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## The Epigraphic Diction of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn and Environs

In *OC* 71 (1987), pp. 53-139 I published a corpus of inscriptions from Ṭūr ʿAbdīn and environs (reference-numbers A. 1-20, B. 1-13, C. 1-14 and D. 1-15) which was intended as a complement to H. Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul* (Paris, 1907) (reference-numbers P. 22-35, P. 53, P. 54, P. 65-71, P. 92-5 and P. 97-116); there I promised two further studies, of which this is the first.

Of these 109 inscriptions at least 43 commemorate material products, mostly buildings, whereas 57 are epitaphs; C. 2 combines both functions. The remaining 8 may come in the first category, except for three which definitely commemorate another kind of event. The following analysis takes first those aspects shared by the two main categories: dating formulae, abbreviation, economy of expression, prayers; then examines dedications, doxologies and other opening texts of good omen, establishing one distinction between the building and the funerary genres; and finally takes in turn the diction specific to each genre. The exceptional inscriptions are treated incidentally; it is impossible to say, on the basis of such a small sample, what is conventional in their diction. Concluding this provisional survey is a glossary of those words which are not treated in it.

### *Dating formulae*

Some inscriptions are dated by the reign of patriarch, bishop, abbot etc. (later by that of local Muslim emirs), others by the Seleucid era, i.e. from 1 October 312 B.C. (to convert to the Christian era, subtract 312 and add the following year after a slash: e.g. A(nno) G(raecorum) 1312 = A.D. 1000/1, viz. 1.10.1000-30.9.1001). When the two methods are used together, the Seleucid year usually comes first. A. 11 and A. 13, both of the tenth century, use the era of the Hijra (هـ. / هـ.), for the conversion of which one may use B. Spuler's revised third edition of the *Wüstenfeld-Mahler'sche Vergleichungstabellen zur muslimischen und iranischen Zeitrechnung* (Wiesbaden, 1961).

The first of these systems is usually put into words as follows: "in the days of (ܡܠܟܐ) X, the patriarch, and of Y, our bishop" (the supplementary glossary below enables the epithets, ܡܠܟܐ, ܡܬܪܬܡܐ, ܡܬܪܬܡܐ, ܡܬܪܬܡܐ to be located), whereby the Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch and the bishop of the place concerned (usually Ṭūr ʿAbdīn) should be understood. Only B. 11 and B. 13,



which were set up by bishops, and some epitaphs of bishops refer to their title by name. B. 9 goes on to name the abbot, the sacristan, the head of the brothers and the administrator of the monastery and B. 1 may have done something similar, though there the formula ܐܒܬܐ is reiterated before the list of monastic officers. (Monastic officers are also included in the glossary.)

The Seleucid era is sometimes called the "year of Alexander" (cf. I Maccabees 1:1; not attested in the inscriptions after the ninth century), but more usually the "year of the Greeks" ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ, or "of Greece" (ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ: not an abbreviation, *pace* Pognon, who has misread the horizontal NUN). D. 11 and D. 12 (ca. A.D. 1125) have "of the blessed Greeks (ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ)". The phrase ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ (cf. Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 194), "in (the reckoning) of the Greeks", occurs in B. 10, P. 99 and A. 16. One might think it could usually be taken for granted that the Seleucid era is meant (as it is in A. 1, A. 3 and A. 17, for example); yet most inscriptions do not and A. 7 puts in ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ above the date, rectifying an accidental omission. The formula was obviously part of the magic of the medium.

The month and the day of the month are seldom referred to in the building inscriptions and suchlike (B. 1 does have the month and A. 1 had both), but often in epitaphs, where the day of the week can also be commemorated (A. 10: ܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ ܕܠܒܝܬܐܝܠܐܝܠܐ). The form of words is: "on the day X in Y", or "in the month Y on the day X in it / in this / in the same month". Sometimes the month-date is placed before the year and is followed by ܕܝܠܐܝܠܐ. Elsewhere we find ܕܝܠܐܝܠܐ or, more rarely, ܕܝܠܐ (e.g. A. 11, 12, 19).

### Abbreviation

The magic of the medium may also explain why so little use is made of abbreviation, less than in most manuscripts of the Syrians. The year is normally written out in full, though tens and units are often abbreviated, regularly indeed, when they stand for the day of the month. ܠܐܝܠܐ (sometimes written ܠܐ) is only abbreviated once or twice, and then not before the twelfth century. The hundreds are rarely abbreviated. (By abbreviation of numerals, I mean the use of the Syriac alphabetic system of numerotation.)

Ecclesiastical titles, particularly ܐܒܬܐ and ܐܒܬܐܝܠܐ, are sometimes abbreviated; yet B. 9, ending a line with ܐܒܬܐ, which is an accepted abbreviation of ܐܒܬܐܝܠܐ, completes the word on the next line. Stock epithets (ܐܒܬܐܝܠܐ for patriarch, ܐܒܬܐ for bishop) are not abbreviated, though ܐܒܬܐ sometimes is.

Many abbreviations were clearly not conventional but were forced upon the cutter by lack of space at the end of the line, or, after the calligraphic revival of ca. 1000, by the desire for lines of equal length, coûte-que-coûte. Here is a list of the few conventional abbreviations: ܐܒܬܐ for ܐܒܬܐܝܠܐ (P. 34, A. 16);







ⲙⲟⲗ / ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ . P. 26 and B. 12 use ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ in contexts other than funerary, where at least some of the beneficiaries were alive at the time of writing:

P. 26: ⲁⲃⲟⲩⲁⲛⲉⲛⲁ ⲗⲁⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲗⲁⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ  
B. 12: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲁⲃⲟⲩⲁⲛⲉⲛⲁ ⲗⲁⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲗⲁⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ  
ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ

Here ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ is a short-hand for "let him say: 'The Lord pardon him when he dies!'"'. The "departed ones" (ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ) of the beneficiary, his parents (ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ), and those who "participated" (ⲁⲃⲟⲩⲁⲛⲉⲛⲁ) are sometimes included in the prayer, even if it is an epitaph (e.g. P. 30, P. 28); this last is expanded in B. 8: ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ and in A. 19: ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ. ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ or ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ is often used to strengthen the appeal. Only A. 20 has: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ, [ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ] ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ. Also unique is the addition in P. 69, though no doubt it is conventional in another medium: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ. This, incidentally, shows that the elliptic usage of the verb had the same "status" as the normal usage, i.e. that the devout wish that another be pardoned was treated as an effective act.

#### *Dedications, doxologies, epitaphial preambles*

A few inscriptions begin with words of good omen. A. 13, probably under Islamic influence, begins: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ, and likewise P. 92 begins: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ. The westerly geographical position shared by these two inscriptions may have made them more susceptible to external culture.

Others begin with a doxology. B. 10 has: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ (cf. C. 3).

P. 34: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ  
ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ

P. 35: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ  
ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ

P. 54: ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ  
ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ

Such dedications and doxologies only stand at the beginning and are always followed by a record of building in a monastery or church.

The genre of epitaphs occasionally shows a comparable preamble (P. 107 and P. 116 of the 11th and 12th centuries, respectively): ⲙⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ. I have seen another inscription in Qeeth, on an outside wall of the church, which began in this way; but it was not legible far beyond the opening words.



*Buildings records*

The specific diction of this genre can best be divided into three categories: 1. the work; 2. the product; 3. the motive.

1) The most common verbs are *ḥbr* and *ʿāḥḥ*. *ʿāḥḥ* and *ʿāḥḥ* are also used where appropriate. *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* appears to be attested (C. 11) and the same combination of verbs in the passive is found in P. 53. *ḥbr* is sometimes combined with another verb for greater emphasis: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (A. 2); *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (P. 34, 54). A. 13 has *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (see below, on *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ*), where the subject is a monk. *ḥbr* and *ʿāḥḥ* are both attested (P. 33, B. 7). In A. 6 *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* refers to the financial contribution of a bishop. Accordingly, the words: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* in A. 2 probably amount to a denial that there were other financial sources apart from the author. A pious gift, e.g. of land or of a cistern, is expressed with the verb *ḥbr*; the gift of a sum of money with *ʿāḥḥ* or *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (B. 3). To the passive verbs may be added the unparalleled *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* of A. 5 and the late *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (P. 33, of the fourteenth century) and *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (P. 35, of the sixteenth century), both at Ṣalāḥ.

Under this heading come also instrumental expressions, such as: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (A. 2); *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (also A. 2); *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (A. 16, B. 10, C. 14, D. 14); *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (P. 53); *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (A. 16). A. 16 has no verb expressing the work done (cf. B. 12, which may, however, originally have had one). B. 4 and B. 5 use the first person singular pronoun, *ʿāḥḥ*, with the name in apposition to it, but have no verb expressing what that person did. Finally A. 6 has a whole series of verbs, understanding *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* as object: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ*.

2) The most common description of a product is *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* (A. 13 is a *nomen actionis*); A. 3 may have added: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ*. *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* covers both liturgical and non-liturgical buildings. In A. 6 the product (a stone slab on which the inscription is engraved) is implied, but not described; A. 16 also has no description, but in this case the product (a building) can no longer be recognized. In the list which follows it will be noticed that the name of the product is almost invariably followed by the demonstrative, "this/these". In a similar way the local bishop is called *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ* and villages and monasteries are referred to with a demonstrative, not a name, if that is where the inscription stands (a fourteenth and a sixteenth-century inscription at Ṣalāḥ are the only exceptions).

P. 53: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ ʿāḥḥ*

C. 1, ?C. 5: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ*

A. 9, A. 13: *ḥbr ʿāḥḥ*



A. 12, C. 3:  $\kappa \alpha \lambda \gamma \delta$

A. 15:  $\frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \right)$

D. 14, 15: אֵלֶּה הָאֵלֹהִים

A.2:  $\kappa$  මැන දි.ප්‍ර. ක්‍රම ක්‍රම

P.115: കൗ കൂല


A.8: ڪو ڪهڙو

A.5, ?B.1:  $\kappa_1 \kappa_2$

P. 34, B. 13, D. 9: കൂത കൂതയ

C.2: കനകപ്പിണ്ഡം

A. 19:  $\kappa \delta i: \omega: \kappa \omega \gamma \text{ אכא קל}$

3) P. 26 begins with a motive for the gift of land to the church: 

Such expressions are also found in the following:

P.53: ଅନନ୍ତରାମ ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଗଠିତ କରାଯାଇଥିବା ଗ୍ରାମ ପଞ୍ଚାୟତରାଜର ନାମ ଗ୍ରାମ ପଞ୍ଚାୟତରାଜ

A.2:  $\langle \mathbf{r} | \mathbf{r}' \rangle = \delta(\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}')$ ,  $\langle \mathbf{r} | \mathbf{r} \rangle = 1$ ,  $\langle \mathbf{r} | \mathbf{r}' \rangle = 0$  if  $\mathbf{r} \neq \mathbf{r}'$















|                                                      |                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| ܠܚܕܐ P. 115                                          | ܠܚܕܐ B. 9                                       |
| ܠܚܕܐ A. 17                                           | (?) ܠܚܕܐ P. 112                                 |
| ܠܚܕܐ A. 17, P. 115                                   | ܠܚܕܐ B. 3                                       |
| ܠܚܕܐ P. 108, 112                                     | ܠܚܕܐ B. 3, 8                                    |
| ܠܚܕܐ (ܐ) A. 6                                        | ܠܚܕܐ A. 8                                       |
| ܠܚܕܐ C. 2, P. 95                                     | ܠܚܕܐ A. 1, 5, 7, 16, 18, 20, B. 3, 5, C. 2, 3,  |
| ܠܚܕܐ P. 100                                          | D. 14, P. 22, 23, 27, 28, 30-3, 65, 66, 70, 95, |
| ܠܚܕܐ / ܠܚܐ A. 1-4, 8, 12, 15, 16, B. 1, 8, 9, P. 69, | 97, 99-105, 107, 108, 110, 111, 113-6           |
| 71                                                   | ܠܚܐ / ܠܚܐ A. 17, 19, 20, C. 11, 14, D. 3, 5,    |
| ܠܚܐ B. 13                                            | 8, P. 33, 70, 92, 114, 115                      |
| ܠܚܐ A. 18, B. 4-6, 7, D. 14, P. 66-8, 98,            | ܠܚܐ A. 8                                        |
| 107, 111, 112, 116b                                  | ܠܚܐ D. 15                                       |
| ܠܚܐ D. 8, 14                                         | ܠܚܐ B. 9, 12, C. 5                              |
| ܠܚܐ C. 2                                             | ܠܚܐ A. 1, 3, 8, B. 1-3, 7, 9, C. 7, 10, P. 22   |
| (Af'el) ܠܚܐ A. 6                                     | ܠܚܐ P. 33                                       |
| ܠܚܐ A. 18, C. 11                                     | ܠܚܐ A. 5, 12, C. 2, P. 65, 97, 99-103,          |
| ܠܚܐ A. 1, B. 1                                       | 105, 107, 116b                                  |
| ܠܚܐ A. 10                                            | ܠܚܐ A. 6                                        |
| ܠܚܐ B. 1, 7, 9, 13, P. 22-4, 27-9, 31, 32*           | ܠܚܐ A. 13, B. 3, B. 13, P. 92                   |
| ܠܚܐ A. 8, B. 1, 9, C. 7                              | ܠܚܐ D. 8                                        |
| ܠܚܐ B. 13                                            | ܠܚܐ D. 14                                       |
| ܠܚܐ B. 13                                            | ܠܚܐ B. 13                                       |
| ܠܚܐ A. 15, B. 8, P. 26                               | ܠܚܐ A. 4, B. 9, D. 4                            |

† The inscriptions numbered in brackets have a month-name, but not the word "month" itself.

\* The epitaphs at Ṣalāḥ frequently use ܠܡܢ ܠܚܕܐ ܡܢܐ to mean "from this monastery", rather than "from the same monastery" (or "above-mentioned"). This may be a solecism, due to copying the phrase from B. 7 without understanding that ܠܚܕܐ ܡܢܐ there refers back to an implicit previous reference to the monastery in the word ܠܚܕܐ; the error was then perpetuated unthinkingly as part of the epigraphic "convention" of Ṣalāḥ.