“Do not focus on their barbarous tongue”: The Languages of Monks and Ascetics of Early Byzantine Syria

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THE COMPLEX ISSUE of written and spoken languages used in Eastern monastic and loose ascetic communities of the early Byzantine period has been discussed in detail, especially regarding the coenobia and laurae of Palestine.[1] The region has appeared particularly rewarding for such a study mainly because of the monastic immigration from all over the Empire to the places associated with New Testament episodes. Those who flocked to the “Holy Land” came from different lands and cultures as well as different backgrounds in terms of education, wealth, and social standing. Thus, the languages, dialects, or even language registers within one language also differed greatly in every major monastery. This situation prompted a number of sharp observations on the languages used in the church and in monasteries by Latin-speaking linguistically sensitive visitors from the West, such as Egeria and Jerome.[2] The

[1] S. H. Griffith, “Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine,” *ChHist* 58 (1989) 7–19, and “From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods,” *DOP* 51 (1997) 11–31; J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ. The Monasteries of Palestine 314–631* (Oxford 1994) 114.

[2] Thus e.g. a description of the liturgical service and the presence of interpreters in Jerusalem in the report of Egeria’s (Etheria’s) pilgrimage, dating from the 380s: “In this province there are some people who know both Greek and Syriac, but others know only one or the other. The bishop may

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overall wealth of the linguistic phenomena and the number of sources describing them are, therefore, unmatched in any other region, perhaps with the exception of Egypt.[3]

know Syriac, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek, and has a presbyter beside him who translates the Greek into Syriac, so that everyone can understand what he means. Similarly, the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, but there is always someone in attendance to translate into Syriac so that the people understand. Of course, there are also people here who speak neither Greek nor Syriac, but Latin. But there is no need for them to be discouraged, since some of the brothers or sisters who speak Latin as well as Greek will explain things to them" (transl. after J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* [Liverpool 1999] 146). A. Franceschini and R. Weber, "Itinerarium Egeriae," in *Itineraria et alia geographica* I (Turnhout 1965) 89 (ch. 47): *Et quoniam in ea prouincia pars populi et grece et siriste nouit, pars etiam alia per se grece, aliqua. etiam pars tantum siriste, itaque quoniam episcopus, licet siriste nouerit, tamen semper grece loquitur et nunquam siriste: itaque ergo stat semper presbyter, qui, episcopo grece dicente, siriste interpretatur, ut omnes audiant, quae exponuntur. Lectiones etiam, quecumque in ecclesia leguntur, quia necesse est grece legi, semper stat, qui siriste interpretatur propter populum, ut semper discant. Sane quicumque hic latini sunt, id est qui nec siriste nec grece nouerunt, ne contristentur, et ipsis exponitur eis, quia sunt alii fratres et sorores grecolatini, qui latine exponunt eis*. By "in Syriac" (*siriste*) Egeria denotes a local Aramaic dialect. Certainly this was not Classical Syriac—a derivative of Old/Edessene Syriac—but rather an umbrella term for all Aramaic dialects. When he came to Palestine and got acquainted with local ascetic communities, Jerome was also struck by the multitude of languages and dialects used for speaking and writing, and their changeability in different contexts. As a linguistically sensitive author he often stressed code-switching situations in his works. For example, on the visitors to the famed hermit Saint Hilarion (*V.Hlar.* 25): "he had frequently healed many Saracens possessed by demons. They went to meet him in crowds with their wives and children, bending their heads and crying in the Syriac tongue *Barech*, that is, *Bless*" (transl. W. H. Fremantle, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* SER. II 6 (Buffalo 1893) 309). A. A. R. Bastiaensen and J. W. Smit, "Vita di Ilarione," in *Vita di Martino. Vita di Ilarione. In memoria di Paola* (Milan 1975): *multos enim Saracenorum arreptos a daemone frequenter curauerat, gregatim ei cum uxoribus et liberis obuiam processere, submittentes colla et uoce syra: "barech," id est, "benedic," inclamantes*.

[3] For an overview of the linguistic situation at Egyptian monasteries see S. Torallas Tovar, "La situación lingüística en los monasterios egipcios en los siglos IV–V," *CCO* 1 (2003) 233–245 (with a suggestion that "[linguistic] groups [were] set up according to their languages in the monasteries and so

With respect to ancient Syria (modern Syria and southeastern Türkiye), it is one of the more intriguing linguistic phenomena of the early Byzantine East that a form of Classical Syriac which sprung from Old Syriac (or the Edessene Aramaic),[4] an Eastern Aramaic dialect, spread westwards and dominated the area of North Syria in spite of the strong roots there of Western Aramaic dialects—to become in both epigraphy and literary output *the* language of Christian Aramaic literary culture.

Syriac certainly differed from the Aramaic that must have been spoken in the hinterland of Antioch.[5] The relations between spoken and written languages in the Antiochene have been fiercely debated in recent years by scholars such as Fergus Millar, Scott Johnson, and Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, but it seems that no easy answers can be readily given. In any case, stereotypical associations of Hellenized towns with Greek and rural areas with Aramaic can be dismissed, for truly monolingual groups are in general a rarity while bilingualism and *diglossia*

a certain pressure [was] exerted on them to learn Coptic"); J.-L. Fournet, *The Rise of Coptic: Egyptian versus Greek in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 2020) 112–148. See also Y. Minets, "Language Matters, Language Does Not Matter. Learning a Foreign Language and Renouncing One's Native Tongue in the Early Christian Ascetic Tradition," in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities. Multilingualism and Linguistic Practice in the Late Antique Near East and Egypt* (Leiden 2024) 235–267.

[4] For the use of "Old Syriac" and "Syriac" as umbrella terms denoting a spectrum of dialectal forms bound by script similarities, see Y. Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel. Languages and Identities in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge 2021) 27, with earlier literature.

[5] As the main linguistic differences F. Briquel-Chatonnet singled out the prefix in N- applied in the 3rd-person of the masculine singular imperfect tense in Syriac (Eastern Aramaic), while West Aramaic has a tendency for Y-. Another difference is the masculine plural ending -ê in Syriac against West Aramaic -aia. As these Eastern linguistic features are present in the inscriptions discussed here, they cannot be considered as a continuation in written form of the locally spoken Aramaic. F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "Les inscriptions syriaques du Massif Calcaire de Syrie du Nord," *Topoi* Suppl. 12 (2013) 25–31, at 28. See also F. Briquel-Chatonnet and J. Daccache, "Researches on Syriac Writing in the Hinterland of Antioch," *The Harp* 30 (2016) 417–436.

quickly develop in environments where more than one language or even different varieties of one language interact. Thus, each case requires individual investigation.[6]

In this paper I argue that Syriac in its epigraphical and literary form was one of key languages (if not *the* key language) of regional Syrian monasteries and ascetic groups, especially from the sixth century onwards, and that its success grew on a fertile ground of Western Aramaic-speaking followers of ascetic movements who already in previous centuries had found it difficult to adapt to ecclesiastical Greek. The issue arises in my current project, whose central question is the choice of language for monumental inscriptions produced in the region between the fourth and seventh centuries CE.[7] So far, the project team’s inquiries seem to show that the choice of Syriac over Greek as the language of building or dedicatory inscriptions in the Antiochene and Apamene, was not directly entailed by adherence to a specific creed (sc. the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian divide), and was not aligned with the liturgical language (which seems to be Greek even in communities with a good dossier of Syriac inscriptions), nor particularly associated with the linguistic choices of artisans, stonecutters and mosaicists, whose signatures are often in Greek.[8]

There is however a correlation of the use of Syriac with inscriptions authorized by local supervisors of work and persons seeking to efficiently record practical information on the construction of public buildings. It also appears that a significant

[6] For an overview of recent debates see C. Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places. Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley 2014) 140–143, and Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel* 28–29.

[7] *Epigraphy and Identity in the Early Byzantine Middle East*, funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (see n.35 below and https://epi-identity.uw.edu.pl/).

[8] See P.-L. Gatier, “Inscriptions grecques, mosaïques et églises des debuts de l’époque islamique au Proche-Orient,” in *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides* (Turnhout 2011) 7–28; S. Leatherbury, “Signing in Syriac: Artists’ Signatures and Identities in Late Antique Syria,” in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities* 79–104.

number of Syriac inscriptions were found at monasteries and isolated hermitages rather than in villages or in urban environments. Accordingly, I mean to look closely at this last correlation.[9] The fundamental question is, thus, whether Syriac was in fact chosen more often by those in monastic or ascetic communities as the language of their epigraphic activity, or is this just a false impression, induced e.g. by the uneven distribution of finds and epigraphic surveys, or the probability of survival of inscriptions in isolated environments. Answering this question may require revisiting a number of sources other than inscriptions themselves, in order to get some glimpses of the spoken and written languages used in Syrian monasteries, alongside a quantitative survey of the epigraphical finds to date. Together, these sources may help us answer the question about the linguistic preferences of monks in Syria.

The literary sources, or monks and villagers

It may be most fitting to first examine several sermons by John Chrysostom and Severus of Antioch. One, Chrystostom's *On the Holy Martyrs* (*CPG* 4357, *BHG* 1186) has been a number of times put forward as possibly referring to either villagers or ascetics in the hinterland of Antioch as speaking a language, or at least a linguistic variety, considered by the inhabitants of Antioch as

[9] The correlation of findspots of Syriac inscriptions with monastic sites has been noted, but never thoroughly discussed. See Briquel-Chatonnet, in *Villes et campagnes* 29, where she credits monasteries with the diffusion of Classical Syriac in northwestern Syria as a prestigious language of Christianity; S. Brelaud et al., "Les inscriptions syriaques de la mosaïque de l'église de Gola," *Syria* 99 (2022) 273–290, at n.59 on the correlation between monastic sites and Syriac inscriptions in southeastern Türkiye: "on lit des charges monastiques à Örmetaş en 489 (un archimandrite, un économe, en plus d'au moins deux presbytres), Kurtaran en 490 (un 'frère' et des presbytres), Hazinedere en 556 (un archimandrite, un diacre et au moins un presbytre) et Yolbilen en 561/562 (un archimandrite et quatre presbytres). Pour la Syrie, à Nabġa en 406/407 (deux archimandrites, deux diacres), Ḥuwayja Ḥalāwa en 471 (un archimandrite) et Tell Bīʿa en 509 (un archimandrite, un presbytre du monastère, un presbytre, quatre diacres)."

"inferior" to their own variety of Greek.[10] In his response to this apparent discrimination, Chrysostom emphatically reproached the Antiochene Christians for ridiculing the strangers and held them up as exemplary for their zeal in undertaking a tiresome pilgrimage to a Christian festival.

> But, as I said in the beginning, yesterday was a martyrs' day, and today is a martyrs' day too—not of those in our city, but those of the countryside. Yet the latter are also ours. For, although city and country differ from one another in the affairs of life, they share and unite together in the cause of piety. I pray, do not focus on their barbarous tongue, but on the wisdom of their mind. For what use is there in speaking the same language, when our beliefs are apart? And what harm is there in having different languages, when our faith is in accord? In this sense, the countryside is by no means inferior to the city, for they stand in equality with regard to the chief of goods. (…) Indeed, just as, when we were celebrating the feast of the Maccabees, all the countryside poured into the city, even so now that the festival of the local martyrs is being celebrated there, the whole city should have gone off to them.[11]

[10] On the passages discussed here see for example: on Chrysostom, D. G. K. Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia," in J. N. Adams et al. (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford 2002) 298–331, at 304 and n.13; T. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor 2002) 15–16; D. Dunn-Wilson, *A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids 2005) 102; Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places* 141–143; J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton 2018) 18–19; on Severus, Briquel-Chatonnet, in *Villes et campagnes* 27–28; F. Alpi, *La route royale. Sévère d'Antioche et les Églises d'Orient* I (Beirut 2009) 175; A.-G. Martin, "Prédication de Sévère d'Antioche sur la sécheresse," *Revue réformée* 36 (1985) 49–54. Cf. M. Marcos, "Ethnic-cultural Prejudice in Early Christian Monasticism," in F. Marco Simón et al. (eds.), *Xenofobia y racismo en el mundo antiguo* (Barcelona 2019) 219–232 (especially on parallels with the *Lausiac History*).

[11] Translation and comments: Efthymios Rizos, *Cult of Saints*: http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02567. *PG* 50.645–654; ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἔφην ἀρχόμενος, χθὲς μαρτύρων ἡμέρα, καὶ σήμερον μαρτύρων ἡμέρα, οὐχὶ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ· μᾶλλον δὲ κἀκεῖνοι παρ' ἡμῖν. Πόλις μὲν γὰρ

Chrysostom is not clear in his description. He emphasizes a significant cultural difference between Antioch and the surrounding areas ("city and country differ from one another in the affairs of life"). At the same time, he considers the Christian religion as an instrument which can bridge this gap and establish a common ground for the people belonging to these two groups ("they share and unite together in the cause of piety"). Hence, religion is in his eyes not a point of possible strife (which is quite interesting given the debate on the survival of Graeco-Roman and Eastern cults in the Syrian countryside).[12] But on the other hand, he stigmatizes the linguistic difference as a main cause of vicious behaviour of the city-dwellers ("I pray, do not focus on their barbarous tongue, but on the wisdom of their mind"). It seems, therefore, that to him language proficiency (or linguistic identity) is not tied to any local, religious, or ethnic identity but rather to the level of one's education. In fact, Chrysostom downplays the importance of education and language to such an extreme point that they cannot play any role at all as a status or identity marker. He builds a stark opposition between education/linguistic skills and religion, saying that proficiency in

καὶ χώρα ἐν τοῖς βιωτικοῖς πράγμασιν ἀλλήλων διεστήκασι, κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγον κοινωνοῦσι καὶ ἥνωνται. Μὴ γάρ μοι τὴν βάρβαρον αὐτῶν φωνὴν ἴδῃς, ἀλλὰ τὴν φιλοσοφοῦσαν αὐτῶν διάνοιαν. Τί γάρ μοι ὄφελος τῆς ὁμοφωνίας, ὅταν τὰ τῆς γνώμης ᾖ διῃρημένα; τί δέ μοι βλάβος τῆς ἑτεροφωνίας, ὅταν τὰ τῆς πίστεως ᾖ συνημμένα; Κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον οὐδὲν οὔτε χώρα πόλεως εὐτελεστέρα· ἐν γὰρ τῷ κεφαλαίῳ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὴν ἰσοτιμίαν ἔχουσι (…) καὶ καθάπερ τῆς ἑορτῆς τῶν Μακκαβαίων ἐπιτελουμένης, πᾶσα ἡ χώρα εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐξεχύθη· οὕτω τῆς ἑορτῆς τῶν ἐκεῖ μαρτύρων ἀγομένης, νῦν τὴν πόλιν ἅπασαν πρὸς ἐκείνους μεταστῆναι ἐχρῆν.

[12] The survival of pre-Christian cults in Syria well into Late Antiquity was emphasized in Frank Trombley's *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* (Leiden 1993–1995). Though the views presented require revision, the general thesis still holds well. Of course, sometimes we are dealing with pure rhetoric, e.g. when Christian authors ascribe to inhabitants of some localities a reputation of particularly "stubborn pagans," e.g. Ḫarrān/Carrhae. More recently, see J. F. Healy, "The Pre-Christian Religions of the Syriac-speaking Regions," in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (London 2018) 47–67.

Christianity and faith is irrespective of education and one’s mother tongue: “For what use is there in speaking the same language, when our beliefs are apart? And what harm is there in having different languages, when our faith is in accord?”

Now, the question is whether Chrysostom fosters the toleration of fully-fledged linguistic diversity between Antiochenes and their neighbours or only calls for the understanding of differences in language varieties that result from the lack of education. Since education was actually seen as proficiency in Greek literature and rhetoric, we can assume that the strangers ridiculed by the Antiochenes were probably people with inferior or no knowledge of Greek. I doubt that he would call a low variety of Greek ἡ βάρβαρος φωνή, “the barbarous speech/language”: the designation is too sharp to refer to varieties within the same language —even in a sermon, a genre with a tendency to exaggerate.[13] Ecclesiastics complained about the level of education of villagers throughout the Mediterranean. In the West, for example, Martin of Braga noted that writing sermons for villagers necessitated the use of a peculiar register of language, probably allowing for at least partial vulgarization of content and form. In his case, it is the low-level variety of Latin that was meant, not an entirely different language, but his description and the linguistic context of late antique Hispania are very different from that of John Chrysostom.[14]

[13] See Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel* 151, on the tendency of ancient Greek authors to treat Semitic languages as “barbarous tongues,” and her comments on the ancient understanding of φωνή as a “language” or “tongue” while it was διάλεκτος that denoted a “mode of speech characteristic of a people or region.”

[14] Martin of Braga *De correctione rusticorum* 1.2: “But because (I thought it) best to offer them an account so fitted to them that it would take their fancy, I had to sketch out a vast extent of past ages and events in a brief compass, and give the country-dwellers their sustenance in language familiar to them”; *Sed quia oportet ab initio mundi uel modicam illis rationis notitiam quasi pro gustu porrigere, necesse me fuit ingentem praeteritorum temporum gestorumque siluam breuiato tenuis compendii sermone contingere et cibum rusticis rustico sermone condire*. (transl. I.

If we accept this reasoning, we have a group of zealous Christians, presumably non-Greek users, who regularly visit Antioch to participate in the festive days. Chrysostom does not name this group, characterizing them only by their linguistic exclusion, and their zeal. It would probably be too hasty to assume that they were monks rather than ordinary villagers. Nonetheless, supporting evidence may be produced from a letter by Ambrose of Milan, apparently touching upon this very same issue from the perspective of a Westerner.[15] The distance between Antioch and Milan may be a bit disturbing, but one should take into account that Ambrose and Chrysostom were contemporary writers, and the wide ecclesiastical network of Ambrose as well as his interest in the affairs of the East may have given him a rather good overview of happenings in Syria (*Ep.* 74.16):

> Will punishment be exacted also for the burning of a temple of the Valentinians? (…) For when the Valentinians blocked the route along which the monks were advancing in procession to the festival of the Maccabean martyrs, chanting psalms, as was their ancient practice and custom, the monks were angered by such insolence (*ut in monachos vindicaretur qui prohibentibus iter Valentinianis quo psalmos canentes ex consuetudine usu que veteri pergebant ad celebritatem Machabaeorum martyrum moti insolentia incenderunt*), and set fire to a Valentinian shrine which had been hastily constructed in some country village. (transl. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz)

Ambrose describes a violent incident that took place probably after the destruction of the synagogue in Kallinikon in Mesopotamia in 388, since the whole letter sets the scene for justifying Christians' violence towards other religions and religious options within Christianity. He admonishes the emperor that Christians should not be held responsible for attacking Valentinan

Velázquez Soriano, "Between Orthodox Belief and 'Superstition' in Visigothic Hispania," in F. M. Simón et al. [eds.], *Magical Practice in the Latin West* [Leiden 2009] 612).

[15] See the comments of Frances Trzeciak, who noticed similarities in both passages: *Cult of Saints*: http://csla.history.ox.uk/record.php?recid=E05207.

"heretics," just as they were exonerated after destroying Jewish property and prayer houses. So it appears that the sermon describes a very real situation, not some fictitious events. For this paper, however, the most important part is that Ambrose identifies the people on the route to Antioch as monks, and the day as the Feast of the Maccabean martyrs. If we combine this testimony with that of Chrysostom, it is very tempting to assume that they are speaking about this same category of people, and that there was some linguistic "deficiency" of Antiochene monks that seemed obvious to the dwellers in Antioch.

Complaints about the poor level of the education and culture of monks (from the perspective of classical education), as well as about their violent behaviour, are not uncommon in Late Antiquity. In the Antiochene context, Libanius deplores the violent destruction of temples in the countryside by bands of roving monks (*Or.* 30.8–9):

> This black-robed tribe (οἱ δὲ μελανειμονοῦντες), who eat more than elephants and, by the quantities of drink they consume, weary those that accompany their drinking with the singing of hymns (τοῖς δι᾽ ᾀσμάτων αὐτοῖς παραπέμπουσι τὸ ποτόν), who hide these excesses under an artificially contrived pallor—these people, Sire, while the law yet remains in force, hasten to attack the temples with sticks and stones and bars of iron, and in some cases, disdaining these, with hands and feet. Then utter desolation follows, with the stripping of roofs, demolition of walls, the tearing down of statues and the overthrow of altars, and the priests must either keep quiet or die (…) Such outrages occur even in the cities, but they are most common in the countryside (…) So they sweep across the countryside like rivers in spate, and by ravaging the temples, they ravage the estates, for wherever they tear out a temple from an estate, that estate is blinded and lies murdered. (transl. A. F. Norman)[16]

[16] We also find a particularly harsh criticism of Egyptian monks in the *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* of Eunapius of Sardis, a devout supporter of polytheistic religions in the fifth century: "Next, into the sacred places they imported monks, as they called them, who were men in appearance but swine

In this connection a passage of Theodoret's *Philotheos Historia* (13.7) merits attention, especially for his mention of interpreters employed by the courts of justice in Syria. He relates a speech given by a monk Macedonius after the Statues Riot in Antioch in 387. Macedonius needed the help of an interpreter before the judges. The episode finds confirmation in other writings of Theodoret and even in *Homily* 17 on the Statues by Chrysostom, but these do not explicitly mention the inability of the monk to deliver a fully-fledged Greek speech.[17] Importantly, however, the passage shows again that some monks from the hinterland of Antioch during Chrysostom's priesthood were not sufficiently skilled in Greek to speak for themselves before the judges.

Another, more ambiguous piece of evidence is Chrysostom's *Baptismal Sermon* 8.2 (CPG 4472):[18]

> But since the people who have this day streamed into our assembly from the country have made our gathering more brilliant, let us in return set before them a richer spiritual banquet (…) that they may take from it enough to sustain them on their homeward way (…) Let us not look to the fact that their speech is different from ours. Let us note carefully the true doctrine of their soul and not their barbarous tongue (…) For they fulfil in deeds the precept of the Apostle, who bids us to get our daily bread by working with our hands (…) By striving to fulfil these precepts by the very work they do, they speak a language more eloquent than words. Or whenever the teaching of deeds leads the way, there is no longer

in lifestyle, and openly did and allowed countless unspeakable acts"; εἶτα ἐπεισῆγον τοῖς ἱεροῖς τόποις τοὺς καλουμένους μοναχούς, ἀνθρώπους μὲν κατὰ τὸ εἶδος, ὁ δὲ βίος αὐτοῖς συώδης, καὶ ἐς τὸ ἐμφανὲς ἔπασχόν τε καὶ ἐποίουν μυρία κακὰ καὶ ἄφραστα (transl. H. Baltussen).

[17] For further comments on the monk Macedonius see F. Van De Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom, The Homilies on the Statues* (Rome 1991) 72 n.346. Shepardson (*Controlling Contested Places* 152 n.69) holds that Chrysostom overestimated the impact of monks on the whole incident. This, however, does not make incidental details such as the linguistic skills of monks less credible.

[18] For comments on this sermon, especially from the linguistic perspective, see Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places* 141; F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "To Write in Greek or to Write in Syriac: The Dynamics of Languages in North Syria in Late Antiquity," in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities* 25–49, at 32.

> any need for instruction by words. Yet you may see these men engaged in both. At one time they stand close beside the sacred altar reading the divine laws and instructing those who hear their words. At another, they toil over the tilling of the earth, as they drag the plough, cut furrows in the field, scatter their seeds, and entrust them to the bosom of the earth. At still another time they take in hand the plough of instruction and sow the seed of the divine teachings in the souls of their disciples. Therefore, let us not look simply at their appearance and the language they speak, while we overlook the virtue of their lives. Let us observe carefully the angelic life they lead and the love of wisdom shown in their way of life. They have driven out of their lives all soft and gluttonous self-indulgence. They have not only put these things aside but also all the slack conduct commonly found in the cities. They eat only as much as can suffice to sustain life, and all the rest of their time they occupy their minds in hymns and constant prayers, imitating in this the angels' way of life. They have said a long farewell to the ostentation of the present life and, by the excellence of their conduct, they strive to lead their subjects to imitate them. (transl. P. W. Harkins)[19]

Here Chrysostom devotes a whole introductory paragraph to the description of the newly arrived worshippers, and urges the citizens of Antioch to embrace them as their brethren. A flashpoint was certainly their language, as Chrysostom refers to it several times: "different" (ἐνηλλαγμένην ἔχουσι τὴν διάλεξιν), so alien that Chrysostom does not hesitate to describe it as a "barbaric language" (βάρβαρον ἔχουσι τὴν γλῶτταν). Even if this is just an exaggerated figure of speech (which is not surprising in a sermon, and ἐνηλλαγμένη διάλεξις more likely expresses a "distortion" or "alteration" of a shared language rather than the opposition of two different languages), the emphasis is so strong that it may indicate unskilled attempts at Greek by people ac-

[19] For the Greek text see A. Wenger, *Jean Chrysostome. Huit Catéchèses baptismales inédites* (Paris 1957) 248–249; there is no need to quote it here as I discuss select passages below.

customed to an Aramaic dialect as their spoken language.[20]

If from this evidence we identify this group as Aramaic-speakers who had a basic command of imperfect Greek as their second language, the question then remains whether they are subantiochene farmers or monks/ascetics. Admittedly, Chrysostom characterizes them as living by agriculture, which fits a description of an ordinary farmer. At the same time, however, he hints at their other activities, which induce me to suggest that these are in fact monks involved in some agricultural work in their rural monasteries. First of all, they are said to "live an angelic life" and to "love wisdom" (ἀλλ' ἀκριβῶς αὐτῶν καταμάθωμεν τὸν βίον τὸν ἀγγελικόν, τὴν φιλόσοφον διαγωγήν), a quite characteristic way to denote life in a monastic community. Furthermore, he alludes to their contempt for a life of luxury, their withdrawal from the community of society, and their strict deprivation of food (πᾶσα γὰρ τρυφὴ καὶ ἀδηφαγία παρὰ τούτοις ἀπελήλαται· οὐ μόνον δὲ ταῦτα ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ λοιπὴ βλακεία ἡ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι πολιτευομένη καὶ τοσαῦτα μόνον σιτοῦνται ὅσα πρὸς τὴν τῆς ζωῆς σύστασιν αὐτοῖς ἀρκέσαι δύναται). These characteristics all match the habits and descriptions of the ascetics. On the other hand, in spite of his remarks on their "odd" language, Chrysostom depicts them as capable of preaching, and singing psalmody (καὶ τὸν λοιπὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἐν ὕμνοις καὶ διηνεκέσιν εὐχαῖς τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀπασχολοῦσι διάνοιαν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὴν ἀγγελικὴν διαγωγὴν

[20] Although, as said above, ἐνηλλαγμένη διάλεξις may not be coherent with βάρβαρος γλῶττα, Chrysostom might be deliberately using here the old trope of the "just barbarian" to build and opposition between the dwellers of Antioch and those from the countryside. The moral superiority of "innocent" and "naïve" barbarians over a "rotten civilization" is found already in Herodotus. Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel* 233–234, adopts a similar line in interpreting this passage, pointing to a dichotomy meant to shame the Antiochenes but still presupposing a cultural inferiority of the newcomers. Briquel-Chatonnet, in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities* 32 n.22, expresses a similar view: "The local idiom is considered a vulgar language, spoken by people of lower rank. While both authors [sc. Chrysostom and Severus] insist that this has nothing to do with the moral value of the speakers, it is clear that neither of them considers it to be a literary language or suitable for writing."

μιμούμενοι). They also "stand close beside the sacred altar reading the divine laws and instructing those who hear their words" (καὶ ἴδοις ἂν τούτων ἕκαστον νῦν μὲν παρὰ τὸ βῆμα ἑστῶτα τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ τοὺς θείους νόμους ἀναγινώσκοντα καὶ τοὺς ὑπηκόους ἐκπαιδεύοντα). It is plausible, therefore, that the sermon is aimed at monks from rural monasteries—unless Chrysostom wishes to convince the citizens of Antioch that these visiting farmers are no different from "real" monks and thus support accepting them. All in all, however, the linguistic difference between the inhabitants of Antioch and rural dwellers is well articulated. Later in his life, Chrysostom remained sensitive but also quite open to the issue of different languages within Christianity. Perhaps the Antiochene experience of coping with Aramaic-speakers induced him to swiftly ordain Gothic-speaking presbyters for the Goths in Constantinople.[21]

This survey of literary sources can conclude with a short overview of a similar remark by Severus of Antioch in his *Cathedral Homily*, preached in March 513, ca. 120 years after the sermons of John Chrysostom; and again, it is not entirely clear whether the bishop meant a communication barrier between Greek and Aramaic speakers or one resulting from the lack of writing and reading skills of the latter. In a rather witty way, he reproaches the behaviour of abusive and greedy landowners or their stewards (19.34–35):[22]

> But, when the time of summer comes, after the harvest and the gathering of the fruits, it happens to each of the farmers that, like a cruel demon, the steward, or the master of the land himself, comes to him, holding in his hand a sheet, stained, badly written, blackened of age, in evil days as the divine Daniel says, or even a book covered with dust and full of cobwebs; then he opens a page and fixes his eyes on it, he reads these (characters): erased, invisible, difficult to decipher and which were known only to himself alone (…), and he moves his fingers to count, and he mutters between his teeth some small words, and (…) he scratches his

[21] See Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel* 197, 234.

[22] M. Brière and F. Graffin, *PO* 37.1 (Turnhout 1975) 38.

> temples, and he rubs his face several times, and he shows hesitation in this, he mocks the poor farmer in high misfortune and he says: "This harvest of fruits is not sufficient with regard to the payment of (your) debts; there are remnants (of former debts) that you have perhaps tripled or quadrupled, coming from the cycle of the past years." Such ignobility and abomination! He does not find it sufficient to take from him the fruits that are there, but, by recalling the remaining debts, he has defrauded him in advance of those that (are) to come. What complaints he utters, when he returns to his house, this unfortunate man, in his native dialect, lamenting with some violence and heaviness, making his complaint more noisy.

Compared with the French translation of Brière and Graffin (here rendered into English), Briquel-Chatonnet rightly pointed out that the passage ܒܡܠܬ ܡܠܐ ܡܪܝܪܬܐ ܒܡܠܬ ܐܬܪܐ should rather be translated "in his native dialect" (or I would say even more literally "in the word/utterance of the land"), and considered it a reference to a "local idiom."[23] Frédéric Alpi likewise supposed that the passage referred to the Aramaic-speaking rural population of the Antiochene, unable to control the Greek content of account books.[24] The passage says nothing explicit about monks, but Alpi concluded that tax abuse could result in tax evasion, and hence the intensification of migrations, with some people joining groups of brigands, others possibly local monasteries. The passage also implies that at least some of the candidates for the monastic life and casual visitors of the Antiochene monasteries may have come from these milieux and could have had

[23] See Briquel-Chatonnet, in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities* 32 n.22, as well as her general comments in *Villes et campagnes* 28.

[24] Alpi, *La route royale* 175; Martin, *Revue réformée* 36 (1985) 49–54. An inscription whose evidence goes spectacularly hand-in-hand with Severus' homily is the honorific for Alexandros Akrabanos, ἑρμηνεὺς ἐπιτρόπων, "interpreter of the stewards/procurators": *IGLS* XVI.3 509, dedicated by his wife, a native of Petra, and their son. It shows that stewards of landed estates in Syria were in need of the service of interpreters, who in turn could reach a respected social status (Alexandros was appointed a high priest, apparently of the imperial cult).

little knowledge of Greek. Under these conditions, it would thus be quite reasonable to assume a significant presence and visibility of Aramaic in Syrian monasteries.

Syriac inscriptions from monastic sites

A handy instrument one could use to explore the validity of this hypothesis, as well as that of Syrian monasteries as the main spring for the spread of Syriac, is a survey of Syriac inscriptions found at monastic sites. Even if Classical Syriac was "transplanted" to western Syria as a literary dialect and probably was not spoken among the monks accustomed to their vernacular form of Western Aramaic (see n.5 above), it is still tempting to assume that Aramaic "speech communities"[25] would be interested in rendering at least a part of their epigraphic production in what they considered a high-variety language of Aramaic Christianity.

A survey of 121 sites and 220 Syriac inscriptions has resulted in a database which will be released on the project's website in the coming year. For this paper, it is more convenient to use an extensive table listing their sites and their contexts (Table 1).[26] The survey showed that approximately 49% (107 out of 220) inscriptions can in one way or another be associated with a monastic context, whereas 51% (113) come from contexts where no monastic connotations have been ascertained. Thus, the results may seem impressive, but one must remember that the adopted definition of the "monastic/ascetic context" was very broad and inclusive: it could be direct mention of an abbot/archimandrite or an ordinary monk, ascetic, stylite, or hermit, or the identification of the findspot as a monastery site, or other

[25] For this concept see Y. Minets, "Introduction," in *Shaping Letters, Shaping Communities* 1–24, at 7.

[26] For a useful parallel study on Palestine see L. Di Segni and J. Ashkenazi, "Newly Discovered Inscriptions from Three Churches in Upper Western Galilee," in A. Coniglio et al. (eds.), *Holy Land: Archaeology on Either Side. Archaeological Essays in Honour of Eugenio Alliata* (Milan 2020) 303–321. A table of dated inscriptions from churches in Greek and Aramaic (CPA) is included on p.316, listing, however, only 21 sites.

reasons for strong association of a given site with a monastic establishment.

This needs a few words of clarification. First of all, Syriac inscriptions hardly ever explicitly mention a "monastery" (ܕܝܪܐ). Furthermore, the agency of monks was not confined to monasteries, as is well documented by Greek and Syriac inscriptions as well as the literary sources. Thus, it is much better to speak of their "monastic/ascetic context" which can be inferred from the description of the findspot but also from the mention of agents associated with monasteries (archimandrites, monks, nuns, etc.) at non-monastic sites, though the occurrence of such an agent in a dedicatory inscription is often used by archaeologists to attribute structures of uncertain character to the monastic/ascetic context.

A good and very recent example of an inscription associated in this way with the monastic context is in the floor mosaic of Nabġa, northeast of Beroia in the direction of Zeugma:[27]

> [– –] eight-… [– –] seven, this martyrion was mosaiced which is in St. John. In the days of Father Superior Mar Barnaba the work was started in that martyrion, and in the days of Father Superior Mares this work was completed. Lord, in the kingdom, remember deacons Theodotos and Kosma, and mosaicist Noah, and John, who all undertook the charge for Our Lord and have mosaiced this house so that whoever reads shall pray for them.

As to the structure designation, the inscription actually says a martyr shrine, and the archaeological context is an aisle of a basilical building.[28] However, the mention of two monastic superiors in the dating formula, "In the days of Father Superior" etc., ܒܝܘ̈ܡܬܗ ܕܪܝܫ ܕܝܪܐ ܡܪܝ ܒܪܢܒܐ … ܘܒܝܘ̈ܡܝ ܕܪܝܫܕܝܪܐ ܡܪܐܣ, gives a strong hint for the identification of the site as belonging to a monastery.

[27] F. Briquel Chatonnet and A. Desreumaux, "L'inscription," in *Le martyrion Saint-Jean dans la moyenne-vallée de l'Euphrate* (Damascus 2008) 23–28.

[28] F. Briquel-Chatonnet and A. Desreumaux, "Oldest Syriac Christian Inscription Discovered in North-Syria," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 14 (2011) 45–61.

In other cases, the dating formula may include lay clergy, but the inscription still mentions monks who participated in the undertaking, usually mentioned as “brothers,” ܐܚܐ̈. We encounter such a configuration in an inscription from the area of Antioch:[29]

> God, bless! † May it be a good memorial before God and his son Christ and his Living and Holy Ghost for everyone who contributed to this bema. It was made in the times of the priest David, and the deacon Sergios, and the deacon Ioannes, and the deacon Simeon, and the deacon Ioannes, and the brother Ioannes, and the brother Jacob, and in the time of the veterans ʾutāl, son of Isaac, and Georgios, son of the archdeacon, and Kyriakos, son of Abraham, and Symeon, son of Qnwsʾ, and Symeon, son of Georgios, and Joseph, son of ʾbws, and Julianos the teacher, and Sergios, son of Kyriakos, and ʾutāl, son of Sergios. It was made in the year six hundred and fifty-three according to the era of Antioch, during eight years. It was constructed by Ioannes from the family of Abraham. May this memorial be a blessing to all those who contributed to it. Amen.

Although it is left vague whether the church where this bema was placed formed part of a monastic complex, the participation of monks (the two “brothers,” ܘܐܚܐ ܚܢܐ ܘܐܚܐ ܝܥܩܘܒ) is enough to reveal a monastic/ascetic context for this epigraph.

Some sites certainly have a much more complex background, encompassing inscriptions of mixed context, certainly with other contexts than “monastic.” An example of this diversity is Bābisqā in Ǧabal Bārīšā, where Greek inscriptions occupy the epigraphic space of three non-monastic religious buildings in the town:[30] a three-aisled church, the basilica of Saint Sergios, and the “Eastern chapel.”[31] Greek inscriptions also come from individual houses (sometimes with dates: 352, 389, 447/8 CE) and from a tomb dated 143 CE. But Syriac inscriptions slowly super-

[29] H. Salame-Sarkis, “Syria grammata kai agalmata,” *Syria* 66 (1989) 314–319, no. 1; B. Aggoula, “Studia Aramaica III,” *Syria* 69 (1992) 401–406.

[30] Table 1 does not include Greek inscriptions at specific sites; this will be discussed at length in my book summarizing the results of the project.

[31] *IGLS* II 562, 563, 556–561.

sede the Greek texts: two come from the "long building"/stoa (admittedly, one of them mentions monks styled as "brothers") and one from a portico in the town.[32] One comes from a tomb situated in the outskirts of the town.[33] So in this case, the majority of the Syriac inscriptions come from contexts other than the monastic ones.

In general, however, sites of monastic character have a good if not impressive yield of Syriac inscriptions. This is especially true of the monastery Dayr Simʿān/Telanissos in Ǧabal Simʿān. Enno Littmann and subsequently Jacques Jarry published 25 Syriac inscriptions from the site, ranging from graffiti of visitors to the monastery, preparing to climb the mountain to reach the column of Simeon the Stylite, to official building and dedicatory texts.[34] The majority of the Dayr Simʿān collection, however, are graffiti and secondary inscriptions, which attests to the use of Syriac as the preferred language of casual scribblings or written personal prayer. Some of these were certainly authored by monks (no. 28 which refers to "brethren," 43–45 with monastic titles "father" and "brother," ܐܒܐ and ܐܚܐ). Others are more vague. Their authors subscribe as "sinners" (29, 30–32, 36), there is also a scribe eager to use Syriac rather than Greek (32), and they may be either the monastery's staff or visitors. A visitor from Ḥarrān is specified in 41.

Importantly, these graffiti date from much later than Simeon's death in 459 CE, like the majority of Syriac inscriptions from monasteries and hermitages listed in this paper. They show that Syriac gradually increased its visibility in the epigraphical mater-

[32] *I.Syria AAES* IV 33–39 nos. 15–16; S. P. Brock, "Dating Formulae in Syriac Inscriptions and Manuscripts of the 5th and 6th Centuries," in G. Kiraz et al. (eds.), *From Ugarit to Nabataea: Studies in Honor of John F. Healey* (Piscataway 2012) 85–106, at 91.

[33] F. Briquel-Chatonnet, A. Desreumaux, and W. Khoury, "Inscriptions syriaques de Syrie. Premiers résultats," *AAAS* 47–48 (2004–05 [2008]) 189.

[34] *I.Syria PAES* IV 24–39, nos. 26–49; J. Jarry, "Inscriptions arabes, syriaques et grecques du massif du Bélus en Syrie du nord," *Annales islamologiques* 7 (1967) 142–144, no. 5–6; Brock, in *From Ugarit to Nabataea* 91.

ial during the sixth century, and at some sites clearly superseded the Greek and Latin inscriptions of the third to fifth century. A good example is Bābisqā in Ǧabal Bārīšā, a case I will describe in detail in the project book. This late evidence reveals the direction of linguistic changes happening among Western Aramaic communities—no doubt Aramaic users were already in quite different positions in the sixth century compared with the late fourth century when Chrysostom preached his sermons.

Conclusions

A combined study of literary testimonies on the use of late antique forms of Aramaic in Syria and the inscriptions in Syriac of the same period suggests that Aramaic may have been the language of choice in different forms of spoken and written communication in Syrian monastic establishments.

The evidence of literary sources alone is probably insufficient to support this thesis, given the uncertain background of the persons mentioned (whether monks or villagers of the hinterland of Antioch); but a detailed survey of the inscriptions reaching far beyond the Antiochene gives us numbers that clearly speak in favour of this correlation. Of course, the fact that the epigraphic survey reveals a trend to use Syriac at monastic sites cannot be taken as testimony to the exclusive use of Syriac in monasteries. Greek inscriptions are very well represented there too. The statistics can also be biased by the scope of archaeological surveys—some regions have been better explored than others—and by the specifics of monastic sites. As establishments founded in remote areas, often without continuity of occupation to the present day, they are much more likely to preserve inscriptions in good shape than sites that were never abandoned and thus subject to refurbishment or more intensive spoliation. At the same time, Table 1 also shows that Syriac as a language of epigraphy was often used in village and town churches, in signatures of mosaicists, to record the completion of the construction of private houses, at tombs and burial sites, and finally for casual scribblings by ordinary people.

Hence, the general image is complex, but while just one trend

in an extensive continuum of practical applications, the use of Syriac as *the* language of monasteries cannot be overlooked.[35]

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TABLE 1:
Checklist of published early Byzantine Syriac inscriptions and their contexts[36]

Site no.	Site	Syriac inscriptions	Context	Inscr. no.
1	Abū l-Qudūr	PAES IVB 2	house	1
2	Akrād Dayāsina	IGLS V 2143	graffiti on a tomb, monastic?	2
3	Al Dayr al Wastani	Abou Assaf 1972, no. 4	Non vidi	3
4	Antioch	Aggoula 1992, 400–406, no. 1	bema construction, involves monks	4
		Mouterde & Poidebard 1945, 176 fig. 19, 227	village graffito by a monk	5
5	ar-Ruḥayya	PAES IVB 3	building, involves an abbot	6
6	Arah	Pognon 1907, no. 15	church, deacon	7
7	as-Safīra	Mouterde & Poidebard 1945, 222, no. 1	dedicatory, church, artisan	8
		Mouterde & Poidebard 1945, 222-223, no. 2	dedicatory, church, names	9
8	aš-Šayḫ Sulaymān	PAES IVB 63	graffito, name	10

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[36] For the sake of brevity only one edition is cited; comprehensive citations will be given in my forthcoming book.

		PAES IVB 64	graffito, name	11
		PAES IVB 62	lintel, deacon, prayer	12
9	Aşağıbaşak (Urfa)	Desreumaux 2019a, 11–12	church, artisans, Greek letters	13
10	aṭ-Ṭuwayḥīna	Mouterde & Poidebard 1945, 226, no. 12	monastic	14
11	Bābisqā	AAES IV Syr. 14	construction of a stoa	15
		AAES IV Syr. 15	purchase of gardens, monks	16
		AAES IV Syr. 16	village, name	17
		Briquel-Chatonnet, Desreumaux & Khoury 2004-2005, 189	funerary, unpublished	18
12	Bāfitīn	Jarry 1967, 149	church, monastic site, graffito, presbyter	19
		AAES IV Syr. 9	funerary, name	20
		Peña, Castellana, Fernandez, Reclus, 334–335	church, capital, monastic site	21
		Jarry 1967, 148–149	lintel, monastic site	22
		Briquel-Chatonnet, Desreumaux & Khoury 2004-2005, 189	funerary, unpublished	23
13	Bāmuqqā	Jarry 1967, 153, no. 23	village, names	24
14	Bānastūr	PAES IVB, 48–49, no. 56	name, monastic tower	25
		Peña, Castellana & Fernandez 1980, 327	graffiti, monastic tower	26
		Peña, Castellana & Fernandez 1980, 427	graffiti, drawings, monastic?	27
		Peña, Castellana & Fernandez 1980, 328	house/villa	28
15	Bāqirḥā	AAES IV Syr. 10	bilingual, building, church, clergy	29
		AAES IV Syr. 11	church, name	30
16	Bāšakūḥ	Jarry 1967, 151–152, no. 20	village, illegible	31
		Jarry 1967, 152, no. 21	village, illegible, label of “andron” (civic building)	32
17	Bāsūfān	Aggoula 1992, 410–411, no. 6	building, village church, clergy	33
		Jarry 1967, no. 4	building, village church, clergy	34
18	Bātūtā	PAES IVB 60	house, graffito, name	35

19	Beroia (environs)	Giron 1922, 90–91, no. B	religious, invocation, building?	36
		Pognon 1907, no. 83	funerary, name of artisan	37
20	Bšandlāyā	AAES IV Syr. 2	building, prayer	38
21	Burdaqlī	Jarry 1967, 145, no. 9	church, graffito, martyr, monastic site	39
		Jarry 1967, 146, no. 10	church, graffito, invocation, monastic site	40
22	Burǧ al-Qās	Jarry 1970a, 190, no. 4	bilingual, building, village, church, artisan?	41
23	Burǧ as-Sabʿ (Teleda)	PAES IVB 19	building, monastic	42
24	Burǧka	PAES IVB, 50–52, no. 59	names, monastic?	43
25	Buyuk-Kachichluk	Aggoula 1992, p. 415, no. 13	dedicatory, prior of a monastery	44
26	Chattura (Qāṭūra)	PAES IVB 21	graffito, tower, abbot's name?	45
		PAES IVB 22	graffito, tower, deacon's name	46
27	Dāḥis	Peña, Castellana, Fernandez Reclus 49, 80, 130, 141, 148, 152, 196–199, 317, 322–323	Monastery	47
		Jarry 1967, 150–151, no. 19	building, baptistery, architect	48
28	Dār Qīṭā	PAES IVB 4	house, date	49
		PAES IVB 5	graffito, village, church, invocation	50
		PAES IVB 6	graffito, village, church, invocation, deacon, scribe	51
		Briquel-Chatonnet, Desreumaux & Khoury 2004-2005, 191	graffito, village, church, invocation	52
29	Dayr al-ʿAdas	Donceel-Voûte 1988, 45, note 2 and p. 52	church aisle, dedicatory	53
30	Dayr Ḏibbān	Littmann 1958, p. 107, no. 2	graffito, invocation, close to a monastery gateway	54
31	Dayr Makr	Naveh 1976, no. 1	building, fragmentary, monastic context?	55

32	Dayr al-Malik (Deir Malek)	Jarry 1966, 155	building, house, cistern, monastic	56
33	Dayr Simʿān (Telanissos)	PAES IVB 46	graffito, church, name, monastic	57
		PAES IVB 47	graffito, church, Trinitarian formula, monastic	58
		PAES IVB 48	graffito, church, name, monastic	59
		PAES IVB 49	graffito, church, invocation of St. Simeon, monastic	60
		Jarry 1967, 143–144, no. 6	graffito, gate, visitor, monastic	61
		PAES IVB 42	graffito, deacon's name, monastic	62
		PAES IVB 43	graffito, monk's name	63
		PAES IVB 44	graffito, monk's name	64
		PAES IVB 45	graffito, monk's name	65
		PAES IVB 38	church, name, monastic	66
		Jarry 1967, 142–143, no. 5	abbot, monastery courtyard	67
		PAES IVB 30	house, invocation, monastic	68
		PAES IVB 26	house, building, monastic	69
		PAES IVB 31	graffito, house, scribblings, monastic	70
		PAES IVB 27	building, house, monastic, artisan	71
		PAES IVB 28	house, monk, hailstorm miracle	72
		PAES IVB 39	inn, monk's name	73
		PAES IVB 40	inn, monk's name	74
		PAES IVB 41	inn, pilgrim's name, monastic	75
		PAES IVB 32	church, graffito, monk's name	76
		PAES IVB 33	church, graffito, monk's name	77
		PAES IVB 34	church, monk's name	78
		PAES IVB 35	church, monk's name	79

		PAES IVB 36	church, monk's name	80
		PAES IVB 37	church, monk's name	81
34	Dayr Tall ʿĀda (Teleda)	PAES IVB 16	building/restoration, monastery	82
		Jarry 1970b, 221, no. 17	monastery, label, name	83
		PAES IVB 18	monastic building, graffito, name	84
35	Dayr al-Zoz Museum	Briquel Chatonnet 1996, 147–153	monk and priest	85
36	Duwayr Rīḥ	Jarry 1967, 207, no. 151	invocation, monastic church	86
37	Edessa (environs)	Puech 1988, 267–270	building, tomb, an ascetic is mentioned	87
		Halloun 1988, 271–275	ecclesiastical construction, monks ("brothers")	88
		Halloun 1988, 275	unknown, name	89
38	Edessa (Urfa)	Desreumaux 2019a, 11	mosaic in a martyr shrine, artisans	90
39	Edessa (Urfa)	Briquel-Chatonnet, Desreumaux & Moukarzel 2008, 19–28	bishop Rabboula inscription	91
40	Edessa (Urfa)	Sahau 1882, no. 4	building, abbot, deacons, funerary	92
41	Eneš (Gümüşgün)	Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 246	village, church, Trinitarian formula and date	93
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 248	village, church, dedicatory, chancel, prayer	94
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 249	village, church, wall, names	95
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 253–254	village, church, confessional	96
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 254–255	village, church, confessional	97
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2019, 255–256	village, church, confessional	98
42	Fidra	PAES IVB 23	village, building, baptistery	99
		PAES IVB 24	village, building, house	100
43	Frikiya	Briquel-Chatonnet 2013, 25, 27	unpublished	101

44	Ġabal Bilʿas	Mouterde 1942/1943	building, stonecutter, long text, archimandrite, priests, a deacon and lector	102
45	Ġneyd	Mouterde & Poidebard 1945, 224, no. 6	dedicatory, monastic church, name	103
46	Gola (Türkiye)	Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2022, nos. A1–A4	church, labels of months	104
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2022, no. B	church, building, presbyters, deacons, and subdeacons, mosaicist?	105
		Brelaud, Daccache & Ruani 2022, no. C	church, building, donor?, prayer	106
47	Halawe	Donceel-Voûte 1988, 148–149	monastic church, building, abbot and monks	107
		Abou-Assaf 1972, 135-144	building, annexed room, monastic church	108
		Abou-Assaf 1972, 135-144	building, annexed room, monastic church	109
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