance of the Arabic Diatessaron is yet to be fully understood. A key question is to what extent the Arabic text suffered harmonisation with the Peshitta (a type of ‘Vulgatisation’).66 While this may be the case, it is untested.67 Recent studies of the Arabic reading of different passages, especially in Luke and John, suggests that the Arabic text preserves, in several cases, more primitive and original reading than the Syrian text in Ephrem's *Commentary*.68 Several investigations started from the Western editions and have stopped at the Eastern Diatessaron, and have waited for a response on whether the readings found in the West correspond to the Eastern texts.69

The importance of the Arabic manuscripts thus lies in the possible antiquity of the textual traditions, for example, in regard to placement of the genealogies, in the first family (comprised by

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65 Lancioni and Joosse, ‘Arabic Diatessaron Project,’ 221-2.
66 Baarda, *Essays*, 55, 111-13. It is standard now to assume that the Arabic Diatessaron’s Syriac *Vorlage* was already edited to bring it into line with the Peshitta.
B, E, Q, S, T and O), they are in an appendix. However, in the second family both genealogies appear in the main text together in one chapter. As noted, the lack of genealogies in the Diatessaron agrees with the testimony of Theodoret, the bishop of Cyr (453 CE), who stated that Tatian cut out (περικόψας) the genealogies (and other passages) of the gospels (Theodoret, *Haer.* 1.20). Therefore, family 1 represents a main text that coheres with Theodoret’s observation, while family 2 suffered an addition like the Western texts.70

In his attempt to define the current place of scholarship regarding the Diatessaron and his search for progress, Pieter Joosse has stated, "If we would make an attempt to answer the question of the viability of the idea of producing a new and revised edition of the Arabic Diatessaron (of course together with an up to date English translation), we must draw the conclusion that there are still very justifiable reasons for undertaking such a major enterprise. The objections which have been raised against the existing editions of the Arabic Diatessaron often emphasize their inaccuracy, incompleteness, inaccessibility, unreliability, obsoletism and their inclination to follow the Vulgate in many instances, even when this is in contradiction to the testimony of the manuscripts."71

However, to establish as original a text as possible has been difficult due to the logistical challenges imposed by the availability of these manuscripts. The digital project, if it could proceed, would help alleviate this, though expertise in Arabic would still seem to be essential. Meanwhile, the fact that these manuscripts are dispersed in several countries across the Mediterranean and Europe has made it hard for the scholars to access them and build their own studies. Due to this fact, we have been left with unreliable,72 dated73 and incomplete translations74 of originals.

70 See also Zola, ‘Tatian’s Diatessaron in Latin,’ 54.
72 Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatian,* for example, comments on the Western translations stating, ‘Les traducteurs modernes du Diatessaron arabe en Latin, anglais et allemande, ont commis, à ce point de vue plus d’une erreur, par suite, probablement, de l’idée très haute qu’ils se sont faite du traducteur, et d’un autre part, de leur incapacité et de leur négligence de vérifier le texte arabe par le syriaque’ (p.xv).
73 Given that the latest translation is from 1935.
74 Nearly all translations rely on the Borgian manuscript B, with references to A, namely the work of Ciasca, ‘Tatiani Diatessaron Arabica Versione,’ from 1888.
The collection assembled in Amsterdam, and the ADP, has clearly suffered some setbacks. These setbacks were exposed when one of the present authors (Monier) aimed to collect photocopies of the surviving manuscripts of the Arabic Diatessaron, so as to allow our study to progress. The first problem identified was the fact that some of these manuscripts were relocated without updating the catalogues of the libraries that held them. This made it difficult to enquire about their new locations without travelling to different countries to trace their movement. This problem appeared initially with a search for the actual locations of manuscripts E and Q, in Egypt, which are complete and important codices. While E was known to Marmardji, Q was not accessed by any Western scholar until 2012 when Joosse managed to obtain a copy of it.75

Monier first travelled to Amsterdam to understand the history of the copies held and described by Prof. Joosse but was told that Tjitze Baarda had borrowed several copies before he died and the copies were subsequently lost. Monier then travelled to Egypt, and visited the relevant institutions, starting from the old catalogue of Markus F. Simaika, the founder of the Coptic museum who listed the manuscripts E and Q in his catalogue of the Coptic Patriarchate's manuscripts.76 After considerable difficulties, due to the relocation of the patriarchate itself and lack of reliable data about the history of the transition of these manuscripts there, Monier understood from a monk that a sudden accident had led to a huge water leakage in the library in the late 1980’s and caused considerable damage to the holdings. This led the patriarch to relocate these holdings to different monastic libraries with a dry climate, in the Nitrian and Mariout deserts. Similar problems also affected the

75 Joosse, ‘From Antioch to Bağdād,’ 67-84.
76 M. Simaika and a.-M. Yassā, Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt (Cairo: Government Press,1939-42). Manuscripts E and Q are *muqaddasa* 136 - *raqm musalsal* 131, and *muqaddasa* 135 - *raqm musalsal* 198, respectively. Monier has located these manuscripts at St. Mina monastery in the Mariout desert. Monier understands that this location, which has accommodated the patriarchal manuscripts after the disaster of water leakage (which happened twice in 1986 and 1990), is temporary until a process of restoration and digitization is finished. Afterwards, they should be relocated in the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center at the Patriarchal residence in Abbasiya, Cairo. However, a timeline to implement this process has not been given. Therefore, this location is valid at the time of conducting this research, and the reader should be advised that the relocation could take place at any time in the future.
situation with manuscript C, yet it was not as difficult since the quality of documentation in Beirut Jesuit libraries was higher. Fortunately, further enquiries led us acquiring copies.

Finally, the most challenging case was of manuscripts S and T (PSbath 1020, PSbath 1280) which were supposed to have been in the possession of Paul Sbath, a Catholic priest based in old Cairo in the first half of the twentieth century, who was also committed to collecting rare Arabic manuscripts in Egypt. They were known to have been endowed to the library of a Greek Melkite charity founded by the philanthropists George and Matilde Salem in Aleppo. After several communications Monier came to understand that the location of a significant part of the collection in that library, including S and T, is no longer known since the destruction of Aleppo as a result of the current Syrian conflict. It had been feared that the Islamist militias who managed to seize the eastern part of that city may have been able to take over the western part which is predominantly inhabited by Orthodox and Catholic Christians. In the panic of the situation, manuscripts were moved between Damascus and Beirut. Fortunately, Joshua Mugler was found to have held copies made locally in Aleppo in 2008. Yet, it is feared that the original may no longer be found, especially if they ended up in the thriving black market of manuscripts smuggled to Lebanon. Fortunately, with regards to the other manuscripts held in Europe, it was not difficult to obtain copies from the relevant institutions, including the important manuscript O held in the Bodleian library, unknown to the previously mentioned translators.

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78 A date of endowment in the Salems library could be 1924, according to the stamps on the copies.
79 Dr. Mugler has kindly made the two Paul Sbath manuscripts available online through the Virtual HMML reading room. For MS S (Sbath 1020) DOI <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/501577>. For MS T (Sbath 1280) DOI <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/501822>. We are also pleased to find that the Vatican Digital Library has now made MS A available online: DOI <https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/detail/Vat.ar.14>.
80 The authors wish to express their gratitude to everyone who helped in accessing the complete collection of the surviving Arabic Diatessaron manuscripts. From the Netherlands, we would like to thank Peter Joosse and August den Hollander of the Free University of Amsterdam for their kind reception and for informing us on the Status Quaestionis of the manuscripts, in particular on the situation of Tjitze Baarda’s collection. From Egypt, we extend our gratitude to Adel Y. Sidarus as well as researchers of the Dominican and Franciscan order in Egypt. From Lebanon, we would like to thank Daniel Alberto Ayuch and Elie Dennaoui of the University of
As a complete set of copies of the surviving manuscripts are now obtained, we too can study the Arabic manuscripts of the Diatessaron. However, such work can proceed only with caution. While it sure that a Syriac Vorlage underpins the Arabic texts, we may be cautious about assuming a simple state of affairs. We do not know how many versions of the Syriac Diatessaron there were, or the stages (and dating) of their development. We do not know the extent of a parallel circulation of a Greek text in the East. Like every other Diatessaron text, the Arabic must be expected to have been influenced by the copyist’s theological context. Historical observations must be taken into consideration. The variants help not only in our quest for the historical Diatessaron, but they also reveal possible causes for such variations due to cultural and theological influences. The Diatessaron thus acts as a vehicle in helping scholars understand theological motifs that were developed over time, such as the Marcionite readings that appear in the Eastern Syrian (and Armenian) texts, the Nestorian, Melkite, and Monophysite polemics as well as the later Christian Muslim debates. Such issues can be sensed in scribes’ choices of certain translations or intentional interpolations. For example, in rendering John 1:1 in manuscripts of family 1 the Arabic text reflects a concern to identify the Word with God, which has always been a problem for the Muslim eyes. The Arabic should be translated as “and it is the Word who is God.” Hence, Marmardji translates: “et Dieu est (not était) le Verbe.” Using هو, ‘is’ rather than ‘was’, which shows preference for the present reality, and in Arabic it is used for emphasizing exclusivity. Likewise, looking at the way some manuscripts are decorated, the Arab and Muslim eye cannot mistake the similarity with the style of decoration in the Quranic manuscripts, which should be taken into consideration in understanding the copyist’s perspective. The idea of a single harmony was appealing to Muslims, hence we find a

Balamand for their valuable advice on the materials of Lebanon and Syria. From the UK, we are grateful to Markus Bockmuehl for supporting and facilitating the process of accessing Manuscript O at the Bodleian Library. From the United States, we are grateful to Joshua Mugler of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library for his help to provide the images of the endangered PSbath 1020 and 1280 of Aleppo.

82 See Joosse, ‘From Antioch to Bagdad.’
83 Marmardji, Diatessaron de Tatien, 3.
work already known to Muslim exegetes such as Burhan al-Din al-Biqa‘i,\(^\text{84}\) while Christians in Egypt preserved other non-Diatessaronic Gospel syntheses in Arabic also.\(^\text{85}\)

Setting such wider concerns aside, however, our concern here is to explore how close the Arabic Diatessaron might be to Tatian’s original work. This is a huge project, and methodologically complex, but we can make some beginning by comparing it with the tiny fragment of Greek text from Dura. We compare the Arabic Diatessaron with the Dura parchment, with open minds.

3. The Dura Parchment (P. Dura 10)

As noted above, the joint French and American excavations led by Michael Rostovtzeff of Yale and Franz Cumont of the French Academy (1928 until 1937) in Dura Europos excavated close to the Palmyra gate a collection of papyri and parchment pieces. Among these was a roughly square piece quickly published by Carl H. Kraeling, identified as the Diatessaron in Greek (see Figure 1).\(^\text{86}\)

Found in the debris of an embankment west of area L8, on March 5, 1933,\(^\text{87}\) P. Dura Inv. 24, as originally designated, is a single parchment leaf, not written on the back, measuring 10.5 x 9.5 cm. It is catalogued in the Beinecke Library at Yale University as P. Dura 10 (or P.CtYBR inv.DPg24, though sometimes referred to as Dura Parchment 24 or 0212 in the Gregory-Aland listing). There are 15 lines of uncial, and the letters are well written, though the first five to seven letters of each line are lost due to the ripping or cutting of the manuscript, as also the final lines, and some letters are not very legible or missing altogether. It was republished with corrections in the official Dura


\(^{85}\) Joosse, ‘An Introduction,’ 72-129.


volumes by C. Badford Welles,⁸⁸ and has prompted much discussion.⁹⁰ A key concern is whether or not it comes from Tatian’s Diatessaron, with David Parker, David Taylor and Mark Goodacre arguing that it may not, using as comparative evidence a broad sweep of Tatianic texts East and West.⁹⁰ However, different elements describing Joseph of Arimathea in the Dura parchment matchs that of the Diatessaron, even though here are linguistic differences.⁹¹ He noted peculiarities and grammatical inadequacies of the Greek text that ultimately made him wonder if already, perhaps just 30 years after Tatian wrote, there were modifications, though this would a Greek version with some variants is still the Diatessaron rather than any other work..⁹² Kraeling’s comparison⁹³ also used Ciasca's Latin translation. Matthew Crawford, who has examined Tatian’s choices in creating his text, as accurately reflected in the fragment, has noted the ‘vulgatisations’ (amendments to bring the text in line with the canonical gospels) that occurred in all later versions.⁹⁴ On the other side, Ian Mills has presented a case for seeing the text as non-Diatessaronic.⁹⁵

This is a major issue in determining which of the later versions might cohere with the original reading of the original Diatessaron. In terms of method, if the Dura text is the Diatessaron, then we can proceed as has Crawford and assess both choices made by Tatian and changes made in versions later on. If the text is not from the Diatessaron, but some other synthesis (perhaps the one made by Justin Martyr), then we have no way of making this assessment. However, we can only assess

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⁹² Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron,’159-175.
⁹³ Joosten nevertheless only used Ciasca’s Latin edition for the Arabic Diatessaron. Ibid., 167-8.
whether the text is from the Diatessaron in the first place by comparing it with the later versions. The dangers of circular argumentation are very great.

In the following analysis we will concentrate on one version of the Diatessaron only: the Arabic. We will present the Dura text (reconstructed) and the Arabic Diatessaron (using all the currently available manuscripts). We will consider similarities and differences. Only after this preliminary comparative approach will we bring in some observations on other versions of the Diatessaron. We will then make some conclusions about the nature of the Dura parchment in its relationship with the Diatessaron.

The most likely reading of the fragment in Greek is as follows, using the reconstruction of Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, with a few small changes. The English translation is our own.

1. [ῶν Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Σαλώμη καὶ γυναῖκες] [ons of Zebedee and Salome and the women]
2. [ἐκ τῶν συνακολουθήσαντων ι][among those who] had come with him from ἄπο τῆς
3. [Γαλιλαίας ὁρῶσαι τὸν σταυρωθέντα.] [Galile]e, were seeing the crucified one. And it ἦν δὲ
4. [ἡ ἡμέρα] [the] Preparation [day]: the Sabbath was soon ἐπέφωτον
5. [σκευ. ὁ] [ing]. And as it was becoming evening, on the Π]ar[α-

96 The space for the available missing letters is furnished by the sure words Γαλιλαίας in line 3 and so we should restore 6-7 letters in the top part of this fragment rather than just 5 unless there is need for a space or a wider letter like M. This means there is something before the word Ζεβεδαίου, presumably the last part of υἱῶν. In the lower lines the letters are more spaced out with fewer letters at the start and on the line overall.
97 Likewise we retain the verb as reconstructed in the editio princeps as there is enough space for insertion of the pronoun while still retaining the verb as it appears in Luke 23:15. See below.
98 After the contraction there is a small dot following it here and elsewhere for the nomina sacra in this text and a large space the width of four letters afterwards.
99 Only five letters are missing from the beginning of this line and in following lines.
6. [σκευὴ], 100 ἐστιν Προσάββατον, προσ- [oration], which is Pre-Sabbath, up

7. [ἡλθεν] ἄνθρωπος βουλευτής [ἐ] [ὑ]πάρ- [came] a man, [be]ing a council-

8. [χων ἀ]πὸ Ἑρινμαθαίας π[ό]λεως τῆς lor from Erinmathaia, a c[i]ty of

9. ἱουδαίας, ὄνομα Ἰω[σήφ], [και] ἅ[γ]αθος [Judae]a, by name Jo[seph], [and] a g[o]od, ri-

10. [καιος], ὄν ἀθητῆς τ[ο]ῦ Ἰη(σοῦ) [ghteous one], being a disciple of Jesus, […]?

11. [κρυμμ]ένος δὲ διὰ τῶν φόβον τῶν but se[cret]ly, for fear of the

12. [Ἰουδαίων, καὶ αὐτὸς προσεδέχετο] [Judaean]s. And he was anticipating

13. [τὴν] β[ασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ] [kingdom] of God. This man [was] not

14. [ἡν συνκατατ]ιθέν ο[ς τῇ β[ουλῇ] [con]senting to [their] de[cision]...

Parker, Taylor and Goodacre rightly correct the reading of Kraeling and Welles in lines 1-3,

which were originally reconstructed as κ[α]ὶ γυναῖκες [τῶν συ]νκολοθησάντων ἰ[ν]τῶ ἀπὸ

100 The word Παρασκευὴ is barely apparent and may not be correct.
101 There is a small dot after the nomina sacra and spaces on either side. However, there is also space for another small word before κε-.
τῆς Γαλιλαίας, with γυναῖκες translated as ‘the wives’ rather than ‘the women’, thus ‘and the wives of those who had come with him from Galilee’. This arbitrarily assumed the women were the marital partners of the men who had followed Jesus from Galilee, creating a strangely anomalous reading, and excluding the women from being disciples in their own right. The construction of the pronoun ἐκ and participle of verb of movement is simpler (and found for example in John 12:20, ἐκ τῶν ἀναβαινόντων, ‘among those coming up [to the festival’), though this also creates an anomalous reading, which will be explored further below. In addition, the participle τῶν συνἀκολουθησάντων rather than their reconstruction as τῶν ἀκολουθησάντων, seems necessary to fill the space at the beginning of the line. The first two lines have more letters than in subsequent lines and thus they are slightly more squashed in.

In Mark 15:41 the women come up with Jesus, to Jerusalem, εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, but the Dura text seems to follow what is written in Luke 23:49: ‘women who followed/came along with him from Galilee saw these things’ (καὶ γυναῖκες αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὤρθοῦσα 103 ταῦτα. Here the tense of the verb has been changed from a present, nominative, feminine participle to an aorist, genitive, masculine participle, in which the gender can be inclusive, and there is an addition of ἐκ, thus: ἐκ τῶν συνἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ, ‘among those who followed/came with him’. This implies the women are part of a larger group of followers. However, as well as the verb alteration there is an addition of the definite article before γυναῖκες. Most noticeably, the final word here is changed: we would expect the text to read ταῦτα, but instead we have τὸν στα, in line 3. There is a line over the letters στα, indicative of a contraction, thus the word is most likely στ(αυροθέντα), ‘the crucified one’. Furthermore, it appears as a nomina sacra, with a dot following it and space around it as with the two other cases of the nomina sacra in this piece, in line 10 and 13.

103 This is a present participle used in a past sense.
Much has been made of this variant. But is this just a mistake of reading? Indeed, it would be quite easy to mis-read ταῦτα in a poor-quality master text (or poor light) as τὸν στα, if one were familiar with the importance placed on ‘the crucified one’, σταυρωθέντος, as attested in writings of the second century, particularly in those of Justin Martyr. It seems certain that the reading of the place-name Ἐριμαθαία is a simple mistake for Ἀριμαθαία, since it is one that coheres with other similar types of mistakes/variants in Greek manuscripts.

The text seems to have other mistakes. There is no reason for the copyist to drop the καὶ from ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος, yet here it has disappeared. In line 5 it has been suggested that ἑπὶ may well be a scribal mistake for ἐπει (from Mark 15:42). It is hard to accept then that these major alterations are deliberate choices made by Tatian himself, as Crawford has suggested, though Crawford has rightly identified clear (though more subtle) aspects of the selective process in regard to the Gospel texts here. Rather, the text seems to indicate multiple errors of reading.

Looking closely at the way it is written, one sees some interesting idiosyncrasies. There is uneven spacing, with some words separated while most are not, and letters are not always well formed, despite the flourish of an elongated upper arm of C (sigma) at the end of words. The alpha is written in two different ways, and there is an uneven application of ink. At the end of line 2 spacing of ἀπὸ τῆς is poor, with the T combined with the H.

This raises profound questions about the nature of the Dura text. Reasonably good quality writing does not necessarily mean high quality reading. Ever since the publication of the studies of

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104 Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, ‘Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,’ 206-8; Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical,’ 263-5.
105 Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical,’ 264. See especially Justin, I Apol. 32.4.
107 However, after the name of Ἰωνῆ there is either a long space or a site of damage in which we could easily place καὶ; if so, it is just in the wrong position.
108 Parker, Goodacre and Taylor, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,’ 205-6. For other possibilities see Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical,’ 271.
109 Crawford, ‘Canonical and Non-Canonical.’
Greek education in Egypt by Raffaella Cribiore\(^{110}\) there have been great strides made in identifying texts that are essentially schoolroom exercises or scribal practices, which could be written on scraps of parchment, papyrus, pottery, wood, wax tablets, stone or even on plastered walls. Christian scribes writing in Greek in Dura Europos cannot have been numerous at this time, and training was surely essential.\(^{111}\) Not every text from the ancient world is written by fully-trained copyists. The Dura text conforms to other scribal exercises in being written on a small piece of parchment, one that has been cut down even further on the left side. While this may have come from a roll of multiple columns, the ‘column’ shown here is not particularly tidy at its right edge, even allowing for crumpled skin (see Figure 1). One must remember that it was found in a stash of scrap paper and parchment, not in the house-church, and not in the ruins of a library. If the Dura parchment represents an exercise, which included mistakes, then we may not have a text precisely as any author intended. We can only assume general accuracy.


\(^{111}\) The graffiti of the house-church in Dura is written in Greek. See M. J. White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture, Vol. II. Texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae in its Environment* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1996-1997), 37, implying Greek language use in this space, as we would expect in Dura Europos at this time, given the predominance of Greek inscriptions and graffiti overall.
The Dura text clearly represents a synthesis of gospel texts, which are Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40 and Luke 23:49. However, we can build up the text further at the beginning by a process of deduction. Given that the Dura piece ends a list of women’s names, they need an introduction. This missing beginning would be furnished from the start of Luke 23:49, into which the women’s names have been inserted, using the other two gospels. This is because the preserved part of the
Dura text follows the Lucan syntax quite closely, with the modification. as suggested above, of ἐκ τῶν συγάκολουθησάντων, referring to the women ‘among those who followed him’. Luke reads: αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι, ‘the [female] followers’, so should the text really have read τῶν συγάκολουθησάσων (Aor. fem.) to be consistent with the gospel’s feminine form of the verb? As noted, the reference indicates a wider group of followers in which the women form a part, and in Luke 23:49 there is initial mention of πάντες οἱ γνωστοί αὐτῶ, ‘all the (men) known to him’, or ‘all his (male) close friends’, ahead of the women. It does read then as if into a Lucan core there is an attempt to name more of the women, as found in Mark 15:40-41 and Matthew 27:56, with a look back at Luke 8:1-3 (which is referred back to in Luke 23:49). The Dura fragment then, prior to mention of the mother of the sons of Zebedee and Salome, must have mentioned Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses/Joset, with some necessary introduction to their presence. It has a sequence of women’s names, followed by mention of ‘the women’ (as in Luke) rather than ‘other women’ (ἄλλαι, as in Mark) at this point. The mention of ‘the women’ then flatly after the names indicates that the named witnesses have been specifically introduced as women prior to this. In Luke, while the male friends of Jesus are included in the throng (unlike in Matthew and Mark), it is the women who actually see, as in Dura. However, we do not know how much more was said about the women in this earlier, missing part. Still, from these considerations, there are good reasons to restore the lost prior text of the Dura fragment, at least conceptually, as follows (with bold indicating the extant text read as above):

εἰστήκεισαν δὲ πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ Ἰησοῦ μακρόθεν (Luke 23:49a) καὶ γυναῖκες πολλαὶ … ἐν αἷς ἦν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσήτου μήτηρ (Matt.

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112 The word γνωστοί (literally ‘known ones’ also has the sense of ‘close friends’, those intimately known, and one may think that the masculine plural could be inclusive, but the way it is followed by specific mention of the women suggests otherwise.

113 The idea expressed by Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,’ 204, that we cannot know what preceded the beginning of the fragment is surely too pessimistic.
And in the distance, stood all those known to Jesus, and the women who came with him from Galilee were seeing the crucified (corr: these things: Luke 23:49c).

4. The Dura Parchment and the Arabic Diatessaron: The Women Witnesses

We will now compare this somewhat expanded version of the Dura parchment to the Arabic Diatessaron. In the following summary we determine the original Arabic Diatessaron in the section covered by P. Dura 10. Notes show how all manuscripts contribute to the reconstruction of each verse.
those who were his (female) followers and the (female) ministers, among them: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses and the mother of the sons of Zebedee and Salome and many others who went up with him to Jerusalem and saw these things And when the evening of Preparation came because of the coming of Sabbath A rich man from Arimathea of the city of Judaea called Joseph came,
and he was a good and righteous man, Matthew 27:57b

and he was a disciple of Jesus and hid himself for fear of the Judaeans, John 19:38b

and he was not agreeing with the slanderers in their desires and deeds, and he was expecting the kingdom of God, Luke 23:51b

This sample shows that every manuscript is important in the construction of the most likely original Arabic text. The division between two families cannot explain the agreements and disagreements across manuscripts. As we can see in the variants, the manuscripts of the so-family B, E, O, Q, S, T are in many cases divided, with some agreeing with A against members of their own family.

There are clear parallels between the Dura parchment and the Arabic Diatessaron in regard to the women witnesses. Before we explore these, however, we should note that in the debate about whether or not the Dura text is the Diatessaron there have been some assumptions about the Arabic version that are not quite correct, as the result of the situation described above. For example, in regard to the description of Joseph of Arimathea in the Dura parchment, it most likely reads:

προσῆλθεν ἄνθρωπος βουλευτής ἀπὸ Ἑρισμαθαίας πόλεως τῆς Ἰουδαίας, ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ, καὶ ἀγαθὸς δίκαιος, ‘up came a man, being a councillor from Erinmathaia, a city of Judaea, by name

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123 Q: om. و
124 A: (the same word preceded by ب which emphasises the meaning)
125 B: (the Thirty) A Q T: للثالثين, O E S: للثالشبین. The reading of B is probably a scribal error as the difference between the two readings is in the dots of a single letter. The other two readings are the same, but they reflect different dialects.
126 A: their passion (ھواهم)
Joseph, and good, righteous one.'127 The Arabic Diatessaron reads: ‘A rich man from Arimathea of the city of Judaea called Joseph came, and he was a good and righteous man.’ There is no mention of being a councillor, but rather he is defined as rich, apparently reflecting πλούσιος (Matt 27:57), ‘a rich one’. If one is to consider the Dura parchment an early Greek form of the Diatessaron, we may ask whether the Dura parchment’s choice of the Lukan βουλευτής was because it suffices to imply that Joseph was necessarily rich (as a councillor had to be), or wonder if this choice was due to Tatian’s theological interest that despised wealth, and therefore he omitted πλούσίος?128

However, Parker, Taylor and Goodacre have used the lack of any adjectives describing Joseph as a key reason to doubt that the Dura parchment is the Diatessaron at all. They noted that Joseph’s designation of being both ‘noble and rich’ exists in every Diatessaron but not in the Dura parchment.129 There are questions of methodology here,130 but it is also important to see that the premise of unanimous agreement of two adjectives against the Dura parchment’s lack of them is itself wrong. Ciasca and Marmardji both decided to accept the reading of A غني وجيء, ‘a rich, notable man’, in their translation.131 However, A stands against the other manuscripts, which unanimously agree that the word should only be ‘rich’ (غني), without ‘notable’ (وجيه). It is difficult to imagine that the Arab copyists decided to cut down the description to ‘rich’ only, while it is perfectly understandable that the copyist of A added ‘notable’, وجيء, to complete the biblical description of Joseph. Manuscript A has the word ‘notable’ in the same place as the Liège version, though in the latter the word ‘rich’ is found earlier. But the Persian text has ‘rich’ also, alone,132 which means that this reading is not a product of a particular Arabic translator, and would have been in the Syriac. The Latin Fuldensis

127 It is somewhat similar to what is found in Luke 23:50-51, which reads: Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνηρ ὀνόματι Ἰωσὴφ βουλευτής ὑπάρχων, [καὶ ] ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος … ἀπὸ Ἁριμαθαίας πόλεως τῶν Ἰουδαίων, though with insertions and rearrangement.
129 Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, ‘The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,’ 192-228
130 Joosten, ‘The Dura Parchment,’ 167-70.
131 Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical,’ 274-5.
132 و جون شهنكام ادینه (یود) که پیشتار از شنبه باشید امبوست رامی از شهر که نامش رامی، و توْنگک که لقب‌ او پیلنگ تودی و نیز در (پنجم) آمید ملتکت خدا یود.
has Joseph initially introduced as a *homo diues*, a ‘rich man’, and then later as *nobilis decurio, uir bonus et iustus*, ‘a notable councillor, a good and just man’, combining Mark 15:43 (εὐσχήμων βουλευτής, ‘notable councillor’), and Luke 23:53 (ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος, ‘good and righteous’). Different versions may have built up adjectives from the gospels over time. But the actual difference between the Dura text and the Arabic Diatessaron is a single choice of word. This raises other questions: what if the Greek text of the Diatessaron was slightly different from the Syriac, and there was a choice made to use πλούσιος ‘a rich [man]’ for the Syriac, for environments where the Hellenistic βουλευτής was less understood?

A comparison between the Dura parchment and the Arabic Diatessaron text shows that they share very similar a general sequence, though component parts can be moved around for linguistic flow. There are 1. The named women witnesses, 2. the definition of the time and 3. Joseph of Arimathea. Both use the same source texts: Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41 and Luke 23:49.

In terms of the women witnesses, there are some striking overlaps, but a different sequence of component parts. The Arabic Diatessaron has what we suggest for the reconstruction of the start of the Dura text, which describes two distinct groups: male and female, and seems to unpack a section that correlates with the (partly reconstructed) Dura text here: αἱ γυναικὲς ἐκ τῶν συνακολούθησαν ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ‘and the women among those who followed/came with him from Galilee’ (cf. Luke 23:49b). We noted how Dura changes a present feminine participle αἱ συνακολούθοσαι in Luke to an aorist participle in which gender could be read as inclusive, with a pronoun, so that the women are ‘from those who followed’ Jesus. The Arabic text has a longer text: ‘and the women who came with him from Galilee, those who were his (female) followers and the (female) ministers (التابعات له والخادمات). For αἱ συνακολούθοσαι in Luke it uses a past participle rather than present, as with the Dura text, but then adds another section that

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133 See Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical.’
134 As noted by Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical,’ 262.
‘those who followed’ were women. However, the Dura text, if ἐκ is a correct reconstruction, indicates that the women are among a larger group in which the men are included also as being followers. The Arabic maps on to Luke more closely. The addition derives from Mark 15:41: ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ, ‘they followed him and served him’ and Matt. 27:55: αἱτίνες ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας διακονοῦσαι αὐτῷ, ‘who followed Jesus from Galilee and served him’ and so the Arabic text folds in the section from Mark 15:41, with the imperfect verbs turned to two participles, thus ‘his followers and ministers/servers’. As noted above, however, we do not know what was missing in regard to introducing the women in the lost section at the start of the Dura text. The Arabic Diatessaron has another unit concerning the women from Mark 15:41, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, ‘and many others went up with him to Jerusalem’ in the place where in the Dura text we have the reformed section from Luke. If we switch the two sections around the parallels are easier to see. The Arabic text then here uses a complex term to signal the names of the women, إﺣﺪﺗﮭﻦ, which is literally ‘among them’ (cf. Greek: ἐν αἷς) but both among and them are feminine. In other words, Mary and the other women are among a larger number of female followers and ministers.

The Arabic Diatessaron uses more of Mark 15:41 overall than the Dura fragment, but both rely ultimately on Luke for structure, with the Arabic Diatessaron differing in order. Only the women witness the crucifixion in Mark and Matthew, and only the women are designated as following and serving Jesus in Galilee in Mark. In Matthew the women are presented as following and serving Jesus from Galilee on his way to Jerusalem rather than in Galilee, continuing to Jerusalem. Luke also has them coming from Galilee, but Luke 8:1-3 had already presented them as following and serving Jesus there. Matthew’s text truncates their activity to the road to Jerusalem and vigil at the cross. In Luke the (male) friends of Jesus are presented as also standing at a distance and witnessing the crucifixion, along with the women, and this is found in the Arabic Diatessaron and – as previously argued – in Dura. The Lucan text, while including the men, makes the women detached
from the classification of ‘those known’ or ‘close friends’ of Jesus: οἱ γνωστοὶ therefore is not gender inclusive but indicates the male disciples who are nowhere in Mark and Matthew. In both cases the women are the ones who are the ‘followers’ and who see, but there are men in the picture, and in Dura the women are ‘among’ a larger group who are followers.

We compare now what is in the Fuldensis and Liège versions. Overall in terms of parallels with the Dura piece we find that John 19:31-37 appears in both and interrupts the flow between the sections of the women and the introduction of Joseph of Arimathea. This makes the Arabic Diatessaron look much more like the Dura parchment than these Western texts, despite the order being not identical. Fuldensis (171.42-5) reads:

a longe · et mulieres multae (Luke 23:49; Mark 15:41) quae simul cum eo ascenderant a galilaea hierosolymis (Matt. 27:56). Inter quas erat maria magdalene et maria iacobi (Mark 15:40) minoris et ioseph mater et salomae (Matt. 27:56) mater filiorum zebedaei (Mark 15:41). Et cum esset in galilaea sequebantur eum· (Luke 23:49) · haec uidentes. 135

From a distance also [there were] many women who likewise with him went up from Galilee to Jerusalem, among whom was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee and when he was in Galilee they followed him. They were seeing these things.

In regard to the women witnesses we may note that the Fuldensis has the women ‘many women … with him went up from Galilee to Jerusalem’. Here we have the words καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (Mark 15:41) folded together with Luke 23:49 at the start and

135 For the text, see Zola, ‘Tatian’s Diatessaron in Latin,’ 132-3.
not existing as separate blocks. The Fuldensis also conflates Salome and the mother of the sons of Zebedee as one person when both the Arabic Diatessaron and Dura separate them out.\(^{136}\) Both the Arabic Diatessaron and Dura conclude the names of the key women in the passage with Salome and other women, who were all present in the scene as important eye witnesses.\(^{137}\) The Fuldensis states of the women that ‘when he was in Galilee they followed him’ (171.41), but they are not called ministers as in the Arabic version. There is no mention of the male close friends of Jesus, but rather only the crowds, who return beating their breasts (from Luke 23:48). The word simul, ‘likewise’, is left slightly hanging, as it does not refer to the crowds, suggesting that there may have been a reference to these male friends in an earlier master text which has dropped out. Note, however, that the Arabic Diatessaron corresponds to the Latin Fuldensis in its reading that the women ‘were seeing these things’ (haec uidentes). As noted above, the Dura text can be understood as a misreading of a manuscript which had ὤρῶσαι ταῦτα.

The Liège manuscript (231.22-28) has:

Ende alle deghene die sine vrint hadden gheweest ende die sine conde hadden gehat, ende vele vrowen die met hem waren comen uten lande van Galileen tote Iherusalem, stonden van verren ende sagen toe. Onder die so stont oc Maria Magdalene ende Maria, des mijnders IJacobs moeder ende Josephs, elide Salome ende de moeder van Zebedeuss kindren. Dese plagen hem te volghene, alse hi was int lant van Galileen, ende hem te dinne.

And all those who had been his friends and had had his acquaintance and many women who had come with him out of the land of Galilee to Jerusalem stood from afar and looked on.

\(^{136}\) The Old Dutch Liège text also distinguishes between Salome and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, but it agrees with the Latin Fuldensis in the order of the names.

\(^{137}\) Crawford has very usefully considered how source texts were used in the Dura fragment for the female witnesses in Crawford, ‘Canonical or Non-Canonical?’ 262-5.
Among those stood also Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of the lesser Jacob and of Joseph, and Salome, and the mother of Zebedeus’ children. These used to follow him when he was in the land of Galilee and to serve him.\(^{138}\)

Like the Arabic Diatessaron, it uses Mark 15:41, focusing on the following and serving of the women in Galilee, but like the Fuldensis and there is not any indication that the women were among the wider group of followers of Jesus, as in Dura. Here we do see the usage of Luke 23:49 with the friends (masculine) of Jesus being at the scene, as also in the Arabic Diatessaron and as we have reconstructed in Dura, an indication of there being ‘many women’, vele vrowen, at the start, with the Mark 15:41 folded in, as with the Fuldensis. The Liège text shares with the Fuldensis the mention of ‘to Jerusalem’, after ‘Galilee’, unlike in the Arabic Diatessaron. There is use of Luke 23:49 in the verb (συνακολουθοῦσαι rather than Mark’s συναναβᾶσαι). The women’s names are the same as in Dura and the Arabic Diatessaron but they are in a different order, with Salome and the mother of the sons of Zebedee back to front. Rather than ending with the reference of Luke 23:49 to the women seeing, there is employment of the phrasing of Mark 15:40/Matt. 27:55: ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι, ‘they looked on from a distance’.

The parallels between the versions of the Diatessaron may be seen in Table 1. The Arabic Diatessaron preserves clearer blocks than the other two versions: there is less conflation, either in terms of the women’s names or in regard to Luke 23:49 and Mark 15:41. However, the Fuldensis and Liege versions cohere in order. In terms of the component parts they are very much the same, with the Fuldensis missing out mention of the male friends of Jesus at the start. It is more truncated in regard to the women’s role as being one of following rather than following and serving as in the Arabic and Old Dutch. In terms of the extant part of the Dura text, we can see that ‘and the women from among those who came with him from Galilee’ in lines 2-4 is something found in all these

Diatessaronic witnesses, but in the Fuldensis and Liège versions this is complicated by the section between, whereas in the Arabic Diatessaron it is distinct. If one were to re-order, minimally, the sections highlighted blue and green in the Arabic column of Table 1, one can see more clearly how the two texts would cohere. It would even be possible to reconstruct more of the Dura text by using the Arabic Diatessaron, as indicated in italics.

Table 1: The Women Witnesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P. Dura 10 (partially reconstructed)</th>
<th>The Arabic Diatessaron</th>
<th>The Latin Fuldensis 171:42-45</th>
<th>The Liège Diatessaron 231:21-26</th>
<th>Greek text used¹³⁹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And all the (men) known to him stood at a distance</td>
<td>And in the distance, stood all those (men) known to Jesus,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and many women who went up with him to Jerusalem</td>
<td>and the women who came with him from Galilee,</td>
<td>From a distance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those who were his (female) followers and ministers</td>
<td>those who were his (female) followers and ministers,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee and Salome</td>
<td>among them: Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Jospeh, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and Salome</td>
<td>And all those who had been his friends and had had his acquaintance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and many women who had come with him out of the land of Galilee to Jerusalem, stood from afar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and looked on;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matt. 27:55a: γυναῖκες πολλαί</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 15:40a/Matt. 27:55a ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 15:41a,b αἱ ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ (b) ἤκολοθοῦσιν αὐτῷ καὶ δημόνοις αὐτῷ.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 15:40b ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία τὴν Σικώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ιωσήφος μήτηρ (c) καὶ Σαλόμη</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³⁹ Note that at times the texts overlap.
However, as we have seen, the Dura fragment seems to represent something written down as a scribal exercise on a scrap of parchment, and includes mistakes and modifications caused by poor reading. A very striking difference between Dura and all Diatessaronic texts is the presentation of the women as being among a larger group of followers: this is different from all gospel texts also. But might this also be an idiosyncratic modification by the copyist? Might the copyist have mistakenly changed the gender from female to masculine/neuter in writing τῶν συν̣ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ rather than τῶν συν̣ἀκολουθησάσων αὐτῷ? We are still left with questions.

Thus, in terms of method, one is best served by placing the Dura fragment against each Diatessaronic version individually. If we are to define the Dura text as the Diatessaron it should show some clear correlations with a version of the Diatessaron known to us, though we may allow it some variables in syntax and ordering given language correlations are never exact. To suggest that the master text is from another work than Tatian’s Diatessaron in Greek would be to assert that any substantive overlaps are disregarded, and the variables are emphasized. What is interesting here is that the Dura fragment is quite consistent with the Arabic Diatessaron in terms of the way the named women are presented and the missing first part can be reconstructed plausibly in a way that correlates with the Arabic Diatessaron. So the Dura fragment could well represent a very early form of the Diatessaron in Greek, even though we cannot assume it is absolutely accurate. It may still be that
the Dura fragment comes from some other work in circulation at the same time (perhaps that of Justin Martyr?), rather than the Tatian’s Diatessaron, if the two works were very similar. Nevertheless, we know that the Diatessaron was popular in the East. We have no reason to think any other synthetic Gospel was as popular, or was even known.

This method also highlights the importance of the Arabic Diatessaron in contrast to the Western examples, because if the Greek Dura text is the Diatessaron, faultily presented, and best maps on to the Arabic Diatessaron, conversely this makes the Arabic version more reliable than others in pointing to readings of the lost Syriac. There is no real reason to assume that Abū’l Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib decided to paraphrase wildly from his Syriac original, or to assume that his Syriac original was poor in any way. Careful study would need to be done of how the Arabic Diatessaron compares with readings reflected in Ephrem, Aphrahat and other authors, and this work has not yet been intensively done. In the meantime, there seems no very strong reason not to trust the text as containing a reasonably accurate presentation of the content of Tatian’s work, as it existed in Baghdad at the time of al-Ṭayyib. We can only work with contingencies, not certainties, but if they are sufficiently strong then further study is worthwhile.

**Conclusion**

In this study we have shown that the manuscripts of the Arabic Diatessaron offer readings that are close to the Greek Dura parchment, especially in highlighting the scale of the women's presence in the crucifixion, though there is a slightly different ordering of component parts. We observe that in the Arabic Diatessaron the multiplicity of women witnesses features in the section on the crucifixion, in agreement with the Dura parchment. The Dura fragment itself is not, however, a perfect copy of a master text, but contains significant errors of reading: it is then most likely a writing exercise. As such it cannot be used as a definitive version made by an expert scribe.
Nevertheless, of all other forms of the Diatessaron in existence, it maps quite closely on to what is in the Arabic version, and this alone is important. Methodologically, if it is significantly close to one version of the Diatessaron alone, this is enough to show that it is supposed to represent Tatian’s work. By using existing and implied elements of the existing text, it can even be built up further in a logical way that corresponds closely to the Arabic Diatessaron, though this must remain conjectural.

This study has also demonstrated the great value of the Arabic version of the Diatessaron. It has provided evidence and argument that supports the call for a critical apparatus of the Arabic text. Every manuscript of the eight manuscripts is important. The variants show that the manuscripts offer sometimes provide a better and more valuable witness to the main codices used by Ciasca. Agreements and disagreements between the manuscripts cannot be predicted based on the recension a manuscript belongs to or its dating. Therefore, any future attempt to provide a critical apparatus of the Arabic Diatessaron must take all the eight witnesses into consideration. In the light of our findings, we offer resources to access the manuscripts either digitally or by identifying their locations. This should help future researcher to engage with the Arabic Diatessaron without any barriers.