

Andrew Palmer and Geert Jan van Gelder

## Syriac and Arabic Inscriptions at the Monastery of St Mark's in Jerusalem

The Jacobite, or Syrian Orthodox, monastery of St Mark's in the Old City of Jerusalem contains a number of inscriptions carved and painted in the wood or stone of its fabric. Some are in Syriac, the liturgical language of the Jacobites (all these, unless we state otherwise, are in Serṭō Pshīṭō script); others are in Arabic: still others, though in Arabic, are inscribed with Syriac characters, in the 'Garshūnī' manner (all these, without exception, are in Serṭō Pshīṭō script); and one or two are bilingual, in Syriac and in Arabic. Most are of recent date (nineteenth or twentieth century); but two refer to earlier periods. One day early in 1986 Andrew Palmer obtained permission to photograph these inscriptions, but there was no time to measure them, record their position with due care, or check readings on the spot. Nevertheless, it seemed to us that it was worth publishing them from the photographs.

The most famous inscription of St Mark's is prominently positioned on the interior wall of the main church, immediately on the right as you enter; it has been encased in wood with a sheet of glass in front of it and it is shown to all tourists. The record refers to the rebuilding, in A.D. 73, of a church of the Mother of God on the site of the house of Mark the Evangelist. O. A. Meinardus<sup>1</sup> supposes that the use of the title 'Mother of God' for Mary indicates a date after the Council of Ephesus in 431. Y. Koriah Karkenny<sup>2</sup> accordingly claims that the inscription is of the sixth century; he tells us that it was discovered in 1940, though he says nothing of the circumstances of its discovery. It has been signalled in good faith by the guide-books as an authentic early inscription<sup>3</sup> and it is the sole evidence that the Last Supper took place on this spot (assuming it was held at the house of John Mark). The masonry of this church is of the Crusader period (the pointed arch through which one enters is illustrated by Meinardus, *loc. cit.*), and the block on which the inscription is engraved forms

1 'The Syrian Jacobites in the Holy City', *Orientalia Suecana* 12 (for the year 1963), Uppsala, 1964, p. 73 with note.

2 *The Syrian Orthodox Church in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem, 1976 (caption to the fourth illustration after p. 48).

3 See A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem', *OrChr* 75, 1991, p. 32 n. 73.



part of the Crusader wall. If the inscription was not built into the wall by Crusader architects centuries before this church had any association with the Syriac language (which seems unlikely), it must be either a copy of an earlier inscription or else a fraud.

## 1.

Translation:

'This (is) the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark; and it was proclaimed a church by the Holy Apostles in the name of the Mother of God, Mary, after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven; and it was built a second time, after Jerusalem was (i.e. 'had been') destroyed by King Titus, in the year 73 \*of Christ\*.'

N.B. The asterisks around the phrase 'of Christ' indicate that this corresponds to an abbreviated word in the inscription. This convention is used throughout the present publication.

A.D. 73 must be the year of the alleged rebuilding of the church, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus having occurred on 26 September A.D. 70. Vespasian was actually the Emperor from 69 to 79, so it is anomalous for his son Titus (Emperor 79-81) to be called 'King' here, since he was merely 'Caesar' at the time. The author could be excused this mistake if he wrote, as the title used for the Virgin Mary suggests, after 431; although the fact that the inscription ends with the year 73 would tend to suggest that it was written on the occasion of the alleged rebuilding of the church in that year.

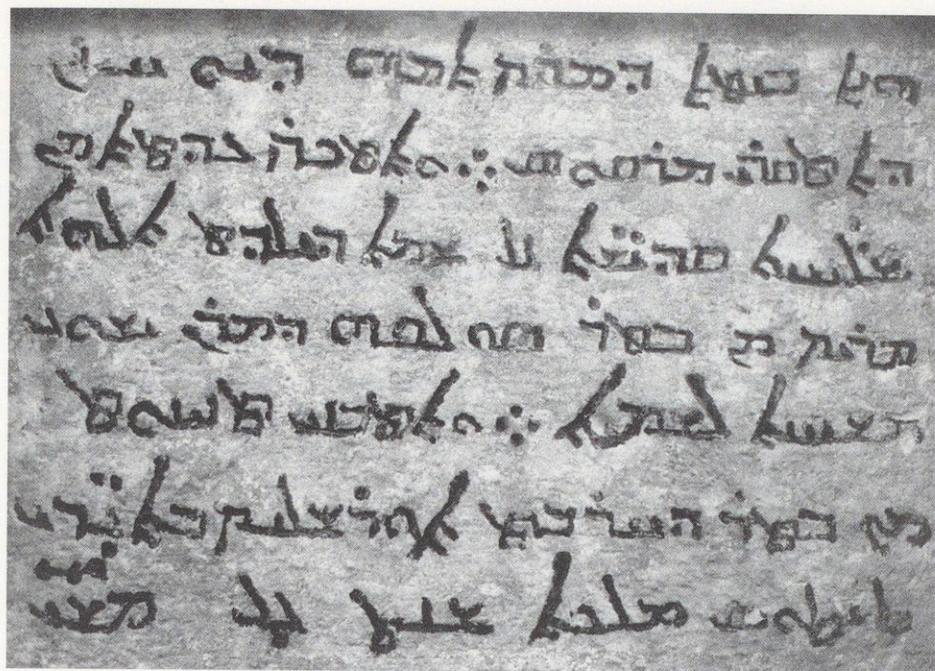
The degenerate letter-forms (a poor imitation of Eṣṭrangēlō script) betray a date at the end of the Middle Ages. The closest parallel is, I think, a fifteenth-century inscription at Ḥaḥ in Ṭūr 'Abdīn.<sup>4</sup> The script of the inscription in Jerusalem is actually much less accomplished than this; but that is what we should expect, seeing that the remote plateau of Ṭūr 'Abdīn was a bastion of Syriac literary culture even in the fifteenth century, when the rest of the Syrian Orthodox Church neglected its linguistic heritage.

In the 1470s the patriarch Khalaf acquired the Coptic church of the Mother of God 'in the middle of the city' for the Jacobite congregation in Jerusalem; and in 1491/2 a pilgrim from Ṭūr 'Abdīn was apparently told by the Syrians that this church was the house of Simon Peter.<sup>5</sup> Since this pilgrim, the presbyter Addai,

4 A. Palmer, 'A Corpus of Inscriptions from Ṭūr 'Abdīn and Environs', *OrChr* 71, 1987, pp. 53-139, p. 136 D. 14, dated 1442/3, with the photograph on p. 131.

5 See A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem', *OrChr* 75, 1991, p. 31, where the reference in note 70 should include p. 83; moreover, I was there misled by a lacuna and failed to see that the church and the house were identified.





ܡܪܝܢ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܗܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ



goes on to identify the house with that in which Simon took refuge after escaping from prison (*Acts* 12:12), he may in fact have been told that the church was the house where John Mark's mother, not Peter himself, had lived. However that may be, Addai does not appear to have seen our inscription, nor any older inscription with the same text.

If it is not a fraud, it must be a copy of an inscription found on the site after it was bought by the Jacobites. This is improbable, for various reasons. The Syriac language of the inscription would suggest that the church was in the possession of Syriac speakers at the time it was composed; but no evidence has been found that this was ever the case before the fifteenth century. If the inscription was known at the time when the church was purchased from the Copts, it would surely have been hailed by the learned biographer of the patriarch John bar Shay Allāh, who describes the negotiations for the church in some detail in the Cambridge MS Dd.3.8<sup>1</sup>, foll. 82-7, as proof that the Syrians had an ancient title to it. We might suppose that it was discovered after the purchase; but then we would still have to explain the fact that this inscription uses the Christian era, whereas early Syriac inscriptions use the Seleucid era or another dating system, but never the Christian era. Perhaps a Seleucid date was converted into a Christian date if the inscription is the result of a transcription made around 1500?

It is more probable that the knowledge that Titus conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was obtained from a western source and that the author of the inscription was insufficiently educated to convert the date into the Seleucid era. For the final argument against the authenticity of this inscription is the poor knowledge of the Syriac language displayed by its author. There are at least seven infelicities of expression and one downright error, in the very first word. This is inconceivable in an early author. This inscription does not contain any of the hallowed formulae or respect any of the conventions familiar to us from Syriac epigraphy.

We may conclude that the inscription was engraved after the visit of the presbyter Addai in order to give credence to the story he was told. The motive is evident: at Jerusalem every sect has to advertise the close association of sites in its possession with events in the narrative of the Gospels and *Acts*. A former monastery of the Jacobites at Jerusalem had claimed to be the house of Simon the Pharisee, where Mary Magdalene washed Jesus's feet, and a hair from Mary's head, found on the spot, was held to prove the fact, although a glance at the Gospel is enough to show that Simon's house should be sought at Bethany, not in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> The report that the inscription was discovered in 1940 (no doubt in the course of stripping the walls to prepare for the replastering recorded by an inscription of that year, which is published below, as number 15) suggests either

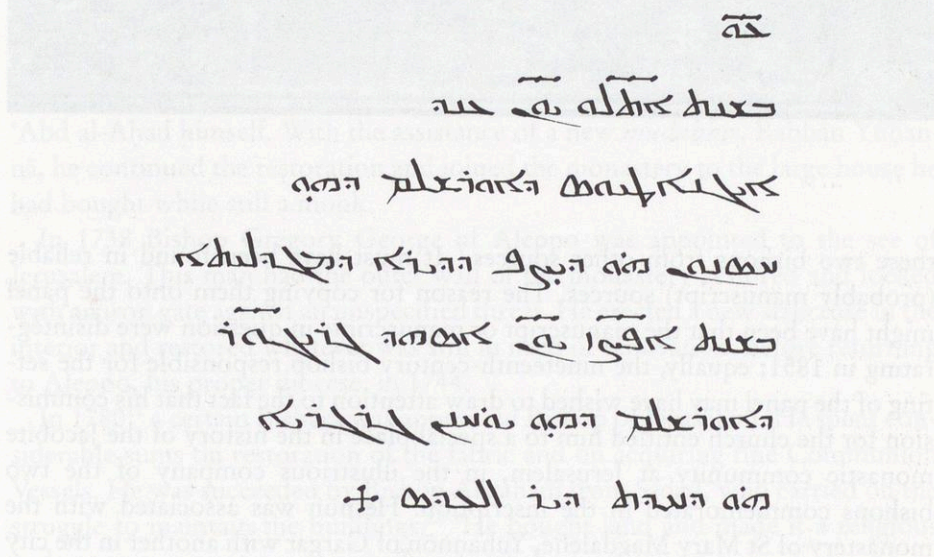
6 See A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem', *OrChr* 75, 1991, p.28f.



that it had been covered up at some date after the fifteenth century, presumably by a bishop who saw through the fraud and was ashamed of it, or (less probably) that it was forged in 1940 and presented as an archaeological discovery.

The church of the Mother of God in St Mark's contains a good deal of ornately carved and gilded wooden furniture (cf. number 4 A/B, below), including a high screen behind the altar, topped by three domes. In the middle of this screen, just below the level of the domes, is a panel, apparently of wood (we have not inspected it from near by), bearing the following painted inscription, in Es-ṭrangēlō script, except for the first letter of the last word, which, under the influence of the Arabic name 'Dayr al-'Adas', perhaps, is written in Serṭō Pshīṭō.

2.



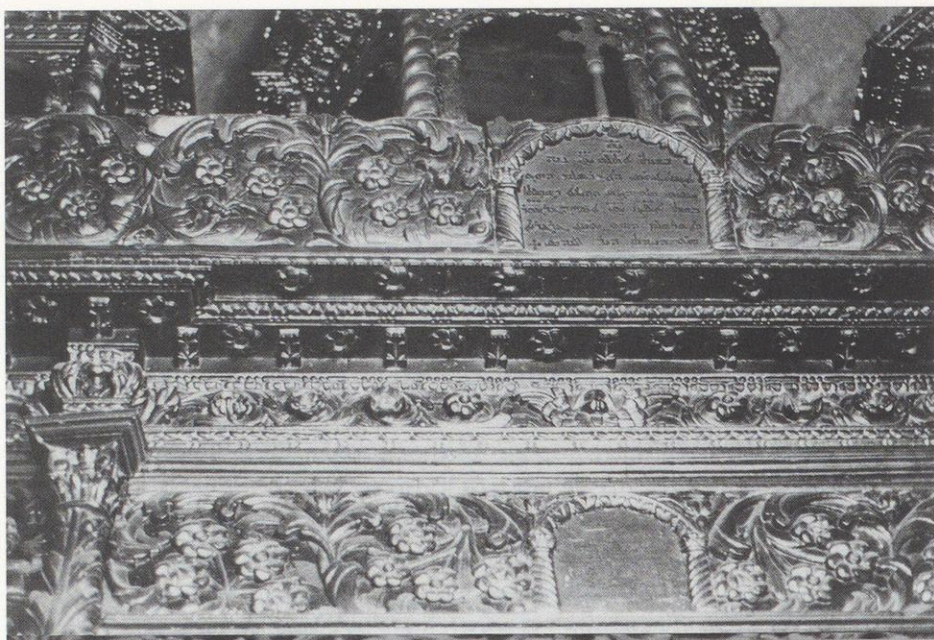
Translation:

'\*Memorial\*: In the year 1436 (A.D. 1124/5) \*of the Greeks\* (the bishop) who commissioned the monastery of the Magdalene, Ignatius of Jerusalem, who is Ḥesnūn, died.'

'In the year 1897 (A.D. 1585/6) \*of the Greeks\* (the bishop) who restored Dayr al-'Adas, \*Gregory\* of Jerusalem, who is Yūḥannōn of Gargar, was martyred.'

Possibly this panel was painted or commissioned by Bishop 'Abd al-Nūr, who commissioned all the wooden furniture in the sanctuary in 1851 (see inscription number 4A/B, below). The information is in accord with what is known about





these two bishops from other sources.<sup>7</sup> It must have been found in reliable (probably manuscript) sources. The reason for copying them onto the panel might have been that the manuscript or manuscripts in question were disintegrating in 1851; equally, the nineteenth-century bishop responsible for the setting of the panel may have wished to draw attention to the fact that his commission for the church entitled him to a special place in the history of the Jacobite monastic community at Jerusalem, in the illustrious company of the two bishops commemorated in the inscription. Ḥesnūn was associated with the monastery of St Mary Magdalene, Yuḥannōn of Gargar with another in the city which adopted the name of a former dependency in the country to the north of Jerusalem, Dayr al-ʿAdas; in the same way (he might have wished to imply) ʿAbd al-Nūr was the major benefactor of St Mark's.

As a matter of interest, there was formerly an inscription on the chancel-screen of the church of St Cyriac in Arnas, Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, which, like this panel in Jerusalem, preserved in epigraphic form earlier manuscript records.<sup>8</sup>

7 See A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem', *OrChr* 75, 1991, pp. 27-8 and 33-4.

8 See. A. Palmer, 'A Corpus of Inscriptions from Ṭūr ʿAbdīn and Environs', *OrChr* 71, 1987, pp. 121-3, C. 2 and *id.*, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: the early history of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 209f.



G.P. Bahnām, *Bayt Marqūs fī Ūrushalīm aw Dayr Mār Marqūs li'l-Suryān*, Jerusalem, 1962, pp. 16-19, presents the results of his researches in the library of St Mark's on the successive restorations of that monastery. We shall summarise that account here, adding to it from the epigraphic evidence by introducing further inscriptions in chronological order up to 1958:

In 1718 the Patriarch Isaac sent Gregory Simon as Metropolitan to Jerusalem with the Metropolitan Shukr Allāh and the monks Rabbān Wānis of Gargar, Rabbān Ḥannā, Rabbān 'Abd al-Nūr and Rabbān Ni'ma, the last three being from Aleppo. The monastery was in a deplorable state of delapidation, although its many debts had already been paid off by Isaac's predecessor, the Patriarch George, who had made Maqdisī 'Abd al-Karīm of Jerusalem his *mudabbir* (possibly "abbot") there.<sup>9</sup> This man continued as *mudabbir* for a couple of years under the two bishops sent by Isaac, who instructed him to begin the restoration of the fabric; in 1719 he was succeeded as *mudabbir* by Rabbān 'Abd al-Aḥad, the son of Fanah<sup>10</sup> of Mardīn, who completed the external and internal restoration in a short time. He was an energetic man, who also opened a school, organized the historic library and acquired a large house opposite the monastery. At the death of Bishop Simon, the Patriarch Isaac ordained in his place Rabbān 'Abd al-Aḥad himself. With the assistance of a new *mudabbir*, Rabbān Yūḥannā, he continued the restoration and joined the monastery to the large house he had bought while still a monk.

In 1738 Bishop Gregory George of Aleppo was appointed to the see of Jerusalem. This man had the outer wall of the monastery restored and locked with an iron gate against an unspecified threat. He erected a new structure in the interior and restored whatever was still in need of renovation, before returning to Aleppo, his proper diocese, in 1744.

In 1780<sup>11</sup> a certain Bishāra was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem. He spent considerable sums on restoration of the fabric and on acquiring fine Communion Vessels. He was succeeded by Bishop Abraham from Ṣadad, who carried on the struggle to maintain the buildings.<sup>12</sup> 'He bought land and made it a religious endowment as mortmain for the benefit of the monastery.'

9 On the title 'Maqdisī', see H. Kaufhold, 'Der Ehrentitel "Jerusalem-pilger"', *OrChr* 75 (1991), pp. 44-61.

10 H. Kaufhold adds: 'Den Beinamen vokalisiert Karkenny in einem Prospekt über das Markuskloster und in "Holy Land" 46 als "Fenah"; S. Colbi, *Christianity in the Holy Land*, Tel Aviv 1969, 104 als "Panah". Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* I 533; II 504 vermeldet einen heiligen "Abū Fānah" oder "Fānā".

11 Or rather, before 1774, in which year he is attested by MS Mingana Syr. 247; I owe this observation and the knowledge that Bishāra became Maphrian in 1789 to H. Kaufhold.

12 This is one of a series of persons from Ṣadad, sixty to seventy kilometres south-south-east of Homs, in Syria (still an all-Christian settlement in 1994), who were associated from this time on with St Mark's.



In 1833 the monastery was again thoroughly restored, near the end of the reign of Bishop 'Abd al-Aḥad al-Dajālī. This is perhaps the 'Abd al-Aḥad mentioned in a rhyming (and thus occasionally oddly worded) Arabic inscription in the church of the Mother of God, set among later inscriptions on the wall to the left of number 1:

3.

قد تجدد عمارة دير مار مرقس الانجيلي الشهير بالسريان  
 باورشليم المقدسة المتقاطر اليها من كل صُقع وبـ[ل]دان  
 بعناية الموحد بثلاثة اقانيم الملك الرحمن  
 واتنشّى به قلاياتٍ ودواويرٍ حديثة واياوا[ن]  
 منزل للزائرين من ابناً روحيين ورُهبان  
 واتنشّت هذه الكنيسة المكنية بالعذري ام المسيح صخرة الايمان  
 في مدّة احقر روسا الكهنة عبد الاحد المطران  
 خادم الاسرار الشريفة يومئذٍ بهذا المكان  
 يرجو بذلك نوال العفو [عند] واهب الغفران  
 له ولزمرة المسيحيين [عند] .....  
 بتاريخ ..... ٨٣٤ (؟)

Translation:

'This building was renovated belonging to the Monastery of St Mark the Evangelist, renowned amongst the Syrians,

in Jerusalem the Holy (*Ūrushalīm al-Muqaddasa*), to which people flock from every region and (from all) countries;

by the care of him who is united in three Persons, the merciful King.

New monks' cells and courtyards and a portico were built,

a lodging for visitors, be they spiritual brothers or monks.

This church, called after the Virgin, the Mother of the Messiah, the Rock of Belief, was built (i.e. restored?)

in the time of the unworthiest of high priests, Metropolitan (bishop) 'Abd al-Aḥad,







the servant of the Noble Mysteries (i.e. celebrant of the Eucharist) at that time in this place,

hoping thereby to receive pardon from the Granter of forgiveness,  
for him and the congregation of Christians, ...  
on the date of ... [1]834.'

The Arabic word translated here as 'portico' could mean any vaulted or flat-roofed room or hall that is closed on three sides and open on one. This inscription could probably be read in its entirety from the stone, but some of the black paint in which it was picked out (as almost all the inscriptions are) has been whitened, no doubt as a result of replastering the church in 1940 (see number 15, below), and this makes the photograph difficult to read.

These works were supervised, Bahnām tells us, by Rabbān 'Abd al-Nūr of Edessa, the disciple of Bishop 'Abd al-Aḥad, who succeeded to the bishopric in 1840. He, too, endowed the monastery with land and repaired its structural defects up to his death in 1877. Bahnām does not mention that this bishop supplied the sanctuary of the church of the Mother of God with its present wooden furniture. This information comes from an Arabic inscription carved in relief on the back of the bishop's throne on the north side of the church. The Syriac letters are enclosed by an oval crown (of which the date, in Arabic numerals, forms the bottom part) framed by two curling rose-bushes, a rainbow of serried tulips, four undulating grapevines and, between the vines, linked medallions of the twelve Apostles flanking a slightly larger medallion of the Mother of God. On the cupboard in which the Scriptures are kept is an almost identical inscription (number 4B), entirely enclosed in an oval crown with a luxuriant vine surrounding it, in the branches of which, among clusters of grapes, hang medallions depicting Christ with an open Gospel Book, flanked in a semicircle by the four Evangelists and two other writers, perhaps Moses and Elijah, at the bottom on either side.



4B	قد اهتم	4A	قد اهتم
	بتخشب وحفر		بتخشب وحفر
	وتذهيب دايرة هذه		وتذهيب دايرة هذا
	خزانة الكتب المقدس		المكان المقدس مطر
	مطران عبد النور ريس		عبد النور الرهاوي
	دير السريان بالقدس		ريس دير السريان
	الشريف وكان ذلك		بالقدس الشريف
	في سنة مس		وكان ذلك في
	١٨٥١		سنة مس
			١٨٥١

Translation of A, with B's variant inserted:

'The panelling, carving and gilding of the precinct of this holy place [B: The panelling, carving and gilding of this treasury (i.e. library) of the \*Holy\* Scriptures] was undertaken by Metropolitan (bishop) 'Abd al-Nūr, from Edessa, superior of the monastery of the Syrians in *al-Quds al-Sharīf* (Jerusalem). This happened in the year 1851 \*after Christ\*.'

Note the appellation of Jerusalem, different from that used in the inscription of Bishop 'Abd al-Aḥad. Three other Arabic inscriptions, in the main courtyard of the monastery, all written in Syriac characters and all with the year 1858 in Arabic and Syriac numerals, commemorate further works by Bishop 'Abd al-Nūr:





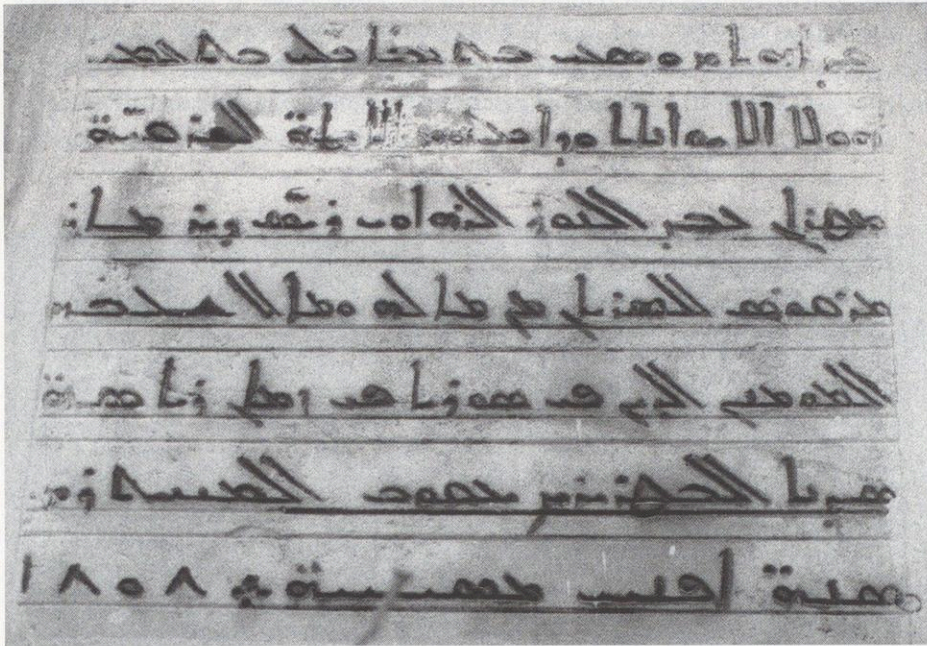
Inscription 4 A



Inscription 4 B



5.



قد اهتم وسعى بتعباً كلي بتعمير  
 هولا الايوانات وداخل[ة] الاوطة الشرقية  
 مطران عبد النور الرهاوي ريس دير مار  
 مرقوس للسريان من ماله ومال شعبه  
 المومنين الذين في سوريا في زمان رياسة  
 سيدنا البطريك يعقوب المحترم.  
 سنة افنح مسيحية: ١٨٥٨

Translation:

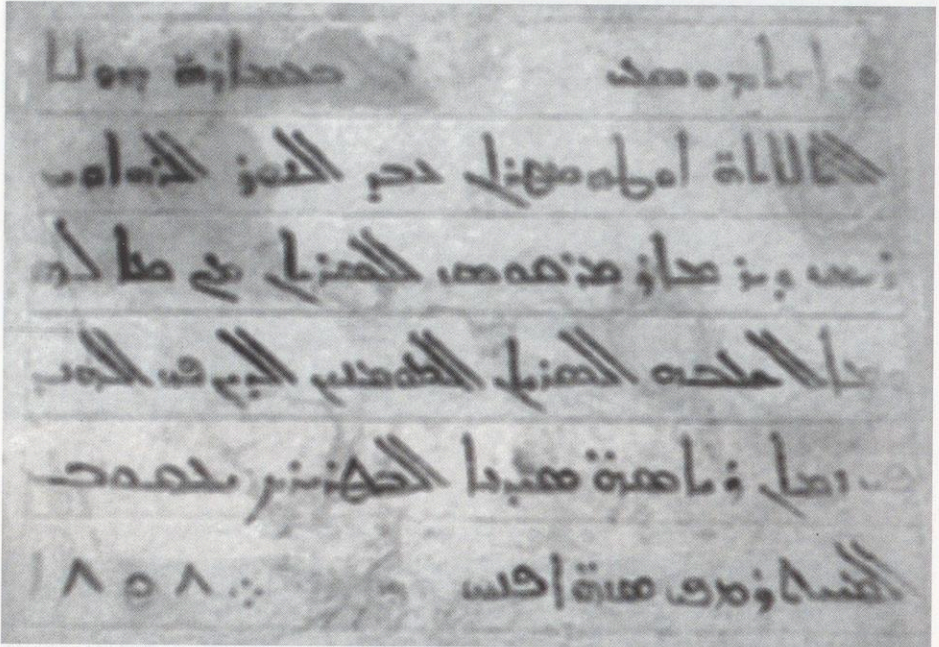
'The building of these porticoes and the interior of the eastern room was undertaken, with striving of great labour, by Metropolitan (bishop) 'Abd al-Nūr, from Edessa, superior of the monastery of St Mark for the Syrians, from his money and the money of his people, the believers that are in Syria, in the time of



the reign of our Venerable Lord, the Patriarch Jacob; in the year of Christ 1858.'

The date is in Syriac and Arabic numerals (also in nos. 6-12). Attention has already been drawn to the semantic extension of the Arabic word here translated as 'portico'. The second and third inscriptions dated 1858 read as follows:

6.



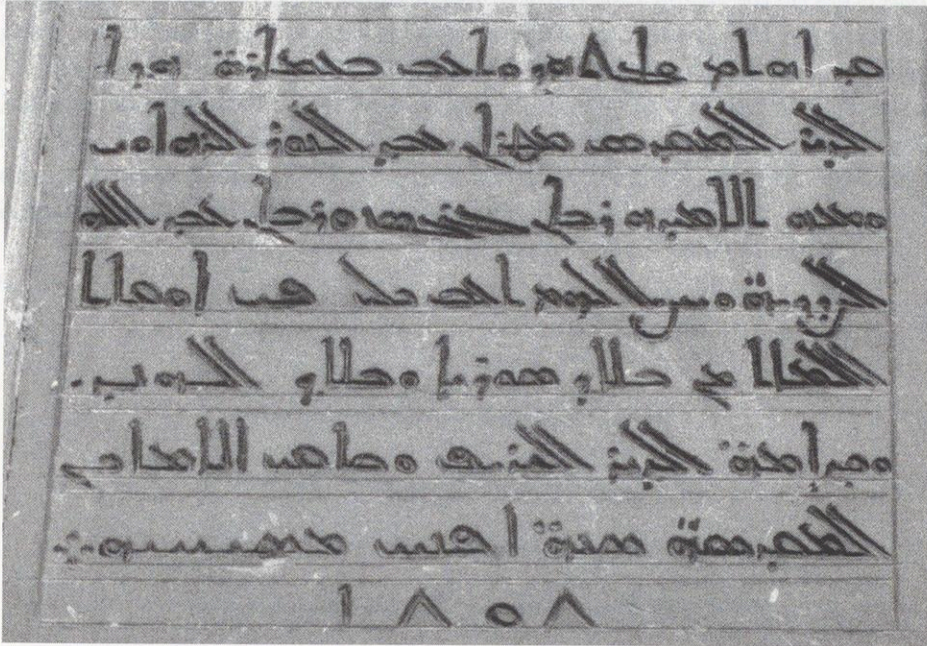
قد اهتم وسعى بعمارة هولا  
 الثلاثة اوطه مطران عبد النور الرهاوي  
 ريس دير مار مرقوس السريان من ماله  
 ومال شعبه السريان المومنين الذين في الهند  
 في زمان رياسة سيدنا البطريك يعقوب  
 المحترم في سنة افنح ٠٠٠ ١٨٥٨



## Translation:

'The construction of these three rooms was undertaken at great pains by the Metropolitan (bishop) 'Abd al-Nūr, from Edessa, superior of the monastery of St Mark for the Syrians, from his money and the money of the faithful Syrian people who are in India, in the time of the reign of our Lord the Venerable Patriarch Jacob, in the year 1858.'

7.



قد اهتم واجتهد وتعب بعمارة هذا  
الدير المقدس مطران عبد النور الرهاوي  
ومعه تلاميذه ربان جرجس وربان عبد الله  
الصدديّة وحصل لهم تعب كلي في اوقات  
اللمات من بلاد سوريا وبلاد الهند  
وقدامة الدير الشريف وباقي الاماكن  
المقدسة سنة افنح مسيحية:

١٨٥٨



## Translation:

'Metropolitan (bishop) 'Abd al-Nūr, of Edessa concerned himself, exerted himself and laboured for the building of this holy monastery: and with him his disciples, Rabbān George and Rabbān 'Abd Allāh, both from Ṣādad. Great efforts were performed by them in the times of the pilgrimages from the land of Syria and the land of India, and those that arrived at the noble monastery and the other holy places; in the year of Christ 1858.'

Two notes on the Arabic of this inscription are necessary: the word translated as 'pilgrimages' is a plural (not found in Standard Arabic) derived from a word meaning '(travelling) party, visit, group'; and for lack of a better alternative, it is necessary to read 'those that arrived' (*quddām*) where the inscription has *qud-dāmat*.

Bishop 'Abd al-Nūr died, as Bahnām says, in 1877; this is attested by the following Arabic inscription, written in Syriac characters and set in the north wall of the main church, above number 3:

8.

قد انتقل الى رحمة الله تعالى ابينا المرحوم  
 مار سطاثة الاربلي بالجنس المطران ع النور  
 وكانت رياسته على بيت مرقوس الانجيلي لد[سريان]  
 ستة وثلاثون سنة مكابداً اتعاباً ثقيلة وهو صبور[ر]  
 وبعد نياحته انوضع جسده الطاهر بداخل هذه  
 الكنيسة تحت هذه السطور الذي هو مكان صلاة  
 ستنا العذرى ام المسيح وكان ذلك سنة افغز  
 ١٨٧٧ مسيح [ف] ي ٨ (؟) [نيس] ان شهر ال[زهر]

## Translation:

'Passed away into the mercy of God, the Exalted: our late Father, Lord Eustace (Arabic 'Sṭāthā'), from Irbil (Arbela in northern Iraq) as regards the (main abode of his) family, Metropolitan (bishop) \*'Abd\* al-Nūr, and his superiorship of the house of Mark the Evangelist for the Syrians lasted for thirty-six years; he suffered heavy hardships [patiently]. After his obsequies his pure body was laid



inside this church, beneath these lines, which is the place of prayer of our Lady the Virgin Mother of the Messiah. This happened in the year \*of Christ\* 1877, on 8 April, the month of flowers.'

Like number 14, below, which is modelled on it, this inscription displays a bishop's hard, black, shiny turban, his right hand, holding a cross (on the left) and his left hand, holding a staff (reduced to the size of the cross) formed of two snakes intertwined (on the right), with winged cherubs filling the top corners above the arch of the frame. Note that the word 'patiently' translates *wa-hurwa ṣabūr*, which cannot be read with certainty on the photograph.

It was George, one of the two disciples of 'Abd al-Nūr mentioned in number 7, above, who succeeded to the bishopric at his death. He lost no time in leaving his mark. Three Arabic inscriptions, in Syriac characters, the latter two having the date in both Arabic and Syriac numerals, bear witness to his energy. The first is set in the wall above Bishop 'Abd al-Nūr's epitaph (number 8):

9.

المجد لله والشكر لرحمته .  
الذي بمعونته قد اهتم الحقير  
غرغر المطران جرجس الصدي  
بتجديد قصارة هذه الكنيسة بيت  
مرقوس الانجيلي للسريان الارثوذكسن  
في زمان رياسته على الدير . وكان  
المساعد له اخيه بالروح  
الريان عبد الله . وذلك بتاريخ  
سنة افحا مسيح ١٨٨١ :

Translation:

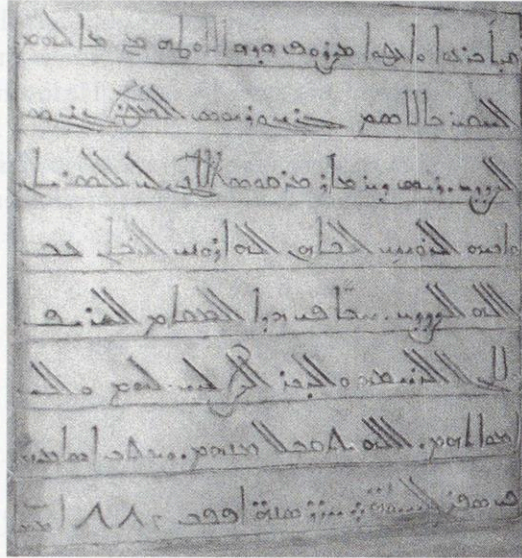
'Glory be to God, and thankfulness for His Mercy, with Whose Help the unworthy \*Gregory\*, Metropolitan (bishop) George, from Ṣadad, took care of the renovation of the cloister (Arabic: *quṣāra*) of this church, the house of Mark the Evangelist to the \*Orthodox\* Syrians, in the time of his headship of the monas-



tery. His assistant was his brother in spirit, Rabbān 'Abd Allāh. This occurred in the year \*of Christ\* 1881.'

The second and third of Bishop George's inscriptions are set in the walls of the buildings to which they refer. Unfortunately the exact situation of these and the other inscriptions outside the main church has not been recorded.

10.



قد تبرعوا واعطوا مصروف هذه الاوطه من مالهم  
الحقير بالاسم غريغوريوس المطران جرجس  
الصددي. ريس دير مار مرقوس الانجيلي للسريان  
واخيه الروحي الكاهن الهاروني الربان عبد  
الله الصددي. حباً في هذا المقام الشريف  
لاجل الرحمة والذكر الصالح لهم والى  
امواتهم. الله يتقبل منهم ويكتب اسامهم  
في سفر الحياة: حرر سنة افقب ١٨٨٢ مس



## Translation:

'The costs of this room were voluntarily contributed and given from their own money by the unworthy (person) with the name of Gregory, \*Metropolitan\* (bishop) George from Ṣadad, superior of the monastery of St Mark the Evangelist for the Syrians, and his spiritual brother, the Aaronite priest, Rabbān 'Abd Allāh from Ṣadad<sup>13</sup>, out of love for this noble site, and for the sake of mercy and virtuous remembrance, for them and their dead ones. May God accept (this) from them and write their names in the Book of Life! Written in the Year \*of Christ\* 1882.'

11.

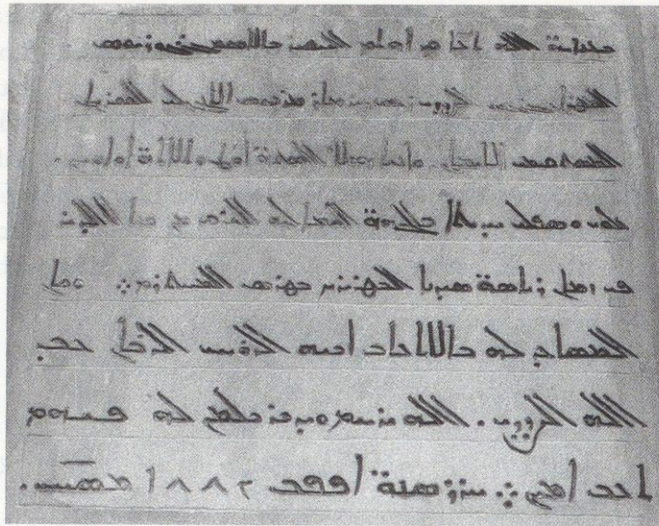
بعناية الله تعآ قد اهتم الحقير بالاسم غريغوريوس  
المطران جرجس الصددى ريس دير مار مرقوس الانجيلي للسريان  
المستقيمي الايمان. وانشا هولاء الستة أوط وثلاثة اواوين.  
علوي وسفلي حديثاً بالجهة الشمالية للشرق من مال الدير  
فى زمان رياسة سيدنا البطريك بطرس المحترم: وكان  
المساعد له بالاعتاب اخيه الروحي الربان عبد  
الله الصددى. الله يرحم ويذكر كل من له فيهم  
تعب امين: حرر سنة افب ١٨٨٢ مسيح

## Translation:

'With the Providence of God, the Exalted, the unworthy (person) with the name of Gregory, Metropolitan (bishop) George from Ṣadad, superior of the monastery of St Mark the Evangelist for the Orthodox Syrians, concerned himself with the building of these six rooms and three porticoes, upper and lower, newly made, at the north side, towards the east, from the money of the monastery, in the time of the headship of our reverend Lord, the Patriarch Peter. His assistant in these labours was his spiritual brother, Rabbān 'Abd Allāh from Ṣadad. God have mercy upon and remember all those who laboured for them (*viz* these rooms *et cetera*). Amen. Written in the year \*of Christ\* 1882.'

13 This is the later Patriarch: H. Kauffhold.





'Portico' has twice been remarked upon already; 'orthodox' is here translated from the Greek form used in the inscription of 1881 into the Arabic *al-musta-qīmī-imān*, 'the Straight of Faith'.

Bishop Gregory George reigned for nearly twenty years, as the following, his Arabic epitaph in Syriac script, attests. It is modelled on the epitaph of his predecessor, Bishop Eustace 'Abd al-Nūr, the Arbelite, from Edessa, and set in the wall above number 9, Bishop George's first inscription.

12.

قد انتقل الى رحمة الله تعالى  
 ابينا المرحوم مار غريغوريوس  
 المطران جرجس كساب الصدي.  
 وكانت رياسته على بيت مار  
 مرقوس تسعة عشر سنة مكابداً  
 اتعابا على اسم سيده. وبعد  
 نياحته انوضع جسده الطاهر  
 بهذه الكنيسة تحت هولاي السطور



وطالب الرحمة من ربه الغفور.  
وكان ذلك عشرين ايلول سنة افصوم

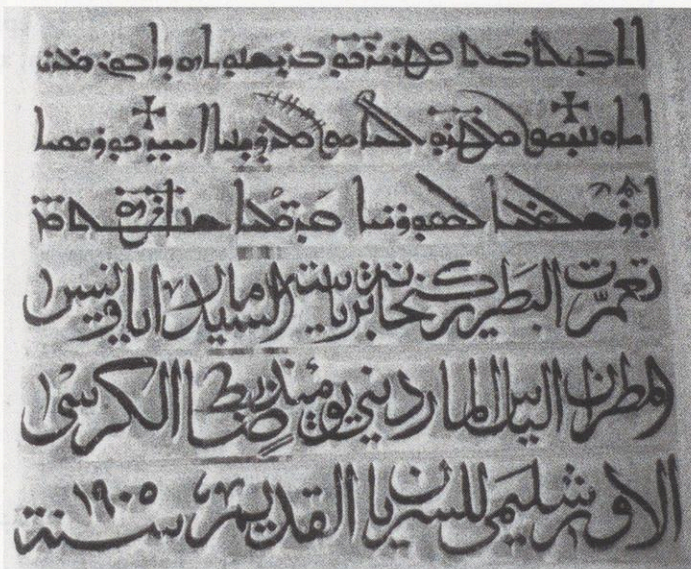
١٨٩٦

Translation:

'Passed away into the mercy of God, the Exalted: our late Father, Lord Gregory, Metropolitan (bishop) George Kassāb from Ṣadad – his superiorship of the house of St Mark was nineteen years; he suffered hardships for the Name of his Master. After his obsequies his pure body was laid in this church, beneath these lines, and (he is now) seeking mercy from his much-forgiving Lord. This happened on the twentieth of September of the year \*of Christ\* 1896.'<sup>14</sup>

From about the turn of the century onwards there is a tendency to use the Syriac language in epigraphic memorials. Appropriately enough, the first twentieth-century inscription is in Syriac and Arabic. It is set in one of the internal walls of the present bishop's private reception-room.

13.



<sup>14</sup> See S.P. Brock, 'Two Syriac Manuscripts in the Library of Selwyn College, Cambridge', *OrChr* 55 (1971), 149-60, p. 149.



13A  
 اٰلِاٰحِبَّةِ حَسَّ وَهَنَتْ قَدَّ حَبِيبِهَا وَاحْفَ قَدَّ  
 اٰمَاهُ سَبَّحَ مَلَكًا كَلَامَ مَدْبُوبًا اِسْبَاحَ ذَهَبًا  
 اَوْعَلَقْنَا لَهْبُونًا حَبَّتْهَا مَعَهُ اَرْزَقَ مَرَّ

13B  
 تعمّرت البطريركخانة برياسة السيد مار اياونيس  
 المطران الياس المارديني يومئذ صابط الكرسي  
 الاورشليمي للسريان القديم سنة ١٩٠٥

Translation of both texts:

'The patriarchal residence was built in the reign of our Father [B has a variant: 'the Master'], My Lord Īwannīs, Metropolitan (bishop) Elijah, from Mardīn, incumbent of the see of Jerusalem for the Old Syrians in the year [A adds: \*of Christ\*] 1905.'

The following inscriptions are all exclusively in Syriac. Three epitaphs are gathered on one stone and set in the north wall of the main church, adjacent to numbers 8 and 9 on the right:

14.

بَعْدَ مَرِّ خَلْقًا وَحَقًّا مَغْبٍ لِّلْاَوَا  
 وَبَتَّةً اَحْفَ قَدَّ اَحْبَابِهَا  
 قَدَّ وَابْنِهَا وَبَعْدَ حَبَّتِهَا وَابْنِهَا  
 اَوْعَلَقْنَا قَدَّ حَبَّتِهَا اَسْنِ مَعَهُ اَرْزَقَ مَرَّ  
 حَبَّتِهَا مَعَهُ وَبَعْدَ اَحْفَ قَدَّ اَحْبَابِهَا  
 وَابْنِهَا مَعَهُ حَبَّتِهَا اَسْنِ مَعَهُ اَرْزَقَ مَرَّ



ܕܒܝܫܬܐ ܐܡܪܝܬ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܐܠܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ

Translation:

'Departed from the world of distress and removed to the country of delights: our Father, My Lord Ignatius, \*Patriarch\* of Antioch, who is 'Abd Allāh (written here in Syriac as 'the Slave of God') the Second, 26 November in the year 1915 \*of Christ\*.'

'Deceased: Metropolitan (bishop) Gregory Ephraem of Ṣadad, \*Metropolitan\* of Jerusalem, 12 November in the year 1922 \*of Christ\*.'

'Deceased: The venerable Īwannīs Elijah from Mardīn, sometime superior (of the monastery) in Jerusalem, 2 May in the year 1933 \*of Christ\*.'

It seems probable that these epitaphs, which are divided by decorative motifs and crowned by the emblems of episcopal office, with cherubs in the top corners, as in the adjacent inscription (number 8), were inscribed at the same time as the following inscription, which is positioned directly above it, for this commemorates (among other things) the replastering of the wall in which both are set.

15.

ܕܒܝܫܬܐ ܐܡܪܝܬ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܐܠܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ  
 ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ







is also the only one of which we do not possess a complete or publishable photograph, some centimeters having been inadvertently missed on the right and the remainder having been overlit with the flash.

16.

[حفظ] اَنْزَلَ مَرَّةً حَقِيقَةً حَبِيبٌ وَحِبٌّ ۱۱۱۱  
 [معه] فَرُوجًا وَبَنًا هَعَبَتْ حَبِيبٌ حَقِيقَةً  
 [معه] عَتَمَ مَعْمَعِ ۱۱۱۱  
 [حفظ] اَنْزَلَ مَرَّةً حَقِيقَةً حَبِيبٌ وَحِبٌّ ۱۱۱۱  
 [وَسًا] مَحَبًّا وَبَنًا هَعَبَتْ حَبِيبٌ حَقِيقَةً  
 [ ]  
 [حفظ] اَنْزَلَ مَرَّةً حَقِيقَةً حَبِيبٌ وَحِبٌّ ۱۱۱۱  
 [معه] فَرُوجًا وَبَنًا هَعَبَتْ حَبِيبٌ حَقِيقَةً  
 [معه] عَتَمَ مَعْمَعِ ۱۱۱۱

Translation:

‘[In the year] 1904 (or perhaps 1906) \*of Christ\*, on 5 \*December\*, Rabbān . . . [Jose]ph (?) of Ṣadad, monk \*and presbyter\*, died after [having] served for fifty-three years.’

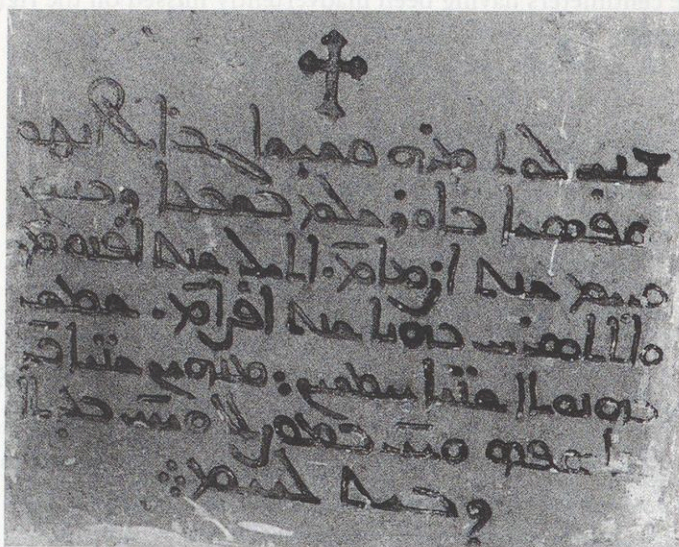
‘[In the yea]r 1910 \*of Christ\*, on 10 September, Gabriel, the son of [Denhō] of Hvōv, monk \*and presbyter\*, died, having served for [...] years.’

[In the yea]r 1916 \*of Christ\* on 8 April [Yūḥan]nōn Garūm of Mardīn, monk and presbyter, departed to his Lord, having [se]rved for ten years; and he lived for 44 years.<sup>16</sup>

16 For Yūhannōn Garūm, see H. Kaufhold 'Die syrischen und christlich-arabischen Hss. in Münster', *OrChr* 72 (1988), pp. 89-113, p. 99 (with the date 1915, a year before Yūhannōn's death).



17.



ܐܒ ܕܐܢܬܐ ܡܪܝܢ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ  
 ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ  
 ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ  
 ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ  
 ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ  
 ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ

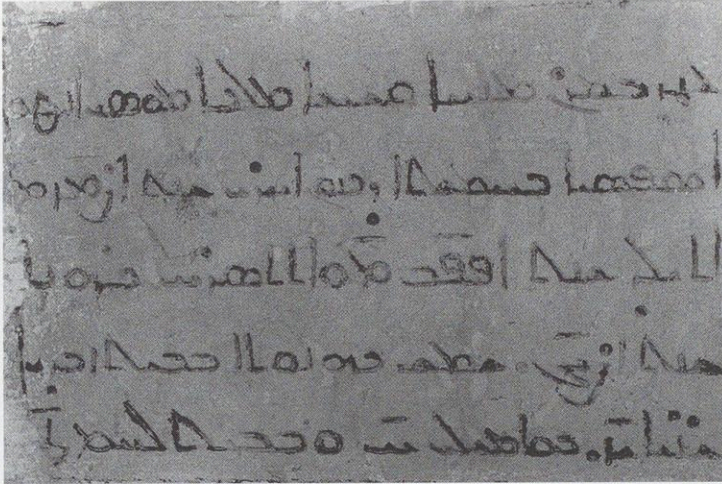
Translation:

'The presbyter Gabriel Antō of Espes departed to his Lord in Jerusalem on the seventh of December in the year 1941 \*of Christ\*. He was born in the year 1856 \*of Christ\* and ordained a priest in the year 1891 \*of Christ\*. He performed the priestly function for fifty years, 24 of them at Espes, and 8 in Mosul, and 18 in the church of Bethlehem.'



Espes, like Ḥvōv in the previous inscription and Šālāḥ in numbers 15 and 20, is a village in Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, in the basalt country north of Bēth Zabday/Āzakh (see the following inscription), just on the brink of the spectacular Naḥlō d-Gīhannō ('Hell Canyon').

18.



ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܘܨܐ ܡܠܟܐ

Translation:

'The late presbyter Malkē Mūsā Anṭō of Espes died in our Lord on the fifth of January in the year 1947 \*of Christ\*. He was born in the year 1882 \*of Christ\* and ordained a priest in the year 1913. He performed the priestly function in Bēth Zabday for 17 years, in Qāmishly for 8, and in Bethlehem for 9.'







'This commemoration was composed by Mar Grigorios Givargēs, Metropolitan\* of Angamali in the year 1946.'

The final inscription in this collection commemorates more building-works, described by Bahnām as ‘six beautiful rooms’, to which Rabbān Paul added, as Bahnām tells us, a new room and repair-works to two rooms and a hall in 1961.

المحب حسبنا هذا لا فائدة من جهة واحدة حكمة / حم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

منه من اهل البيت محمد وآله واهله واولاده

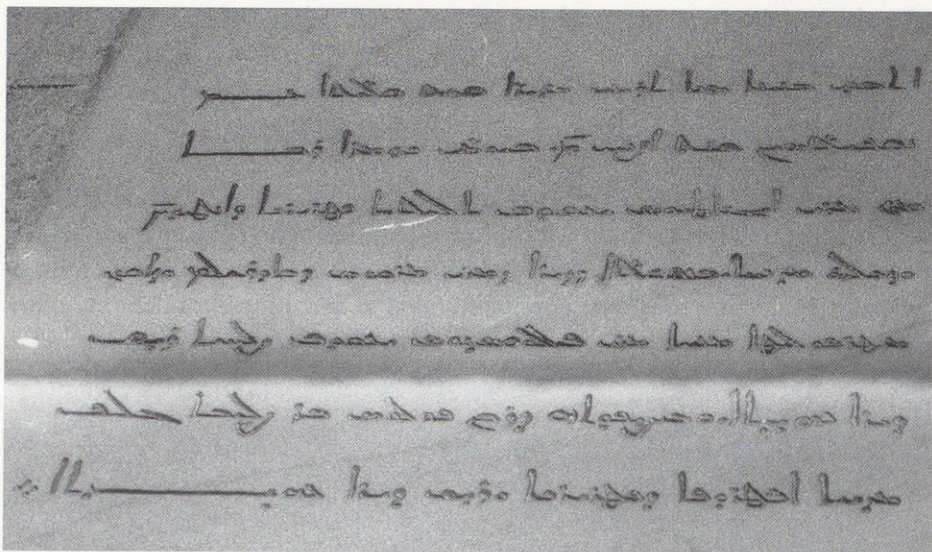
[illegible]

مذہبہ و اولاد / مسلمانان و کلمہ حقیدہ و حقوبت / اسما و بی

وَبِنَا حَبِيبًا ۝ احسبوهما وروح فلهما ذرهما

مدى افعولها وفعلها هزب ونا حبيب لال.





Translation:

'This building containing six chambers on two storeys and the adjoining structural elements were built in the year 1958 \*of Christ\*, in the days of the Great Priest, our Lord, My Lord Ignatius Jacob the Third, Patriarch of \*Antioch\* and of All the East, at the expense of the monastery of St Mark in Jerusalem and of our Father, the late Metropolitan (Bishop), My Lord Philoxenus Jacob of Ṣālāḥ, the superior of the said monastery, and on the commission of Rabbān Paul, the son of Ṣālība Ghalaf, from Midyāt, the Representative of the Patriarch and the superior of the said monastery.'

Final note, by Andrew Palmer

It is with regret that I have been obliged to conclude that the most famous of the inscriptions of St Mark's is a fiction of about 1500 or after. The authenticity of the two epigraphic records referring to the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, respectively, is, by contrast, unassailable, although they were probably copied in their present form in the mid-nineteenth century. It is surprising that the restorations of the eighteenth century, recorded, according to Bahnām, in manuscripts kept at St Mark's, have not left an epigraphic trace. Epigraphy, like diary-writing, is a habit which can be lost; on the other hand, it is possible that the eighteenth-century buildings were replaced by those of the later nineteenth century so radically that their building-inscriptions disappeared. It seems that this nineteenth-century spurt of restoration was stimulated by an influx of money from the faithful in Syria and in India connected, perhaps, with a renewed en-



thusiasm for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem about the middle of the century. The epigraphic record of the nineteenth century begins in Arabic script, then changes to Arabic in Syriac script. A bilingual Syriac and Arabic inscription of 1905 heralds the return of the Syriac language, which supplants Arabic in the epigraphic record for the rest of the twentieth century. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of renewed learning in the Syrian Orthodox Church, which produced at least two scholars of renown at that time: the Patriarch Ignatius Ephraem Barṣawm and the Bishop Philoxenos Yūḥannōn Dōlabānī. This improvement in Syriac literacy, which went hand in hand with a new kind of nationalism, appears to have prompted the bishops of Jerusalem to abandon the use of Arabic in their inscriptions. It was in 1903 that a monk at Jerusalem boasted about 'the enviable nation of the Syrian Jacobites'<sup>17</sup>

The final instalment of this series of articles on the Syrian Orthodox presence in Jerusalem will contain descriptions of manuscripts and the text of certain notes contained in manuscripts, which are of interest for history, such as the three colophons featured in A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem, Part Two: Queen Melisende and the Jacobite Estates', *OrChr* 76, 1992, pp. 74-94, and the nationalistic colophon of 1903. It will also contain an index to the whole series. I apologize to my readers for the failure to keep to my plan as announced in successive instalments. At the end I record my great debt to my co-author Geert Jan van Gelder, who established from my photographs the text of the Arabic inscriptions and translated them; some readings were improved by H. Kaufhold. G.J. van Gelder was also responsible for writing the notes on Arabic words and for translating the relevant passage on building-works from Bahnām's booklet. We enjoyed the secretarial assistance of Adrie Drint, a graduate student of Christian Arabic at Groningen University.

17 See A. Palmer, 'The History of the Syrian Orthodox at Jerusalem', *OrChr* 75, 1991, p. 17 n. 4.