



Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in

Tur Abdin

Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in

Tur'Abdin



KÜLTÜREL MİRASI KORUMA DERNEĞİ
ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF
CULTURAL HERITAGE

©KMKD

January 2022

ISBN: 978-605-06335-9-7

Editor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Keser Kayaalp

Project Coordinator

Başak Emir

Project Coordinator (Mardin)

Eliyo Eliyo

Experts

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Keser Kayaalp (*Art and Architectural Historian, 9 Eylül University*)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marica Cassis (*Archaeologist, Classics and Religion, University of Calgary*)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdül Massih Saadi (*Syriac Language Expert, Lecturer, Baylor University, Texas, USA*)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jorge Correia (*Architect, Lab2PT | School of Architecture, Art and Design, University of Minho*)

Dr. Banu Pekol (*Art and Architectural Historian, KMKD*)

Dr. Elmon Hançer (*Art Historian, KMKD*)

Dr. Lory Zakar (*Architect, Archista; Research Assistant, Mimar Sinan University, KMKD*)

Dr. Mesut Dinler (*Conservation Architect, Lecturer, Politecnico di Torino, DIST*)

Dr. Pınar Aykaç (*Conservation Architect, Lecturer, METU*)

Dr. Stuart Blaylock (*Independent Scholar and Archaeologist*)

Dr. Zekai Erdal (*Art Historian, Lecturer, Mardin Artuklu University*)

Barış Altan (*MA, GABAM, KMKD*)

Mihayel Akyüz (*Syriac Language and Literature Expert, Lecturer, Mardin Artuklu University*)

Murat Demirli (*Conservation Architect*)

Seher Ivrendi (*Art Historian, Mardin Archaeology Museum*)

Sena Kayasü (*MA, KMKD*)

Suna Kabasakal Coutignies (*Conservation architect*)

Süreyya Topaloğlu (*Conservation Specialist, KMKD*)

Theocharis Katrakazis (*Conservation and Risk Management Specialist*)

Translation

Dr. Pınar Aykaç (*from Turkish to English*)

Özgün Forta (*from English to Turkish*)

Photos and Plan

Drawings on Site

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Keser Kayaalp

Dr. Banu Pekol

Dr. Elmon Hançer

Dr. Lory Zakar

Dr. Mesut Dinler

Dr. Pınar Aykaç

Dr. Stuart Blaylock

Dr. Zekai Erdal

Barış Altan

Başak Emir

Eliyo Eliyo

Mihayel Akyüz

Seher Ivrendi

Suna Kabasakal Coutignies

Süreyya Topaloğlu

Digital plan drawings

Sena Kayasü

Alp Köse

Design

Meryem Tanrıku

Cover

Meryem Tanrıku

Fonts

Arimo

Palatino Linotype

Times New Roman

Color Separation and Print

Fotokitap



This project entailing site visits and assessment reports was supported by a grant from the US Department of State. (Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation - AFCP) The contents of this report do not reflect the opinion of the US Government

Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in

Tur^c Abdin

Istanbul 2022

Contents

Foreword	7
Introduction	9
Methodology.....	12
Risk Analysis Matrix.....	14
Locations of Structures	17
Monastery of Mor Abay	18
Church of Ambar	23
Church of Mor Sobo.....	29
Church of Yoldath Aloho (Virgin Mary)	33
Monastery of Mor Barsaumo.....	37
Monastery of Mor Aho/ Dayro da-Slibo/ Der el-Muhr	40
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon	44
Monastery of Mor Quryakos/ Dayr al-Qira.....	47
Monastery of Mor Yoreth Alexandroyo/ Der Chapke	52
Church of Mort Mariana	58
Monastery of Mort Maryam Magdloyto	62
Monastery of Mor Lo‘ozor.....	66
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon Tayyoyo.....	70
Monastery of Mor Shem‘un/ Dayro d-II.....	75
Monastery of Mor Holo.....	78
Monastery of Mor Mushe	81
Dayro d-Moshok	84
Monastery of Mor Abraham of Kashkar.....	87
Monastery of Mor Ya‘qup of Serugh	93
Monastery of the Virgin Mary/ Dayro d-Yoldath Aloho d-Notfo.....	97
Church of Yoldath Aloho	102
Monastery of Mor Aho/ Bnoyel/ Dayro da Fnoth/ Der Pum/ Der Pu‘e	106
Church of Mor Barsaumo	109
Church of Mor Addai	112
Çel Bira (Forty Wells).....	115
Church of Mor Gewargis/ Dera Meshkok	117
Church of Deame (Sürekli)	120

Church of Kundel.....	123
Monastery of Mor Aho	125
Monastery of Mor Abhay	129
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon of Kfone.....	132
Church of Mort Saro	136
Church of Mor Gewargis	139
Church of Yoldath Aloho, Camili Church	144
Church of Forty Martyrs	147
Church of Mor Sobo.....	151
Church of Mort Shmuni	154
Church of Mor Shem‘un	157
Monastery of Mor Barsaumo.....	160
Monastery of Mor Shem‘un/ Der Bazizke	163
Monastery of Shumrin.....	167
Monastery of Mor Doniyel/ Der Matina	171
Monastery of Mor Afrem	174
Church of Mor Barsaumo	179
Monastery of Mor Shem‘un.....	182
Monastery of Mor Theodute	185
Dera Būbe	187
Church of Mor Sobo.....	191
The rock-cut chapel of Mor Behnam	194
The monastery of Mor Behnam and the enclosure of Mor Joseph	197
Church of Mor Bobi	199
Monastery of Mor ‘Azozoyel	203
Monastery of Mor Dimet	205
Church of Mor Shem‘un	209
Church of Sardef	212
Deyr Kubbuk, Kubekke.....	215
Church of Yoldath Aloho	218
 Bibliography	 222
Glossary	225

Foreword

«Documentation and Promotion of the Syriac Intangible Heritage in Mardin Region» Tur ‘Abdin’s At-Risk Syriac Architectural Heritage Timeless!

Walking around the hillside on which Mardin was built or looking out onto the Mesopotamian Plain stretching out as far as the eye can see, you may think that this place has preserved its soul and its architectural-spatial integrity for centuries, that there has not been a historical rupture, change or loss, and that it may have always existed just as it is.

The graded, labyrinthian, narrow streets –dotted with abbaras and accompanied by sounds of bells and azan– that wind through the clusters of cubic buildings spread over the hillside, as well as the stone domes, minarets, bell towers, iwans, arches, and window frames –each the fruit of intricate labor– that peer out of a city and appears to have been carved out of a monochromatic monolith may strengthen that perception.

Some of the communities that created the houses, churches, monasteries, synagogues, bazaars, mosques, and madrasas that constitute Mardin’s cosmopolitan culture have disappeared, while some have significantly decreased in size. Nevertheless, the city has maintained its multilingual, multireligious and multicultural nature. The old rituals, traditions, and crafts as well as the unchanging languages, tastes and smells that create a sense of continuity are quickly noticeable in every corner. This reinforces the abovementioned perception.

Mardin is not only at the heart of this perception, but it is also embedded in the rich historical, cultural, and archaeological landscape of the Tur ‘Abdin region that lies at the center of a wider universe, among other settlements and a network of relations, in a broader geography, to the north of Mesopotamia where the first agricultural civilizations flourished and where the oldest religions and languages mingled.

Tur ‘Abdin is bounded by Tigris River to the north and east, between the settlements of Mardin, Hasankeyf, Dara, Nusaybin, and Cizre. The mountainous region has been home to many societies, ethnic groups, and religious congregations for thousands of years; and it still is. It contains important archaeological traces. However, Tur ‘Abdin is fundamentally defined by the cultural assets created by Syrians who, despite experiencing important societal traumas at the beginning of the 20th century, have sustained their existence, language, faith, and art.

The primary growth of the Syriac Orthodox culture took place in Tur ‘Abdin, which Syrians have been adorning with their artifacts for 2000 years and where they still live in significantly decreased numbers in Midyat and surrounding villages as well as Mardin, Savur, Qelleth, Idil, and Nusaybin. A large number of Syriac cultural assets have either been abandoned, neglected, naturally or artificially destroyed or are at risk of destruction due to migration (voluntary or enforced), planning activities or willful damage.

The Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (KMKD), established in 2014, conducts comprehensive and high-quality research in many different geographies of Anatolia. It examines, documents, and investigates cultural assets that have been abandoned, unattended, and threatened by extinction with conservation specialists from different disciplines including architecture, architectural history, art history, archaeology, and civil engineering. In line with the principles of the historic preservation discipline, the association identifies and classifies current physical conditions, problems, current and potential threats, disappearing values, and lists priorities for interventions in addition to developing suggestions for their protection. KMKD

contributes to the visibility of cultural assets and public awareness about them by publishing research findings and sharing them through panels, exhibitions, and presentations. Moreover, KMKD investigates the ownership status of cultural assets, which is pivotal for their registration and inclusion in funding programs, as well as conveying comprehensive information to relevant authorities and institutions through reports that emphasize the necessity of urgent interventions for their protection.

The project entitled «**Documentation and Promotion of the Syriac Intangible Heritage in Mardin Region**» takes the experience and knowledge KMKD accumulated during our examinations in Kayseri, Adana, Bursa, Niğde, Elazığ, İzmir, Muş, Artvin, and the Southern Marmara Islands one step further. It is different from our other projects in that the content accounts for the beliefs, rituals, traditions and art –in other words, the intangible heritage– of the community as well as the abandoned and at-risk tangible heritage assets to provide a holistic understanding of Syriac culture of the region.

The project delves into Syriac traditions, customs, language, stories, rituals, festivals, and crafts –in other words, how they understand and interpret the world– and aims to disseminate this information so as to contribute to knowledge about and recognition of this people. It researches, documents, and provides recommendations for the protection of their tangible cultural assets, such as monasteries, churches, and settlements, which provide endless opportunities to understand this culture through the physical environment.

The research project which included **three distinct field surveys**, diligently examined and documented surviving Syriac cultural assets through written and oral sources as well as archival documents and physical remains with the level of precision required by the conservation discipline, assessed their values and issues, and recommended emergency measures as well as short-, medium- and long-term interventions for their protection. Moreover, a selection of the examined monuments that were determined to be very valuable and at a higher risk of destruction were re-documented with their immediate surroundings using three-dimensional technology, as they are difficult to access and rapidly deteriorating. In this sense, the project aims at being a beacon in the online dissemination and digital preservation of knowledge.

This publication is yet another product of the selfless endeavors that are inspired by the vision of dear Osman Kavala, who is still unjustly imprisoned in Silivri, and who believes in the need for dialogue, friendship, and collaboration in the preservation of our shared cultural heritage –such as at the Ani World Heritage Site– that has been created by Anatolian communities and is fast disappearing.

We believe that this publication, which is the product of 16 months of intense effort by a team of experts from Turkey and abroad, will help to increase the visibility and recognition of Syriac intangible heritage and tangible cultural assets, as well as contributing to the recognition of their value and need for protection. We hope that this resource will be helpful for individuals, organizations, and institutions that work in the conservation field.

İsmail Yavuz Özkaya
Chair of the Board at KMKD

Introduction

This book, with few exceptions, focuses on the churches and monasteries in the Tur 'Abdin region, which is surrounded by the Tigris River and the Southeastern Anatolian mountain range in the north and east, the Syrian plain in the south, and the city of Mardin in the west. Although there are different views about the etymology of the word Tur 'Abdin, the translation 'Mountain of God's Servants' approved by Sebastian Brock, is quite appropriate to describe this region which is dotted with churches and monasteries (Brock, 1999, 22). Tur 'Abdin is important not only because it is sacred, but also as the region regarded by the Syriacs as their homeland where their traditions are rooted. Herman Teule emphasizes this importance by stating that the end of the Syriac presence in Tur 'Abdin will be the end of the Syriac identity (Teule, 2012, 56). Despite the wars and challenges for centuries, some churches and monasteries are still standing and functioning. Many buildings, however, have disappeared or are under threat of demolition as we will present in this publication. The Syriacs built not only religious structures, but also villages, roads, and castles in this region. However, most of the buildings that have survived today are religious structures, and therefore mostly religious buildings are included in this publication. The fifty-eight buildings selected by KMKD and local stakeholders for inclusion in this book are those under the threat of demolition due to neglect and improper usage. This number represents only a few of the buildings at risk and a fraction of the remarkable architectural heritage of the Syriac community in the region.

The buildings included in this study cover a chronologically wide span. The church in Ambar, the Monastery of Mor Abay in Qelleth, Dayr Metinan, the Monastery of Mor Abraham of Kashkar, and the Monastery of Mor Aho comprise construction techniques and ornaments that we can date to the 6th century. There are many other monasteries in the region that can be dated to this period. These monasteries are important for the early monastic architecture, not only of Turkey, but also of the world. Situated on the border of the Byzantine Empire with Sassanians in the Late Antiquity, this region became a place of refuge for Syriacs due to their separation from the Chalcedonian Church over the dogma of the double nature of Christ. The desire to create a local and specifically unique architecture in the region is mostly observed in the transverse plan-type seen in the churches of monasteries, extended along the north-south axis with a tri-partite apse in the east. Gertrude Bell, who did the first detailed surveys of these buildings, calls this plan-type 'monastic', and she calls churches with a single nave extended along the east-west axis, and usually found in villages 'parochial'. We prefer to call this second type 'village-type churches'. Nevertheless, the terms 'village-type' and 'monastic-type' used in this publication are based on Bell's classification.

Another important factor which makes this region significant is the continuation of church and monastery construction after the region was taken by the Arabs in 640 CE. Many of the buildings included in this study have a building-phase from this period. The most remarkable of these is the Monastery of Mor Lo'ozor in Habsenus. This monastery is interesting, not only because it shows that extreme ascetical practices such as stylitism continued in the 8th century, but also because of the unusual construction of its pillar. Another building that we can date to this period is the Church of Yoldath Aloho in a ruined village known as Sarhavdana, near Der Qubbe. The ornamentation of the apse archivolt is a stylized version of the classical decoration, found in 4th to 6th century buildings of the area (Keser-Kayaalp 2018, 203, list 2).

Some buildings around Kızıltepe, included in this publication, though they lie outside the limits of Tur 'Abdin, were built thanks to the efforts of Yuhannon, the bishop of Mardin (d.1165). The Monastery of Mor Abay near Qelleth was probably also enlarged during his time. The inscriptions in this monastery are significant because they show that the Syriacs prayed for the

Artuqid rulers of Mardin in the 13th century. The decoration of the Mor Barsaumo Monastery in Salah is an important example of the influence of Islamic art on the Christian architecture in the early 16th century (Keser-Kayaalp 2017). It is impressive to see the continuity of some decorative elements through the centuries. Buildings dating to comparatively recent periods, such as the Church of Yoldath Aloho in the Kfarzo (Yenipinar) which was rebuilt in the 19th century, or the Church of Mor Gewargis in the village of 'Arbaye (Alayurt), which was rebuilt in the 1940s, have also been included, because both of these are already in a ruinous condition.

Buildings of different sizes are included in this study, ranging from a small single space building-the little church of Mor Shem'un in the village of Beth Qustan (Alagöz)-to a monument the size of a castle: the Monastery of Mor Abhay in Beth Man'em. The measurements of these buildings are not given here, although the scaled sketches give its approximate dimensions. More detailed surveys are needed to establish the exact measurements and to document fully what is described here briefly. Many villages, monasteries and individual buildings have more than one name: the Turkish village names are added in brackets. Most of the buildings we examined belong to the Syriac Orthodox community (West Syriacs). The monasteries on Mount Izla originally belonged to the so-called Nestorians -the name «East Syriacs» is preferred here. Around 1800, the West Syriacs took responsibility for the upkeep of these deserted monasteries. There are additional altars and fireplaces in the side rooms of the apses of these churches.

When Barsaum visited Tur'Abdin at the beginning of the 20th century, two thirds of the population was Christian. Now only around 1500 Syriacs are left (for migrations, see Güsten, 2015 and Özmen, 2017). This loss of population is the primary reason for the neglect of the buildings studied here. The lack of a community committed to maintaining them is not the only reason however. The revision of the cadastre has resulted in the expropriations and seizures of churches and monasteries as well as private properties. Important examples of early monastic architecture, such as Ambar and Der Metinan, are no longer in Christian ownership and have therefore suffered neglect. After the Syriacs were invited to return in 2001, some families returned and in the following ten, fifteen years, new houses were constructed, many churches and monasteries were restored (Keser-Kayaalp 2016). Monasteries that had been abandoned became active again. This is still the case, in spite of the conflict, which flared up again in 2015 and still continues in some areas. The Syriac community abroad does its best to maintain the sacred buildings in their ownership and to take care of them but many churches and monasteries are still at risk.

This report suggests various approaches to conservation, starting with the dissemination of information. The most promising strategy involves considering the buildings as an integral part of the landscape and including them on tourist routes. Some buildings should be restored, while others should be conserved as they are because of their intrinsic archaeological interest. For the latter, urgent conservation work is needed while waiting the sondage and excavations with which archaeologists will add to our knowledge of the past.

The buildings in this book are not only of historical and architectural interest. They constitute the cultural heritage of a unique ethnic and religious minority in Turkey. The memory and identity of the Syriacs is bound up with these buildings, and the saints to whom they are dedicated. The Syriacs make pilgrimages to these churches and monasteries on the days on which their saints are commemorated. Taking these intangible aspects together with the tangible ones illustrated in this book, Tur'Abdin should be seen as a cultural landscape under threat. It is our responsibility to conserve this landscape together with its buildings. We hope that this book will make more people aware of this rich Syriac heritage, which is also the heritage of Turkey; that it will inspire others to consider themselves also stakeholders in this heritage and to join the Syriac community in protecting it. At the same time, this book demonstrates that a proper understanding of these buildings and of the Syriac culture demands a multidisciplinary approach.

The histories of the buildings in this publication are written by me and they should be enhanced as our knowledge about the region increases and as more Syriac texts become available to us. I would like to thank all the experts who prepared the reports; the members of the Syriac community who welcomed and helped us- especially Mihayel and Gabriel Akyüz; Andrew Palmer for his important corrections and contributions; the Association for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage (KMKD) and its team who realized the importance of this project; Eliyo Eliyo, who determined which the buildings should be visited; and the project director Başak Emir for her successful and gracious coordination of the project.

Elif Keser Kayaalp

Methodology

The **‘Documenting and Disseminating the Syriac Intangible Heritage in Mardin’ Project** aims at recording the architectural heritage built by the Syriac community, determining the conservation measures after the identification of existing problems, documenting the intangible Syriac heritage, and publicizing Syriac culture and transferring it to future generations.

At the architectural documentation stage of the project, field surveys were conducted in order to examine how Syriac architectural heritage is facing the threat of disappearance and to determine conservation measures after the identification of existing problems with the participation of specialists from the fields of architecture, architectural history, archaeology, and history. These field surveys were held on November 1-6, 2018, March 8-14, 2019, and April 1-8, 2019 with the knowledge of Mardin, Şırnak, and Batman governorates, the provincial directorates of culture and tourism of these cities, and with the permissions of the Ministry of Culture, the Deyrulzafaran Monastery and Churches Foundation, Midyat Syriac Deyrulumur Mor Gabriel Monastery Foundation, and Mardin Syriac Catholic Church Foundation.

We believe that this architectural documentation and risk assessment study is one of the most important studies in the region for the Syriac heritage. In order to increase the impact of this study, we aimed to reach out not only to local but also to international stakeholders for their contribution to our project. As a result of the building surveys, conducted with three different international expert groups of 20 people from different disciplines, 60 buildings have been documented, including the ones without any architectural record. 58 of these structures are included in this publication.

The present condition of the visited structures and the damage they are exposed to are documented, while the condition of their physical environments is also examined. The information collected by historical research and field analyses are classified in tables by the experts under the topics of architectural features, history, function (or functions) of the structure, its relationship with its contexts, the problems related to the structure, and materials. The structures that are under the threat of collapse and the architectural plans of those which are not available are measured and digitized via architectural drawing programs. Photographs of the general aspects of the buildings, architectural and decorative details, and aerial photographs accompanied architectural drawings.

Reports prepared for each building includes risk analysis and recommendations to mitigate risks and measures to be taken against the threats. The methods of architectural conservation are evaluated according to the present condition of each building and their specific context. We paid attention to include all known names of the structures. Risk analysis tables are prepared according to the numerical values given to structures based on the qualities of the structures as cultural heritage and the threats they are exposed, obtained from the evaluations of the experts who participated in the field surveys. The structures with high probability of further, and more extensive damage are identified and priorities are determined for the protection among the structures at risk.

As in the case of other publications of the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (KMKD), this study used an evaluation system based on Herb Stovel’s *Risk Preparedness: A Management Manual for Cultural World Heritage* (ICCROM Rome, 1998) report. Each building is rated according to the criteria of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘significance’. ‘Vulnerability’ is the various risks structures face (structural resistance, difficulty of access, earthquake, wind and rain erosion, firmness of the ground, flood and human damage), and ‘significance’ is evaluated on the basis of

the importance of the structure as a cultural heritage asset (authenticity, interior spaces, façades, and degree of preservation of its integrity). The experts participating the field studies classified the priorities for the conservation of buildings as cultural heritage and the threats to which they are exposed, and risk analysis matrices are prepared based on the numerical values of these classifications. The architectural vestiges in this publication are listed according to the values in this matrix.

Along with these field surveys, we aimed to increase the impact of the project on architectural documentation by using digital technologies. Our goal was to create digital models of the structures at the highest risk in the region, to record 360-degree panoramic views, and to reach more stakeholders by publishing these views on the project's website. We believe that these models will have a great impact on raising awareness both for heritage assets and for the project itself, and therefore will provide their sustainability.

In order to achieve this, we worked with the Heritage Management Organization (HERITAGE) on September 17-29, 2019 and visited structures in the region with HERITAGE-Digital Manager Dr. Cornelis Stal. The structures visited are the ones that are listed as at high risk according to the risk matrix created in our previous field surveys. Ten Syriac architectural vestiges are modeled using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Safety and feasibility assessments were carried out before actual flights for each visit. For all UAV-based images, a sample ground distance of 2 to 10 cm was recorded, depending on the size of the structure, its location and relationship with its surrounding. You can access these records from the project's website, www.intangiblesyriac.org.

In conclusion, we believe that reporting the architectural features of each structure we have visited, and preparing the comparative tables according to the vulnerability and importance criteria will contribute to the identification of priorities in decisions regarding the use of resources in conservation and repairs. Although most of the examined structures are registered as immovable cultural assets, we observed during field surveys that their registration alone is not sufficient for their conservation and urgent interventions are necessary for most of the structures. The responsibility for the conservation of cultural heritage, however, should not only be given to public institutions and professionals working in this field. Public awareness for conservation will be strengthened as long as this cultural richness can be attributed to society as a whole.

The attitudes of the people who live in areas with authentic structures affect their state of conservation and the extent of damage to which they are exposed. We believe that activities carried out locally by competent civic organizations and conscious individuals will contribute to the development of a dialogue in this direction.

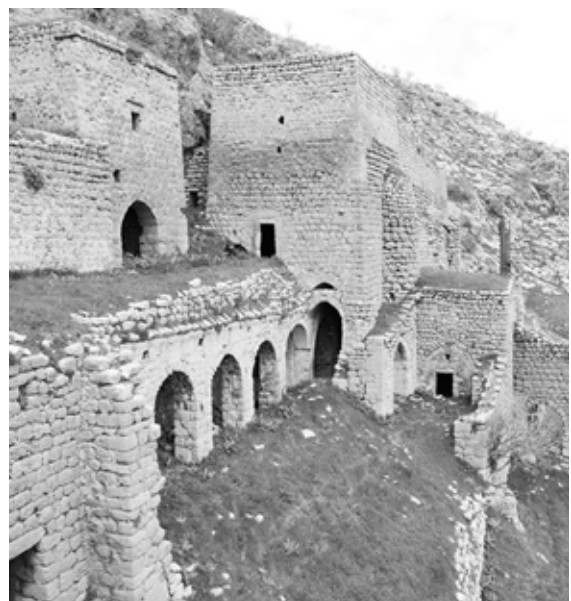
We hope that our work will contribute to promoting the multi-layered rich cultural heritage of Anatolia and to the understanding of the social significance of the studied structures.

Başak Emir

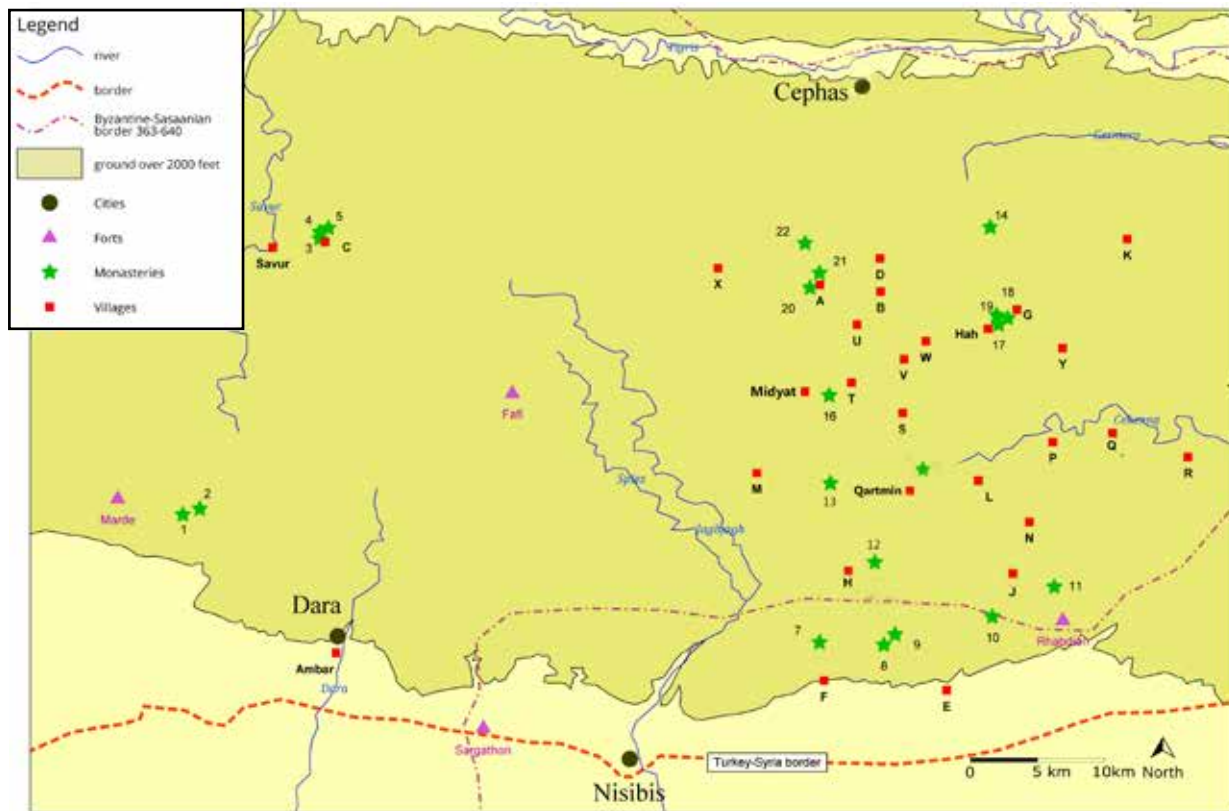
Risk Analysis Matrix

	Significance					Vulnerability-Threats							
	Heritage Significance	Intactness of Building	Exterior Significant Fabric	Interior Significant Fabric	Significance Rating	Structural Instability	Seismic Belt	Wind and Rain Erosion	Soil Instability	Flooding	Anthropogenic	Vulnerability Rating	Significance + Vulnerability Rating
Monastery of Mor Abay	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	16.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	33.00
Church of Ambar	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	5.00	3.	4.00	1.00	3.00	5.00	18.00	33.00
Church of Mor Sobo	5.00	4.00	2.00	5.00	16.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	33.00
Church of Yoldath Aloho (Virgin Mary)	4.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	11.00	5.00	3.	5.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	21.00	32.00
Monastery of Mor Barsaumo	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	18.00	2.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	14.00	32.00
Monastery of Mor Aho/ Dayro d-Slibo	5.00	4.00	1.00	4.50	14.50	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	31.50
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon	5.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	14.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	31.00
Monastery of Mor Quryaqos/ Dayr al-Qira	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	4.00	3.	5.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	16.00	31.00
Monastery of Mor Yoreth Alexandroyo	5.00	3.00	1.00	3.50	12.50	5.00	3.	5.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	17.00	29.50
Church of Mort Mariana	4.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	12.00	5.00	4.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	29.00
Monastery of Mort Maryam Magdloyto	4.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	12.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	29.00
Monastery of Mor Lo'ozor	5.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	15.00	4.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	14.00	29.00
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon Tayyoyo	5.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	13.00	4.00	3.	4.00	2.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	29.00
Monastery of Mor Shem'un/ Dyro d-II	3.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	9.00	4.00	3.	5.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	19.00	28.00
Monastery of Mor Holo	4.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	13.00	3.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	15.00	28.00
Monastery of Mor Mushe	4.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	10.00	5.00	3.	5.00	2.00	1.00	5.00	18.00	28.00
Dayro d-Moshokh	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	21.00	28.00
Monastery of Mor Abraham of Kashkar	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	17.00	2.00	3.	2.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	11.00	28.00
Monastery of Mor Ya'qub of Serugh	5.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	12.00	5.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	15.00	27.00
Monastery of the Virgin Mary/ Dayro d-Yoldath Aloho d-Notfo	5.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	13.00	4.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	14.00	27.00
Church of Yoldath Aloho	5.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	11.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	27.00
Monastery of Mor Aho/ Der Pu'e	3.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	10.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	27.00
Church of Mor Barsaumo	4.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	12.00	3.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	15.00	27.00
Church of Mor Addai	4.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	11.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	27.00
Çel Bira (<i>Kırk Kuyu</i>)	5.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	14.00	1.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	12.00	26.00
Church of Mor Gewargis, Deyra Meshkok	3.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	10.00	3.00	4.	5.00	2.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	26.00
Church of Deame (<i>Sürekli</i>)	4.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	9.00	5.00	4.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	26.00
Church of Kundel	3.00	3.00	2.00	1.00	9.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	26.00
Monastery of Mor Aho	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00	26.00
Monastery of Mor Abhay	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.50	9.50	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	25.50

	Significance					Vulnerability-Threats							
	Heritage Significance	Intactness of Building	Exterior Significant Fabric	Interior Significant Fabric	Significance Rating	Structural Instability	Seismic Belt	Wind and Rain Erosion	Soil Instability	Flooding	Anthropogenic	Vulnerability Rating	Significance + Vulnerability Rating
Monastery of Mor Yuhannon of Kfone	4.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	12.00	3.00	3.	4.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	13.00	25.00
Church of Mort Saro	3.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	9.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	25.00
Church of Mor Gewargis	3.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	9.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	25.00
Church of Yoldath Aloho, Camili Church	4.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	10.00	5.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	15.00	25.00
Church of Forty Martyrs	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	10.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	15.00	25.00
Church of Mor Sobo	5.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	13.00	3.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	11.00	24.00
Church of Mort Shmuni	3.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	8.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	24.00
Church of Mor Shem'un	3.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	10.00	2.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	13.00	23.00
Monastery of Mor Barsaumo	4.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	12.00	2.00	3.	2.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	11.00	23.00
Monastery of Mor Shem'un/ Der Bazizke	2.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	23.00
Monastery of Shumrin	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	23.00
Monastery of Mor Doniyel/ Der Matina	4.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	11.00	3.00	3.	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	11.00	22.00
Monastery of Mor Afrem	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	14.00	3.00	3.	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	8.00	22.00
Church of Mor Barsaumo	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	7.00	3.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	15.00	22.00
Monastery of Mor Shem'un	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	6.00	4.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00	22.00
Monastery of Mor Theodute	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	3.	5.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	16.00	21.00
Dera Bübe	3.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	9.00	1.00	3.	2.00	1.00	3.00	5.00	12.00	21.00
Church of Mor Barsaumo and Luqianos	3.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	11.00	2.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	10.00	21.00
Rock-cut chapel of Mor Behnam	2.00	5.00	1.00	1.00	9.00	1.00	3.	2.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	10.00	19.00
Monastery of Mor Behnam and enclosure of Mor Joseph	3.0	N/A	1.00	N/A	4.00	3.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	13.00	17.00
Church of Mor Bobi	5.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	12.00	1.00	3.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	17.00
Monastery of Mor 'Azozoyel	2.50	N/A	1.00	N/A	3.50	3.00	3.	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	13.00	16.50
Monastery of Mor Dimet	3.00	5.00	1.00	2.00	11.00	1.00	3.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	16.00
Church of Mor Shem'un	2.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	8.00	1.00	3.	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	8.00	16.00
Church of Sardef	2.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	1.00	3.	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	7.00	14.00
Deyr Kubbuk, Kubekke	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00	N/A	3.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00	0.00
Church of Yoldath Aloho	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00	N/A	3.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.00	0.00



Locations of Structures



Drawn by Elif Keser-Kayaalp and Anthony Comfort

List of villages

- A- Salah (Barıştepe)
- B- Zaz (İzbırak)
- C- Qelleth (Dereci)
- D- Derikfan (Nurlu)
- E- Marbobo (Günyurdu)
- F- M'aare (Eskihisar)
- G- Beth Qustan (Alagöz)
- H- Arkah (Üçköy)
- J- Beth Man'em
- K- 'Arobon (Karalar)
- L- Kfarbe (Güngören)
- M- Anhel (Yemişli)
- N- Beth Sbirino (Haberli)
- P- Dera (Dereköy)
- Q- Beth Ishak (Başakköy)
- R- Midon (Öğündük)
- S- 'Ayn Wardo (Gülgöze)
- T- Kundel
- U- 'Urdnus (Bağlarbaşı)
- V- Kfarze (Altıntaş)
- W- Heshterek (Ortaca)
- X- Habsenas (Mercimekli)
- Y- Serhevdana

List of monasteries

- 1- Deyrulzafaran
- 2- Mor Ya'qub of Sarug
- 3- Mor Abai
- 4- Mor Theodotus
- 5- Mor Dimet
- 6- Mor Daniel
- 7- Mar Yoret Alexandroyo
- 8- Mar Awgin
- 9- Mar Yuhannon Tayoyo
- 10- Mar Abraham Kashkar
- 11- Mor Aho
- 12- Mor Melke
- 13- Dayr Kubbuk
- 14- Dayro da-Slibo
- 15- Mor Gabriel
- 16- Mor Abrohom
- 17- Mor Maryam Magdloyto
- 18- Mor Sergius and Bachus
- 19- Mor Yuhannon
- 20- Mor Ya'qub
- 21- Mor Barsawmo
- 22- Mor Holo

Monastery of Mor Abay

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 Savur District, Qelleth (Dereiçi) Village, Andiddeyr Locale

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 06.07.2010/3280 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

This monastery, which was dedicated to a Persian saint, was founded in 370 according to some sources (Akyüz, 1998: 145), and in the 6th century according to others (Barsoum, 2000, 560). The *vita* of Mor Abay's has survived to the present day in Garshuni texts written in later periods (15th -16th centuries) (for the *vita* of Mor Abay translated from an Arabic manuscript, see: Akyüz, 1998, 150). In a monastic colophon, the name of the monastery is mentioned as follows: God's mother Mort Maryam, the Great Mor Abay and his disciple Mor Abay, Mor Theodute and his disciples Mor Yavsep, and Mor Shabay and his disciple Mor Dimet (Palmer, 2010, 194). The site of Mor Abay monastery, known as Koros Mountain, is located in the close vicinity of the monasteries of Mor Theodute, Mor

Shabay, and Mor Dimet. Palmer defines Mor Abay as the mother of these two monasteries and emphasizes that they are all connected (Palmer, 2010, 215).

The *vita* of Mor Theodute (d. 698) mentions that this saint stayed in this monastery. Although the earliest text from the *vita* of this saint is from the 12th century, it is important that this information was traditionally conveyed. We know that in the years 1002-1031, a priest from Mor Abay was appointed as the bishop of Dara. We understand that around 1155, there was a specific connection between this monastery and Dayr al-Za'faran. Meanwhile, in Mardin, there was a bishop called Yuhannon, who was particularly noted for his construction activities, and probably the



first additions to Mor Abay in the Middle Ages were made during his time (Vööbus, 1976, 214).

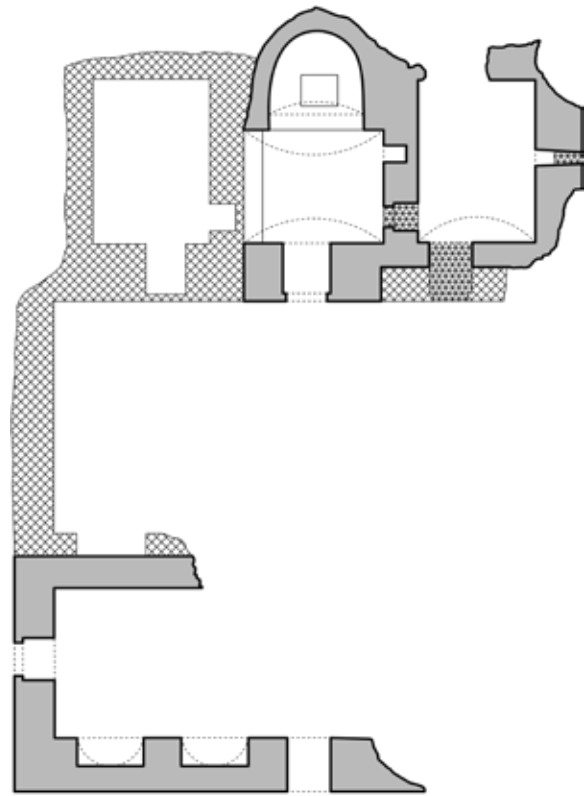
Pognon recorded three Syriac inscriptions in this monastery. One of the two inscriptions, which is lost today, was about the construction of the monastery during the time of the priest Abd-al-Messih and monk Moses. This inscription, which also mentions other structures built during the period of Abd-al-Messih, does not contain a date, but Pognon states that it was probably written in the second half of the 13th century (Pognon, 1907, inscription no: 93: 188).

One of the other two inscriptions still remains, which is horizontally placed on the tower of the monastery. Written in Estrangelo script, this inscription reads:

This tower, in one thousand, five hundred and sixty seven (1567) Greek year, in the reign of the victorious and joyful King Najm al-Din, the crown of all kings, - May Allah extend his life - is renewed with the efforts of Patriarch St. Mor Yuhannon, the monastery warden Humdan's son Rabdan Moushe and all the monks. May everyone who reads pray for the contributors. And everyone who reads, pray to God for the priest AbdulM-esih, architect / engineer and the dead. May also pray for all who read this (all contributors) (Translation: Mihayel Akyüz).

The third inscription, which was formerly located in the eastern tower and is said to be in the monastery of Dayr al-Za'faran, mentions that the door, tower, vault and altars were restored in 1561 Greek year (AD 1249/1250), again in the time of Najm al-Din al-Malik al-Sa'id. Akyüz has published the two surviving inscriptions in Turkish (Akyüz 1998: 149, 150). In addition to the name of the priests and monks involved in the restoration, a group of sixty monks is also mentioned (Pognon, 1907, inscription no: 92, 187).

The monastery was in an important location during the Artuqid period. Savur was a robust fortress located between Mardin and Hasankeyf, two important centers of the Artuqids. It was also a settlement where the Artuqids spent their summers. The fact that there are inscriptions in the monastery



Plan of the main church of the monastery



of Mor Abay with the name of the Artuqid sultan indicates that there was a strong connection between the Artuqids and the monastery, and may indicate that the Syriacs had a relatively comfortable time during this period. This monastery also had a lion relief, the location of which is unknown today (for the photograph of this lion relief see: Wiessner 1981, I/II, 81, fig.37). The lion was a figure, which was used by the Artuqids as an indicator of power. There are examples from the Middle Ages on the fortifications of Diyarbakır and in Mardin Museum. The lion in Mor Abay was similar in style to these lions.

It is known that Yuhannon bar Shayallah, the bishop of Diyarbakır and Savur in the 15th century, stayed in this monastery and restored it (Palmer, 1990, 23, d. 17). The patriarch Joshua I, who took his seat in 1509, was from this monastery (Palmer, 1990, 46, fn.11) and eleven other bishops were educated in this monastery. Barsoum mentions that the monastery, which was an episcopal center, was abandoned in the 1700s and



later became a ruin (2000, 187 and 2006, 14). In late 19th century, Sachau described the monastery as a ruin (1883, 420). Pognon, who records the inscriptions, states that all the buildings of the monastery are in a very poor condition (1907, 186).

Architecture

The monastery is located in a valley surrounded by hills in the east and west, about 1.5 kilometers north of the Dereiçi village's center. The monastery has an outer dimension of 39x54 meters, and has a square plan slightly narrowing down to the south. Aerial photos show garden or terrace walls beyond the northern main wall of the building.

The high and thick outer wall of the monastery complex has a width of 1.5-2.0 meters and gives the impression of a fortification. From the outside, the remains of two towers rising from the eastern and southern main walls are visible. The tower on the south wall has an arched entrance. The tower on the east wall, which is located close to the church of the monastery, also has a semi-circular arched entrance providing access to the monastery. Above the entrance door is a rectangular window (approximately seven rows of stones above) with jambs of large cut stone blocks. There are other rectangular openings in the surrounding walls, although not as large as this window.

When the architecture of the building is examined, at least two different construction periods are identified, which is supported by the information in the inscriptions. Large fine-cut stone blocks were used in first phase in the 5-6th century. In the second phase, which was the restoration in the 12-13th century, smaller rough-cut stones were used. Some of the windows, with flat arches, in the monastery have timber lintels.

There are spaces with different dimensions in the monastery, some of which seem to be interrelated. Due to the filling of their ground levels, the functional or architectural features of these spaces cannot be traced. Only the space that is identified as the monastery's church gives clear information. The church, which was built with fine-cut stone masonry, has a typical monastery-type plan of Tur 'Abdin region. It has a nave extending on the north-south axis and a three-partite apse in the east. The plan sketch of Wiessner shows different building phases (1981, I/I, 63, fig. 12).

Only the church's apse can be accessed through an opening with a flat lintel due to the filling of the ground level. The traces of plaster on this entrance are noteworthy. There is a molding running along the entire apse, which is covered by a vault. When Pognon visited the monastery, the

church's nave was completely ruined, but the apse was in better condition (Pognon, 1907, 186).

The main church of the Mor Abay monastery has similarities with the main church of Mor Gabriel monastery, and the Ambar church. It reflects the typical 6th century architectural features of the region with its stone vaults, molding and stone workmanship. For these reasons, Barsoum dates the church to the 6th century (Barsoum 2000: 560). When Sinclair visited the monastery in the 1980s, he saw frescoes on the apse wall (Sinclair, 1989, 322). Although there are no frescoes in the spaces accessed, there are the traces of lime plaster. The arches have profiles with dentils.

Pognon mentions the inscriptions found in the niche at the eastern gate, which are lost today: 'There are inscriptions on two stone blocks in this niche. One of these blocks is not damaged, whereas the other has fractures on it. Neither of these blocks are in their original location' (Pognon, 1907, 186). Pognon argues that the location of these two inscriptions changed when the church was rebuilt, and they were originally in the interior. He also mentions a third inscription on the outer wall of the tower in the center of the western wall. The position and orientation of this

inscription, which is now placed sideways, indicates that its location is not original.

About 15 meters southeast of the building is a chapel with a square plan and a flat roof, constructed with rough-cut stone masonry, as well as a well. According to the tradition, this chapel was dedicated to Mort Shmuni. A molding with dentils on the arch of the apse, elevated by a step, is noteworthy. There are traces of plaster on its walls.

Present State

The monastery can easily be reached from Qelleth village (Dereği). There is a secondary road about 100 meters from the monastery. However, the building does not have any visitors except those who already know it. There are no information panels neither on the region nor on the three monasteries in the area. The old village of Qelleth, which is the closest settlement to the monastery of Mor Abay, is now largely deserted. Only a few families continue inhabiting in the village, which was mostly abandoned by the migration wave of 1970s. Only the houses of these inhabitants and the ones used as summer houses are in good condition. Iwans and ornamentations are observed in some of the historic houses in the village, which are in danger of being lost.



The village has three churches of three different communities, belonging to Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants (Hollerweger, 1999, 143).

As per the monastery complex, Sinclair, who visited the building in the 1980s, mentioned that the vaults were collapsed, and the floor was raised with soil (Sinclair, 1989, 322). During the site visits to the monastery in 2018 and 2019, the building was found in poor condition and neglected, confirming that no measure for the protection of the monument has been taken to mitigate the effects of cumulative decay for at least the past forty years. At present, the upper structure of the building and most of its main walls have collapsed, and its ground level has been raised more than 1.5 meters due to the accumulation of collapsed building material. The ruins of the monastery are covered with dense lower vegetation, while locally the growth of trees is observed. The elevation is raised also outside of the monastery complex.

There are structural cracks and collapses on the walls of the monastery. Severe material losses and surface weathering are also observed in the building. The northern and western walls of the narthex are partially standing, but the vault has completely collapsed. Some of the walls of the nave are visible, but due to the collapsed vault, further observations cannot be made. Indeed, the ruinous condition of the monastery, obstructs understanding of the architectural features and plan organization of the spaces other than that of the church.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church of the monastery -dating back to early 6th century- shares similarities with important monasteries such as Mor Gabriel and Mor Ya'qub. It also shows similarities with the church in Ambar in terms of its construction technique, ornamentations, dimensions, and plan organization. However, the ensemble of the values of this church, and its surrounding monastery complex is in danger of being lost due to long-term neglect, acts of vandalism, and incidents of looting (i.e. indicated by the loss of some of church's inscriptions recorded by Pognon in 1907).



The monastery, survives in poor condition. It is directly exposed to the effects of rain and wind, while its upper structure has largely collapsed. It is open to vandalism since its entrance is not controlled or guarded. In short, the structure is at risk of rapid deterioration, collapse, and loss. The building should be protected against further deterioration and collapse by first taking emergency consolidation, stabilization and security measures. A future rejuvenation project should aim at a holistic approach which takes into account not only the monastery but also its immediate surroundings (the village and other monuments) and landscape; the latter being one of the factors affected the choice of establishing the monastery at that location. Moreover, the inclusion of the Qelleth Village, which is a historic Syriac village with abandoned historic houses, as well as the remnants of the monasteries of Mor Theoduto and Mor Dimet that are closer to Mor Abay Monastery, in a conservation project is essential for the preservation of the Syriac cultural heritage in this area. A cultural route, connecting these buildings and the village, is recommended together with insertion of information panels and signage.

Church of Ambar

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 Mardin, Central District, Ambar Village

Present Function: Depot and barn

Registry Status: Registered - 25.01.2007/281 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

The Church of Ambar bears similarities to some of the buildings in Dara in terms of its construction technique. Therefore, like the buildings in Dara, this church should have been built either at the beginning of the 6th century during the time of Anastasius or in the middle of the 6th century when Dara was refortified by Justinian. The building bears similarities with Mor Gabriel Monastery in Kartmin in terms of its plan organization and construction techniques, and it was recorded that there was a relationship between the construction of the monastery's main church and the construction of the city of Dara (Keser-Kayaalp, Erdoğan, 2017, 164). Since Mor Gabriel was built in the first decade of the 6th century, the same period would be more appropriate for the construction date of the

Church of Ambar. Mor Gabriel Monastery is the largest of monastery type churches extending in the transverse (north-south) direction. The Church of Ambar pursues this church in terms of its scale. There are at least four monastery churches that can be dated to approximately the same period and have the same type of plan in Tur 'Abdin (Keser-Kayaalp, 2008, figs.107 and 108).

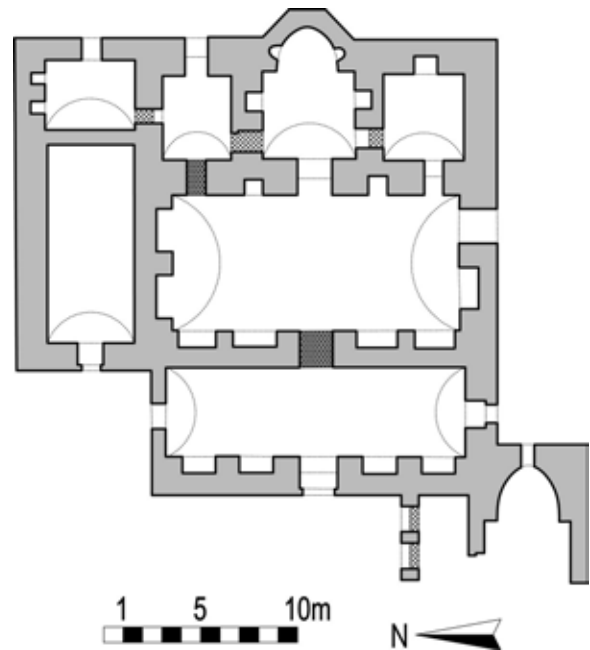
The building has a plan organization used especially for the monastery churches in Tur 'Abdin. Its monastery function, however, is uncertain since it was located 3 kilometers south of the Dara, which was the site of a battle with the Sasanids. Marlia Mundell Mango suggests that this church might have been a village church as it had *beth slutho*



(open-air apse), a feature specific to village churches (Mundell Mango, 1982, 48). The section identified as *beth slutho* by Mango is in fact the apse of a chapel southwest of the elongated main church. The existence of more than one place of worship strengthens the possibility that the building complex was a monastery.

Whitby suggests that the Church of Ambar might have a military function, as the communication between Mardin and Dara might have been made here. This suggestion does not exclude the possibility that the building belonged to a monastery. Lillington-Martin states that the building was probably used to observe the Persian raids coming from the direction of Nisibis (Nusaybin). He suggests another possibility that the building may have been constructed to celebrate the victory over the Sasanids in 530. Although it is rather uncommon for a monumental church to be located on a battlefield, recent studies suggest that the area between Dara and Ambar had been inhabited (Keser- Kayaalp and Erdoğan 2017). Hence, the building complex in Ambar can be a monastery in the suburbs. There are also many monasteries outside of other cities of northern Mesopotamia.

Mundell Mango mentions two sources referring to this church in the 19th century (1982, 48). In his chronicle, Ainsworth states that “they passed by a large grain warehouse called ‘Anbar Dara’ in front of Dara”. Ainsworth’s impressions cannot be associated with the church that is even obvious today due to its architectural characteristics, but should be about a nearby building (Ainsworth, 1842, 117). This structure is probably at the site of the windmills, to which Whitby was referring, next to the riverbed in the village of Ambar (Whitby, 1986, 749). Sachau mentions the village of Ambar on a hill west of the river Dara and remembering a church among the ruins (Sachau, 1883, 394). The impressions of Sachau indicate that the church was not in use in the second half of the 19th century and was neglected. The drawing of the church by Mundell Mango, reproduced here, continues to be the best documentation of the building (Mundell Mango, 1982).



The building was registered as a cultural asset in 2007, and it was decided that the additions to the structure should be removed. There have not been any attempts to conserve and rehabilitate the building or destroy the later addition from this time until 2019.

Architecture

The Church of Ambar is monumental in scale and elongated in transverse (on north-south axis) direction. Three rectangular spaces (narthex – naos – apse) are attached from their longitudinal sides in the east-west direction. This church type is used especially in monastery churches in Tur ‘Abdin.

The building complex was constructed in masonry technique using fine-cut stone blocks, almost all of the same size. The walls have generally double stone (without infill) thickness, and only the vaults are jointed. The wall technique and the wear condition of the stones indicate that the adjacent buildings using the walls of each other were constructed simultaneously. The entrance to the main church, the largest mass of the building complex, is from the narthex through a gate located at the central axis of its west wall. The apse in the east is semi-circular from the interior and half-hexagonal from the exterior. The use of the polygonal apse form in the Cathedral of Dara suggests that the apse of

Church of Ambar was inspired by the cathedral. The narthex is accessible not only from the central axis to the west, but also from the gates in the north and south. The narthex was illuminated by small-size rectangular openings at the upper levels of the western wall, arched windows above the lintel of the door in the north and south walls, and the windows in the pediment. The naos is one and a half times larger than the narthex, and both spaces are covered with high barrel vaults.

There are four wide niches with semi-circular arches in the west wall. Two niches in the east, north, and south walls and four niches in the west wall of the naos bear similarities with the niches in the narthex in terms of their size and form. Although these niches were evaluated as tomb niches in the past (Mundell Mango, 1982, 52), there are not any earlier period tombs in the main spaces of the churches when other monastery churches are considered. These niches have deteriorated and are used as manglers at present. The naos is illuminated by three arched windows on its south wall and the tilted windowsills provide more intense daylight.

The section involving the apse on the very east is accessible by three doors with plain and carved lintels in the east wall of the narthex. This section consists of a central space with an apse, and two square planned side chambers in the north and south, which are similar in size with the central space. All three spaces are covered by barrel vaults extending in the east-west direction. There are niches in the north and south walls of the apse as well as its semi-circular east wall. Similar niches can be seen in the east and south walls of the chamber in the south. There was probably a niche in the north wall of this chamber. The existing remains are not sufficient to suggest the existence of a window in the central axis of the apse's east wall. Although there is limited information on liturgy in late antiquity in this region and the usage of the transverse space in that period, the side chamber should have served as pastophorium.

There is another rectangular mass attached to the north wall of the main church extending in the east-west direction from the naos to the apse section. There are two rooms in this mass, which are not connected to each



other. These two rooms are covered by barrel vaults extending in the east-west direction. The door of the room with a square-like plan is on its east wall, whereas there is an access on its south wall to the room on the north of the church's apse. The other room on the east is rectangular in plan and has only one entrance on the central axis of its west wall. On the exterior façade, there are pediments with a rectangular window in the north and south walls of the narthex. There are four corbels in the north wall of the narthex four stone rows under the pediment. However, there are no traces regarding where these corbels are connected.

The west wall of the additional structure on the north has a pediment without a window, whereas the pediment on its east wall has been lost. Pediments and traces on the roof structure indicate that these spaces were covered by pitched roof. Fourdrin also implies a similar outcome in his axonometric drawing of the Church of Ambar (Fourdrin, 1985, 333).

There is a Greek inscription on the corridor providing access from the naos to the apse of the main church. This inscription which has been recorded in the past includes a verse from psalm 24: 7: "Lift up your heads, you gates! Be lifted up you ancient doors! Open that the King of Glory may come in! (Mundell Mango, 1982, 48). There are varying circular ornamentations carved in stone on the lintels of the other openings between the spaces. Mundell Mango suggests that one of these ornamentations is the motif of Solomon's knot. There is a plain cyma recta cornice surrounding the space in the narthex and apse. On the exterior, there is a roof sill surrounding the entire building at the lower level of the springing line of the vaults coinciding with the pediments. There are also sills on both edges of the pediment similar to the roof sills.

There is a single-naved chapel with a rectangular plan, which is attached to the southwest corner of the main church. This chapel ends with an apse. Mundel Mango mentions the remains of five piers during his visit to the building indicating that there was a portico on the north of the chapel (Mundell

Mango, 1982, 52). Although this portico was transformed into a closed space by filling the area between its columns, its original semi-circular arches connecting the columns in east-west direction are prominent.

The semi-circular niche identified by Mundell Mango as the possible *beth slutho* is in fact the apse of this chapel. This suggestion is clearly revealed after the walls and the rows of arches of the structures underneath the apse are accessed. The molding surrounding the vault of chapel's apse, which is the most remarkable ornament of the church complex, is much more elaborate than the cornice of the main church's apse. There is an ornamentation on the key stone. Since the keystone is severely deteriorated, the form of the ornamentation is not perceivable, but it was most probably a cross.

Present State

There is no Christian population in the village. The village started to be called the 'Ambar Village' after a family settled in the village started to use the church as a depot/barn. Along with the houses, there is a masjid, a condolence house, and a primary school in the village. In time, houses were built on top of the church, constructed with a mixed technique of reinforced concrete and masonry. Although these houses were unauthorized when they were constructed, they were given private ownership in 1973. The title deeds of these houses legalized these structures and their location. Moreover, two buildings were constructed on the south of the main church together with new buildings attached to the north wall of the chapel. Garden walls were also constructed adjacent to the main walls of the church.

Although a decision had been made for the removal of the buildings constructed on top of the church after the church was registered as a cultural asset in 2007, it was observed that these buildings were still inhabited during the field survey in November 2018. The cracks in the superstructure of the church caused by the weight of composite buildings in reinforced concrete and masonry, and deterioration in time, were repaired with cement. The upper surface of the church's vaults was leveled by cement screed in



certain sections. The location and end points of the water drainpipes of the houses constructed on top of the building has caused water to flow across the walls of the church, which in turn exacerbated the weathering of stones due to permanent water infiltration, and resulted in the loss of mortar joints. In addition, the water tanks of the houses placed on the building's roof could cause water leakage from its superstructure in case of overflows.

Most of the door openings providing circulation between the spaces of the church have been closed by infills, and individual spaces were created to be used as warehouses, barns or stables. Similarly, new doors were opened in the walls of certain spaces. For example, the original niche in the east wall of the room on the north of the apse has been transformed into a door. The naos of the main church was divided by a few meters high walls composed of hollow concrete blocks. In certain sections, the stones were drilled to support additional timber floors in order to store straw or other materials effectively. The niches are used as mangers. The ground is filled with debris, soil, and animal



feces. The level of accumulated debris sometimes exceeds up to 1.5 meters, making it difficult to comprehend the architecture of the building.

The entire complex is poor in condition, dilapidated, and its current use as a barn/warehouse/ haystack, alongside with the construction of houses on top of it, have accelerated the deterioration of the building. There are severe structural cracks, collapses, weathering, and material losses on all of the walls of the building. Efflorescence is observed on the stones due to water leakage together with dilapidation, the loss of mortar joints and material losses. Vegetative growth can be observed on the roof of the building in north of the main church and on the wall joints of the entire complex. Uncontrolled access and improper use of the building result in vandalism in certain sections. As much as ten percent of the stones in the main walls have fallen down or deteriorated to such an extent that they have lost their load bearing capacity. Rubble stones and cement were used to replace the fallen stones in the vault and walls. Stone-carved ornaments on the lintels of openings between spaces can barely be identified due to mechanical deterioration which have worn them away. The improper structures built on the top of, attached to or inside the church complex obstruct the perception of the building as a mass and affect its plan organization. The center and south of the apse's extension of the main church is completely lost, and the northern part has remained underneath a staircase built on top of it. Nevertheless, the plan organization of the complex and its spatial characteristics are still understandable to a large extent. The building has no information panel and it does not attract any visitors other than those who already know it, or live in its surroundings.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The Church of Ambar is significant as a monastery church from the 6th century. Other monastery churches that have survived to the present have undergone numerous repairs as they still maintain their original function within the active monasteries. Since the Church of Ambar has survived to the present in its original state, except the later structures

added to the building, it gives important information about the late antique building attached to the church and the construction technique of the period.

The building is structurally in poor condition. It is relatively resistant to potential earthquake loads, whereas it has a moderate flood risk due to the water tanks on top of the building. Given the existing structural vulnerabilities of the building as described above, it should be brought to the attention of the inhabitants or users that the structure may not fit the requirements for habitation, as safety precaution.

Due to its improper usage, the building is exposed to vandalism, which altogether increase the risk of further loss. Measures should be taken as soon as possible to prevent the structure being subject to continuous vandalism. A comprehensive research, conservation and restoration project should be prepared, and a holistic approach should be developed considering all buildings together. The unauthorised continual habitation, and subsequent transformation of interior spaces and interventions to the building to suit short term needs of its inhabitants may lead to significant loss of documentary evidence of the building architecture and its original function, if no action is taken.

An archaeological survey should be conducted during the architectural documentation stage of the conservation project. The debris inside the church should be carefully cleaned and the intact floor, which can be seen in certain sections, should be unearthed. The building should at least be consolidated within the scope of a restoration project and a landscape design project should be implemented after the surrounding structures are demolished. The building's location within the village can be considered as a potential for its conservation in the future.

After these conditions are met, signage and information panels should be placed on the route of the visitors to attract more visitors to this relatively unknown building. This building located on a hill surrounded with the plain and close to the main road and about 2 kilometers south of Dara archaeological site, has the potential to contribute to the tourism of the region.

Church of Mor Sobo

Bariş Altan

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Hah (Anıtlı) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 13.12.2012/1031 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Hah, probably the seat of the bishopric of Tur 'Abdin in the 6th century, is an important village remarkable for its numerous churches and monasteries in and around it. Most of its population is still Syriac. The village is named Anıtlı, meaning 'with monuments' in Turkish, due to these remains. It is believed that the church of Mor Sobo was the cathedral of the bishopric center (Bell- Mango, 1982, iv, 112). The architectural decoration, partially preserved at the springing line level of the apse's arch, suggests that the building dates to the 6th century. Hah gained importance in the 8th century (Keser-Kayaalp, 2018, 197). There are at least five buildings dating from this period in the immediate vicinity of the village. The church of Mor Sobo appears to have undergone a major renovation during this period. The chronicle of Zuqnin

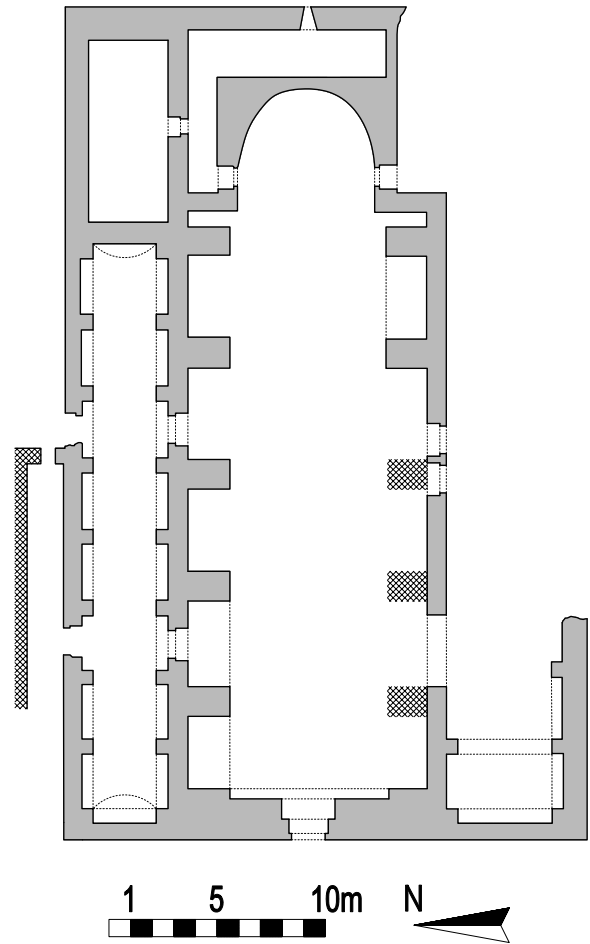
mentions four earthquakes in the first half of the 8th century. The piers and brick upper structure covering the church was probably added right after these earthquakes or later (Keser-Kayaalp, 2018, 190). Mango claims that the church of Mor Sobo is the prototype of the village-type churches in Tur 'Abdin, which is the largest church of this type. In other churches, piers and arches are attached to the north and south exterior walls. While in certain buildings it is clear that these elements are added later, in others they seem to be part of the original building. It is suggested for other churches in Tur 'Abdin that the piers were added in the 7th or 8th century right after the construction of these churches. The elements indicating later construction phases in the church of Mor Sobo are the decoration on stone blocks appearing to



be a templon fragment and elongated space in the north of the naos. Although it is difficult to date these elements, they resemble some of the ornamentation styles that appeared in the 12th century. The latest inscription in the *beth slutho* (open-air apse) dates to the end of the 13th century.

Architecture

The church of Mor Sobo is larger than many other village churches in Tur 'Abdin region. The apse has a passage at the back in the shape of ambulatory, which is rarely seen in other churches. The piers and the arches on their top, constructed with stone and brick, are added later. They cover the architectural ornamentation in the apse, windows on the upper level and doors on the lower level. While the stones used in the apse are large cut stones, smaller rough-cut stones were used in other parts of the church. The corners are again reinforced with large cut stone blocks. While fine-cut stone is used in the piers attached to the walls in other village churches, the piers in this church were constructed with alternating rows of brick and smaller stones. The four doors with profiles opening from the narthex to the naos, are grouped in pairs. Unlike other churches, there is another narthex to the west of



the building, reached by a wide arch. While the stone voussoirs of the arches are from the Late Antique period, this wall and the narthex were built in a later period. These voussoirs were most probably used elsewhere in the church before. Different from the other churches in Tur 'Abdin, there is a space parallel to the naos in the north. While this space, reached through doors, seems to have been added later, the large stone blocks with molding – located at the outer edge of this space – are confusing since they were most probably reused as spolia. The *beth*

slutho which is approximately 20 meters south of the southern wall of the church, has fine-cut stones. The size of these stones resembles the late antique stone workmanship in the region.

Most of the epitaphs within the summer church date back to the 12th century, indicating that the church was densely used during this period and underwent a serious repair. The ornamentation on the stones placed randomly on the floor where templon may have once been also suggests this period. One of



the stones has a cross-like motif and a wheel of fortune around it, and a Maltese cross in the middle of a large flower and a grape branch motif around this stone block. In another block, there is a larger Maltese cross. In another piece of the templon, resembling the first stone block, there are stars and a portion of Psalm 44:5, which usually appears around crosses.

Present State

The church is located in the center of Hah Village. Although the building is in a very dilapidated state, it retains its main architectural features and the outline of its plan. The standing walls and the decorative elements found either collapsed or at the lower parts of the structure provide important information about the monumentality of the building. The entire upper structure, except the section covering the northern nave, has collapsed. The western section of the narthex, in the southern part of the church, is partially standing. Lower vegetation is observed to a great extent both inside and around the structure growing in between the stones where filling material of the joints is missing. In addition, areas on the lower parts of the structure suffer from biodeterioration possibly due to water stagnation.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building is completely exposed to natural and manmade factors of decay. However, since the majority of the village's population is Syriacs, it is relatively protected against vandalism. The building has frequent visitors due to its location in the centre of the village. The building, which is one of the most impressive surviving examples of the monumental architecture of Tur 'Abdin, remains unprotected from slow and cumulative weathering causing further deterioration and loss. The building may be especially susceptible to potential earthquake loads due to a number of cracks formed in its main walls, and the loss of stone in its load bearing elements. It is, therefore, recommended that action towards its documentation and regular maintenance is seen as priority, focusing on emergency stabilization of the elements susceptible to collapse, mitigation of



the vegetation overgrowth, and wall consolidation. In addition, collapsed building material should be classified for their eventual use in reconstruction if their original location can be appropriately identified. This church, along with other important buildings in and around Hah, can form part of a cultural route. A cultural route would significantly contribute to the village's cultural heritage-based development. This pilot model if successful could be adopted for other villages and regions in Tur 'Abdin.

Church of Yoldath Aloho (Virgin Mary)

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 **Batman, Beşiri District, Kfarzo (Yenipınar) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 25.03.2009/2129 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Situated on a mound in the central location of the village, this church was probably built on an earlier foundation. The current remains point to a 19th century structure. We know from tax records that forty-eight families from the village gave taxes to the Patriarchate in 1870 (Akyüz, 2017, 373). Therefore, this church probably existed then when there was a considerable Christian population in the region. The church shows similarities with the 19th and 20th century churches in Midyat town center.

Architecture

The Church of Yoldath Aloho is a three-aisled basilica with a rectangular plan extending in east-west direction. The church was built in rubble stone masonry. Although there are not any traces indicating that its outer façades were originally plastered, its original plaster may have disappeared over time due to disintegration or other reasons. The interior is generally plastered with a technique locally called *cas* (plaster composed of gypsum burnt in a furnace and grinded, and incorporated with wood

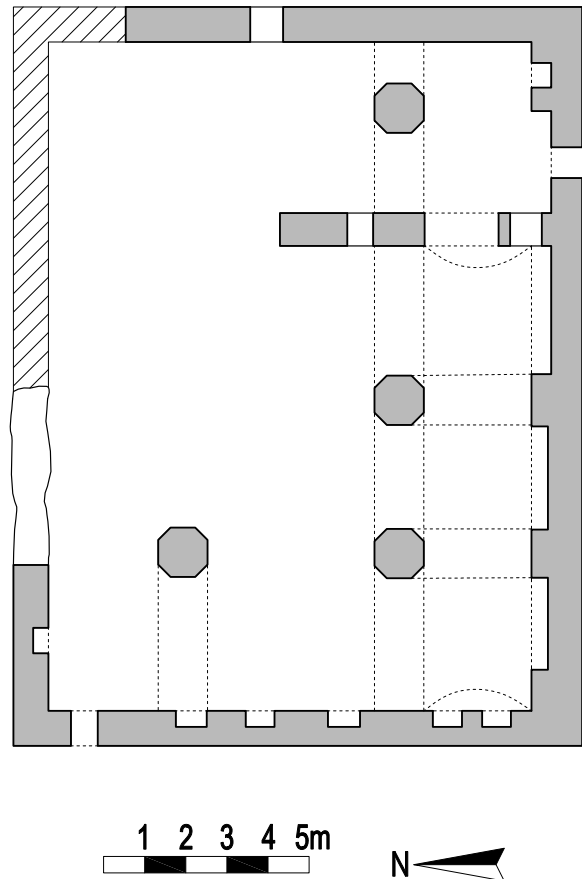


ashes), whereas in certain places cement plaster is also observed. Terracotta jars, used both for acoustic purposes and support, are observed between rubble stones in the interior walls where plaster layer is lost. The columns of the templon wall separating the naos from the apse are clad with cream-colored marble.

The apse has an unusual form; it is not semi-circular but rather has a flat wall from the exterior. The apse is flanked by side rooms. The naos consists of three naves separated by two piers with octagonal cross sections. Depressed arches are used to span these piers. There are traces indicating that the naves were covered by barrel vaults. The south wall of the apse's south chamber has a door opening, providing the entrance today. However, there is not sufficient information suggesting whether this was enlarged from the original door opening.

There are three arched openings with semi-circular profiles at the intersection of the apse space with the middle nave. While the opening in the middle is larger and at a higher level, the side ones are smaller and at a lower level. The side chambers of the apse (which may have functioned as pastophoria) can be accessed from both the apse and the side naves with depressed arches. There is a semi-circular arched niche in the south wall of the south side chamber of the apse. There is also an arched opening to the south of the arch separating the southern side chamber from the side nave. The same order can be expected for the side chamber in the north, but this cannot be ensured since this section is now ruined.

There are two semi-circular niches in the western wall of the southern nave. Since the western wall of the northern nave is partially ruined, only one niche can be observed. There are also two of these niches in the middle nave's western wall with an oval window opening between them at an upper level. On the southern wall of the church, there are engaged columns, supporting the arches between them. These arches have profiles which are almost pointed. The same order is likely to exist on the northern wall, which is demolished today.



The high vault of the middle nave is elaborated as a tympanum in the east and west façades. In the center of this tympanum is an embrasure window, narrowing outwards, is located in the center of the tympanum. Since the upper sections of the eastern wall are ruined, the presence of such a window cannot be identified. Nevertheless, an arched window opening with a semi-circular profile in the eastern wall, approximately 1 meter above the ground level, has survived to the present day. In the western wall, an embrasure window narrowing outwards is located in the center of the tympanum. Since the upper elevations of the eastern wall are in ruin, such a window can only be predicted in that wall. However, a window opening with a semi-circular arch in the eastern wall about 1m above the ground has survived to the present day.

It can be observed that the church was repaired in a later period after it was constructed. Cement plaster was applied in this period. Although some of the decorations were completed, there are certain decorations that are like drafts indicating that these



later period interventions could not be completed. Marble piers have simple beveled capitals. The piers of the arches separating the side naves from side chambers also have beveled corners.

Molding in the form of zigzags and straight lines are carved on the marbles of the templon, framing the architectural elements in order to accentuate them. A zigzag motif was carved into the cement plaster, framing the niche's arch in the southern wall of the side chamber in the south. At the intersection of the eastern wall at the level of the vault's springing line, is a cornice molding with arabesque forms carved into the cement plaster. In the middle nave, there are traces of two moldings, about 50 cm below the springing line of the vault, probably running along the entire space.

Present State

The church is situated on a hill and is surrounded by other structures of the village. It is next to the main road of the village and can easily be accessed by a vehicle. It does not attract any visitors except those who



already know the building, and there are no information panels or signage about the church. It is in poor condition and neglected. The ground level is filled with the fragments of the collapsed vault and garbage. The ground level around the church has also been filled in over time.

Recently, a cement screed was poured over the southern nave and a reinforced concrete structure was started to be built in the southwest corner, but it was not completed. A hollow-concrete toilet, which uses the wall of the church, was added to the southern façade of the building. Salt deposits caused by cement plaster damages the marble. The traces of vandalism, such as scrapings or graffiti, are seen on all the walls of the building.

Only one of the piers in the west, separating the central nave from the side nave in the north, has survived until today. The upper structures of the central and northern nave and the side chamber in the apse's south have collapsed. The major parts of the northern wall and the northeast corner are damaged. There are fragments of marble piers and other damaged architectural elements from the collapsed parts of the church, scattered within the church's lot and on the slopes of the hill where the building stands. The plan of the church is comprehensible from its remaining sections since the building is thought to have a symmetrical arrangement.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

As a result of the collapses in the walls and vaults, the structural integrity of the church has been lost. Serious structural cracks and material losses have been observed. It is completely exposed to wind and rain. Therefore, the church is in a process of rapid

deterioration due to surface weathering, loss of jointing mortars and vegetation. The building also has a weak foundation due to the slope on which it is located. The church is at risk of collapse.

The building should be protected against further deterioration and collapse by first taking emergency measures such as structural consolidation and conservation measures. Improper additions on top of the building and to its side should be demolished. The scattered architectural elements should be collected and protected. The surrounding of the church should also be taken into consideration in the restoration project and a landscape project should be prepared for its surrounding open area.

As a result of the collapses in the walls and vaults, the structural integrity of the church has been lost. Serious structural cracks and material losses are observed. It is fully exposed to wind and rain. Therefore, the church is in a process of rapid deterioration due to surface weathering, loss of jointing mortars and vegetation. The building also has a weak foundation due to the slope on which it is located. The church is at risk of collapse.

The building should be protected against further deterioration and collapse by first taking emergency measures such as structural consolidation and conservation measures. Improper additions on top of the building and to its side should be demolished. The scattered architectural elements should be collected and protected. The surrounding of the church should also be taken into consideration in the restoration project and a landscape project should be prepared for its surrounding open area.

Monastery of Mor Barsaumo

Dr. Elif Keser Kayaalp

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Salah (Barıştepe) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 09.06.2009/2283 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

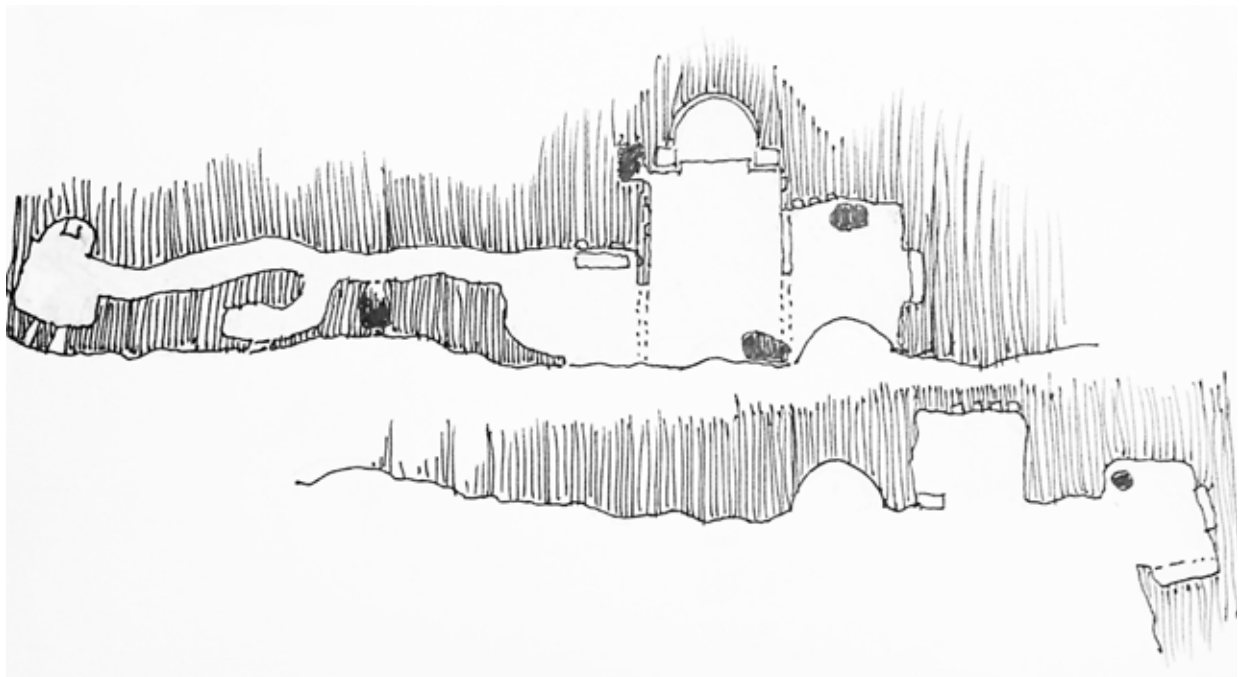
The name of the complex as inscribed on the wall of the church of the monastery is the House of the Mother of God, Meryem (Mary) and Mor Barsaumo. Pognon recorded three inscriptions from this monastery (Pognon, 1907, 72-75), two of which partly survived. There is an additional inscription which he did not mention. The inscriptions provide a *terminus ante quem* of 1507/8 for the monastery, although one cannot rule out the possibility that it may have been founded much earlier as a simple rock-carved sacred space.

An important historical development of the fourteenth century is the schism in the patriarchy. After being excommunicated in August 1364 by Patriarch Ishmail (d.1365), the bishop of Salah, Sovo, received a certification from the Ayyubid ruler of Hesno d-Kifo (Hasankeyf) recognizing him as patriarch of the Tur 'Abdin. Until 1839, despite five reconciliations between them, there were two

patriarchs within a hundred kilometers (Keser-Kayaalp, 2017, 264).

Over the centuries when the region was under attack, the monastery, because of its secluded location, may have served as a refuge. In the time of Mas'ud of Zāz, patriarch of the Tur 'Abdin (1492-1512), who is known for his building activities, the monastery may have received further attention and may have been adorned with its unique sculpture. We know from the appendix added to the Chronography of Barhebraeus in the late fifteenth century by monk Addai from Basabrino that the nearby monastery of Mor Ya'qub was attacked in 1454 and was left in ruins after being plundered in 1493. After the monastery of Mor Ya'qub was abandoned, the remote monastery of Mor Barsaumo, which is in a protected position but still close to the monastery of Mor Ya'qub, may have temporarily served as the residence of the patriarch (Keser-Kayaalp 2017).





Special thanks to Dr. Jorge Manuel Simão Alves Correia for the sketch.

Architecture

The monastery is composed of a series of rock-carved spaces, located around 800 m northeast of the well-known monastery of Mor Ya'qub at Salah. It is carved into the west side of a low hill. In the southern end of the curved rock surface, there is a room with a destroyed ceiling. The east wall of the room extends towards the north and on that wall there are traces of two niches topped by foliated arches. Next to these, there is another room which has three small rectangular and two semi-circular niches on the east and south walls. To the north of this room on the surface of the rock is a large semi-circular prayer niche.

This outdoor prayer niche, which is elaborately decorated, is in the form of a *beth slutho* (open-air apse). It is composed of a curved wall and part of what most probably was a semi-dome above it. The latter was adorned with a carved monumental cross. The lower part of the vertical arm and part of the horizontal arm on the right have survived. In the background of the surviving part, there is a carved semi-circular sunburst with traces of red paint. The apse wall below the cross is elaborately carved with ornamentations. Under the cross runs a band of a floral scroll. Below the scroll, there is a combination of carved geometric decoration and two carved crosses in medallions, whose styles are

different from the cross above it. These crosses have equal arms and at the end of each arm there are three elaborate curvilinear finials. The apse wall flanking the crosses is divided into sections. In the first section just to the right of the cross, there are six eight-pointed star-shaped recesses. Next to them are three rows of five squares, under which there are interchanging six-pointed stars and hexagons. To their right, we find another series of eight pointed star-shaped recesses. Under the second cross and first set of star-shaped recesses is a section composed of small crosses. Under all these runs another scroll which has more elongated leaf like features. Below this is a band devoid of any sculpture except from the remains of the lower part of a cross, which may indicate that some parts were in fact decorated differently in the past. At the lowest level runs a decoration that is difficult to decipher. It looks like pseudo-Kufic writing. Some parts of the northern side of the apse are eroded and some are destroyed (Keser-Kayaalp, 2017, 267- 72).

At the upper level, there are four rooms and a corridor. The room at the northern end is a small space with an apse and an altar. On the east wall, to the left of the apse, there is an inscription in red paint, written vertically, recording that in the year 1819 of the Greeks (1507/8) the altar was sculpted by the priest

Habib, a recluse and a disciple of Patriarch Mas'ud, who consecrated it in the name of Mor Barsaumo (Pognon, 1907, 73). Around the cross in the apse is an inscription which is divided into four sections. It is from Psalm 44:5: 'Through thee will we push down our enemies' (Keser Kayaalp, 2017, 273). A corridor connects this room to the other parts of the monastery, first to a small room and then to a larger room which was probably the main church of the complex. The arch of the apse rests on carved pilasters. The apse conch is decorated with a carved cross. This cross has a sunburst or fluted background as is the case for the two monumental crosses on the rock surface.

An inscription in this room stated that the inscription was carved on the rock surface of the church of Mary, Mother of God, and Mor Barsaumo, located next to the blessed fortress of Şalah and Mor Ya'qub the Recluse by Ḥusab the sinner, son of the priest 'Aziz from Zāz, in the year 1819 of the Greeks (1507/8), at the time of Ignatius of Mardin and Ignatius of Tur 'Abdin, also named Yešu' of Zāz (Pognon 73). As it could not be read properly, Pognon proposed that the date in the inscription could be either 1507/8 or 1517/8 (Pognon, 1907, 75).

The monastery of Mor Barsaumo is unique in terms of its sculpture. It provides a fine example of medieval artistic interactions between Muslim and Christian traditions. It is remarkable also because some Christian features in its decoration have origins dating back to the late antique period, illustrating the strong continuities in the region.

Present State

There is no signage or information board available. The structure has been abandoned for a long time, which in turn has resulted in considerable vandalism and deterioration. Amongst the decorative elements of the structure, the crosses on the rock surface have faced human destruction. Uncontrolled vegetation growth is another problem that damages the unique sculpture of the *beth slutho*. Additionally, the complex suffers from structural issues due to cracks in the rock surface which raise concerns about its overall stability. Despite its condition, the plan of the monastery is partly legible.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Cracks in the rocks, treasure hunting, and vandalism should be considered the main threats to the structure. In fact, the location of the monument does not appear to have been a deterrent factor to uncontrolled human activity. After necessary safety measures are in place, an architectural and condition survey needs to be undertaken in order to address possible solutions to the current structural problems. This monastery should be included in a cultural route together with the other rock-carved structures around it and the important monastery of Mor Ya'qub, which is a tourist attraction.

Monastery of Mor Aho/ Dayro da-Slibol/ Der el-Muhr

Dr. Marica Cassis

📍 **Batman, Hasankeyf District, Difne (Üçyol) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 15.05.2003/3142 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

This monastery is also called the Monastery of the Cross near Hesno d-Kifo (Hasankeyf) to distinguish it from the Monastery of the Cross of Bet Il. The name “Monastery of the Cross” comes from Saint Aho (on the saint, see Krüger, 1938, 10), a sixth-century solitary who is believed to have brought a stolen fragment of the Cross on which Jesus was crucified to Tur ‘Abdin (Palmer, 2010, 231). In various publications, the monastery’s name has been given differently. Socin says, in Kurdish it is called Der Mahar, ‘the Monastery of the Valley’, referring to

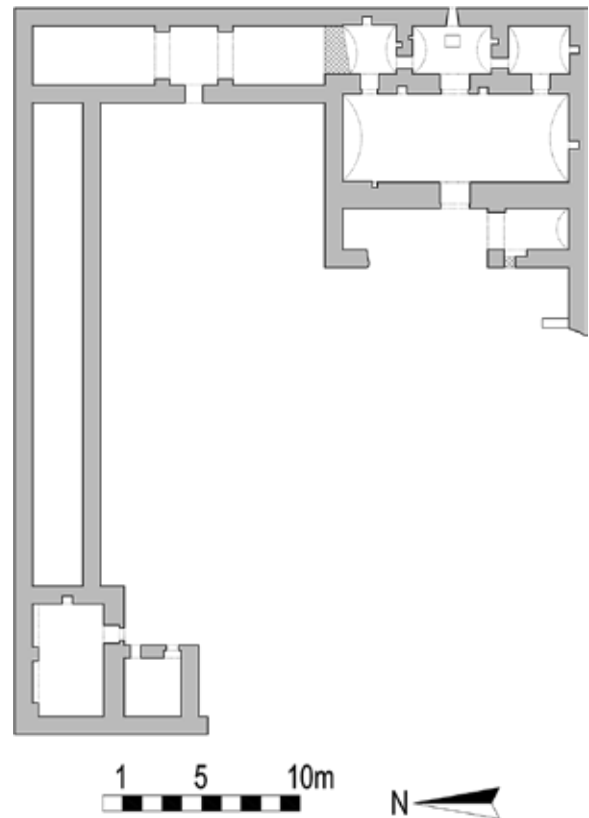
the wadi Armah (Socin 1881), in which it is built. Wiessner records the monastery as Der el-Muhr (1981, I/1, 110-115) and Sinclair as Der el-Mukhr (1987, III, 314). Barsaum records that its church was built in 770, was destroyed in World War I and the last of its monks were killed (2003, 562). He records that three bishops graduated from it. Monastery’s relation with two villages is recorded in endowment deeds dating to 1543 and 1560 (Palmer, 2010, 196). In 1584 hasyo Abrohom, the son of *muqaddasi* Habib of Hesno d-Kifo, was ordained ‘bishop of the



Monastery of the Cross'; he rebuilt the circuit-wall, making it and the roofs impregnable to robbers, and purchased a number of fields and gardens for it. Wiessner mentions an inscription from the monastery which is an epitaph recording the passing away of a monk in 1700 (AD 1388) (1981, I/II, 107). If that inscription is the one illustrated in p. 39, it needs to be studied in detail.

Architecture

The church, which is of monastic type, stands in the southeast corner of the walled courtyard of the monastic complex and consists of a narthex, a transverse nave and a three-partite sanctuary. The northern room of the sanctuary was almost certainly a diaconicon, and the southern room may have functioned as a martyrion, although the function is unclear. The diaconicon corresponds to both the sanctuary and the nave, and contains a niche in its eastern wall and southern wall. The central room of the sanctuary has niches in both the north and south wall, as well as the eastern wall, which is surmounted by a small window. The south chamber corresponds to both the sanctuary and the nave as well, but contains no niches or windows.



The nave has a niche immediately to the south of the door connecting the nave to the sanctuary. A second niche is located equidistant between that door and the door to the diaconicon. A third niche appears in the southern wall. A single doorway leads to the narthex, which has a niche in the west wall, to the south of the door to the nave. The narthex has a single original door leading in from the courtyard.

There is a substantial second level on the top of the sanctuary of the church, which was constructed in at least two completely different styles. Arches constructed of bricks extending from small piers seem to have replaced a barrel vaulted room of later construction. The roofs here are brick cross-vaults. This looks like a second floor added at a later date with architectural elements which are more common in Byzantine architecture. Finally, another small room over the southern wall of the church was constructed



of packed mud and rocks, and then plastered over. Its dates and functions are unclear, although it is tempting to connect this final addition to the reconstructions of the sixteenth century.

The earliest visible construction is stone construction with squared and small blockwork laid in rough horizontal rows, and then covered with a thick plaster. The stones probably encased a rubble core. The original construction is clearest in the apse and in the rooms flanking it. The doorways have, for the most part, rectangular or semicircular stone block lintels, and the ceilings are barrel vaults constructed of brick and then plastered over. There is an inscription outside the sanctuary probably dating to the 13th or 14th century.

The nave and narthex, on the other hand, were partially rebuilt. The top parts of the wall in the nave, for example, are smaller sized stones, suggesting a repair. During the later medieval period, the entrance to the sanctuary was further repaired and replaced with a distinctive decorative window above the doorway. The window is a semi-circular

arch with a slight point. Running below it, and over the lintel, was a decorative panel of low relief stars which were painted red. While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact parallel, these share the most similarities with decorative programs of the Seljuk or Artuqid periods of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. The narthex was also rebuilt in this period with pointed arches which mirror the window over the sanctuary.

While the church is significant, it is also important to note that it was part of a large walled monastic complex. The north and west walls of the complex have small rooms, which point to different construction phases. These require further study. Behind the complex to the west is what appears to be a well-preserved *beth qadishe* (house of saints). The walls of the complex have been rebuilt several times, including one in the 16th century.

Present State

The external walls have ruptured in several places, and there is both vandalism and natural erosion destroying what remains. The site is relatively isolated, sitting in the

middle of several agricultural fields, but there is new construction in the immediate vicinity. The complex survives in ruinous condition, with low accessibility to the built structures due to the accumulation of collapsed building material that have altered the original elevation. Surviving sheltered structures suffers from microbiological colonization due to water infiltration from the top. In addition, the scant evidence of engraved inscriptions appear damaged most likely due to deterioration processes and vandalism.

Though signs of repair work and limited reconstruction work is evident (the date of which is unknown), this action has not changed the continuous loss of rubble material which collapses as the mortar joints are weakened. The vaulted room of the church exhibits a number of cracks on the mortar render which covers the interior façades, and which is at risk of gradual detachment.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The geographic location of the complex may have been a reason for the little deliberate damage it has endured since its abandonment in the early 20th century. However the close vicinity to agricultural fields may imply the change of water table and increased level of lower vegetation growing over the structure. Although the surviving structure does not show signs of severe structural issues, it almost certainly suffers from the gradual local collapse of rubble (evident by the amount of fallen rubble accumulated), which in turn may cause the further weakening of vulnerable architectural elements, such as vaults and arches, and walls.

Additionally, vibration by the continuous movement of large vehicles may structurally weaken the structure substantially, while there is the danger of more walk-in traffic, and consequently vandalism, to the site. The site and surrounding fields should be formally surveyed so that more than just the church and its surrounding wall are noted. There was clearly a large complex associated with this monastery. Excavation, even if just some test trenches, would elucidate the periods of use. The site has the potential to be very important in the overall development



of monastic complexes as they operated in different periods and under different communities. It also has the potential to illustrate the interaction between the different communities in this period. Ceramic analysis would add a great deal to our understanding of the period, and the agricultural nature of the area suggests a rich ceramic corpus.

Archaeological surveying and research aside, the complex is in need for a thorough documentation and condition survey with the view to priorities necessary actions for its temporary stabilization and salvage. In addition to this, work should also focus on registering the complex to a regional heritage inventory for its formal recognition as heritage property. This could potentially facilitate further protection measure to be undertaken, while initiating the discussion for a conservation campaign.

Monastery of Mor Yuhannon

Bariş Altan

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Hah (Anıtlı) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registration Status: **Registered - 26.03.2019/4391 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Although the monastery is known as Mor Yuhannon, Palmer suggests that the building was also dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which can be understood from the inscription panel on the door opening leading from the narthex to the naos. The inscription has not survived intact until present. However, from the mentioned names and the surviving part of the inscription, its construction date can be estimated as 739-40 (Bell- Mango, 1982, 115, 116. Palmer, 1987, A.2, 60).

Architecture

The surrounding walls of the monastery, which are clearly visible today, allow us to understand the scale of a monastic foundation in the 8th century. The church is a typical monastic church and covers the area of almost half of the monastery. In the plan organization, the narthex, naos and three-partite apse extend parallel to each other along

the north-south axis. It is noteworthy that their dimensions are close to each other. The entrance to the narthex is through a door opening with a rectangular lintel. The naos section is relatively larger and has an ornamented door with an inscription panel. The decoration of the vine branches and leaves is typical of the 7th-8th centuries. There are traces of crosses made with red paint, which are commonly seen in the region. There is a series of arches in large cut-stones in the western wall of the naos.

Present State

The building is located in the middle of a wide plain, about 600 meters east of Hah Village. Currently, there are no information panels or signage *in situ*, with limited visits from those who know the location of the monument. While the building has largely been demolished, the outline of its

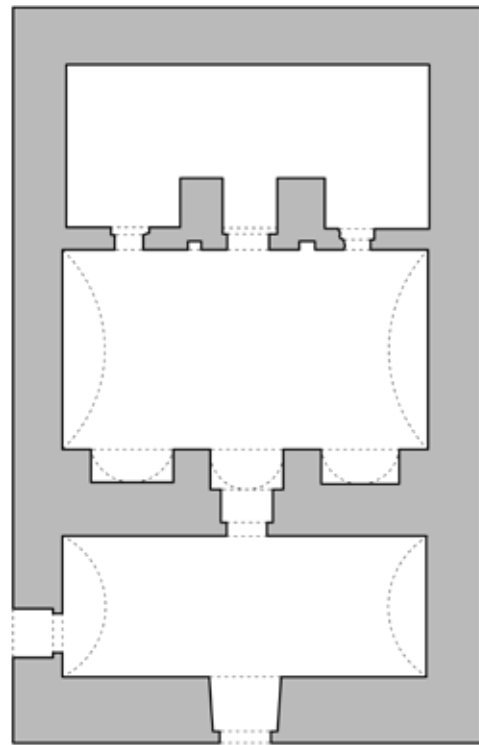


surrounding walls can still be traced. In certain parts, these walls survived up to a few meters high. Apart from the arches in the western wall which survive standing, the remaining parts of the naos have collapsed, currently in ruins. Additionally, a very small portion of the vault covering the naos is still standing. The apse section has severely been damaged.

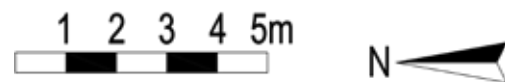
Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although the building's proximity to Hah Village has contributed to its preservation to a certain extent, since there is no protective barrier surrounding it, the building has been susceptible to vandalism. While the ornamentation and the inscription panel on the door jamb remain the most significant elements of the structure, they are at risk of being stolen or destroyed as long as they remain in their place under the current circumstances.

An architectural survey is necessary to document the monument in its current condition before further destruction takes place. Although in ruinous condition, considering the significance of the structure, actions can be taken for its preservation as part of a cultural route that could interlink structures in and around Hah Village, especially those located within walking distance. Additionally cleaning works could be undertaken inside the building to collect the collapsed rubble stones to provide easy access to the building.



Plan of the main church of the monastery





Monastery of Mor Quryakos/ Dayr al-Qira

Dr. Zekai Erdal

📍 **Batman, Beşiri District, Zargel (Ayrancı) Village**

Present Function: Abandoned, will be given a function by the Special Provincial Administration

Registry Status: Registered - 25.04.2012/462 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

This monastery was the residence of the bishop of Zargel. The earliest known reference is in Barsaum, mentioning that in 1415, the patriarch ordained the bishop of Zargel (Palmer, 2010, 198, fn. 122). We know from the colophons dating to 1486 and 1488 that there were many monks from Tur 'Abdin there. Mango notes that a colophon of AD 1483 mentions renovations to the monastery carried out two years previously and that its monks then numbered a hundred (Bell-Mango, 1982, 136). We also know from Barsaum that it was abandoned in the early 1940s, two years before he wrote his history (Barsaum, 2000, 187). It is also known as Black Monastery to some due

to its location near Black Rock (Karataş). Bell states that the building lacks the "brick-work vault, so typical of the Tur 'Abdin". She adds that it is devoid of interest and frequently repaired. She also mentions that it has no moldings or inscriptions (Bell-Mango, 1982, 44). Bell did not pay careful attention to the inscriptions and a detailed study of the inscriptions remains to be done. Bell's account may indicate that the remarkable ribbed dome of the room lying next to the church was built after her visit. The best comparison for this room is the room known as the Patriarch's throne in Dayr al-Za'faran built between 1872-76 (Bilge, 2006, 60).





We thank to the Syriac Catholic Church Foundation for sharing this drawing with us.

Architecture

The monastery, extending in a rectangular form in an east-west direction, is two stories high and has the dimensions of 76x39 meters. It consists of two large courtyards arranged side by side, a collapsed church and various spaces created around them. Since the monastery is located on a sloping terrain in the north-south direction, its main south wall is supported by buttresses. White /yellowish limestone and black basalt stones are used in the monastery.

The entrance to the ground floor is through a monumental portal on the south side. The entrance iwan is accessed through an arched door opening with a depressed profile. The door opening is framed by a semi-circular arch on fluted colonettes on both sides. There is an inscription in the middle of the arch's tympanum, framed by floral motifs. There are niches, windows and door openings in the east and west walls of the entrance iwan. Arched door openings on both sides of the northern end of the iwan lead to rooms on the east and west sides. The rooms are rectangular extending in north-south direction and covered by a barrel vault extending in the same direction. There are niches of various lengths in the side walls of the rooms.



The entrance iwan leads to a rectangular courtyard. In the southeast of the courtyard, there is a rectangular room similar to the spaces on both sides of the entrance iwan, but the northern section of this room was severely damaged. The room is covered by a barrel vault extending in the north-south direction. The space on the west side of the courtyard has a rectangular plan extending in north-south direction and accessed through three door openings. The space is divided into two naves by five piers with almost square sections, arranged in a single row. It is covered by cross vaults. The wall to the north of the courtyard has partially collapsed and is mostly lost. The remains of the walls and arches to the east of the courtyard indicate the presence of either a portico or a single-nave section on



the eastern wing. The second courtyard is accessed through the arched opening in the middle of the eastern wing.

The second courtyard has a rectangular plan. It is surrounded by porticoes from the east, west, and south. The porticoes are covered by cross vaults carried by pointed arches sitting on rectangular piers. A large section of the rectangular space to the north of the courtyard is filled with soil. The window openings with flat lintels, either intact or demolished, in the south wall of this space overlook the courtyard. The traces of arches on the south wall indicate that there was a portico in front of this space. Behind this portico to the south of the courtyard are six rectangular rooms extending in north-south direction. They all have barrel vaults in the same direction. These rooms are directly connected to the courtyard through a door opening with a semi-circular arch and a window with a flat lintel. These rooms have embrasure windows on each of their southern walls and niches with pointed arches in their eastern walls. There is a well to the northeast of the courtyard.

The church, which is currently in ruins, is accessed through a portal in the middle of the

east wing of the courtyard. There is a partially intact inscription on the tympanum of the door's arch. The door opening is framed by a pointed arch with a series of muqarnas. This arch is followed by a series of dentils in the form of a pointed arch, followed by a sill with a fluted profile. The church is the most ruined part of the monastery. The existing remains are under the heaps of soil. The plan drawn by Bell (Bell-Mango, 1982, 136) is not traceable today. According to the drawing, the church had a typical monastic type church plan of Tur 'Abdin, which is longer on the north-south axis and has a tripartite apse. The existing remains of the southern and eastern walls indicate that this section was two stories high and covered by a vault and dome.

A small courtyard with a rectangular plan extending in the north-south direction is accessed through the portico to the southeast of the second courtyard. There is another room in the south of this courtyard, which has a similar style with the rooms to the south of the second courtyard. This courtyard also provides access to the most elaborate space of the monastery. The square-shaped room is accessed through a partly demolished portal on the west side. The

portal has an arched opening with a depressed profile and is articulated by a series of muqarnas in the form of pointed arches, and a sill with plain and fluted profiles. This section, the function of which is unclear, is two stories high.

The interior is articulated by niches. There are three rectangular niches in the northern and southern walls. While the niche in the middle of the eastern wall is rectangular, the ones on the sides are semi-circular. There is an entrance in the middle of the western wall and there are semi-circular niches on both sides of the entrance. The niches have arches with semi-circular profiles. Only the niches in the eastern wall differ from the rest in the sense that the key stones of their arches are elaborated by ornamentation. These two niches have fluted shell-shaped tympanums. Both corners of the niches have colonnettes with fluted shafts resting on simple bases. Simple geometric motifs are seen in the square column capitals. The square space is covered by a dome, resting on a high drum. The squinches are used as transition elements. The dome is ribbed from the interior, forming a star with eight arms. It is said that there was a bell tower on the octagonal opening in the center of the star, which does not exist today. This is unlikely.

There are five rooms on the south wing of the upper level of the monastery. The space in the middle has a rectangular plan, extending in the north-south direction and opens to the courtyard as an iwan covered by a barrel vault. To the west of the iwan are two rectangular rooms. These rooms extend in the north-south direction. The rooms are accessed through doors on the north side. They are covered by barrel vaults and each has a window in their south walls.

The most elaborate room of the monastery is located to the east of the iwan. This room has a rectangular plan extending in an east-west direction. While its upper structure is demolished, the remaining traces indicate that it was once covered by two cross vaults. There are three niches in its eastern wall. The niche in the middle is evaluated as a fireplace niche. In the southern wall of the



room are eight windows arranged in two rows. The windows in the lower row have arches with semi-circular profiles and are higher than the windows in the upper row, which have flat lintels. There are damaged windows and niches in the northern wall. The niche to the east of the northern wall is noteworthy due to its tympanum with muqarnas. The stairs on the northern façade of this flamboyant room leads to the upper level of the monastery and provides access to the bell tower.

The most remarkable façade of the monastery is its southern façade. Cut stones are used in the doors and windows, marble in the portal and rubble and cut stones are used in other sections. The most elaborate parts of the façade are the portal and the windows of the room on the upper floor with pointed trefoil arches. Since the monastery is on a sloping terrain, the buttresses supporting the high walls of the monastery's south façade are also noteworthy.

New additions and deteriorations are dominant on the eastern façade. Rubble stones are used throughout the façade. The northern façade does not attract much attention due to the sloping terrain. This façade, which is also built with rubble stone masonry, is mostly underground and is surrounded by buildings from later periods. There are houses in the east and west. Additional structures were built on the west façade, also made of rubble stone masonry. The Garshuni (Arabic written with Syriac alphabet) inscription on



the portal on the south side of the monastery also mentions an addition built during the period of Patriarch Abdullah (1909).

The Garshuni inscription in the first courtyard mentions that the portico was added in 1855 during the period of Patriarch Jacob II and names the building masters as Ibrahim M. Melek, Sefere, Resso and Melke. The Syriac inscription on the window lintel of the room to the north of the first courtyard has been damaged. The Syriac inscription on the portal, providing passage to the church, has also been damaged. The inscription on the western façade of the elaborate space with a square plan dates to 1897 and mentions a donation to the monastery.

Present State

The monastery is severely damaged due to vandalism and it is exposed to natural weathering conditions. Its plan cannot be read clearly due to the spaces added later. The monastery is currently under restoration with the sponsorship of the Tigris Development Agency.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Loss of jointing mortars, losses of material and stone units, plant and algae growth are observed in the façades. There are problems such as deterioration, cracks, decay, salt deposit, and discoloration on stone units. There are collapses and damages in the upper structure.

Monastery of Mor Yoreth Alexandroyo/ Der Chapke

Dr. Stuart Blaylock

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, M'arre (Eskihisar) Village**

Present function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 21.10.2020 - 5745 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Mor Yoreth was a saint who came to Nisibis (Nusaybin) from Alexandria (Fiey 1977, 25, 26; Johnson 2004, 132-134). The vita of this 4th century saint has been studied by Minov for understanding the relations between Jews and Christians in late antique Northern Mesopotamia (2019, for the translation of the vita: 495-98). Although his vita says he was born in 288, Minov says details in the account are anachronistic. Some events that it mentions can only have taken place after 363 when the city was under Sasanian rule. Although the monastery is attested to his life time, there are no architectural features that would support that date. This

monastery was an East Syrian monastery like the others in Mount Izlo and this explains its distinctive features. While other East Syrian monasteries of Mount Izlo were later adopted by the West Syrians, Palmer claims Mor Yoreth has never been occupied by the West Syrians (Palmer, 2010, 180). Overall the style of construction and ornament indicate a medieval date. There are inscriptions in the building and they are done with plaster. Similar inscriptions, mostly dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, can be found in both M'aare (Eskihisar) (Palmer 2010, 181) and other monasteries in Mount Izlo.

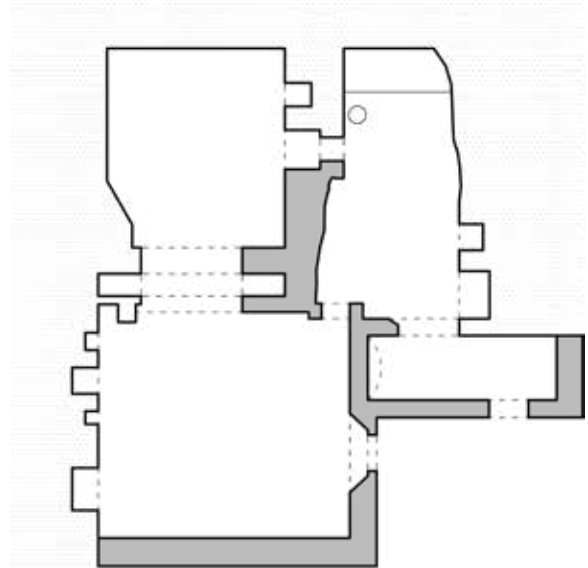


Architecture

Dayro d-Mor Yoreth Alexandroyo is located high on a mountain ridge, north-north-east of the village of M'arre, directly above a pass called Marinboğazı. The site contains the extensive remains of a monastic settlement, covering an area of approximately 155 meters east–west beneath overhanging cliffs. The lower terrace is about 25 meters wide to the west, total width about 40–45 meters in the center; and about 30 meters to the east. The overall plan resolves into several terraces on multiple levels, built up by means of retaining walls, which often rise precipitously from bedrock. The monastery buildings themselves act as terraces to build up the levels and render the slopes habitable, and are a mixture of rock-cut and built masonry structures. The overall plan of the site, and its component parts cannot be clearly illustrated at present.

The description below concentrates on the monastic church, with a brief overview of other buildings to follow. The monastery church lies at the east end of the lower terrace, approached from the west through a portico building and with a courtyard in front of the church. The church is a combination of masonry structure at the front with rock cut elements further back. The north side is formed by a rock-face or cliff, with rock-cut rooms running into it. The portico building has two arches on the courtyard side; two doorways on the west side. The west façade of the church is a structure of rubble masonry leading into a narthex and thence into the nave to the north and to the room for relics to the east.

The church consists of two main components, both nearly square. The nave is largely featureless, other than niches in the north wall. At the east end of the nave is a raised platform in front of the sanctuary, reached by four steps in the centre, flanked by a low wall on either side. The sanctuary wall is a solid partition with central door and four triangular apertures above. The sanctuary is also nearly square and is positioned north of the central axis of the nave, so that the north walls align, thus leaving room for a side chamber to the south of the sanctuary. To the south of the church is a room for relics,



Plan of the main church of the monastery



a rectangular room with a stone barrel vault. A door at the north end of the east wall gives additional access to the side chamber, and a blocked doorway in the north wall formerly lead back into the church.

The bedrock is limestone and thus the building materials are also predominantly of this material. Masonry features usually employ better-finished stone: a handful of monolithic blocks, and some neatly-dressed and squared ashlar blocks may testify to older fabric and be re-used; but these are exceptions and the predominant building material is rubble, squared and coursed to varying degrees. Occasionally mortared tilework is used for details.

The west and south façades of the church and the fore-building are masonry structures, resting against bedrock and giving onto rock-cut structures. The façade of the church is built entirely of coursed rubble masonry. There is a central arch flanked by two narrower and lower arches; the northern arch is blocked. The central arch leads to the narthex. To the south, an additional thickness of masonry has been built against the south wall of the building, including the turn of an arch. The south wall continues east forming the southern limit of the church





complex, and retaining the flat earth roof over the room for the relics and part of the nave. Other than this, the church is almost entirely subterranean, although other structures are built over it at higher levels to the east and north.

Nave and sanctuary are all rock-cut with horizontal rock-cut ceilings. The nave is largely featureless except the niches in the north wall. The sanctuary has a rectangular altar attached to the east wall. It is highly damaged but traces survive. It was surmounted by painted decoration. A secondary altar or lectern was placed to the north. It is again represented by some traces in the east wall and a painted cross above. To the south there are further niches and painted decoration.

The room for relics is rectangular with its long axis north–south, roofed with a parabolic vault with a relief inscription on the east side of the plastered soffit. This seems to be a masonry structure, perhaps cognate to the roofed area outside, as it is considerably taller than the remainder of the church. In

the east wall are three niches containing reliquaries in the form of small sarcophagi with acroteria, all badly damaged by vandalism.

The typical ornament of the church and its associated rooms uses red paint for crosses, to decorate niches and other features. Typically, this would be single or double rows or fields of red dots outlining a feature. Crosses are plain, outlined, with single or up to three dots between each arm; a plain cross is painted onto the rock above the east side of the sanctuary door. Decoration is concentrated in the sanctuary, but is seen also in the nave and in the room for the relics.

There is a red-painted inscription to the left of the altar in the sanctuary, likely to be contemporary with the red-painted decoration just described. Relief plaster inscriptions with traces of black paint occur on the vault of the room for relics; on the west side of the vault of a passage above the church; on a vault in the base of the tower; and on the semi-dome of the entry to the painted rock-cut chamber above and north-west of the church.

An adequate description of the many other buildings on the site is beyond this account. The upper part of the site seems to fall roughly into two further terraces, the first immediately above roof level of the church with the tower at its east end; the second further up the slope. Each has a series of structures, mostly a combination of rock-cut chambers and constructed front walls. Insofar as it is possible to generalize, building up and construction of terrace and retaining walls concentrates in the lower part of the site, and cutting in dominates in the upper part, no doubt a response to the nature of the terrain.

One structure that requires some further attention is a rock cut chamber towards the upper limit of the site, rectangular in plan and entered by a doorway with the remains of a barrel vault above it. The chamber has numerous niches, but is distinguished by the remains of wall paintings. The main scene appears to represent a tower with soldiers with isolated mounted riders further out. Locals ascribe this subject to the fact that the monastery might have been under siege at some point.

Present State

The rock-cut elements of the site seem moderately stable, although some caves have collapsed from one level to another. Most of them suffer from constant water infiltration, a condition, which most likely derives from the hydrological characteristics of the site, creating a damp environment within the enclosed spaces which in turn is facilitating biological colonization and deterioration. The constructed buildings will always be vulnerable to constant water penetration and slow attrition especially those where their roof is partially or fully collapsed and face structural issues (either inherent due to the way they were erected in the first place, or due to the development of vertical and diagonal cracks over time). Evidently the most susceptible built structure is the tower of the complex, as a tall building with a number of severe structural cracks on all of its walls. Besides this, no recent collapses of built structures were evident during the rapid ground survey. Another part of the complex which is likely to face irreversible damage is the cave



with the painted scene, as the remnants of plastered painted surface are cracked and becoming detached from the rock face behind. While most of the painted inscriptions in other parts of the monastery survive in fair condition, the "battle scene" in the cave is discolored and faded to the extent of becoming illegible to the naked eye. Assessment of the condition after the site visit considered the most severe threats to the fabric to be structural instability, effects of the weather and hydrology of the site, and vandalism.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Despite its location and relatively difficult access, the main threat to this site comes from the widespread vandalism that is evident throughout, much of it very recent in date. There is almost no interior feature that has been left unmolested. Floors are littered with the debris arising from this destruction. Some of this may be the result of wanton vandalism, but much of it looks like concerted destruction motivated either by prejudice or by illegal treasure hunting. The long-abandoned state of the building, lonely situation and vulnerability to further structural decay and deliberate vandalism, combine to yield a verdict that the overall risks to this monastery remain severe, and that its condition will worsen with time if nothing is done.

Overall the site is of high significance because of the extent of the buildings and the complexity of their structural history. This monastery is also important because it is one of the four most remarkable East Syrian Monasteries that have survived in Turkey. The monastery shows similarities in design and architecture with the other three, namely Mor Awgin, Mor Yuhannon Tayyoyo and Mor Abraham of Kashkar, with many caves and building complexes. Mor Awgin also has an elevation with a trio of arches with the central arch higher, as seen here in the

west elevation of the church (Hollerweger, 1999, 293; 295). This site is in need of a metric architectural and condition survey to record the extent and inter-relationship of the structures, and to improve the description attempted here. In its combination of rock-cut features, built architecture, inaccessible position, steep slopes and situation protected by cliffs from above, this site is not dissimilar in character to the monasteries of Murfa and Piske in the Euphrates gorge in Adiyaman, recorded by a team from the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara in 1989–90 (Summers and French 1992; Blaylock 1990 and 1998). The resulting drawings (with plans at different levels, and detailed plans of the more important structures) could form a model for such a survey. A thorough geo-hydrological survey is also necessary better to understand the inherent vulnerabilities of the site in terms of the likelihood for land slide and the long-term effects of continuous water infiltration to rock-carved spaces. Besides the investigative part which will enrich understanding of the heritage complex and its pathology, emergency stabilization measures should be considered as a high priority to secure the severely cracked structures of the site such as the tower of the complex. In light of its evidential and historical value, a formal procedure for the inscription of the complex in a regional heritage directory is highly recommended.

Church of Mort Mariana

Dr. Lory Zakar

📍 **Mardin, Kızıltepe District, Kleybin (Halkalı) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 05.05.1990/476-26.10.2017/2939 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets - 30.05.2018 -3474 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

The building, which was registered as a tomb/ religious place, is located within a cemetery at present. The villagers identify the building as a religious place of visitation associated with a woman. It is known that there were churches in the village, and some villagers point to this structure when asked about the location of the church in the village. Older than the rest of the structures in the village, the building draws attention with its decoration but does not bear any information regarding its function or date. The Syrians identify the building as a church dedicated to Mort Mariana, a saint who is believed to have lived in the 6th century.

Architecture

The building, which has three aisles, is surrounded by a cemetery. As a result of deterioration and destruction in time, its entire west façade, almost half of its south and north façades have collapsed. The only remaining façade of the building is the eastern façade and there are no traces of an apse in this façade. There is a decorated niche in the north wall of the building.

Although it is claimed that there was a sarcophagus associated with Mort Mariana in the past as an indicator that the building was dedicated to Mort Mariana, there are not any traces supporting this claim. The entrance of

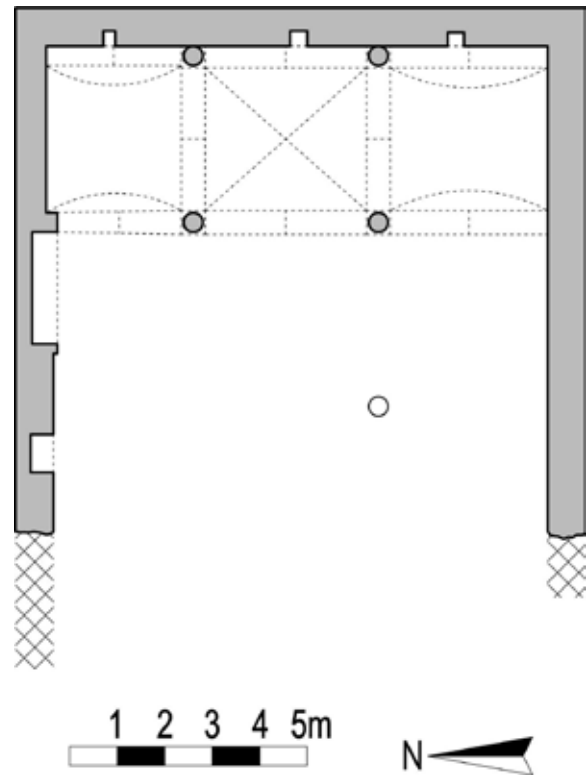


the building is thought to be from the eastern side of the main south wall. The basalt jamb stones at this location should be part of this door. This suggestion is supported by the photographs from 1980-90 obtained from the archives of the Şanlıurfa Regional Conservation Council (Arslan 2018).

Barrel vault is observed in the northern and southern aisles of the building, whereas cross vault is seen in the middle aisle. While the superstructure of the side aisles is carried by the side walls and stone columns, the load of the cross vault in the middle is transferred to stone columns. The remains of the main walls are stone masonry with alternating rows of brick. The stones used in the interior are light-colored. The niches referred to as tomb niches and the niches for illumination on its both sides are in cut stone, and the remaining surfaces are in rough-cut stone. Rough-cut stone surfaces have remains of plaster. On the exterior surface of the eastern façade, there are dark-colored basalt stones on the top of the brick bonds, and on the lower part of the north façade, as well as in the middle and at the corner of the south façade.

The stone columns are connected to each other and the main walls by stone arches. There are narrow window openings with lintels on the western and southern façades of the building. While the stone column capitals in the middle are similar to the Doric style, the engaged columns attached to the east wall are Corinthian in style with acanthus leaf motifs. Cross motifs have been carved on the column capitals. Inside the building there is a cut-stone molding running along the north and south main walls at the level of the springing line of the vaults. No decorations were observed on this molding. This molding does not continue on the eastern façade.

There is a molding with geometric ornamentation on the arch of the niche in the north wall, at the springing line level of the vaults. The ornamentation of this molding bears similarities with the Islamic ornamentation of the region (for examples: Altun, 2011, 90, 96). This similarity can also be observed in



the arches of the niches sitting on slender stone pilasters. However, these elements cannot suggest that the building is an Islamic structure. In fact, there was an artistic interaction in the decorations of Islamic and Christian buildings constructed in the Middle Ages and later in the region (Keser-Kayaalp, 2017). The pilaster on the left of the arch can be observed, whereas the one on the right has been lost. There are two stone corbels with muqarnas details on both sides of the niche, symmetrical to the top point of the arch. While they might be supporting a horizontal stone inscription at a certain time, their actual function is not known.

The building has probably undergone many transformations and reconstructions due to various factors. The existence of basalt stone rows only in the east façade and the interruption of the molding on the interior surface of this wall, and the engaged columns different than the other walls of the building are some indicators. This can be the only explanation that the building could have been a church in the past, because all the traces of a probable apse could have been erased with this intervention.





Present State

The building is located on the western periphery of Kleybin village and its lot has an approximate area of 6000 m². The information regarding the history and identity of the building has gradually been lost. The building is severely damaged and has lost more than half of its structure. The plan organization of the building, which has serious material loss and deterioration, can partially be observed from the remaining parts and wall traces on the ground. The fragments of the columns carrying the superstructure can be seen scattered around the building. Certain parts of the corner connection of walls are in ruinous condition. Since the building has completely lost its roof covering, the remaining superstructure is exposed to weathering conditions. The factors such as the structure being abandoned today, the continuing illegal excavations, and the lack of any protection of the building's structure against the weather conditions especially due to the loss of its superstructure, will result in the rapid loss of the building.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The surviving remains should be consolidated and conserved in order to avoid the

serious risk of the building's loss. After urgent and effective conservation measures, an architectural conservation project should be prepared following the necessary archaeological excavations, as well as material and structural analyses. The building should be refunctioned after the implementation of maintenance and repairs.

When the location of the building, the budget required for excavation and conservation project, and the problem of its refunctioning are considered, it is clear that the surviving building remains will be completely lost until the conditions for the realization of this process are met. Therefore, the priority should be given to preventing the building from further deterioration and being a complete loss, as well as to prevent from being forgotten or eradicated as a cultural asset.

The reinforcement of the existing structural system by supports can be considered as the primary and rapid measure. Further measures can be taken for the gaps in the southern wall and the weak connections of the north and east façade walls by supports or simple systems using available material in the region.

Monastery of Mort Maryam Magdloyto

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jorge Manuel Simão Alves Correia

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Hah (Anıtlı) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.03.2019/4392 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

This church which is of monastic type was probably part of a monastic complex together with the tower standing around 30 meters to the north of it. Although Bell took notes on that church which she considered late, she did not publish it. Mango took notice of the building in her update of Bell's book (Bell-Mango, 1982, 117). The lintel on the doorway to the apse has a winged palmette ornament which Mango linked to the Umayyad decoration (Mundell Mango, 1982, 117) and thus to 7th-8th century. It is evident from the type of the masonry that the western part of the building is considerably later than eastern part.

Architecture

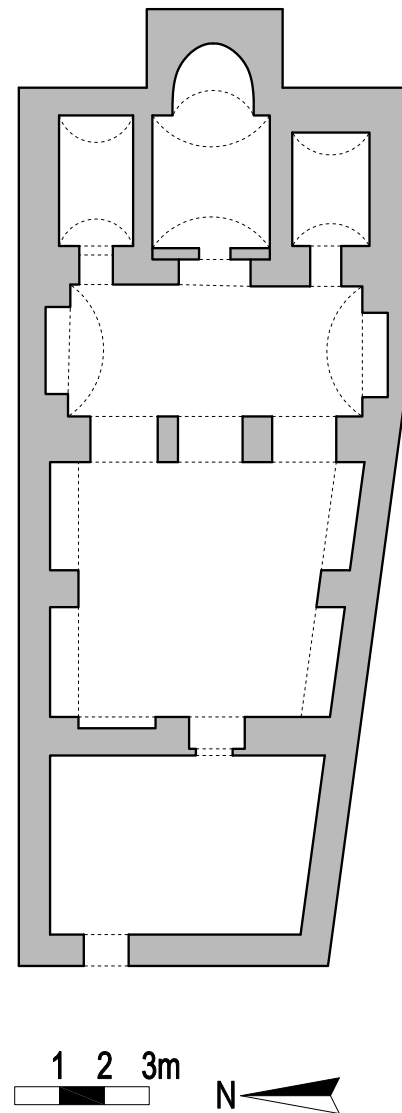
The site can be accessed from the village by following a path, flanked by stone garden walls. The area is forested, the surface irregular and the archaeological evidence emerges as a continuity of the stony landscape. The whole compound is in ruins and comprises two adjacent zones: a church and a tower, located only a few meters away from each other. As far as the church is concerned, no sign of recent interventions can be detected, so the remains are the resilient testimony of a decaying process over centuries. Partially roofless, the building is mostly inserted in a mound of dirt and rubble that hides its original ground level. Nevertheless, the plan



can be detected and it is composed of four defined transverse spaces long in the north-south direction. The entrance, now totally hidden, was through a trapezoidal narthex showing signs of its roofing system. This first space is quite barren and much destroyed for a full interpretation. Despite this fact, it was most likely covered by a barrel vault. The only sign of visible decoration appears on the lintel of the gate towards the second space in the form of three Greek-crosses inscribed in circular recesses on each side and a square recess in the center.

Moving on to the second space, a wider area of around 6 to 7 meters draws an approximate square shaped space if it was not for the trapezoidal direction coming from the narthex, which shrinks towards the main entrance. The four vertical surfaces present different characters, with the communal wall with the narthex exhibiting one niche beside the door. The two opposed lateral walls are dominated by twin-round blind arches each, plain and with no capitals. Finally, the whole focal point of the nave is diverted to the eastern wall, framed by an arcade composed by three slightly horseshoe-shaped arches. Supported by impostes decorated by uncut acanthus leaves, they all present sequences of geometric protrusions that run parallel to their moldings. Today this space is roofless but the presence of squinches in two angles indicate that in its original form it could have been domed.

A barrel vaulted transversal rectangular space, a sort of enclosed transept, stretches between the nave and the apse. Its function is not clear and such an additional space between the apse and nave is unusual for the region. Here, the geometry of the church is more regular and the oblique walls of the previous two spaces no longer distort the plan. This part is divided from the roofless space by large piers which are decorated with uncut acanthus leaves. This transitional space leads to the three partite apse. The level of the soil has risen so dramatically here that it hides much of the decorative features of the apse. We can see a winged palmette ornament and a crude vine scroll on the lintel which is now on the ground level.



The level of the lintel today gives an idea about how much the building is filled with earth today.

On the exterior, the scenario is less appealing as the ruins barely rise over the artificial mound that has been formed by the falling stones of the structures and accumulated earth. The façades are generally plain, devoid of any elements for a deeper characterization or chronology of the building. The only distinctive elements are pieces of cornices with a simple cyma profile that indicated a more elaborate definition of volumes in the apse area. As we approach the apse, we find better masonry with nicely cut ash-lars pointing to an earlier date than the rest

of the structure. Judging from the decoration on the slab mentioned above, that part of the church may date to the early Islamic period, when we find a considerable building activity in the region (Keser-Kayaalp 2018).

In the surroundings of the church site and within sight of it, a tower watches over the rural landscape. Partially ruined, the structure is inscribed in a rather perfect square

shape plan. It presents different levels though only the intermediate one is accessible now. In there, niches animate the walls. A semi-destroyed dome once covered the room. On the northern side, one can find a vertical shaft which functioned either as a latrine or part of a defensive system. It seems to have been a hermit's tower and its very rational layout points out the expertise in place at the time for the building of such





structures. In fact, both buildings and the compound they enclose may suggest an extended area of settlement that only archaeology could bring to life.

Present State

This religious complex is totally abandoned and neglected at present time, with no signage or information board available. Both buildings are extremely vulnerable to natural elements and human action. The church presents severe damage to its structural basis and the remaining vaults risk collapse, as do some of the walls that are not sustained by the rubble that meanwhile has filled their foundations and sides. Structural cracks have been the cause of consecutive deteriorations that prevent the assessment of the whole plan today. There are also deteriorations in the ornaments. Vegetation is slowly taking control of the mound where the ruins sit. Regarding the hermit's tower, the situation is similar. The partial collapse of the sides of the exterior walls, as well as of the roof, endangers the whole sustainability of the construction.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Both buildings of this complex, church and tower, face similar challenges, not only due to bad structural condition, but also because of uncontrolled access. Although both buildings are surrounded by walled fences, these are not enough to prevent human access; thus, protection of the site against vandalism is required. Totally open to the effects of wind and rain, not to mention instability to an occasional earthquake, the remaining structures might face irreversible collapse. Although the main walls and part of the church roofing survive, the deep cracks on the walls, particularly the missing stones on the tower's sides, call for an urgent consolidation. In fact, such measures would point in the direction of a cleaning of the surrounding area together with a project of structural reinforcement of the tower and two remaining roofed spaces in the church. All these actions would reveal the monumental aspect of the complex and the neat architectural decoration of the entrance at the apse, and prepare the conditions for much urgent and needed archaeological work to take place.

Monastery of Mor Lo'ozor

Barış Altan

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Habsenus (Mercimekli) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 19.10.2001/2698 - 13.05.2009/2234 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

There are two different narratives related to the foundation of this monastery. The first narrative suggests that the monastery was founded by Mor Lo'ozor, the bishop of Harran (Bell-Mango 1982, 110). The second narrative is based on the *vita* of Shem'un d-Zaite. According to this *vita*, Shem'un built a monastery and a stylite tower dedicated to Mor Lo'ozor just outside the village of Habsenus. He put the bones of Mor Lo'ozor, which he brought from Harran, in this monastery. There is a tower in the middle of the monastery today, matching with the *vita* of Shem'un. The construction date of the tower is inscribed as 791/792 (Palmer, 1987, 71). This date is confusing since according to his *vita*, the saint died in 734 (Dolabani, 1971, 88). The tower standing today might have been built in the place of Shem'un's tower. Tur 'Abdin and its surroundings came under Islamic rule in 640.

It is interesting that the radical ascetic practice of pillar saints was still maintained during this period (For further information on this type of asceticism, see Schahner, 2010). But what is more interesting is the creative form of the tower. The tower is not built of monolithic stones like other seclusion towers but rather constructed in cut-stone courses and has a hole in the middle. This hole connects with the channels on the rock surface of the courtyard. The main church of the monastery, like the other monastery churches in Tur 'Abdin, has a transverse plan (in the north-south direction) but it is quite small in scale. The large cut-stone blocks in the southern wall indicate either an earlier structure or spolia. Horseshoe-shaped piers and arches were built adjacent to the outer face of the exterior wall, which seems to date earlier.





Architecture

The monastery is surrounded by a three-meter-high cut stone wall. It has a square plan and accessed through a door in the northwest corner of the building. There are structures in the west, north and east of the courtyard, and the floor of the courtyard is natural rock. Through the courtyard door, one first enters a closed iwan. The inscription panel on the door indicates that the building was constructed by Priest Yusuf. The iwan was added later to the monastery. Since the inscription does not have a date, the exact period of the iwan is not known. An arched door opening in the northern wall of the iwan leads to the main courtyard of the monastery. There is an elevated section on the eastern side of the courtyard with a façade composed of piers and pointed arches, and behind is a very modest church compared to the size of the monastery. The church is constructed with quite large block stones.

There are rooms on the west side of the monastery. These rooms, which are made of fine-cut stone and are quite large in size, should belong to the monks. The building on the north eastern part of the monastery has two floors. This section, which is a reception hall, is accessed from the courtyard by a staircase made of cut stone.

The most distinctive feature of the monastery for Tur 'Abdin region is the seclusion

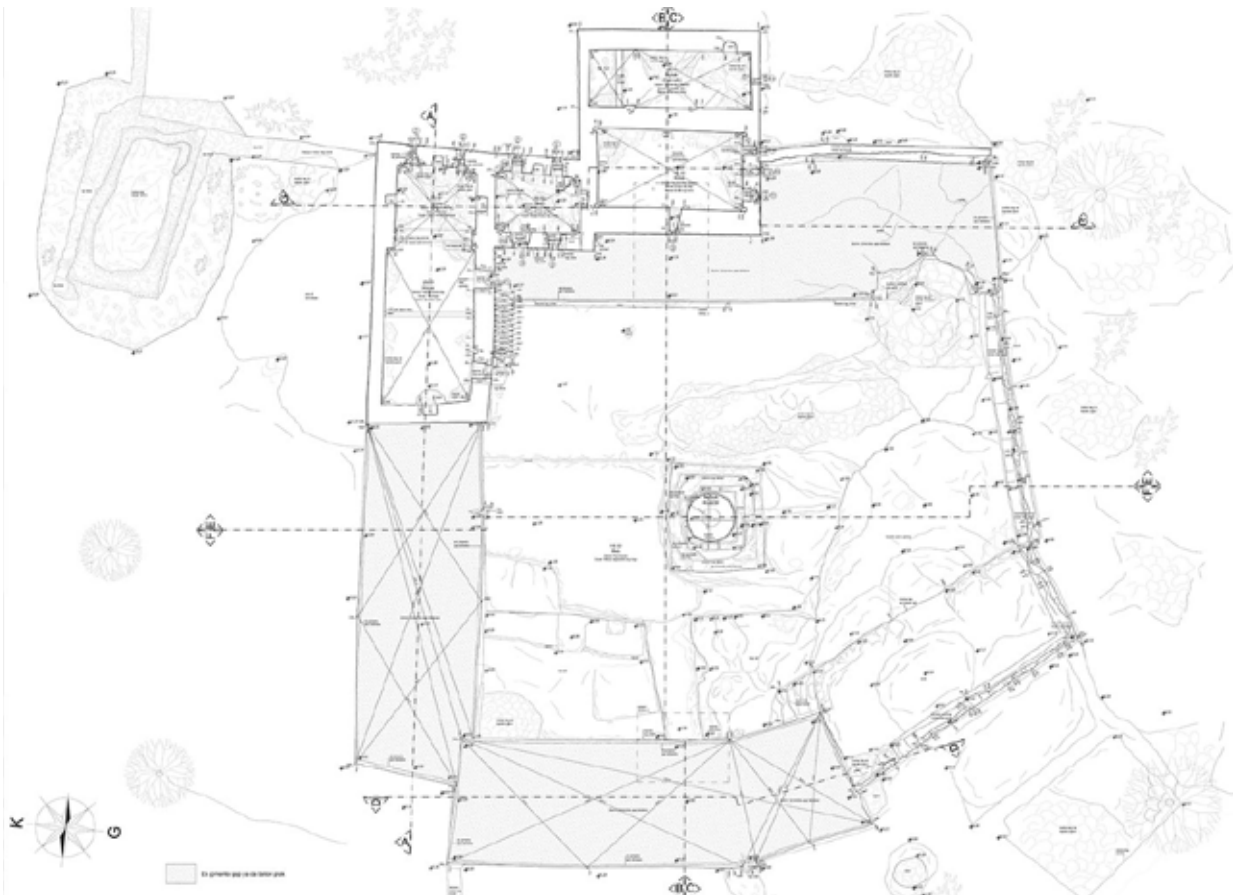
tower in the middle of the courtyard. The upper section of the cylindrical tower, raised on top of a base, has collapsed. Its outer diameter is about 2.5 meters and its height is about 7 meters. Some channels can be observed to the south of the tower which has a hollow middle section.

Present State

The monastery is located about half a kilometer southwest of Mercimekli village. Collapses are observed in the buildings within the courtyard of the completely abandoned monastery. The effects of vandalism are gradually increasing since the entrance of the monastery is not controlled. Numerous illicit excavations are observed within the building. There are also graffiti on the walls, which seem to have been made recently. The large industrial facility to the east of the monastery has a negative impact both on the monastery and the natural landscape of the village.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The deterioration of the building would increase unless emergency interventions are taken. The demolition of the seclusion tower would mean the loss of the last remaining sample in the region. Emergency protective measures should be taken and access to the building should be controlled. The building can be part of a cultural route together with Midyat and its immediate surroundings.



Thanks to MP Design and Construction Ltd.Comp.Istanbul



Monastery of Mor Yuhannon Tayyoyo

Barış Altan

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 22.11.2012/941 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets - 21.10.2020 - 5748 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

According to Mor Yuhannon's oldest known *vita*, this East Syrian saint was born in Hira, later came to Nusaybin school, and the monastery dedicated to him was founded in the 9th century after his death. The later tradition commemorates this saint as the disciple of Mor Awgin (Fiey, 1977, 154-155). Since he was from Hira, he was given the epithet Arab (for further details on his life, see also Brock, 1980, 6-12). Monneret de Villard states that the church of the monastery cannot be earlier than the 11th century (1940, 83). Herzfeld and Guyer dated the dome of the narthex to the 9th century due to its similarity with the dome of Mor Awgin. However, today we know that the dome's narthex dates to 1271 (Bell-Mango, 1982, 141). The

text recording the restoration of Mor Awgin in 1271 also refers to the monastery of Mor Yuhannon. There are also records dating to 1501 and 1607, mentioning the monastery's name (Wilmschurt, 2000, 43). Similar to Mor Awgin, this monastery should have been adopted by the Western Syriacs in the middle of the 18th century (Palmer, 2010, 181). The colophones collected by Barsaum indicate a strong connection between Mor Awgin and Mor Yuhannon monasteries in the 19th century. Mor Yuhannon is thought to have originated from Mor Awgin and had strong ties with this monastery for centuries (Palmer 2010, 242). In 1864, there was only one priest in the monastery (Palmer, 2010, 184).

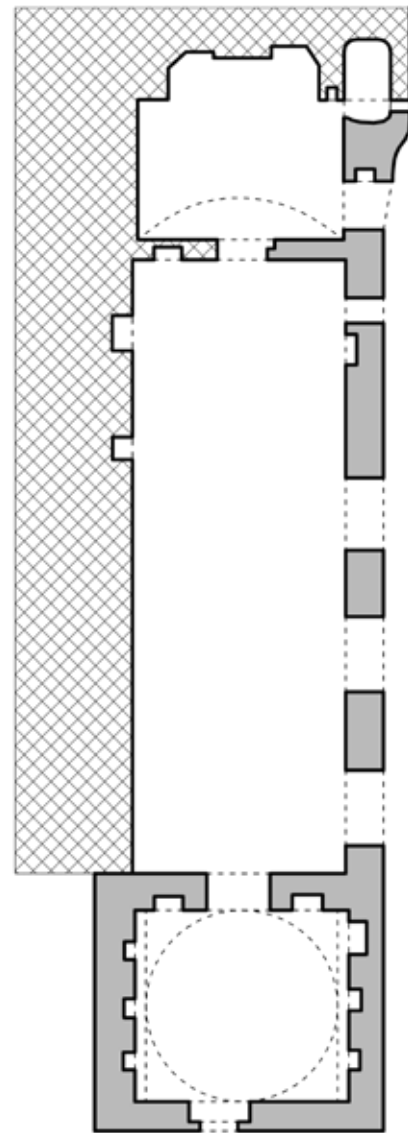


Architecture

The monastery is composed of numerous rock-cut and built structures of various sizes. These structures are spread over a wide area and leaning on a hillside (see Sinclair, 1987, 348 for a sketch showing the relationship of these spaces). The porticoes are particularly remarkable from a distance. The most striking of these spaces, which are connected to each other at different levels, is the monastery's main church (Bell-Mango, 1982, 5). The entrance of the church, which is located on the hillside, is reached by stairs from the upper level. The southern wall is supported by buttresses and there are not any prominent features on the façades. The square narthex in the west is covered by a brick dome with squinches used as transition elements. A similar but smaller dome can be observed in the Mor Awgin monastery dating to the 12th century. Therefore, the dome of the narthex can be dated to a similar period. There are eight reliquary niches with brick arches in the walls of the narthex.

The unusually long naos of the church extends on an east-west axis. Similar to other Eastern Syriac monasteries, this plan type was preferred, different than the Western Syriac monasteries. On the eastern side of the naos, there are two niches facing each other in the northern and southern walls, and these niches are believed to encompass the tombs of Mor Yuhannon and his mother (Bell-Mango, 1982, 5). The naos and apse sections are separated by a templon wall, which is partially comprised of reused materials. The pointed arches in the apse section suggest their date as earliest 12th century. It can be observed that the church has undergone numerous urgent and sloppy repairs. The brick barrel vault over the naos reveals a very rare construction technique. An almost flattened brick work at the top of the vault continues with alternating rows of bricks and rubble at lower levels.

To the south of the main church is a second smaller church at a lower level. This church has a square plan and its apse and naos sections are separated by a templon. While the main church's altar was damaged, this church's altar is relatively preserved. Apart



Plan of the main church of the monastery



from the churches, there are many spaces with different sizes. However, there is no information about their uses. At the upper levels of the building groups where monastery's main church is located, there is a tower probably used for surveillance. In the east of this tower is a space with remarkable frescoes on its walls.

Present State

The monastery, reached by a strenuous one hour walk from Mor Awgin Monastery, has been abandoned. There is serious water penetration in certain parts of the buildings of the complex, especially in the stairs







connecting two levels. Though no serious structural defects are observed, biological colonization appears to be growing in between the uncoursed rubble walls where the joints are weakened, or where no filling material survives. The interior of many places is filled with accumulated building material fallen from the walls. Moreover, all the reliquaries in the church's narthex are damaged. Additionally, signs of uncontrolled criminal activity include extensive graffiti on the walls of the church. Overall, the main church and the adjacent structures appear to be surviving in good structural condition.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

While the difficulty to access the building can be considered as a deterrent for destruction by uncontrolled human activity, the structure exhibits evidence of vandalism, and should be considered susceptible to it in the near future. In addition, issues related to water infiltration are to be considered a risk, likely to pose threat to the structure's integrity if not adequately addressed.

Although the building is structurally in good condition, emergency protection measures are required for its various parts, including wall capping, to mitigate the slow but cumulative collapse of building material from their original position. That said, the remoteness of the building may complicate the implementation of any potential emergency conservation campaign. As a first step towards addressing a longer term program for the consolidation and conservation of the structures, a thorough architectural and condition survey seems essential to document the entire monastery and priorities protective actions. Special attention should be given to the documentation and further analysis of the fragments of frescoes due to their rarity in the context of Syriac Churches (with particular focus on the colors and within the framework of Islamic motifs). This is a crucial action point in view of the susceptibility of the monument to further destruction. Finally, considering the location of the complex and the overall landscape within the Izlo Mountains, an integrated approach for its preservation seems most appropriate (i.e. the development of walking trails).

Monastery of Mor Shem'un/ Dayro d-II

Barış Altan

📍 **Batman, Gerçüş District, Dêrdîl (Gönüllü) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 24.10.2013-1781 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Dayro d-II means the Dwelling of God. Wiessner found this building noteworthy because of its distance from the villages of Tur 'Abdin (1993, III / 1, 45-51, figs. 29-40). Its divergence in plan organization can be evaluated as an interpretation of the typical monastery type in Tur 'Abdin in a later period.

Architecture

While the building has a monastic church plan, the plan of its apse section is atypical. The rooms of the tripartite apse are interconnected as in the case of other monastery churches. Each room has niches in

their south, and the middle niches are larger than the others. Different from the other monastery churches in Tur 'Abdin, there is a transition space in front of these niches, extending parallel to the naos. The transverse nave in the north-south direction is reached by a door opening in the west. The building is constructed in rough-cut stone and rubble stone masonry. Large cut stone blocks are used in door lintels. The building material indicates a later period, compared to other buildings in Tur 'Abdin. Unfortunately, there are no ornamentations or inscriptions that would confirm this assumption.

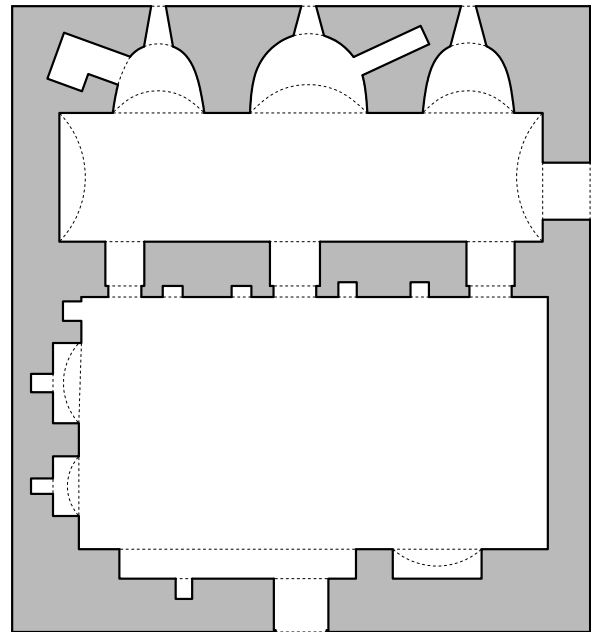


Present State

The monastery is located on a flat plain at the end of Gönüllü village settlement, built along the hillside. The flat plain might indicate the boundaries of the monastery. There is a steep slope at the end of the plain, and there are some building remains beneath the slope. The proximity of the monastery to the village and its location at a lower level than the village is also not common for the monasteries in the region. The building is largely demolished. The vault of the naos and the south wall have collapsed. The vault of the space in front of the apse is intact, whereas the south wall is partially, and the north wall is completely demolished.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although the building's proximity with the village settlement can be seen as an advantage, it also causes the reuse of its stone material as spolia in other buildings. There is no signage or information panel about the building. The building is situated in a quite remarkable landscape, and it can be part of a walking trail.



1 2 3 4 5m





Monastery of Mor Holo

Dr. Jorge Manuel Simão Alves Correia

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Salah/ Shiluh (Bariştepe) Village**

Present function: **Abandoned**

Registry status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6413 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

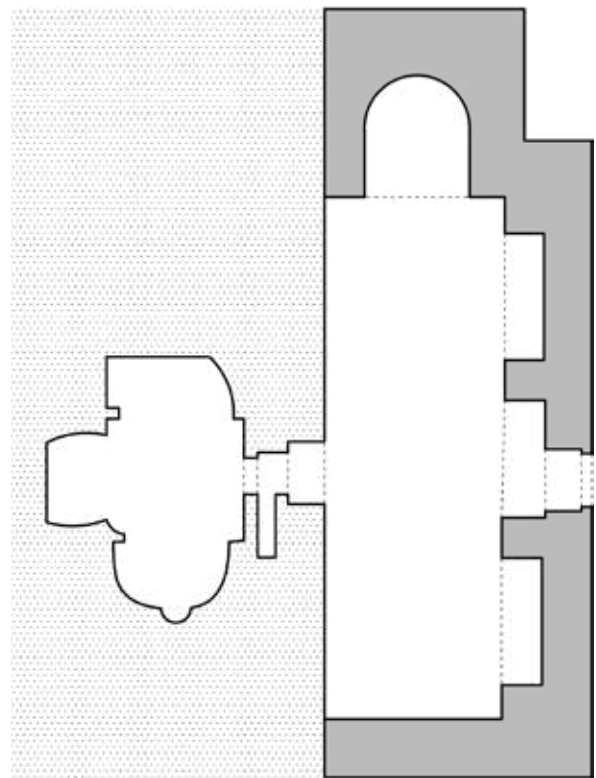
According to the *vita* of Ya'qub of Salah, Ya'qub travelled with Bar Shabo and Holo to Hasankeyf, where Bar Shabo was captured by raiding Persians and put to death with ten of his disciples. A monastery was founded on the site of the martyrdom and here Ya'qub settled with another disciple, Daniel. Holo, however, went off to live in a monastery of his own nearby (Personal communication with Palmer: fol. 422b of British Library Additional MS 12,174). This building must be the nearby monastery that is mentioned. Some people call this building Mor Antonios, who is also mentioned in the *vita* of Ya'qub, but there are no written references about a church or monastery dedicated to him.

Architecture

This religious complex, composed of a church and rock-cut spaces, is located against a rocky cliff, in an isolated and bucolic location, away from the nearest village or access. Presenting a high degree of collapse, the church barely shows any evidence of its religious character from the exterior. Parts of masonry walls and a gate signal the transformation of the natural landscape today and the human occupation of the site. However, the scenario beyond the first impression is of a complex structure, with significant architectural elements.

Overall, the compound is formed by a main building, a church divided into a built area and a rock-cut one, and a side cave. The





church is formed by a rectangular volume entered by a door on one of the long sides, the only opening visible from the outside, presenting two well-cut lintels, the upper functioning like a relieving arch. On the inside surface of this wall, an arcade formed by three round and blind arches is supported by plain impost capitals and quadrangular pillars. The total absence of roofing allows for the understanding of the construction technique of such walls, composed of two juxtaposed surfaces, the exterior one made of regular ashlar blocks, pointing at a late antique date, and the interior one over an arcade. The other long side of the rectangular nave is formed by the bare rock surface of the slope. Therefore, only three built sides subsist, though the shorter ones are in ruin. Opposite a much deteriorated plain west side, the eastern extremity powerfully draws a horseshoe shaped apse in plan. The level of rubble inside the church space is extremely high and hides much of the ground floor. Nevertheless, it is still possible

to recognize the apse's main features. It has a horseshoe shaped archivolt with elaborate cyma moldings. Only the springing of the arch on both sides have survived. The archivolt is sustained by two similar capitals which launch an intermediate cornice to separate the vertical walls of the chapel from the once complete semi dome of its roofing.

Beyond this built area, and accessible by a low and rough opening on the cliff side, is the rock-cut sector of the church. The entrance from the nave is a complex carving of an undefined shape. It evolves to an imperfect rectangular door shape design in the interior, with a long niche to the left. The rock-cut space is a typical burial chamber with three arcosolia. The whole structure was directly carved in the rock, wishing to convey domed and semi-domed aspects to the centre and arms of the cross, respectively. This cave may have worked as a micro-church type, with a main apse niche aligned with the entrance, and two side exedras. This

directionality, which ultimately annuls the quadri-symmetrical display of the plan, is accentuated by frescos found in the main apse/niche, painted with red. It is not easy to decipher what was depicted in the frescoes.

Tentatively, one would guess that the evolution of this church would have started as a rock-cut space which probably had the burial of monks of some religious significance. It was then followed by the built area against the cliff for which two interpretations can be advanced. On the one hand, the new built addition, a rectangle disposed transversely vis-à-vis the carved area with its main entrance on the long side, worked almost as a narthex to the cave. On the other hand, the elaborate masonry and decorative details of the arches and apse of the novel construction concurs with a volunteer plan of expansion of the complex, which eventually, closed in the carved holy sector.

A few meters to the north-east of this main building and on the side of the same cliff is another rock-cut space. Its function is unknown but it confirms that there was a religious complex which was much larger than what one perceives at first glance. The space has an inverted T-shape plan accessed by an irregular opening, and is big enough to accommodate a group of people.

Present State

The current situation of this heterogeneous complex is of total abandonment, negligence and high deterioration. In fact, partial collapses of walls have raised the soil surface, making an accurate assessment of the current pavement and floor levels almost impossible. Structural cracks denounce further collapses in the near future. The built area is completely roofless and carved openings present degrees of enduring erosion. Vegetation is slowly taking over the mound of rubble that has been formed in time and water leaks endanger the northeastern cave severely.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although there is no signage and access is remote, the precinct is exposed to human vandalism and almost entirely open to rain and wind. Even the carved zones are



exposed to nature and hence its entrance has deteriorated. Furthermore, uncontrolled entrance fosters the destruction of the pictorial elements, such as the fresco inside the cut part of the church, or the theft of molded pieces and neatly cut stone blocks. The church would require urgent cleaning of the zone parallel with actions of structural stabilization to avoid other collapses triggered by the removal of the interior debris. Careful attention should be paid to the fallen molded stones for future architectural reconstitution of the apse. Inside the rock cut part of the church, a detailed conservation intervention ought to be directed to the remaining fresco in order to prevent further deterioration and loss of pigments and shapes.

Monastery of Mor Mushe

Dr. Marica Cassis

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Kfarze (Altıntaş) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.10.2021/6569 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Mor Mushe to whom the monastery was dedicated was probably a disciple of Mor Awgin (Palmer, 2010, 207). Palmer recorded a detached inscription dated 1085 and another one in the antechamber of the large rock-cut burial vault dating to 1173. The latter was the epitaph of an inspiring writer and teacher called *rabban* Daniel (Palmer, 1987, A16 and A17). Palmer notes that there are references to a Monastery of Moses the Black in some of the manuscripts recorded by Barsaum. Wiessner records an additional

inscription which was a tomb-stone (1993, III/1, 56-64, III/2, figs. 48-61). The Ottoman tax register of 1566-1574 tells us that the *Kilise-i Deyri-Musa* in the *nahiye* of Tur paid an *ispençe* of 400 akçe, the equivalent of the poll-tax of sixteen Christian men (Göyünç, 1972, 148).

Architecture

The church is a small monastic type church. It has a lateral nave, with a single entrance in the west wall. There are no visible traces

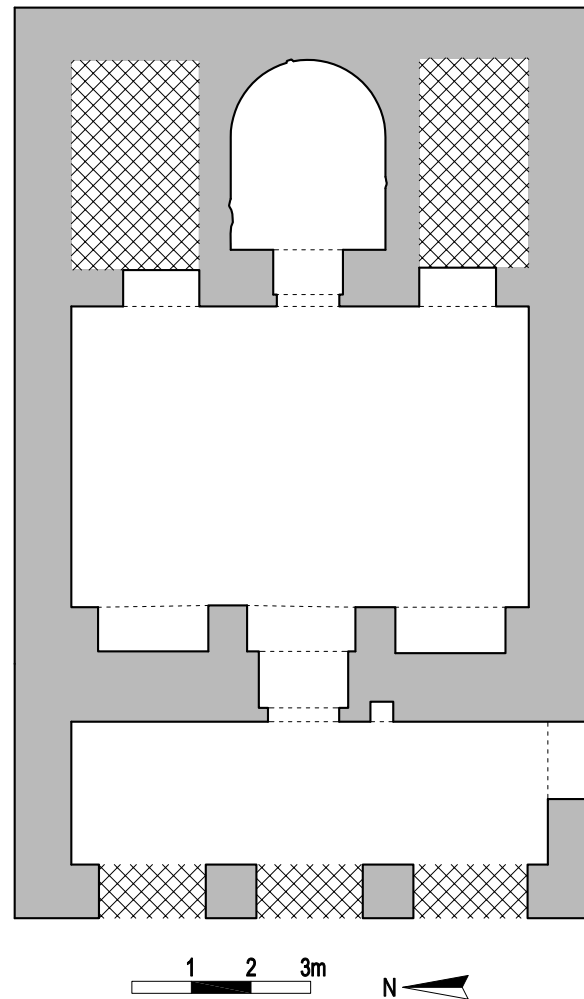


of pastaphoria today but one can recognize the slightly elongated curve of the apse which was probably inscribed together with the side rooms. The entrance to the apse is through a rectangular opening with a large stone lintel. This entrance sits in line with two lateral arches, one on either side of it. These are mirrored on the west wall by three other lateral arches. All of the arches have slight points to them. The entrance to the church was blocked at some later stage. The remains of a narthex are also apparent, although the entrances are no longer extant. When Wiessner recorded the church, he suggested that the narthex had two piers and three openings (1993, 59).

Three types of construction can be singled out. The basic construction is layers of nicely cut small stones laid in organized layers. These are interspersed with large ashlar blocks that may have come from an earlier structure. The arches have solid, single piece piers with continuous imposts as a base, but are then constructed of six or more blocks formed into an arch set onto the profiled imposts. Finally, at various times there have been attempts at repairs, and in several places the upper levels of the church are constructed of smaller stones roughly placed on the earlier ones. Enough of this structure was still standing in the 1980s that Wiessner's pictures indicate that it was roofed with barrel vaults.

There is little ornamentation extant in this church, other than the arches, the imposts of which have some minor, largely geometric decorative carving. Note should be made, however, of the remains of three arches which stood to the south of the church. Now mostly gone, they were extant when Wiessner visited the site. Some of the stones are in situ, and suggest a much earlier structure. The remains of carved arches are now scattered to the south of the structure.

The church also sits near several other buildings of note. To the west of the structure is a probable *beth qadishe*, constructed in a similar fashion as the church. There are several other buildings in the vicinity, which indicates that this was a large monastic complex. To the south of the church, there are



fragments of a profiled arch pointing at an early date. To the northeast is a much later large structure which has been called a fortress or castle. In fact, its purpose and date are unclear, and it is also unclear what the relationship to the monastic community was. It has several profiled stones that must have been spoliated from the monastery. There is a large amount of ceramic material visible on the surface, and much of it can be dated to the medieval period (roughly eleventh to thirteenth centuries).

The construction period for this church as it currently stands probably ranges between the 9th-11th centuries. This assessment is based on the understanding of the number of churches rebuilt and built during this period (Keser-Kayaalp 2018), and the manner of this construction. Further there are dated inscriptions from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, suggesting that this building was established or rebuilt in the medieval period.

The remnants of earlier structures to the south of the church indicate that the current church replaced an earlier building, although no date can be provided for the earlier structure.

Present State

The structure has been abandoned for a long time, and is slowly disintegrating. Further, there is activity in the region, both construction and farming, and there are clearly people visiting the area. This has brought with it considerable vandalism, and further deterioration is inevitable.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

This is a significant set of buildings that bears consideration as a project to explain interactions between Christian and Muslim communities in the medieval period, especially if we can determine the function of the so-called fortress. The complex needs to be surveyed and recorded (beyond the monastic church), and eventually targeted excavation could be done. At present, the entire site needs protection.



Dayro d-Moshok

Sena Kayasii

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, Nawale/Nabula (Beyazsu) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 30.03.2007/348 - 17.08.2017/5027 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Dayro d-Moshok, literally means the monastery of Moshok. Thus, any monastery located in Moshok Valley could have been named like that. Palmer recorded four monasteries and a church mentioned in the valley of Moshok. The building we visited has a hall-type layout which may lead us to guess that it was a parish church, which is the case for the Tur 'Abdin churches. However, in the East Syrian monasteries around this region, this type of plan is used in monastic churches. In the vita of Mor Esha'yo, it is mentioned that sixty men from Anhel baptised by him went to the valley of Moshok to build a monastery.

Some local people suggested that it might have been the monastery dedicated to Mor Salloro. However, his monastery is described as on the upper reaches of the Moshok (Palmer, 2010, 238), not by the river. Wiessner calls these remains Basine Taqa (IV/ I, 34).

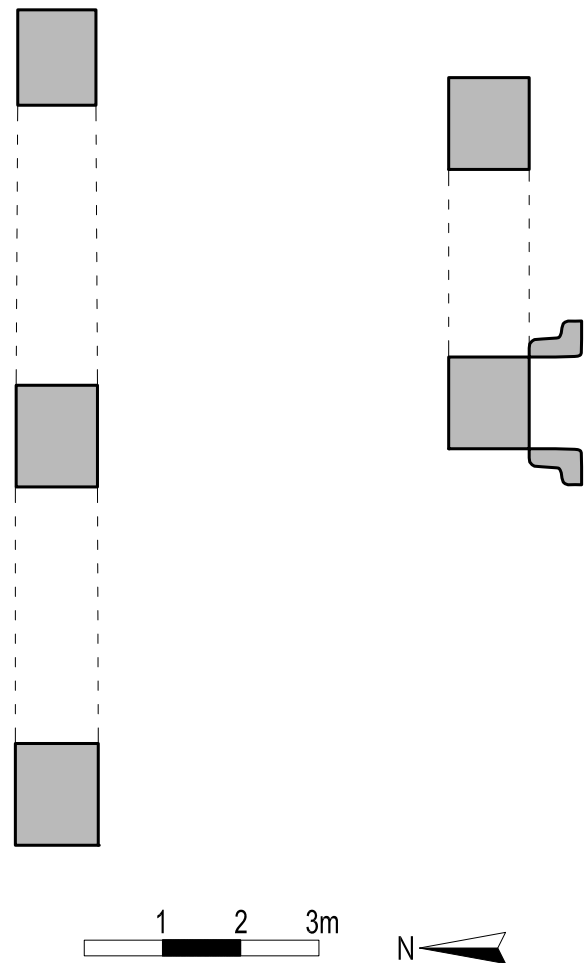
Architecture

Only a small portion of Dayro d-Moshok is still intact. The surviving parts show that the building was constructed of large-scale ashlar stones. The standing part of the structure comprises three arches (two on the north,



one on the south), and five piers (three on the north, two on the south) supporting them. Some of the stones in the arches have simple, rectangular, projecting bosses, which may lead us to think it was unfinished, but this feature appears in several buildings in Tur 'Abdin. A reliquary niche is intact in the pier between the two arches to the north.

The plan is partially legible. The two arches to the north appear to frame the main space. There is evidence of a double wall to the south of the single arch on the southern side. This side also seems to have been the entrance to the now collapsed structure. This theory is supported by the two architectural elements that are attached to the southwestern column, which appear to be halves of a door post. If so, the thickness of the external walls of this building must have been approximately 170 cm. The space between the two sets of arches must have been the nave. Further archaeological research would ascertain the plan. The roof has collapsed, and the ground level has been completely changed as a result of debris, soil infill, and vegetation. There is no evidence of recent repairs, or any attempt at maintenance.





Present State

Dayro d-Moshok has been empty and neglected for decades. As a result, it has deteriorated significantly and lost material. More has collapsed than what still stands. It is also overrun by vegetation. The roof, doors, and most walls have completely disappeared. Consequently, the building is completely exposed not only to vandalism and uncontrolled entrance, but all kinds of weather conditions. An example of vandalism, in the form of graffiti, is visible on the northwestern column. There is very little surveillance over the building, since there is not an inhabited building or settlement in sight.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Dayro d-Moshok is located at the bottom of a valley surrounded by rocky cliffs, less than 1 kilometer away from the vehicular road

following the Beyazsu Stream. Its position makes it extremely vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods or landslides. It is also completely open to effects of the weather, which has caused substantial vegetation.

Structurally, the building is extremely unstable. The three remaining arches are unsupported and may collapse at any moment. Few of the original features have survived above ground. There is a cave nearby. The surrounding landscape must be surveyed for further evidence to determine if it is a monastery or a parish church. The monastery is separated from the main road (Nusaybin-Midyat) by a field of poppies. It is visible from the cars passing by, but blends into the background because of the color of its stones. An information board is required.

Monastery of Mor Abraham of Kashkar

Dr. Banu Pekol / Theocharis Katrakazis

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, M'arre (Eskihisar) Village**

Present function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6404 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

This monastery is known as the 'Great Monastery' on Mount Izlo. It was founded by Abraham of Kashkar (d.588). Abraham, who was from the Kashkar region (today al-Wasit) in southern Iraq, came to Nusaybin school after living in Hirta, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem for a while and soon founded his own monastery on Mount Izlo (Fiey, 1977, 144-150, Van Rompay, 2011, 8). In 571, he formed the monastic order, which consists of 12 rules and which is followed by the Eastern Syriacs. He is known for his reforms in monastic life. His followers established monasteries in various parts of Mesopotamia.

According to Barsaum, there was a monastery known as Beth Gugi or Gugel at the site

of this monastery that was active until the 6th century. Barsaum claims that this monastery was later abandoned and Abraham of Kashkar, built his own monastery on the remains of this monastery at the end of the 6th century. The monastery, which passed to the Western Syriacs in the 19th century, was restored during this period (Barsaum, 2000, 564). According to the remaining parts of an inscription dated 1854, interventions were made to the monastery in that year. When Hinrichs visited the monastery in 1911, there were still monks there. Bell interpreted the notes of Hinrichs and emphasized the importance of the monastery (Bell-Mango 1982, 79-83). Mango examined the church of the monastery in detail and dated it to the 6th



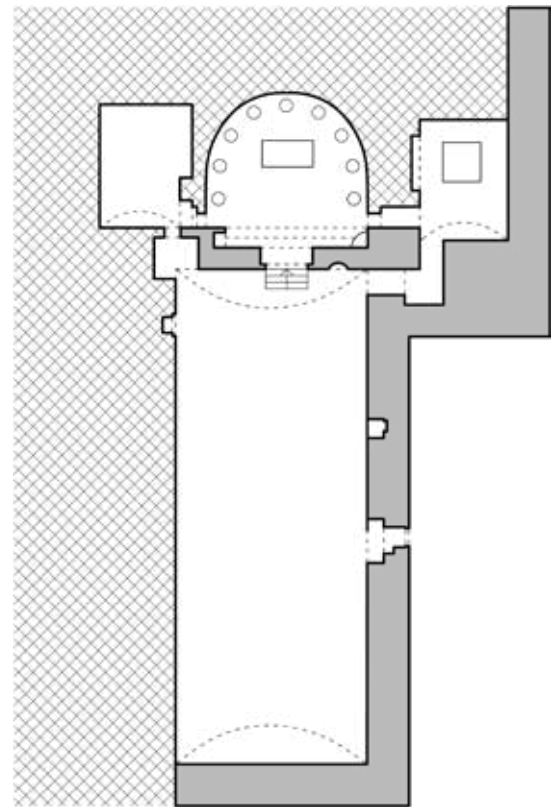
century based on its architectural decorations (Mundell Mango 1982).

Architecture

The monastery sits on the southern escarpment of a hill and overlooks the Mesopotamian plain. The view of the monastery is partially blocked by a hill, which may have served as an element of camouflage in the past. The surrounding walls of the monastery are only discernible to the west and the southeast. There are many other remaining foundations and free-standing walls that used to belong to structures which do not survive today. The remaining buildings are the main church and a group of buildings towards the west- both which contain late antique building features such as large building stones. There is another space, carved into the hill to the north to which entry has been blocked after an intervention in the 1970s. This whole complex has been reconstructed and modified many times, causing original passages to be bricked in or spaces repartitioned. The fact that the monastery has been destroyed and rebuilt is visible in the fabric where older building materials have been reused. Despite later additions and interventions which caused considerable damage to the original form, the remaining few details give a hint to the delicate and rich craftsmanship of the first, probably 6th century construction. Due to the time limit, only the church was studied during this fieldwork.

A detailed study is needed to clarify the layout of this complex. Traces of a large garden to the south of the monastery are visible through aerial photography, although this needs archaeological study in order to be certain. Multiple hermitage spaces are visible in the valley surrounding the monastery. Some of these caves, which probably sheltered the monks, have masonry walls in southern direction which faces the valley.

The complex on the west has rectangular inner spaces, some of which continue as rock-carved spaces. This complex seems to be the living quarters of the monastery, as it includes an inner courtyard and a chapel. The main space that was studied in this complex is the chapel, which is marked by



Plan of the main church of the monastery

a stone block with a carved cross above its entrance lintel on the exterior. The chapel is covered with a dome made of brick and stone, a technique also seen in the arches of its windows. Its eastern end has arched niches which are plastered and carry traces of crimson paint. Despite the ground floor remaining today, the walls above this western complex demonstrate that there was at least a first floor on some of these spaces. The monastery is built into a slope and complements the surrounding topography.

To the east of this complex lies the main church of the monastery, which is rectangular in an east-west direction. From the exterior, the apse is covered with a quadrangular filling, concealing its semicircle. The nave is also covered with a flat roof on the outside. The whole roof has been covered with concrete, and has a date of November 1972 incised on it. The church has a later portico parallel to the nave. To the north of the portico is a narthex. It rises higher than the portico and has three rectangular windows



on its southern wall. These windows have decorative carvings on their outer frames. The narthex is also a later addition, as is understood from the construction method of rough (nearly rubble) stones with near to no mortar, which contrasts with the smooth cut stone of the main church. This narthex is covered with a barrel vault and has arcades on both the north and south. To its east, it is perpendicularly connected to another rectangular space.

The church has a single nave with one chamber on either side of the apse. Its exterior belies the multiple construction phases, especially on the northern wall where a horizontal molding from the original construction (which was probably at the level where the roof started) is continued upwards by rough stones of the later vault. The nave has one entrance on its south wall, from the narthex. A stone with Syriac inscription has been laid above the lintel of the entrance to the nave.

The north and south walls consist of three blind, rounded arches which abut to the outer walls and rest on embedded pillars with plain, rectangular abaci. The space between these arches has been filled in today and the original arcade is best seen in the arch above the door on the west wall that opens up to

the narthex. Looking further above this arch, a horizontal cornice with dentils below can be seen, which probably originally spanned the whole length of the south wall. The infill between the southern arcade has caused the main axis of the apse and the vault to be out of line with the central axis of the nave. The windows on the interior of the southern wall correspond to the four rectangular windows on the narthex. They are arched from the inside and are all of different width and length on the interior. Halfway through the depth of the window, these arches transform into a horizontal lintel and the window narrows towards the exterior. The west wall has slots which look like they may have been for beams, yet their irregular positioning makes this theory doubtful. There is a single rectangular window on the western wall of the nave, which has a highly profiled frame however without the decorative features of those on the south wall.

The barrel vault covering the nave is a later addition. Corbels at the level of the springer of the vault may suggest a roof where these corbels held internal arcades. Above these corbels is a horizontal, cyma-recta cornice. There is also a single corbel at a lower level, about halfway between the top of the arcade and the cornice. These corbels may also be

spolia from another structure. Some of the corbels have cross reliefs on their sides or bottom while the some are plain. There is spolia with inscriptions alongside the corbels on the upper level. With the later vaulting of the church, the wall above the archivolt has been extended upwards, with two windows in it. Three scaffolding slots are also visible in this wall.

At the east end is a semicircular apse, which is at a higher level than the nave. The apse archivolt has an intricately carved string course with palmettes, acanthus and other motifs, and sits on columns with acanthus capitals. A horizontal molding circles the semicircle of the apse, located at the level where the archivolt of the apse begins. At the center of the bottom of the conch is a relief which was part of a larger cross. The eastern, semicircular wall of the apse was originally

lined with a stylobate on which ten columns once stood. Initially, the columns in the apse would possibly have an arcade between them, which also carried rich decoration. On the eastern corner of the north wall of the apse, a small portion of an arcade which used to rest on columns can be seen. Other parts of this combination are used in random places as spolia.

This arcade in the apse is similar to the design of the apse in the church of Yoldath Aloho at the village of Hah. While the columns themselves have been cut and taken away, all the column bases are in still in place. The two capitals from the apse arcade (Mundell Mango, 1982, 60) have been taken to Mor Gabriel Monastery. Although the vault of the apse has collapsed and was re-vaulted, the remains demonstrate that it was lower than the level today.



There is a crude masonry screen which seems to have been hastily built to the west of the apse archivolt. There is an altar standing to the west of the screen, and another at the center of the apse. At the corners where the archivolt meets the curvature of the apse, there are doors to the side chapels. The doors to both side chapels have palmette relief above its lintel, which are most probably replaced spolia. A fragment of a carved decorative stone, which is to the northeast of the palmette relief above the lintel of the north wall is nearly identical with the extremities of the cross of Yoldath Aloho in Hah, with its pair of lobes at the end of a quadrangle. This signals extensive rebuilding of the church, where even the cross within the conch of the apse has been dismantled.

The side chambers flanking the apse extend outside the line of the nave's north and south walls. They are covered with a barrel vault in an east-west direction. Both chambers would originally connect to the nave as well, through openings in the wall to the sides of the archivolt on the east wall of the nave. The southern chamber originally connected to the narthex with a doorway that is blocked. The north wall of the south chapel has another narrow opening which is walled in today, and which Mango says leads to the crypt although she did not descend either (Mundell Mango, 1982, 62). The northern wall of the south chapel has a blind arcade with molding above it ascending towards the west. There is an altar in the center of the space. Today the northern chapel's passage to the nave has been partially filled in to convert it into a sort of window.

Present State

In general, the complex appears to have undergone a series of repair and reconstruction works in the past. This is evidenced by the extended use of cement-based mortar for the external capping of the roofs (i.e. an intervention date of November 1972 is found incised in one of the roof tops), but also by the -presumably- most recent rebuilding of the south facing façade sheltering the entrance to the main Church (see the comparative photographs in the previous page).



Alterations to the original function and layout of the church are observed mainly due to blockage of the side chambers doorways leading to the narthex and nave. In the apse, the ten columns originally lined against the apse wall are missing, the presence of which is indicated by the surviving pedestals. Use of spolia incorporated to the un-coursed random rubble masonry is evident both in the interior and exterior façades. Although worn and locally damaged, stone carved elements preserve their rich floral decorations, while the inscription above the entrance to the main church is still legible. In contrast to the interior decorative elements, those located in the external façades appear heavily deteriorated having lost a significant portion of their initial surface (i.e. stone window frames).

The interior of the church is rendered with a whitish plaster-like mortar, which in parts appears cracked or absent and in others possibly repaired. Evidence of small-scale fire damage is observed at the bottom of internal



walls, while effects of vandalism (graffiti) and debris accumulation of unregulated human activity are also evident.

The neighboring spaces survive in poorer state, suffering mainly from constant water infiltration (roof leakage and unsealed windows) which in synergy with absence of direct sunlight has triggered biological colonization and hence biodeterioration of the masonry surface. In addition, local failure of mortar joints at external façades facilitates the colonization and development of lower plants imposing physical forces through their rooting systems.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The geographic location of the monastery complex and the repair/rebuilding campaigns have played a significant role to its current condition. Although abandoned, being relatively difficult to access without a guide has deterred excessive vandalism and other unregulated human activity. That said, risks of criminal activity remain present and should not be ignored, as acts of vandalism could harm irreversibly the decorative elements of the church and extraction of building material for use in modern construction could weaken the stability of the monument.

Abandonment and decay processes driven by natural phenomena have established vulnerabilities to the monument, weakening its performance as building envelope. Water infiltration from the damaged roofs not only triggers surface damage via biodeterioration processes but could also impose pressure to the flat roofing system itself. The portion of the complex surviving in ruinous condition



(unsheltered standing walls) on the east and west side neighboring the church are more susceptible to further loss of material. The rooting system of uncontrolled vegetation growth is likely to weaken the binding material of the rubble masonry which in turn could lead to partial collapse.

In view of potential concerted initiatives for the preservation of the complex, a full scale documentation and analysis is necessary to help better understand the causes of deterioration. Nevertheless if an emergency first-aid campaign is to be undertaken, actions should aim towards blocking the water infiltration, repairing the flat roofs, securing the free standing walls and removal of lower and higher vegetation.

Monastery of Mor Ya'qub of Serugh

Dr. Mesut Dinler

📍 **Mardin, Yeşilli District, Benabil (Bülbül) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 06.07.2010/3280 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

There are remains of five rock-cut monasteries on the hill known as Mount Hazro, on the north of the Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery, which housed the patriarchate of the Syriac Orthodox Church for nearly 640 years (1293-1932). The Monastery of Mor Ya'qub of Serugh is the largest of those. The steep slope where the monastery is located is known as Arur Rocks. Barsaum (2006, 73), who wrote the history of the monastery in 1917, states that the monastery was also known as Mor Ya'qub Hbişoyo (Hermit) or Mfasqo (Martyr) Mor Yaqub, and adds that according to the manuscripts found in Dayr al-Za'faran,

this information is not correct. According to Barsaum, the monastery should be associated with Mor Ya'qub of Serugh, an important poet of the Syriac church who lived in the 6th century and was also known by the nickname of Melfono (Teacher).

According to Barsaum (2006), the first records of a monastery dedicated to Mor Ya'qub of Serugh dates back to 1165 based on the manuscripts in Dayr al-Za'faran. From this period onwards, new spaces had been added to the monastery, which had continuously been settled and used until



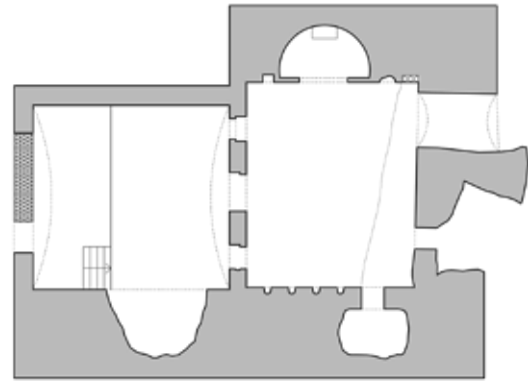
the beginning of the 20th century. It was recorded that bishop Atanasiyos Yusuf Kerim (1847-1852) had renewed the church of the monastery (Barsavm, 2006, 74). Monk Abd-Yeşuh Ğaribo (1876-1916) spent more than two years repairing the monastery after 1899. Monk Şemun Naşif, who was his successor, dealt with the landscape of the monastery (Barsavm, 2006, 74). The needs of the monastery, which was closed in 1916, used to be met by the people of Goliye (Göllü) village (Akyüz, 1998, 155).

Architecture

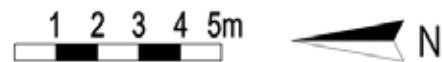
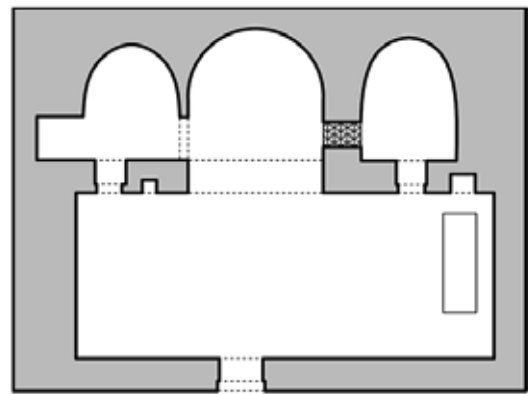
Sinclair (1990, 217) describes the monastery as two-storey. The rock-cut monastery does in fact appear to have two floors from the exterior. However, from the interior, it consists of a network of spaces with an organic relationship at different levels with a steep limestone rock. The narrow corridors and stairways connect different spaces with closed, open and semi-open uses.

While the monastery was mainly built as rock-cut, there are certain sections constructed with fine-cut and rough-cut stones. There are also division walls in certain spaces. At the highest levels, there are structures built with stone masonry. The monastery's organic growth over time can be observed by spaces with different architectural characteristics. The traces of different periods can be identified from the different construction techniques of the buildings. For example, some of the buildings at the uppermost level were constructed with large stone blocks commonly seen in the 6th century, which were also used in Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery. Certain buildings were constructed in rubble stone masonry, which was common in the 19th century.

The spaces of the monastery that survived to the present are not only religious spaces, but also spaces for production, storage and daily activities. For example, there are traces of cisterns and channels connecting these cisterns. Parts of the network of cisterns and channels might have been used for the production and storage of wine or similar products, and others may have been used for the collection and efficient use of water as a response to the arid character of the region.



Plan of the main church of the monastery



This remaining infrastructure and the cross signs on its original floorings are among the important features distinguishing this monastery from the others.

Similar to the other rock-cut Syriac monasteries (Virgin Mary-Seyde Notfe, Mor Behnam, Mor 'Azozoyel) to the north and east of Dayr al-Za'faran, the rupture of rock layers has caused extensive damage to the structure and the current condition of the monastery poses serious danger. Due to these ruptures, the northern walls of many spaces have been lost and the spaces almost become terraces opening to Mesopotamia. The church at the lower level of the monastery is identified by Wiessner as Church A



(1981, I/I, 145, fig. 36). The south-north axis is composed of three volumes, and the southernmost volume has been damaged by the ruptures of rock layers. The other two volumes define the narthex and the naos of the church. The church is entered from the north by a wide arched opening on a flat surface carved into the rock. This entrance emphasizes the monumentality of the building, but the molding on the arch has not been completed. The arched opening was partially closed in a later period. The entrance to the narthex is provided by a one-meter wide staircase from the west of the entrance opening. The section on the west of the staircase was filled, and a retaining wall was built around this section to form a one-meter high platform. The narthex, reached by going down the stairs, is covered by a barrel vault. There is a cornice with a circular profile on the springing line of the vault. Although this cornice is plastered, the vault is left exposed. Half a meter below the cornice, there are the traces of beams on the east and west walls, corresponding to each other. These traces might indicate that once there was a mezzanine floor in the narthex.

The naos of the church is almost the same size as the narthex. As mentioned above, there was a third space to the north of the naos, which has collapsed by rupturing from

the rock. This space is separated from the naos by a one-meter thick wall. This wall was probably built in a later period. There is an apse on the east wall with rectangular niches on its both sides. The walls of the naos are plastered and there are the traces of decoration with earthen colors. The original floor level can be observed. There are three rectangular door openings in the wall separating the naos and narthex from each other, and the opening in the middle is relatively longer and larger. The door openings on the sides are highlighted by a semi-circular arch. All three openings have top windows and they all enlarge towards the naos.

The church bears similarities with the village churches extending from the longitudinal (east-west) axis and the monastery churches extending in the transverse (north-south) axis in Tur 'Abdin. Its resemblance to the first church type is that it has a narthex-like entrance room on its longitudinal side. However, this space is in the south in the village churches, whereas here it is located in the north. In the village churches, there is an apse, which is usually opened with an arch to the naos. Although the arrangement is similar, the apse's size is small like the ones in the monastery churches. The space before the nave is neither similar to the narthex of the monastery churches nor the village



churches. This space is as large as the naos of the church and is covered by a very large vault. There are three doors between these two spaces. The Garshuni tomb inscription in the naos was probably moved here later.

The second church at the upper level is similar to the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Hah. The church is entered through a door with a lintel, the entrance is highlighted with a second stone arch over the lintel. Naos is covered by three cross vaults connected to each other on the north-south axis. There is an apse covered by a half dome in the middle and rooms with niches on both sides of the apse. Some of the profiles in this church are similar to the pointed arch profiles in Kirkklar (Forty Martyrs) Church and to the Islamic structures dated to the Middle Ages in Mardin.

Barsaum mentions that there were two churches in the monastery. Wiessner has published plans of four churches in the monastery (1981, I/I, 144-160). The two other churches, which Wiessner has published are quite small in size, have the characteristics of a monastery cell, where there are apses on their eastern side that do not correspond with the other parts of the space. Finally, the presence of a burial chamber (*beth qadishe*) in this monastery is an important feature that distinguishes the building from other monasteries on Mount Hazro. The burial chambers in Tur 'Abdin stand out as one of the major elements of the monasteries (Keser-Kayaalp 2010).

Present State

The monastery is abandoned at present and it has no users other than the shepherds who graze their animals. Since the building does not have any users, it is neglected and is vulnerable to vandalism. There are many pits formed by treasure hunters giving structural damage to the monastery. The pits opened at the upper levels of the church have caused damage to the walls.

The monastery is structurally in a poor condition. As a result of the collapse of the rock layers on which the monastery is located, most of the buildings have substantial structural problems. There are fractures and deep cracks in an east-west direction both in the naos and the narthex of the church at the lower level. As mentioned above, some sections of the spaces to the south of the naos have collapsed, and only the traces of structural elements can be observed in these spaces which were once covered by vaults. It is impossible to access certain spaces and the structure poses danger to visitors. It is exposed to all kinds of effects caused by weather conditions. Nevertheless, the architectural plan organization and its features can mainly be identifiable. Despite its proximity to Dayr al- Za'faran, which is a touristic center, there is no information indicating this monastery in touristic booklets and it has no information panel.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The major risks threatening the structure are ruptures of the rock, treasure hunting, vandalism and abandonment. As a primary step, conservation measures should be taken for the falling of rocks to prevent potential loss of life or property. Afterwards, the structural problems should be eliminated. This monastery can be integrated with other Syriac religious structures adjacent to it, as well as with Dayr al- Za'faran and its visitors. It can also contribute to rural development once its relationship with Bülbül village is revitalized.

Monastery of the Virgin Mary/ Dayro d-Yoldath Aloho d-Notfo

Barış Altan

📍 **Mardin, Central District, Qal'at al-mara (Eskikale) Locale**

Present function: **Abandoned**

Registry status: **Registered - 06.07.2010/3280 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

There are remains of five rock-cut monasteries on the hill known as Mount Hazro, to the north of the Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery, which housed the patriarchate of the Syriac Orthodox Church for nearly 640 years (1293-1932). The westernmost of these monasteries on the mount is the Monastery of Virgin Mary, which is also associated with Mor Theodoros. The monastery is also called the Dayro d-Notfo, meaning the Dripping Monastery. The reason behind this name is the water constantly dripping from the ceiling of the cave into a rock-cut pool. According to Palmer, the association of the monastery both with Virgin Mary and Mor Theodoros

indicates a connection with Nusaybin since the two churches in the city, constructed in 700, were dedicated to Virgin Mary and Mor Theodoros. He also suggests that the monks who were obliged to leave Nusaybin might have come here since it is possible to see Nusaybin from these hills on a clear day. This can also be a coincidence, as he also puts forward (Palmer, 2010, 188).

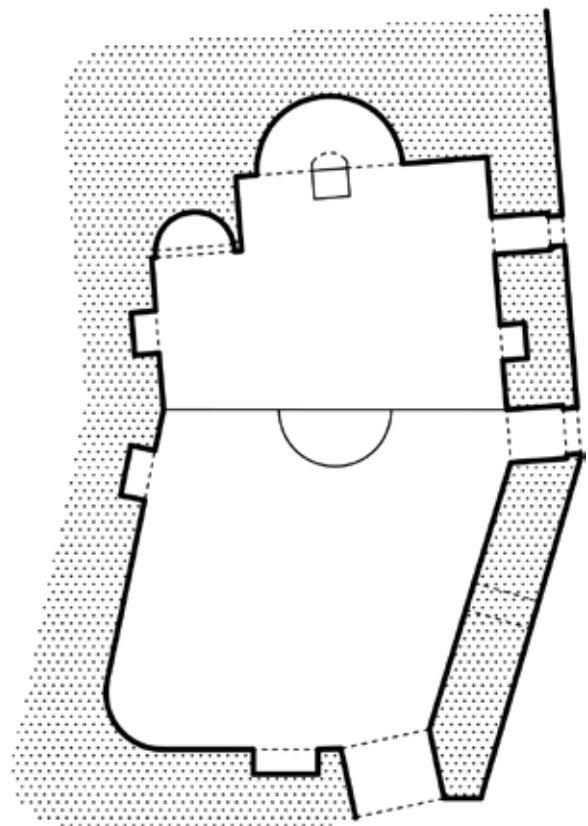
On the skirts of these hills, there are the buildings of Dayr al-Za'faran monastery, some of which can be dated to the 6th century (Mundell 1981). When Mor Hanonyo came to Dayr al-Za'faran, he found the



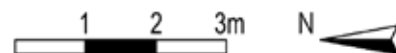


monastery in ruins and restored it at the end of the 8th century. Afterwards, the monastery was associated with him. The *vita* of Mor Yuhannon (d. 1165) mentions Hanonyo coming to this monastery called “Netapha” and restoring it (Vööbus 1975, 221; Hage, 1966, 60). Although the original dedication of the Dayr al-Za‘faran Monastery is not known, it was probably associated with the same names of the monasteries mentioned above before it was named after Hanonyo. There is also a physical connection between these monasteries. The water requirements of the Dayr al-Za‘faran Monastery were met by water accumulating from these rocks. There has been an advanced water collection and storage system, as it can also be seen in other rock-cut monasteries in this area.

There were eight monks in the Dripping Monastery in 1443 (Palmer, 2010, 190). During this period, Islamic decoration elements began to be seen in Christian buildings in the monasteries of Tur‘Abdin such as the case in Mor Barsaumo Monastery near Salah (Keser-Kayaalp 2017). The Islamic style decorations in this monastery indicate a much later period. Monk Sait constructed two rooms in the monastery in 1905, whereas Dolabani,



Plan of the main church of the monastery



the famous bishop of Mardin who became a monk in 1908, stayed in this monastery for fifteen years. The monastery, which was active until the 1930s, drew its revenues from the nearby Qal'at al-mara (Old Castle) Village. Seven bishops were raised in this monastery (Akyüz, 1998, 155-156).

The church's plan drawn by Wiessner includes a section of the templon, to which the ornate stones, which are now stacked in a corner, might belong. In addition, a part of the templon's wall can be seen in one of his photographs (1981, I/II, 144, fig.100). The same photograph shows that the kdu-shkudshin (the sanctuary in the apse which

contains holy objects) inside the apse was constructed with similar molded stones. One of the two inscriptions found in the monastery is located in this space, whereas the other one is located near the pool. Although no traces of a name or a date could be seen, they are thought to be parts of gravestones.

Architecture

There is a rough-cut stone masonry wall in front of the building complex. The rock-cut spaces of the monastery are accessed through a door in this wall. There is a rectangular masonry structure with fine-cut stone corners between this wall and the bedrock. This structure is most probably one of the



rooms built by the monk Sait of Mardin in 1905. After the entrance near this structure, there is the dripping rock, giving name to the monastery. There are two pools, one octagonal and the other L-shaped, underneath the rock where water drips.

The rock-cut section of the monastery is composed of spaces with varying dimensions that are physically connected to each other. These spaces spread over two floors, and there are traces of plaster in each of them. The spaces on the lower floor are smaller, whereas the ones on the upper floor are larger in size. The most striking section of these spaces is the monastery church, which is located on the eastern end of the complex. The platform in front of the church's apse is elevated by two steps from the naos. There is a second prayer niche north of the apse niche. Inside this prayer niche is a relief with cross motifs. This cross motif with round ends is widely seen in rock-cut churches in Tur 'Abdin (Keser-Kayaalp 2017).

There are frescoes on the church's apse, which appear to have been painted recently. These frescoes are composed of a square formed by four crosses and floral ornamentalations around this form. On the two upper corners of the square are two bird motifs. These depictions are of birds drinking water

from a pool with plants around. Therefore, this fresco composition on the apse niche can be the depiction of the monastery itself with its pools and plants. On the rear walls of the apse there is the star of David and figures resembling the depiction of sun.

There are some fragments of stone decoration, stacked in the church. These fragments could be parts of the church and might belong to the templon separating the naos and the bema. Although the earliest templon examples known in Tur 'Abdin date back to the 8th century (Szymazsek 2013), they were later demolished and replaced by new ones in the 20th century. These 20th century additions were also removed during the restorations in the last two decades. It is seen that this liturgical element has been removed in





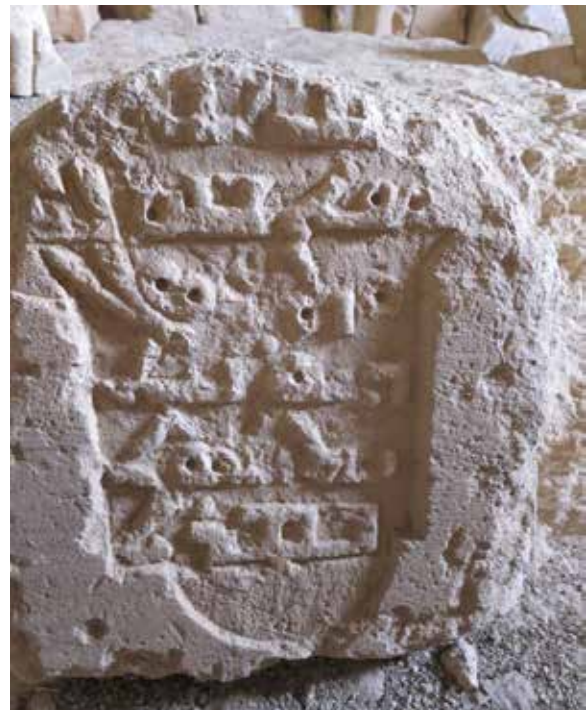
Dayro d-Notfo, however the fragments kept in the building are significant since they not only reflect the architecture of their period but also the influence of Islamic style in later decorations.

Present State

The monastery, which was abandoned after the 1930s, is mostly in ruins. Since the building does not have controlled access, it is exposed to any kind of vandalism. The rock-cut spaces of the monastery are relatively less affected by weathering conditions than the exterior wall and the building attached to the wall. The ceiling of the building attached to the wall has largely collapsed, causing rapid deterioration. Its plan organization and spatial characteristics are legible. There is no information panel related to the monastery.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The external wall and the building attached to this wall are at high risk of complete collapse in time. Precautions should be taken to prevent the building being exposed to human, animal and natural destruction. The upper levels of the exterior wall, which have been collapsed, should be rebuilt to reinforce the wall. The door in this wall should be closed for controlled access. The building attached to the wall can be repaired in an



inexpensive way, and the buildings and its courtyard can be used for certain activities after cleaning and landscape design. Dayr al-Zaʿfaran monastery attracts many tourists. Dayro d-Notfo Monastery can be part of a hiking/trekking trail together with the other monasteries in its north. These hills have a very impressive panorama of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran and the surrounding hills.

Church of Yoldath Aloho

Dr. Marica Cassis

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Der Qubbe (Karagöl), Sarhavdana Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.03.2019/4390 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

We could not find any information specifically on this church or the settlement that it is located in. The original name of the church might have been something else. Its proximity to other sites around Dayr Qubbe (Palmer, 2010, 206) and the size and complexity of the settlement suggest that it was a settlement of some importance in the medieval period. Wiessner has recorded three churches in the village: The church of Virgin Mary (Yoldath Aloho), church of Mor Eshaya, and Der Qarnawala (1982, II/I, 239-244). Sinclair notes the latter as Karnavala (1989, III, 321). Zeki Joseph corrects the name to Derka Nafnuwala 'the little monastery between the ravines'. When Wiessner recorded the site,

a piece of sculpture and foundations of that building were visible (1982, II/II, figs.136 and 137). The piece of sculpture recorded is similar to the sculpture of the apse archivolt of the church of Yoldat Aloho, indicating an Early Islamic date. This may lead us to assume that the whole village was a 7th or 8th century foundation.

Architecture

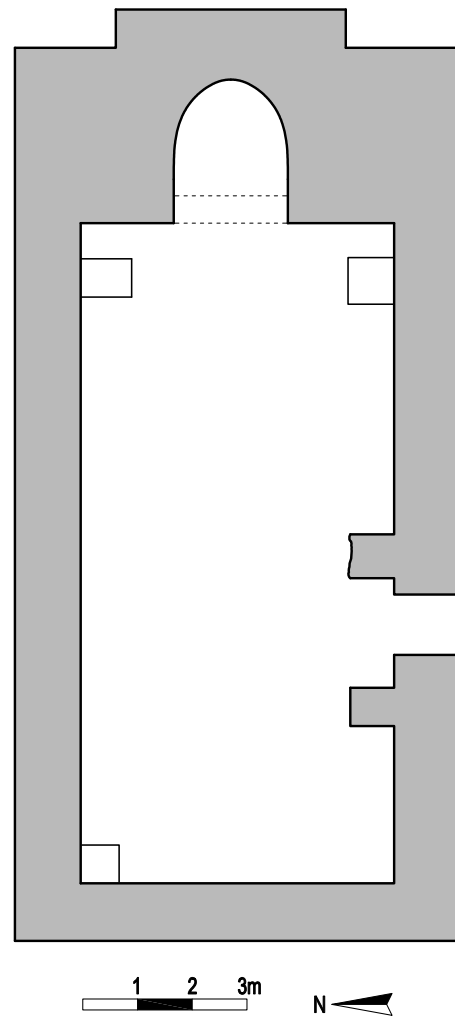
The church known as Yoldath Aloho is a typical village church which has a longitudinal nave running in east- west direction. It had a semi-circular apse from the inside, but was inscribed from the outside. The sanctuary area shows no trace of apsis side rooms.



In terms of architectural layout, there are few exact parallels to this church. There are traces of three piers on the south wall and of two on the northern wall. When Wiessner visited the site, two of the arches combining the piers on the southern wall were still intact (1982, II/II, figs. XXXIV, 134, 135). Although drawn as straight by Wiessner, one can see that the piers were repeated on the north wall.

Having lateral arcades on the north and south walls is a repeated feature in the Tur 'Abdin churches. It has been suggested in the past that they were introduced to reduce the span to use the local timber but as is the case here, they were used even in the narrow churches in order to carry the heavy barrel vault, and this practice was repeated in other churches. There is one entrance through the central lateral arcade in the south wall, visible from the inside. When looked at from outside, one can notice the profiled block of the entrance, giving the impression that there were two adjacent doors.

This church is constructed of carefully cut ashlar blocks laid in rows. As is the case in many of the parish churches of the



Tur 'Abdin, it is difficult to determine the phases of the church. One may suggest that it was built or rebuilt extensively in the 7th or 8th centuries and its piers were added not so long after it. The most significant part of this structure is the extant archivolt leading into the apse, which is decorated with low-relief carvings. The arch, which is slightly horse-shoe shaped, sits on two blocks carved to look like capitals decorated with double rows of acanthus leaf decoration. These in turn sit next to two uncarved blocks. These sit on a thin layer of carved blocks, which are in turn placed on the ashlar blocks below. The rest of the church seems to be constructed of a less delicate local gray stone. This impression may be a result of the weathering of the other stones.

The arch is decorated with five rows of carved decoration. It is quite stylized, but retains some classicizing elements typical for the 7th-8th century decoration in the region (Mundell Mango 1982). This type of ornamentation is found in other churches in the region (see the eleven churches and monasteries listed in List 2 in Keser-Kayaalp 2018: 203) and has been considered as evidence to date some of the churches to the 7th and 8th centuries (Keser-Kayaalp 2018). The most

external row is a row of stylized egg and dart. Next to it is a row of raised circles in a band which is raised slightly from the flutes below it, and the flower and vine pattern above it. The third row is a series of flowers which turn to stylized leaves in the corners of the arch. The fourth row is an interlocking chain of circles, again within a border and again raised slightly over the bands on either side of it. The final row is a row of split palmettes. The five rows culminate in a much effaced cross in a circle carved at the center of the arch.

A secondary level of ornamentation was also present in the church, which may represent a secondary building and decoration. Unfortunately most of this has disappeared now, but a small amount remains on the external blocks of the south side of the church. This is geometric line decoration carved into blocks of the local stone. This geometric decoration was originally much more elaborate than is present now. Images in Wiessner's book indicate that the lateral arches were still standing to full height at that time, and that these were built against the original walls. They consisted of piers with stones set on them which were meant to mimic stylized acanthus capitals, carved with the geometric





shapes, on which rested small arches. These blocks now lie scattered around the south wall of the structure.

Present State

The church is located in a large abandoned village. Based on some minor amounts of ceramic evidence visible on the surface and the undisturbed nature of the site, the abandonment probably happened in the medieval period. Hollerweger (1999, 185) suggested an abandonment due to the Mongol invasions. There are clearly several other important structures here (including another church), as well as the detritus of medieval daily life. Among the buildings visible from the surface is a wine press just west of the church. This was obviously a very large and prosperous settlement, yet the entire village seems to have been abandoned and largely forgotten.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

There is some minor vandalism at the site, but the most significant threat to the site is neglect. There can be little doubt that the arch will fall in the next few years. It is possible to see the decline between Wiessner's visit in the early 1980s, when the lateral arches were still standing, to Hollerweger's



visit in 1999, to the present. When the photographs of these three visits are compared, it is possible to see serious signs of the degradation of the arch, probably due to weather and tectonic activity.

The entire site should be surveyed carefully by an archaeological team, and immediate action should be taken to stabilize the apse archivolt. Given the location of the site, which sits at a number of crossroads and is up relatively high, it is almost certain that the site has a very long history. A careful survey has the potential to create a narrative of the continuity of the site, both in the medieval period and much earlier.

Monastery of Mor Aho/ Bnoyel/ Dayro da Fnoth/ Der Pum/ Der Pu'e

Dr. Mesut Dinler

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, Beth Man'em Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6401 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Mor Aho built a monastery with his patron Theodore and his disciple Heworo and named it Bnoyel, meaning 'built by God'. The Roman commander Demetrius, who was assigned to a military unit, made a donation to the monastery and asked for the building of a cut stone tomb to the southeast of the monastery containing nine arcosolia and a room to store the bones. Shortly after Aho's death (d. 560), the monastery, which was subjected to torrential rainfall and flooding, was abandoned and the monks moved to the "Lower" Monastery. According to Palmer, Dayro da Fnoth (Pnoth = it returned) was the name given to the monastery after it returned to the upper site (Palmer, 2010, 231). Anschütz describes this monastery as the

oldest monastery of Tur 'Abdin (Anschütz, 1984, 139). Although there are sections suggesting a 6th century date among the ruins, it is very difficult to evaluate the building as the oldest monastery in the region. With the addition and repairs made over the years, the building has become quite complicated. The inscriptions on plaster are reminiscent of the 12th century inscriptions in the region.

Palmer states that the parts of the Holy Cross, brought by Mor Aho from Constantinople, were placed in the north, north-east, east and south-east of Tur 'Abdin, and monasteries dedicated to this saint were built in these sites where these relics might have been believed to protect the region



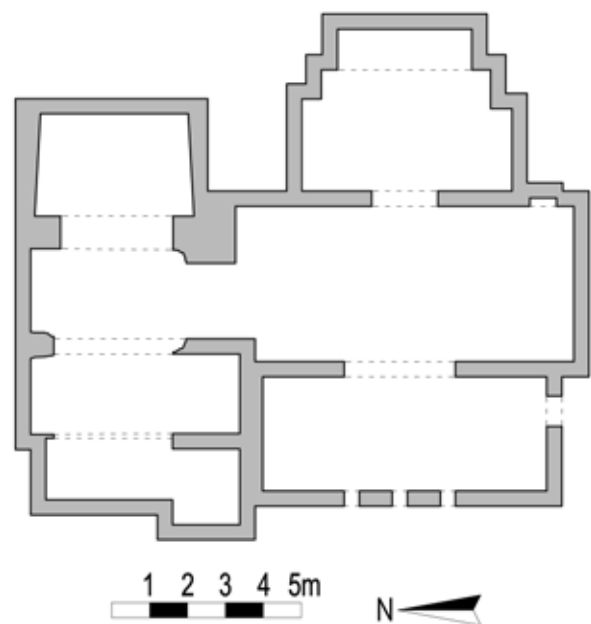


spiritually. According to Palmer, although all the monasteries named after Aho claim to have the bones of this saint, his bones are most likely in this monastery (Palmer, 2010, 231).

Architecture

The monastery of Mor Aho has a rectangular plan type surrounding a courtyard. Like a castle, it has blind walls and a rectangular tower in the southeast corner. Constructed of rubble stone masonry, the building has lost most of its architectural features, including its original entrance. While the building is in ruinous condition, it is still possible to understand the original volumetric features of the monastery and access its original spaces.

There are many water wells and cisterns inside the monastery. Considering the building traces in the close vicinity, this monastery should be a part of a building complex spreading over a much larger area than its present state. Two main spaces of the monastery attract attention. One is relatively small, and its plan type, extending on the north-south axis, is seen in the monastery church plans. There is a small room on the eastern corner of the south wall. The walls



of this church are fine-cut stone, whereas its ceiling is covered by rubble stone vaults. The other striking space is located to the north of the space mentioned previously. These two spaces are connected to each other by an arch. While cut-stone blocks are also used in this space, the stone blocks are larger in size and there are more ornamentations on these stone blocks unlike the first space. The stone sills both on arches and the springing lines

of the arches are remarkable. Unfortunately, most of these stone blocks have fallen down, making circulation and access to certain volumes impossible, and posing danger both for the building and the visitors.

To the north of this space, is a structure resembling a narthex, with the same length as the space, and a door opening to this space with profiled sills. In its eastern part is a space, identified as the apse, constructed with large cut stones. These architectural features point to the possibility that this space may have been the church. The section, which is reminiscent of a narthex, is not illuminated due to its collapsed walls. There is another space to the east, which could not be accessed.

The tower is one of the most striking architectural features of the monastery. Like other monasteries, it might have been used for defense or seclusion purposes. The cell of the tower, which is accessible from the terrace of the monastery's wings, has a thick layer of plaster and an inscription formed by shaping this plaster layer. Since the plaster layer was severely deteriorated because of excessive water penetration, the inscription cannot be read. Nevertheless, there are other buildings in the region with similar use of plaster.

Present State

The building is located on a vacant land in a rural setting. It takes a long walk to access the building and there are sparrow nests in almost every tree along the way. The monastery, which is reached by passing through a large area surrounded by bird nests and trees, offers the opportunity to experience the combination of landscape and manmade structures. This combination is significant since it reveals the necessity to treat nature and the built environment together. A large part of the building complex is above ground and its plan organization can be traced through its remaining walls. However, it is not possible to understand the volumetric features and their relationships with each other, except the two churches mentioned above. The building is neglected



and in a poor state of protection. Since the building is not used, it affects its physical condition even more negatively. There are structural problems in the buildings which are mostly destroyed. Trees began to grow in them. Water penetration, uncontrolled access and vandalism accelerate the deterioration of the buildings and threaten the parts which are relatively in better condition.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Since the original features of the building have survived *in situ*, the building is significant as an architectural heritage. Moreover, its relationship with the landscape is another feature stressing the building's significance. However, it is structurally in very poor condition, and it is susceptible to any type of weathering condition and vandalism. As a primary step, structural measures should be taken to prevent further structural damage and deterioration. A temporary roof should be constructed to protect the building from weathering conditions.

Church of Mor Barsaumo

Süreyya Topaloğlu



Mardin, Midyat District, 'Ayn Wardo (Gülgöze) Village

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 22.09.2021 - 6492 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Wiessner describes this structure, in a footnote, as a church converted from the underground cistern and states that its ceiling has collapsed (II/I, 45, fn.102). We understand from the photo of its exterior that the building was more visible during Wiessner's visit (Wiessner, II/II, fig.131). It seems that, in the Tur 'Abdin region, there was a common tradition to dedicate rock-cut monasteries to Barsaumo. Barsaumo Monastery around Malatya, also known as the cave monastery, was mentioned for the first time in 790. This monastery in Malatya might have a connection with associating rock-cut monasteries with Mor Barsaumo since it was an important monastery that served as the patriarchate center between the 11th and 13th

centuries and was active until the 17th century. This church in 'Ayn Wardo is also defined as a monastery by the locals.

Architecture

Mor Barsaumo Church is located on a hill parallel to the settlement of 'Ayn Wardo (Gülgöze Village). It is less than one kilometer from the main road. It has an almost perfect circular plan, carved into the rock, with an approximate diameter of 9.4 meters. The church is reached by climbing from the west side of the hill. It is accessed through a sheltered opening formed on the rock surface by descending from a short slope, which is skillfully hidden in the topography. To the west of the entrance are the remains of a dry

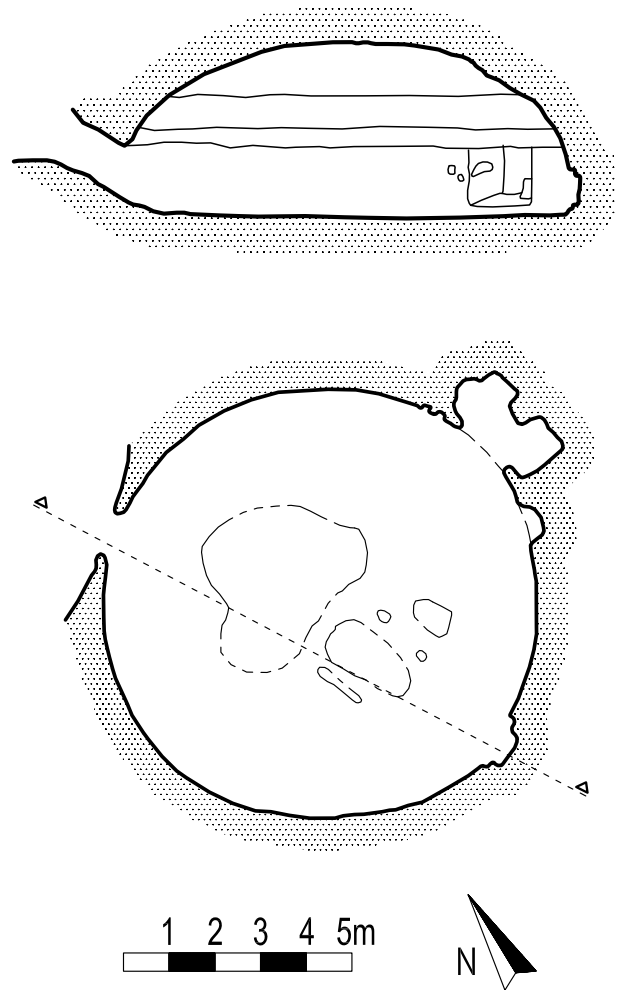


rubble stone wall, which is thought to be a later addition to the church. The church is a single volume space. The rectangular apse in the east draws one's attention. There is an altar carved into the rock, adjacent to the eastern side of the apse. A cross is carved into the face of the apse and colored in red.

There is a large niche in the south of the apse opening and two small niches, adjacent to each other, in the north. Between the niche and the apse in the south, is another red cross carving in the upper corner of the niche, which has been partially damaged. Along this level, there are the traces of red paint on the wall surface continuing towards the floor. Since they are damaged, it is not possible to determine what these traces may depict. Above the north of the two smaller niches in the north, there is another cross carving, which is not colored. Just above the altar is a recess with a cross carving on its top, and there are two colored crosses next to this cross carving. Further south of the apse is a rectangular niche, getting deeper in two stages, which is aligned with the entrance opening in the plan. This is the largest niche in the building, the base of which is slightly above the ground.

The upper structure of the space is carved as a recessed dome. Even though a large section of it has collapsed, it can still be understood from the uppermost level that the upper structure does not exceed more than four meters. The low height of the ceiling, compared to the diameter of the space, creates a sense of enclosure. The structure is an impressive underground space carved into a monolithic rock. Due to the geological structure of Midyat and its surrounding, the rock layers are formed on top of each other by forming natural contour lines. Consequently, four different rock layers can be seen on the walls of the structure. The continuous lines parallel to the ground, formed by these layers, are located at different levels in the section and function as the springing line of the dome.

The measurements taken on site indicate that the diameter of the plan changes only a few centimeters at different levels. This precision, however, cannot be found in the



carving of altar or niches. The workmanship of these elements is relatively poor. There are openings with varying dimensions on the southern inner face of the rock, forming the dome. Although there is a chamber here, its entrance cannot be found. The main walls of the structure, forming the circular plan, are smoother than the inner surfaces of the niches and the walls of the apse. The traces of tools used to carve the walls are more apparent in the niches and the apse section. These traces might suggest that the space was once used as a cistern for a while and it was converted into a worship space after the addition of necessary architectural elements. Similar rock-cut cisterns in the surrounding support this suggestion.

Plaster remains can be observed on the walls and the dome's surface on which it has survived as large patches. The plaster in the dome has survived as large surfaces. Discoloration and stains are observed on the wall

surfaces, closer to the ground level and parallel to the ground. During the fieldwork, the ground was filled with rainwater. Stains on the wall surfaces may have been caused by rising rainwater. To the northeast of the hill is the Mor Efreem Church. The existence of many remains of walls and cisterns between the churches of Mor Barsaumo and Mor Efreem indicate that there was a settlement on this hill.

Present State

Although it is not known when the building was actively used, its present state indicates that it has not maintained its function as a place of worship for a long time. A large section of the rock forming the building's upper structure has collapsed, forming a wide hole in the dome. The rock fragments fallen from the dome are clustered in the building. There are severe structural cracks in its upper structure, some of which are formed above the entrance. During the site survey, the ground of the building was completely filled with rainwater. The rising rainwater causes serious moisture problems. Vegetation is observed both on the ground and the dome. The moisture problem in the dome caused the formation of algae layers. Severe deterioration and intense material loss are observed. The building will certainly face more serious problems if essential conservation measures are not taken immediately.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The most important risk for the church of Mor Barsaumo is its structural problems. The collapse of its upper structure and the structural cracks may lead to more severe losses in the near future. Considering its context and picturesque ruinous state, it is not recommended that the building be completely restored and refunctioned. However, structural consolidation is compulsory to prevent further losses.

Another risk damaging the building is the rainwater accumulation. Its floor is filled with water, especially during rainy seasons. It is not possible to prevent the accumulation of water as long as its upper structure is



open. However, if an architectural solution can be developed for water drainage, the damage caused by the accumulation of rainwater for a long time can be prevented.

The vegetation grown in the building should also be cleaned immediately. By applying proper chemicals, not only the vegetation can be prevented but also the moisture problem can be eliminated. Plant cleaning and general cleaning should be done in the building, but the removal of the debris from the collapsed upper structure is not recommended. The building's image as a picturesque ruin, composed of collapsed stone fragments on the ground, should be preserved for the visitors as an indicator of the building's struggle against time. The building is prone to vandalism. Crosses have been destroyed. An information panel can be placed at the entrance of the site. Regular monitoring and maintenance should be provided to prevent further damage to the building.

Church of Mor Addai

Murat Demirli

📍 Şırnak, İdil District, Beth Ishak (Başakköy) Village

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 31.05.2019/6851 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Anschütz says that the village was destroyed in 1394 by Timur's son Amiran-shah. She mentions that nomadic Kurds settled in the village in 1457 and then the village was re-sited by Christians around 1870, but soon these villagers migrated to Midon during the World War I (1984, 118). Sinclair describes this building as "the most completely fortified church in the Tur 'Abdin (1989, 330). Although the building is named as a monastery by some of the villagers, Wiessner also records the building as a church during his visit (1993, IV/I, 25). The church has a typical village church plan. Additions were made to the interior and exterior of the church. Wiessner marks the additions in the interior on his plan (1993, IV/I, 26). Although Palmer marks the village on his map, he did not give any information about this village (Palmer 1990, xxi). During his visit in 1978, Sinclair states that the church was used as a barn and

it was not possible to enter the building. He also mentions towers in the south-western, north-western and north-eastern sides, a demolished tower towards the northeast corner, and another tower with a square plan in the southeast corner (1989, III, 330). While large cut stone blocks in the apse wall indicate an early construction phase, many different construction techniques and phases can be observed in the church.

Architecture

The Church of Mor Addai is located on a hill northwest of the village settlement. There are not any buildings in its immediate vicinity. The area to the west of the church is separated from the surrounding by garden walls, built adjacent to the building, and is used by the villagers for livestock activities. The building resembles a fortified castle with its circular/ truncated conical towers at the

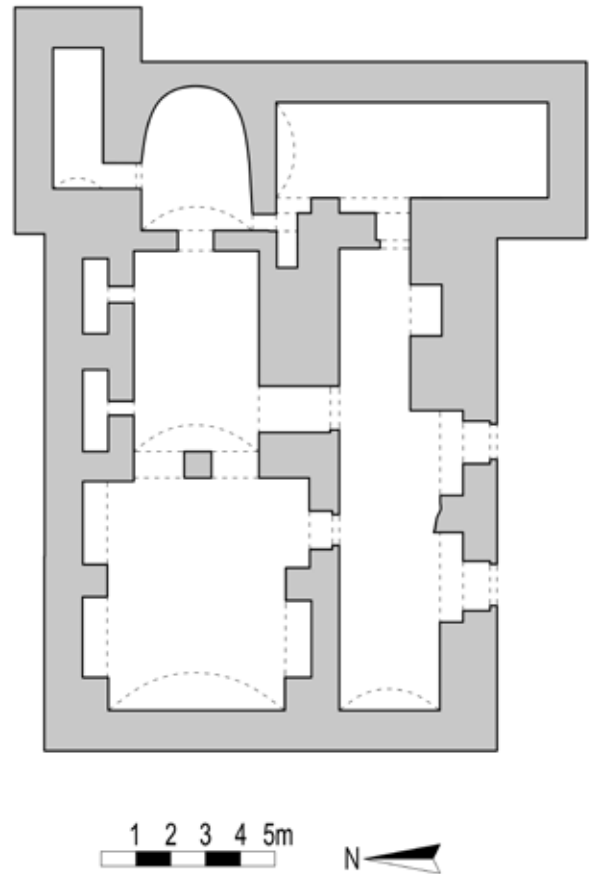


northeast, northwest and southwest corners. A single-storey stone masonry space, with a rectangular plan, is attached to the southeast wall of the building. This space stands as a separate tower. To the east of the northern façade, there are the remains of a circular wall adjacent to the church's main wall. Although these wall remains might belong to another tower similar to the towers at the three corners of the building, there is not sufficient information to justify this claim.

At present, the entrance to the building is provided through a door opening with a flat lintel in the south wall. The original ground level of the building cannot be observed in the entrance façade due to soil infill. The narthex is reached through this door opening. There is a stone relieving arch on top of the opening with lintel, connecting the narthex and the nave. In a later period, a second lintel was added to this opening at a lower level and the entrance was narrowed.

A second floor was added later on top of the narthex. The walls of the upper floor have largely been demolished, whereas the ground floor has preserved its architectural integrity. Stone staircase, connecting the ground floor to the upper floor, still remains. The stone arch, carrying the staircase and parallel to the direction of the stairs, is partially buried. The walls of the upper floor are almost completely in ruins. While small rough-cut stones are used as building material of the walls, there are not any traces of brick walls. There is a rectangular space in the east of the narthex. This space is built in rubble stone masonry. The arched opening in the south wall of this space has been filled with rubble stones.

Half of the church's naos, whose upper structure is largely demolished, was later closed and a new church was formed. In the section of the naos whose upper structure is lost, there is a row of pillars and arches in the walls. These pillars and arches are constructed with alternating rows of stone and brick. Brick is also observed at the level of the vault's springing line. In the section of the naos that was closed later, there is an apse in the east. The circular wall of the apse, which is covered by a half-dome, is



constructed with large cut stones and partly plastered. The apse is elevated from the main nave with three steps. The apse is also separated from the naos by a templon and connected via a door in the templon's center. This wall separating the apse was constructed later. There is a profiled molding at the impost level of the apse's half dome. While there is a door opening with a lintel connecting apse to the space in the north, the opening at its opposite in the south wall is closed. There is also a cross motif on the middle axis of the apse wall.

Present State

The Church of Mor Addai has undergone substantial interventions and therefore it is difficult to comprehend the building. Compared to its ground floor, the upper floor of the building has deteriorated more due to the loss of its upper structure and is open to weathering conditions. Structural cracks are observed in the church. The causes of these cracks, such as moisture or settlement of the ground, can be determined after further investigation. The church is used by the



villagers for livestock activities. The improper use of the building and its exposure to weathering conditions caused severe material losses especially in its upper floor. All floors of the building are filled with soil. Therefore, it is not possible to observe the original floor levels. There is intense vegetation and moss growth on the upper floor due to rain penetration. The traces of vandalism are observed on some of the walls caused probably by visitors or users.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

As emergency measures, the building should be protected, and further deterioration caused by environmental conditions and improper use should be prevented. After structural and static investigations, possible consolidation

and strengthening measures should be taken in order to ensure the building's survival until the implementation of a comprehensive restoration. A temporary shelter should be placed and static measures like underpinnings should be taken where necessary after environmental conditions of the area and ground conditions of the building are analyzed. Comprehensive restoration work can only begin after these emergency measures are taken. During the preparation of its restoration project, archaeological excavations can be conducted in the building where necessary. An information panel about the church should be placed at the site, and a pedestrian pathway should be planned to provide easier and safer visits.

Çel Bira (Forty Wells)

Barış Altan

📍 **Mardin, Central District, Nur Neighborhood, İzzetpaşa Locale**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry status: **Registered - 26.03.2009/2152 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Vinicultural activities in the region were first mentioned in records of Ashurnasirpal II's fifth expedition to Tur 'Abdin in the 9th century BCE (Soileau, 2017, 24). We learn from the Neo-Assyrian texts that the wine of Izlo Mountain was especially famous and that there was a significant wine trade during that period. More is known about local production during the Roman era. Due to the symbolism of wine in Christianity, the Syriacs also gave importance to wine that found its place in the poems of Mor Afrem, who lived in the 4th century. There are also traces of material culture indicating that wine was produced in churches and monasteries (Soileau, 2017, 25). This area known as Çel Bira by the locals is also known as a wine

monastery by the Syriacs. However, there is no evidence to associate it only with Syriacs and to date it. Nevertheless, it is one of the most important wine production workshops in the region.

Architecture

There are many cisterns and connecting channels at the site. Soileau mentions ninety cisterns and five crushing surfaces. He identifies the dimensions of these surfaces as 5x5 meters, and the depth of most of the cisterns as 2 and 2.5 meters. He also states that some of the cisterns are 4 meters in depth (Soileau, 2017, 34). Since a large part of these cisterns are filled with soil and debris, precise information cannot be obtained about their





depth and dimensions. According to the report of the Mardin museum directorate for registration, the cisterns are connected to each other by channels from their upper and ground levels. About 5 meters north of the area where grapes are crushed is a flattened rocky terrain, measuring 3x20 meters. According to the report of the museum directorate, this rocky terrain is the area where grapes were collected, sorted out, and dried. The hinge slots of probable timber lids can be observed on the cisterns. The museum directorate identified many rock-cut tombs on the southern and northern skirts of the hilly terrain where cisterns are located as well as large stone blocks in an area referred to as 'the church' by the villagers.

Present State

This complex is located in the south of the area known as Zinnar vineyards in Mardin. After the studies conducted by Mardin Museum, the site was surrounded by a wire fence, but this precaution is not sufficient enough to protect the site. There are some new buildings in the east of the site. It is believed that the wine production workshops continue underneath these buildings, but due to the existence of these buildings, a detailed study cannot be conducted on this site. The layout of the complex cannot be identified. There are no information panels.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Although surrounded by a wire fence, the wine production workshops are open to uncontrolled entrances. Since the top of the cisterns are open, they are filled with soil and debris. Open cisterns also pose danger during site visits. Residents in the immediate

vicinity can be appointed by Mardin Museum to protect and regularly maintain the site. The site is significant as an important example demonstrating how the wine production culture fits the topography. It can be part of the touristic routes promoting food culture in the region.

Church of Mor Gewargis/ Dera Meshkok

Dr. Banu Pekol



Mardin, Kızıltepe District, Meshkok (Büyükayrık) Neighborhood

Present function: **Barn**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.10.2017/2938 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

According to the *vita* of Yuhannon (d. 1165), who had been the bishop of Mardin for thirty-eight years, Yuhannon built and restored many churches and monasteries. His *vita* mentions specifically five churches, constructed in stone and lime, which were large and beautiful and are located in the villages of Dunisar, Maskuk, Saba and Tel Besmai (Vööbus, 1976, 212). The Maskuk mentioned in his *vita* might be the Büyükayrık village, which is also known as Meshkok today. The church he built in this village can be the building known as the Church of Mor Gewargis or Harabe (Ruins) Church. Hence, the church can be dated to the 12th century. The rubble masonry workmanship also supports this dating.

Architecture

Situated northeast of Büyükayrık village, the church is a three-aisled basilica. The only entrance to the church is from the door in the south. Since the village is within the region of Karacadağ, which has a volcanic character, basalt is used in the village's architecture. The church has been built with cut and rough-cut basalt stone and has a flat earth roof.

The naves are separated by three piers that are connected to each other by pointed arches. These pointed arches coincide with the relieving arches on the walls. All three naves are covered by exposed barrel vaults in the east-west direction. The traces survived to present day indicate that there were



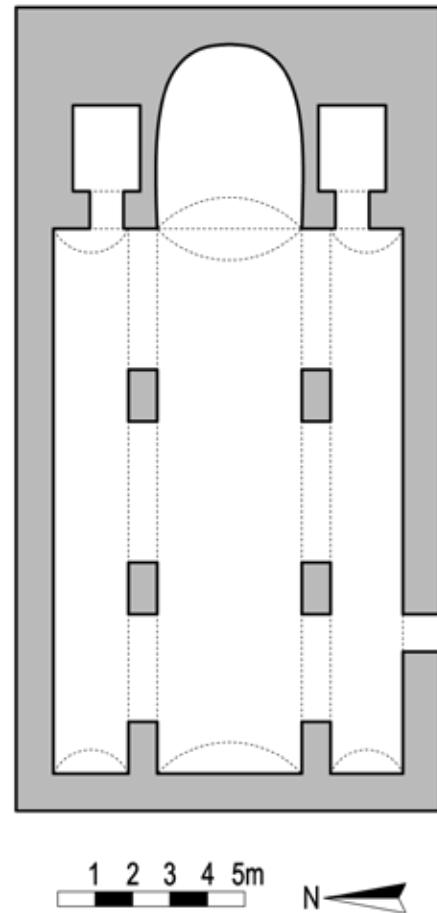


two circular columns at the intersection of the central nave and the apse volume. The apse walls were originally plastered since there are remaining plastered sections on the walls. The rooms on the north and east side of the apse should have been used as *pastophoria*. There is a niche in the north wall of the apse and there are flat openings with lintels in the north and south walls leading to the side rooms of the apse. The room in the south also has a door opening with lintel.

Although the building is illuminated with small rectangular windows in all of its walls, the interior is relatively dark. There are stones with cross motifs on the interior walls. There is no ornamentation on the exterior façades. There is a pond on the east side of the church surrounded by 2- 2.5 meters high wall with rubble basalt stones. The remaining traces indicate that this wall was originally surrounding the church together with the pond.

Present State

The exterior walls of the church are severely deteriorated in general and there are structural cracks on these walls. Almost half of the southern wall's outer face has been lost. The



western façade of the building is thought to have been demolished and rebuilt in recent years. There are collapses in the superstructure of the building causing rainwater penetration. Due to serious humidity problems, there are material deteriorations such as salt deposits, algae growth, loss of binding mortar and plant growth. The stones that have fallen from the upper levels of the walls due to the loss of binding mortar, are scattered around the building.

A new door has been installed instead of the original door of the building, damaging the original door opening. Outside this door there is a stone lintel decorated with three cross carvings, which should be the original lintel of the church. Since the building has been used as a stable for a long time, the floor was filled with animal feces. Salts and chemicals formed by feces also cause deterioration in the church.

Among the columns in front of the apse, only the one on the north is still standing. However, a brick and stone wall was constructed



between this column and the walls next to it. The entrance of the room on the north of the apse is partially filled with rubble stone and was converted into a haystack.

A barn was attached to the northern façade of the church, which is constructed with hollow concrete blocks and stones that have fallen from the building. Despite the material deterioration, the plan organization and spatial arrangement of the church is understandable. There are no information panels.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Due to the partial collapses in the superstructure, the structural integrity of the building is weakened. These collapses and severe structural cracks on the walls pose the risk of partial collapse of the building. While the building is relatively resistant to earthquake loads, it is not protected against the effects of wind and rain. The deterioration caused by animal feces should also be taken into consideration.



Conservation measures should be taken as soon as possible against the structure's exposure to natural depredation and vandalism. The use of church as a barn should be stopped as soon as possible and the animal feces should be cleaned. The floor covering, which seems to be stable should be exposed to its original floor level. Structural consolidation works should be conducted, and the collapsed vaults should be completed within the scope of a restoration project. The building can be accentuated by an urban design project considering the surrounding basalt wall.

Located approximately 2.5 kilometers south of the Silk Road, the church can be included in the historical tourism routes of the region. While the building is relatively easy to access, it is necessary to place signage and information panels that will attract visitors, since the building has no visitors at present. The surrounding village can be regarded as a positive factor for the long-term maintenance and conservation of the church after its restoration.

Church of Deame (Sürekli)

Dr. Lory Zakar

📍 Mardin, Kızıltepe District, Sürekli Village

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 17.12.2009/2745** Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

Yuhannon (d. 1165), the bishop of Mardin, constructed five large-scale and twenty-four small churches throughout his life (Vööbus, 1976, 214). His *vita* tells us that one of the great churches he constructed was in Meshkok. It has been suggested in this publication that the church standing in Meshkok today can be associated with the church mentioned in the *vita* of Yuhannon. According to the *vita*, he constructed a small church in Deame. The building known as the Deame Church today is even larger than the church in Meshkok. Therefore, the church mentioned in Yuhannon's *vita* should be another structure. There is no available information on the history of the Deame church, which

is partially standing today, but the above account shows that Deame was an important village in the 12th century.

Architecture

The remains known as the Deame Church point at a three-aisled basilica extending in east-west direction. In the apse section, there are two-story apse rooms located symmetrically with respect to the main apse space. There are stairs within the walls adjacent to the rooms on both sides of the apse providing access to the upper floor. On the interior surface of the western façade wall opposite the apse, there are the traces of two load-bearing piers. Based on these traces and the

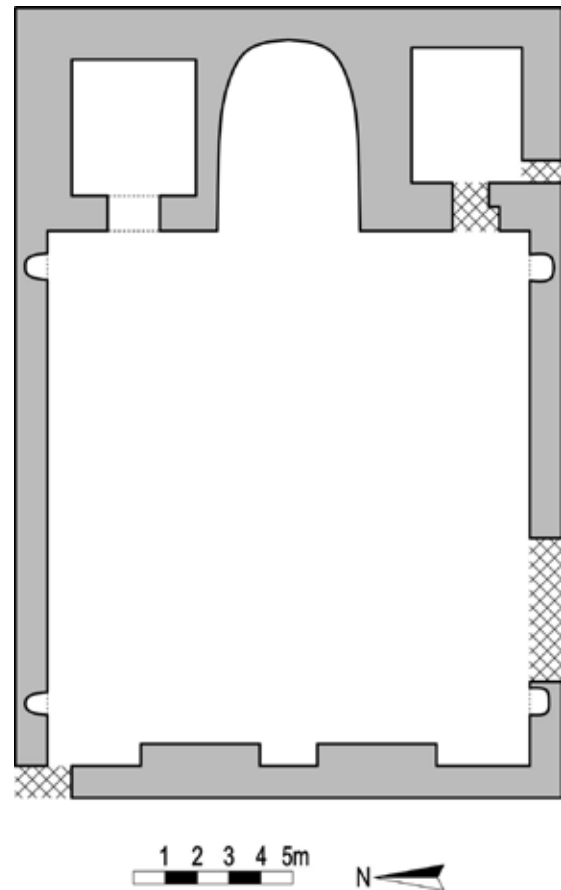




partition of the apse, it can be suggested that the church was composed of three naves. The entrance of the church was most probably from the collapsed section of its southern wall. On the other hand, there are the traces of a filled door opening on the central axis of the western wall of the church. There are the traces of thick load-bearing piers, placed symmetrically on both sides of this door opening on the west façade. On the left side of this door, there are the traces of steps that are thought to be part of a stairway towards the corner of the western and southern façade walls. There are no stone columns or piers in the naos of the church as well as any traces of its superstructure.

The two-storey apse rooms and the narrow stairs providing access to these rooms on the upper floor are remarkable. Although these architectural elements are rarely found in Syriac architecture, they are frequently seen in Armenian church architecture in South-eastern Anatolia, especially in Diyarbakır. These stairs are located right next to the apse rooms, inside the exterior walls perpendicular or adjacent to the apse, usually on both sides of the naos. In the Armenian churches with this type of apse, the naves are usually separated from each other by arches carried by stone columns or load-bearing piers. Timber floor coverings, roofs and gallery floors known as *vernadun* can be constructed in these naves, which are divided by these stone load-bearing surfaces.

In the Deame church, the filled door opening, located in the middle of the western wall, can be the original entrance door of the building. The traces of a step on the left side of the door might belong to stairs leading to



a possible upper gallery floor. These stairs can be part of a gallery floor with timber construction carried by load-bearing piers (as in the case of Diyarbakır Surp Giragos Church). The fact that there are no remains of the superstructure or the sections forming the nave within the naos section, support the idea that some of these remains were constructed with materials that are not durable like timber, or there were architectural elements that are suitable to be removed and reused as spolia.

The remains of plaster are observed on the interior surfaces of the main façade walls. The load-bearing walls are constructed in rough-cut stone masonry walls. Dry stone masonry wall technique is observed in the upper parts of the western wall. Most of the stones used in the building are basalt.

The voussoirs of the arched openings, on the right and left sides of the apse in the apse rooms, have been removed. The cut-stone facings of these openings can be seen at the levels of the arch's springing line. There is

a sill fragment with geometric decorations, corresponding to the springing line of the arch, above the opening providing access to the apse room on the left side of the apse. There are carved cross motifs on the surfaces of cut stones in the apse.

There are the remains of door openings with lintels. There are arched niches in the interior parts of the main exterior walls, which are placed symmetrically in the section near the western wall. The two-storey rooms in the apse have narrow, elongated windows for ventilation and light. The door openings of the stairs leading to the upper floors from the front of the apse and ones providing access between the upper floor rooms are arched. The two-story volume in the middle of the apse, is gradually recessed as the walls rise. There is a narrow and elongated window opening in the middle of this section providing light to the apse.

Present State

Most sections of the church of Deame have been demolished. Since the entire superstructure has collapsed, the existing walls are exposed to rain, frost, moisture and other weathering conditions, and biological growth. Due to treasure hunting and natural weathering, the corbelled arrangement of the apse and the stair on the right of the apse have severely deteriorated.

The structural and cultural identity of the church is unrecognizable. While the Syriacs in the region may have adopted this building, the structure bears similar features with Armenian architecture in the region. It is known that the churches were used by different communities at different times in the regions where the Armenians and the Syriacs lived together in Anatolia. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the cultural identities of these deteriorated structures.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Necessary measures should be taken to ensure that the building is conserved in a sustainable manner based on its architectural characteristic. A future adaptive reuse should consider the structural condition and cultural value of the church, and should be implemented in accordance with



the adaptability of the building and should not put extra load on the existing structure. Making the church accessible for visitation within a tourism route established in the region will be a significant achievement for this cultural asset.

Before conservation or management projects mentioned above, urgent measures should be taken to ensure the survival of the building, including the protection of certain sections of the church from weathering conditions and inserting temporary structural supports where necessary. Especially the sections that have been severely damaged like the floors and walls of the apse rooms should be supported by suspension systems.

Church of Kundel

Süreyya Topaloğlu

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, 'Ayn Wardo (Gülgöze) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 21.02.2013/1187 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

We could not find any information about this church or the ancient settlement where it is located. Since we do not know the saint to whom the church is dedicated, the building is referred to as the church of Kundel in this report.

Architecture

The remains of the settlement, where the church is located, are almost at the foundation level. While most of the buildings are underground, the walls of the church have partly survived. Numerous cisterns are found around the church indicating the

existence of a workshop. The building is stone masonry. The monolithic stone blocks used occasionally are remarkable and indicate that the church was built at an earlier period (probably between the 6th and 8th centuries). Only the naos and apse volumes are identifiable from the wall remains at the ground floor level. Although plan measurements can be taken, it is not possible to make an evaluation about the upper structure or spatial qualities in the third dimension. Like other churches in the villages of the Tur 'Abdin, the church is longitudinal on the east-west axis.



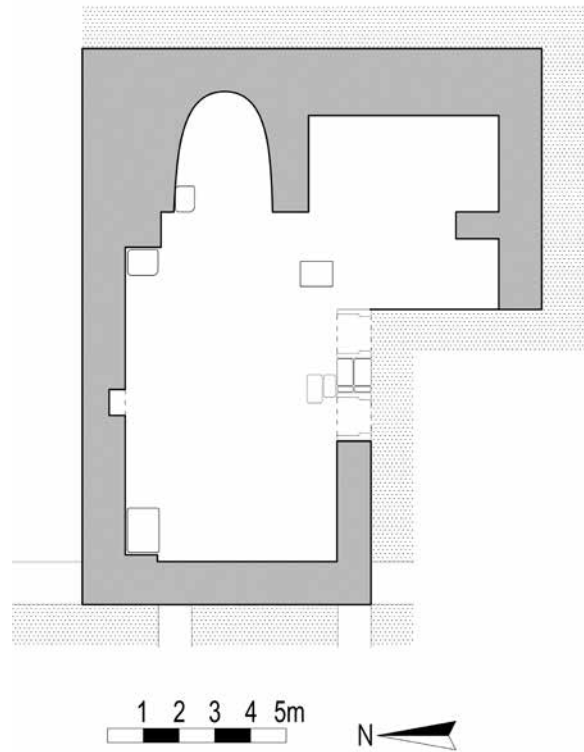
There are two door openings with lintels standing in the south wall. The openings are rectangular and spanned with monolithic stone lintels. The door jambs are also made of monolithic stone blocks. These construction techniques reinforce the suggestion that the building is from an earlier period. There are not any traces of openings in the northern wall corresponding to the openings in the south wall. However, there are three piers attached to the northern wall. There are impost blocks on the piers in the two corners. The only opening in the north wall is a window behind the central pier. The alignment of the window with the pier can indicate that the northern wall might have been rebuilt later. There are remains of piers attached to the south wall, similar to the ones in the north wall. However, they are mostly buried in the ground. There are no ornamentations in the interior or exterior of the building.

Present State

The church is within Kundel Village, which is an old settlement. It is located 8 kilometers east of Midyat and 5 kilometers northwest of 'Ayn Wardo (Gülgöze) village. Most of the church is underground. The main volume of the church is perceivable, but it is not possible to evaluate the entire wall remains. Since the building is exposed to weathering conditions, the standing walls are in the risk of collapse. There is vegetation on all surfaces. It appears that an illegal excavation has been conducted in the apse.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church at Kundel poses serious structural risks. The building has gradually been deteriorated due to serious material losses. Restoration or partial re-erection is not recommended considering the present state of the building, its physical characteristics and context. Archaeological excavations, however, can be conducted to obtain more information about the building. The church should also be protected from illegal excavations.



Monastery of Mor Aho

Sena Kayasii

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, 'Urdnus (Arnas, Bağlarbaşı) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 18.09.2014/2495 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Although called a monastery, this building has a village type (hall-type) church plan. The remains of other ancient buildings to the west of the building may suggest that it was located in a settlement. Or the standing building may have been the secondary chapel of a monastery whose main church has not survived. Mor Aho with whom the site is associated is a highly venerated saint who is known to have built many monasteries. The building is also known as Der Hadad.

Architecture

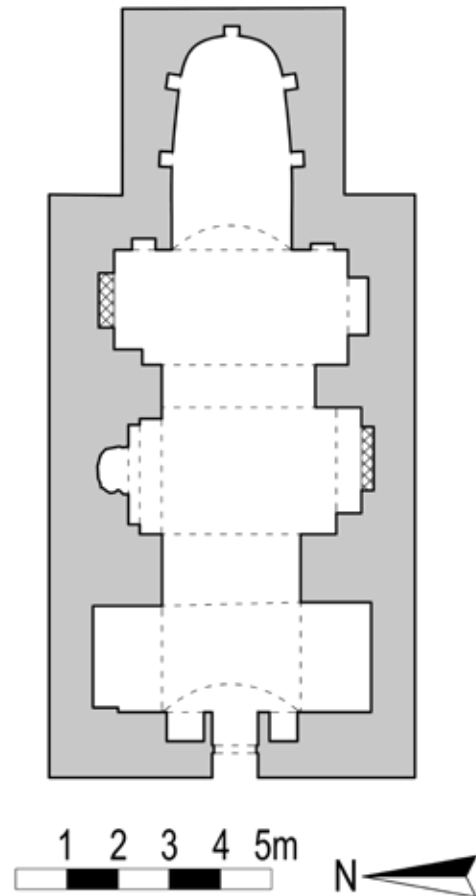
The building known as Dayro d-Mor Aho has a rectangular plan with an unusually deep apse. The building is long on the east-west axis. Unlike other Tur 'Abdin churches, its entrance is on the western façade. The entrance is set within a much larger arch that is partially filled in with stones. This suggests that the entrance has been completely rebuilt at least once. The size of the arch suggests that the original, rectangular passageway may have been larger. Today, there is a low



entrance which requires bending or crouching. This feature can be seen in some churches in the Tur 'Abdin region. The lintel of the doorway has a cross decoration and a Syriac inscription in a rotated position. This block is clearly reused.

The entrance directly leads to the nave, which is divided into three parts by two large piers. The niches formed by the piers closest to the entrance are two storied. The vaults separating the floors are visible but there is no visible trace of access to the upper floor. Between the other piers, there are small openings close to the ceiling. These appear to have been purposefully built to allow light to enter, rather than as a result of damage or repairs.

The central part leads to wall openings on either side that are covered up by debris. These are possibly a result of collapsed chambers, or transition spaces into other parts of the building that have not survived. In fact, the original entrance to the church may have been from the southern wall, as the surviving arches indicate, as it is the case





in the hall-type churches of the Tur 'Abdin. The roof is supported by a barrel vault that is visible from the interior.

The third part, which is in front of the apse, is separated from the nave by two arches. There is a curvature and height difference between these two structures, suggesting that they were built (or re-built) at different times. The type of masonry also supports this argument. The roof on the northeastern corner of the apse has collapsed, which severely exposes the interior to weather conditions. There are two reliquary niches flanking the apse on the eastern wall and two niches flanking the entrance on the western wall. In addition to them, there are further five niches set into the walls around the apse.

The structure has been repaired multiple times, as is evident from the many different types and colors of mortar applied to the building. Most of the stone masonry used to build the main structure is roughly cut and small. However, there are reused larger ashlar blocks in the church probably coming from the once existing larger complex as

the dispersal pattern of the large monolithic blocks around suggests. The possibility of a larger complex is strengthened by the existence of spaces formed by using the level difference in the surrounding topography. Almost all of these have been mostly infilled with soil.

The monastery of Mor Aho is situated in a rural area, with almost no other structure in sight except for the empty, concrete, modern building that appears dangerously close to the monastery. The concrete building is surrounded by a composite fence topped with barbed wire poles, which also partially encapsulates the monastery and surrounding ruins. The locals posit that the building has no permit and was constructed illegally. This seems likely, since the site was designated as a historic resource, and modern construction nearby should not have been possible so close to a designated site.

Present State

As our visit followed a rain, there were many puddles on the ground in the interior of the building. The ease with which rainwater can enter the structure explains the



level of water damage in the walls and ceiling. There is also significant and widespread discoloration all over the ceiling and walls, as a result of exposure to weather in the interior.

The level of the floor has been altered by fallen debris in most places. The debris appears to be a result of damages and collapse in the roof and walls. The building gives the impression that it has not been in use for a long time. However, the site is used for feast days annually, on the first Monday of Easter. The feast day is attended not only by the Christians living in the surrounding villages, but their Muslim neighbors, who utilize the occasion to picnic near the monastery.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

There is a basic, but sizeable concrete building near the monastery of Mor Aho. It is quite close to the monastery, with almost no other building in sight. This may suggest an interest in the monastery by the builder and/or owner of the concrete structure. Regardless of the reason, the construction of a concrete building would have required heavy machinery on site. Likely, this has already caused considerable damage to the historic building.

The monastery is far away from any other settlement that could provide a level of safety through surveillance (Urduş/ Bağlarbaşı is 3 kilometers away). It is also close to a paved road, which could allow easy access even as it increases the chance of random acts of vandalism.



The monastery of Mor Aho is vulnerable to climatic conditions, resulting from years of damage and neglect. Past repairs have been made with reused materials. These decreased the amount of information available about the original structure. For this reason, further research is urgently needed. The building has no protection from unwanted human attention, attempted looting, or graffiti. The community believes the complex is looted for construction material.

As we mentioned, the church is surrounded by large stones scattered across the land. They suggest that they are the ruins of what must have been a larger monastic complex or a settlement. The little that remains is extremely vulnerable to natural effects and artificial interference, which would jeopardize future research into the complex and the surrounding area. A preliminary archaeological survey is needed before the remains completely disappear.

Monastery of Mor Abhay

Dr. Mesut Dinler

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, Beth Man'em Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6400 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Anschütz mentions the village of Beth Man'em under the title "Tur 'Abdin between 1000 and 1400". She lists it among the new bishoprics resulting from the schism in the Church (Anschütz, 1984, 166). The monastery of Mor Abhay certainly existed in 1484 when a book of services for feast-days was copied for the monastery. We find mentions of the bishop of the Monastery of Mor Abhay in 1723, 1749, 1841 and 1906 (Palmer, 2010, 232). Wiessner recorded the church of the monastery. Although not giving a date, he identified three phases for the church and structures around it (1981, I/I, 32-38, figs. 6-7, I/II, pls. IV, 12, 13). According to that, the long room against the church's south side is later than the church and the room at the west end of that room is the latest.

An inscription from Mor Gabriel Monastery (Palmer, 1990, 224) reveals that three of the bishops of Tur 'Abdin between the mid-ninth and the late eleventh century came from the village of Beth Man'em (Palmer, 1987, B13).

Architecture

A visitor who wants to reach the monastery of Mor Abhay should travel for a long time through the temporary settlements and tents established by nomads. Disappearing from time to time and reappearing with its monumental scale along the travel, the monastery demonstrates how it is the most powerful symbol of the plain both visually and architecturally. Blind and high walls, ruined high towers, the form of the hill on which



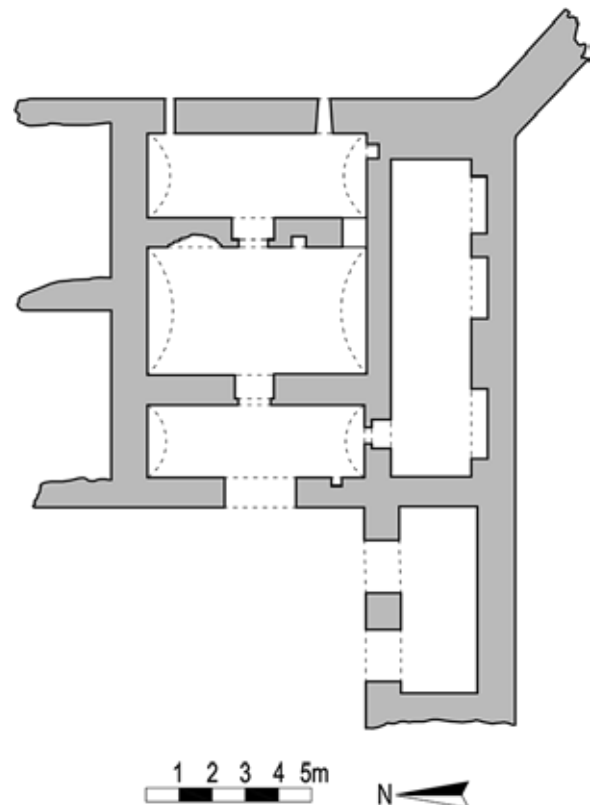
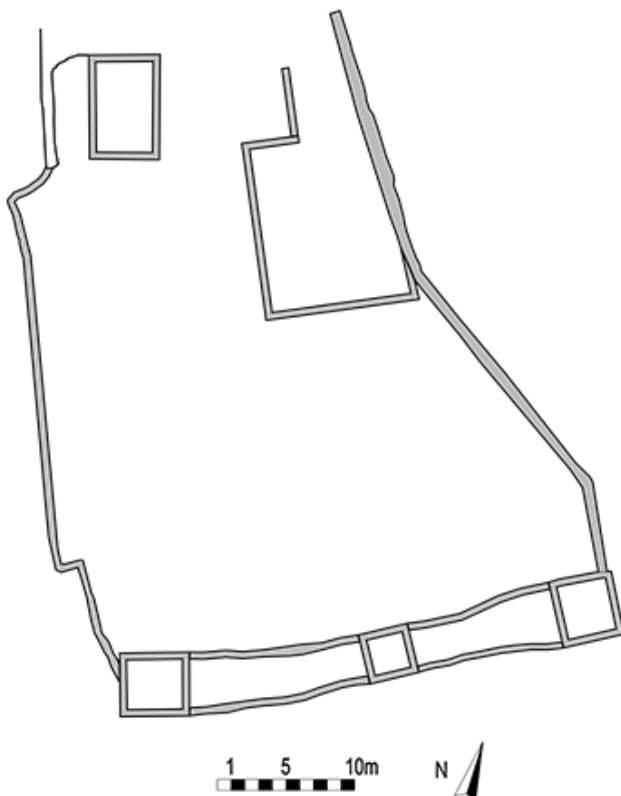
the monastery sits, and its integrity with the single or two storey masonry buildings on the slopes of this hill within the landscape, as well as the contrast of its monumental scale compared to these masonry dwellings are among the factors forming this powerful symbol. After climbing the hill and entering the monastery, one encounters a completely ruined building. It is almost impossible to follow the volumetric features and the relationships of different levels of the building complex. The interior of the monastery is covered with trees, plants and debris of its demolished buildings. However, some of its walls and spaces can still be traceable.

Resembling a castle, the monastery was built in rubble stone masonry. The boundaries of the building in plan can be determined by tracing the footprints of its thick walls. The fortifications of the monastery follow the form of the rocky terrain and have a plan resembling an open V-shape. Four towers are observed along the south and southeast walls of the monastery. While three of them retain their rectangular form, the fourth

tower is completely demolished, but its plan can still be traceable. There are vaulted spaces under all towers. It is likely that these towers were used for seclusion purposes as well as for providing defense and controlling access.

Although not clearly understandable, spaces at different levels within the monastery indicate the presence of many different spaces. While the vaulted volumes within the spaces closer to the exterior of the monastery can be traceable, the other spaces inside the monastery are in ruins. According to the information gathered during the site survey, the monastery was functioning until 1931. Large-scale destruction in such a short time indicates that the monastery's stones might have been used in the construction of other buildings.

Although there are traces of many vaulted spaces along the north-south axis, their vertical and horizontal relationship cannot be understood. Nevertheless, the space in the center of the monastery, which is in the form



Plan of the main church of the monastery



of Tur 'Abdin's typical monastery church, could be accessed. The eastern part of the church is composed of a single undivided space, making this church unique. The outer walls of the monastery serve as fortifications and they are devoid of any ornamentation.

Present State

At present, there are nomads in the immediate vicinity of the monastery. Most of the nomadic tents are used periodically for feeding animals. The monastery, which is located in a rural area, has no visitors except the nomads and the people who know the structure. While the monastery's plan organization and certain walls can be observable, other architectural features cannot be traceable. Since its roof has collapsed, the monastery became exposed to weathering conditions, and trees and plants grew within the building. Water penetrates into all spaces and there are deep structural cracks in its remaining sections.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building has great architectural and archaeological potential. Even the removal of the rubble debris can reveal many unknowns features about the structure. One of the most significant features describing the value of the building is its visual and physical relationship with its landscape and



nomadic settlement. Vegetation spreading over the entire plain (the number of pomegranate trees is striking), nomadic tents, livestock activities and Mor Abhay Monastery exemplify the integrity of tangible and intangible heritage, which can be defined as a 'cultural landscape' (Jones, 2013). However, since this relationship is extremely uncontrolled and there have been no actions taken to protect the neglected Mor Abhay Monastery, this situation causes harm to the building. Uncontrolled access to the building, vandalism, and the use of the monastery's stones in the construction of new buildings, are among some of the major problems. As a result of being treated as a cultural landscape, the site can serve as a primary investment for sustainable development. This site can become a model for eco-tourism.

Monastery of Mor Yuhannon of Kfone

Dr. Jorge Manuel Simão Alves Correia

📍 **Batman, Gercüş District, Derikfan (Nurlu) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.06.2021/8370 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

According to the *vita* of Mor Yuhannnon of Kfone to whom the monastery has been dedicated, the monastery dates to the end of the sixth or the middle of the seventh century (Palmer, 2010, 201). The church of the monastery is entered today through a doorway opened in the apse of the church. The apse is decorated with pillars and niches, similar to those in the apses of the church of Yoldath Aloho at Hah (Anıtlı) and the main church of the monastery of Mor Abrohom of Kashkar in Mount Izlo. This decoration is one of the most remarkable features of the church that stylistically confirms the date mentioned in the *vita*. Wiessner, who recorded the church,

did not notice the nicely built small chapel that we discovered in our survey (Wiessner, 1982, I-I, 94-98, fig. 20, I/II, pls. 53-6).

Architecture

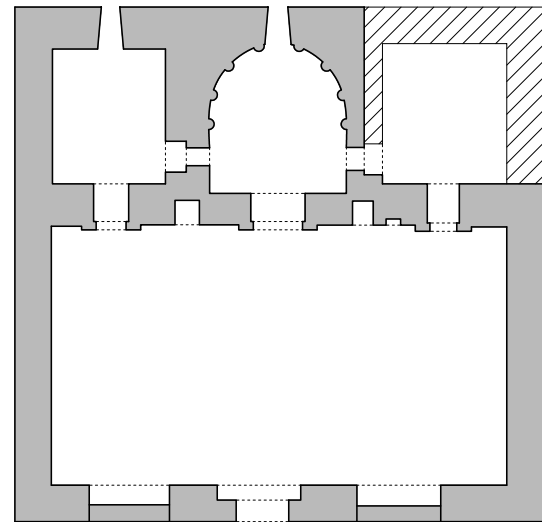
The church of this former monastery is found amidst the buildings of a village that meanwhile took over the religious structures. Therefore, the rediscovery of the historical spaces requires a wider survey involving entering into places beyond several gates and fences belonging to private domains. The effort is rewarded by remarkable remains in the form of elegant arcades and delicate ornaments. From the original



church, two sections survive: the apse and the nave, now totally separated and accessible from different parts. The apse is approached from its back through a private yard that gives access also to a couple of buildings and some animal breeding areas. The apse is three partite. The central room is a semi-circle with a radius of about 2 meters. It possesses an elaborate cyma molded cornice that divides the vertical walls from the semi-domed ceiling. The cornice is supported by eight capitals, carved with uncut acanthus leaves. Unfortunately, the original columns that sustained those elements no longer exist in place, so the capitals work almost as ornamented corbels these days, standing due to their inlaid method of application in the wall.

Besides the later opening that serves as the current access, three original openings can be detected. The two lateral ones link the main apse with the side rooms, though only one is accessible at the present. Less elaborate than the central apse, it is a plain rectangular room. One assumes the other, which is today totally filled with rubble, would be identical. The main door of the apse would lead to the nave of the church, as would the smaller doorways in the side rooms. However, all these openings towards the west are currently blocked. From the exterior, the apprehension of the interior spaces is masked by the boxy mass of the ensemble, which is superposed by another volume over the closed side chamber. The nave of the church is accessed through the roofs of neighboring houses. The transverse-nave, long in north-south axis, is today roofless. Although short sides present no relevant characteristics, both longer sides of the rectangle exhibit an array of openings and decoration.

Towards the east, to the apse area, the three doors detected on the inside are translated to the nave by quadrangular geometric decorative features, all with different heights, being the tallest the main apse one; the intermediate opened to the accessible side room and the shortest framed the door to the closed side room. A couple of rectangular niches can also be seen in this wall. Opposite, towards the west, stands a fine arcade, constituted by three slightly horseshoe shaped



Plan of the main church of the monastery



arches, supported by rectangular-shaped piers. These are crowned by imposts and the whole wall is a typical testimony of a passage between nave and narthex. Unfortunately, no other structures of the former church, which would most likely extend it westwards, can be detected, though traces of arches or porticos can be read in the wall juxtaposed to the arcade.

Within close distance of the above structures, to the right of the hypothetical narthex of the main church that we have mentioned, yet accessible by another property, is a small-scale church or a chapel. Interpretation of this space is difficult, but it could have worked as a part of the bigger religious compound of the monastery, or as an older church that had been supplanted by the erection of a larger one later on, or even as a separate sanctuary. As is the case in many of the monasteries in the region, see for example Ambar in this volume, this monastic complex had more than one church.

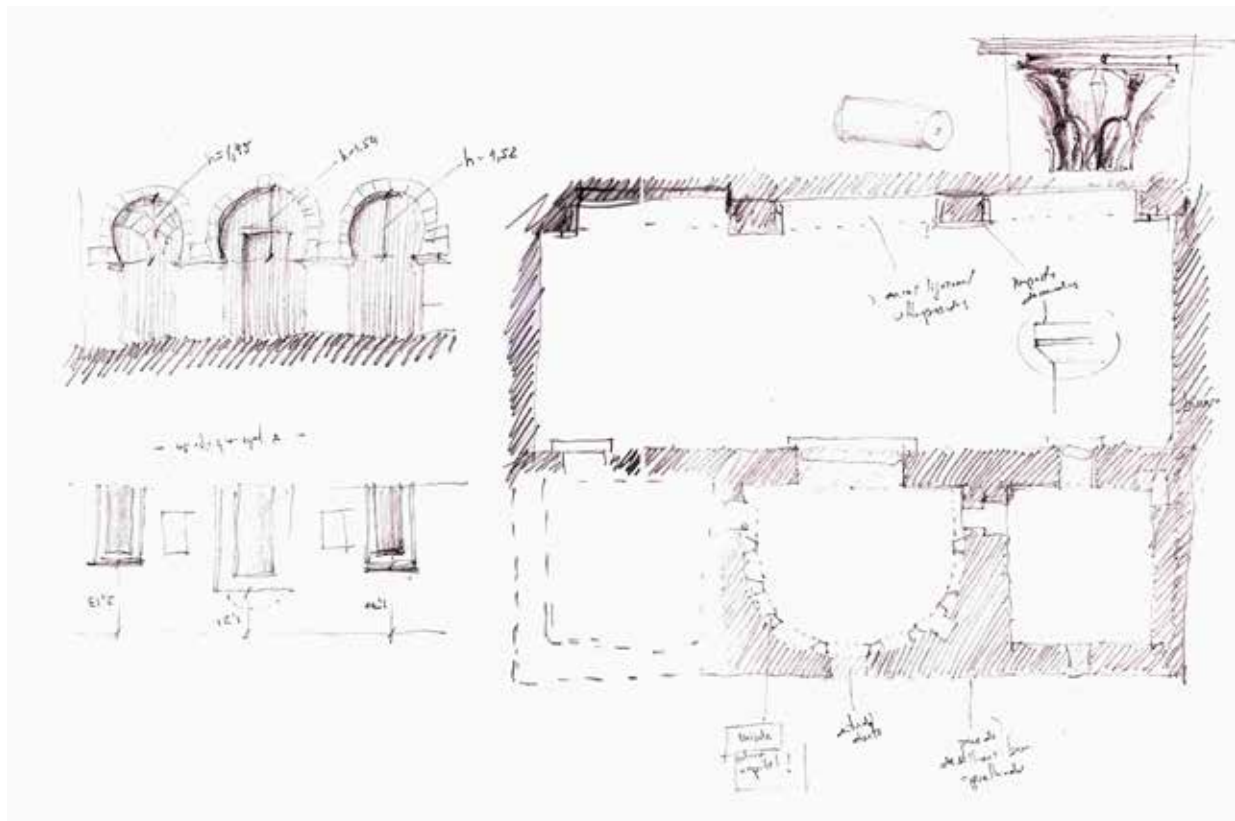
Typologically and morphologically speaking, the main features that concur with its original religious purpose are totally disguised by an outdoor aspect of dwellings at different levels and stables in the ground-floor. In fact, the interior space is fully occupied by animals, keeping none of the dignity of its former functions and presenting considerable challenges to its preservation.

There are three spaces to be taken into consideration. The first is a transversal rectangular

and vaulted area and this space raises the biggest doubts about its belonging to the original premises of this second church or chapel. Two doors open to two distinctive interior spaces. The plan is commanded by the church space to the left. It is a longitudinal space divided into three parts: two transverse stretches divided by an arch and a semi-circular apse. The whole space is vaulted, semi-domed in the apse and has a single oculus in the rear. All the arches sit on stylized impostos. To the right, a vaulted and square shaped chamber communicates with the church by a low door.

Present State

Nowadays, the reconstitution of the religious complex is like a puzzle amidst novel developments of the village, even if of vernacular character. The apse is used as a barn; the nave is open and neglected with uncontrolled access; and the secondary church/chapel is used as a stable. While all the areas are confined and only accessible to owners and the occasional knowledgeable visitor, the nave is extremely vulnerable to natural elements. That can be seen in the decaying aspect of its walls, particularly the



A special thanks to Dr. Jorge Manuel Simão Alves Correia for the sketch.



one with the arcade. Similar structural damages are evident in the apse, with an imminent risk of collapse of the capitals. As for the smaller chapel, the intensive use for livestock produces a huge amount of manure and consequent ammonia levels that deteriorate all its walls and roofing, with fungi covering most of them.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

While this monastery does not suffer from anonymous vandalism, it has been subject to vandalism through misuse that has

endangered its structural sustainability. New dwellings have been superposed on top of former ones, risking new cracks and accentuating the water leakage problem in the still-vaulted rooms. Therefore, urgent preventive consolidation is mandatory, as is a change in the local community practices of storage and animal breeding in such grounds. Of particular attention are not only the ornamented capitals in the main apse, which would require immediate intervention with the positioning of metallic or wooden props, but also the cleaning of vegetation in the open air area of the former nave.

Overall, signage and basic information would benefit the site, calling for vigilance. The monumentality, complexity and quality of the remains available could put this ensemble as a focus point of the village, acting as an economic vector for tourist routes. Further research is required in order to decipher the connection between the main church of the complex and the smaller chapel found in the surroundings.

Church of Mort Saro

Dr. Pınar Aykaç

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, Baskil/ Beth Sqole (Kısmetli) Village, Calahat Locale**
Present Function: **Abandoned**
Registry Status: **Registered - 22.10.2015/ 3657 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Wiessner, although records the church, does not give a name and just says “the parish church” (1982, II/1, 161-166. figs. 77-80). According to tradition, it was dedicated to Mort Saro. No further information could be found about the church but its masonry points to a late date.

Architecture

The church has a typical village church plan organization. It has a naos with single-aisle extending in the east-west direction and a narrow narthex in its south. The entrance of the narthex is through an opening in the middle of the south wall. In the south wall is a blind arch with a semi-circular profile on the west side of the entrance, and two blind arches on the east side. On the west side of the narthex is a rectangular embrasure window. On the northern wall of the narthex, is a rectangular door providing access to the

naos section directly opposite the entrance door to the narthex. The eastern part of the naos has not survived today. The traces of the foundation indicate that the apse protrudes outside with a semi-circular shape. The naos is divided into four parts by arches with semi-circular profiles in the south wall. The entrance to the naos is within one of these arches. In the northern wall of the naos, there are three piers located just opposite the piers in the south wall.

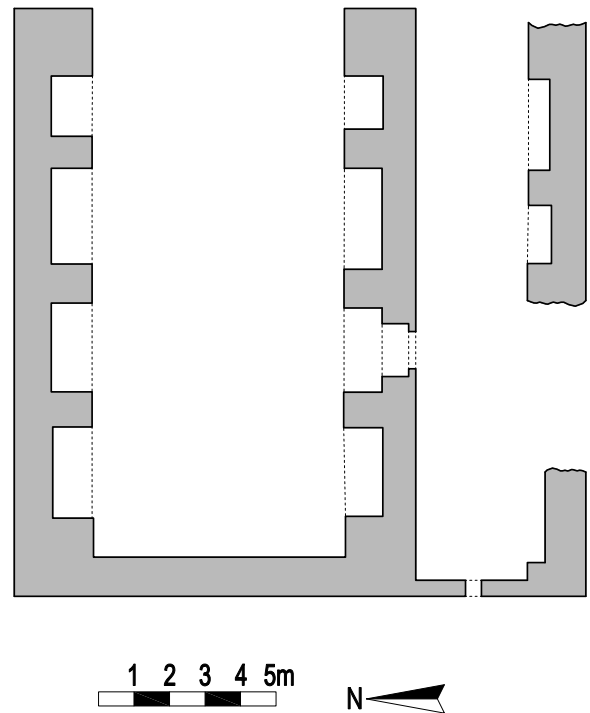
The building is constructed in rubble and rough-cut stone masonry. Rough-cut stones and large stone blocks are used in the wall joints, pillars, and piers of the arches. The main walls are approximately 100 cm thick. Lime mortar is used as binding material and plaster fragments are observed on the interior of the walls. The upper structure and the upper sections of the main walls, starting



from the springing line of the arches, have not survived. The spatial characteristics of the building indicates that the naos was covered by a barrel vault extending in the east-west direction, and the narthex was again covered by a barrel vault extending in the same direction at a lower level. The floor of the western part of the narthex is higher than the rest. This section might have been a space separated from the narthex by a wall.

The door opening leading from the narthex to the naos has a stone lintel and jamb. The face of the arch is not filled but rather left as an arched top window with a semi-circular profile. One of the stones on which the lintel rests has a niche with a quarter-sphere section. The lintel has holes for a metal door. There are Syriac graffiti engraved on stone in three different places on the piers of the blind arches, allowing passage from the naos to the narthex. A cross motif was carved on the pier adjacent to the western wall of the naos.

The plan of Wiessner shows that there was a rectangular space in the naos to the east of the narthex (1982, II/I, 162). Granite stones are observed on the pier of the arch on the eastern side of the naos. Considering that limestone was used in other parts of the building, it can be suggested that this part is the trace of the templon. On the north-east corner of the naos, there are the traces of an



arch extending in the north-south direction at the upper level of the pier. These arch traces indicate that the northern side had four pillars, similar to the southern side. In addition to the traces of the semicircle of the apse protruding to the eastern façade, there are other traces indicating the presence of spaces in the northwest corner of the naos and east of the narthex.

The exterior walls of the building have rubble stone coursing. There are not any openings in the façades other than the embrasure window on the western façade of the narthex. Large stone blocks are used in the corner of the naos's west façade.

Present State

The church is located 2.5 kilometers southeast of Kismetli Village, near the old settlement of Beth Sqole. About 500 meters south of the building is the Der Kaf Salte rock-cut monastery. The church can be reached through a paved road to the south of the village, followed by a 1.5 kilometers walk through a narrow path. The church is difficult to find without a local guide, and it does not attract any visitors other than those who already know it. The building is not used at present, and it is in a neglected and dilapidated state. Due to the collapse of the apse and its surrounding spaces, the plan organization of the eastern part of the church is not fully understandable. The upper structure of the building is completely lost. Structural cracks, loss of mortar, surface weathering, and vegetation are observed in the walls. The loss of stone material in the southern wall of the naos is more severe than the other walls, causing the wall to collapse in certain places. Most of the plaster layers of the interior wall surfaces are lost. The ground level is filled with soil, vegetation and the building's own rubble.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The upper structure and the eastern section of the building was completely destroyed, and the remaining parts are dilapidated and neglected. All the interior spaces are fully exposed to weathering effects such as wind, rain and frost, because of the collapse of its



roof. Therefore, the building is at high risk. The building faces serious structural problems since the remaining walls are not supported on both sides, accompanied by cracks, loss of jointing, and surface weathering in the walls. The plaster layers that remain in very limited areas are in danger of disappearance over time. There are not any protection measures taken around the building. Therefore, the building is susceptible to vandalism. Since the church is located very far from the village's center, protection measures should be taken against treasure hunting for the church and its surrounding.

The surviving parts of the building have lost their structural integrity to support themselves. Emergency protection measures should be taken to structurally support the building and protect it from natural conditions. Following these measures, archaeological surveys and excavations should be conducted to reveal the foundation traces and the plan organization of the church's apse.

A pathway can be arranged to connect the building, which is very far from the village, to the main road and an information panel can be placed at the junction of the main road as well as near the building. The church can be part of a walking trail, with the nearby Der Kaf Salte underground monastery and the remains of the old settlement of Beth Sqole. In addition to the conservation project, a holistic approach should be taken to consider the relationship of the building with its environment.

Church of Mor Gewargis

Dr. Pınar Aykaç

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, 'Arbaye (Alayurt) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 22.10.2009/2571 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

When Hollerweger recorded this church in the late 1990's, it was still intact. As he notes, the church was built on the foundations of an earlier (1999, 210), probably a late antique building with remarkably large blocks of stone (especially in the southwest corner). Hollerweger says it was recently restored. According to the headman of the village, the church was rebuilt in the 1940s. The templon and some sculpture in the church confirm this date.

Architecture

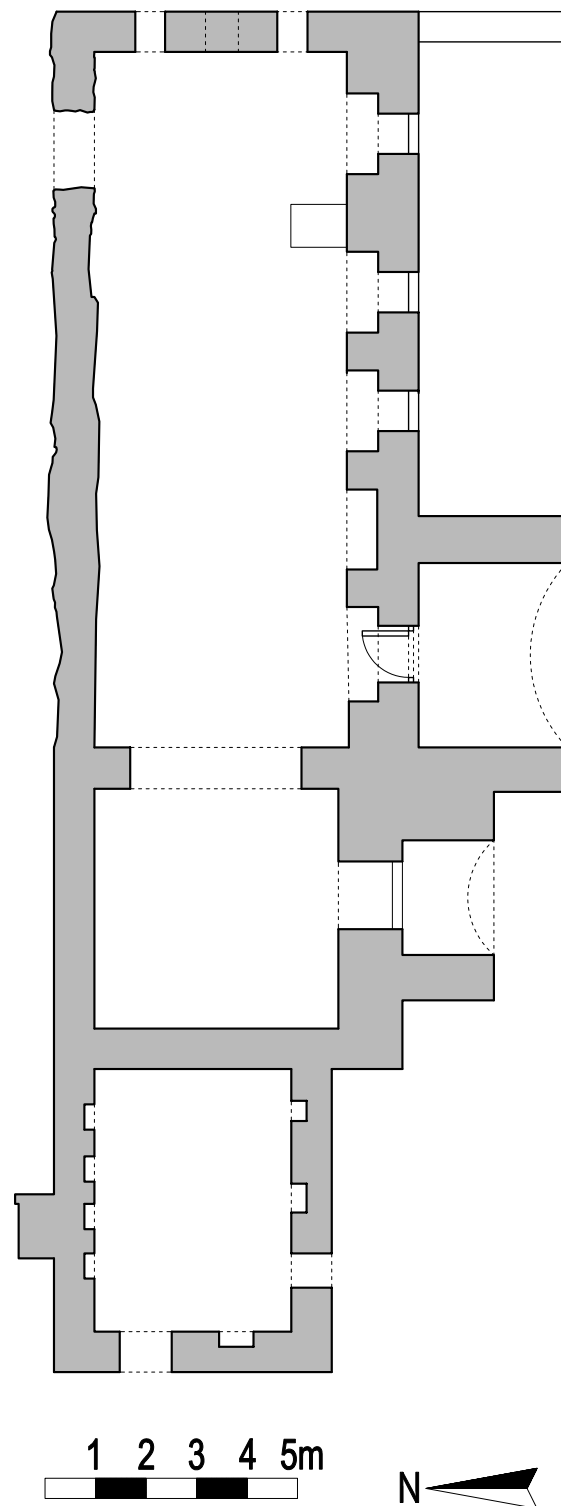
The church is located to the south of the hamlet which is 1 kilometer northwest of the village center. The northern part of its courtyard was divided due to the road opened later and resulted with the destruction of the building's north façade. There are three graves in the south of the courtyard. The building consists of three main masses, which are attached to each other from their short sides.



The mass on the west is covered by a barrel vault extending in the east-west direction. The entrance is through a rectangular door opening on its south side. There is an arched door opening, which was closed later, and an arched niche on the western wall of this space. On the upper level of the wall is a rectangular skylight near the top of the vault. To the east of the entrance in the south wall is a fireplace with a triangular pediment and a rectangular niche. There are four rectangular niches in the northern wall. This section can be a service space, such as a warehouse or kitchen. There are the remains of a door opening in the north-east façade of the space. This opening might be the entrance gate to the courtyard.

To the south of this mass is another mass, rectangular in plan almost like a square, covered by a vault. There is a small window opening with a semi-circular arched niche on the south side of this mass. While the western and northern walls of this space are blind, the space is in the form of an iwan opening to the mass in the east. A large arch in the iwan leads to the naos section in the east. There is a grave in the south-west corner of this space. There are profiled stone fragments scattered on the floor with cross motifs and Syriac inscriptions.

The church has a typical village church plan, seen in Tur 'Abdin region. The northern façade of the naos is blind, whereas the western façade opens to the space in the western space with an arched iwan. There is a vaulted space on the south-west corner of the naos section. After passing through this space, naos is reached by a rectangular door opening. There are four horseshoe-shaped blind arches and a rectangular door opening within a semi-circular blind arch on the south side of the naos. The three horseshoe-shaped blind arches to the east have arched window openings. On the southern wall of the naos, there are remains of a templon between two blind arches. On the corner of the cut-stone templon is a colonette with floral relief and round profile. The naos was covered with a barrel vault in the east-west direction. However, the vault is completely demolished. The existing plaster remains indicate that the



vault covering the naos was plastered from the level of its springing line. The eastern façade of the naos has a symmetrical organization. There is an arched embrasure window opening in the upper level, which narrows down and becomes rectangular towards the outer wall and two other embrasure window openings on each side of this window in the lower level.



The building is constructed in coursed rubble stone masonry. The plaster remains in certain parts indicate that the interior and exterior façades are lime plastered. Rough-cut stone and large stone blocks are used in the wall joints, voussoirs of the arches and the walls carrying the arches. The southern wall of the naos section, the blind arches with horseshoe-shaped profiles and the piers are constructed in fine-cut stone. The southern wall is cladded with fine-cut stone, whereas close joints with plaster are used in its interior face. The arched window openings within the blind arches are also built of fine-cut stone. The fine-cut stone jambs of the architectural elements also have close joints.

The northern façade of the building is constructed in coursed rubble stone masonry. The wall of the eastern section, corresponding to the naos in the interior, was completely demolished up to a height of one meter. In the eastern corner of the northern façade, there is a semi-circular arched door opening constructed in fine-cut stone. The western part of the northern façade gradually descends starting from the end of the naos. There are not any openings in this part. Near

the western corner of the façade, there are the remains of a stone jamb of the courtyard door, which is perpendicular to the façade. The western façade of the building is two story high and is constructed with coursed rubble stones. There is a window at the upper level in the middle and on either side of this window there are two other windows at the lower level. These windows are rectangular and have rough-cut stone jambs.

The southern façade of the building is two story high and built with coursed rubble stone. In the middle of the façade, corresponding to the west of the naos section, there is a single story high iwan with a semicircular profile. Inside the iwan, there is a rectangular door opening placed in an arched opening. The opening has a cut-stone lintel and staggered cut-stone sides. The arch above the lintel is filled with fine-cut stone. A floral motif is engraved on the arch's key-stone. There are three rectangular windows on the east side of the southern façade. Staggered fine-cut stone is used for the sides, and the lower jamb and the lintel. The arches on the lintel are also filled with fine-cut stone. The faces of these arches are cladded with stone and cross motifs are engraved on

their keystones. The timber shutters of the windows have survived. These windows are reminiscent of the windows used in the residential architecture of Midyat district. The southern façade of the spaces to the west of the naos is constructed with coursed rubble stones and is lower than the naos section. In the eastern corner of this section, there is an iwan covered by a single-story vault with semi-circular profile. The vault is constructed with large stone blocks. Some of the voussoirs are engraved with cross motifs. The iwan has a small rectangular window opening. The mass to the west of the southern façade is constructed with coursed rubble stone and is lower than the mass in the middle. There is a rectangular door opening in the western corner of the façade, a square window to the east of this door opening and an embrasure window at a higher level, east of the square window. The western façade of the building is single story high, constructed with rubble stone masonry and is blind. Certain sections of the wall are repaired with cement mortar. Behind this mass is a small

rectangular window on the upper level and three stone steps adjacent to the façade rising north to south. These stone steps can be considered as the steps of the staircase providing access to the bell tower, which has not survived today. A small fragment of an inscription is found on the ground, but there is not any date or name on it.

Present State

There is a three-story reinforced concrete apartment and a single-story residential building in the south of the building's lot, whereas a three-story reinforced concrete apartment building is under construction just across the road to the west. The road construction works, started in the north of the building in 2018, caused great damage to the building. The stones fallen from the building during these studies were stacked inside the building. Since the original floor level is raised, the naos section of the church and the iwan-shaped space to the west can be reached by climbing. The building has no visitors except those who know it.





The door remains on the northern façade suggests that the building complex had a courtyard entrance from the north. The western part retains its original plan organization and spatial characteristics to a large extent. The vaulted iwan adjacent to the southern façade is filled with soil up to the springing line of the vault. Loss of jointing mortar and stone is observed in the infill of the vault as well as on the façades and roof of this section. Because of the dampness from the roof, loss of jointing mortar, vegetation, salt deposits and discoloration are observed in the interior walls.

The upper structure of the naos section is completely lost. The northern wall collapsed up to a height of one meter. Therefore, the building has lost its structural integrity. The remaining section of the north wall leans outside. The original floor of the naos is filled with soil and the building's own debris. Since the upper structure is lost, discoloration and loss are observed in the interior plasters, together with the loss of jointing mortar and stone units especially on the east wall up to the level of the vault's springing line. There are structural cracks on the eastern wall of the naos. In the upper elevations of the west of the naos, stone units are lost due to dampness from the roof. Discoloration and scaling are observed on the surfaces of the fine-cut stone in the southern wall of the building. Vegetation and loss of jointing

mortar are seen in the remains of the tem-
plon. Structural cracking is observed on the
entrance gate on the south side of the naos.
The vaulted iwan, adjacent to the southern
façade of the naos, is partially destroyed, and
its stone infill is lost. In the southern façade of
the naos, salt deposits, loss of jointing mortar
and plaster are observed due to rising damp.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building complex's original courtyard has lost its integrity because of the road works and new constructions around it. It is exposed to vandalism and natural decay. The building is neglected and does not have any protection measures. The upper structure of the building, especially of the naos section, is in very poor condition and has lost its structural integrity due to the collapse of its vault and the northern wall. There is a risk of rapid deterioration and the loss of remaining walls since its roof has collapsed. The building needs to be consolidated urgently and should be covered with a temporary roof until the preparation of a detailed conservation project.

After urgent protection measures are taken, a general cleaning work, archaeological survey and excavation should be carried out to unearth the foundations of the demolished masses and reveal the original dimensions of the courtyard, followed by the documentation of these unearthed remains. After the excavations, architectural survey, restitution, and restoration projects should be prepared and protection measures should be taken according to these projects.

An urban design project should be prepared to reduce the risk of vandalism and control the entrances, as well as to present the building in a holistic manner by considering the relationship of it with its environment. Information panels should be placed in the village center of Alayurt, entrance of the building and about the tombstones in the courtyard. The building can be evaluated together with the Mor Sobo church in the village center.

Church of Yoldath Aloho, Camili Church

Dr. Murat Demirli

Şırnak, İdil District, Dera (Topraklı) Village

Present Function: Barn

Registry Status: Registered - 27.10.2021/8800 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

There is no information available on the history of the building. Wiessner mentions the church as the church of Dera village and does not mention the dedication. He calls the village Dereköyü (Wiessner II/I, 68-75). The construction techniques of certain sections indicate that the church was built in the 6th-8th century.

Architecture

The church is in the center of the village and surrounded by various structures. It is located just in the west of the main road leading to the village and is at a slightly higher level than the road. A masonry second floor was later built on top of the ground floor walls

of the church. This floor is reached by stone staircases in the west and is currently used as a house. A mosque was later constructed in the west of the church, adjacent to its main mass. Therefore, the building is also known as the Camili Church (meaning a church with a mosque in Turkish).

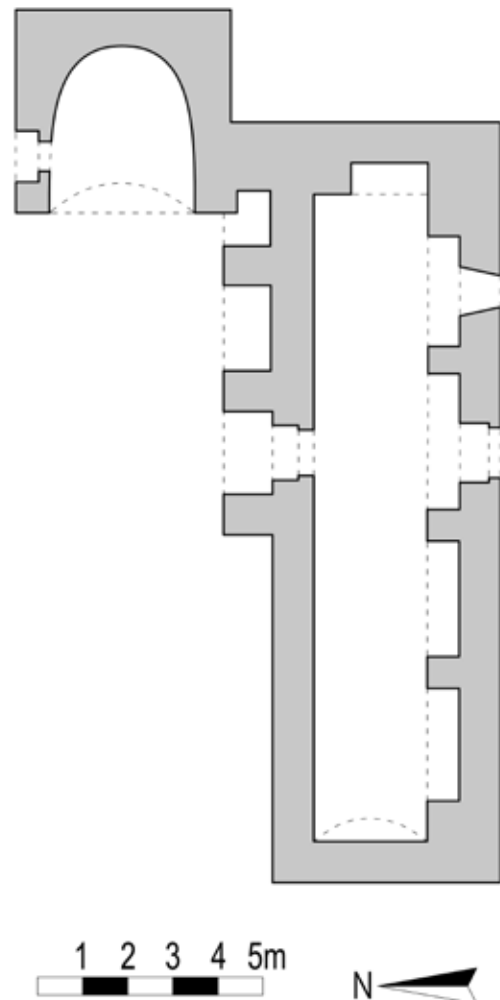
The church is a typical village church, extending on the east-west axis. Only the apse and the south wall of the single-nave naos are still standing. There are three piers and arches on their top, adjacent to the southern wall of the naos. These elements were once carrying the upper structure of the church, which is lost today. While the piers are





constructed with large cut stones, the arches are built with smaller rough-cut stones. In the south of the naos is the narthex, continuing along the naos. The narthex is covered with a barrel vault. The entrance from the narthex to the naos is through a door opening with a monolithic lintel. There is a rectangular protrusion on top of the lintel. This protrusion might be left for an inscription or an ornamentation, which was probably never completed.

A dry wall was built in front of the apse to obtain an enclosed space. This space is currently used as a barn. The circular wall of the apse, which is covered by a stone half-dome, was built with large cut stones. There is a profiled molding at the level of the impost line of the apse's half dome. A layer of plaster can be observed on certain sections of the apse wall. On top of this plaster, there are the traces of ornamentation with red paint. The pattern of this ornamentation, however, cannot be identified. While the southern wall of the apse has no opening, there is a door opening in the northern wall. The presence of this door opening may indicate the existence of a side chamber in the north of the apse.





In the west of the naos, there are wall remains at the ground level on the axis of the staircase leading to the upper floor. These traces, which are built with large stone blocks, should be the remains of the church's main wall in the west. The architectural characteristics of these wall remains can be identified after archaeological excavations are conducted at this section. The southern façade of the building, which is the entrance façade, is not perceivable since it is blocked with modern buildings. At present, there is a small entrance to the narthex.

Present State

Dera Village Church is in ruinous state since it is exposed to vandalism, uncontrolled and improper usage of villagers, and weathering conditions. Today, it is used as a barn by the villagers. The remaining sections of the church have severe material losses, vegetation, and algae, as well as interventions with cement-based mortar. The upper floor, which is a later addition, and the adjacent mosque have damaged the architectural integrity of the church. The presence of these buildings poses structural risks to the remaining parts of the church. The original ground level of the church has risen due to earth infill.



Risk Assessment and Recommendations

First of all, emergency measures should be taken to ensure that the surviving parts of the church are not damaged or lost. The building should be covered with a temporary shelter, the structural cracks should be repaired, and temporary structural supports should be placed where necessary. An information panel about the church should be placed, and publicity can help attract more visitors.

Church of Forty Martyrs

Dr. Banu Pekol / Theocharis Katrakazis

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, M'arre (Eskihisar) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 24.03.2011/3823** Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

According to Anschütz, M'arre village was a bishopric between 622-1037, and the religious administration of the village was soon annexed to Nusaybin (1984, 117). Sinclair states that M'arre prospered in the 12th century during the Artuqid period and entered a period of decline between the 13th and 16th centuries (1989, 346). Sinclair, who visited the Church of Forty Martyrs in 1978, states that the church's apse was covered by an eight-faceted dome. These facets were separated by drums and sat on a rectangular base. Unfortunately, there are not any traces of the upper structure today. The inscription

observed by Sinclair, documenting the church's restoration in 1569/70, has not been preserved (Sinclair, 1989, 346).

Architecture

The church lies among remains of a small, isolated medieval town which consists of stone houses and ancient cave dwellings. The town stands in an enclosed, basin-like space formed by a widening of the valley cut into the escarpment. Out of the north slope rises a rock crowned by a small, ruined fortress. The town's buildings, mostly ruined, stand on the rock shelves descending from

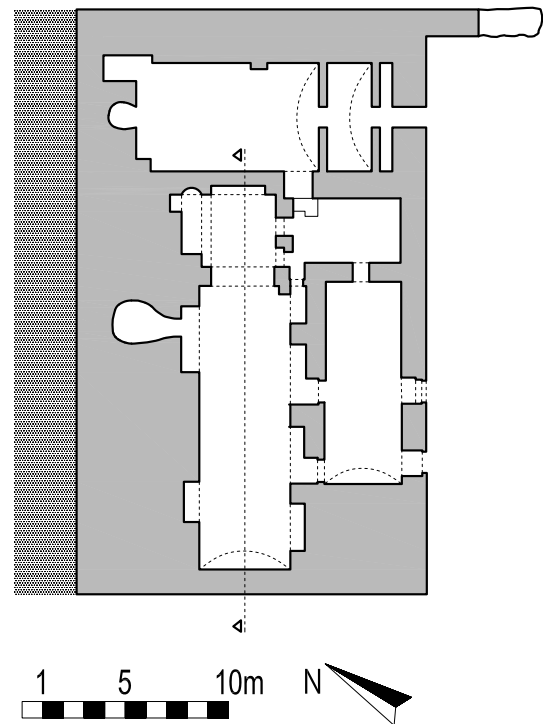


the fortress down to the flat floor of the basin. From the many Syriac inscriptions seen in the past on the buildings' plastered interiors, the town seems to have grown and started to flourish in the late 12th century.

The Church located at the foot of the hill, is a masonry structure built mainly of rough-cut stone; however, its arches and columns are of fine-cut stone. The complex is rectangular on an east-west axis, with its northern façade partly embedded into the slope of the hill. There are two entrances that open into the narthex which is parallel to and south of the nave. These entrances have arches with keystones above horizontal lintels. The narthex is plastered (with bread stamps as a decoration on some walls) and covered with a barrel vault. There is a single window on its east wall, providing insufficient illumination. The only entrance from the narthex to the nave is directly opposite the western main door of the narthex.

The south wall of the nave is spanned by arches, which rest on large, engaged piers. The engaged piers have plain, rectangular profiled abaci. The northern wall of the nave is blind, as it is built into the hill and there is another structure directly abutting the north façade. The northern wall also has arches, although they do not mirror the order of those to the south. However, piers which the arches rest on have the same, plain abaci. Only the abacus of the pier to the east of the entrance has a decorative, chevron-like carving. From the recesses between the arches to the east, one can access the irregular shaped, rock-carved cave. This cave was probably carved later.

The nave is covered with a barrel vault and the apsis with a dome. All inner walls and ceilings are plastered. The curvature of the arches is constructed using bricks, which is visible today because the plaster has partially fallen off. Although the original flooring material is lost, the remaining levels show that the apse was at a higher level than the nave. The apse lies to the east of the nave and is a roughly square space. Its east end extends further as a semi-circular projection. There is an arched niche in the wall, to the



north of this projection, and a smaller one to its south. The north wall of the apse has an arched recess with steps ascending to a space further north, which is walled-in today. There is a window on the arched partitioning wall between the apse and the nave.

There is a passage on the south wall of the apse, which leads into a square-shaped chamber. This chamber connects to the easternmost end of the narthex with a door on its west. There is another passageway to this chamber, which is on the southeastern corner of the nave that first opens into a small room with a low ceiling. Terracotta tiles are visible in the central axis of the vault of this small room. This room has another door to its east, which connects to the aforementioned, square chamber.



There is another, separate rectangular space positioned at the east of the nave and narthex, in a north-west direction. This rectangular space is a later addition to the church and exiting it from its south end, one finds the remains of another structure. It can be entered from a wide arched opening on the eastern corner of the west façade of the complex and is comprised of multiple spaces of which the first two to the west are sub-divided with arches. There is a passageway roughly at the center of the west wall of this space, which allows access into the square-shaped chamber to the south of the apse.

Present State

The Church is located at the foothills of the village. Like the majority of uncoursed random rubble masonry dwellings of the area, the church is abandoned and stands in moderate-to-poor condition. It appears to have undergone alterations on its original floor plan as indicated by the addition of a vaulted two-room rectangular space erected parallel to the nave and extending through the sanctuary. It is likely to have undergone maintenance sometime in the past,

as suggested by repair mortar patches on the vaulted ceiling of the room adjacent to the nave and the different pointing mortars used in the outer façades.

A large portion of the church envelope appears structurally in a stable state. The structure, however, suffers from partial roof collapse over the narthex and the sanctuary, permitting rainwater to enter and leaving it exposed to the elements. In addition, structures of religious function adjacent to the church (from the northwest) are partially collapsed, and evidently in precarious state as water infiltrates their soil-capped roofs.

The floor of the church is covered with accumulated debris, soil, rubble (possibly collapsed) and fragments of detached plaster from the walls and the ceiling. The church suffers from structural horizontal cracks running along the lower part of the vaulted ceiling of the nave and the centre of the vaulted ceiling at the room parallel to the nave. Additionally, vertical cracks developed in the inner side of the southwest corner of the church, and the corners of the east

facing wall of the adjacent room to the nave. The interior preserves partially its whitish mortar-like render (possibly containing lime) applied directly to the uncoursed rubble masonry, leaving the stone carved capitals of the piers. The rendered surfaces appear deteriorated with cracks. Water infiltration from the semi-collapsed roof alongside with the absence of direct sunlight has prompted biological colonization in the interior masonry surface. In contrast, colonization and development of lower plants on the exterior façades is minimal.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church complex is exposed to natural hazards, yet it is fair to say that its current condition is primarily a result of slow and cumulative decay and uncontrolled human activities. The interior exhibits the apparent signs of weathering, which has been naturally intensified by the partial collapse of its roof. Although, the church appears structurally stable, the neighboring structures are seemingly in greater risk of further collapse if no protection action is taken.

Being located in a long abandoned village and being easily accessible due to its close proximity to the road, the complex is exposed to manmade threats. The church exhibits signs of misuse, with its built extension (room parallel to the nave) to the south currently functioning as storage of bee-keeping equipment and several bee-hives. Signs of deliberate vandalism are not apparent, although incidents of uncontrolled access may have led to damage of the interior fabric.

Considering the amount of loose rubble available within the complex, the risk of intentional removal of building material for use in contemporary constructions should not be ignored. Extraction of rubble from structurally vulnerable areas of the partially collapsed structures, is likely to lead to further irreversible loss. In light of possible actions for the gradual recovery of the complex, a full scale survey and documentation deems necessary. Emergency stabilization should aim towards treating the structural cracks and the weakened vaulted roofs, with priority towards church's surrounding structures.



Church of Mor Sobo

Dr. Elmon Hançer

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, 'Arbaye (Alayurt) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 15.05.2003/3129 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Hollerweger says the church was from the 8th century (1999, 210). When Wiessner visited the site, the *beth slutho* (open-air apse) was still standing (1982, II/II, 10-21, figs. 11 and 12). The sculpture on the *beth slutho* was of typical 7th/8th century sculpture in the region. Similar sculpture also existed in the narthex (Wiessner, 1982, II//2, fig. 10) but have not survived today.

Architecture

The church is a parochial type church extending in an east-west direction. The apse has side rooms which may have been used as *pastophoria*. The narthex is situated to the south of the naos. A door opening on the

east wall of the narthex provides access to the space near the apse in the south-east, which is relatively larger. In the southern courtyard of the church, there are traces of a *beth slutho* adjacent to the building at the level of the space near the apse.

Large cut-stone blocks are used at the church's foundation level, wall corners, arched openings, piers, lintels, niches, and in certain parts of the exterior façade. Rough-cut stones are used in the exterior and interior wall coursing, which get smaller towards the upper levels. While limestone is the main building material, brick was also used in the apse's dome and the superstructure



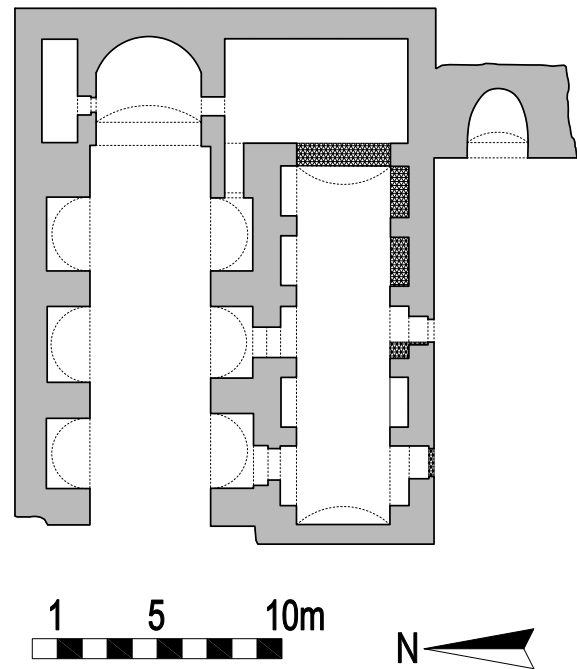
of the narthex. Plaster traces are seen on the north-eastern arch and the narthex's vault. There are rectangular door openings, connecting the naos to narthex, in the southern interior wall in-between the piers in the west and middle axis. These door openings are emphasized by curved relieving stones on their lintels. Horseshoe-shaped arches of the piers have profiled imposts at the level of the springing line.

In the narthex, there are symmetrically arranged piers, relatively smaller than the ones in the naos, carrying a series of five arches on both sides. The arches in the narthex, covered by a barrel vault lower than the church's naos, are closer to horseshoe shape, and again sit on profiled imposts. There are traces of plaster on the north-eastern infill wall of the narthex and the vault. There are interlocking brick bonds in certain parts of the vault.

The extension of the inner piers as vertical lines of cut-stone blocks in the northern exterior wall is an important feature, distinguishing the building from other structures. This feature also contributes to the discussion of whether the piers in Tur 'Abdin churches are added later. The details in this church may indicate that cut-stone piers and wall infill in-between them are dating to the same period. One of the door openings, which is not aligned in relation to arches, again raises the question of whether these piers are added later. The convex wall of the apse wall is framed by a linear wall on the eastern side. In the southern exterior wall, there is the entrance door providing access from the church's courtyard to the narthex with a wide cut-stone lintel and a small arched niche on its top.

Present State

The church is located in the western part of the village. It is surrounded by village houses in the east, west and south, and fields with a water tower in the north. The church rises on a small hill within a fenced courtyard wall. Despite its ruinous state, the plan organization and spatial features of the church are apparent to a large extent. The main interior and exterior walls framing the main space of the church from the north



and south have survived up to the level of the pier's moldings and the springing line of the vaults in certain parts, albeit with deterioration. The exterior and interior main walls opening to the west façade of the naos were completely destroyed.

The wall on the arch of the apse, in the east of the interior space, is partially standing albeit with damages. The side space connected to the apse from the north is in ruinous condition. The exterior wall framing the apse has collapsed. The side space in the south is relatively in better condition, whereas the most substantial damage is the large void on its wall connecting to the apse, which is also visible from the exterior. The possible barrel vault and pitched roof covering the church, have entirely been lost. Due to the



collapse of the upper structure, the flooring of the interior spaces is covered with debris and soil. Since ground level is raised especially in the narthex, door openings in the apse and the entrance doors of the narthex became shorter. The vault covering the narthex is still standing. However, there are collapses at the junction of the side space in the east and the west, causing a large void in the western façade. Only a few stone rows have remained from the *beth slutho*, which was documented by Wiessner. There are voids in the walls especially in the main space and the narthex, material losses on the upper levels of the walls and wall surfaces, surface weathering, excessive vegetation in the entire church. While the floor of the main space has excessive grass growth, there are structural cracks on the apse's dome and the vault of the narthex.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church has lost its original features due to negligence, weathering conditions and destruction caused by treasure hunters. The church has been protected by a courtyard wall, wire fences, and a door lock in recent years. It does not have any information panels. Although the church is not difficult to access, it does not attract any visitors other than those who already know it.

While the building has relatively sound ground, the interior of the naos and the



southern façade of the narthex are filled with soil and debris. The floor level is raised about 1.5 – 2 meters in certain areas, and the southern part of the building is partially buried. The building is structurally in poor condition and is not resistant to earthquake loads. It is completely exposed to wind and rain.

In the narthex of the church, there are traces on the piers and arches above, indicating first and second building phases as well as the wall coursing in certain parts suggesting a third building phase. Archaeological excavations are essential to accurately date the church. The priority should be given to consolidate the remaining architectural features in their present state. Together with the Church of Mor Gewargis, it can be a part of a cultural route.

Church of Mort Shmuni

Dr. Zekai Erdal

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, Asit (Altıyol) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.11.2021/6715 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Wiessner identified the building as Aşit village church (1993, IV/I, 1-9; IV/II, 26-35, figs. 1-10). We could not find any further information on the history of the building.

Architecture

The remains of the main walls of various buildings can be seen in the surroundings of the church. The church extends in an east-west direction and has a rectangular form. While the north and south main walls are intact up to the springing line of the vaults, the east and west main walls have collapsed to their half height. The naos is entered from the middle of the south façade through a door opening with a flat lintel. A reliev-

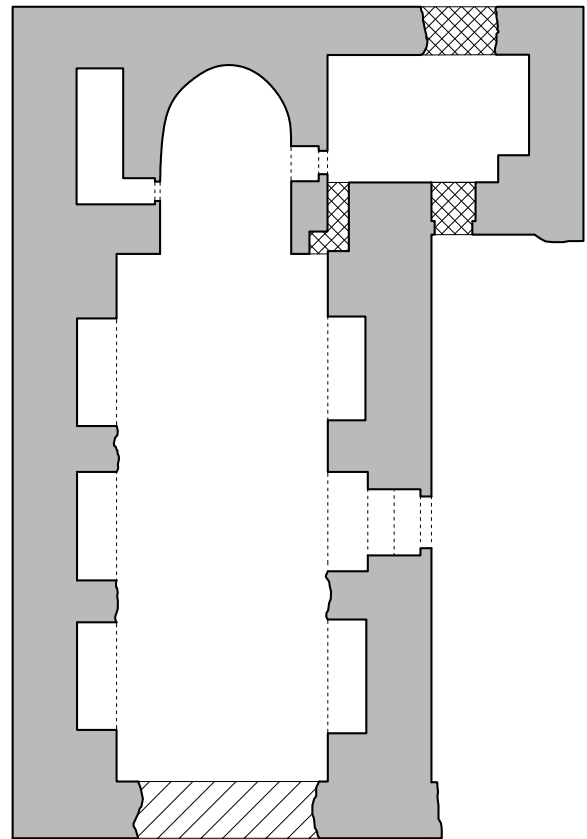
ing arch with depressed profile is observed above the lintel. The keystone of the arch is accentuated by projecting outwards. The surfaces of the door jambs, made of monolithic stone blocks, are profiled. The naos is rectangular in shape, and there are three piers and arches in both the northern and southern walls. It is noteworthy that the arches in the north have semi-circular profiles, whereas those in the south have pointed profiles. The entrance door is within a niche in the middle of the south wall.

The upper structure of naos is lost. However, the inclined vault remains on the main walls reveal that the naos was covered by a





barrel vault in an east-west direction. The apse is semi-circular from the interior, and rectangular from the exterior, and it does not protrude from the façade. There is an arched opening in the north wall of the apse. The remains of walls and spaces suggest the existence of a narthex in the south of the building. The entrance is through a door opening with a flat lintel in this space. There is a rectangular niche in the northeastern wall of this space, and a door opening with a flat lintel on the north of the west wall. The inclined vault remains indicate that this room was covered by a barrel vault in north-south direction.



1 2 3 4 5m



Large rough-cut stones are used in the lower parts of the church's main walls, whereas small rough-cut stones are used in the higher parts. Fine-cut stones are used in the piers and arches of the naos, and the wall remains separating the apse from the naos. Smaller rough-cut and rubble stones are used in the apse, giving the impression that it was completely demolished and then rebuilt. The main walls are built in double-faced technique, with cut-stone faces and rubble infill.

Present State

The church, situated in a rocky and rugged ground, is located around 3.5 kilometers northwest of Altiyol village. All the main walls of the building are partially standing, whereas the upper halves of the eastern and western walls are demolished. The whole upper structure has collapsed. The church is completely exposed to natural factors. When the existing remains are considered, the building's plan organization can be comprehensible.



The wall remains in the south of the church and the presence of a space in its southeast, suggest that there was a narthex in the south and a side chamber of the apse in the eastern end of the narthex. Around the church, there are various building remains constructed with dry wall masonry along with the double-faced walls with high quality.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church is far away from the settlement, encouraging illegal excavations and destruction. The loss of stone blocks from the walls and piers will result with the rapid collapse of the walls and arches. The openings such as windows, doors, and voids formed by the loss of stones require urgent intervention. The plants in the joints result with serious cracks in the walls. Therefore, the plants should be cleaned urgently. An excavation around the church would reveal the function of the buildings around it.

Church of Mor Shem'un

Dr. Zekai Erdal

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Baksıyan/ Beth Kustan (Alagöz) Village**

Present Function: **Used on the saint's day.**

Registry Status: **Registered - 19.10.2001/2697 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Although the building is called 'Dayrunitho', meaning little monastery by the villagers, (Akyüz, 2007, 40), the present building can be considered as a chapel marking a sacred space rather than a monastery.

Architecture

The chapel is located at the foot of a rocky slope, 1 kilometer east of the village of Beth Kustan. A pathway through the fields leads to the chapel. While there are not any remains of structures around the building, there are platforms formed by flattening the surrounding rocks. The chapel has a rectangular plan extending in an east-west direction. The apse

is rectangular in form and flat from the exterior. The façades of the building are plain without any decoration.

The naos is entered through a low door opening with a flat lintel in the middle of the southern façade. The rectangular naos is quite plain and the only articulation in the interior is the door opening and the rectangular niche in its east. The inclined vault traces on the main walls indicate that the naos was once covered by a barrel vault.

The apse is accessed through a door opening with a flat lintel in the east of naos. The apse





has a rectangular shape and there is an altar in the form of a rectangular niche in its east wall. A rectangular window, just above the altar, illuminates the interior. Although the upper structure of the apse is in ruins, the remaining wall coursing indicates that it was once covered by a vault.

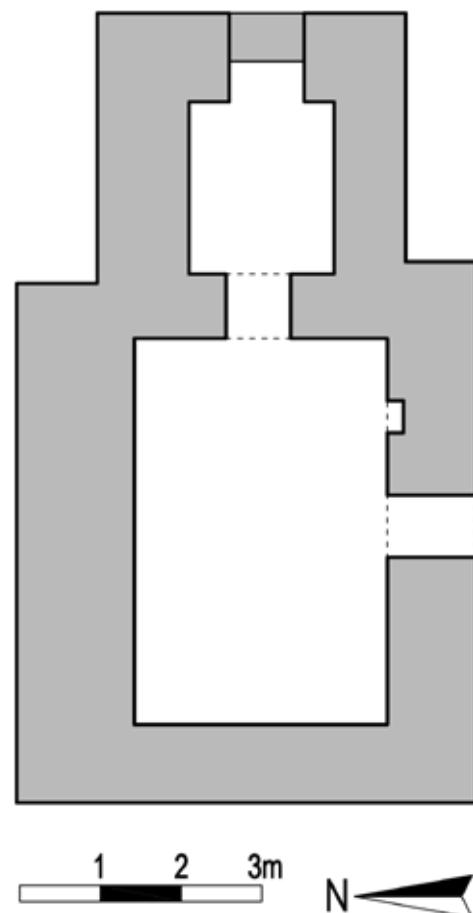
The main walls of the chapel are built in dry wall technique without any mortar. While irregular courses of large rough-cut stone blocks are used at the lower levels of the main walls, small rough-cut and rubble stones are used in the upper levels.

Present State

A large section of the chapel has survived to-day since the rock that the building sits on and the main walls are steady. It is used by the villagers on the saint's day. The chapel, which stands quite intact albeit its upper structure, has not suffered vandalism since the nearby village is a Syriac settlement. There are not any information panels about the building.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building does not pose a serious structural risk because of its solid walls and the rocky and flat surface it sits on. It only lost its upper structure, causing probable damage to



the interior of the chapel especially in rainy weather. The building can be part of a walking trail with the nearby Syriac village.



Monastery of Mor Barsaumo

Dr. Zekai Erdal

📍 **Batman, Gercüş District, Kafro 'Eloyto (Arıca) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 09.06.2009/2282 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Barsaumo is known as the chief mourner (Palmer, 2010, 214) and there are numerous rock-cut monasteries dedicated to him. We could not find any further information on this monastery.

Architecture

Located on the western slope of the rocky terrain, the rock-cut monastery has two levels. It is composed of a series of spaces in a north-south direction. It is quite modest, designed for an ascetic life. The entrance in the northwest leads to the first space on the ground floor. This space has an amorphous

plan, and its west section is constructed in rubble stone. There is a semi-circular niche on its eastern side. On both sides of this niche there are platforms, elevated from the ground level. A corridor with an irregular form connects this space to an opening leading to the upper floor. The stairs leading to the upper floor are carved into the bedrock, which are amorphous. The upper floor has an irregular form, displaying an ad-hoc design, governed by the existing bedrock.

The entrance in the northwest of the upper floor leads to a corridor. This corridor is





connected to the spaces in the north of the entrance. The rectangular space with concave corners in the north of the entrance is reached by an L-shaped corridor. There are arches of different sizes with semi-circular profiles on the north, east and west sides of this space. To the north of the niche in the west is a window opening within a niche illuminating the interior.

The thick monolithic pillar in front of the entrance separates the spaces, whereas the corridors surrounding this pillar connect the spaces. There are two niches in the east of the entrance. The niche in the north has a semi-circular profile and there is an L-shaped elevated platform in its front. The southern niche is arched with a depressed profile and has an elevated altar carved from the bedrock inside it.

The corridor, leaning south from the entrance, leads to a larger space. In the east of this space is an apse with a high altar. The apse is semi-circular in plan, and has an arch with semi-circular profile. There are smaller niches with lintels and semi-circular arches on both sides of the apse. The rocks in the west of this space are ruptured and fallen in

certain parts. In the southeast corner, there is a thin and small drain carved into the rock on the upper parts of the space. This drain, which is connected to the cistern in its front, provides the collection of rain and snow water in the cistern.

From the south of the large space in the middle, a partially deformed door opening leads to a rectangular room with concave corners. There is a high elevated platform and a window opening with a flat lintel in the east of the room. On the northwest corner of this room is an L-shaped elevated platform which is relatively lower. There are six window openings with different sizes and heights in the west and a series of niches, with different sizes, one on top of another in the south as well as a door opening with a flat lintel providing access to the space in the south. This space in the very south has an almost oval plan and small in size.

The monastery was formed by carving the rock, which descends straight down on the western façade. The number of floors, and the number and size of the spaces display an ad-hoc design, governed by the existing bedrock. The cisterns carved into the ground are

immediately in front of the western façade. These cisterns are connected through thin drains opening to the façade surface.

The only façade articulation in the building is the circular and rectangular frames with different lengths and depths in the lower parts of the western façade, which is the building's main façade. There are damaged cross motifs and Syriac inscriptions within these frames. In one of the frames, a passage from Psalm 44:5 is inscribed. This is commonly found in the altars in Tur 'Abdin (Keser-Kayaalp, 2017, 273). There are further spaces to the north and south of the monastery which vary in size.

Present State

The monastery is located in the northwest of Arica village, along the main road. The building is easily accessible due to its location on the main road. There is a monastery and a village in its immediate vicinity. The ground floor is used as a depot by the villagers. The graffiti on its walls indicates that it is exposed to vandalism, as well as natural destruction. The building retains its original plan organization and spatial characteristics to a large extent. Cracks and vegetation are observed in the rocks. There are no signage or information panels related to the building.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Considering the existing remains, the building retains its original state to a large extent. Vandalism is the biggest threat to the monastery. The inscriptions and cross motifs have been erased. Apart from these, there are many contemporary graffiti both in the exterior and interior of the building.

The existing voids indicate that the rocks in the west of the monastery have ruptured and fallen in certain sections due to natural conditions. After emergency protection measures are taken, general cleaning works should be carried out. A landscape project should be prepared in order to reduce the



risk of vandalism and control the entrances, which will also provide a better presentation of the building by considering its nearby environment. The building can be a part of a walking trail together with Arica Village and the nearby Mor Aho Monastery.

Monastery of Mor Shem'un/ Der Bazizke

Dr. Banu Pekol / Theocharis Katrakazis

📍 Şırnak, İdil District, Rowen (Karalar) Village

Present function: Abandoned

Registry Status: Registered - 27.10.2021/8801 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

Mor Gabriel monastery, one of the most important and oldest monasteries of Tur'Abdin, is thought to have been founded by Mor Shmuel and his disciple Mor Shem'un. There are three other monasteries dedicated to Mor Shem'un in the south, east and west of this monastery (Palmer, 2010, 216). Located in the south west of 'Arobon, the monastery in question is one of the monasteries dedicated to Mor Shem'un. Since the church, which is partially standing, has a typical village church plan, Bell interprets this church as the chapel of the monastery (Bell-Mango, 1982, 141). Defining the building as "Der Baskis", Wiessner gives

a detailed description of the church of the complex (1982, II, 154-160). Gertrude Bell states that Der Bazizke is in the village of Ba Sebrina, but it has to be stated that it is closer to 'Arobon (Bell-Mango, 1982, 141).

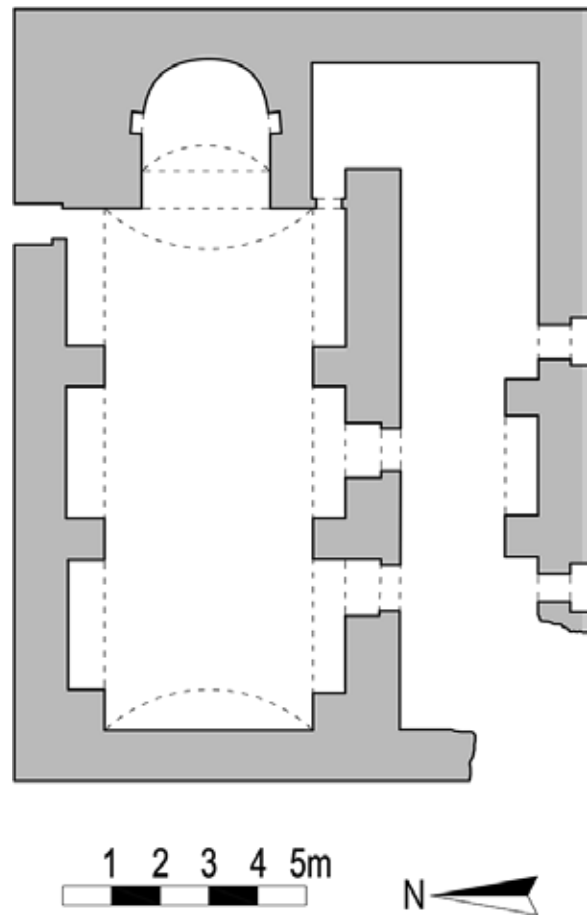
Architecture

The church is within a monastery complex situated about 2 kilometers east of the village of Rowen (Karalar). There are many ruins in the area, especially to the west and the south of the complex, which may indicate that the monastery was possibly part of a settlement. The roughly square-shaped complex is surrounded by thick, fort-like walls. It



is built mainly of rough-cut stone; however, the arches and columns of the church are of fine-cut stone. There are many quadrangular units within this complex, which usually share walls. Most units use the main outer wall of the monastery as one of their walls. Although the roofs of most of the buildings have collapsed, the remaining ceilings are all vaulted. All of the collapsed vaulting and walls have fallen onto the ground below and have been further covered with soil and vegetation, preventing any study of the interior. From the remains and the levels, it can be inferred that there was a central courtyard in the complex. The only space that can be partially understood is the main church, which is rectangular on an east-west axis. There are also traces of a narthex to the south of the nave. This plan replicates typical parish type churches and is not common in monasteries of Tur 'Abdin.

The two entrances to the church are on the south of the nave and correspond to the wall between the western and central arcades on this wall. These entrances have a horizontal lintel with an arch above it. The north





and south walls consist of three blind arches which abuts the outer walls. The round arches rest on engaged piers with plain, rectangular abaci. There is a rectangular window opening under each arch of the south wall. These openings narrow towards the outside. There are no openings on the remaining sections of the other walls. A niche is visible on the southern corner of the east wall of the nave which is filled with rubble today and so cannot be studied sufficiently. A circular block can be seen reused within the spandrel, above the easternmost pier on the south wall. Traces of plaster on the walls indicate the presence of plastering on nearly all interior walls.

A barrel vault covers only the rectangular nave and does not continue over the apse. The vault is made of vertically placed rubble stones. Slots for beams are visible just above the springer of the vault, which could either be a feature in the original construction or gaps left from dismantled scaffolding. The nave terminates in a semicircular apse at the east, which rises only as high as the springer of the vault of the nave. The arch which opens up to the apse is more pointed than those on the north and south walls. The apse has two niches within, although



the irregular shape of the western niche suggests that it may have been done by looters.

Present State

The monastery complex, located in close proximity to the village is in ruinous condition. The church of the complex preserves only a very small portion of its vault at the center of the nave. The flat-rubble-stone vault, today appears weakened from loss of binding material and is likely to further collapse in the future if no protective measure is taken. Similarly, only a small part of the semi-circular arch of the south aisle remains standing. Despite its condition and the fact that the original floor elevation is filled with a significant amount of earth and collapsed building material, the plan of the church is sufficiently legible.



The uncoursed random rubble masonry exhibits material loss due to weathering processes and has mostly lost its plaster rendering. Parts of the rendering are evident in the interior of the church at the north east corner and while other attached remains cover parts of the upper ashlar built elements (voussoirs) of the south and north arcades. The complex appears free of decorative elements incorporated in the masonry.

Beyond the loss to the initial surface, rubble masonry suffers from biological colonization causing microbial growth and staining. In addition, local failure of mortar joints at external façades facilitates the colonization and development of lower plants imposing physical forces through their rooting systems.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The monument is openly exposed to natural hazards, and manmade criminal activities. The collapse of the church vault has added to its vulnerabilities accelerating the degradation mechanisms in the interior.



The standing portions of the vaults, as the most susceptible components of this complex, are in need of structural stabilization and consolidation to prevent from complete collapse. Besides this, measures against the uncontrolled illicit human activity including blocking of the entry points should be considered high priority, as removal of building material for use in modern construction could further weaken the stability of the monument.

Monastery of Shumrin

Dr. Stuart Blaylock

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 21.10.2020/5747- 26.01.2021/6001 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Samuel of Eshtin and his disciple Simeon are known to have founded the famous monastery of Mor Gabriel in 397. Samuel had a younger brother called Shomir. Two of them built a monastery three miles away from their village. Later, Samuel left and found a deserted mountain-top called Amrin somewhere to the north-east of Nisibis. Seven years later, the number of monks had risen to thirty and thus Samuel was ordained priest by Karpos, bishop of Sawro (today Savur). Karpos was killed by the Persians during a raid and the monastery of Samuel was burned down. Samuel retrieved his master's body and rebuilt the monastery. Then he took a relic of Karpos and left the monastery (after 350). He left the Persian territory and came to Qartmin (today Yayvantepe) (Palmer, 1990, 21) where he built the monastery

known as Mor Gabriel today. The name Shumrin may be related to Amrin or Umrin, referring to men from this settlement on the mountain. Or it may be related to Samuel's brother, who as we mentioned was called Shomir.

In some parts of the church, there are large ashlar blocks, typical of the late antique structures of the region. However, it is difficult say if they are as early as the 4th century, when Samuel lived. The church is an unusually large hall-type church. It is surrounded with remains which point to a large and even fortified settlement. This in fact may fit with the life of the saint which mentions a deserted place, once occupied. Hall-type churches were used in the monasteries on the other side of the border in the Persian

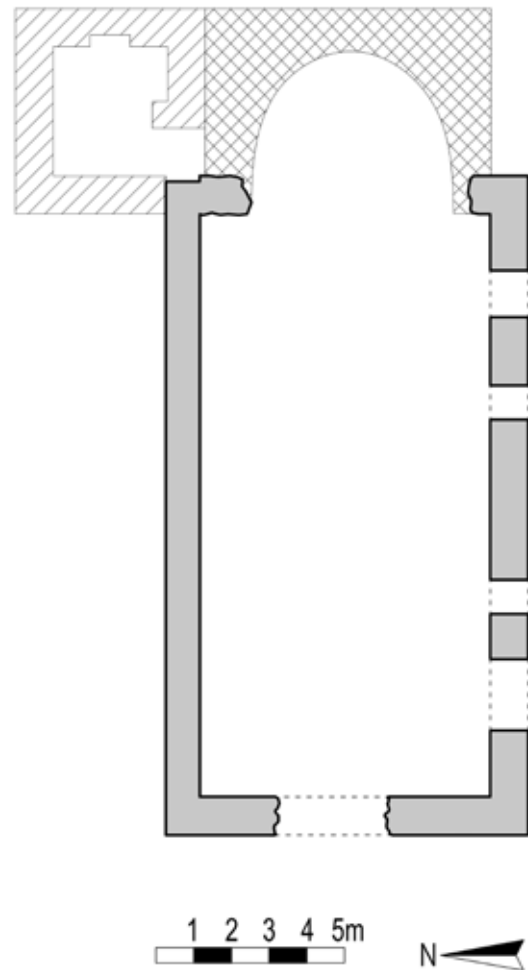




lands, so the plan of the church is not at odds with the monastic function. However, the extent of the remains around the church points to a settlement rather than a monastery.

Architecture

The building known as Dayro d-Shumrin is within a large complex of buildings located on the edge of one of the highest points of the escarpment of Mount Izlo, about 12.5 kilometers northeast of Nusaybin, and looking out over the Syrian plain. The settlement includes the ruins of many buildings, streets, and courtyards, within a sub-square enclosure of perimeter walls on the east, north and north-west sides measuring approximately 250 x 200 meters. The remaining sides are protected by the edge of the escarpment. There are well-preserved sections of perimeter wall standing nine courses high on the east side of the circuit and twelve-plus courses (up to c.3 meters) on the north side. Several streets are clear. Some houses survive to first floor level; and there are numerous cisterns and rock-cut features indicating a well-developed water-management system. A distinctive aspect of the site is the numerous rectangular plots enclosed by low walls. These are probably animal pens rather



than gardens, and are probably of a fairly recent date. The drone was prevented from flying, as the site is in a no-fly zone because of proximity to the border. Air photographs would have been so useful; this absence is partly compensated for by good Google Earth imagery, especially one under snow in December 2013, although these cannot provide details of individual buildings.

The church is close to the centre of the settlement. The plan of the church is comprised of a rectangular nave with its long axis west-east and semi-circular apse within a square end. The apse was narrower than the nave. A side chapel was accessed from the north-east corner of the church; its west wall abuts the north-east quoin of the nave, although it is largely a separate structure. Entrance to the church is towards the west end of the south wall. There are two windows in the south wall and a niche or another doorway low down towards the east end of the south wall.

The church is constructed of large, semi-squared blocks throughout, with larger ashlar blocks used (or re-used) for some features like quoin stones and doorways. The interior is plain, with little trace of plastering; plain (i.e. projecting, but unmolded) cornice. Some large and well-squared ashlar blocks, concentrated towards the south-west corner of the nave, may be *in situ* from an earlier building or may also be re-used.

The ground levels around the church have built up through the accumulation of collapsed masonry. Most fabric can be seen in the south wall, where there are two-to-four courses of footings at the base of the wall, below the threshold level of the south doorway; then nine courses up to the arch of the doorway, generally in larger blocks with a shallow offset at the top of this stage; the upper build is of eleven courses of generally smaller blocks though still employing significantly larger blocks at the quoins. There is a difference in the color of the stone, paler or greyer below, yellower above, probably because the lower half had been buried until recently. The north elevation shows the same sequence, although no footings are exposed and only one or two courses of the

lower part are visible above ground level. More, up to four courses, of the lower part are visible at the northwest corner and ten courses survive above the offset.

Little is now visible of the exterior of the apse. It can be seen that the east wall was aligned with the east wall of the side chapel. Also the south-east corner of the nave forms a clear quoin, inside and out, which means that the building narrowed at this point. The earliest visible fabric is the large ashlar blockwork at the south-west corner, west of the doorway. This is typical of the masonry of the early Tur 'Abdin churches, and so it is possible that this is a fragment surviving from a Late-Antique building. Everything else, with the possible exception of the blocks of the inner quoins of the apse arch, which are similarly large blocks, although now largely obscured by collapsed masonry, is rebuilt in less well-squared and smaller blockwork. This forms the majority of the exterior masonry, and represents the main build of the church, including the west elevation and the segmental arches over features in the nave. Elsewhere there are also further patches of still-later rebuilding, notably to the east of the south doorway.





The cornice is a prominent surviving feature in the interior. Above the cornice the springing of the rubble barrel vault survives; three courses on the north and one on the south. There are two windows high in the south elevation with different sill heights. Small areas of rendering survive below the cornice on the south wall, above the door; otherwise the interior fabric has lost any surface rendering or finishes it once possessed. The illegal excavation within the south door shows that the present internal ground level is at least 1.5 meters above the original floor level.

The earlier set of photographs (taken by Eliyo Eliyo in 2012) shows that the fabric of the apse resembled the main body of the church in its masonry style, and so is likely to have been contemporary with it. Both north and south walls show a clear scar for the returns of an east wall forming quoins to either side of the apse. The side chapel has two arched-headed niches in its south wall. The western one forms a doorway from the church. There is another niche in its east wall. The rubble masonry is of noticeably smaller blocks than the main building of the church and this, along with the structural relationships, suggest that it is a later addition. The circular domed building to the north of the church and detached from it is another notable associated structure.

Present State

Between an earlier visit by Eliyo Eliyo (in Summer 2012) and our visit in April 2019



significant changes took place at the site. Most notable was that the initial photographs show fabric of the apse standing *in situ*, which had collapsed by the time of our visit, along with standing fabric of the east wall. Secondly the south doorway of the church was blocked up, but had been unblocked, and a section of the fill of the church inside had been excavated away in order to create access within. These events, along with other factors such as the large hole in the west wall, show that the fabric is vulnerable to collapse, although the side walls of the church look in reasonably stable condition at present.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Illegal excavation and plundering clearly form a major threat to this site. It is particularly shocking to see how much further damage has been sustained in recent years. The two-fold risks of structural instability and exposure to the weather clearly also represent severe threats to this building.

Monastery of Mor Doniyel/ Der Matina

Suna Kabasakal Coutignies

📍 **Mardin, Mazıdağı District, Tilbisim, Gümüşyuva Village**

Current function: **Haymow and barn**

Registry Status: **Registered - 26.10.2017/2937 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

According to Andrew Palmer, in the life story of Doniyel, it is stated that the monastery of this saint was described as being between Beth Ma'de and Qelleth, but much closer to the former, near a fortress built on top of the mountain of Ghlosh, in the north of Rişayno. He also adds that this description corresponds to Barsoum's description of Mor Doniyel Monastery as being located on the Matiniyya Mountain, the northwest of the village of Dairkah (Palmer, 1990, 74, footnote: 10). Located in the Gümüşyuva neighbourhood, the monastery was dedicated to a saint named Doniyel of Ghlosh. Ghlosh is the name of the mountain where the monastery is located. Barsoum states that this monastery was rebuilt by the bishop of Mardin, Yuhannon and was active until 1230 (2000, 187). The tower, next to the church, probably used for

recluse, may have been built in the time of Yuhannon. Such towers are also found in other monasteries in Tur'Abdin. These towers, usually dominating the surrounding topography, might also have served as watch towers (Keser-Kayaalp, 2008, 143).

When Doniyel became old, his son and student Lazarus (Lo'ozor), wanted to build a church for his father and a burial chamber to deposit his bones, so that people could benefit from his holiness. Lazarus did not realize this through the support of church, but rather he travelled with friends to various parts of the Mediterranean and collected money and gold. He spent a portion of this money on making a cross (probably to deposit the bones), and built a large and robust church with the rest (Palmer, 1990, 47).





According to his *vita*, Doniyel died in 439. The decorations on the apse of the monastery bear great resemblance to the main church of Dayr al-Za‘faran, dated to the 6th century (Mundell 1981). The church built by Doniyel, therefore, might have been expanded and adorned with architectural ornamentation in the 6th century after his death.

Architecture

Two spaces of the monastery draw attention. One of these spaces is the church, and the other is the tower in its southeast. Alternating rows of limestone and basalt rubble stone masonry were used in these buildings. There are large limestone blocks used as spolia on the north wall of the church and on the walls of spaces in the south.

Today, the entrance to the church is from a ruinous door on the north wall of the building, where one encounters the apse. There are ornamentations dating to the 6th century along the whole length of the apse’s arch. This arch sits on a column capital, ornamented on its north side. Except this arch and the column capital, the remaining parts of the church were built later. In the western wall of this space, there is a window in the middle and two niches on both sides. Plaster and mortar fragments are observed on the interior façade of the walls.



The large apse of the church resembles village churches extending in an east-west direction in Tur ‘Abdin. Most of these churches have ornamentations on the apse archivolt dated to the 7th or 8th century, which seems to be the continuation of the classical tradition in the 6th century but differ from them because they are more abstract (Keser-Kayaalp, 2018, 201). Mor Sobo Church in Hah, which is considered as the prototype of this church typology, is an example of longitudinal churches with decorations showing the characteristics of the 6th century (Bell- Mango, 1982, 17-19). Since the only remaining element from Mor Doniel Church is its apse archivolt and it was a monastery church, it is essential to compare this church with the main church of Dayr al-Za‘faran Monastery. Unlike the other churches in Tur ‘Abdin, the main church of this monastery has a wide and high apse archivolt and the ornamentations on its



archivolt are similar with the ones in Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery (for the ornamentations of Dayr al-Za'faran, see: Mundell 1981).

There is a space with a collapsed vault to the south of the church. The wall extending from this space defines a courtyard. The floor of this courtyard was filled with the ruins of the building. There are openings in the west, north, and east walls surrounding the courtyard. While the upper levels of these openings can be observed, their lower levels are filled. There are the traces of a vaulted space on the western wall of the courtyard. Only the upper levels of this vaulted space can be observed. There is an opening with a wide limestone lintel in the north wall of the courtyard. Only the upper sections of this opening can be observed. On top of this lintel, there is a circular motif, which is barely visible today. The eastern part of the building, where the tower is located, is completely in ruins. The interior of the tower can be observed through a window at this level. The tower has two floors and is composed of a domed single space on both floors. There is a window opening on the upper level.

Present State

The entrance to the church's apse and the neighboring vaulted space is through openings that were obtained by the demolishment of walls. The upper levels of the walls have collapsed. Rainwater penetrates the building through these areas. The original stones of the monastery's church were used as spolia in various parts of the area, which is now transformed into a building complex.



The collapsed parts were filled with rubble stones. The church section is currently used as a barn to store hay. In order to see the 6th century decorations, one should climb on the straw bales. There are pits opened by treasure hunters on the lower levels of the tower. The upper structure is partially collapsed. The plan organization of the building is barely identifiable. There are no information panels.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building, located in the village, is used as a barn and for the storage of hay. Its plan organization cannot be identified completely due to demolishment and collapses in time. The entire structure is neglected and poorly maintained. Apart from vandalism, the building has structural problems, material losses and moisture problems. The improper use of the building, its exposure to human and environmental depredation and its severe structural problems will cause further damage to the building in the future.

The building is significant since it is comprised of a rare well-preserved monastery tower and decorations from an early period. After putting an end to its current function, a general cleaning work, a detailed architectural survey and documentation, and restitution study should be conducted together with a research excavation. A research should be conducted in the village in order to identify a potential proper function for the building to ensure its maintenance. Cleaning works and a holistic design should be conducted in the vicinity of the building for its publicity.

Monastery of Mor Afrem

Seher İvrendi

📍 **Mardin, Artuklu District, Diyarbakır Kapı Neighborhood**

Present Function: The church is abandoned, other rooms of the monastery are used as houses

**Registry Status: Registered - 21.09.1979/A-1933 (31.06.2011/3944) (10.07.2017/4881)
Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

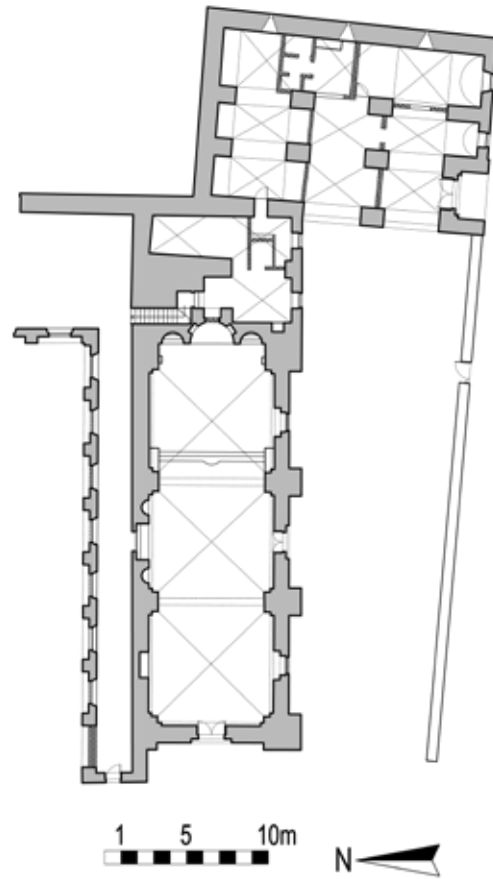
At the end of the 18th century, some of the Syriac communities in Mardin converted to Catholicism (Özcoşar, 2009, 126) and began to build their own churches and monasteries. These buildings bear the traces of the local architecture of the period as in the case of Mor Afrem Monastery. The inscriptions in the Mor Afrem Monastery give information about when and by whom the building was constructed. The inscription on its exterior wall reads: "This monastery, dedicated to honorable Mor Afrem who was the

church teacher of the Syriacs, was constructed on the days of the happy Mor İgnatyus Gevarghis Şelhet, the Patriarch of Antioch. They began to live among the monks on 8 December 1884 and on the day of the Annunciation to the Virgin St. Mary/ Suboro Feast". The Arabic section of the same inscription comes from the Book of Psalms "How blessed are those who dwell in your house and they shall praise you! Psalm 83: 5." There is an inscription on the west gate of the large church in the south of the monastery, both



in Arabic and Syriac. The Arabic inscription comes from the Book of Psalms, “This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it! Psalm 131:14” (Translations by Mihayel Akyüz). Akyüz notes that the reference number of the Psalms recorded at the end of the inscriptions does not coincide with the verses. The Syriac inscription reads: “In 1884 CE, this monastery and church were consecrated by the esteemed Metropolitan Mor Yakup Matay Ahmardakno” (Akyüz, 1998, 90).

The use of Arabic and Syriac together in the 19th and 20th century inscriptions is common in both Catholic and Orthodox Christians. In the monastery, there are three other Arabic inscriptions, one of which is a gravestone. These inscriptions are framed by remarkable decorations. These decorations include classical motifs such as dentils, grape leaves and grape bunches. The church was functioning until 1933 and later, it was used as a military hospital for 12 years (Akyüz, 1998, 90). The church’s dedication to Afrem, a very important poet for the Syrians, who



lived in the 4th century, can be regarded as a reference to the deep and ancient past of the Syriac culture. Afrem’s poems were published in Turkish in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture of Turkey. Gabriel Akyüz who translated the poems also included the life of Mor Afrem in this book (Akyüz, 2012, 20).

Architecture

The monastery is located in a large plot with a square plan. The entrance is from a monumental door in the south. From this entrance door, one reaches a courtyard surrounded by a portico supported by large piers and through this courtyard one reaches the church’s courtyard. The building group consists of a basement, a ground floor and an upper floor. The building was constructed with limestone masonry, matching the traditional Mardin architecture. There are extensive traces of plaster on wall surfaces. The street façades are coursed rubble stone masonry, whereas the interior façades of the walls are fine-cut stone. Rubble infill is used in between the exterior and interior façades of double walls as well as in the vaults.

Located on the southeast of the monastery, the church has a rectangular plan extending in an east-west direction. It is a single-nave church with an apse. The main entrance of the church is from the west through a door opening with a depressed arch framed by a three-foiled pointed arch. On top of the entrance, there is a seven-line Syriac inscription commemorating the patriarch of the period mentioned above on a monolithic square stone framed by moldings.

The southern façade of the church is the most articulated one and there is a second entrance on this façade, similar to the entrance door on the west, with a depressed arch surrounded by a three-foiled pointed arch. On the eastern and western corners of this façade there are inscriptions at the ground level, which are assumed to have been brought from somewhere else. The southern façade of the church is supported by three buttresses, two of which are half-domed and one with a triangular molding. In between these buttresses, there are windows with lintels inserted in semi-circular arches. These windows have top windows

with oval and floral forms. On the southern and western façades of the church, there are a few rows of moldings and waterspouts in certain places.

The church has a flat roof with a cross-vault from the interior supported by pointed arches. The interior walls of the church are supported by blind pointed arches. The apse, which is raised by two steps, has niches on both sides. These niches are articulated by moldings with semi-circular arches with pilasters on both sides. The plasters on the ceiling and walls of the church are severely deteriorated and have been lost in certain areas. The floor is currently earth and the original floor covering is lost. The church is not open to worship at present. The bell tower, which existed before, has been lost.

The access to the annex section of the monastery is provided by a rectangular corridor in the east-west direction. The lintel of the entrance to this corridor is articulated by mouldings and has pilasters on both sides. There is a window in the west of the entrance





door and two windows in the east. These depressed arched windows are framed by three-foiled pointed arches.

The corridor is covered by a cross-vault and a flat roof. To the east and west of this corridor there are two rooms with depressed-arched entrances. This corridor and the neighboring rooms are identified as later additions. The plaster on the ceiling and walls of the corridor are lost in certain areas and there are traces indicating severe moisture problems. The floor of this section is covered by cement screed.

Located in the west and north of the church, the annex section of the monastery is accessed through the main entrance door of the monastery in the south. The annex section consists of a basement, ground and first floors. The ground floor consists of a series of rooms opening to a rectangular courtyard. These rooms once had crossed-vaulted porticos with three pointed arches carried by thick piers, which were later closed and

turned into rooms. The original rooms are covered by cut-stone vaults. The walls and ceilings of these rooms are plastered and painted, and there are traces of moisture on the walls, and losses of plaster in certain areas, whereas the floors are covered with cement screed.

A narrow stairway to the west of the ground floor leads to the first floor. The first floor originally consists of pointed-arched porticoes located around a central courtyard. However, these porticoes were later closed by stone walls with window openings and converted into rooms. The basement of the annex building is located underneath the southwest corner of the central courtyard and the main entrance is from the street facing south.

Present State

The street façades of the building are composed of high fine-cut and rough-cut limestone walls conforming to the topography. The north and west façades of the building



face the main street, whereas the south and east façades face the side streets. The structure, which has deteriorated due to long-term abandonment, the lack of maintenance, and negative effects of natural conditions, partially conserves its original spatial organization and architectural integrity. However, the annex section has undergone alterations that has changed the original plan layout of the building. The most noticeable alteration is the conversion of the ground and first-floor porticoes into rooms by closing them with concrete. One of the major problems in the structure is moisture. Material deteriorations such as the erosion and loss of mortar joints, mold growth, loss of plaster and surface deterioration in stone can be observed on wall surfaces. Despite these alterations, the plan organization and spatial arrangement of the building are still identifiable. There are no information panels.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building, which has not been used or maintained for a long time, has been relatively exposed to vandalism. One of the main reasons for vandalism is that the building is in the close vicinity of the main street and the annex section of the monastery is used as residences. While the exterior walls of the building are relatively intact, the interior of the building is quite dilapidated and susceptible to vandalism. The building is also susceptible to earthquake loads. Almost the entire plaster layer on the interior façades of the monastery has been lost resulting with the loss of mortar joints.

Since the church has been used as the central building of Mardin Biennial in recent years, it has been maintained and become more known. Hence, partial restoration works were observed on the building's roof during the site visit.

Church of Mor Barsaumo

Dr. Elmon Hançer

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Baksıyan/ Beth Kustan (Alagöz) Village, Baylo hamlet**
Present Function: **Abandoned**
Registry Status: **Registered - 22.09.2021 - 6491 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

We could not find any information on the history of the building.

Architecture

The church of Mor Barsaumo is a typical parish church which extends in an east-west direction. It is relatively a small-scale village church, covered by a vault. There are rooms on both sides of the apse, and the apse is flat from the exterior. The traces indicate the existence of a narthex to the south of the naos. In the interior of the church, there are rectangular openings at the lower level of the apse's semicircle, providing access to side rooms in the north and south. There are

window openings in each of the side rooms. There is another window opening and two niches in the apse's wall. The arch of the apse is pointed and depressed, and its upper structure is shaped accordingly. The wall fragment in front of the southern wall is probably a part of a pier, indicating piers and arches on the south and east walls of the naos. This organization is typical of Tur 'Abdin village churches.

Two decorated stone blocks are identified in front of the eastern façade of the building. One of these blocks has an inscription panel written in Syriac Estrangelo. While the



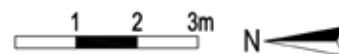
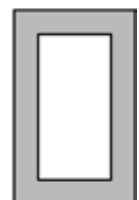
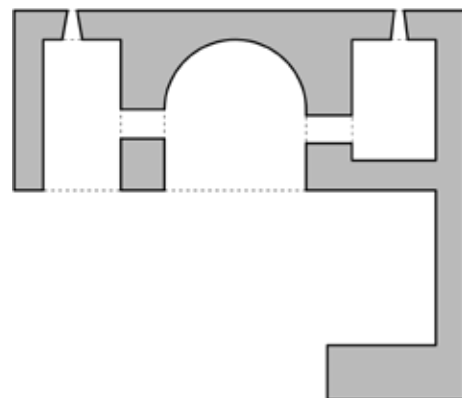


inscription mentions the names of certain priests who were martyred, it does not indicate any date. The other stone block has a cross motif with equal arms.

At the southwest end of the building is a small-scale cross vaulted space adjacent to the southern exterior wall. There is a deep well at the southeastern end of this space. The upper levels of its side walls have niches. The building has wall coursing with cut stone and large stone blocks at the lower levels and continues with rough-cut stones, getting smaller towards the top. The walls of the building are not plastered.

Present State

The Church of Mor Barsaumo, which is located 4-5 kilometers north of the Baylo village, was still standing until recently. Certain sections of the church were demolished during the road construction works connecting Sardef (Altiyol) Village and Baksıyan Village in the 1980s (Akyüz-Aktaş, 2004, 33). Today only the remains of two buildings from the village have survived in the immediate vicinity of the church. At present, the church is located on a hill near the newly opened road. The floor level of the church's naos has risen approximately 2 meters. The



western, southern, and northern walls are almost completely in ruins. The eastern façade still stands up to the upper level of the apse's arch. The eastern parts of the walls and vaults of the north and south side walls are in ruinous condition. The church's plan organization is partially traceable.

The church has faced substantial destruction. The major risks are ruined walls, rapid and extensive material losses of its existing fabric, surface weathering, collapses, detachments and the deterioration of the apse's vault. The floor covering is covered with debris of the collapsed roof, vault and walls, and the original floor level cannot be observed.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church does not attract any visitors other than those who already know it. Its access is difficult without a local guide. Although its spatial organization is partially perceivable, its details and original features are lost to such an extent that little information can be gleaned.

An archaeological survey, excavation, and cleaning works should be conducted in the

exterior and interior of the church in order to identify its plan organization, interior space organization, and upper structure. The cleaning of the ruins piled up as a hill around the building, especially the debris in the south, will clarify the presence of a narthex extending from the east to the chapel in the southwest, connected to the naos from the south through the main entrance door.

The building should be registered as a historic and cultural heritage site. An information panel can be placed with a map showing the historic monuments in other hamlets of Beth Kustan. The church should be consolidated and protected in its current state.



Monastery of Mor Shem'un

Süreyya Topaloğlu

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, Arbo Village (Taşköy)**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6402 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Mor Gabriel Monastery, as one of the most important and oldest monasteries in Tur 'Abdin region, is thought to have been founded by Mor Shmuyel (Samuel) and his student Mor Shem'un (Simeon). There are three other monasteries dedicated to Mor Shem'un in the south, east and west of this monastery. One of them is to the southwest of Arobon, and the other to the west of Mzizah. The third one is the Mor Shem'un Monastery in Arbo (Palmer, 2010, 217). In Tur 'Abdin region, we see small monasteries connected to a principal monastery. According to Palmer, the priests who were forced to leave Mor Gabriel Monastery were settled in an abandoned monastery in Arbo. As it is understood from the colophons of the manuscripts they were produced between 1718-1838, they

gave this abandoned monastery one of the names of their original monasteries (Palmer, 2010, 219). Arbo survived Timur's invasion in 1401. In 1403, however, both this monastery and the villages of Hbob and Arbo were destroyed by Malik al-Adel, the governor of Hasankeyf (Palmer, 2010, 217, fn.212).

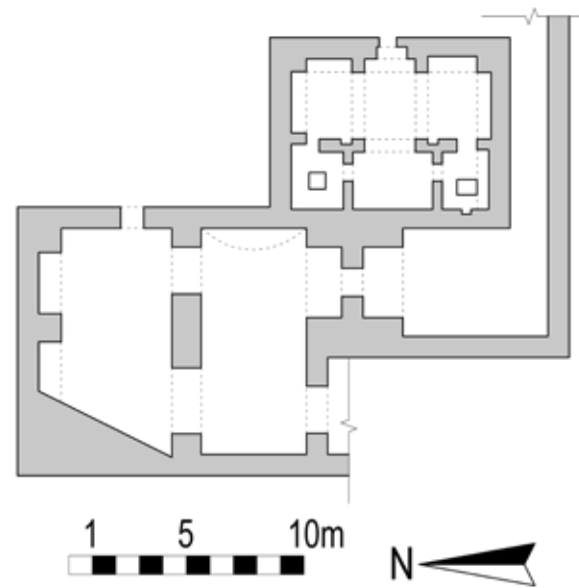
The main church of the monastery has a typical monastic church plan. Wiessner has identified two construction phases in this church (1981, I/I, 108, fig. 24). According to Wiessner's plan, the walls separating the apse and naos were built later. Sinclair also states that this section was added later (Sinclair, 1987, III, 327). According to Anschutz, this monastery is evidence of Arbo's importance in the Late Antique period (1982, 76).



Architecture

The monastery is a two-story masonry building with a courtyard. In its present state, the walls of the upper floors are in ruins, but the ground floor is preserved. The three stone blocks on the entrance door of the church are decorated with cross motifs. All three motifs have different geometries. The entrance area extends in a north-south direction and is covered by a barrel vault. There is an arch in the middle of the western wall near the entrance door. There are niches on both sides of this arch. There are three arches in the eastern wall, corresponding to the arch and niches in the western wall. These arches, however, were filled in a later period. The arches in the north and south walls were filled to form a doorway and a small niche. In the middle of the southern wall is a recess rising up to the vault level. Although this recess is thought to be an opening in the original state of the building, it is now closed.

In the east, parallel to this entrance space is another room with the same length. This room is divided into three spaces. The apse's arch opposite the entrance was also filled, but it is seen that this infill wall had



later collapsed. There are altars in the side chambers in the north and south of the apse. There are passages from these rooms to the middle of the apse. To the north of these two rooms is a corridor with an entrance from the courtyard. This corridor leads to another room behind the apse. This room lies on an east-west axis and covered by a barrel vault. In the south of this room is another large room, parallel to this room, and accessed by two arched openings. While all of the walls





of the monastery are attached to each other at almost a right angle, the eastern wall of this room extends diagonally on the north-east-southwest axis. Another passage is observed in the west of this room, but it cannot be reached due to debris.

Present State

The Monastery of Mor Shem'un is located in the northwest of Arbo (Taşköy) Village, just outside the settlement. Most sections of the monastery are still standing. Its ground floor has been preserved, but the building remains at the upper levels are not sufficient enough to understand the plan organization of its upper floor. Interventions such as the closing of arches and openings suggest that the church has at least two building phases, as Wiessner states. The building has serious structural problems as well as structural cracks. Intense material loss is observed in the building. Most of the exterior and interior mortar joints have disappeared. In interior spaces, there are repairs with cement-based plaster on the vault's surface. Cement-based plaster remains are also observed on the walls. A similar intervention is seen in the altars of the apse's side rooms. At present, the most critical problem for the monastery is moisture. It is obvious that this problem will cause further losses in the entire building in the near future. Vegetation is observed almost in the entire building. There are mosses on all interior walls.

Some of the ruins in the courtyard are covered with soil. Although the ground floor plan is clearly legible and standing, the monastery's ruinous state is readily apparent for



the visitors when they first approach the site. The monastery is located slightly outside the settlement, but there are two villages nearby. Two houses are observed in the immediate vicinity of the building. Although the inhabitants of the houses maintain the monastery, the building is open to vandalism as it is accessible to everyone.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The monastery has serious structural problems. Necessary precautions should be taken to prevent further damage to the building. As a primary step, emergency measures should be taken for the protection and consolidation of the building. Physical supports should be provided for the parts with structural cracks, which are in danger of collapse. Since the most serious problem is moisture, a suitable architectural solution should be considered for rainwater drainage.

The restoration of the building can only be possible after these emergency protection measures are taken. Prior to its restoration, archaeological excavations should be conducted for the underground parts. The original state of the building can be understood after archaeological excavations and a thorough research process. It is known that the Syriac community in the village intends to restore the building. It was learnt during the fieldwork that the community has already restored three buildings in the village with their own resources. There are no information panels about the monastery. Providing an information panel will raise awareness for the protection of the building.

Monastery of Mor Theodute

Suna Kabasakal Coutignies

📍 **Mardin, Savur District, Qelleth (Dereiçi) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 31.07.2018/3597 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

This monastery was founded by Mor Theodute, the bishop of Amida, shortly before his death in 698. It is known that many churches and monasteries were built or repaired in the 7th and 8th centuries in Tur 'Abdin (Keser-Kayaalp 2013). This monastery should also be one of these monasteries, which were built from scratch during this time. Mor Theodute Monastery should be considered together with Mor Dimet Monastery on the hills and Mor Abay Monastery, which is closer to the village below and only 500 meters from Mor Theodute. The monasteries built in the 8th century were constructed relatively small in scale and are not monumental like those from the 6th century (see Mor Abay Monastery). It is known that there were eighteen priests in 1470 and three priests in 1589 within the monastery (Palmer,

2010, 195). It is believed that spending a night in this monastery cures headaches. Theodute's *vita* has important information about the monastic life in the 7th century. After visiting various monasteries, he came to Mor Gabriel Monastery (for an English translation of a significant part of his life story, see Palmer, 1990, 88-90). At that time, he was invited by the ruler of Dara to Mor Abay Monastery. He stayed in a place known as "the cave of the saints", which is probably the monastery known today as Mor Dimet. Afterwards, with the permission and encouragement of the prince of Dara, probably the person who was mentioned as Elustriya, he founded a monastery and built a church dedicated to Virgin Mary. In this monastery, he built a space for the relics he collected in a sack throughout his life (Palmer, 1990, 167).



Architecture

Only the corner of the east and south walls of the building has survived. The walls were built with rough-cut stone masonry. It is impossible to identify the building's plan type with the surviving remains. In the northern part of the building there is an opening, of which only the top is visible. It is stated in its registry form that the building has an arched entrance and below it there was a burial chamber with a dromos constructed in fine-cut stone. This information is corresponding with the burial chamber, which is said to have been built in the *vita* of Teodute.

Present State

The building is located 2 kilometers from the main road on the slope to the north of the Mor Abay monastery in the northwest of Qelleth Village. It is completely in ruins

and unidentifiable. The surviving remains cannot be understood clearly due to the rubble formed by the collapsed parts of the building. On the north side, there is a stone block with circular ornamentation next to the space buried in the ground. This space is not accessible. The remaining parts of the building are neglected and in poor condition and are damaged by illicit digs. There is no information panel.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The building is in danger of collapse due to its exposure to weather conditions and vandalism. After archaeological research excavation, a detailed architectural survey and documentation project, an emergency conservation project should be prepared. The village of Qelleth can be part of a trekking route together with the monasteries of Mor Abay and Mor Dimet.



Dera Būbe

Dr. Pınar Aykaç

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, Baskil/ Beth Sqole (Kısmetli) Village, Calahat Locale**
Present Function: **Abandoned**
Registry Status: **Registered - 22.10.2015/ 3658 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Palmer notes that the underground church in Baskil recorded by Wiessner (1982 I/1, 173-5, fig. 42) is called 'Dera Būbe' (2010, 206). Local tradition links this monastery to the monastery of Kaf Salte which was renowned for the handwriting of its monks in the twelfth century. The monastery of Kaf Salte was in Mihallami territory and thus must have been somewhere else (Palmer 2010, 206). In addition, it is unlikely that a monastery famous for its handwriting is located underground.

Architecture

The rock-cut monastery is located within a vast area, which is thought to be the old settlement of Baskil. According to the inventory of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, prepared in 2015, there are six cisterns and a rock-cut space thought to be a grave. About 500 meters north of the building is the church of Mort Saro.

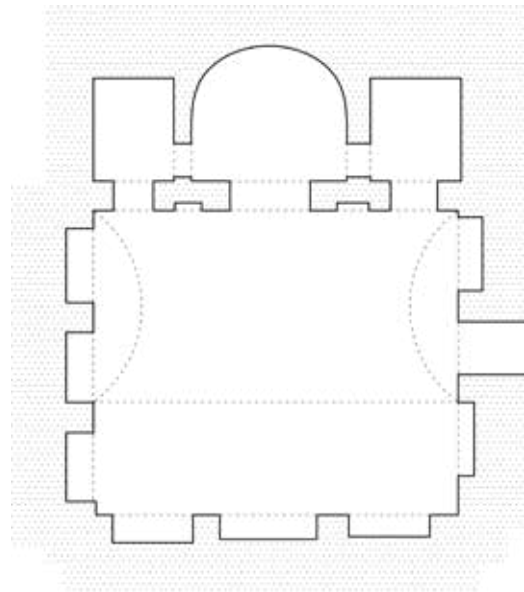
The building is completely underground and accessed through a void formed later in the bedrock in the south. From this



opening, a tunnel approximately three meters in width and twenty meters in length leads to a rock-cut rectangular space extending from the south-east opening of the church. This space is the greeting space of this building group, which is thought to be an underground monastery, and its entrance is marked by an arched niche. There are five arcosolia in the four walls of this space.

The monastery's church is a typical monastery type church. The naos has almost a square plan and the apse is tripartite. Since the church is carved into the bedrock, the eastern part of the naos is carried by a barrel vault constructed with rubble stone in a north-south direction underneath the bedrock.

A circular window, at the intersection of the vault and the southern wall, illuminates the space. On the east side of the naos section, there is a rectangular niche starting from the ground, a rectangular opening providing access to the tunnel next to the church, and a blind arch with a semi-circular profile. On the northern and western sides of the naos, there are three blind arches, each 60 centimeter wide, with semi-circular profiles. The eastern façade of the naos has a symmetrical organization. In the middle, there is an



Plan of the main church of the monastery

arched opening with a semi-circular profile rising up to the springing line of the vault, which reaches the apse. On both sides of this opening are rectangular openings leading the side rooms of the apse. Between these openings are rectangular niches, approximately one meter above the ground level. There is also an arched opening with a semi-circular profile on top of the northern door opening.



The central sanctuary is almost square in form. Its eastern part has a semi-circular shape. In the south wall of the apse is a rectangular niche, and a niche with a semi-circular plan in the part where this wall joins the southern wall. A narrow opening in the north wall of the apse leads to the room on its north. While this room has a rectangular plan closer to a square, its northeast and southeast corners are chamfered. Similarly, the opening in the middle of the apse's south wall leads to the room in the south. This room has a rectangular plan and its eastern part is semi-circular in shape.

The architectural elements of the building, such as the profiles of the blind arches and door openings, have fine workmanship. There are no inscriptions or ornamentations within the building. Since the entire rock-cut complex is underground, there might have been a structure on its top.

Present State

The monastery is located in the former Beth Sizle settlement, designated in 2015 as a first-degree archaeological site, in Calahat locale, 3 kilometers southeast of Kismetli Village. The monastery is reached after a 2 kilometers walk through a narrow path after the asphalt road to the south of the village. Since the ground level is filled, it is difficult to access the building from its original entrance. A wide void was later opened in the south wall of the church to provide access. The building is difficult to find without a local guide. Therefore, it does not attract any visitors other than those who already know it. The building is not used today and is neglected.

The church preserves its original plan organization and spatial qualities to a large extent. The ground level of the building is filled with soil due to the later void in the south wall. There are losses of stone units on the wall framing the door opening leading to the apse. Deep structural cracks can be seen on the wall separating the apse from the naos, while there is a loss of mortar joints in the rubble bonds of the vault carrying the apse. The bedrock, forming the ceiling, has severe fractures and ruptures. Severe surface

weathering of stones, vegetation and salt deposits are observed in the interiors due to dampness.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

In the inventory of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism dating to 2015, several illicit excavation pits and traces of destruction have been recorded in various places in the Baskil settlement. This is due to its location quite remote from the main road. A similar illicit excavation pit is seen especially in the floor of the apse. The later void in the southern wall of the church and the fractures in the bedrock cause structural problems. The ceiling and southern wall of the building should structurally be consolidated. The building is susceptible to natural disasters like floods due to the void formed later.

The building is exposed to natural disasters and vandalism. The moisture problem in the interior causes a rapid deterioration of the bedrock. After emergency protection measures, general cleaning works should be carried out in the building and long-term protection measures should be taken. Possibility of a detailed archaeological survey and excavation should be considered.

Architectural survey, restitution and restoration projects should be prepared for the building, and protection measures should be taken according to these projects. The monastery and its surrounding, which are far from the village center, should be protected against treasure hunting. The monastery and Baskil settlement should be enclosed as a first-degree archaeological site. Archaeological survey and cleaning works should be carried out in Baskil settlement. A pathway should be arranged to connect the building, remote from the village, to the main road and an information sign should be placed at the junction of the main road and near the building.

The monastery can be part of a trekking route, with the nearby Mort Saro Church and the remains of the old settlement of Baskil. In addition to the conservation project, a project can be prepared to emphasize the relationship between the building and its environment.



Church of Mor Sobo

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin District, Beth Man‘em Village**

Present Function: Sheepfold

Registry Status: Registered - 28.07.2021/6398 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

Palmer defines Beth Man‘em as a ghost village and notes that the church of the village was filled with animal feces (Palmer, 2010, 232). It is also the case today. He also noted that the house of the village’s landlord, which is on the upper part of the church, was striking. There are no ornamentations or architectural elements that can help date the church. It has a plan of typical village churches in Tur ‘Abdin. It was most probably built after the 8th century and underwent various additions and repairs over the centuries.

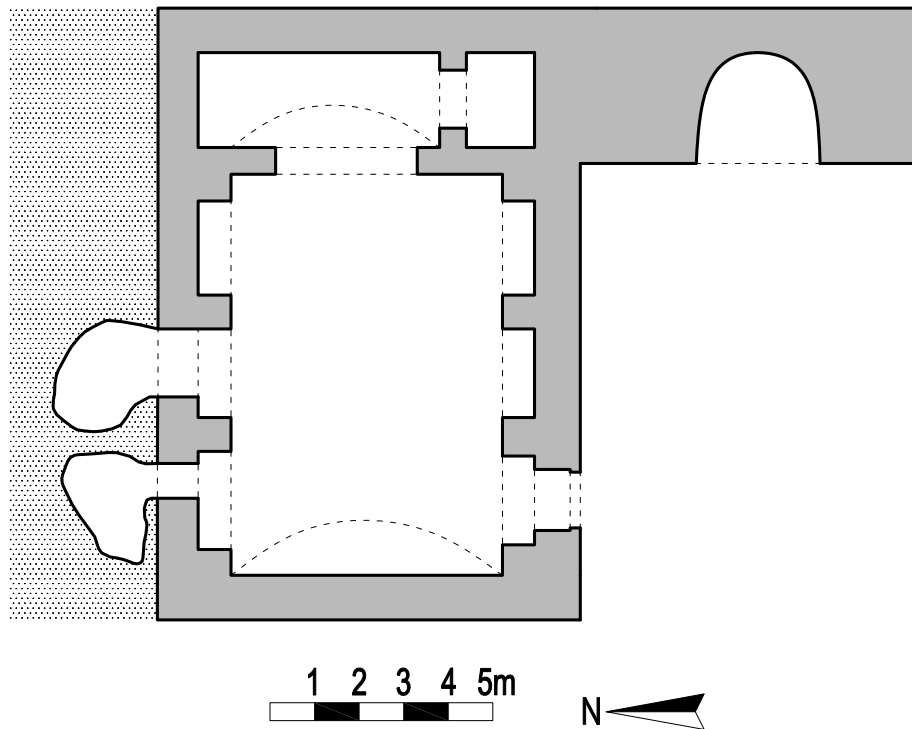
Architecture

The church, rectangular in plan, is a single-aisled church extending in an east-west direction. The northern façade sits on the

hillside. It was built in rough-cut stone masonry. The exterior façade was not plastered, whereas the interior façade was plastered as a later intervention made after its first construction date. The only entrance to the church is through a door in the naos’s south wall. To the south of the church is a *beth slutho* (open air apse, which is common in the region).

Construction techniques indicate that first the nave, then the apse, and finally the side rooms of the apse and *beth slutho* were built respectively. Therefore, the centers of the apse and nave are not exactly on the same axis. The nave is covered by a barrel vault. On the northern wall of the nave, there are





arches with semi-circular profiles and the piers on which they stand. An opening, probably a later intervention, in the middle of two of these piers in the west leads to rock-cut amorphous spaces. The east and west of the row of three arches in the southern wall of the nave are blind, whereas the entrance gate of the church is underneath the arch in the middle. The entrance door has a flat lintel and a door jamb made of large and fine-cut stone blocks. This door opening has a semi-circular arch in the interior façade.

The apse is accessed by a few steps from the east of the nave. The apse is narrower than the nave and is covered by a narrow barrel vault. The apse probably had an ornamented archivolt like the other 8th century churches. This archivolt, which has collapsed with the apse, was rebuilt arbitrarily. There are niches on both sides of the walls in the transition section from the nave to the apse due to this narrowing down. There is another rectangular space to the south of the apse, possibly used as a *diakonikon*. This space is accessed from the apse through an arcade with two arches. There are windows at the upper levels of the east wall and in the center of the western and eastern arches of the south wall. The space is mainly illuminated by three

windows in a line, one of which is located at an upper level, in the western wall.

On the northern interior wall of the nave, there are impost stones with dentils above the piers. Except for these, there are not any other decorations. On the outer faces of the church's walls, there are two stones with cross carvings and one Syriac inscription. There are also the traces of a projecting sill on the outer face of the southern wall of the naos. This sill is not repeated on the apse wall, which was constructed later. Cross shaped stamps were printed on the side walls of the door opening when the plaster layer was still wet, and these stamps became permanent decorations after the plaster dried.

Present State

The abandoned village, in which the church is located, is currently used by nomads. The church serves as the sheepfold of this settlement. There are temporary tents set up by nomads outside the abandoned and ruined buildings around the church. The church is very difficult to reach without a local guide or an off-road vehicle. There are not any visitors other than those who know the building and there is also no information panel or signage.



The neglected church is preserved to a certain extent. The main reason for this is that there are not any people in the surrounding who can damage the building or use its building blocks for other constructions. Hence, the plan and spatial organization of the church are still perceivable today. However, as a result of its use as a sheepfold, the chemicals of animal feces are damaging the building. Significant losses have occurred in the interior plaster and rudimentary repairs have been made with cement plaster. The church does not have a door, only a wooden mechanism preventing animals from going out. There is heavy vegetation on the roof and serious material losses especially in the corners of the buildings. There are serious moisture problems due to water penetration. These problems result in salt deposits, material losses, surface weathering, loss of jointing mortars, and vegetation.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The church is relatively resistant to earthquake loads but not protected from the effects of wind and rain. The damage caused by animal feces is particularly noticeable.

Precautions should be taken as soon as possible in order to prevent the building's exposure to vandalism, natural conditions and damages caused by animals. The use of the church as a sheepfold should be ended, and it should be cleaned from animal feces, and its ground level should be unearthed. The *beth slutho* should also be cleaned and strengthened. The entire building should be consolidated within the scope of a restoration project, and the missing



parts of its upper structure should be completed for its protection.

The church, which was formerly used as the main church of the village, can be included in the region's tourism routes. Information panels and signage should be placed near the building. Since the building is surrounded by an abandoned village fabric, it is necessary to explain the history of this village in the information panels about the church.

The rock-cut chapel of Mor Behnam

Suna Kabasakal Coutignies

📍 **Mardin, Yeşilli District, Benabil (Bülbül) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 01.07.2009/2338 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Although there are no historical sources documenting this rock-cut church, there is a relevant anecdote about Mor Behnam in the *vita* of the bishop of Mardin, Yuhannon (d. 1165). In Yuhannon's *vita*, the intention to record the history of churches and monasteries was indicated as a result of the concern that these buildings could be abandoned and to whom they were dedicated would not be known in the future. Similarly, it is stated that the life stories of the saints, to whom churches and monasteries were dedicated, were lost. Mor Behnam is given as an example: "The *vita* of this saint, who was doing great works and miracles for the believers who came to him

as in the era of the apostles, exists only in the oral tradition, and people can either exaggerate or succinctly tell this story. For this reason, we remember the names of these monasteries, the earlier saints and other saints who constructed these buildings in the places where these saints were. It is pertinent for each monastery to have a worthy story" (Vööbus, 1976, 219).

The limestone in Tur 'Abdin is very soft and it enables rock-cut churches and monasteries. Wiessner gathered these rock-cut churches and monasteries in a single volume in order to give us a general idea about these



buildings (1981, I). This church also bears similarities with the rest of the rock-cut spaces in the region. As it is stated in the *vita* of Yuhannon, these buildings have been lost or the saints to whom they were dedicated have been forgotten in time. This rock-cut church dedicated to Mor Behnam should be recorded before it is lost or forgotten.

Architecture

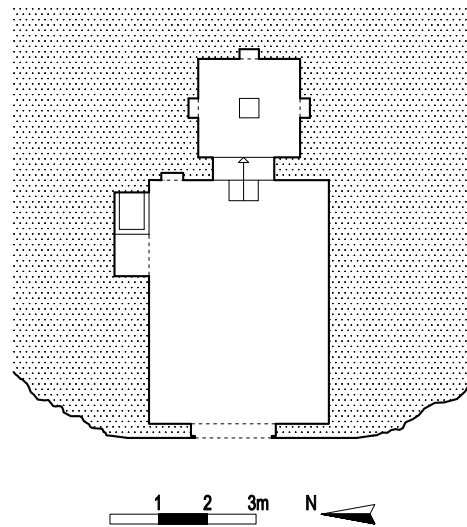
The small-scale church on the north side of Mor Ya'qub Monastery is constructed as a rock-cut structure. The entrance of the rectangular church is from its short side to the west. The main space is a rectangle ending with a sanctuary. There is a baptismal font at its northeast corner. There is a small altar in the apse elevated by three stairs.

Present State

Although the building in the village was structurally conserved as a rock-cut structure, it is in poor condition due to material deterioration, exfoliation on wall surfaces, staining, material losses, surface weathering, and vandalism. Its plan organization and spatial characteristics are legible. There is no information panel related to the building.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Due to the location of the building and its exposure to outdoor conditions, the deterioration caused by vandalism and weather conditions will continue. Therefore, firstly the architectural survey, documentation and cleaning works should be conducted for the building, followed by the restoration and conservation projects. As there are other churches within the village, this church can be part of a touristic route for Bülbül village.





The monastery of Mor Behnam and the enclosure of Mor Joseph

Dr. Mesut Dinler

📍 **Mardin, Yeşilli District, Benabil (Bülbül) Village**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 06.07.2010/3280 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

The building is the easternmost of the monasteries located on Mount Hazro to the north of the Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery. Mor Joseph's retreat was first mentioned in 1335 (Palmer, 2010, 189). The monastery was most active in the 17th and 18th centuries and it was mentioned in eight sources dated between 1648 and 1749 in Barsaum's history. It is suggested that the Priest Behnam of Bate, who was raised to Maphrian in 1653, was also in this monastery (Barsaum, 2006, 75). Akyüz mentions that its last priest was R. Yohannan of Meşte (d.1885) (Akyüz, 1998,

158). The rock-cut churches were places of isolation for monks and priests who were overwhelmed by earthly affairs. According to Palmer, all of the experienced priests were living in the monasteries in the hills. Krüger states that the monastery was referred to as Der Alkkahf (Krüger, 1938, 40).

Architecture

Mor Behnam monastery could not be accessed, and photos were taken with a drone. Since the rock-cut monastery is abandoned and impossible to enter, it was not possible



to identify its architectural characteristics. Depending on the images taken with a drone on site, four adjacent spaces at the same level and a fifth space probably providing transition can be observed. As a result of the ruptures of the rock mass, the cross section of these spaces is perceivable on the façade.

Present State

The church is abandoned at present and has no visitors. The stairs providing access to the church most probably fell from the rock, making access impossible. The building has no information panel.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The ruptures from the rock and the building's exposure to the weathering conditions are significant risks threatening the structure. Due to the limited sources related to the monastery, the architectural survey and documentation of the building should be conducted as the most urgent measure. Hiking equipment or current architectural documentation technologies can be used for this purpose.



Church of Mor Bobi

Sena Kayasü



Mardin, Nusaybin District, Marbobo (Günyurdu) Village

Present Function: **In use, incorporated into a larger, newer church complex**

Registry Status: **Registered - 28.07.2021/6399 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

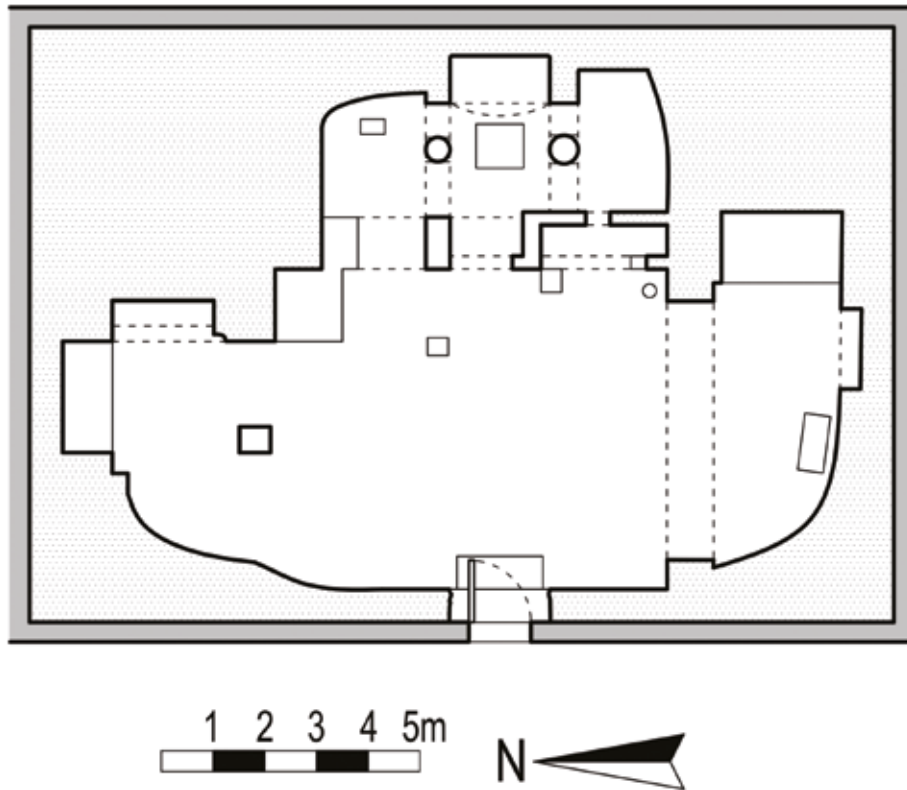
Mor Bobi (d. 628) is considered to be a great theologian of the East Syriac Church. He became a monk in the Great Monastery of Abraham of Kashkar. He later moved to Beth Zabdai and founded his own monastery (Brock, 2011, 49). Like the other monasteries in Mount Izlo, this church must have been adopted by the West Syrians in the 18th century. It is difficult to date this rock-cut church but the profile of the arch in the entrance and the wreath carved on the wall surface inside point to the 6th century. According to Hollerweger, the new church was built in 1975 and the village was temporarily abandoned around 1995 (1999, 305), with villagers returning in the early 2000s.

Architecture

The Church of Mor Bobi requires descending a set of four steps to enter. Two of these appear to be original to the rock-cut church, and two have been built later to accompany the new, surrounding structure. When Mor Aho was built, a porch was added in front of Mor Bobi's entrance. This comprised a new door opening and door frame, which concealed the original external appearance of the building.

There are five lecterns in the church. They are comprised of a horizontal slab of rock balanced on a vertical monolith. They are each 1 meter tall on average. There is also a baptismal font with a torus-shaped horizontal





slab and an elaborate vertical monolith neatly etched with crosses. The altar is separated from the rest of the church by a wall pierced by three arches. While two of the arches lead through to the altar area, the third opens to a small niche that is covered on three sides and has balustrades on the fourth side. The font and a lectern frame the entrance to this area. The back wall of the niche has a window opening that provides a view of the altar. The structure has no openings, other than the door, for natural lighting. There are several tombs inside the church. The way in which these are recessed into the wall is reminiscent of other rock-cut churches in the area. There are also two burials that date to the past century. The villagers seem to have continued to use the church as a burial chamber.

Present State

The villagers have continued to use Mor Bobi. Religious objects needed for ceremonies are still intact. The construction of Mor Aho next to it has allowed for the installation of electricity and plumbing, which has protected Mor Bobi from being refitted with modern conveniences.







Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Continued use has required small, but permanent interventions, which have altered the building's historically significant indoor features. Such interventions include installing modern burials (made of contemporary material) and nailing hooks into the wall to hang ceremonial tapestries. The contemporary interference with both indoor and outdoor features is critical, since there has not yet been a full-scale survey of the church beyond the schematic plan drawn for this report, and permanent interventions may destroy historical evidence. It is advised to stop such interventions. Alternative methods must be used to hang tapestries, and a thorough survey must be conducted.

The structure is considerably stable and intact. It is protected from the effects of the weather. There is a slight risk of flood if the door is open, since Mor Bobi's floor is at a lower elevation than its surroundings. Since Mor Bobi was carved into rock, with no layers of insulation, there is constant water condensation in its interior. Water often drips and creates puddles. This does not pose an imminent threat, but it may slowly erode the church. It would also make ceremonies

that take place here uncomfortable. Furthermore, there is discoloration on the walls and floor of the church similar to rust. It is likely that the condensed water transports solvents that may prove dangerous to the edifice.

Most of the original interior features of the church seem to have survived. Although Mor Bobi's name is included above the entrance to the newer church, the location of the old church is not specified and there is no information panel about it. The structures of the newly built church of Mor Aho allows for effective surveillance of Mor Bobi because it completely surrounds it. The 6th century church is thus protected from vandalism, looting, and unmonitored entry. There is accessible parking outside the new church, and visitors are often guided inside by volunteers. The door to Mor Bobi is locked, which necessitates the presence of a guide with a key for visitors to enter. While this is an effective protection measure, if more information about the church is made available and free visit hours are arranged, the congregation and the visitors would be better informed and the church would be more accessible.

Monastery of Mor 'Azozoyel

Dr. Mesut Dinler

📍 **Mardin, Merkez District, Qal'at al-mara (Eskikale) Village**

Present Function: Abandoned

Registry Status: Registered - 06.07.2010/3280 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

The building is one of the many rock-cut monasteries north of the Dayr al-Za'faran monastery. This monastery took its name from a saint from Samosata (Şamşat), lived in the 4th century (Barsavm, 2006, 74). The first historical source mentioning the monastery dates to 1165 (Palmer, 2010, 189). In the monastery, there were twelve priests in 1472, and fourteen priests in 1567. There were more priests in these rock-cut monasteries than the ones in Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery in certain periods (Palmer, 2010, 190). According to Barsaum, the bishop Rizkallah lived here in 1601 (Barsaum 2006, 74). Akyüz mentions that priests lived here until the end of the 18th century, and that one of the bishops was educated in this monastery. The expenses of the monastery were covered by Yalımlı (Man-suriye) village (Akyüz, 1998, 158).

Architecture

The monastery cannot be accessed. The only remaining space of the monastery is documented by photographs. As a result of the rupture of the rock, the cross section of this space can be observed from the façade. It is very difficult to enter the monastery.

Present State

The monastery is abandoned, and it does not have any visitors. The stairs leading to the church's entrance have collapsed making it impossible to reach the church. There are no information panels on the site.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

Architectural survey and documentation should be conducted as an urgent action for this building which is under the threat of disappearing.





Monastery of Mor Dimet

Seher İvrendi

📍 **Mardin, Savur District, Qelleth (Dereiçi) Village, İskak Derrih Locale**
Present Function: **Abandoned**
Registry Status: **Registered - 26.11.2021/6712 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

We learn from the *vita* of Mor Theodute (d.698) that Theodute stayed in a cell known as the Cave of Saints, which he describes as the tomb of Mor Abay (Palmer, 1990, 90). The monastery which is partially rock-cut and known today as Mor Dimet, might have been built in front of the cave mentioned in the *vita* of Theodute. The surviving wall remains indicate that there was another story above the rock-cut section. This masonry wall coursing is similar to the construction techniques used in the monastery of Mor Theodute, which is in the immediate vicinity of the Mor Dimet Monastery. Therefore, we can date this monastery back to the 7th century, the time of Theodute. The monastery is also known as the rheumatism monastery, especially because it is believed that rheumatism patients are healed there.

Architecture

The monastery of Mor Dimet is located on a steep slope near the monastery of Mor Abay. In front of the monastery's church is a courtyard surrounded by rough-cut stone walls and has a floor covered with cement. The church, which has a rectangular naos and a single apse, is a rough-cut stone masonry building with fine-cut stones in the corners. There are no decorations on the exterior and interior spaces. All of its interior walls are painted white with a thick layer of lime-wash, whereas the floor is covered with cement screed. The entrance of this small-scale building is through a door opening with a fine-cut stone lintel on the west side.

On top of this door is a rectangular window with lintel and iron bars, ending at the springing line of the vault. In the southern



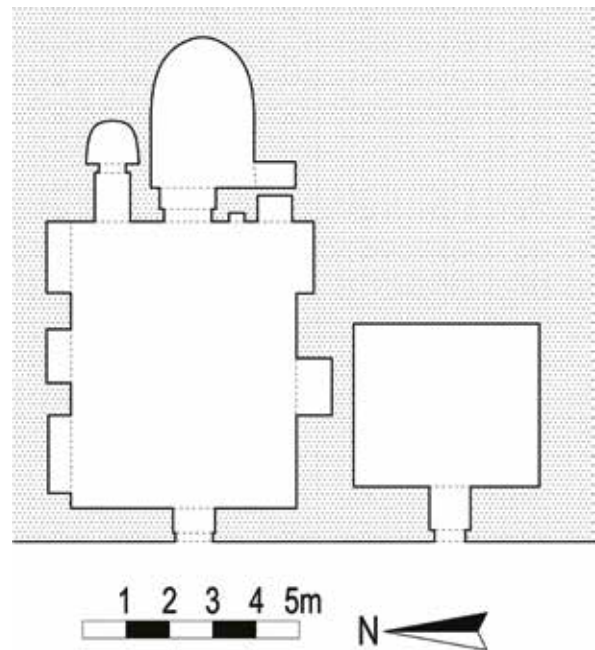


wall of the naos, there are two large niches with semi-circular arches (one deeper than the other), whereas there are three large niches of different widths in the north wall.

In the southern wing of the apse wall are two niches (one large and one small), whereas in the northern wing is a niche and a door opening leading to the retreat or healing room underneath the apse. There is a niche with a semi-circular arch inside the healing room, which is small and at a lower level, formed by carving the rock underneath the apse. It is believed that especially rheumatic patients who lie down in this room will be healed.

All of the architectural elements of the apse were formed from carving the rock. The lower part of the apse has a semi-circular plan and the upper part has a triangular form. There is a cross motif carved in the apse's niche. The apse features an altar carved into the rock. There are architectural elements with different forms and heights, adjacent to the north and south walls of the apse, which are thought to have been used to house sacred objects.

The eastern façade of the church, which is carved from rock, and the southern façade



walls, which are built of rough-cut stone, cannot be observed from the outside since they are filled with earth. There are wall remains of a building, rising in the southeast corner, above the church. The church is covered by a barrel vault from the interior, and has a flat roof covered with cement from the exterior.





There is a vaulted room with a square plan, adjacent to the south to the church, approximately one meter lower than the church. This room has thick masonry walls and is accessed by a door opening with a lintel from the outside and a pointed arch from the inside. Since the mortar joints between the stones of the walls and vaults of this room have been lost, stones have fallen to the ground, which is covered with cement screed. There is an opening in the northern wall of the room leading to the adjacent church, which is closed later with stones. All surfaces of the room except the floor are painted with white limewash.

Present State

The monastery is approximately 3 kilometers north-east of Dereçi Village. The plan and spatial characteristics of the building are perceivable. On the other hand, there is loss of stone units and mortar joints due to dilapidation and decay of stones in the exterior and interior walls.

The building is now abandoned; however, it is known that patients from nearby villages occasionally come to this monastery to seek healing. Religious activities are performed

accompanied with feast by visitors because of their belief in the healing power of the place. In the courtyard of the church, a series of fireplaces built by placing stones on top of each other along the southern wall indicates that there have been people coming here. Not only Syrians, but people from every religion who believe in the healing power of this holy place visit this monastery (Uygur, 2015, 397-399).

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

In order to obtain accurate information about its architecture, the main structure of the building should be uncovered. Therefore, the thick lime layer on the building's surfaces should be removed, the interior should be cleaned together with the earth infill on the north and east façades. The building is not protected from weathering conditions and is structurally at risk.

Road signage should be placed at necessary points in order to provide access to the building, and an information panel describing the history of the church should be placed outside the building. The monastery should be evaluated together with the nearby monasteries of Mor Abay and Mor Theodute.

Church of Mor Shem'un

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 **Batman, Gercüş District, Bin Kalbe (Çukuryurt) Village, Tutumlu Locale**

Present Function: **Barn**

Registry Status: **Registered - 24.12.2021/9002 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

The diocese of Tur 'Abdin was divided into two in 1089. Mor Gabriel monastery and the Monastery of the Cross became the two administrative centers. Palmer listed the village Bin Kalbe as one of the villages attached to the Monastery of the Cross and listed the different names associated with it (Tel Kalbeh, Bar Kalbeh and Ib'n Kelbe by Kiepert) (Palmer, 2010, 203). Anschütz mentions that there were not any remaining Christians in the village during her visit (Anschütz, 1984, 106). The church records reveal that 27 families gave ashar tax (Akyüz, 2017, 376) in 1870, indicating that there was still a significant Syriac community in the village at that time.

Architecture

The main mass of the church is a single story rectangle extending in a northeast-southwest direction. The church was built in rough-cut stone masonry, like many other buildings in the region. The main entrance of the church is an opening with a flat lintel. The interior is divided into three parts. The apse is elevated from the naos by two steps and separated by an arched opening. There are niches in the east and west of this opening. The building has plaster in certain sections and the cross figures are carved on the plaster layer. There are not any decorations in the building.

There are three square openings on the north wall of the apse, one of which is at a



higher level. The interior is illuminated by an embrasure window narrowing outwards, close to the vault, in the south wall of the church. The interior of the building is generally dark. In the southwest corner of this rectangle, there is an additional mass, which is slightly lower than the main mass, without a western façade. It is a semi-open, iwan-like space. In the center of this annex is an opening, which has a flat lintel from the exterior and is arched from the interior.

Present State

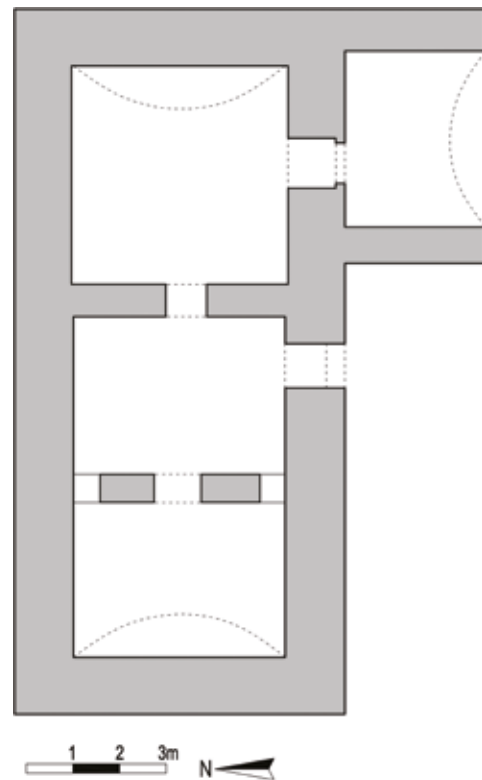
The church is within the village, right next to the main road and surrounded by other buildings. A new house was built adjacent to the northern wall of the church and the church is used as the barn of this house. The interior is filled with straw and garbage. The church does not have any visitors, except for those who know the building. There are not any information panels or signage.

The irregularity of the masonry course in the northern part of the western wall of the church suggests that this section was demolished and rebuilt arbitrarily. The church has a door, but unfortunately this does not prevent damage to the building due to its use as a barn. Thus, the building is neglected and in poor condition. Plant and algae growth are observed especially on the upper structure and the upper parts of the façades due to water penetration. Salt deposits occur on the walls due to water penetration into the interior.

Some of the stones on the wall above the arch providing access to the apse are missing in the interior. A rudimentary mud brick masonry wall is added later to divide the main space of the building into two spaces. Nevertheless, the plan and the spatial characteristics of the church are mainly understandable. The plaster of the interior is largely lost, the remaining parts are at risk of disintegration and loss due to moisture. Plaster and white lime wash are randomly applied on the walls.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The use of the church, although with an improper function, has prevented it from being destroyed. Its structural condition is as not



severe as other churches in the region. It is not fully exposed to the effects of wind and rain since its upper structure has survived today. It is mainly neglected. Although it has a door, the building is exposed to the damage due to its function as a barn. The partition wall, which was added later, should be removed and the house leaning against the church's northern wall should be demolished if possible. In this way, the church can be experienced and perceived in its entirety, and it can also attain its original spatial features.

The loss of building materials and mortar joints of the upper structure should be repaired with original material, and water penetration should be prevented. The building's use as a barn should be stopped. Its interior should be cleaned, and an information panel should be placed and the building should be opened for controlled visits. There are also remains within the village, which are claimed to be a rock-cut tomb, carved into the natural rock. However, today it is full of garbage, and fires burned many times inside have damaged its walls. All remains around can be investigated, and a more detailed presentation can be achieved about the historical heritage of the village.



Church of Sardef

Dr. Banu Pekol

📍 **Mardin, Dargeçit District, Altiyol Village**

Present Function: **Sheepfold, depot**

Registry Status: **Registered - 15.05.2003/3129 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Although Wiessner recorded this church in detail, he did not provide any information about its history. In Wiessner's record, the name of the village is Serder (Serdefi) (1993, IV/I, 103-106, figs. 114-115). The church's architecture also does not help dating, but the relatively large cut stones and impost blocks in the apse may indicate an early (perhaps 8th century) phase of the structure.

Architecture

This single-nave church, extending in an east-west direction, has a rectangular plan apart from a recess in the southeast corner.

The building is so small and plain from the exterior that it is not perceivable among the village houses. The thick walls of the church are built in rough-cut stone masonry seen in other churches in the region. The vault, on the other hand, is constructed with relatively small fine-cut and rubble stones with mortar joints.

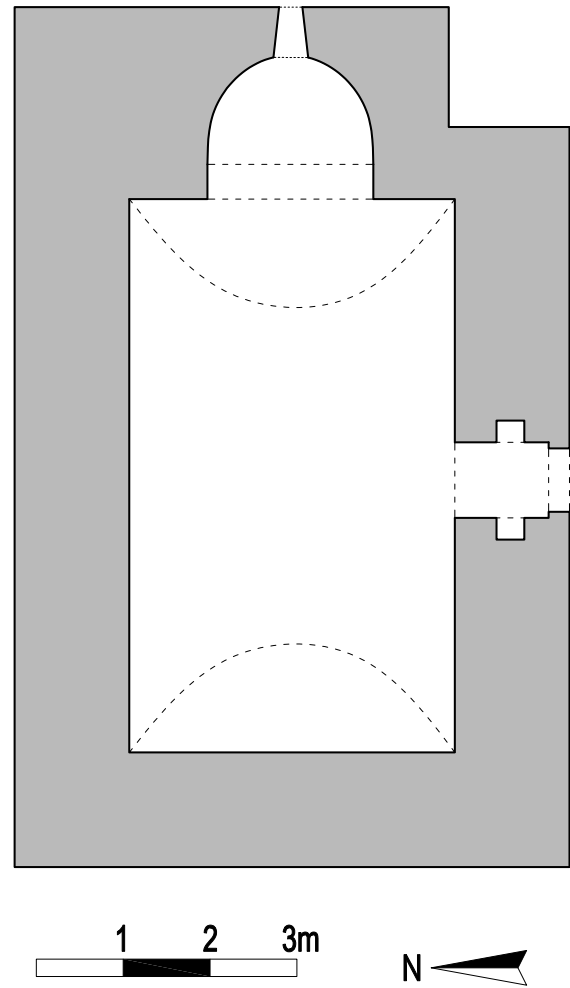
The entrance to the church is through an opening with a flat lintel in the middle of the south wall. The only light source is a small embrasure window, narrowing outwards, which coincides with the center of the apse



wall. To the east of the interior is a circular apse, framed by a rectangular wall from the exterior. The cut stones of the apse archivolt are larger than the other stones of the building. The imposts of the arches are carved from large horizontal rectangular stones in the form of simple column capitals. There are no ornamentations other than these imposts. The upper level of these imposts also coincides with the vault's springing line.

Present State

The church is surrounded by other structures in an area where the residential fabric of the village is dense. It is close to the main road, but there are not any information signs about the building. It does not attract any visitors except those who already know the building. The church is within the garden of a village house. It is adjacent to other structures in the garden and is used as a storage and sheepfold. The wall surrounding the house's garden adjacent to the eastern wall of the church was built later. A masonry building with the same height as the church is added later to the south-west corner of the church, to the west of the door opening. The latter prevents the structure from being





perceived as a single building. However, the church's plan and spatial characteristics are traceable.

There is no door in the entrance opening, which is closed arbitrarily with rubble and shrubs. Since the ground level of the church is covered with rubbles, garbage, and soil, it is not clear whether the original floor still exists. Structural cracks, material losses, water penetration, and surface weathering are observed in the church. Vegetation and algae growth are seen especially in the upper structure and at the upper levels of its façades due to water penetration. There are material losses at the eastern end of the upper structure. Salt deposits are observed on the walls due to water leakage as well as discoloration caused by soot indicating that fire burned within the building.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The use of the church by the villagers, albeit with an improper function, and the walls with a thickness of 1.40 meters have

prevented the building from collapsing. Its structural condition is as not bad as other churches in the region. The church is not completely exposed to the effects of wind and rain due to its surviving upper structure. The building is neglected and vulnerable to vandalism due to the absence of its doors and current function. The loss of building materials and mortar joints of the upper structure should be repaired with original material, and water leakage should be prevented. A door should be added to the building.

The church should not be used as a sheepfold, but rather be cleaned and opened to controlled visits by placing an information panel near the building. Some of the other buildings of the village are remarkable in terms of their architecture, and they have architectural elements indicating earlier periods. Therefore, a detailed architectural survey and investigation can be conducted for the church and the other historic structures in the village in a holistic manner.

Deyr Kubbuk, Kubeke

Dr. Zekai Erdal

📍 **Mardin, Midyat District, Devank**

Present Function: **Abandoned**

Registry Status: **Registered - 10.07.2017-4890 Diyarbakır Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets**

History

Wiessner states that the building, known today as Deyr Kubbuk, is undoubtedly a tomb structure and reflects Late Antique tomb architecture of northern Syria in the Tur 'Abdin region (1993, III/I, 116, for drawing III/1, fig. 25). Similar buildings can be found in the Mor Ya'qub Monastery in Urfa, in Fafi (Keser-Kayaalp 2008, 334), near Arica (Wiessner, 1993, III/I, 116), and the recently excavated structure to the northwest of the main church of Mor Ya'qub Monastery in Salah. It is difficult to evaluate the building's context since the traces of other remains around the building are not comprehensible. Nevertheless, the building may be part of a monastery.

Architecture

Located within the fields, the abandoned building has a squarish plan. While the main eastern and northern walls of the building are intact, only a small section of its main western and southern walls have survived. It is constructed with double faced cut-stone masonry with rubble infill. There are serious structural cracks on its main walls.

The eastern façade, where the entrance door is located, has a finer workmanship than the other façades. The door opening has a semi-circular arch and both the door jambs and the arch itself are articulated with profiled moldings. On the row of stone just





above the arch, there are five triangular decorations resembling column capitals, protruding from the façade. The other façades are comparatively plain. A molding runs along all four façades, at the upper level of the main walls.

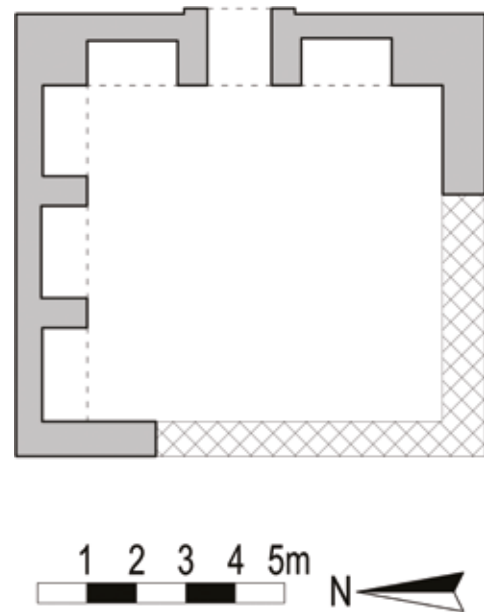
The surviving traces indicate that the building was once covered by a pyramidal cone. In the southwest corner of the cone, there is a squinch with a depressed arch. There are five niches with semi-circular arches in the interior, one on each side of the entrance door and three in the north. A profiled molding runs along all four interior walls.

Present State

A large part of the building, located on a slope outside the village within the fields, have been demolished. Since it is abandoned, the building is exposed to a wide range of harmful interventions.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

A large section of the building has been demolished. There are serious cracks and loss of stone units on its main walls. Therefore, the building poses serious structural risk. Since its upper structure is largely lost, the



building is exposed to weathering conditions such as rain, snow, and strong wind.

The building is vulnerable to earthquake loads because of the cracks and loss of stone units in its main walls. Since the building is located on the slope, all of the collapsed elements are in the direction of the slope. The present state of the building clearly demonstrates the extent of vandalism.



Church of Yoldath Aloho

Dr. Stuart Blaylock

📍 **Mardin, Nusaybin, M'arre (Eskihisar)**

Present function: Abandoned

Registry Status: Registered - 31.01.2019 - 4292 Şanlıurfa Regional Board for Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

History

Carsten Niebuhr (1766) mentions a monastery dedicated to the Mother of God near Nisibis where the Syriacs brought their dead for burial (Anschütz 1984, 79). According to Niebuhr, bringing corpses to this monastery on donkeys from Midyat took five days. We cannot be sure if the church called Yoldath Aloho (Church of Virgin Mary) today belonged to that monastery. The church we see today is high up and there are caves that would be suitable for burials. It is a hall-type church which would be unusual for a West-Syrian monastery but typical for an East-Syrian. It has no trace that would point to an early date. The rubble construction and absence of masonry features testify to its humble status and probably late date (late

medieval or early modern). The inscription carved on the plaster (which could not be read) also points to a date in the 13th century at the earliest, based on its similarity to those in M'arre (for the latter, Palmer, 2010, 181). If this church was part of an East-Syrian monastery, like other monasteries around Nisibis, it must have been adopted later by the West-Syrians.

Architecture

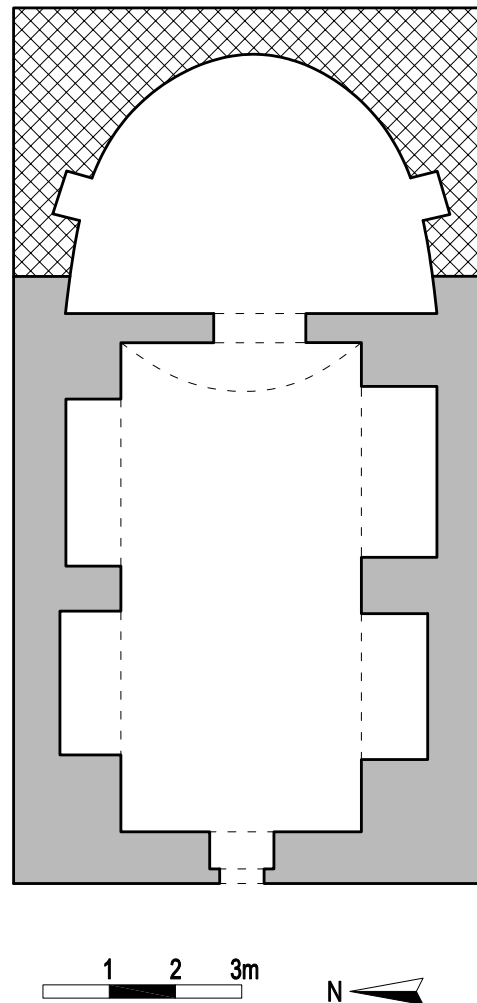
The Church of Yoldath Aloho lies near the fork where the road from Gremira (Girmeli) to M'arre divides from the road to Mor Awgin. The church is set back about 250 meters from the road, beneath a high natural rock in a combe. To the west the combe widens



out to form a small plain, now cultivated as fields. The rubble area to the west of the church could represent the limit of an entrance court; but it could equally be one of the field retaining walls typical of this area. Features cut into the rock at the base of the cliffs to the north, include a cistern.

The plan is rectangular externally, accommodating a rectangular nave with apsidal sanctuary internally. The north and south walls have two niches. The apse is separated from the nave by a high wall, with a gap in the centre providing an entrance to the sanctuary. There are smaller niches on the north and south sides of the curve of the apse, with arched heads and plastered interior surfaces.

The church is mainly of roughly-squared limestone rubble masonry. Semi-squared and rather larger blocks are reserved for corners and architectural features such as door frames and *abaci* blocks of the piers. There are also occasional blocks of better-squared stone among the rubble, possibly re-used from an earlier structure. Arches and vault ribs are constructed of unshaped, or semi-shaped voussoir blocks. The nave retains its vault, consisting of a rubble barrel vault,



abutting an arched rib of better-formed voussoirs on the archivolt of the apse. The exterior wall surfaces are partly rendered. The areas lacking this treatment perhaps represent rebuilds. Interior wall surfaces are lime plastered, with some areas fallen away.

The west elevation has a low doorway at ground level, with monolithic jambs and lintel. The masonry shows different phases: the lowest stage around the doorway is of flush-pointed rubble masonry stopping in a roughly-level upper limit. Above this is a variety of builds with a core of coursed rubble masonry, also flush pointed, including two small windows near the crown of the vault; the quoins are partly (north) or wholly (south) rebuilt, to a battered profile. The evidence for rebuilding can be seen also on the interior, where the west wall abuts the soffit of the vault.

The side walls step in at a certain height above ground level to accommodate the vaulted roof of the interior: these, too, may be secondary features. The raised central section and flanking lower sections to north and south are now roofed in earth, although other means of roofing may have been used originally. From the east the building appears

buried, and partly dug into the slope, although this may be partly an illusion created by the collapse of the apse walling and vault.

In the interior, the masonry of the west elevation displays two phases, as on the exterior. The lower stage bonds with the side walls, meaning that it is part of the primary construction of the church building. The west doorway has a pointed inner arch. The opposed niches of the nave have round-arched heads, and once had cut stone voussoirs, although these have been almost completely robbed away. Each niche contains painted crosses on the rear face, and some incised graffiti on the masonry piers that separate the niches. The original floor level is obscured by accumulated debris and collapsed rubble, which worsens at the east end of the nave and in the apse, presumably from the collapse of the vaults above.

The east end of the nave is limited by a wall up to the level of the springing of the arch with a central doorway retaining its plastered reveals. The curved wall of the apse has a rubble masonry skin facing up a cut in the bedrock (striated earth layers are visible in section where a segment of the apse





wall has fallen away), with an internal plaster face. There are niches north and south; the wall is missing at the eastern limit, so it is unclear whether there was another niche there. The interior is filled with collapsed rubble and debris to its full surviving depth.

The vault of the nave is a barrel vault of mortared rubble, with a roughly-plastered soffit. This may be a secondary construction, since it has quite a steep parabolic arch form and it abuts the apse archivolt in less-than-tidy fashion. The apse archivolt is of better-formed rubble masonry voussoirs. Small areas of the apse vault survive *in situ* against the apse archivolt to north and south.

The main ornaments in the church are numerous incised and painted crosses on the walls, particularly on the rear faces of the nave niches. These range from single crosses modeled in plaster to numerous small crosses painted in black paint. The north pier has two incised circles, possibly formerly with crosses within. Nearly all of these ornaments have been defaced.

Present State

According to the local tradition, the building was active, and presumably maintained, until 1975, which means that the collapse has happened in the last forty five years. The fact that the apse and part of the nave vaults have collapsed may mean that further similar collapses are not far off. The original structure was bonded with lime mortar, but some of the repairs and additions are earth-bonded, and thus additionally prone to water action. There is also evidence of deliberate vandalism, particularly to the crosses, presumably both from iconoclasm and the belief that such ornaments conceal treasure (Pulhan, 2019, 41; Palmer, 1990, 200).

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The main threats to the building are structural instability, exposure to the weather, flood risk, and vandalism. The overall risks remain severe, because of the abandoned condition, lonely situation and susceptibility to further structural decay and deliberate vandalism, and this can only worsen with time, if nothing is done to repair the building.

Bibliography

- Ainsworth, William Francis (1842), *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia*, vol.2, London: John W. Parker.
- Akyüz, Gabriel (1998), *Mardin İli'nin Merkezinde, Civar Köylerinde ve İlçelerinde bulunan Kiliselerin ve Manastırların tarihi*, İstanbul: Resim Matbaacılık.
- Akyüz Gabriyel and Aktaş, Şabo (2004) *Bakıyan /Alagöz Köyü'nün Tarihçesi*, Mardin: Anadolu Ofset.
- Akyüz, Gabriel (2012), *Kilise Ataları Tarafından 'Kutsal Ruhun Kavalı' Olarak Adlandırılan Süryani Mor Efrem'in Şiirleri*, Ankara: Kültür Turizm Bakanlığı.
- Akyüz, Gabriel (1998), *Deyrülzafaran Manastırı Tarihi*, Mardin: Resim Matbaacılık.
- Akyüz, Gabriel (2017), The Status of Süryanis in and around Mardin, in: H. Teule, E. Keser-Kayaalp, K. Akalın, N. Doru, M. S. Toprak (eds.), *Syriac in its multi-cultural Context*, Leuven: Peeters.
- Altun, Ara (2011 reprint, 1971), *Mardin'de Türk Devri Mimarisi*, İstanbul: Mardin Valiliği.
- Anschütz, Helga (1984) *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur 'Abdin: eine altchristliche Bevölkerungsgruppe zwischen Beharrung, Stagnation und Auflösung*, Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag.
- Aslan, Leyla (2018), Mardin Kızıltepe Kileybin Mort Mariana Kilisesi Sanat Tarihi Raporu.
- Barsoum, Afrem (2000), *History of Syriac literature and Sciences*, translation: Matti Moosa, Pueblo: Paseggiata Press.
- Barsavm, Efram (2006), *Zihniyetlerin Bahçesinde Deyruzzafaran Manastırı'nın Tarihi ve Mardin Abraşiyesi İle Manastırlarının Özet Tarihi*, (first print: 1917), translation: Akyüz, Gabriel, İstanbul: Mardin Tarihi İhtisas Kütüphanesi.
- Bilge, Yakup (2007), *Geçmişten Günümüze Deyrulzafaran Manastırı*, İstanbul: GDK Yayın.
- Bell, Gertrude L., Mundell Mango, Marlia (1982), *The churches and monasteries of the Tur 'Abdin*, London: Pindar Press.
- Blaylock, Stuart R. (1990), Adıyaman Survey 1989, *Anatolian Studies* 40, 16–18.
- Blaylock, Stuart R. (1998), Adıyaman Survey 1985–1991, in: Matthews, R. (ed.) *Ancient Anatolia, Fifty Years' Work by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara*, London: BIAA, 101–10.
- Brock, Sebastian (1980), Notes on Some Monasteries on Mount Izla, *Abr-Nahrain*, 19, 1-19.
- Brock, Sebastian (1999), Tur 'Abdin- a Homeland of Ancient Syro-Aramaean Culture, in: Hollerweger, H., *Turabdin*, Linz: Rudolf Trauner, 22-23.
- Brock, Sebastian (2011), "Babai the Great", in: S. P. Brock, A. M. Butts, G.Kiraz, L. Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Gorgias Press, 49.
- Dolapönü, Hanna (1971), *Deyr-el- umur tarihi*. İstanbul.
- Fiey, Jean M. (1977), *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours*, Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO.
- Fourdrin, Jean-Pascal (1985), Les églises à nef transversale d'Apamène et du Tûr 'Abdîn, *Syria*, 62, Fasc. 3/4, 319-335.
- Göyünç, Nejat (1972), Tûr 'Abdîn im 16. Jahrhundert nach den osmanischen Katasterbüchern, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement 2, XVIII. Deutscher Orientalistentag, 142-8.
- Güsten, Susanne (2015), *Tur 'Abdin'deki Süryani Taşınmazların Sorunu*, İstanbul: Istanbul Policy Center.
- Güsten, Susanne (2016), *A farewell to Tur 'Abdin*, Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center.
- Hage, Wolfgang (1966), *Die syrisch-jacobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit. Nach orientalischen Quellen*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Hollerweger, Hans (1999). *Lebendiges Kulturerbe, living cultural heritage, Canlı kültür mirası Turabdin*, Linz: Rudolf Trauner.

- Johnson, Dale A. (2004), *Monks of Mount Izla: Origins of Monasticism in Upper Mesopotamia in the 4th–6th Centuries*, Morrisville: Lulu.
- Jones, Michael (2003), The Concept of Cultural Landscape: Discourse and Narratives, in: Palang H., Fry G. (eds.), *Landscape Interfaces. Landscape series, vol 1*, Dordrecht: Springer.
- Keser, Elif (2002) *Tur ‘Abdin Süryani Ortodoks Dini Mimarisi*, İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2008), *Church Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, AD. 300-800*. Oxford University, Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2010), The Beth Qadishe in the Late Antique Monasteries of Northern Mesopotamia, *Parole de l’Orient*, 35, 325-348.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2013), Églises et monastères du Tur ‘Abdin: les débuts d’une architecture « syriaque », in: F. Briquel Chatonnet (ed.), *Les églises syriaques. Xe table-ronde de la Société d’études syriaques*, Paris: Geuthner, 269-288.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2016), Preservation of the architectural Heritage of the Syriac Christians in the Tur ‘Abdin: Processes and Varying Approaches, *TÜBA-KED Dergisi*, 14, 57-69.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2017), The monastery of Mor Barsawmo in the Tur ‘Abdin: artistic Continuities and Encounters, in: Tassos Papacostas, Maria Parani, (eds.), *Discipuli dona ferentes: Glimpses of Byzantium in Honour of Marlia Mundell Mango*, Turnhout: Brepols, 261-290.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif (2018), Church Building in the Tur ‘Abdin in the first centuries of the Islamic rule, in: A. Delattre, M. Legendre, P.M. Sijpestein (eds.), *Authority and Control in the Countryside*, Leiden: Brill, 176-209.
- Keser-Kayaalp, Elif and Erdoğan, Nihat (2017), Recent Research on Dara Anastasiopolis, in: Efthymios Rizos (ed.), *New Cities in late antiquity*, Turnhout: Brepols, 153-175.
- Korkut, T., (2019). Turabdin Bölgesi Hristiyan Dini Mimarisinde Midyat (2017 Yılı Arkeolojik Yüzey Araştırması). *Atlas International Refereed Journal in Social Sciences* , vol.5, 323-349.
- Krüger, Paul (1938), Das syrisch-monophysitische Mönchtum im Tūr ‘Ab(h)dīn von seinen Anfängen bis zur Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 4, 5-46.
- Lillington-Martin, Chistopher (2007), Archaeological and Ancient Literary Evidence for a Battle near Dara Gap, Turkey, AD 530, in: A. S. Lewin, P. Pellegrini (eds.), *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, Oxford: BAR, 299–311.
- Mardin KUDEB Registration Reports.
- Minov, Sergey (2019), Jews and Christians in Late Sasanian Nisibis: The Evidence of the Life of Mar Yāreth the Alexandrian, in: Rubanovich, Julia and Herman, Geoffrey (eds.), *Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 473-506.
- Monneret de Villard, Ugo (1940, trans.2012), *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, İstanbul: Yaba Yayınları.
- Mundell, Marlia (1981), The sixth century sculpture of the monastery of Deir Zafaran in Mesopotamia, *Actes du XVe Congrès International D’études Byzantines, Athènes*, 511-28.
- Mundell Mango, Marlia (1982), Deux églises de Mésopotamie du Nord: Ambar et Mar Abraham de Kashkar, *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 30, 47-70.
- Mundell Mango, Marlia (1982), The Continuity of the Classical Tradition in the Art and Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, in: Garsoian, N. G., et. al. (eds.) *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* , Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 47-70.
- Özcoşar, İbrahim (2009), *Merkezileşme Sürecinde Bir Taşra Kenti*, Mardin (1800-1900), Mardin: Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Özmen, Abdürrahim (2017), Umudu Uzakta Aramak: Süryanilerin Turabdin’den Göçü, *Turkish Studies*, 12/2, 167-178.
- Palmer, Andrew (1987), Corpus of Syriac Inscriptions from Tur ‘Abdin, *Oriens Christianus*, 71, 53-139.
- Palmer, Andrew (1990), *Monk and mason on the Tigris frontier: the early history of Tur ‘Abdin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Palmer, Andrew (2010), La montagne aux LXX monastères: la géographie monastique du Tur 'Abdin, in: F. Jullien (eds.), *Le Monachisme Syriaque*, Paris: Geuthner.
- Parry, Oswald, H. (1895), *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, London: H. Cox.
- Pognon, Henri (1907), *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul*, Paris: Impr. Nationale.
- Pulhan, Gül (2019), The Public and Archaeology: some examples from the current practices in Turkey, in Gürsu I. (ed.) *Public Archaeology: Theoretical Considerations and Current Practices in Turkey*, London: The British Institute at Ankara, 41–51.
- Sachau, Eduard (1883), *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig: F.A Brockhaus.
- Schachner, Lukas A. (2010) The archaeology of the stylite, in: Gwynn, D., Bangert S. (eds.) *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, Leiden: Brill.
- Sinclair Thomas A. (1989), *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, Volume III, London: Pindar Press.
- Soileau, Mark (2017), A Vinicultural history of Tur 'Abdin, in: L. Thys-Şenocak (ed.), *Of vines and wines: the production and consumption of wine in Anatolian civilizations through the ages*, Leuven: Peeters, 21-38.
- Summers, G.D., French, D.H. (1992), 1990 Adıyaman Yüzey Araştırması, IX Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı, 505–22.
- Szymaszek, Maciej (2013), The Lost Screens of the Churches of Mar Cyriacus in Arnas and Mar 'Azaziel in Kefr Zeh (Tur 'Abdin, Turkey), *Eastern Christian Art*, 9, 107-118.
- Teule, Herman (2012), Who are the Syriacs?, in: P. H. Omtzigt, et. al. (eds.), *The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey: And of the Grounds of the Mor Gabriel Monastery*, Berlin: LitVerlag, 47-57.
- Uygur, Hatice K. (2015), *Kültürel Doku İçinde Mardin Süryanilerinin Kutsal Mekân Efsaneleri*, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.
- Van Rompay, L. 2011, Abraham of Kashkar, in: S. P. Brock, A. M. Butts, G.Kiraz, L. Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Gorgias Press, 8.
- Vööbus, Arthur (1958), *History of asceticism in the Syrian Orient: a contribution to the history of culture in the Near East*, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO.
- Vööbus, Arthur (1975) *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition*. Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO 375.
- Whitby, Michael (1986), Procopius' description of Dara, in: P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (eds.), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, Oxford, 737-783.
- Wiessner, Gernot (1981-1993), *Christliche Kultbauten im Tur 'Abdin*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Note: This series consist of four volumes which include a "textband" (text) and a "tafelband" (pictures). In this publication, the first is referred as I and the latter as II. For example the text of the 4th volume is IV/I, the figures of the same volume is IV/II.
- Wilmshurst, David (2000), *The ecclesiastical organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913*, Leuven: Peeters.

Glossary

Abacus: The slab placed on top of a capital.

Abbara: Vaulted passages linking neighbouring houses or streets, commonly found in Mardin and Midyat.

Acanthus leaf: A decorative element in the shape of a conventionalized representation of an acanthus leaf, especially used in Corinthian column capitals

Additional element: Later addition to a structure not in harmony with original features.

Aisle: In a church, a lower part parallel to and at the side of a nave, choir or transept, from which it is divided by pillars

Ambulatory: A curved or polygonal corridor that permits walking around the apse inside a church.

Apse: Semicircular, sacred recess in a church where the altar is placed.

Apsidiole: A small, secondary apse, or a one of the apses on either side of the main apse in a triapsidal church.

Arch: A semicircular structural element that connects two columns.

Baghdadi: A technique of close-timbering between bays on the exterior and interior, coated in plaster.

Baldachin: Permanent canopy, especially over an altar, throne or tomb, usually supported on columns.

Baptismal font: Font that contains water used for baptisms.

Barrel vault: A cross-cut, semi-cylindrical vault made of bricks and mortar.

Basilical plan: Large, rectangular church plan divided into halls with rows of columns with the middle nave one higher than those on the sides.

Bema: The platform in the middle of the nave from which the Scriptures are read and explained before the eucharistic liturgy.

Beth slutho: Outdoor Oratory, an open air apse.

Beth kadiše: House of the saints, Burial Chamber.

Bevel: Blunting out to have sloping surface on a structure; sloping side.

Bond beam: Wood, brick or cement elements horizontally placed with space between from end to end inside walls of a structure to reinforce the masonry building.

Bossage: To cut material, especially stone, to a form as if awaiting fine dressing.

Capstone: Lintel-stone or large flat stone fixed on top of something, typically a wall.

Carcass: Building or part of it, finished as to its main construction or shell, essentially the bare, basic loadbearing part (framed or otherwise) without flooring, roofing-cover, window-frames or finishes.

Chamfer: An oblique surface produced by cutting away a corner at angle (usually 45 °), not as big as a splay.

Chapel: 1.Small church 2.Place of worship dedicated to a Saint in large churches.

Close joints: A joint technique with which wall stones are fit as tight as possible, remaining holes are filled with mortar and the surface is troweled.

Colophon: Brief statement containing information about the manuscript.

Composite order: A classical order of architecture consisting of elements of the Ionic and Corinthian orders.

Corbel: Horizontal structural element carried by only one abutment on one side, with other sides unsupported.

Corinthian order: A column order used in Ancient Greek architecture in which capitals are adorned with acanthus leaves and columns rise on a pedestal.

Cornice: Protrusions delimiting the upper side of the façade of a structure.

Crypt: An underground room or vault beneath a church, used as a chapel or burial place.

Cyma Molding: Projecting molding, common in Classical architecture, with an ogee section, usually of equal convex and concave arcs, with a plain fillet above and below it.

Diaconicon: A cell adjoining the Qdush-qudshin, or sanctuary on the south side where the deacons put on their vestments for the eucharistic liturgy.

Double Wall: Vertical panel made of stone, bricks etc., protecting the sides of the structure from exterior damage and separating the interior sections.

Drainage: Act of transferring accumulated water from one place to another.

Drum: The circular, square or polygonal pedestal that carries a dome.

Eave: Lowest portion of a pitched roof projecting beyond the surface of the wall beneath.

Efflorescence: A crystalline deposit on surfaces of masonry, stucco, or concrete.

Emboss: To carve, mould, or stamp a design on a surface so that it stands out in relief.

Estrangelo: The angular, monumental script used for inscriptions and for the Scriptures by both East and West Syrians, as opposed to the rounded cursive script used from at least the third century for documents, colophons and such records.

Exedra: A semicircular, open recess covered with a semi dome and which serves as seating.

Fluting: Longitudinal, parallel indentations with equal space in between running the height of a column.

Fresco: Painting with mineral dye done on wet plaster.

Frieze: In classical architecture, decorated section between ground sill and the roof.

Gable roof: A simple roof design shaped like an inverted V.

Gallery: Wide corridor connecting many sections of a structure on the same floor, built either on the exterior or the interior.

Garland: Inlay in the form of a wreath of leaves and flowers hanging between two ends.

Garrison: The building occupied by troops stationed in a town to defend it.

Garshuni: Another language, often Arabic, written with the Syriac alphabet.

Groin vault: Vault produced by the intersection of two barrel vaults at right angles. Also sometimes known as cross vault.

Icon: Religious depictions in Orthodox Christian art.

Iconography: Branch of knowledge dealing with representations of people or objects in art and design, hence the symbolism in a design.

Impost: Top course of a column that supports an arch.

Iwan: Large semicircular niche-like building element, sometimes with a semidome over, resembling a large apse, often arranged on an axis related to a larger space.

Jamb: Long stone post placed on both sides of a door or window.

Joint: The visible connecting element between wall stones filled with mortar and troweled.

Keystone: The stone placed at the summit of an arch consisting of radially tapered sections which support each other.

Khorasan mortar: A type of mortar made of sifted brick dust, lime and water, main material of structures, especially in Asia Minor.

Lath: Narrow, thin strip of wood used as a base for a plaster finish.

Lintel: The beam conducting to the sides the weight of window or door apertures or the part that joins two columns.

Martyrium: A place which bears the memory of Jesus Christ or one of his apostles or which bears the relics of a Christian martyr; a structure built in such a place.

Mihrab: A niche in the wall of a mosque, at the point nearest to Mecca, towards which the congregation faces to pray

Molding: Raised fringe that frames the wall, ceiling, door or windows of a structure.

Monastic type church in Tur 'Abdin: Church long in a north-south direction with a tripartite apse in the east.

Mor/ Mar: Saint

Muqarnas: is a form of architectural ornamented vaulting, the "geometric subdivision of a squinch, or cupola, or corbel, into a large number of miniature squinches, producing a sort of cellular structure", sometimes also called a "honeycomb" vault.

Naos: Main area in Orthodox churches available for public worship.

Narthex: Entrance area in a church separated from the naos with a wall or columns.

Nave: The main body, or prayer-hall (Syriac: Hayklo), of a church building, as distinct from the Qdush-qudshin, or sanctuary, where only the clergy may stand. The bema stands in the centre of the nave. Men stand at the east end of the nave, women and young children at the west end.

Niche: A usually arched recess in a wall mostly to place an oil lamp or other lights within.

Oculus: A round opening on top of a dome or a roof.

Pantile: Plain roofing-tile with a profile resembling an S on its side giving a corrugated effect when laid on the roof.

Parapet: Low wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, bridge, roof or terrace.

Parecclesion: Chapel built adjacent to or separate from a church.

Pastophoria (singular: pastophorion): Two cells on the north and south of the main apse.

Pedestal: The base on which a column or something similar is mounted.

Pediment: A triangular decoration framed with a cornice above a door or a window.

Pendentive: Rounded triangle structural element connecting a square plan with the spherical base of a dome, positioned between the dome and the carrier vaults.

Pilaster: A column partly embedded in a wall.

Pointing: Process, material, or completed finish of mortar-joints in brickwork or masonry.

Portico: A structure consisting of a roof supported by columns at regular intervals, typically attached as a porch to a building.

Prothesis: A room in Greek-Orthodox churches in which the liturgy of preparations is held.

Qdush-qudshin: Sanctuary, the centre and eastern focus of the church building, where the Eucharistic liturgy is performed at the altar. Also called Madhbeho, or place of sacrifice.

Reconstruction: The process of re-building a building that has been severely damaged or destroyed.

Relief: A raised or embedded form on a surface.

Rib: Circular molding jutting from arches carrying the vault, which also transfers vault weight from the buttresses to the ground.

Rosette: A circular, stylized flower decoration.

Rustication: In masonry, to fashion stone in large blocks with sunk joints and a roughened surface.

Sill: Lower horizontal projecting element below an aperture (e.g. doorway or window), to throw water off the surface of the wall below.

Skylight: An opening that runs the height of a structure built to draw sufficient light in the middle section of a structure.

Spolia: Elements formerly used in another structure, repurposed in new construction, usually with inlays or decoration.

Spreader: Wooden or steel rod connecting two structural elements.

Squinch: Part of a vault superimposed on the corner of a structure.

Stele: A vertical stone slab carved with reliefs, inscriptions and ornament, commonly used as a gravestone.

Stucco: Decorative coating on walls and ceilings.

Surveying: Measuring all dimensions of a structure

built to draw sufficient light in the middle section of a structure.

Synthronos: A semicircular row of seats with the cathedra in the middle behind the altar in the apse of an Early Christian or Byzantine Church.

Templon: The division between the middle nave and the apse in a church.

Terazzo: In situ or precast finish for floors, dados, etc. made of small pieces of marble beaten down into a fairly stiff cement or lime-mortar, rubbed down, and polished.

Tie bar/tie rod: A rod acting as a tie in a building or other structure.

Transept: In a cross-shaped church, either of the two parts forming the arms of the cross shape, projecting at right angles from the nave.

Vault: Structural element forming a roof.

Village (parochial) type church in Tur 'Abdin: Church long in an east-west direction with a single nave.

Vita: Life story.

Volute: Spiral curves similar to a ram's horn on top of a column.

