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Identity and Christian-Muslim interaction : medieval art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul area

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Appendix B
Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Inscriptions at Deir Mar Behnam

Introduction

The present appendix lists the twelfth- and thirteenth-century inscriptions that have survived at Deir Mar Behnam, together with information about the location of each inscription in question and Harrak's English translations. For editions of the Syriac inscriptions, reference is made to Harrak's 2009 *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions of Iraq*. In order to facilitate cross-references, Harrak's numbering of the inscriptions has been retained.

Inscriptions

Inscription AE.01.5

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); underneath an Arabic inscription, in a frame along the three sides of the doorway.

Translation: '(This) gate is the gate of mercy, which bears mercy inside it. The one who enters (it) is full of sins, but the one who comes out (of it) is full of mercy. But if the one who has sins does not shed tears, he would not find mercy or forgiveness of sins. My Brothers, pray in faith for everyone who contributed (to this) whether in word or in caution, amen'.

Arabic inscription above AE.01.5

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); above the palmette frieze.

Translation: 'Lord, shut not the door of your mercy against the face of us who confess our sins. Open to us the doors of your mercy, O Forgiver'.

Inscription AE.01.6

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); below the two seated lions, starting with the one on the left.

Translation: 'You are a harbour full of compassion and every kind of assistance. And he who comes stepping over your threshold will find peace'.

Inscription AE.01.7

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); below the two seated lions, starting with the one on the left.

Translation: 'Open for me the gate of righteousness so that I may enter through them and praise the Lord'.

Inscription AE.01.8

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); stone slab placed horizontally against the floor at the left-hand corner.

Translation: ‘Lord, forgive the sins of your servant through the prayers of his friends, and have mercy on the disciple of all the Friars, who does not deserve to sit beside their feet every day on account of the sins and iniquities which he performed in their presence. May their prayer in faith be over the sinner and wretched one, who early everyday used to disciple himself with total (self) dislike. His name is ʿĪsā, residing (?) in Bēth Khudēdā. He wrote this on the gate full of mercy, so that he who comes and steps over (its) threshold may pray for him. Let a prayer be offered for all the community, in both worlds’.

Inscription AE.01.9

Location: Southern exterior gate (Fig. 7A; Pl. 34); two slabs on the insides of the doorposts.

Translation: ‘Open for me the doors of righteousness so that I may enter through them and praise the Lord. Lord our God give us light and …’.

Inscription AE.01.10

Location: Northern exterior gate (Fig. 7B; Pl. 33); topmost inscription.

Translation: ‘Peace be with you, O Mōr Behnam, blessed martyr; peace be with you and with holy Sarah, your sister. Blessed are you for you are the treasure of life for he who is in need; open your treas(ury) so that from you all the needy may enrich themselves. You are the haven of compassion and all help; he who comes and steps over your threshold will find peace. The wife of Muqqadar contributed (to this building)’.

Inscription AE.01.11

Location: Northern exterior gate (Fig. 7B; Pl. 33); around the three sides.

Translation: ‘This gate is the gate of mercy, inside which there is mercy. Go through, O sinner, and seek mercy from the Lord who is full of it. Abū Sālim and Abraham his brother worked on these gates of the *bēth-ṣluthō* through the care of the monks ʿĪsā and Faḍl-Allah the priests, Abū-Naṣr and Behnām the deacons, Thomas and Maḥbūb. May God have pity on every one who contributed to it’.

Inscription AE.01.12

Location: Northern exterior gate (Fig. 7B; Pl. 33); on the lintel.

Translation: ‘Peter’. ‘Paul’.

Inscription AE.01.14

Location: Façade of the church; upper panel of the frieze situated between the southern and northern exterior gates.

Translation: ‘Your monastery, O Mār Behnam, has become the source of life, and in it you are placed like a tree bearing fruits. Your temple has become a source that gushes all kinds of assistance and towards it all who are sick set their faces so as to be healed in it. Simon the sinner, of the family Hindō, wrote (this)’.

Inscription AE.01.15

Location: Façade of the church; both the ascending and descending sections of the frieze situated between the southern and northern exterior gates.

Translation: ‘O you who pray to God, do not insult your fellow human in your heart, for the insult does not make prayer pure. O you who beg (God) concerning your fault, look! Corruption lies in your heart! Forgive your brother his fault and pray your Lord in a pure manner. Anger is worse than a sword, and rage is worse than a knife. Take an arrow and shoot it at your brother rather than shooting him with an insult. For if you shoot your fellow human with an arrow, it would hit the body, which is external, but if you shoot him with an insult, it would hit the heart, which is internal’.

Inscription AE.01.16

Location: *Bet ṣlotā* (Fig. 7C; Pl. 35); central niche (Pl. 48).

Translation: ‘Look toward it (= the Cross) and have hope in it. (This is) the Victorious Cross. Look toward it and have in it. (It is) the sign of peace and mark of victory. Place of the adored and holy Gospel’.

Inscription AE.01.17

Location: *Bet ṣlotā* (Fig. 7C; Pl. 35); slab underneath the central niche.

Translation: ‘Lo! At your door, O merciful physician, the sick people knock so that they may be healed; let your compassion come forth to treat our injuries’.

Inscription AE.01.19

Location: Gate of the Chapel of Mar Mattai (Fig. 7G; Pl. 40); on either side of the gate, starting on the right.

Translation: ‘Where your bones are located, O most graceful Mār Behnam the security and peace of your Lord dwell forever’.

Inscription AE.01.20

Location: Three marble slabs situated between the Gate of the Chapel of Mar Mattai (Fig. 7G; Pl. 40) and the Gate of the Two Baptisms (Fig. 7F; Pl. 38).

Translation: ‘In the year one thousand and six hundred and six of the Greeks, the victorious king Khan Baidu attacked the land about Athor, the town of the holy Mār Behnam, seized it, and made a massacre. He went to Mosul but did not invade it. Afterword, he left for the region of Erbil, leaving his chiefs behind him, who sacked the countryside and the monasteries. The chiefs sent (their men) to the

Great Monastery and took away the mules of the mill, as well as much silver and gold. One of them came to the Monastery of the Pit, opened its gate and entered. He put his hands on the sacred vessels, the veils and the rest. Nothing remained on the altar except for the Gospel and the reliquary of the Saint–God obscured their eyes! The monk *Rabban* Jacob went to the Victorious King, and brought back to the Monastery everything that the latter had carried away. The Khan even gave to the Saint a gift of his own wealth, paying the Saint homage. Thus the king was sorry'.

Inscription AE.01.21

Location: Gate of the Two Baptisms (Fig. 7F; Pl. 38); at the top.

Translation: 'Lord you made your sanctuary a place for your dwelling, so make it firm with your hands. May the Lord reign in it forever. Open for me the doors of righteousness so that I may enter through them to praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter'.

Inscription AE.01.22

Location: Gate of the Two Baptisms (Fig. 7F; Pl. 38); surrounding the three sides.

Translation: 'We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. (We believe) in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten from the Father, Light from Light, true God, begotten not made, One in Being with his Father, through him everything is made. For us men (…)'.

Inscription AE.01.23

Location: Gate of the Two Baptisms (Fig. 7F; Pl. 38); rabbet of both right and left jambs.

Translation: 'The Martyr Mār Behnam reached full stature through two baptisms. He was immersed in water; but this was not enough for him, so he did more, he was bathed in his own blood. When his body drenched with the blood from his neck, and the Church saw him and investigated his matter, she asked: Who is this with his garments stained with blood?'.

Inscription AE.01.24

Location: Gate of the Two Baptisms (Fig. 7F; Pl. 38); near the left post.

Translation: 'Bahiyyah wife of the late Muqqadar contributed to this gate. May the Lord have pity on them'.

Inscription AE.01.25

Location: Secondary gate leading into the altar room (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39).

Translation: 'For our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered, died and was buried. On the third day he rose as he wished. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right

hand of his Father. He will come again in great pomp to judge the living and the dead, and hid kingdom will have no end…'.

Inscription AE.01.26

Location: Between the secondary gate (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39) and the Royal Gate (Fig. 7D; Pl. 37).

Translation: '(…) and in one Holy Spirit, Lord Giver of life of everyone, who proceeds from the Father'.

Inscription AE.01.27

Location: Secondary gate leading into the altar room (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39); top.

Translation: 'Lift up your heads, Gates! The eternal gates went high so that the King of glory may enter. Who is this King of Glory? The mighty Lord, the King of glory for ever and ever, amen'.

Inscription AE.01.28

Location: Secondary gate leading into the altar room (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39); along the lower lintel.

Translation: 'Lift up your heads, Gates! The eternal gates were lifted up so that the King of glory may enter. The heavenly ones rejoice and the earthly ones exult on the remembrance day of the Martyr Mār Behnam.

Inscription AE.01.29

Location: Small gate leading into the altar room (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39); next to inscription AE.01.28.

Translation: 'Simon, servant of this holy place–the Monastery of Mār Behnam'.

Inscription AE.01.30

Location: Two slabs situated between the small gate (Fig. 7E; Pl. 39) and the Royal Gate (Fig. 7D; Pl. 37).

Translation: 'Mār Behnam placed in his monastery is like the incense to the Holy Temple, and like the rain and the dew to the earth. May his prayer energize our souls. Your remembrance, O Mār Behnam, may it be here and above in Heaven. May those who pay respect to your remembrance be assisted through your prayers. Where your bones are laid, may the tranquillity and peace of your Lord, O most beautiful Mār Behnam, dwell forever. For the sake of the sick and the distressed, the miserable and the poor, orphans and widows, and the world and its inhabitants, O Merciful One who resembles his Father, have mercy on the(se) creatures. The heavenly ones rejoice and the earthly ones exult on the day of your remembrance, O Martyr Mār Behnam'.

Inscription AE.01.31

Location: Surmounting the Royal Gate (Fig. 7D; Pl. 37).

Translation: ‘For the praise and honour of the adored Trinity, equal in essence, and for the exaltation and building of the holy Church of God. This gate of the Holy of Holies was renovated, rebuilt, completed, and adorned’.

Inscription AE.01.32

Location: Royal Gate (Fig. 7D; Pl. 37); tripartite frieze.

Translation: ‘Our Father who are in Heaven, may your name be sanctified, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us bread enough for the day. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for the Kingdome, the power, and the glory are yours forever and ever, amen. Abū Salīm and Abraham worked on this gate under the care of the monks … and his colleagues. May God forgive everyone who contributed (to this gate) whether in word or in action’.

Inscription AE.01.33

Location: Royal Gate (Fig. 7D; Pl. 37); inner side of both jambs, left (1) and right (2).

Translation: (1) ‘Forgiving Altar’, (2) ‘Holy Altar’.

Inscription AE.01.34

Location: Marble slab in the altar room (Fig 7, Room 6).

Translation: ‘[In the name of the Living and Holy God]: This Altar was renovated and fixed through the care of the monks Joseph, priest in name only, Abū al-Faḍl and Gabriel the Deacons, and Friar Ḥasan, in the year one thousand four hundred and seventy [of the Greeks], which is the year fi[ve hundred] and fifty-nine of the Arabs, in the days of the blessed Fathers, our [Patriarchs] Mōr Atha[nasius of Syria]n Antioch, and Mōr Ewannīs [(of Alexandria]), in the year during which Mōr Igna[tius], Maphrian of the Ea[st], died. May the reader pray for [them]’.

Inscription AE.01.39

Location: Gate of the burial chamber (Fig. 7H; Pl. 41); at the top.

Translation: **‘**This gate was renovated and ornamented for the glory and honour of the adored Trinity, equal in nature, and for the exaltation and building of the holy Church of God. May God forgive everyone who contributed to it, amen’.

Inscription AE.01.40

Location: Gate of the burial chamber (Fig. 7H; Pl. 41); two inscriptions (A and B) on the jambs.

Translation: (A) ‘I beg every believer who falls upon (this) to pray for the workmen who contributed to the workmanship’. (B) ‘This gate was built through the care of Abū Naṣr the Deacon, son of the late Khalaf, from that which the divine grace has granted to him’.

Inscription AE.01.46

Location: Chapel of the Virgin (Fig. 7, Room 4); stucco dome (Pls 50-52); Syriac inscriptions on four ribs (A) and between them (B); Arabic inscriptions (C) on one rib and the rows of corbels.

Translation: (A) ‘In the name of the Living and Holy God: Because of this, the Lord built for Himself a house on earth wherever he wished. Let he who wants to see the Lord come to this House’. (B) ‘May all our congregation be blessed (in) this holy house (of) the Virgin Mother of God, praise to Him’. (C) ‘Grace lasts through thanksgiving. Made by ʿĪsā al-Nattāfah and Mīkhā’īl’.

Inscription AF.02.1

Location: Mausoleum; grave of Mar Behnam. Three inscriptions: Arabic (A, D), Syriac (B), and Uighur (C).

Translation: (A) ‘The sinning servant Masʿūd, son of Jacob son of Mubārak Nāzik volunteered to build this. May God have mercy on he who wishes him mercy’. (B) ‘These sculptured stones that are in the tomb of Saint Mār Behnam were mounted through the care of Rabban Masʿud, son of Mubārak of the [house of Nāzi]k of Barṭellī. Let everyone in the monastery pray for him and for his f[athe]r. This was at the end of Latter *Kōnūn* (January), the year 1611 of the Greeks: Glory to God, amen. [In Arabic:] Timūr the goldsmith wrote it’. (C) ‘May the peace of Khudr-Aliās, the devotee of God, rest on the Ilkhan, his nobles, and his wives’. (D) ‘Made by Master Masʿud son of Joseph, the stonecutter. May God have mercy on he who wishes him mercy’.

Inscription AF.02.2

Location: Mausoleum of Mar Behnam (Fig. 6); Khatchkar to the right of the grave; Armenian (A) and Syriac (B) inscription.

Translation: (A) ‘In this holy place rests a generous and wonderful Saint: all who call upon him in faith receive their desires. We should with all reverence and meditation worship the holy Cross and implore the Saint for the Lord to have pity on us and be mindful of us through the intercession of the Saint’. (B) ‘May God forgive our Gondin, Agkis son of Aktis’.

Inscription AF.02.3

Location: Mausoleum of Mar Behnam (Fig. 6); panel on the west wall, opposite the grave of Mar Behnam.

Translation: ‘Peace on you, O most splendid Mār Behnam, peace on you, O friend of Christ, peace on you, O the choicest among the heroes, and the nobler among the martyrs, peace on you, O ornament of the churches and gleaming crown of the

monasteries, peace on you, O warier who won and shone, peace on you, O hero, peace on you, O fighter, peace on you, O source which gushes forth help for the needy ones, peace on you, O provider of healing for all who ask for it. The heavenly ones rejoice and the earthly ones exult in the day of your remembrance, O Martyr Mār Behnam. Simon, the wretched one, wrote it. Let the reader pray for him: Forgive him Lord God'.