TUR ABDIN AT CLOSE:
THE CHURCH COMPLEX AT ZAZ, MARDIN.
ITS ARCHITECTURE, HISTORY
AND CONTEMPORARY REVITALIZATION PROCESS

by
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Submitted to the Graduate School of
Social Sciences & Humanities
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in
Anatolian Civilizations and Cultural Heritage Management

Koç University
June 2010

Koc University

Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of a master's thesis by

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and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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To my mother and brother

ABSTRACT

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Archaeology and History of Art, MA Thesis, 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Alessandra Ricci

Keywords: Tur Abdin, Syrian Orthodox Church, Mor Dimet, late antique/early medieval ecclesiastical architecture, hall type church, church complex, modern revitalizations of churches

Tur Abdin, an area which is known as "the Mount Athos of the East", a limestone plateau on the south-east region of modern Turkey, should be considered a significant territory in terms of the development of an early Christian presence and the shaping of ecclesiastical architecture following the conversions of Edessa and Nisibis, which are generally accepted as having taken place approximately the 3rd and 4th centuries, respectively. The plateau was conquered by the Moslem Arabs in the mid-7th century; and interestingly, the region appears to have flourished following this event, as visible through intense building activity.

This thesis focuses on one of the lesser-known monuments of Tur Abdin possibly dating to this time period: the church of Mor Dimet located in the village of Zaz to the north-east of Midyat. Based on four

field-trips to Tur Abdin, the architectural surveys I have conducted on-site and previous scholarly works, this study attempts to analyze the architecture of the monument, identify the building phases, reassess its dating, and contextualize these findings within wider architectural and ecclesiastical history of Tur Abdin, which has hitherto been studied generally through the most prominent ecclesiastical monuments of the plateau. Along with the church's architectural history, this thesis discusses the contemporary situation of the monument, including its physical layout and social functions. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from the survey of the monument, along with further explorations in Tur Abdin, have prompted enquiries regarding monastic spaces and communities, burials in churches and the hierotopical context of Tur Abdin. Although these issues are not discussed in-depth in the current study, they are addressed and interpreted, with the intention of prompting further studies on the region.

ÖZET

TUR ABDİN'E YAKINDAN BAKIŞ: MARDİN'İN ZAZ KÖYÜNDEKİ KİLİSE KOMPLEKSİ. MİMARİSİ, TARİHİ VE GÜNÜMÜZDEKİ YENİDEN CANLANDIRMA SÜRECİ

Reyhan Durmaz

Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi, Yükseklisans Tezi, 2010

Tez Danışmanı: Alessandra Ricci

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tur Abdin, Süryani Ortodoks Kilisesi, Aziz Dimet, geç antik/erken orta çağ kilise mimarisi, boyuna nefli kiliseler, kilise kompleksi, kiliseleri yeniden canlandırma projeleri

Tur Abdin, "Doğu'nun Atos Dağı" olarak da bilinen alan, Türkiye'nin güney doğusunda yeralan bir plato, erken Hıristiyanlık'ın varlığı ve dini mimarinin şekillenmesi açısından önemli bir bölge olarak kabul edilmelidir. Bölgeye Hıristiyanlık olasılıkla Urfa ve Nusaybin'in bu dini kabul etmesini takiben girmiştir – ki bu şehirlerin Hıristiyanlık'a geçişlerinin, sırasıyla, aşağı-yukarı 3. ve 4. yüzyıllarda gerçekleştiği kabul edilir. Tur Abdin 7. yüzyılın ortalarında Müslüman Araplar tarafından ele geçirilmiştir. Bu olayla beraber bölgede gelişme kaydedilen bir sürecin başladığı görülmektedir; yoğun inşa faaliyetleri bunu doğrulamaktadır.

Bu çalışma Tur Abdin'deki az bilinen ve olasılıkla yukarıda bahsedilen süreçte inşa edilmiş olan dini yapılardan birine, Midyat'ın Zaz

köyündeki Mor Dimet kilisesine, odaklanmıştır. Tur Abdin'e yapılan dört gezi, kilise ve çevresinde yapılan mimari incelemeler ve önceki akademik yayınlar temel alınarak, bu çalışma binanın mimarisini analiz etmeyi, yapım evrelerini belirlemeyi, binayı tarihlendirmeyi ve tüm bu sonuçları Tur Abdin'in genel mimari ve dinsel tarihi içinde değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır; Tur Abdin mimarisi ve tarihi şimdiye dek genellikle ön plana çıkan yapıların incelenmesi ile çalışılmıştır. Kilisenin mimari tarihinin yanı sıra, bu çalışma binanın günümüzdeki fiziksel yapısını ve sosyal konumunu incelemektedir. Tüm bunlara ilaveten, kilisenin incelenmesi sonucunda elde edilen veriler ve Tur Abdin'de yapılan araştırmalar, manastırlar ve bunlarla ilişkilendirilen cemaatler, kilise içlerinde yeralan mezarlar ve Tur Abdin'de kutsal mekanların oluşturulması konularında yeni araştırma soruları ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu çalışma bu konuları detaylı bir şekilde incelemese de, gelecek çalışmaları teşvik etmesi amacıyla bu üç genel konuda çıkarımlarda bulunmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank the many people and institutions that made this thesis possible.

First and foremost, it is difficult to overstate my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Alessandra Ricci. I am heartily thankful for her guidance, inspirations, faith in me, encouragements, sincerity and patience. This process of self-realization and creation was challenging and would not have been possible without her.

Gül Pulhan, one of my professors in the ACHM program and committee members, was the one who introduced me to Tur Abdin. The fieldtrip we took there with her demarcates the beginning of my interest and amazement towards the region. Her encouragements and contributions to my thesis and my academic life in general have been immense.

I should like to thank Turgut Saner, my third committee member, for his sincere and friendly attitude, together with his very valuable questions and directions, which were great sources for me towards the completion of this work.

I would like to thank the faculty, administration and my friends at the program. I am also very grateful for the scholarship and research grants provided by Koç University. I should extend my thanks to the staff of the Suna Kıraç and RCAC libraries. Last but not the least, I want to thank Küçükyalı ArkeoPark Project for having provided me with the technical material for the survey of the monument.

This research was closely watched, intensely supported by and thus greatly indebted to Elif Keser-Kayaalp, Kutlu Akalın and Linda Wheatley-

Irving. It was a pleasure and pride for me to work with Elif. With her presence, a complex issue like Tur Abdin architecture was more comprehensible. Kutlu read the Syriac inscriptions for me; I was very lucky to be in the scope of his radiating energy. Linda also deserves my deepest gratitude, for despite the physical remoteness, she was always near me, brainstorming with me on various issues or editing my poor English.

I am heartily thankful to Abuna Yakub Kurt for allowing me into his life and his delightful talks. I am indebted to the Syrian Orthodox Bishopric of Tur Abdin, the community at the church of Mother Mary in İstanbul, as well as Aho, Mushe and all other Suryoyo friends for their immense support and hospitality. I also owe greatly to Sacide Kansu, Fırat Öztürk, Velid Akdoğan and all other teachers and administration at Ortaca Primary School for hosting me in their homes, supporting this research in any way they could and offering me the warmest friendship I could imagine.

I am very thankful to my "hidden helper" Pieter Michiels for putting up with me and supporting me in anything I dream of accomplishing. I should like to thank Şükran and Selami Özcan for making my life in İstanbul easier and making me believe in angels. Also, my dear friends Özlem Ebeyli, Onur Yılmaz, Zeynep Civelek and Anlam Filiz deserve my heartily gratitude for being the best friends and home mates I could ask for.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my beloved family, my mother and brother, Hatice Bozdeveci and İbrahim Durmaz, for their unconditional faith in me. I love you!

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INTRODUCTION

The plateau of Tur Abdin, also known as "the Mount Athos of the East", is well known for its prominent examples of early ecclesiastical architecture. Among these, the "glory" attained by the church of the Virgin (el-Adhra), as expressed by Gertrude Bell; the outstanding mosaics of the monastery of Mor Gabriel; the magnificent presence of the church of Mor Sobo in Hah; and the awe of crosses and acanthus decorations have solidly been incorporated in the knowledge repertory of any researcher of early Christian architecture. The astonishment deriving from particular monuments, however, appears to have side-tracked scholarly attention from closely investigating other monuments in the plateau. This situation is metaphorically-speaking similar to the modern tourist or pilgrim hurrying to go to see and worship at the church of the Virgin at Hah, without noticing the presence of many churches and sites that contribute to the historical wealth of Tur Abdin and its neighboring areas. The aim of this thesis is to analyze one of the lesser-known monuments of the plateau.

This thesis is centered upon the church of Mor Dimet, located in the village of Zaz, to the north-east of Midyat. It attempts at analyzing the

topographical and architectural features of the site and creating a chronological reassessment of the same features. This thesis reflects upon the architectural and religious history of Tur Abdin based on extensive on-site architectural surveys and analysis of the church. This thesis also takes into consideration the more recent permutations of the church of Mor Dimet in terms of physical layouts and social functions.

The plateau of Tur Abdin, which rises on the south-east region of present-day Turkey, should be regarded as a significant territory in terms of the developments of an early Christian presence and the shaping of ecclesiastical architecture. The plateau was converted to Christianity following the conversions of Edessa and Nisibis, which are generally accepted as having taken place in approximately the 3rd and 4th centuries, respectively.[1] Further to almost one-and-a-half centuries of existence of the Eastern Christian faith under the Byzantine and Sassanian rule, the plateau was conquered by the Moslem Arabs in the mid-7th century.[2] Interestingly, the Moslem Arab presence in this territory sees a flourishing time period, which is visible through intense architectural activity in Tur Abdin.[3] The church of Mor Dimet was possibly built in this latter era, and was expanded throughout the centuries ahead. This study aims at

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[1] J.B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (USA: Gorgias Press, 2005), 62; Andrew Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30.
[2] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 158.
[3] Gertrude Bell and Marlia Mundell-Mango, *The Churches and Monasteries of Tur Abdin and Neighboring Districts* (London: Pindar Press, 1982), v; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 147.

contributing to scholarly research through a more in-depth and thorough analysis of the church of Mor Dimet through close examination of its architectural features, sculpture, inscriptions[4] and contemporary layout and function.

Although the presence of Mor Dimet may have been partially overlooked by early travelers and recent scholars, this situation is not the case for numerous other monuments in Tur Abdin. Since the end of the 19th century, many scholars, having been astonished by the material, literary and spiritual content of the plateau, explored and published its major sites. Although Tur Abdin historiography dates back as early as the 19th century,[5] many early works appear to have been in the forms of travel accounts, explorations or general works; and they have been superseded by more recent historiography. Some of these works will be briefly introduced in the current section as well as throughout the thesis. To start with, Tur Abdin studies owes greatly to Gertrude Bell, who, in 1909 and 1911, traveled to the region, documented and published extensively the

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[4] I would like to thank Kutlu Akalın for deciphering the Syriac inscriptions at the church complex for me.

[5] J.S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia: Including a Journey from Aleppo to Bagdad, by the Route of Beer, Orfah, Diarbekr, Mardin and Mousul: With Researches on the Ruins of Nineveh, Babylon, and Other Ancient Cities* (London: H. Colburn, 1827); F. R. Chesney, *Expedition for the Survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850); H. Pognon, *Inscriptions Semitiques de la Syrie, de la Mesopotamie et de la Region de Mossoul* (Paris: press, 1907); C Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmaler Altchristlicher und Islamischer Zeit*, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Detschen Orient-Gesellshaft D.17 (Leipzig 1911); F. W. Deichmann, U. Peschlow, *Zwei Spätantike Ruinenstatten in Nordmesopotamien*, (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977)

prominent ecclesiastical structures of Tur Abdin; her work, "Churches and Monasteries of Tur Abdin and Neighbouring Districts" (1913), has been updated and expanded by Marlia Mundell-Mango in 1982.[6] This study has been one of the essential sources for the current study, as well as it is for any study on Tur Abdin.

Gernott Wiessner's four-volume publication "*Christliche Kultbauten im Tur Abdin*" (1981-3)[7] is another extensive work that has explored the ecclesiastical architecture of Tur Abdin. In it, Wiessner describes the physical characteristics and provides ground plans and photographs of a total of 111 buildings from the region. Although extensive, this work includes only brief architectural descriptions of edifices, excluding details of architectural sculpture or inscriptions; moreover, Wiessner, a theologian, is questioned for his identifications of structures which are not always accurate.

The most recent architectural study on Tur Abdin was conducted by Elif Keser-Kayaalp in 2009 in the form of a dissertation.[8] Her work extensively discusses the ecclesiastical architecture of northern Mesopotamia on various dimensions. Keser-Kayaalp analyzes urban and

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[6] Gertrude Bell and Marlia Mundell-Mango, *The Churches and Monasteries of Tur Abdin and Neighboring Districts* (London: Pindar Press, 1982)
[7] Gernott Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten im Tur Abdin* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrosowitz, 1981-3)
[8] Elif Keser-Kayaalp, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, 300–800 AD* (dissertation, Oxford University, 2009)

rural churches, other types of ecclesiastical structures, such as baptisteries, architectural sculpture, as well as building techniques and materials. Her work brings together many issues which had been studied separately previously; therefore, it constitutes an essential work on the architecture of Tur Abdin.

Syriac inscriptions, manuscripts, hagiographical texts, chronicles, gospel books and other literary sources from Tur Abdin have been deciphered, translated and analyzed. One of the first comprehensive collection of inscriptions from the region is owned by Pognon, who, in 1907, published a book on the subject.[9] This formed the base of subsequent studies on the literary sources of Tur Abdin. One of the examples among others is undertaken by Palmer, who extended Pognon's work in "A Corpus of Inscriptions from Tur Abdin and Environs".[10] This has prompted the latter author to publish his book, "Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier" (1990), in which he discussed the early history of Tur Abdin through an extensive textual analysis.

In addition to works focusing on Tur Abdin, there have been significant publications with a more general geographical or chronological foci;[11] these and like works are essential publications for contextualization

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[9] *Inscriptions Semitiques*

[10] *Oriens Christianus* 72 (1978): 115-24

[11] Thomas Alan Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* (London: Pindar Press, 1987); Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine*

of architectural, historical or art-historical issues discussed in the context of Tur Abdin. The cited works and others have formed the base of my research on Tur Abdin and the church of Mor Dimet.

The church of Mor Dimet, the chronology of which will be reassessed in this thesis, will be discussed based on the results of on-site architectural surveys that I have conducted along with comparisons with other ecclesiastical structures in the vicinities. The church, which, through multiple expansions and additions, has been transformed into a church complex hosting a monk and a nun in the present day, will also be analyzed for its contemporary architectural and social meanings.

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter I provides a general geographical, historical, religious and architectural background information about Tur Abdin. A geographical definition of the plateau, together with its ancient names, is provided. General history of Tur Abdin within the context of northern Mesopotamia is summarized. For practical purposes, the historical background of the region is represented starting from circa the 2nd century C.E., when the plateau as well as wider northern Mesopotamia was conquered by the Romans,[12] although the history of Tur

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Architecture (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986); Ignatio Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria* (Spain: Garnet Publishing, 1996); Gertrude Bell and William Ramsay, *The Thousand and One Churches* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008)

[12] *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1982]) (henceforth CAH) vol.XI, 125-126

Abdin dates back to a much earlier era. Chapter I also provides a brief account of the history of the Christian presence on the plateau, followed by a summary of development of ecclesiastical architecture in Tur Abdin.

Chapter II introduces the village of Zaz and the church complex. Initially, the rock-cut structures, located in the immediate vicinity of the church will be discussed, since they spatially represent the base on which the site rests. As rock-cut architecture received a relatively less scholarly interest concerning Tur Abdin, this section of the current thesis constitutes an introduction to numerous features of rock-cut architecture in Tur Abdin. The chapter then continues with the enclosure wall which determines the site, the modern residential building and the courtyard of the site.

Background information, provided for a better historical contextualization, and introduction to the architectural features of the complex will have set foundation of an in-depth architectural analysis of the church, which is the focal structure of the entire complex. In chapter III, the church of Mor Dimet will be analyzed in terms of its architectural typology, features and possible building phases. Following the architectural discussions and addressing of the question of patronage at the church of Mor Dimet, the dating of the core church will be reassessed. The chapter will be finalized by possible later additions to the church, which presumably took place in later time periods.

Having discussed the architecture and history of the complex, chapter IV aims at introducing the contemporary situation of the structure, which has been revitalized in the last decade by a monk and a nun. The chapter addresses issues concerning the social interpretations of a church complex hosting individuals with possibly monastic titles, as well as the architectural changes as a result of the revitalization processes encountered on the site in the last decade.

The final chapter of this thesis attempts to interpret material evidence observed during the on-site surveys and general explorations in Tur Abdin in terms of some underrepresented issues within the scholarly studies on the region. Although the problems will not be thoroughly discussed, this thesis aims at fostering reappraisals concerning monastic spaces and communities, burials in sacred spaces and the hierotopical context of Tur Abdin.

This study is methodologically based on the results of four recent field trips to Tur Abdin, during which architectural survey of the church was conducted and some other ecclesiastical buildings, mainly village churches, were investigated.[13] These field trips took place in August 2009, November 2009, February 2010 and April 2010. The field trip in August constituted a preliminary exploration to the region and the monument,

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[13] I would like to thank the Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Koç University, which has provided the research grants for the four field-trips.

whereas in the next field trip majority of the architectural survey of the monument was completed. Architectural survey was undertaken with traditional survey technique, which is hand measuring. The fieldtrip conducted in February consisted of visits to 11 villages (except for Zaz) and 17 ecclesiastical structures in Tur Abdin; in April, the survey of the church complex has been finalized and 7 more structures were investigated.

The works of Gertrude Bell and Marlia Mundell-Mango (1982), Gernott Wiessner(1981-3), Andrew Palmer(1990) and Elif Keser-Kayaalp(2009) are publications I have been closely following during my studies. Although there are numerous primary sources that are vital to Tur Abdin studies, I extensively relied on three major sources besides others; namely John of Ephesus's "Lives of the Eastern Saints", Lives of Samuel, Simeon and Gabriel (an hagiographical source known as Qartmin Trilogy, consisting of the lives of these three saints) and the Book of Life (a chronicle derived in Tur Abdin), the latter two of which are microfishe supplements to Palmer's work (1990).[14]

Floor plans published in this thesis have been developed on the floor plan of the church provided by Wiessner.[15] Digital aerial views provided by the Google Earth software are used to view various regions.

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[14] The extensive usage of a small number of primary sources is due to the fact that I was not able to conduct many other sources which were not available.
[15] *Kultbauten,* Teil2, 148

Unless cited otherwise, all of the photographs used in this publication have been taken by me, with a digital camera, Nikon D40x. Therefore, only date information will be provided in most of the captions of the figures. Mostly the old versions of place names are used in this thesis; in order to obtain clarification, the initial mentioning of each place name is accompanied by the modern name of the place and the province it is located within.

The terminology used to refer to the monument should be clarified. "Church complex of Mor Dimet", "church complex", "complex" are used in reference to the site as a whole, the residential building, the enclosure wall and the church included. The term "church of Mor Dimet" or "church" refers to the actual church that rests to the north of the courtyard. In Syriac "Mor" stands for "saint" (literally "my lord"); "abuna" is "priest" (literally "our father"); "deyroyo" is "nun"; "beth" is "house".[16]

This thesis has two chronological foci. The era between the 7th-10th centuries constitutes the major timeframe of this study, since the church of Mor Dimet and majority of the buildings compared to it possibly date to this time period. The second chronological focus is the modern era, in which revitalization projects in the region, as well as at the church of Mor

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[16] This thesis does not use accents for Syriac words.

Dimet, are observed. Therefore, this thesis excludes a thorough analysis of Tur Abdin or the structure for the earlier periods, until the 7th century C.E., neither does it represent the times under the Seljuk, Ottoman and early Republican Turkish political dominions.

As regards to its methodological limitations, this work could not benefit from advanced architectural survey techniques, such as laser scanning or theodolite. Moreover, I was not able to consult many Arabic and Syriac primary sources due to my restricted knowledge of languages or not being able to locate the sources.

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF TUR ABDIN

The current chapter aims at providing a general descriptive and historical foundation for the monument presented in this thesis, which is a church complex located on the plateau of Tur Abdin. Following a geographical definition and a brief account on the ancient names of Tur Abdin, the history of the plateau including the emergence of Christianity and the architecture parallel to the faith will be briefly explained. This section is essential for only after a general presentation of the geography and history of the region it would become possible to contextualize the monument and various historical and religious issues raised throughout this study.

I.1. Geographical Definition and Features of the Tur Abdin Plateau

The plateau of Tur Abdin is within the present-day official boundaries of province of Mardin in the southeast of modern Turkey. It is delimited by the river Tigris on the north and the east; and Karaca Dağ, an

extinct volcano, rises on its west side. To the south, the plateau opens into the plain of Mesopotamia (fig. I.1).[17]

Ancient documents and writers refer to this plateau and different districts within it under various names. Ashurnasirpal II, a 9th-century BCE king of the Neo-Assyrian kingdom, mentions in a victory stele marching through and conquering Mount Kashyari, which is believed to be the wider plateau which encompasses Tur Abdin.[18] Strabo, the ancient geographer (64BCE-24CE), states that Nisibis lies at the foot of Mount Masius, which is accepted as yet another reference to at least the south escarpment of Tur Abdin.[19] Palmer notes that Ptolemy, a 2nd century Greek historian from Egypt, also refers to the region as Mount Masius.[20]

From the 4th century CE onwards, Mount Izala, Izlo and Gawgal appear to have started to be used to refer to possibly the southern hilly district of the plateau which is elevated from the plain of Mesopotamia.[21] John of Ephesus, a 6th-century clergy member and historian from the region of Amida, states that some monks withdrew to Izala Mountains

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[17] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* iii; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol.3, 33; Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* xiii.
[18] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 1.
[19] Strabo, *Geography*, translated by Horace Leonard Jones. The Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, 2006 [1930]): 16.1.22-24.
[20] *Monk and Mason*, xix.
[21] Ibid. xix.

due to the anxiety caused by the persecutions in the 6th century.[22] Similarly, historians with Greek background, such as Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century), Sozomen (5th century), Theophylact (7th century), are recorded to have referred to the region as Mount Izala.[23] The latter author also referred to the region as "Tur Abdin".[24]

Palmer notes that the name "Tur Abdin" generally stands for the eastern part of the plateau, which terminates with the river Tigris; the west, south-west and easternmost escarpments are addressed with separate names, as Mount Aglosh (Karaca Dağ), Mount of Mardin and Mount Malbash, respectively.[25] The entire plateau appears to have had distinct geographical escarpments with separate names, which sometimes intersected with each other. "Tur Abdin", as one of the more general ways of referring to the limestone plateau has been mentioned in ancient sources; however, a precise determination of what is actually being referred to by the name was not provided.[26] Bar Hebraeus, a 13th century physician and historian, uses the name "Tur Abdin" to refer to the

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[22] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Patrologia Orientalis. Tome 17. Fasicule 1. No:82 Brepols: Pontificio Istitution Orientale Roma, 2003[1974]), 419. I shall write about this phenomenon in the forthcoming section.
[23] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, xix; John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 419, n.4.
[24] Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 200, 210, 215.
[25] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, xix.
[26] Ibid. xix-xxii.

region.[27] He does not provide a description of the region; therefore, it must be a commonly known way of referring to the plateau by the 13th century. What appears to be interpreted out of the ancient statements, most of which are ecclesiastical documents, is that Hesno d-Kifo, Mardin, Sawro and Dara are theoretically not in Tur Abdin; yet, as Palmer rightfully notes, for a better contextualization of Tur Abdin, these settlements should be integrated into the discourse and analyses.[28]

Tur Abdin is ca. 800-1000m high above the sea-level. Terrestrial climate is the predominant climate in the region; thus it is arid in summer and it receives rain and snow in the winter[29]. The higher elevations of the plateau generally lack vegetation; the significant natural flora, although rare, includes oak. Since the plateau comprises a massive limestone formation, which is a porous material, the rainwater is collected in the underground cavities. Major present-day agricultural products are grain, pulse, vine and olive.[30]

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[27] Gregory Abu'l Faraj. *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj; The Son of Aaron, The Hybrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus. Being the First Part of His Political History of the World.* Translated from the Syriac by Budge, Ernest A. Wallis. (USA: Gorgias Press, 2003), vol.I, 86, 132, 475.

[28] Information about these and other significant settlements will be integrated into and provided throughout the text.

[29] http://www.midyat.gov.tr.

[30] http://www.mardin.gov.tr.

I.2. General Historical Overview of the Ruling Presences in Tur Abdin[31]

The formative period of Tur Abdin, as well as the wider northern Mesopotamia, as a specific cultural milieu in itself was characterized by its position of being a part of the frontier between the Graeco-Roman and the Persian worlds for numerous centuries, following the conquest of the region by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE.[32] As Mundell-Mango underlines, Arameans, Kurds, Arabs, Jews and Macedonian settlers inhabited in the region throughout a long period of time, in which significant ancient settlements such as Edessa, Nisibis, Mardin and Amida were possibly refounded.[33] It is significant to note that majority of these urban centers, appear to have re/gained economic, religious, cultural or political significance basically after the Roman conquest. Re/foundations and fortifications of cities and other settlements, as well as their roles in significant historical events testify this.[34]

A great part of the northern Mesopotamia, together with Armenia, was conquered and annexed to the official territory of the Roman Empire by Trajan in 117 CE, a time in which the east and south side of the eastern

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[31] Although the history of the region of northern Mesopotamia dates back earlier than the 5th millennium BCE, for practical purposes, the account of the region will be presented starting from the Roman conquest of northern Mesopotamia in the 2nd century AD, in the current work. J.N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (NY: Routledge, 1992), 23.

[32] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* iii.

[33] Ibid.

[34] The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, *Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813,* edited by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 2006), 59, 84, 231.

terrestrial boundaries were occupied by the Parthians.[35] This conquest also triggered the attempts to strengthen the *limes*, a term which is used to refer to the frontier as a zone rather than a border line, consisting of sets of fortified sites and settlements[36]. Because, even though a Roman expansion into the east is recorded, the frontier area appears to be dominated by both Roman and Persian powers in turn.[37]

In 363, Jovian, by then the Byzantine emperor, ceded Nisibis to Sassanid dynasty of Persia in compliance with a peace treaty, an event which seemingly shifted the frontier, which had been more to the east previously.[38] This occasion resulted in debates in the scholarly world on whether to place Tur Abdin in Roman/Byzantine or the Persian territory; the general acceptance is that majority of the plateau was in the former.[39] Thus, Tur Abdin basically was an official Roman territory until the Arab conquest. Nevertheless, being on the frontier appears to have determined

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[35] CAH, vol.XI, 125-126.

[36] Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, "The Defences of Syria in the Sixth Century" *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms II* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag GMBH, 1977): 488-9; Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 1999): 18; C.S. Lightfoot "The Site of Roman Bezabde" *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia*, ed. Stephen Mitchell (Oxford: BAR, 1983), 189.

[37] The notion of "frontier" has been elaborated on by numerous scholars. Stephen Mitchell, ed., *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia*, Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at University College, Swansea in April 1981 (Oxford: BAR, 1983); D. H. French and C. S. Lightfoot, eds., *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire*, Proceedings of a Colloqium Held at Ankara in September 1988 (Oxford: BAR, 1989); Ibid.; Shalegh Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture on the Eastern Frontier* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1995); Geoffrey Greatrex, Samuel N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: AD 363-628* (London: Routledge, 2007); Michael Decker, "Frontier Settlement and Economy in the Byzantine East", *DOP*, vol.61 (2007): 217-267.

[38] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, iii.

[39] Ibid.

the political, cultural and religious features of the region, rather than the official Roman identity, which possibly never surpassed the Semitic identity of the region.[40]

Following the cede of Nisibis to the Sassanid dynasty, Byzantine emperor Anastasius (491-518) re-founded and fortified the city of Dara, a settlement to the south-west of the Tur Abdin plateau, in 505-507 to compensate the lost economic and strategic advantages of Nisibis.[41] Therefore, the potential damage its loss would have given was attempted to be minimized by this new Byzantine city, which shortly became an administrative, military and religious center in the 6th century.[42]

Foundation of the city of Dara appears to have been followed by a group of imperial investments and projects on the east flanks of the Byzantine Empire. Anastasius provided benefactions not only for strengthening the *limes*, but also for religious building projects, a major one of which is the monastery of Mor Gabriel in Tur Abdin.[43] A physically strong frontier with an attached-to-the-emperor public appears to have been contemplated.

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[40] Lucas Van Rompay, "East (3): Syria and Mesopotamia", *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook-Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 365-6.
[41] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, iv; Brian Croke and James Crow, "Procopius and Dara" *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol.73 (1983): 149.
[42] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, iv.
[43] Ibid. v.

The imperial favor provided at the beginning of the 6th century to Tur Abdin appears to have reversed with the ascension of Justin I to the throne in 518. In fact, after this time, persecution of the Miophysites[44] by the Byzantine authorities shaped the political and social domains in the region until when the persecutions appear to have been left in a subsidiary position in the late 6th century.[45] Tur Abdin, and the wider northern Mesopotamia, hence was restored to its primary position of a frontier with an interchanging dominion of the east and west powers. Indeed, Mardin, Amida and Dara are reported to have been attacked by and ceded to Chosroe, by then the Sassanid king, in 607[46]. This state was dramatically changed with the Arab conquest of the region in 640.

Moslem Arabs, under the caliphate of Omar (634-44) gradually but rapidly conquered Mesopotamia in the first half of the 7th century.[47] Arab conquest eliminated the Byzantine-Sassanid frontier struggles in the northern Mesopotamia.[48] Tur Abdin, since it is a remote and rural area when compared to major settlements such as Edessa and Nisibis, appears

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[44] Miophysitism is the Christological doctrine which suggests that Christ had one nature which is the divine. Khaled Anatolios, "Discourse on the Trinity", *Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to c.600,* ed. Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007) (henceforth CHC): 455. Frederick Norris, "Greek Christianities", *CHC,* 94. I shall discuss this denomination and the notion of persecutions in the following section.

[45] Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997): 225.

[46] Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography,* 86.

[47] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 158. Andrew Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993): xlix.

[48] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* v.

to have enjoyed a relatively less strict state of administration under the Arab dominion; this is claimed to be interpreted out of intense building activities in the region.[49]

The social and architectural situation of Tur Abdin under the Arab dominion appears to have changed with the raids of Seljuk Turks starting from the 11th century. Many major buildings, including the monastery of Mor Gabriel are recorded to have been sacked and plundered.[50] This is a time which is also called the "Syrian Renaissance" due to high volume of writing activity in Tur Abdin.[51] This increase in writing activities might be seen as a reflection of catastrophic events such as raids, insecurity and economic decline which people tended to record and under which they might have attempted to establish unification through literature.[52] Palmer interprets this period as the start of an era in which functions of monasteries within the Christian society declined while that of villages ascended in Tur Abdin.[53]

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[49] Ibid.; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 147. I shall summarize the building activities in Tur Abdin in the forthcoming sections.
[50] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 7, 224; Book of Life, microfiche to Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, section H, 2.
[51] Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Leaves from an Illustrated Syriac Lectionary of the Seventh/Thirteenth Century" *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* ed. David Thomas (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001), 186, 202.
[52] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 7.
[53] Ibid. 226.

The following major event prevailing in the region was the Mongol sack, which occurred in the 14th century.[54] Tur Abdin, together with majority of Syria and Mesopotamia, was annexed to the Ottoman territory in the early 16th century under Selim II;[55] and stayed under Turkish rule up to the present day, except for times of warfare, such as the First World War.[56]

I.3. The Syrian Orthodox Church and Tur Abdin

Christianity is accepted to be traced back, through textual evidence, to the 2nd century in northern Mesopotamia, based on the fact that Christian communities in the region are known to have used Aramaic of the city of Edessa.[57] The Syriac language, an East-Aramaic language belonging to the Semitic language family, was used to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew; this Syriac Scripture is called *peshitta*.[58] Thence originating in a buffer area between the Graeco-Roman and Semitic worlds, the Syriac Christianity (Christianity expressed in the Syriac language) is generally accepted to have been nourished by both the

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[54] Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, vol.II, xxxi-liii; Book of Life, 7,8.
[55] Colin Imber, *Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2004), ix.
[56] Mehmet Çelik, *Ortadoğu Mozaiği Süryaniler – Nasturiler* (Elazığ: Fırat Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları, 1996), 37.
[57] Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia*, 366.
[58] Ibid. 367.

Judaism with its Semitic nature and the Hellenistic culture.[59] It spread on a vast territory, from Antioch, a highly Hellenized Roman city on the east coast of the Mediterranean, on the west and Ctesiphon, center of Persian land, on the east.[60]

The Roman Empire, as stated previously, started expanding eastwards in the 2nd century. The expansion into the Persian land continued in the 3rd century; in fact, the frontier was shifted further into the east, leaving Nisibis, Amida and Tur Abdin in the Roman territory. This had a dividing effect on the Syriac Church, since a part of the land dominated by Syriac Christianity was left on the Sassanid land, the newly reorganized Persian dynasty, whereas the other part was left in the Roman.[61] The shifts in the frontier continued until the Arab conquest of the whole region in the 7th century. There were Syriac Christian communities existing in both of the empires; both communities further diverged from each other due to not only the political boundaries but theological disputes in the forthcoming decades.

In the 5th century doctrinal disputes on Christ's nature emerged between Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, and Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople.[62] The ideas of the latter, which were possibly rooted from

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[59] Ibid. 365-7.
[60] Ibid. 366.
[61] Ibid. 366.
[62] Anatolios, *Trinity*, 454.

the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia[63], were based on a dual nature of Christ. In fact, Nestorius questioned the term "Theotokos" (Mother of God) and Cyril's interpretation of Jesus's humanity; whereas Cyril argued that Jesus had only one nature and that is the divine nature which is directly identified with his humanity.[64] The latter doctrine has been accepted in the Council of Ephesus in 431; and Nestorius and his followers were declared heretical.[65]

Meanwhile, Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa, accepted Cyril of Alexandria's doctrine, which was the Miophysite doctrine, and burnt works of Theodore in Edessa. This phenomenon was a clear indication of the division of the Syriac-speaking Christian communities, although the School of Edessa continued to produce works in line with Nestorius's teachings.[66]

Among the scholars of Edessa, Narsai attempted at integrating Theodore's Christology into Cyril's (Alexandrian) theology; however, it was strongly opposed, which resulted in Narsai and other followers of Nestorius to leave Edessa and settle in Nisibis. The scholars leaving the School of Edessa established a new theology school in Nisibis, which was then in the Persian territory, in the second half of the 5th century. The

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[63] A former bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia.
[64] Ibid. 455.
[65] Karl-Heinz Uthemann, "History of Christology to the 7th Century" *CHC*, 485; Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia*, 376.
[66] Ibid. 377.

School of Nisibis shortly became the center of Nestorian doctrine.[67] Meanwhile, Edessa greatly supported Alexandrian thought, enjoying for a short time an imperial support for its theological standing, which is the Miophysite doctrine.[68]

Miophysite doctrine suggests that Christ has one nature and it is the divine. The doctrine was possibly established in the late 4th century and it was the mainstream Christology in Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Armenia and Egypt besides other geographical locations.[69] In the Council of Chalcedon held in 451, the imperial church accepted a middle-way Christology, condemning both Diophysitism of Theodore and Nestorius and Miophysitism, which is generally associated with Euthyces, an extreme Miophysitist.[70]

On one hand the Council of Chalcedon set the foundations of the Western Christian doctrine, while on the other it alienated majority of Christian communities which had accepted Miophysite doctrine to be the ideal Christology founded by church fathers such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, Cappadocian fathers and many others.[71] Thus, many Miophysite theologians such as Philoxenus of Mabbog and

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[67] Ibid.; The term "Nestorian" is in fact erroneus for it was Theodore who set the foundations of the Dyophisite doctrine and Rabbula appears to have opposed to Theodore rather than Nestorius (ibid.).
[68] Ibid. 378.
[69] Norris, *Greek Christianities*, 94-5; Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia*, 378.
[70] Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia*, 378; Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, iv.
[71] Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia*, 378.

Severus, Bishop of Antioch, expressed their support of the doctrine.[72] They were supported by the imperial family in the late 5th and early 6th century, until in 518, Emperor Justin I started the anti-Chalcedonian persecutions,[73] with an attempt to restore the orthodoxy as a reaction to the schism between Rome and Constantinople, which broke out in 484.[74]

Persecutions targeting anti-Chalcedonians symbolically started with the exile of Severus of Antioch in 518 and they continued in the form of sacks of churches and monasteries and exiles of clergy members and monks until Justinian and Theodora ascended to the throne in 527, a time when the imperial couple issued an edict declaring that exiled monks and clergy could resettle in their former locations.[75] With this edict, a time period of negotiations between the imperial couple and anti-Chalcedonians started. However, in 536, the imperial church decided once more that anti-Chalcedonian doctrines were not acceptable, thus restarted the persecutions. Emperors Justinian (527-565) and Justin II (565-578) are known to have attempted at imposing Chalcedonian doctrines.[76] Thus, the persecutions appear to have continued into the second half of the 6th

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 17.
[74] Winrich Löhr, "Western Christianities", *CHC*, 18.
[75] Brian Croke, "Justinian, Theodora, and the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol.60 (2006): 33-5.
[76] Sidney Griffith, "'Melkites', 'Jacobites' and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth Century Syria" *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*. ed. David Thomas (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001), 12.

century; they were left in a subsidiary position as a result of constant negotiations with the Miophysites and other political and economic struggles the empire faced towards the end of the 6th century.[77]

The persecutions, failing to unite the imperial church, resulted in the Syriac Church, thenceforth called the Syrian Orthodox Church, starting to form its anti-Chalcedonian identity in the 6th century, a time period in which intense literary and architectural projects were undertaken.[78]

Tur Abdin was pagan prior to entering of the Christian faith into the land; variety of practices from tree-worshipping to Zoroastrianism had been practiced.[79] It is not clearly determined when the Syriac Christianity spread into the plateau of Tur Abdin. It is stated that the faith already was widespread in the 3rd century. Ephrem and Aphrahat's[80] literary works testify that a solidly established Syriac ecclesiastical literature was practiced in the 4th century. Ascetic communities emerged in Syria ca. the late-2nd century, *Odes of Solomon* being possibly the earliest reflection of ecclesiastical spirituality in this region; persecutions, martyrdom and

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[77] Susan Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (London:Berkeley University Press, 1990): 21; Treadgold, *State and Society,* 225.

[78] Van Rompay, *Syria and Mesopotamia,* 379.

[79] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 29; Qartmin Trilogy, microfishe to Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* section B, xxiii.

[80] Two theologians who lived in the 4th century and produced the initial Syriac works. Sebastian Brock, "An Introduction to Syriac Studies" *Horizons in Semitic Studies: Articles for the Student,* University Semitic Study Aids 8 (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1980): 5, 13.

ascetic communities and individuals, such as stylites, were phenomena of the region in the 4th and early-5th century.[81] But it appears that the spread of the Christian faith and Syriac literature was basically an urban phenomenon.[82] It is not clear whether asceticism emerging in Syria found a direct continuation in northern Mesopotamia and Tur Abdin.

The spread of Christianity into Tur Abdin is traditionally associated with the legend of Mor Awgen, who is believed to be a disciple of St. Anthony of Egypt and to have brought Christianity together with monasticism to Tur Abdin in the 4th century.[83] There is no material evidence in accordance with this myth. In fact, it is generally accepted that sources mentioning Mor Awgen cannot be dated earlier than the 9th century.[84]

Nevertheless, Palmer claims that Tur Abdin was possibly converted to Christianity in the 4th century.[85] One of the earliest references to the Christian presence in Tur Abdin is provided in the Life of Jacob of Salah, which states that the bishop of Hesno d-Keyfo (modern Hasankeyf, Batman), in the 4th century, was in charge of the land extending as far as

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[81] Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 8; Sebastian Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (USA and Great Britain: Variorum, 1984): 11; Frank Trombley, "Christian Demography in the *Territorium* of Antioch (4th-5th c.): Observations on the Epigraphy", *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch,* eds. Isabella Sandwell and Janet Huskinson (Oxford: Oxbow Boks, 2004), 59.

[82] Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 8.

[83] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 1, 3; Palmer states that Legend of Awgen was possibly a late invention (*Monk and Mason*, 30). I was not able to consult the source.

[84] Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, 3, n.6.

[85] *Monk and Mason*, 30

Salah (modern Barıştepe, Mardin), a village in Tur Abdin.[86] In the Qartmin Trilogy, a manuscript collection describing the lives of Samuel, Simeon and Gabriel, indicates the foundation of the monastery of Mor Gabriel in the 5th century.[87] The same source mentions Emperor Theodosius' and Anastasius' benefactions to the monastery in the 5th and 6th centuries, respectively.[88]

Another 6th century source referring to Christian presence in Tur Abdin is provided by John of Ephesus who states that some of the monks being expelled from their monasteries in the Amida region during the Chalcedonian persecutions of early 6th century resettled in Izala (south escarpment of Tur Abdin) and founded new monasteries.[89] In *Notitia Antiochena* of 570 three suffragan (auxiliary) bishoprics of Dara, Theodosiopolis, Mnasoubion and Tourabdion are listed, the latter of which is thought to be possibly Tur Abdin.[90]

Tur Abdin, which was an auxiliary bishopric according to *Notitia Antiochena,* is recorded to have a bishop in the 7th century; in the Qartmin Trilogy, Gabriel is stated to be the bishop of Tur Abdin during the Arab conquest of the area in 640.[91] Whether this was a main or a suffragan

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[86] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* xxii.
[87] Ibid. 14.
[88] Ibid.; Qartmin Trilogy, xxx.
[89] *Lives,* 419.
[90] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* iv; Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* xxii.
[91] Ibid. 14.

bishopric is not clear, since Palmer also states that Gabriel could be the metropolitan of Dara during the Arab conquest.[92] Although the ecclesiastical title of Gabriel is dubious, it is still clear that Tur Abdin had a more solid place within the Syrian Orthodox Church, since not only Christian but also Moslem sources refer to it as an area populated by Christians.[93] A strong presence of Christianity in Tur Abdin appears to have been pertained in the following centuries. In the late 8th century official register of ordinations in Tur Abdin begins; the records indicate bishops through the 9th-11th centuries. Therefore, it can be suggested that Christianity must have long been strongly established in the region by this time period, since there was a need for bishops.[94]

The 13th century has been referred to as the period of the "Syrian Renaissance", in which an intense production and usage of literary works have been recorded in the Syrian Orthodox world, and Tur Abdin is one of the centers of this period; voluminous manuscript production in the monasteries in and around Tur Abdin testifies this.[95] This phenomenon is yet another indicator of a strong Christian presence on the plateau of Tur Abdin in the medieval era.

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[92] Ibid. 158.
[93] Ibid. 158-9.
[94] Ibid. 224-6.
[95] Hunt, *Syriac Lectionary*, 186, 202.

The situation appears to have pertained until the contemporary era in Tur Abdin. Monasteries in Tur Abdin housed bishops not only throughout the Ottoman but the Turkish Republican era; and this situation is an indicator of an existing Christian population and a community for the monastery on the plateau.[96]

I.4. Architecture of Tur Abdin

During the time in which northern Mesopotamia was part of the frontier between the Graeco-Roman and the Persian worlds, namely between the 4th century BCE and 7th century CE, major architectural projects in the area appear to have been military in nature. Especially with the expansion of the Roman Empire from the 2nd century onwards and reorganization of Persia under the Sassanid dynasty resulted in formation of *limes*, which means sets of fortifications forming a defendable area on the frontier.[97] Fortifications in Amida, Dara, Qal'at Hatem Tay and many others constitute material evidence of military architecture of the region. They

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[96] For bishops of Tur Abdin after 1923, http://www.morgabriel.org/bishops_1923.html.
[97] *CAH* 295.

have been recorded by ancient authors,[98] and are frequently referred to by modern scholars.[99]

Starting from the 2nd century, ecclesiastical architecture emerged in the region's urban centers such as Edessa.[100] Military and ecclesiastical architecture, contributing to the making of the landscapes of northern Mesopotamia, is either left at the lower edges of Tur Abdin, as in the case of military architecture, or appears to have entered the plateau in later periods.

Architecture of Tur Abdin has been studied by numerous scholars, who based their work on material evidence as well as written sources.[101] Mundell-Mango and Palmer both provided lists of so-called dated buildings of the region of northern Mesopotamia.[102] Both lists appear to have items which the other one does not include, thus the architectural history of Tur Abdin is still incomplete within the scholarly studies.

Very few buildings appear to possibly pre-date the Arab conquest in Tur Abdin, in fact no inscriptions indicating a date earlier than 640 has been found in the region.[103] If some structures, which are not

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[98] Procopius, *Buildings* General Index to Procopius. trans. Dewing, The Late H. B. (Great Britain: Harvard University Press, 1940), v.II 99, 127, 129; Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle,* 231.
[99] Croke and Crow, *Procopius and Dara;* Michael Whitby, "The Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East" *BAR International Series* 297 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1986).
[100] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 161.
[101] Please refer to introduction where a brief literary review is presented.
[102] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 161; Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 194.
[103] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* vi.

systematically dated and are identified as "pagan" by Palmer, are neglected, the earliest building in the plateau has been dated to late-4th, early-5th century.[104] This building is the monastery of Mor Gabriel in Qartmin; and the information about its foundation is provided by Qartmin Trilogy. An almost contemporary edifice is the monastery of Mor Yakub in Salah.[105] Until the end of the 7th century, majority of the buildings in Tur Abdin appear to be monasteries, namely that of Deyr Salib and Mor Aho (before 556), Mor Serkis and Bakhos in Hah (modern Anıtlı, Mardin) (691), Mor Abay in Qillit (modern Dereiçi, Mardin) (696)[106].

Village churches[107] appear to have followed the monastic buildings in a slightly later era. The earliest dated village church is possibly the church of Mor Sobo in Hah; a date of 6th century is proposed for this building.[108] However, this church can be considered an exceptional church in terms of its dating, since chronologically what follows in the record have been built in the early-8th century.[109] This situation indicates a rural architectural boast in Tur Abdin, following the Arab conquest of the

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[104] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 161; Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 194.
[105] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 161.
[106] Information derived from lists provided by Mundell-Mango (1982) and Palmer (1990).
[107] Bell proposed a distinction between monastic and parish churches in terms of their architectural typology (Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 56). I use the term "village church" not to refer to the specific type of church, but to the churches which are loacted in villages and not in monastic settings.
[108] Elif Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architectur,* 98.
[109] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* 163; Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 194.

region.[110] This phenomenon has been associated with a rather autonomous administration of the region, along with direct and indirect favors and grants of the Arab rulers.[111] It is important to emphasize that the turn of the 8th century has also been identified as a time period in which Christians in the lands conquered by the Moslem Arabs appear to have realized that a new faith was being established.[112]

In both of the lists provided by Mundell-Mango and Palmer it is seen that after early 10th century not many buildings were founded. Although architectural projects appear to have continued until the 15th century, they were generally in the form of rebuildings, restorations or additions to already existing buildings. This observation will be used in the discussion of dating of the church of Mor Dimet, which is at the core of the church complex at Zaz and the current study as a whole.

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[110] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, vi; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 147.
[111] Bell and Mango, Churches and Monasteries, vi.
[112] Sidney Griffith, "John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: The Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam", *Hugoye* vol.11 no.2 (2008): 1 (http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol11No2/index.html)

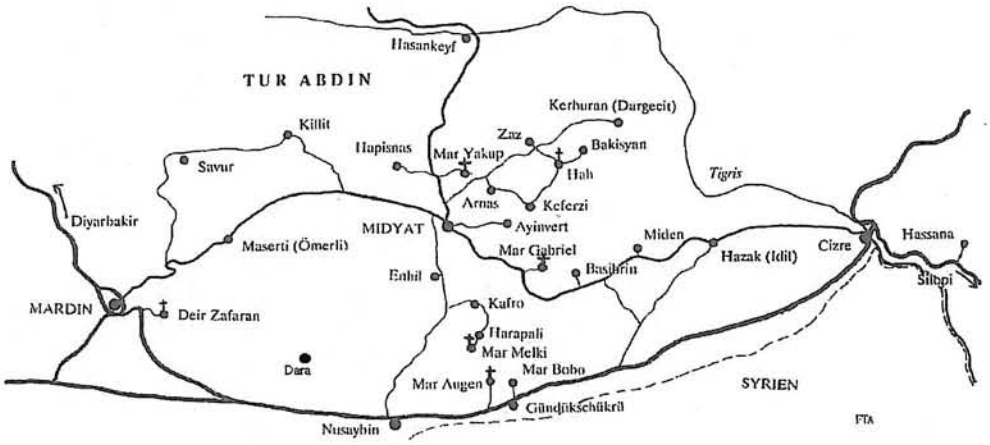
CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH COMPLEX AT ZAZ

II.1. Introduction to the Village and to the Site

The village of Zaz (modern village of Izbirak) is located on the 16th km of the modern road connecting Midyat and Dargecit, two prominent towns of the province of Mardin, in modern south-east Turkey (see maps I and II). The road follows a natural pass among the medium-height hills of the north-east part of the Tur Abdin plateau[113]. Zaz is located on the west and north slopes of a hill at 1km into the land, to the north of the main road. (fig. II.1 & II.2)

[113] Please, refer to Chapter I for detailed description of Tur Abdin.



Map I. Major settlements in Tur Abdin and the neighboring districts (Reproduced based on the map provided at http://www.aina.org/maps.turabdin/turabdin1.jpg)

Map II. Google Earth view of the village of Zaz (downloaded on 13 Dec. 2009)

The turning point is marked by two signs; one for the village and the second for the "Church of Mor Dimet" (Mor Dimet Kilisesi)[114]. While the modern village dwellings and some ruins of old buildings are laid on the south slopes of the mound, the complex is situated on the tip of the mound, to the east of the village. Thus, the layout of the village terminates with the church complex on the east edge (fig. II.2, II.3). The space between the main road and the village is mainly allocated for agricultural fields processed by villagers.

The pebble-stone road leading from the paved main road to the village lies along the southern edge of the village and terminates at the entrance of the complex[115]. The church complex can be reached from the north of the village as well, via less regular, earth pathways. One taking either of these roads from the village up to the hilltop ultimately reaches the west façade of the structure. At this point, the church, a residential building annexed to it and the exterior wall enclosing the former two are visible. The church has been revitalized over the last decade by two individuals, Abuna Yakub[116] and a nun[117]. They also built the residential

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[114] As explained in the introduction, I shall be referring to the structures within the enclosure wall as the "church complex and complex", whereas, to the main church as the "church" in my texts.

[115] The road was probably laid in 1970s, since another village road is reported to be laid in that time (İlyas İran. *Kfarze (Altıntaş) Köyünün Tarihçesi*, (İstanbul: Anadolu Ofset, 2007), 86).

[116] "Abuna" literally means "our father" in Syriac. It is the title given to priests and priested-monks in the region.

building (2001-2005) and now live in it while guarding and taking care of the church[118].

The church complex comprises five components: the limestone base on which the structure rests, the enclosure wall which surrounds the complex on the south-west, south and south-east, the cluster of structures which generates the residential area on the north-west of the complex, a courtyard, and the actual church on the north of the complex (plan II.1). The complex as a whole extends over the surface of a limestone platform, a detailed description of which is provided below.

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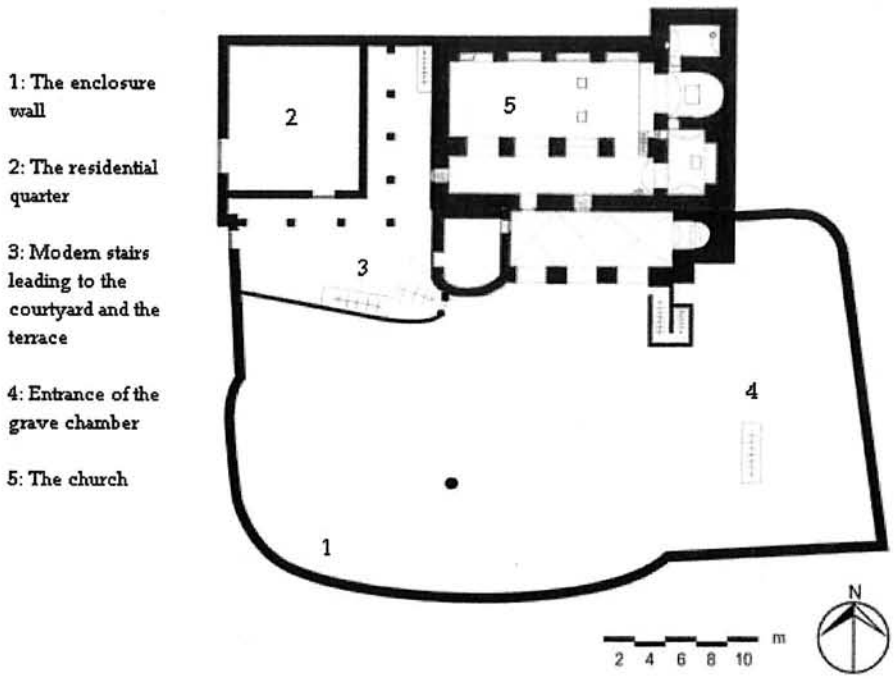
[117] The religious titles of these two individuals, monk and nun, have been told to me by Abuna Yakub; these titles are being used by villagers as well, to address these individuals. I shall discuss this issue further in detail in chapter IV

[118] I shall have a separate section on the revitalization process of the church in the chapter IV.



Plan II.1. Ground plan of the church complex at Zaz[119]
(Redrawn by the author, based on the ground plan of the church provided by Wiessner[120])

This chapter introduces the church complex. It comprises detailed descriptions of various components of the complex, based on results of the on-site architectural survey conducted by the author[121]. First discussion will be on the limestone base and the rock-cut structures it bears, since the whole complex rests on it. Then, I shall proceed with the enclosure wall which surrounds and defines the entire complex. A description of the

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[119] This ground plan does not indicate the building phases of the structures. It is provided to introduce the general layout of the complex. Plans showing the building phases will be provided later in the relevant sections.
[120] All of the ground plans of the church of Mor Dimet provided in this thesis are drawn by the author based on the plan provided by Wiessner (*Kultbauten*, 148).
[121] November 2009 and April 2010.

modern residential building will follow. The chapter will be finalized with the description of the courtyard which lies to the south of the church and the residential building[122].

Each architectural component of the structure is discussed separately. Discussions start with a description of the structure/s of concern, which comprises of location, measurements, building techniques, function and possible dating. Descriptive sections are followed by analysis of *comparanda* and contextualization of the structures. Since little has been published on the church, I shall at time refer to Abuna Yakub's identifications and testimonies throughout the chapter.

II.2 The Components of the Complex

II.2.1 The Limestone Base

The plateau of Tur Abdin is a limestone massif covered by a layer of earth. Although the existence of earth enables small-scale agriculture in the region, the terrain is basically determined by projecting limestone accumulations. White limestone, called the "Midyat stone" is a geological formation covering other rock formations beneath it.[123] It is a "*sedimentary rock that is composed mostly of calcite (CaCO3) that precipitates from*

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[122] The church will not be described here, since chapter III is allocated for an extensive analysis of it.

[123] Enver Altınlı, "Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'nun Jeolojisi", *Maden Tetkik ve Arama Dergisi*, 66 (1966): 58.

seawater."[124] It is light and porous, which eases building and carving. Gradually ascending rock platforms is a frequently observed natural phenomenon in Tur Abdin, which is peculiar to this region (fig. II.4).[125]

The hill, on which the village of Zaz rests, is composed of limestone rock formations; this is clearly visible in the environs of the complex. To the west, the limestone base is visible only within 2-3m range from the foundation of the church complex, due to human-made structures, such as road or dwellings; the situation is similar on the north where the limestone is barely traceable due to modern buildings used as animal shelters by the inhabitants of the church complex. Nevertheless, on the south and east the limestone base appears clearly. In fact, it is approximately 30m wide on the south and 50m on the east; composed of rock platforms, each of which is 15m wide on average. The rock platforms gradually ascend until they reach the foundation of the structure on the east (fig. II.5).

This limestone base is significant, because it represents the platform on which all of the structures of the complex are built; and at the same time it was and is used for numerous rock-cut spaces, such as the so-called "winery", "crypt", wells and other structures (plan II.2). Except for short sections in Wiessner's description of the church, these rock-cut spaces have not been previously published. Identifications of these spaces have

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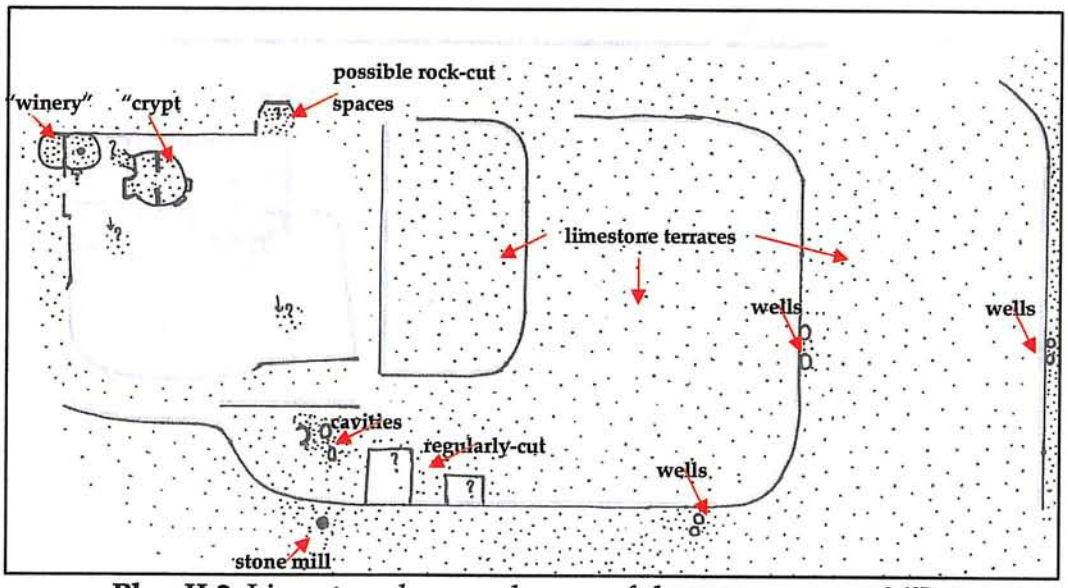
[124] http://www.beg.utexas.edu/mainweb/publications/graphics/limestone.htm
[125] Altınlı, *Jeoloji*, 58

been provided by Abuna Yakub. To analyze the functions of these spaces, I have used comparative material from Tur Abdin; and when Tur Abdin does not provide adequate number of *comparanda*, from farther districts, such as northern Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Cappadocia or others[126]. In the following six sections I shall analyze a number of structures which are either carved out of the limestone base in-situ and/or are directly related to the bed-rock.



Plan II.2. Limestone base and some of the structures on it[127]
(Drawn by the author, May 2010)

[126] Yet, Abuna Yakub's identifications seem to be generally not based on historical facts; and comparisons made with other geographical locations might be disguising in terms of providing chronologies, since rock-cut architecture is difficult to date.

[127] Vague lines show human-made structures; dark lines show borders of limestone structures and terraces; dotted areas are generally bedrock; "?" indicates unidentified and unsurveyed areas with a possible rock-cut space underground.

II.2.1.1. The so-called "winery"

One of the very prominent structural elements the limestone base bears is the so-called "winery", which is located to the north-west of the complex. It is beneath the modern residential building; however, its entrance is on the west, outside the main walls of the church. It is a circular underground rock-cut chamber, 1.8m high and approximately 3.2m wide. It contains a number of specific features which are explained in the current section.

The initial entrance of the structure is a semi-circular rock-cut niche, approximately 1m below the modern ground level (2m on the east side). The eastern edge of this niche is a straight stone wall, 6.6m long from north to south, joining the western wall of the church complex. The floor of the rock-cut niche is smooth, except for a rectangular cavity close to the eastern edge. The upper part of the eastern wall of the outer niche bears a triangular carved recess, which looks like a shelf on the wall; and a Syriac inscription, which was written upside down (the direction of writing being twisted 90° anti-clockwise)[128] and was framed with a rectangular incised carving. The inscription is illegible; thus, it does not throw light onto the function of the space (fig. II.6, II.7).

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[128] This is a common orientation for inscriptions in Tur Abdin. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 224.

On the eastern wall of the niche there are three openings. The northernmost opening is the narrowest one, having been blocked with small pieces of stones. The opening in the middle is on the floor level of the niche. It opens into a tub-like vat inside the "winery". The part of the floor connecting to the lower end of this opening is a round indentation which is carved into the stone. Thus, it might be an opening which enables collecting liquid material in the vat inside, which is explained below. This opening is now closed with a piece of steel net. The third and the largest opening on the south of the eastern wall of the niche is a door, 0.6mx1m, leading into the enclosed room of the "winery". (fig. II.8, II.9)

Passing through the entrance, taking two narrow steps down, one reaches the actual interior of the "winery". This is also a rock-cut structure, a round chamber with a cylindrical column in the middle (0.5m in diameter). This chamber is 1.8m high and 3.2m wide. On the west wall of the chamber the tub-like vat attracts attention. The thick rock was hollowed out, forming a vat that measures 1.2mx0.4mx0.5m. A triangular opening from inside the chamber and the opening from outside the chamber (from the eastern wall of the outside niche) opens into this hollow space. As I suggested above, it is likely that a kind of liquid was being collected here and further processed inside the chamber (fig. II.9). There are two more openings on the southern wall of the chamber. The

one on the upper side might be for air circulation[129], and the one below is said, according to Abuna Yakub, to have been the entrance of a cistern and network of underground tunnels (it is now closed with a large block of stone).

The chamber's floor is made of earth, but the limestone layer is very close to the ground. There are twenty-four cavities on the ground, in the earth (fig. II.10). The below the central column is the largest; the rest of the holes very between 0.3mx0.25m and 0.7mx0.5m. These holes might have been created to seat large amphorae. Although one might suggest this is an archaeological layer rather than the actual floor, in my opinion, the position of the entrance, the vat and the identical holes on the ground indicate that the floor is the actual floor of the chamber.

The structure is referred to as "winery" by Abuna Yakub, as it is believed to have functioned as a wine production unit once; it is out of any sort of use today. Some of the architectural elements appear to be in line with this theory. For instance, the outside niche appears like the space where the grape was pressed, the rectangular hollow on the floor of the outer niche is where sediments were collected and the indentation was used to lead the liquid inside and the vat inside, on the west of the chamber, was possibly the space where the liquid was trapped.

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[129] It is not possible to see through it; so, it is difficult to suggest any other theory for its function.

A modern *comparandum* is located in the courtyard of the church of Mor Serkis and Bakhos, in the village of Hah (fig. II.11). It is a masonry press for processing grape[130]. It has one large niche; and a tube leads the liquid into the vat situated lower than the niche. This structure exemplifies a simple winepress. A modern photograph from an exhibition which was held in Diyarbakır[131] shows some individuals from the village of Hah processing grapes into wine. In the photograph, it is observed that in wine production process, a hollow structure is used to press the grape, and a pipe lets the liquid be collected in buckets.

As the archaeological and literary sources inform us, and as the modern examples show, wine is produced as the following:[132] The grapes were collected and treaded, generally barefoot. While doing this, the skins and stalks of the treaded matter were piled together to ease the flow of the must and sometimes to press the remains further. The liquid was let flow into a vat. In some wineries the treaded must was further pressed and in some others treading and pressing were done at once, depending on the type of wine aimed to be produced. After the pressing process, the must went through two stages of fermentation, the second one being in a cooler

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[130] This identification belongs to the villagers, who claim to have been using the structure until recently.

[131] A photograph exhibition, titled "*Tur Abdin Süryanileri*", (Syrians of Tur Abdin) by Hüsamettin Bahçe, a photograph artist. The exhibition was held at Diyarbakır Art Gallery in February 2010.

[132] Rafael Frankel, *Wine and Olive Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries* (England: Sheffiled Academic Press, 1999), 42-43.

place, for a longer time. The total amount of time for fermentation was approximately 40 days, but it varied depending on the climate or the material used. Frankel emphasizes the importace of supplements added to the wine, and the importance of storage of these supplements in the immediate vicinities of wineries.[133] Thus, the structures in the "winery" of Mor Dimet are suitable for a wine-production process. Moreover, the reconstructions of ancient wineries are also in line with the structure at Mor Dimet.[134] Therefore, my suggestion is that the space was indeed used for this purpose[135], as well as a storage facility.

There are pieces of pottery of various-size scattered on the floor of the chamber. In addition to this, the identical holes on the floor match with the majority of the amphora feet, which indicate that some of these amphorae might have been placed in these cavities. Thus, it would not be wrong to suggest the space to have functioned as a storage area as well. It is a cool and dark place; and, as mentioned above, there is possibly a cistern opening, similar to the situation Ousterhout identified in the store room of one of the monasteries at Çanlı Kilise area, a possible 10th-11th century Byzantine settlement, in Cappadocia.[136]

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[133] Ibid. 43

[134] http://www.yeshuat.com; the segment on "Wine Production"

[135] Note that wine in the region was an important economic activity besides being a religion-related consumption product (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 8, 109 n.189).

[136] Rober Ousterhout, "Survey of the Byzantine Settlement at Çanlı Kilise in Cappadocia: Results of the 1995 and 1996 Seasons", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 51 (1997): 302-3.

Contextualization of wine production and wineries in Tur Abdin is a difficult task. It is known that wine was produced in the region since before the 9th century BCE.[137] Palmer states that a winery was built at the monastery of Mor Gabriel in 784/5.[138] This indicates that wine production facilities were being built in the region in the late 8th century. In fact, the phenomenon is not confined to Tur Abdin in this era; large-scale wineries are documented to have been built in the same century in souther Syria.[139] This observation might be interpreted as wine having been a significant trade commodity in the mentioned era.

To my knowledge, the physical features of no wine presses from Tur Abdin have been described in written sources. However, Bell and Ramsay describe a rock-cut wine press from Binbirkilise region.[140] *"An oblong hole, 2.70 metres long, 1.22 broad, 1.15 ... The bottom slopes strongly; and a hole at the lower end conducted the liquid into a curved receptacle, 1.15 by 0.90 by 1.1. Over the back of those presses ... there is a square hole in the rock to receive the end of the lever by which pressure was exerted on the grapes."* The description is almost identical with features of the possible winery at the

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[137] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 109 n.189.
[138] Ibid. 94.
[139] Joseph Patrich, "A Sanctuary of the 1sr c. A.D. and an Islamic Wine-press at Si' in the Hauran" *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, vol19 (2006): 666-70.
[140] An antique site majorly with Byzantine ruins, to the north of modern Turkish province of Karaman, further in Asia Minor compared to Tur Abdin. Bell and Ramsay, *The Thousand and One Churches*, 559.

church of Mor Dimet, specifically of the outer niche and interior vat which were described above.

It is mentioned in the two author's records that the church (church no. 6) by the wine-press possibly dates to the 5th-6th century.[141] A rock-cut winepress in the Nea Laura of the Judean Desert dates to the 6th century.[142] These two examples provide a possible general time frame for the rock-cut winery at the church of Mor Dimet. However, due to lack of inscriptions or decorative elements, a more specific dating can not be proposed for this structure. Yet, I shall have a discussion on possible timeframe of this and other rock-cut spaces at the church of Mor Dimet in the forthcoming sections.

II.2.1.2. The so-called "Crypt"

The limestone base bears another prominent structure, physically very close to the "winery": "the crypt"[143]. It has not been mentioned by Wiessner. It is a rock-cut underground chamber, inside the walls of the complex, to the west of the church. Its entrance, from the south-east, is inside the residential building. The original gate of the "crypt" was

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[141] Ibid. 25.

[142] Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 15, 108.

[143] The identification is provided by Abuna Yakub; the space is used as a crypt church today. But, its original function is debatable; therefore, I choose to write it in quotation marks.

slightly below the modern ground level, yet was removed further down recently by the monk who resides at the complex. The "crypt" is an elliptical chamber carved out of limestone, lying on an east-west axis, approximately 1.8m high. Originally it seems to have been an undivided space; however, it was separated into two sections with a masonry wall made of ashlars in the middle. In 2003 it was excavated and reconsecrated as a church[144]. The chamber is claimed, by Abuna Yakub, to have been once a pagan temple, on which I shall elaborate below. Currently it is used as a crypt church[145] (fig. II.12-II.14).

The "crypt"'s original entrance was marked by two stone columns. From this level, four short steps lead one almost 1m below the modern ground level; therefore, it is almost at the same level with the "winery". On the south wall, next to the modern entrance, an old door, which is now closed, is visible. The monk claims that the door was leading to the underground network of tunnels which was mentioned previously (fig. II.15). On the northern wall of the chamber, a hole that is now filled up from inside is observed. Like the opening on the south wall of the "winery", this opening could have been used for air circulation, or it can be a burial, a notion dealt with below.

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[144] Abuna Yakub, in discussion with the author, November 2009.

[145] I was not able to identify specific liturgical practices being carried out in this space, if there is any. But, an altar and a book-rest are placed, and candles have been burnt, all of which might indicate some ecclesiastical usages.

Two rectangular niches, resembling windows, are present on further east of the chamber walls. The one on the right hand side has a small extension on its bottom (fig. II.16). Their original function is debatable. Nevertheless, same types of carved niches on the walls of rock-cut chambers are observed in Tur Abdin. For instance, in the so-called "hermitages"[146] of Mor Yakub at Salah almost each of the rooms have at least one carved niche on its wall in the interior (fig. II.17, II.18). Their quantities, measurements and orientations vary. Other examples are provided in Wiessner's work.[147] Wall niche of the rock-cut chapel in a cave in the laura of Gerasimus (ca. 5th century) in the Judean Desert comprises probably an earlier example of these niches.[148] Palmer suggests that recesses on walls might have been used for placing holy images.[149]

Modern usages of niches on the walls provide insight about their rock-cut counterparts. In fact, niches on the walls are frequently used in churches for keeping holy books, candles, or other material relevant to liturgical rituals carried out in churches (fig. II.19, II.20).[150]

There are two handle-like carvings on the ceiling of the "crypt". They might have been used for hanging purposes. It is not clear whether

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[146] They have been identified as hermitages by the residents of the monastery and Palmer (*Monk and Mason*, 100): but I am not sure if they were actually hermitages. Therefore, I prefer to write them with quotation marks. A dating has not been proposed for them.
[147] *Kultbauten*, Teil3&4.
[148] Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 147.
[149] *Monk and Mason*, 134.
[150] Elif Keser-Kayaalp, "A Newly Discovered Rock-Cut Complex: Monastery of Pheshilta?" *Istanbul Mitteilungen* (2008): 276.

they were made simultaneously with the "crypt" or later. Examples of such handles have neither, to my knowledge, been published, nor have they been encountered by me in Tur Abdin. These handles must be related to the function of the chamber. As I shall discuss below, the chamber might have had multiple functions throughout history; therefore, it is difficult to suggest a specific function for these handles. Abuna Yakub claims that these handles were carved out by pagans who hang and burnt sacrificial animals; however, there are no traces of extensive burning in the interior of the space.

The "crypt" was divided into two with large stone blocks; this separation was reinforced when it was converted into a church (fig. II.14). On the lintel of the separation door, a group of ecclesiastical symbols and a Syriac inscription are visible. The decoration, all of which is shallowly carved on stone surface, consists of two Greek crosses, a *Theta*, a bigger Greek cross in a square frame in the middle, a second *Theta*, and two more Greek crosses (fig. II.13). The inscription was engraved on white plaster, and it, like the inscription on the wall of the "winery", was written upside down. It reads as: *"This sun-temple of the Greeks was built two thousand years ago [...]."* It appears as it was incised by Abuna Yakub, who claims that the space was once used by pagans as a temple, since usage of modern white

plaster is observed. There is no material evidence to testify this "temple" theory[151].

An altar has been placed in the inner division of the crypt, in 2003, by Abuna Yakub. It faces the two niches on the wall, which were mentioned above, and thus the east. It has a cylindrical base and a rectangular flat top. In the western division there is a book-rest. It stands with an orientation towards north, making a 90° angle with the direction of the altar in the south division of the crypt. It is also composed of two parts: a cylindrical base and a slightly-decorated top which is carved in the shape of an open book at the top (fig. II.21).

The altar of the "crypt" is a frequently observed liturgical supplement observed in Tur Abdin. It is difficult to date, but it has a pair placed in the courtyard, again by the last inhabitants (fig. II.22). I suggest these two objects were originally book-rests. In fact, such book-rests are called *"guda"* in the region, and they are frequently used (fig. II.23).[152] These two book-rests could be the original *"guda"* of the church interior, which has two modern book-rests today.

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[151] It is observed in Tur Abdin that many seemingly old spaces are associated with ancient pagan heritage of the region. One of the well-known examples is the so-called "sun temple" within the monastery of Deyr Zafaran (Hans Hollerweger, *Living Cultural Heritage: Tur Abdin* (Linz: Freunde des Tur Abdin, 1999), 350). This tendency of identification of places as ancient and pagan might indicate an attempt to show the long history of sites and the triumph of Christianity over these assumed pagan spaces. This will not be discussed in this work.

[152] Bell and Mundell-Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 102, 165; also author's observation

The book-rest placed in the western division of the "crypt" has an identical example in the courtyard of the church of Mor Quryakos in Arnas (modern Bağlarbaşı, Mardin) (fig. II.24). None of the previous scholarly works appear to have attempted to date or provide a general timeframe for these objects. Nevertheless, I suggest some of them might be as early as the churches. Although there is no direct evidence, such as inscriptions, to date the book-rests, it is known that monolithic objects were used for liturgical purposes in early ecclesiastical buildings of Tur Abdin.[153] Moreover, modern book-rests and even other liturgical objects such as altars or baptismal fonts, are made of wood, marble or other modern material; therefore, monolithic versions are likely to be older.

Some elaboration on the notion of crypt should be put forward. Krautheimer describes it as "*a chamber or vaults beneath the main floor, not necessarily underground, usually containing graves or relics*".[154] It is stated that crypts are generally beneath the altar; their entrances might be from the interior or the exterior of the church; they have funerary functions or they might bear burials[155]. The underground cave beneath the basilica at Ayatekla (Meryemlik, south of modern Silifke) constitutes a clear example

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[153] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 148.
[154] Krautheimer, *Architecture,* 518.
[155] Mark J. Johnson, "Crypt" *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium.* ed. Alexander Kazhdan [1991] 2005, Oxford University Press (e-reference edition) (henceforth OODB).

to such a usage of rock-cut spaces.[156] As mentioned earlier, the "crypt" of the church of Mor Dimet barely intersects with the nave, in spatial terms. A burial has not been identified; however, the niche on the north wall might be one. Majority of the other rock-cut spaces directly connected to the "crypt" are disconnected, as mentioned previously. Thus the space is difficult to identify as a crypt or contextualize. A magnified look at the space and consideration of comparisons are required for a better analysis of the chamber.

Rock-cut structures, which are frequently encountered in Tur Abdin, provide an important source of comparison for the "crypt" of Mor Dimet. Location-wise some of the closest examples of rock-cut structures are located near the monastery of Mor Yakub in Salah and near the village of Heshterek (modern Ortaca, Mardin -a village ca. 10km to the south-east of Zaz)[157].

In Salah, one km. to the north of the monastery of Mor Yakub, 9 rock-cut chambers, some of which I have mentioned above, have been carved on a limestone mound. They have been identified as "hermitages" by the modern inhabitants of the monastery. They are almost identical, 3-5 meters wide, rock-cut chambers, situated right next to one another,

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[156] *Egeria: Monuments of Faith in the Medieval Mediterranean,* Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Participants of the Egeria Program, (Athens, 2008), 175.

[157] There are certainly more rock-cut structures in this region. But, these are the large sites I could visit, with similar features; therefore, my discussion will extensively include these structures.

sharing walls. That is, a block of rock seems to have been divided into chambers (fig. II.25-II.30). Some of them have different interior components and more ornamentation than others, which might reveal the existence of differentiated functions of these spaces. Two of them appear to be in the form of raised platforms adjoining to the walls, enclosed with projecting arches. They might be arcosolia, *"an arched niche, usually for a tomb, carved out of or built in front of a wall"*.[158] They are highly similar to identified rock-cut burials in Judean Desert and Dara.[159] Palmer probably refers to these burials in Salah by "large number of cave tombs in Salah".[160] The chambers have been heavily destroyed over the years; nevertheless, they provide comparisons with the "crypt" of Mor Dimet. In fact, carved niches in the interiors of chambers are analogous with the two niches of the latter, as discussed above. On the other hand, due to the position of the rocks, they are not below the ground level, and they are smaller than the "crypt" of Mor Dimet.

Again in Salah, 1km to the north-east of the cluster of rock-cut chambers, a large rock-cut structure with two chapels, a corridor and underground sections is located. It is elaborately decorated (fig. II.30).

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[158] Anthony Cutler, "Arcosolium", *ODB*.
[159] Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 140; Wissner, *Kultbauten*, Teil3, abb.78.
[160] *Monk and Mason*, 100.

Palmer identifies the structure as the hermitage of Barsawmo.[161] Yet, since it does not have specific similarities with the "crypt" of Mor Dimet, this identification does not directly shed light on the original function of the latter.

The second *comparanda* I include in the discussion are the rock-cut structures located near the village of Heshterek[162]. It is a less published site[163], approximately 3km west of the village, in a region locally called Beh Werki[164]. It is a complex of rock-cut chambers, which includes a hall type church, a transverse-hall type church[165], a round chamber, at least two large rock-cut spaces, a number of wells and a pair of stone arches (fig. II.31-II.33). It is not as decorated as the possible monastery in Akkese (in modern Şanlıurfa), which Keser-Kayaalp surveyed and published.[166] Thus, a relative chronology is difficult to establish.

The site at Beh Werki does not appear to comprise any similarity with the "crypt" of the church of Mor Dimet. However, the arches are

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[161] *Monk and Mason*, 100 n.168. Although debatable, identification of rock-cut chambers as hermitages is a common tendency. Likewise, some rock-cut chambers have been identified as hermitages by Wiessner (*Kultbauten*, Teil3, 90).
[162] It is surveyed together by the author and Gergely Cziky in April 2010.
[163] To my knowledge, by Wiessner only (*Kultbauten*, Teil3, 73-84).
[164] Referred to as "Bahwark" by Wiessner (*Kultbauten*, Teil3, 73); shown as "Bahwar" on the map Palmer uses (*Monk and Mason*, xx fig.1). I use the name "Beh Werki", because that is how it is referred to by villagers today.
[165] These tow types of churches have been identified by previous scholarly works as the two dominant church types in Tur Abdin. They refer to the nave long on east-west axis, and nave long on north-south axis, respectively. I shall have a detailed section on this issue in the next chapter.
[166] *Rock-cut Complex*, 2008.

similar to the one on the north of Mor Dimet, although the arch at the latter is much smaller.[167] (fig. II.34-II.35). Wiessner states that there is a rock-cut chamber beyond the arch at Mor Dimet and that the space beyond the arches at Beh Werki is a rock-cut church.[168] Although it is difficult to justify the chamber at Beh Werki as a church, it is significant for it shows the use of arches at the entrances of chambers which probably have an ecclesiastical attribution.

I would like to suggest that the site at Beh Werki might be a monastic settlement[169]. Ousterhout shows how a site, previously recognized as a monastery, could actually be a residence or even a village.[170] Nevertheless, the complex at Beh Werki is a large site; it has at least two churches[171] and many wells. Moreover, it is located on the east slopes of a limestone hill, far from villages, thus it is visually secluded[172].

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[167] I shall have a separate discussion on the arches below.
[168] *Kultbauten*, Teil4, 109; Teil3, 79.
[169] The term "monastic settlement" has certain connotations. However, I think it is a vague term which should be further analyzed. Here, I use the term simply to refer to a settlement in which a group of monks and/or priested-monks live. Monastic settlements, monastic life, and their relations with villages should be reconsidered in the context of Tur Abdin, on which I shall further comment in chapter V.
[170] Robert Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 176.
[171] One of them is a transverse-hall church which Bell identifies as "monastic type" (Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii) and it should also be noted that Mundell-Mango has shown that hall type churches could also be existent at monasteries. Marlia Mundell-Mango, "Deux Eglises de Mesopotamie du Nord: Ambar et Mar Abraham de Kashkar". *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30 (1982): 58.
[172] The qualifications of monastic settlements, which Keser-Kayaalp pointed out in an article (*Rock-cut Complex*, 277 n.30).

The use of arch raises the question whether the rock-cut spaces beneath the church of Mor Dimet had also been an ecclesiastical space.

A significant testimony Abuna Yakub mentions is that there had been more number of churches, like the crypt, carved within the limestone, beneath the church of Mor Dimet. Thus, he adds, that the church once had been used by monks[173]. Most of the underground chambers are abandoned today: nevertheless, oral history brings forward one of the possible usages of rock-cut chambers; that is, as hermitages and chapels serving a group of monks. If this was the case, then, I think, the "crypt" was originally not a church but rather a hermitage, because, it originally does not appear to have had an apse or another specific church-architectural feature. When the two churches at Beh Werki are observed, they are deliberately carved churches with their apses, nave arches, even the baptismal font. Likewise, rock-cut churches surveyed and identified by Wiessner appear to have architectural features resembling an apse or sanctuary.[174] The "crypt" looks plainer, like an individual prayer hall rather than a church. Like Keser-Kayaalp explains some of the chambers in Akkese, it could have been converted into a church in a later period, which appears to be a common practice in the region.[175]

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[173] Abuna Yakub, in discussion with the author, April 2010.
[174] *Kultbauten*, Teil3, 87, 101.
[175] *Rock-cut Complex*, 276.

In the "Lives of the Eastern Saints", John of Ephesus as well informs us about caves being converted into chapels.[176] Although he writes about mainly the 6th century Amidene monasticism[177], the practice might be wide-spread into a wider territory and timeframe. The limestone base is abundant in caves; and it is convenient to use some of them in ecclesiastical contexts, because it saves time and effort[178], and it provides spiritual protection for these hollow spaces. Note that John of Ephesus informs us about Paul the Anchorite converting a cave into a chapel by placing an altar in it, because other monks could not sleep due to "terrifying sounds the Devil made".[179] Therefore, the "crypt" of the church of Mor Dimet might demonstrate continuity in usage of rock-cut spaces as hermitages or chapels[180].

A laura community, generally described as a central church or refectory with monks' cells scattered around, could have existed at the site on which Mor Dimet rests today.[181] It should also be noted that monastic spatial setting is not necessarily standardized in Tur Abdin.[182] Therefore,

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[176] *Lives*, 114, 117.
[177] Monastic communities clustered around the city of Amida, modern Diyarbakır, to the north-west of Tur Abdin.
[178] Converting a cave into a chapel is possibly easier than building an entire church.
[179] *Lives*, 117.
[180] I do not think a distinction between the two can or should be made. John of Ephesus writes how the heremitic cell of Simeon the Old, the scribe of Amida, "was also a church with an altar and furniture already set in it" and how "a large congregation used to assemble before it" (*Lives*, 404).
[181] Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 18; Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 519.
[182] Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 49-50; Keser-Kayaalp, *Rock-cut Complex*, 277.

the "crypt" might have been a part, probably a hermitage as explained above, belonging to a Tur Abdinian monastic community. Note that Magness points out that not every community living under monastic rules necessarily inhabited a physical monastery.[183] Therefore, a holy community dwelling in the hollowed spaces underground could have existed at the site. Similar monastic settlements are known, for instance, at Alahan, Cilicia.[184] Yet, the question of seclusion appears to remain. That is, one might challenge the theory, that there had been a monastic settlement at the site of the church of Mor Dimet, with the argument that it is not secluded from the village.

The notion of visual seclusion of monasteries of Tur Abdin should be reconsidered. Palmer defines the physical distance between villages and monasteries as varying between 500m to 3km.[185] In the life of Mor Samuel, it is stated that "the blessed ones who were only about a bowshot removed from the village" were disturbed by singings of girls from the village.[186] The villages and monasteries have been highly interrelated, in social, religious and economic terms in Tur Abdin. Therefore visual

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[183] Jodi Magness, "Communal Meals and Sacred Space at Qumran" *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism*. BAR International Series 941 (England: Basingstoke Press, 2001): 15, 16

[184] Mary Gough (ed.), *Alahan: An Early Christian Monastery in Southern Turkey. Based on the work of Michael Gough* (Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1985), 76

[185] *Monk and Mason*, 110.

[186] *Qartmin Trilogy*, xv.

seclusion and physical proximity to the village might not be standardized practices.

Yet another possibility is that the monastic community might be predating the village. As I shall explain in Chapter III, there is a myth stating that the village was established in the late 4th century. Thus, the monastic community and rock-cut spaces might be pre-dating this, which is theoretically possible, in the seeming lack of indicators of a later date.

This theory invokes the fact that there exists the question of dating for the "crypt" of the church of Mor Dimet. In the lack of decorations or inscriptions, rock-cut architecture is difficult to propose a date for. I think the "crypt" is likely to be contemporary with the "winery". I propose this due to their physical proximity, the similarity in the way they were carved out and their possible physical connectedness[187]. However, being more specific in dating is difficult, for the rock-cut parts do not bear any ancient inscriptions or decorations.

Neither do the comparanda provide much further help. One of the chambers in the cluster, in Salah, is painted (fig. II.28). The heavily-eroded paintings resemble the paintings in the ecclesiastical buildings in Cappadocia, majority of which are dated to the 10th-11th centuries.[188] No

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[187] As Abuna Yakub claims and explains the now-abandoned doors in both of the structures.

[188] Lyn Rodley, *Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 8.

similar paintings are detected at Mor Dimet. Furthermore, the decorations of the greater hermitage of Barsawmo appear to be significantly different than the ones at the church of Mor Dimet. In fact, the latter does not appear to bear any decorations at the rock-cut sections, as mentioned earlier. The rock-cut site at Beh Werki provides the closest comparative material, which is the use of a stone arch.

II.2.1.3 The Stone Arch

To the north of the church of Mor Dimet a stone arch is noticeable. It is approximately 5m to the north from the north-eastern corner of the church sanctuary; it is aligned with the northern flank of the church, despite the fact that the length of the arch is smaller than the width of the latter. It lays on an east-west axis along the opening. For the land surrounding it was fenced, I was not able to survey the structure. Nevertheless, it appears to be leaning against a limestone platform on the north, beneath which, according to Wiessner, is a rock-cut chamber.[189] It is integrated with and flanked by the part of the limestone it leans against on the west, south and east; the photograph published by Wiessner shows that the limestone outcrop was carved for a better integration of the arch. The southern pier rests on the rock, which suggests that the arch is entirely placed on the

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[189] *Kultbauten*, Teil4, 77.

limestone base. Yet, the natural elevation the limestone gives to the arch is not clear due to the modern earth cumulation covering the foundations of the piers (fig. II.34, II.35).

The piers comprise one row of ashlars each. They are low and rectangular in shape. Both of them are capitalized with a moulded stone block. The mouldings are plain and they slightly project out of the piers. The arch rests on these blocks. The arch is horse-shoe shaped. It is built, with dry-stone building technique, with 13 ashlars. The ashlars appear to be originally finely-cut. This is observable at the inside of the arch, especially in the photograph published by Wiessner. However, the arch is highly eroded over time. There are hollow spaces in between the stone blocks, and the surfaces of the ashlars are not smooth anymore. The ashlars which rest on the moulded blocks are larger and thicker than the remaining 11 ashlars, which are almost identical with each other in size.

Palmer claims that the arch must be pre-dating the church; according to him if it had been part of a Christian structure, it would have been incorporated into the church building.[190] The pre-Christian time frame suggested for the arch is debatable, since there are similar arches used at ecclesiastical structures in Tur Abdin, Asia Minor and Syria.

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[190] *Monk and Mason*, 30 n.55.

Moreover, the horseshoe shaped arch is not a common theme in Roman architecture.[191]

Similar arches are extant at various sites in Tur Abdin. Among the better known-about are the arches to the north of the monastery of Mor Yakub at Salah.[192] Bell states that they could be the ruins of the patriarchal palace, an identification which Mundell-Mango seems to hesitate accepting.[193] Palmer claims that the arches must have belonged to a temple of a god identified with Herakles.[194] He states that the arch must be pre-Christian since the stone work observed on them is not seen in Tur Abdin in Middle Ages. Both scholars mention that Pognon published an inscription from this part of the monastic complex; however, there is a debate whether the inscription, which dates the structures to the 14th century, includes the arches or not.[195]

The arches in Salah have recently been excavated and masonry rooms are unearthed (fig. II.36). I have not surveyed the chambers; however, the situation is significant for it shows a possible context for arches, which were once on the modern ground level. The arches in Salah were interior arches of masonry chambers.

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[191] Robert Adam, *Classical Architecture: A Comprehensive Handbook to the Tradition of Classical Style* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1990), 157-8.
[192] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, fig.241.
[193] Ibid. 10; ibid. fig.241.
[194] *Monk and Mason*, 30 n.55.
[195] Ibid.; Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 13.

The pair of arches at Beh Werki is another comparison for the arch at the church of Mor Dimet. The former is much larger than the latter; nevertheless, the two arches are similar to each other in terms of the typology of piers, shape of arches and moulded capital of piers. The arch at Beh Werki demarcates the entrance of a rock-cut chamber. The inscription present on the arch is illegible. However, the site at Beh Werki was an ecclesiastical, probably monastic, complex, which might, contrary to Palmer's theory, show that these and such arches could be contemporary with Christianity in Tur Abdin. The arch at Beh Werki closely compares to some 5th to 7th century arches in some settlements in Cilicia, in southern Turkey and in Syria.[196] Similarities occur in pier building technique and type, moulding pattern, arch size, technique and type.

Hollerweger has published the photograph of a series of arches in Achlah (modern Narlı, Mardin).[197] Achlah is location-wise very close to Beh Werki (slightly to the south of the latter); and the arches in both places are almost identical to each other. Hollerweger states that arches in Achlah faced the east and were probably remains of a church or a monastery.[198] Although it is not clear on what he bases his identification of the arches,

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[196] Some of these settlements are Binbirkilise, Alahan, Kanlıdivane, Rusafah and Kharab Shems. Krautheimer, *Architecture*, pl. 38-B, pl. 49-A, pl. 85, pl. 136-B; Stephen Hill, *Early Churches of Cilicia and Isauria* (USA: Variorum, 1996), pl. 82, pl. 93.
[197] Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 157.
[198] Ibid.

his publication is significant for it shows the existence of "Beh Werki-type" arches found in the region.

Yet another example was published by Wiessner. It is almost identical with the arch at Mor Dimet in terms of size and typology (fig. II.37). It is placed at the entrance of a church, in Bela (a village on half way between Zaz and Nisibis, within the province of Mardin).[199]

Were the territorial scope of comparison to be extended to Asia Minor and Syria, it is seen that similar arches were frequently used in ecclesiastical architecture. Among the earliest-dated *comparanda* from Asia Minor is in Diocaesarea (modern Uzuncaburç), Cilicia. A low arch resting on moulded blocks determines the entrance of an arcosolium; it has been dated to the late-4th century.[200] It is integrated into a wall from both sides. The arch is similar to the one at Mor Dimet in terms of its size, typology and moulding pattern. A similar moulding is also seen at a 5th-century ecclesiastical building in Corycus (modern Kızkalesi) in Cilicia.[201]

Another group of *comparandum* comes from the Alahan pilgrimage center in Cilicia. East church of the settlement, which has commonly been dated the reign of Emperor Zeno (5th/6th century), comprises arches that closely compare to the arch at Zaz. Although the arches at Alahan determine windows, they compare to the arch at the church of Mor Dimet

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[199] *Kultbauten*, Teil3, abb.120.
[200] Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria*, pl. 117.
[201] Ibid. pl. 34, 39.

in terms of building technique of piers, typology of arches and mouldings.[202] Yet another comparison is located in Binbirkilise. 7th-century arches similar to the one at Zaz in terms of typology and mouldings are observed at one of the churches, although they are smaller and coarser than the one at the latter.[203]

Some of the ecclesiastical buildings in Syria comprise close comparions to the arch at the church of Mor Dimet, as well. Arches with similar typology, piers and mouldings were used in 4th-to-6th century ecclesiastical buildings in Qalbloze, Harab Shems, Burj Heidar and other ancient settlements in Syria.[204]

Although previous scholars have proposed dates ranging from pre-Christianity[205] to the 14th century for some of the arched structures in Tur Abdin, comparisons from Asia Minor and Syria indicate a chronological frame around the 5th-7th centuries for the arch at Zaz. The physical context for the arch, on the other hand, can be hypothesized in various ways.

Arches resting on low piers with moulded capitals were used in a variety of contexts. They are generally integrated into structures as architectural components; they are used at chamber entrances, windows

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[202] Gough, *Alahan,* pl. 32; Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria,* pl. 12.
[203] Krautheimer, *Architecture,* pl. 49-A.
[204] Georges Tchalenko, *Villages Antiques de la Syrie du Nord* (Paris: Geuthner, 1953-8), pl. CLVII
[205]Palmer's interpretation of arches as pagan remnants is not exclusive to the arches in Salah; he claims a pre-Christian dating for the arches at the monastery of Mor Gabriel as well (*Monk and Mason,* 33).

or interiors. The arch at the church of Mor Dimet appears to be difficult to conclude on its architectural context. It is physically disattached and distant from the church. It is integrated into the limestone. On both sides of the piers there are outcrops of limestone which flanks the piers. Thus, a space for another pier adjoining the piers of the arch does not exist. Moreover, in some structures, lower ashlars close to piers are cut in a cornered fashion to enable better fitting of adjoining arches, like in Beh Werki and Alahan. At the church of Mor Dimet, all of the arches were smoothed but not cornered; there are no signs of adjoining structures.

Arches that are integrated into a wall generally have piers carrying some parts of the walls. The piers are larger than the arch, which enables some ashlars or stone pieces to be placed on the former, like seen at a 5th-century church at Corycus.[206] The piers of the arch at Zaz, however, are exactly as thick as the ashlars of the arch. Moreover, there are no foundations of a wall aligned with the arch. Therefore, it is not clear if the arch was originally a part of a wall.

Another possibility is that it leaned against a wall on the north side. This is also difficult to conclude, because although there is a limestone platform on the north side of the arch, there are no traces of a wall placed on this platform. Although the arch at the church of Mor Dimet is difficult

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[206] Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria*, pl. 34, pl. 39.

to contextualize, it is a structure which marks the entrance of an underground chamber, which has not been surveyed by me, but only mentioned by Wiessner.

II.2.1.4. The Stone Mill

To the south of the complex, outside the enclosure wall, a rock-cut mill is located. The base of the mill was carved out of the bedrock; its diameter is 2.5m and it is 0.5m high. The press, which is also made out of stone, is 0.4m thick and is 0.9m in diameter. The core of the press of the mill is a hollowed square (0.3mx0.3m), and in the center, another cylindrical hollow (0.2m diameter) is carved out for the wooden beam to be inserted. The mill is not used today, but it is a common tool in the villages of the area, mostly used for production of cracked wheat (fig. II.38).[207]

During my visits to villages in Tur Abdin I have identified two types of mills which are run by animals: carved out of limestone in-situ or built with medium-sized stones. The former is the category to which the mill in Zaz belongs, with the mill found in Arnas as another example. The latter is an abandoned monolithic mill situated on the east of the village (fig. II.39). The mill in Arnas seems to have been left outside the village

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[207] Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 148.

today; however, the remains suggest that there had been once structures (a church? – it has a horseshoe-shaped apse-like structure on the east) close to the mill.

In Hah, to the immediate north-west of the ruined cathedral of Mor Sobo, a mill belonging to the second category is located. It is built out of stone. It is out of use, but its renewed wood center testifies that it was used until recently (fig. II.40). Another contemporary example of this type is found in Qillit (fig. II.41). In both of the second-type examples, use of stones and cement is observed. Both of them appear to be active until recently, in contrast to the former two examples, which were probably abandoned longer time ago. I propose the masonry mill had replaced the monolithic type, which requires more effort to build and is immovable and irreparable, in the villages[208].

Primary sources indicate that in antiquity rural mills, which I believe were similar to the ones mentioned above, were distinguished from the urban ones. Palmer provides extracts from various primary sources which appear to mention mills existing and being built in/by urban centers, and being economic commodities.[209] Based on these examples, there seems to be a distinction between village and the mill. In this and such expressions, it is indicated that the mill is a revenue-

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[208] Villagers in Hah told me that they did not use the mills in the village, but get their wheat processed into flour in modern mills in Midyat instead.
[209] *Monk and Mason*, 158, 164.

gathering economic commodity and it is outside villages, at least is separated conceptionally. Therefore, they are different structures than the above-discussed mills, the history of which is thus difficult to determine.

II.2.1.5. Wells

The limestone base in Zaz bears a number of wells. One of them is already mentioned above; it is in the "winery" and claimed to be reaching 7 meters below the ground level[210]. Two more wells are observed on the south of the complex wall, approximately 20 meters to the east of the stone mill. Similar to the wells next to the so-called "hermitages" in Salah, they are very close to each other; and they measure 1mx0.6m and 1.2mx0.5m (fig. II.42, II.43). They were two openings of a cistern. Both have been abandoned with stones. However, they must have been active until recent time, because, a rope with a stone tied to it (probably to measure the water level) is extant. Another similarly blocked cistern is observed further east of the church, beyond a modern barrier 35m to the east of the church.

Besides the identified cistern openings, it is observed that the limestone base has been carved out in a round fashion on the east of the church (fig. II.44). Although abandoned by earth accumulation, I propose these were also cistern openings. Because, they are almost identical two

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[210] Abuna Yakub, in discussion with the author, November 2009.

holes on the ground, very close to each other[211]. Besides, same type of carved rock is present next to the so-called "hermitages" in Salah; they have been identified as old cisterns by the inhabitants of the monastery. Similarly, in Beh Werki, cistern openings as well as the hollowed spaced beneath them are seen.

The site on which the church of Mor Dimet is located, as indicated previously, is the part of the limestone which is unearthed the most within the vicinity of Zaz. It is frequently hollowed underground. Therefore, although there might be other natural cisterns in the village, they appear to concentrate on the mound. Thus, the area on a part of which the church rests today is likely to have been significant for it bears majority of the water sources of the immediate village and any other settlement or community predating it.

In every village of Tur Abdin, it is possible to count many wells on the limestone in the environs. They are cavities in which rainwater is collected and pulled out through narrow holes (up to 1m wide) on the surface of limestone. Cistern openings can be identified with pairs of holes on the ground. If they are abandoned, they tend to be left open (like in Salah), or they might be blocked with stones (like in Arnas, Zaz and Basebrin (modern Haberli, Mardin)). Despite the fact that rainwater

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[211] This is one of the general indications of a cistern under the ground.

continues to be collected in these hollow spaces, many of the wells in the area are out of use today[212]. The ones which are still in use are closed with a piece of lighter material; and occasionally they have been improved by installation of mechanic or electronic water pull-out system, an example of which is observed at the entrance of the church of Mor Dimet, in the portico.

In Zaz, I have identified one active limestone cistern which is still used by the villagers. It is approximately 20m to the west of the church and is a common property in the village. A mechanical system has been improved for an easier water extraction. Moreover, most of the villages posses (Zaz does not) modern water storage structures, which are built approximately 20m above the ground level. It is used to collect, store and distribute water to dwellings through modern water infrastructure.

II.2.1.6. Regularly-Cut Spaces on the Limestone Base and Stone Objects

Some parts of the limestone base have certain shapes that raise curiosity. Two sections of the massif on the south of the complex are regularly cut. They are both 4m on the north edge. The larger one is 5m, the other one is 1.4m long on the east (fig. II.45). One option for their function is that they had been stone quarries. The most known examples

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[212] Based on my observations during my field trips to the region in November 2009 and February 2010.

of stone quarries from the region are the ones located in Dara.[213] [214] The stone quarries of Dara look much different than the cut areas of the limestone at the church of Mor Dimet. In fact, Dara stone quarries are much wider and deeper; they have a general shape of descending stairs; and they often reveal the shape of the stone ashlars.[215] Nevertheless, the rock-cut rectangular spaces at the church complex of Mor Dimet might still be quarries, when it is considered that the amount of ashlars needed were far less than it was in Dara. Waelkens presents how quarries might be in various appearances and sizes, based on the bedrock, cutting technique and formation of the stone.[216] He also states that when the limestone bed has a natural stratification, quarrying takes place in accordance with this natural layout,[217] similar to the situation observed at Zaz where the limestone is cut at the edges of a natural stone platform. Moreover, the limestone used at the lower levels of the church walls do match with the stone located at the platforms in the immediate vicinities of the church. Therefore, a shallow quarrying might have taken place on the site of Mor Dimet; and the spaces might have been filled up with earth

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[213] A Byzantine city founded by Anastaisos I in 505-507 to the south of Tur Abdin, North-west of Nisibis (Marlia Mango, "Dara", *OODB*).
[214] Oliver Nicholson, "Two Notes on Dara". *American Journal of Archaeology*. 89.4 (Oct. 1985).
[215] Ibid. Pl.76.
[216] Mark Waelkens, "Bronze Age Quarries and Quarrying Techniques in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East", *Ancient Stones: Quarrying, Trade and Provenance* (Leuven: Leuven University Pres, 1992), 5-20.
[217] Ibid. 6, 11.

since then. Nevertheless, such conclusion would not be entirely accurate, since there appears to be no signs or remains of cutting tools or tool marks, transportation or storage of stones quarried.[218]

Another possible explanation for the regularly-cut spaces on the bedrock is the existence of buildings in these sections of the limestone. There are no traces of foundations, or of spolia in-situ. Nevertheless, if there are indeed rock-cut network of rooms and tunnels in the bedrock, which is a highly possible situation, the hollow spaces might be related to this network. Besides all, one must always be aware of possible misguidance of the limestone. It is hollowed out frequently, by humans or natural factors. Therefore, a part of it, which looks regularly and deliberately cut, might as well be natural.

Besides the largely cut spaces on the surface of the limestone, many smaller holes are visible. Majority of them might have been natural phenomena, since limestone is a porous matter and it tends to be hollowed out easily by external physical forces such as rainwater. Nevertheless, some of them have more specific shapes which make one think that they were carved out deliberately (fig. II.46). They are almost rectangular in shape, ca. 0.5m-0.7m long, 0.2m-0.4m wide and ca. 0.1m deep. During my visit to the village of Basebrin, I was informed by local guides that near the

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[218] For identification of Stone quarries http://www.quarryscapes.no/guide_c2_text.php.

cisterns they carved the limestone and regularly filled them with water so that their herds could drink water out of them. This can be a general practice in the region, and can explain deliberately-carved cavities. A cistern opening in Beh Werki also has cavities nearby, which also shows the existence of this practice (fig. II.47).

In addition to the stone base itself, two stone basins, found in the environs of the church complex, are worth mentioning here. One of them is found next to the two cistern openings mentioned above. It is a rectangular stone basin measuring 0.5mx0.2m (quite close to the sizes of the cavities mentioned in the paragraph above). Its function might be related to the cistern next to which it lies, possibly also for enabling herds to drink water (fig. II.48).

The second stone basin is now placed in the courtyard, east of the church as a decoration. It is a round basin, 0.4m in diameter. It has a hole at the bottom; so, it might have had a more specific function, such as pouring or sifting various substances (fig. II.49, II.50). This monolithic basin can be the old baptismal font of the church. As will be explained in the next chapter, the church now has a modern chalice-looking baptismal font, which must have replaced an older font. The bowl in the courtyard might be the original font of the church. It is smaller, but identical in shape, with the original baptismal font of the church of Mor Yuhannon in Mzizah (modern Doğançay, Mardin), which is placed in the narthex as a

decorative object after the establishment of the modern font (fig. II.51). Another example of a stone baptismal font is still in the original location in the church of Mor Afrem in Bote (modern Bardakçı, Mardin) (fig. II.52). Palmer describes a similar ("ancient" as he calls) monolithic baptismal font in the monastery of Deyr Zafaran in Mardin.[219] Mundell-Mango states the existence of a monolithic baptismal font in Dara –a city founded at the beginning of the 6th century.[220] Therefore, monolithic round basins were probably original baptismal fonts of churches in Tur Abdin; and the monolithic basin found in the courtyard of the church of Mor Dimet was possibly the church's original baptismal font. As previous scholars have stated, they can have a *terminus post quem* of 6th century in the immediate region around Tur Abdin.

The discussions so far have analyzed the rock-cut spaces and objects on and around the site on which the church of Mor Dimet rests currently. Although precise dating might be difficult, some of the rock-cut spaces might be pre-dating (as early as the 5th century) or contemporary with the building of the church, an issue that will be adequately addressed in the chapter III. The analyses have shown that the limestone base has been an integral part of the immediate environment surrounding the church; various sections within the base might have had different

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[219] *Monk and Mason*, 148.
[220] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 102.

functions, such as agricultural activities (winery, wells) or ecclesiastical spaces. Having mentioned the limestone base, the discussion proceeds to the other, possibly modern, components of the complex at Zaz.

II.2.2 The Enclosure Wall

One of the most significant architectural features of the church complex is the enclosure wall which visually determines the complex (plan II.1, fig. II.53). The enclosure wall starts on the west of the complex with a modern entrance into the courtyard, which is placed in the last decade by Abuna Yakub; the wall then makes a round curve on the south-west corner; the curve continues until the middle of the south of the complex where the enclosure wall becomes straight until the south-east corner; finally the wall joins the eastern wall of the church on the east of the complex. It is a wall about 88m long and 2m to 4m high, shaped according to the topography of the limestone base. It is built up of small and medium-sized stones and ashlars; usage of spolia is also detected. The wall appears to have been rebuilt many times in history, which makes dating difficult.

The enclosure wall has been constructed along a platform of the limestone base, which is clearly observable on the west and south of the wall. The platform on which the enclosure wall raises is approximately 0.5-0.7m high; therefore, it provides a natural elevation to the wall (fig.

II.54). The wall's height varies between 2.5m and 4m on the exterior, and 1.6m and 4m on the interior. This difference is possibly due to natural elevations of the platform on which the site rests.

The enclosure wall starts with a modern steel door to the west of the church complex. This door presently is the only entrance through this wall into the courtyard of the complex (fig. II.55). On the west, the enclosure wall is straight for 10.8m after which a curvilinear part of it starts on the south-west corner. On the south, the wall has two components: the circuit part on the south-west corner (32.5m in perimeter), and the rest of the wall, straight until the east corner (15.5m long). The southern part of it joins the eastern part with an orthogonal corner on the south-east. After 20 meters, the eastern part of the enclosure wall makes a curve (7.5m in perimeter) and joins the church. The wall appears to lean on the east wall of the former. This part of the structure seems to be a later alteration, as the older wall foundations are visible on the ground, which seem originally to be attached to the church wall further north than the current connection, enclosing the entire east wall of the church. (fig. II.56-II.58)

The wall has basically been constructed of ashlars and medium-sized limestone blocks on the parts closer to the ground; smaller limestone pieces are used for the upper sections. Other types of stones (i.e. marble) and pieces of pottery and bricks are observed in between the main texture

of the wall, which testifies that the extant enclosure wall has been built up at least partially out of spolia. As some of the bricks appear to be original roof bricks of the church, usage of ancient spolia on the enclosure wall can be determined[221]. Mortar has been used on the wall to attach the building material. Majority of the texture of the wall is identical; however, some of the south-eastern and eastern sections have been plastered, which makes analysis of the texture difficult.

The enclosure wall is approximately 1m thick. The top of the wall has been smoothed with modern grey cement. It has recently partially collapsed on the west. The collapsed part reveals the section of the wall; indeed, it has been built in a rather irregular fashion, to a large extent with chop stones, spolia and mortar in between. Some rectangular window-like openings are observed in the interior; however, they have been blocked and are not visible from the exterior (fig. II.59 - II.60).

The enclosure wall of the church of Mor Dimet has been described by Wiessner only.[222] He provides a general description of the structure. Moreover, a photograph published by Hollerweger in 1999 shows the wall (fig. II.61).[223] Based on these two previous works, the southern and the eastern parts of the enclosure wall seem to have not been altered

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[221] Please refer to the discussion on the roofing system of the church in the following chapter.
[222] *Kultbauten*, Teil2, 144-153.
[223] *Tur Abdin*, 201.

significantly at least in the last two decades. However, the wall started on the north of the church before the residential building was erected.

It is dubious when this enclosure wall was built. There is an inscription placed on the lintel of the modern entrance of the courtyard. It is illegible except for the date of 1953. The date gives a *terminus ante quem* of 1953 for the building of the wall. Because the stone slab was possibly placed on the enclosure wall, before it was re-placed on the same wall with the addition of the modern door. When the texture of the wall is compared to some components of the church, it is seen that the extant enclosure wall was built later than almost every part of the church, except for late repairs. The "tower", portico and the upper storey have relatively regular textures; they were built with medium-sized stones with minimal amount of mortar. The enclosure wall, on the other hand, has a rather irregular texture. Small pieces of stones and other material, such as bricks, were extensively used within the wall. Thus, it might be suggested that the enclosure wall seen today was built after the additions to the church, after 1920s, a time in which the portico and the upper storey were added to the church. The white mortar seen on some sections of the enclosure wall is identical with the one seen on the church, which testifies a common repair; and unmortared sections of the enclosure wall, such as the south-western part, must have been rebuilt after the enclosure wall was built; thus, these parts are the latest sections of the wall.

Even though the exact date of the extant wall can not be determined, the inscription and the wall texture indicates a building time within the first half of the 20th century for the enclosure wall. Moreover, I suggest that the church always had a courtyard bordered by an enclosure wall, because the limestone base provides a naturally-elevated (or possibly human-made) platform, which, as mentioned before, the enclosure wall borders. I think this platform has always been the determination of the courtyard of the church, possibly from the time in which it was first erected.

In terms of its function, it is clear that this wall has been built basically as a separation of the territory of the church -the sacred milieu, and the external world. Also, it is high and thick (2-4m and 1m respectively), thus enables a significant level of protection from various possible threats such as plunderers or animals. Enclosing the main village church with a wall is a common practice in Tur Abdin.

Almost every main village church is separated from the village with a high wall that encapsulates the church, as well as other units such as a courtyard, an outside oratory, a *medrese*[224], residence of the priest, graveyard, or a fountain[225]. Some examples of enclosure walls of churches are seen in the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi (modern Altıntaş,

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[224] "Medrese" means "school/classroom" in Syriac. This is the modern way of referring to the space.
[225] Author's observation.

Mardin), Mor Hadbshobo in Aynwerd (modern Gülgöze, Mardin), Mor Afrem in Bote, Mor Quryakos in Arnas, Mor Dodo in Basebrin, Mor Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas (modern Mercimekli, Mardin). These churches are generally accepted to be dating to 7th-8th centuries.[226] However, their enclosure walls have not been included in dating discussions.

Keser-Kayaalp claims that all of the above-mentioned additional architectural elements are later additions.[227] It is not clear if she considers the enclosure wall itself as a later addition. Bell suggests that, although the enclosure wall of the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi appears to be modern[228], the church had always had the courtyard.[229] She records an enclosure wall at the church of el-Adhra in Basebrin as well.[230] Thus, the extant enclosure walls seen in Tur Abdin today must have started to be built latest in the 20th century, since Bell's photographs (taken at the beginning of the 20th century), recordings and plans include some of them.[231] The tradition of enclosing churches with walls appears to be a

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[226] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 14, 99; Marlia Mundell-Mango, "The Continuity of the Classical Tradition in the Art and Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia". *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington, DC, 1982), fig. I7; Palmer, Monk and Mason, 211; Elif Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, chapter3.

[227] Ibid. 97.

[228] This means the enclosure wall of the church existed in the beginning of the 20th century.

[229] *Churches and Monasteries*, 13.

[230] Ibid. 101.

[231] Ibid. 13, fig.97, fig.107, fig.153.

tradition dating as early as the 12th century, since in that era, some churches in the village of Basebrin, including the church of Mor Dodo, are recorded to have been enclosed with strong walls.[232]

None of the external walls observed in these churches totally encapsulate the church, but rather function as an extension of church walls, possibly as a demarcation of the "church" territory and protection. In practical terms, the enclosure wall of Mor Dimet functions similarly; it encases the church, the residential building, and a courtyard with an underground burial chamber.

II.2.3. The Residential Quarters

On the north-west corner, a residential building has been added to the complex (fig. II.62). The enclosure wall has been abandoned on the north-west; the residential building now connects the enclosure wall and the church. It is above the previously mentioned "winery", not encasing its entrance, however. The building was erected in 2001, the date which is noted in an inscription on the south wall of the residential building. It is the house of the latest inhabitants of the church complex; Abuna Yakub and the nun (the name of whom was not available to me).

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[232] Book of Life, 5.

The residential building is a two-storey, rectangular building; 13m on the west and 15m on the north. It is composed of two floors, a portico flanking the ground floor, a terrace on the south side of the second floor, external stairs on the east of the building and a bell tower. A large modern entrance to the north of the enclosure wall enables direct access into the ground floor of the residential building. The other two entrances of it are inside the courtyard, one on the ground level, one on the terrace (second floor), and both from the south.

Restrooms, a garage, portico and storage areas are located on the base floor, whereas on the upper floor private rooms, visitors' room and a kitchen have been placed. The entrance of the "crypt" is left in the garage which is in the ground floor. Public access is denied to majority of the building interior; therefore, it is difficult to determine the interior plan of the building. Initially, both of the floors had 8 arches on both sides; thus, both floors had an L-shaped portico. The portico of the upper floor was later closed, and the arches were transformed into large windows (fig. II.62, II.63). External stairs on the east of the building is used to access the roof of it (fig. II.62).

The residential building has mainly been built with stone and modern brick. On the outside and on the bell tower stone is used as the main building material. It is observed that both modern new ashlars and spolia (possibly from the abandoned part of the enclosure wall) were used

for the construction. It has not been plastered on the outside. The roof of the building is flat, smoothed with cement. A modern water storage system has been installed on the roof. On the south of the residential building, six steps lead up to the terrace. The terrace is at the altitude of the top of the enclosure wall; and it bears the external entrance into the second floor. The bell tower rises on the south-west of the residential building (fig. II.64). It has been erected at or after the year 2004, since the Syriac inscription on the bell tower mentions the birth and death dates of a person, the latter of which is recorded to be 2004. The construction of the residential building is a significant turning point in the history of the church complex, for it brings about additional functions into the complex.

During my field trips[233] to the villages of Tur Abdin, I have identified three different practices in terms of church-residence relations[234]: churches without any residential unit, churches with a seasonal residential unit and churches with permanent residential quarters.

A group of churches seems to have no architectural feature resembling, or could be used as, a residence attached to them. Small-scale churches in villages, such as the church of Mor Gabro in Basebrin, Mother

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[233] August 2009, October 2009, February 2010, April 2010

[234] Here, I exclude churches of monasteries which are outside the villages. I do not differentiate between transverse and longitudinal nave churches; a distinction which Gertrude Bell makes to identify monastic and village churches (Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii).

Mary in Keferzi, are examples of this group. They are rather small chapels, located at various spaces in the village. Therefore, it appears to be natural that they do not have residential quarters.

Churches in the second group have residential quarters that are used on a seasonal base. Many churches in villages of Tur Abdin are being repaired and restored at the initiatives of the Syrian Orthodox foundations in the region[235]. While the churches are being repaired, residential quarters are added to the structures, generally to the main churches of the villages, within their external enclosure walls. These quarters are used only at certain times of the 2009, generally in summer, when individuals from the Syrian diaspora living abroad intend to spend a certain amount of time in their villages of origin[236]. It is uncertain whether this type of a seasonal usage has emerged recently or it has been an old custom for churches to have such "guesthouses". Examples of this are church of Mor Afrem in Bote, Mor Yuhannon in Mzizah and Mor Quryakos in Arnas[237].

The third group, to which Mor Dimet appears to belong, is the churches with permanent residences within their courtyards. The local priest, with or without his family, resides at the church, in a building

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[235] I deal with this issue more in detail in the chapter IV.

[236] This information has been repeatedly told to me by local guides who gave access to me while I was visiting these churches.

[237] I visited the church twice, both in February and April. In neither of the times I could enter the church interior, for it was locked. The governor of the village (muhtar) told me that "they" (meaning Syrian Christians of the village) came only at certain times to stay.

which is physically either attached or very close to the church, within the enclosure wall. Bell mentions how *Monasteria Clericorum*[238] had been an ancient tradition and how the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi (and thus other churches in Tur Abdin) most of the time might have had housing for members of clergy, who were supposed to be in charge of the church.[239] One of the local priests, Abuna Malke, resides at the church today. Note that an old nun used to reside at and guard the church when Bell visited Tur Abdin in 1909.[240] The church of Mor Dimet could be analyzed in this group of churches. However, this is problematic, because, the inhabitants of the church of Mor Dimet are a monk and a nun, which, in theory, is supposed to make the building a monastery. Since the current chapter introduces the complex in architectural terms, I shall reflect upon the ecclesiastical titles of these individuals together with the recent usage of the complex in the chapter IV.

II.2.4. The Courtyard

The courtyard lies to the south of the residential building and the church. It is a plain ground bordered by the enclosure wall on the west,

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[238] Literally "Monastery of the Clergy". At the beginning of their work, Thousand and One Churches, Ramsay, seemingly based on Bell's observations, explains how some churches were surrounded by edifices for the convenience of the people who were in charge of the church liturgy and "this developed into a sort of monastery attached to the church" (*Thousand and One Churches,* 24).
[239] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 13.
[240] Ibid.

south and east side. It is a space roughly 20mx35m. Its solitary entrance is on the west, which was mentioned above. Passing through this entrance, five steps on the right lead one up to the actual courtyard (fig. II.65). A very narrow, 3mx4m, part of the courtyard, on the west, is allocated for vegetation; the rest of it bears natural flora. On the south-east corner of the courtyard, seven steps lead down to the underground cemetery in which many members of the clergy and laymen from the village of Zaz have been buried. This chamber was not studied previously; and it was locked during my on-site inspections. I previously suggested that this courtyard was possibly determined, naturally or human-made, by the outcrop of the limestone base, thus the church has always had the courtyard.

The courtyard has been decorated by numerous objects since the church started to be repaired and revitalized since 2001. Two decorative stone objects were placed at the entrance of the courtyard, one on each side of the stairs. Usage of modern grey cement indicates, and Abuna Yakub testifies, that these objects were assembled together and placed in the courtyard after the inhabitants moved into the complex.

The object on the left has been constructed by assemblage of two pieces of ashlars with cement (fig. II.66). The lower ashlar is simply a rectangular one, with incised carvings on. The upper piece was probably originally a part of a book-rest; its carved niche on top implies this. Stone type, measurements of the two pieces and the alignment of the section

they are conjoined testify that these two pieces of stones might have been two parts of a monolithic book-rest once. It is 0.9m high in total.

This type of monolithic or multi-piece book-rest is frequently encountered in Tur Abdin. Similar book-rests are observed at the churches of Mor Eliyo in Baqisyan (modern Alagöz, Mardin), Mor Azizael in Keferzi, Mor Malke in Sari (modern Sarıköy, Mardin), Mor Qawme in Basebrin (fig. II.67). They are generally put outside of churches. Their heights appear to be approximately at the same level (chest or waist level of an average person), as an obvious result of the function. No previous scholarly works have attempted to analyze or date these objects, as mentioned previously.

The decorative structure on the right of the courtyard entrance has three components; a cylindrical limestone piece at the lowest level, a column base-like piece in the middle, and yet another stone piece placed on top of the former two (fig. II.68). The top-most piece has a unique shape that might indicate an initial specific usage. In fact, it is probably a piece of sarcophagus, since it is conspicuously similar with some previously-published sarcophagoi.[241]

The third object in the courtyard is the table-like object placed on the south of the courtyard, as mentioned previously (fig. II.22). It is

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[241] I shall discuss it in the next chapter, when possible burials in and around the church of Mor Dimet is the subject matter.

composed of a piece of cylindrical stone and another rectangular stone placed on top of it. The cylindrical piece is 0.62m high and 0.45m in diameter. It is attached to the ground and to the piece on top with cement. The rectangular piece on top is 1.08mx0.8m and 0.16m thick. It was covered with cement and plastered (this material does not appear to be modern). It does not have a function now, but as I have discussed previously, it could probably be one of the two original book-rests (*guda*) of the church.[242]

Thus far, majority of the church complex at Zaz has been introduced and described. The rock-cut spaces within the limestone base, the enclosure wall, residential areas and the courtyard have been discussed. All these structures cluster around a core building, which is the church of Mor Dimet. It is located to the north of the courtyard and east of the residential quarters.

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[242] Please refer to the discussion on "crypt".

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH OF MOR DIMET

This chapter puts forward the results of the architectural survey conducted on-site at the church of Mor Dimet. Architectural features of the church will be described, analyzed and contextualized within the ecclesiastical architecture of Tur Abdin to the extent possible.

The church of Mor Dimet was previously described by a rather small number of scholars. It was first published by Wiessner; he also provided the most extended description of the church.[243] The next publication mentioning the church belongs to Sinclair; he gives a very short account of the church and attempts to place it within a chronological context.[244] The next year, in his publication Palmer briefly refers to the church and the village various times.[245] The most recent publications

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[243] *Kultbauten*, Teil2, 144-153.
[244] Thomas Alan Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* (London: Pindar Press, 1987), III, 319.
[245] *Monk and Mason.*

specifically mentioning the church are by Hollerweger and de Courtois, although their works present the church very briefly.[246]

The church has a rectangular layout extending on an east-west axis. It comprises three entrances, a nave, a narthex to the south of it and a sanctuary placed at the east end of the latter two.[247] These structures are probably the oldest sections of the church, reflecting the original plan of it. The church also originally has an extension on the south-east of it. This exedra, called *"beth slutho"* in the context of Tur Abdin, is in the form of an apse; it is attached to the church.

The possible later additions to the church are three structures. One of them is the circular, tower-like wall (henceforth "tower") attached to the south-west corner of the church. The second structure, which will be frequently referred to, is the portico. It leans to the east section of the "tower" on the west, and terminates with the apse of the *beth slutho* on the east, corresponding to a great section of the south façade of the church; and it encases the *beth slutho*. The third structure to mention here is the upper storey, which spatially rests exactly on the portico. It is divided into

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[246] *Tur Abdin,* 204; Sébastien de Courtois, *Les Derniers Araméens: Le Peuple Oublié de Jésus* (France: La Table Ronde, 2004): 33.

[247] I use the terms "nave" and "narthex" because Wiessner has used them in his architectural description of the church; and other scholars, such as Elif Keser-Kayaalp, use them while describing the churches in Tur Abdin.

two chambers and a set of modern stairs has been attached to it in the last decade.[248]

III.1 The General Ground Plan of the Church of Mor Dimet and Architectural Typology

The church of Mor Dimet has a rectangular layout, resting on a space measuring roughly 13mx20m on the exterior (plan III.1)[249]. It lies on an east-west axis. It has three entrances, two on the south and one on the west façade. The nave of the church (13.2mx5m)[250] comprises the north section of the layout; to the south of the nave is a narthex (13.2mx2.4m)[251]. The nave is separated from the narthex by four arches, which rest on square piers. There are also four blind arches on the north wall of the nave. The west and south walls of the naos are straight, without arches. There is a tripartite sanctuary at the east end of the naos.

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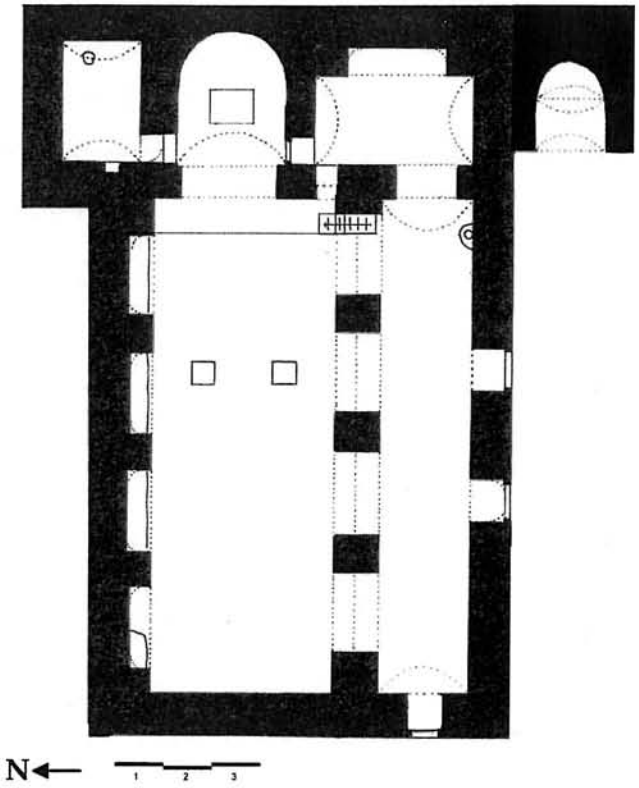
[248] Please refer to figure III.1 for visual representations of these possible later-added components mentioned so far, since they will be referred to frequently during the discussions.

[249] The east-west length of the church is measured on the north wall; the width is measured on the east wall.

[250] The east-west length of the nave is measured from the west wall to the end of the easternmost projecting pier of the northern arcade; the width of it is measured from pier to pier on the west wall.

[251] The east-west length of the narthex is measured from the west wall to the entrance of the southern chamber; the width of it is measured from the westernmost pier of the southern arcade to the south wall, on the west wall.



Plan III.1. Ground Plan of the Church of Mor Dimet (May 2010)

The sanctuary has a horseshoe-shaped apse, spatially corresponding slightly to the north of the nave. The apse is determined by an arch. It rests on an elevated platform, which is accessed with a stairway on the south-east of the nave. Two side chambers flank the apse from both north and south sides. The north room communicates only with the apse, through a door on its south. It is a rectangular room, without any specific architectural features. The south room, on the other hand, has a more dynamic setting. Its largest entrance is from the narthex, through an arch. It also communicates with the apse through a door on its north, and with the nave through another door on the west. The doors of both of the side

chambers opening into the apse correspond to each other. There is a blind arch in the interior, on the east wall of the southern chamber.

The ground plan of the church includes also the *beth slutho* on the exterior of the church, at the south-east corner of the church. It is an exedra, attached to the church on the south façade. It has a rectangular layout, with a horseshoe-shaped apse in the middle.

The domination of two major church types, the hall type and transverse-hall type, in Tur Abdin has been proposed by various previous scholars. Mundell–Mango summarizes the two types, which were initially proposed by Bell.[252] Keser-Kayaalp, in her dissertation, gave an extensive account of features of the both types of churches.[253] According to the descriptions put forward, the church of Mor Dimet is a typical hall type church of Tur Abdin, within the given size range by Keser-Kayaalp.[254] It has a longitudinal nave lying on an east-west axis, a narthex on the south, a tripartite sanctuary on the east, all of which comprise the basic features of the hall type church.[255]

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[252] *Churches and Monasteries*, viii.
[253] *Ecclesiastical Architecture.*
[254] Ibid. 97.
[255] Ibid. 96.

III.2. Observations on the Building Material, Techniques and Phases of the Main Walls and of the Church Entrances

On the exterior, the building measures ca. 20mx13m. The walls are straight except for the south façade, to which have been added different architectural components, as mentioned previously.

The eastern wall of the church is 13m long, of which 11m is outside the enclosure wall. It encases the apse of the church sanctuary[256]. The wall intersects with the northern wall of the church with an orthogonal corner (fig. III.2-III.4).

The eastern wall is constructed of medium-sized stone blocks. An accumulation of earth disables to see its foundation; however, general pattern of building reveals the usage of larger stone blocks on the lower part and at the corners, and smaller ones on the upper parts. The wall has been partially plastered on the exterior. There are four windows located on the eastern wall. One of them corresponds to the southern chamber of the sanctuary and the rest of them to the north-east upper section of the wall, which is now abandoned. All of the window openings appear to be blocked on the church interior.

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[256] This is a common architectural practice in Tur Abdin and northern Syria. Howard Crosby Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*. edited and completed by E. Baldwin Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929), 177.

The north wall of the church is 20m long. It reveals the general wall pattern of the church walls: standing on a stone base, medium-sized stones at the lower and smaller stones on the upper parts. The limestone base gives the wall a natural elevation of almost 1m; large pieces of stones, which have a dark color, are visible on top of the bedrock elevation, at the lower section of the wall. These stone blocks are the same type of stones with the stone base; therefore, they must have been quarried out of the environs of the church. The regular hollowed-out spaces on the limestone base, which was discussed in the previous chapter, might be one of the sources for this material. These three rows of darker and larger stones appear to be to the lower level of the oldest traceable wall of the church (fig. III.5, III.6).

Above three rows of dark limestone, 24 rows of medium-sized yellow limestone form the north wall. The wall's north-east corner, the part which corresponds to the north-east chamber of the sanctuary is projected (2.3m out of the regular alignment of the northern wall). The projected section, 6.2m wide from east to west, also shows a similar wall pattern with the rest of the northern wall, therefore it must be an original part of the church plan. The northern wall of the church continues for 14 meters, until it connects to the northern wall of the residential building, which is a modern addition to the complex (fig. III.7, III.8).

One window, which is closed from the interior and which corresponds to the upper, now-abandoned section, is observed from the exterior of the northern wall. Immediately beneath this window is a row of projecting flat stones making a visual separation on the wall, but since the northern chamber has a low vault today it is not possible to survey the upper sections of the northern wall from the interior. The upper section, as observed from the exterior of the north wall, appears to be rebuilt; the irregularity at the edges of the window opening reveals this (fig. III.5).

There are several projecting stone blocks on the north wall; Palmer identifies same type of stone blocks at the church of Mor Azizael (dated to the 8th century) in Keferzi as to secure and stabilize scaffolding during construction.[257] It is likely that this was the case for the church of Mor Dimet as well, since the projecting stone blocks are of same size with, and symmetrical like the ones at the church of Mor Azizael (fig. III.9).

The north wall appears to be one of the possibly oldest parts of the church. The wall's homogenous texture testifies this, the fact which is better observed on the interior of the church. Majority of the exterior of the north wall have been plastered with a thick layer of plaster. Various types of cross engraved on the plaster are observed on the east part of the wall. They were shallowly engraved on the plaster layer, without

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[257] *Monk and Mason*, 207 n.2.

ornamentation. They are approximately 1.5m high above the modern ground level (hand and eye level of an average person). Therefore, I suggest that they were engraved on the wall, after the church had a major plastering, as a sign of the presence of the Christian faith and marking of the sacred space. Due to lack of inscriptions or other written sources, it is difficult to determine when these crosses might have been engraved on the wall. One of the cross types on the north wall (six-armed, encircled cross) has been repeated on the east of the enclosure wall; therefore, the repair and plastering of the church must have taken place when/after the enclosure wall was built, which cannot be securely dated.

The west wall of the church has also been elevated on the limestone base. Large stone blocks observed on the foundation of the northern wall are observed on the western wall as well. However, unlike the texture of the northern wall, ashlars were more heavily used on the western wall; medium-sized stones appear only on the upper parts. In this section a gable, beyond which the wall continues, is observed (fig. III.10). This vertical extension of the wall, which comprises four rows of small-sized limestone pieces, appears to be the latest addition to the church walls, since it rises above the whole south façade, which, as I shall argue below, is probably the latest architectural addition to the church.

There are three identical, horseshoe-shaped windows pierced on the west wall (fig. III.11, III.12). One of them is higher and symmetrically

in the middle of the other two. They are determined by large pieces of stones; and they are spatially well organized with regards to the general layout of the west façade. Therefore, they must be included in the original church plan. Besides, similar types of composition of windows on the west facades of hall type churches are frequently observed in Tur Abdin.[258] For example, the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi and Mor Dodo in Basebrin have similar layout of windows on the west façade[259] (fig. III.9).

On the right lower level of the western wall there is a door which is defined by three ashlars on both sides and the lintel (fig. III.13). It is ca. 0.8m above the modern ground level, which calls for the existence of a few steps from outside. It opens into the narthex of the church. It was probably used by the clergy.[260] I suggest it was in the original plan of the church, since it is centered with respect to the narthex, and is framed by ashlars on all sides. Note that a similar entrance also existed in the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi (fig. III.9). Bell adds this entrance to the ground plan of the latter church upon her second visit to the church, but she does not mention it in the text.[261] Peña states that an entrance to the west of the

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[258] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 96.
[259] Church of Mor Dodo, in Basebrin, is an interesting exception with three windows on both east and west walls. I did not survey the church, thus I do not know whether the locations of these windows are original.
[260] Peña, *Christian Art*, 72.
[261] *Churches and Monasteries*, 44.

churches became a general practice in the 5th century churches of Syria.[262] I suggest the western entrance of the latter church, like at the church of Mor Dimet, was contemporary with the church. Both of the western entrances in these churches are abandoned today.

The west wall terminates with the "tower" attached to the south of it. The "tower" is a circular wall, narrowing down in perimeter as it reaches the upper sections; thus it is a round tower-like structure. It is located on the south-west corner of the church, thus it is also the western end of the south façade of the former. The south façade is defined by a portico, upper storey chambers built on the portico, and the extended wall built upon the *beth slutho,* they are possibly later additions to the church (fig. III.1).

The original south wall of the church, 20m from west to east, starts with an orthogonal corner with the west wall and terminates with the *beth slutho* on the east end. The only section which reveals the original texture of it is the part around the two entrances of the church on the south wall (fig. III.14).

The church originally had two entrances on the south wall and one entrance on the west wall. The eastern entrance on the south wall, which was the largest entrance into the church, was possibly initially used by

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[262] Peña, *Christian Art,* 72.

male laymen (fig. III.15).[263] This door is 1m wide, slightly wider and higher than the door on the west of it. It is determined by two vertical monolithic stone slabs on both sides, and a vertical one on the lintel. Above the lintel, there is an arch comprising 5 ashlars, which can only be seen on the church interior (fig. III.15).

The eastern door was abandoned when a part of the south wall of the church, around the eastern door, had been rebuilt; the irregular texture of the wall proves this. Indeed, the very east part of the south wall is composed of regular stones, whereas the middle and the western part are not. However, it is not known when this rebuilding took place, since there must have been multiple rebuilding-repair sessions in the edifice's history.

The western door on the south façade is the only used door of the church today (fig. III.16). It is ca. 0.9m wide. It is determined by vertical monolithic frames on both right and left sides, and a horizontal monolithic frame on the lintel. Instead of an arch as in the eastern door, another monolithic stone lab was placed above the lintel.

Two entrances on the south is a typical feature of hall type churches in Tur Abdin.[264] The church entrances are always determined with monolithic slabs on the edges; they generally have arches above their lintels. The stone frame of church entrances are most of the time moulded.

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[263] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 96.
[264] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 96; transverse-hall type churches generally have one entrance on the west (ibid. 107).

Although the frames of the doors at the church of Mor Dimet are not moulded, they are similar to other church entrances in Tur Abdin in terms of their typology and building technique. Moreover, their spatial organization with regards to the church interior and their well integration into the texture of the south wall testify that they were originally contemplated in the plan of the church.

A final structure I would like to point out in the discussion on entrances is a possible later entrance to the church. On the west of the southern wall, there is a niche (fig. III.17). It is approximately 2m high above the floor of the church. It corresponds to the "tower". According to Wiessner's ground plan, initially there were stairs leading up probably to this opening. Therefore, although abandoned today, this niche might initially have been another entrance, which led into the "tower". It was, however, probably not contemplated in the church plan, because it is not determined by a solid frame; also, the "tower" was probably a later addition to the church; therefore a door on such an elevation would not have been necessary before the "tower" was annexed to the church.

III.3 The Interior Arches

Intense usage of arches is observed in the interior of the church (fig. III.18). Four pairs of arches separate the narthex from the nave; four blind arches are attached to the north wall of the nave; an arch determines the

apse of the sanctuary; an arch connects the narthex to the south chamber of the sanctuary; and yet another blind arch is observed on the east wall of the same room (11 arches in total). All of the archivolts and piers of these arches are made of finely-cut ashlars; the rest of the arches are built with medium-sized stones, the texture which is observed on the majority of the main walls of the church.

The narthexes of churches with longitudinal naves are connected to the nave either with two doors or open arches[265]. The narthex at the church of Mor Dimet exemplifies the latter; it is separated from the nave by four longitudinal arches (fig. III.19, III.20). The piers carrying these arches are 1mx1.25m in size. They in fact carry combinations of pairs of arches, the south ones carrying the vault of the nave and the northern ones carrying the vault of the narthex. These pairs of arches rest on common piers. The easternmost pier is thinner than the rest of the piers of the southern arcade (1.25mx0.4m).

There are four projecting blind arches resting on piers on the northern wall of the nave (fig. III.21). The piers on the north are slightly thinner than the ones on the south (0.93mx0.7m). The westernmost northern pier is the thinnest pier of the church interior, measuring 0.7m by 0.8m.

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[265] Keser-Kayaalp states that two doors is the usual passage between the narthex and the nave (*Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 103).

Use of lateral arcades makes Tur Abdin hall type churches differentiated among the northern Mesopotamian churches.[266] One of the earliest dated examples is present at the monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar (a possible 6th century monastic church).[267] It is generally accepted that lateral interior arcades became a local tradition in Tur Abdin, to reduce the roof span of churches, so that local cheap oak could be used to cover the nave.[268] Mundell-Mango states that arches were used originally in church building in Tur Abdin, but then, in later times, they were enlarged to carry the barrel vaults.[269] These discussions on the lateral arcades invoke the question whether in some churches the arches were originally contemplated with the plan or were added later.

Regarding this inquiry, the arches of the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi (8th century) are accepted to be original.[270] This acceptance stems from the fact that the arches are aligned with entrances and sanctuary. The ones at the church of Mor Sobo in Hah (a generally accepted 6th century church) are claimed to be added later than the actual building of the same church, although they also seem to be aligned on the ground plan

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[266] Ibid. 99.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii-ix; Marlia Mundell-Mango, "Architecture of the Syriac Churches". *The Conference of the Architecture of the Eastern Churches* (Birmingham: May 16th, 1981), 16.
[269] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* ix.
[270] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii; Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 99.

published by Bell.[271] Bell explains the addition of interior arches as an attempt to reduce the width of the roof to be covered (from 11.1m to 7.3m). Mundell-Mango suggests that in Tur Abdin churches, the roof to be vaulted is generally reduced to ca. 6 meters with the using of interior arches, thus churches could be covered with local oak.[272]

This theory has been partially questioned by Keser-Kayaalp who underlines the existence of interior arches in a high number of churches which already have a nave narrower than 6m without the arches.[273] Also, the rock-cut church at Beh Werki is a curious example. It is a hall type church with lateral arcades carved out on the north and south walls. Since the nature of the rock-cut architecture requires, the arches are not projecting, but are rather hollowed in the walls. This might be the indication of rooted local tradition of lateral arcades in church architecture in the plateau; regardless of the necessities of the roofing system, a suggestion mentioned by Mundell-Mango and Keser-Kayaalp.[274]

Referring back to the church of Mor Dimet, first of all, the nave without the interior arches is ca. 6.5m; the interior arches reduce this width to ca. 5m. Thus, the church is one of those churches which according to Mundell-Mango's theory, would not need to be inserted

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[271] *Churches and Monasteries*, 17.
[272] Ibid. viii-ix.
[273] *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 100.
[274] *Churches and Monasteries*, xi; *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 101.

arches into. That is, if the church originally did not have arches, it could not be necessary to add them later for the roofing system. Moreover, the easternmost arches do not block the archivolt of the apse and the top sections of the arches have a similar building technique with the walls of the church. Therefore, it can be suggested that the arches are originally built with the church.

However, discrepancies within the church interior might indicate that the arches could be added later or heavily rebuilt. The easternmost southern arch barely blocks the right side of the entrance of the southern chamber (fig. III.22). The easternmost southern pier and the westernmost northern pier are thinner than the rest of the piers. The interior arches are also not in an exact aligned position with the church entrances and with each other; that is, the northern arcade with the southern arcade[275]. Moreover, only two of the piers are adorned with capitals with sculpture[276]; and some other decorative items on the piers have curious locations, which bring into mind the possibility of usage of spolia.

On the third eastern pier of the southern arcade, there is a cross relief at the lower section of the pier. A stone slab, which possibly has

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[275] It should be noted that when the ground plans of other hall type churches of Tur Abdin are examined, it is seen that not in many churches are the interior arches have exact alignments with each other (see Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, Teil2, 24, 39, 77, 115, 127, 137, 187). The interior arches of the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi, which are claimed to be original but not later additions to the church, have the proportionate alignment (Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 14).

[276] I shall discuss the architectural sculpture below.

funerary connotations, is placed on a regular place on the easternmost pier of the southern arcade. It is significant to note that their locations are not specific locations, such as door lintels, archivolts, apse conches which have been determined as general locations for decorations in the churches of Tur Abdin. Thus, at least some sections of the arcades, where these irregularities are seen, might have been rebuilt. To sum up, the interior arches can be originally built together with the church and rebuilt heavily since then, or be added later to the church interior; neither of the two possibilities can be rejected. Nevertheless, it is seen that all of the arches were contemplated in the same building project and were originally built together.

All of the interior arches of the church of Mor Dimet, the northern arches, southern pairs of arches, the arch leading from the narthex to the south chamber and the blind arch on the east wall of the same chamber, appear to have been built simultaneously. I suggest this because they have the same building style and material throughout the church. Moreover, the southern arch pairs share the piers; therefore, at least the arches must as well have been built together. Furthermore, all of the piers have same type of plain capitals, except for two of them, which have uncut acanthus leafs.

III.4. The Sanctuary of the Church

The church has a tripartite sanctuary on the east end. It spatially corresponds to the eastern end of the nave and the narthex together, thus has a south-north length of 13m (fig. III.22). It is ca. 4.5m wide from east to west. As the term "tripartite" indicates, the sanctuary has three sections; an apse in the middle, a longitudinal rectangular chamber to the north of the apse, and a transverse rectangular chamber to the south of it[277]. Both of the side chambers communicate with the apse; the south chamber communicates also with the nave and the narthex. As explained above, the sanctuary is not flanked on the east of the church; it is encased by straight walls on all three sides. The sanctuary was left behind a modern iconostasis until April 2009.

There is a horse-shoe shaped apse in the center of the sanctuary; it is enclosed by a semi-dome. It is raised by a platform 1m high above the floor of the church. The platform extends from the easternmost northern pier to its counterpart on the south. It is reached from the south, through a stairway which originates on the east of the narthex. The platform is also reached from the nave, through a smaller stairway placed on its west center.

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[277] A "twin chapel-compact arrangement", a pair of chapels placed at the east end of a church, as Ćurčić would describe it. Slobodan Ćurčić, "Architectural Significance of Subsidiary Chapels in Middle Byzantine Churches", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* 36.2 (May 1977): 99.

The apse has a maximum depth of 4.5m and it is 3m wide from north to south. The archivolt determining the apse is 2.5m wide. While the apse itself and its inner semi-dome are built of medium-sized chop stones, the archivolt of the apse is made up of finely-cut ashlars (fig. III.22, III.23). The archivolt has two engaged capitals on its piers.

There are two gates on each side of the apse, to the east of the apse archivolt, leading to the side rooms. Both of the gates are 0.8m wide. They spatially correspond to each other. They were possibly originally framed with monolithic stone slabs; and they had arches above their lintels. However, the entrance of the northern room lacks both of these features, which indicate a major rebuilding in this section of the edifice. Usage of modern cement, which is identical with the rest of the recent repairs in the complex, indicates that this rebuilding probably took place in the last decade, by Abuna Yakub.

The apse does not have its original altar anymore. A modern altar, called *kduşkudşin* in Syriac, was placed before the 1990s, since a photograph published by Hollerweger shows it.[278] However, Wiessner does not mention the modern altar; but he indicates the existence of a rectangular altar in the ground plan of the church. Since he does not indicate an altar in the southern room, which has a rectangular-based altar

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[278] *Tur Abdin*, 204.

today, the altar currently located in the southern room might be the church's original altar, being carried to the southern chamber when the new altar was brought into the church (fig. III.24).

The most common type of altar encountered in Tur Abdin is a flat stone slab placed on a cylindrical or rectangular base, which is raised by another rectangular platform at the bottom. This platform functions as a step for the clergy member; it also gives a vision of ascendance towards the topmost sacred point, which is the top of the altar (fig. III.24). These altars are now in side chambers of churches, but these churches have modern altars today; so, the altars shown in the figures might be the original altars of these churches. As mentioned previously, no scholarly studies attempted to date these structures.

The southern side chamber is the largest section of the sanctuary. From the interior, it is ca. 2.5mx4.5m (long along the north-south axis). It is a rectangular space with three entrances: one from the narthex, which is the largest entrance, one from the apse from north, and one from the nave from west[279]. The entrance from the narthex is determined by an arch, which is 2m wide (fig. III.25). It is built up of finely-cut ashlars. The piers of the arch are provided with engaged plain capitals. This arch appears to

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[279] In line with generalization Keser-Kayaalp makes about entrances of southern chambers, apart from the passage from the apse, which she says it was generally a small opening, but is a door in Mor Dimet (*Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 102).

be contemporary with the inner arcades of the church, based on the building materials, techniques and usage of the same pier capitals.

The entrance from the apse is 0.8m wide. This entrance is determined by a monolithic frame and an arch above its lintel (fig. III.26). One takes three short steps down to proceed from the apse into the south chamber. The entrance from the nave, from the west, is an entrance measuring 0.7m wide. It is determined by ashlars on both sides. Its lintel comprises a monolithic stone block (fig. III.26). I suggest the stone slab forming the door lintel, on which a decorative item is located, originally belongs to the entrance of the southern chamber, because it is well integrated into the texture of the door on which it is located. Also, this entrance further has an arch above its lintel, which rests on the ornamented stone slab. The door is abandoned now, leaving only a semi-circular niche between the lintel and the arch.

The southern chamber's walls are regularly built with medium-sized stones. On the eastern wall of the same chamber, there is a projecting blind arch, forming a niche on the wall. The arch is 0.5m thick and 2.5m wide. It is built up of finely-cut ashlars and it was provided with plain capitals, which are same type with the ones seen on the piers of the interior arcades (fig. III.27).

Two possibly window openings are found in the south chamber, one on the eastern wall and one on the southern wall. Both of them appear

to have been pierced later through the walls, since they are not determined by any kind of frame on their edges. The one on the east is not aligned with the blind arch; it is situated slightly to the south of the center of the arch. The window on the south wall is blocked from the exterior now. The southern room is enclosed with a low vault probably in a recent time. An altar has been placed in this chamber. Usage of modern cement indicates that this was done recently. I previously suggested that this altar could be the original altar of the church apse.

The northern chamber is the smallest of the three divisions of the sanctuary (3.5mx2.1m). It is projecting out of the north wall of the church. A 0.8m-wide passage leads from the apse to this side room. Unlike the southern chamber, the northern chamber's floor is at the same level with the one of the apse. Its walls are mainly homogenous –built with medium-sized stones. However, signs of rebuilding are traced on the west wall of the room and the entrance of the room. These sections are highly irregular. From the exterior, three windows are seen, corresponding to the upper sections of the north room. However, since the room, like the southern chamber, has a low vault today, the upper sections of the walls are not possible to be surveyed. There is a short, cylindrical altar placed on the east end of this chamber (fig. III.28).

Division of the sanctuary spatially into three is an often observed practice in the churches of the plateau. Ćurčić warns that not every

tripartite organization of the eastern end implies a tripartite sanctuary in a church.[280] However, in Tur Abdinian churches, side chambers are generally organically connected to the apse, thus forming a tripartite sanctuary. It is generally agreed that this type of sanctuary is inherited from pagan temples of Syria.[281] Possibly due to the long time span of usage, typological varieties have emerged. Indeed, different compositions of tripartite sanctuary are observed in Tur Abdin.[282] They seem to differ from each other in terms of the organization of their east terminations, and number and organization of side chambers. Despite the varieties, almost unexceptionally the southern division is more accessible than the northern one, which is smaller and more secluded[283]. This situation might be explained by their roles in the liturgy.

Side rooms flanking the apse are called "*pastophoria*" within the general scholarly literature.[284] "Pastophoria is accepted to refer to the combination of *prothesis* and *diakonikon;* the former is the chamber in which preparations for the Eucharist are carried out; the latter is the

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[280] *Subsidiary Chapels*, 101. His work is concerned with Byzantine architecture; nevertheless, his warning is valid for analyzing any church.
[281] Mundell-Mango, *Eastern churches*, 14; Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria*, 55.
[282] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 96.
[283] Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria*, 23.
[284] A. M. Shneider, *Liturgie und Kirchenbau in Syrien* (Göttingen: 1949), 50; Janet Charlotte Smith "Form and Function of the Side Chambers of Fifth- and Sixth-Century Churches in Ravenna" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol49.2 (Jun. 1990): 181; the latter author mentions the discussions on the usage of the term (ibid.); however, in this study the terminology will not be discussed.

chamber in a church where sacred vessels are kept.[285] The side rooms of the churches of Tur Abdin, however, stand in a vague area within the previous scholarly debates. Keser-Kayaalp states how they were generally identified as *prothesis* or *diakonikon* by the previous scholars.[286] The functions of side chambers in northern Syria generally appear to be in line with these identifications.[287] Nevertheless, a standardized, solid function should not be assumed. As Keser-Kayaalp underlines, side chambers can have attributions to private liturgy and baptism, as well as the functions mentioned previously.[288] Likewise, what I have observed in the churches of Tur Abdin is that northern room appears more secluded than the southern sections; baptismal fonts are almost always placed close to the southern room[289]; and some of the side chambers have altars (although, as mentioned previously, they might have been placed in the side chambers with the introduction of modern altars into the church apses). John of Ephesus writes that Malkha the Mendicant and Stranger goes to the vestry (house of diakonika) to pray, before he passes away.[290] Therefore, it might be suggested that the side rooms had rather mixed functions including

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[285] Robert F. Taft, "Prothesis", "Pastophoria" *OODB;* Smith, *Side Chambers*, 181-2.
[286] *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 103.
[287] Butler, *Early Churches*, 175; Hill, *Cilicia and Isauria*, 23; Keser-Kayaalp, *Rock-cut Complex*, 276.
[288] *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 103.
[289] Author's observation.
[290] *Lives*, 372.

keeping the liturgical vessels, preparation for the liturgy and personal prayers.

III.5. The Decorations of the Church of Mor Dimet[291]

The decorative items in the church interior are located on door lintels and main bodies and capitals of piers. The only decoration observed on the church exterior is located on the lintel of the eastern door on the south façade. It is a square framed six-armed cross, flanked by two camels from both sides[292]. The camels are placed in *tabula ansata*[293]. The enframed cross, flanks of both of the *tabula ansatae* and the camel figure on the east are visible; the rest of the decorative item is covered by the later-added vaults of the portico (fig. III.29). I suggest the decorative item is contemporary with the door and thus with the church, since it is spatially aligned with the door lintel. This decoration is significant for two reasons: the usage of *tabula ansata* with figural representations, and the usage of camel figure on a door lintel. Neither of these usages is common in Tur Abdin.

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[291] The decorative items discussed in this section should not be regarded a complete totality of decorations of the church; only relevant material regarding the dating and contextualization of the church were included.

[292] It is difficult to identify the image, since it is highly distorted except for a possible "neck" figure.

[293] "Tabula Ansata: (Lat. "tablet with handles"): a rectangular frame or tablet with projections, used to contain an inscription and, by extension, as an ornament. The motif appeared on sarcophagi of the 3rd–4th C., in MSS such as the Calendar of 354, ivory panels of the 4th–6th C., and numerous consular Diptychs. It is all but unknown after the 6th C." Leslie Brubaker, *OODB*.

Door lintels of churches are generally ornamented in Tur Abdin and in wider northern Mesopotamia and Syria.[294] What is special about this decoration is the usage of *tabula ansata*, type of frame which is generally observed with inscriptions, as in the examples given by Colledge and Palmer.[295] The eastern door lintel of the church of Mor Dimet has been highly distorted; therefore, whether or not there had been an inscription is not known. Still, it comprises a peculiar and solitary example of usage of *tabula ansata* with decorative motifs, rather than solitarily an inscription (fig. III.30). A similar example is encountered in the church interior as well (fig. III.31). On the lintel of the door connecting the south room to the nave from the east of the latter, there is a monolithic stone slab with a *tabula ansata* engraved on. There is a cross, a bird pattern and a floral pattern in the body of the *tabula ansata*; the flank of the *tabula ansata* is also decorated with a floral pattern.

As shown by Palmer, numerous inscriptions have been framed with *tabula ansata* in Tur Abdin, dating between the early 11th and 16th centuries.[296] None of these examples have a decorative figure in the main body of the frame. Thus, the decoration at the church appears to reveal adaptation of *tabula ansata* in Tur Abdin in ornamentations of figures,

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[294] Peña, *Christian Art*, 69.
[295] Malcolm Colledge, *The Art of Palmyra* (USA: Westview Press, 1976), ill.61, ill.62; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 205.
[296] Ibid. 205.

besides inscriptions. No similar examples have been published previously by other scholars or encountered by me in another building in Tur Abdin.[297] Therefore, the preference of the patron or stone mason to use a *tabula ansata* in a decoration at the church of Mor Dimet can not be contextualized.

The other conspicuous pattern on the lintel of the eastern door is the likely camel figure in the body of the *tabula ansata.* It has been identified as a camel by the monk[298]. Abuna Yakub attributes the camel representation to the caravan routes passing through the region. Indeed, some of the trade centers in the northern Mesopotamia seem to be located around Tur Abdin.[299] Mundell-Mango also states that from the 7th century onwards Syrian Orthodox merchants dominated the building activity in the plateau and wider northern Mesopotamia.[300] Palmer indicates that Salah, a village very close to Zaz, was on a caravan route.[301] Therefore, a camel figure is not surprising, but it is not a frequently applied one; moreover, a representation of a caravan would require camels to be represented in line or with a master (like shown in a 7th-century mosaic in

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[297] A conspicuous case, however, is a Qur'an manuscript from the 9th-century Abbasid period; the manuscript is in the form of a tabula ansata and both the flanks and the rectangular body of the pattern are ornamented. Richard Ettinghausen et. al. *Islamic art and Architecture,* 650-1250 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), fig. I19.
[298] He claims that the figure was clear when he was a child.
[299] Mundell-Mango, *Continuity,* 116.
[300] *Churches and Monasteries,* vi.
[301] *Monk and Mason,* 112.

Deir al-Adas, Bostra, a site on the trade route or like in a 2nd/3rd century relief in Palmyra) (fig. III.32).[302]

The more likely motivation behind the usage of the camel figure can be found in the life of the saint Dimet. He, a healer monk, is known to have cured a camel that accidentially found its way to the cave of the holy man.[303] This healing is one of the most prominent miracles saint Dimet creates.[304] Although such a representation has neither been published by previous scholars, nor encountered by me in Tur Abdin, the life of the saint appears to have found direct representation as a decoration of the church. Rarity of the pattern shows that individual decisions of the stone mason or the patron were highly influencial in church decoration in Tur Abdin in antiquity.

The western door on the south façade was decorated with two encircled pattée[305] cross reliefs on the side facing the interior (fig. III.33). This section of the wall might have been rebuilt, thus, the ashlar on the door lintel was rotated and the decoration was left in the interior. Another

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[302] Clive Foss, "Syria in Transition; AD 550 – 750: An Archaeological Approach". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*. 51 (1997): 254; Colledge, *Palmyra*, ill.129.

[303] *History of Mor Domitius the Healer*, translated by Alice M. Taylor (London: Luzac and Co., 1938), 14.

[304] M.F.G. Parmentier, *Non-medical Ways of Healing in Eastern Christendom: The Case of St. Domitios*, Fructus Centesimus, Mélanges offerts à Gerard J. M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire, edited by A.A.R. Bastiaensen, A. Hilhorst, C.H. Kneepens, Instrumenta Patristica nr. XIX (Steenbrugge: 1989), 285.

[305] Although the type is basically identified with its curved arms, there are variations to it and the pattern observed at the church of Mor Dimet may be identified as a pattée cross. Helen Stuart Griffith, *The Sign Language of Our Faith; Learning to Read the Message of Christian Symbols* (USA: Morehouse-Gorham Co, 1952), 76-7.

option is that it was the deliberate choice of the patron to leave the decoration inside, since the eastern door of the church is generally more ornamented than the western door.[306] Similar lintel decorations are observed at the church of Mor Hadbshobo in Aynwerd, Mor Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas and Mor Azizael in Keferzi, churches the latter two of which have been dated to the 8th century (fig. III.34, III.35).

The only architectural sculpture observed in the church interior is the uncut acanthus leafs adorning two piers of the northern arcade: the westernmost pier and the second easternmost pier (fig. III.36, III.37). Both of the capitals have two-row acanthus leafs; the leafs in the corners of the capitals are bigger than the rest of the leafs, which are identical with each other. The leafs are finely rounded; and a central vertical line is carved on main body of each of the leafs. The capitals, on which the sculpture is observed, are well integrated into the texture of the piers; they are made of the same material, limestone, and their measurements are same with the ones of the piers. Thus the sculpture must be originally belonging to the piers. It is interesting to point out that the sculpture is observed on the piers by which there are possible burials in the church interior.

Uncut acanthus, like the cut acanthus, is a common decorative pattern practiced in a wide chronological and geographical scope.[307]

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[306] Peña, *Christian Art*, 69.
[307] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, xi.

Examples from the 5th and 6th century are found in northern Syria, as Butler, Tchalenko and other scholars have published (fig. III.38-III.41).[308]

The examples show that earlier patterns appear to have continued to be used in Tur Abdin, though in simpler forms, as Mundell-Mango points out in one of her works.[309] The church of el-Adhra in Hah and Mor Yakub in Salah, which are generally accepted as being among the early ecclesiastical buildings of Tur Abdin, have similar uncut, garlanded acanthus leafs in their column capitals (fig. III.42). Although both of these sculptures have been published by Bell, a dating for this type of decoration is not proposed by her.[310] Keser-Kayaalp and Mundell-Mango suggest, however, that the decoration of the church of Mor Yakub in Salah could hint a 6th century dating.[311] The latter author also suggests a 7th century dating for the decorations at Hah.[312] The cut acanthus leaf is also found in Tur Abdin; examples are seen in the baptistery of the church of Mor Yakub in Nisibis, the possibly 7th-8th century churches of Mor Azizael in Keferzi, Mor Quryakos in Arnas and Mor Shemun in Habsenas.

The sculpture observed in the church of Mor Dimet is different from the cited examples. The former is uncut, and not much detailed.

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[308] Butler, *Early Churches*, 50; G. Tchalenko, *Eglises De Village De La Syrie Du Nord.* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1980), 4, 39.
[309] Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, 127.
[310] *Churches and Monasteries*, 21, 40.
[311] *Continuity*, 122; *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 112.
[312] *Continuity*, 127.

Therefore, it is certainly differentiated from the capitals with cut acanthus, observed in churches mentioned in the previous paragraph. Yet it does not fit into the former category of uncut acanthus capitals, either, for it is not garlanded. The workmanship observed on the capitals of piers in the church of Mor Dimet appears to reflect a different taste, with thicker and more rounded leafs. It could be suggested that the pattern has a *terminus post quem* of 6th century; a more precise dating cannot be suggested, however.

The capitals of the piers carrying the archivolt of the apse have zig-zag pattern as decoration (fig. III.43). This pattern, combined with uncut acanthus, was encountered on a column capital dating to the 5th century in northern Syria (fig. III.40).[313] This example is significant for it appears to combine the two types of architectural sculpture used at the church of Mor Dimet. Other examples of zig-zag pattern used at capitals or other moldings have been recorded, in the form of drawings, by Bell and Ramsay some churches and monasteries in the Binbirkilise region; the authors do not provide a specific dating for the structures which bear these decorations, but the ecclesiastical architecture of the region have a *terminus ante quem* of 11th century.[314]

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[313] Tchalenko, *Eglises*, fig.114.

[314] Bell and Ramsay, *Thousand and One Churches*, 69, 185, 22.

On the door lintel of the southern chamber, located is the second decorative item on which usage of *tabula ansata* with figures, rather than an inscription (fig. III.31). In fact, the entire pattern starts with the decorated flank of a *tabula ansata* on the left; in the main body of the *tabula ansata* a pattée cross, a bird facing right and a floral pattern (reminiscent of a stem rose) are visible. The rest of the slab has been broken; therefore, the decorative pattern is not complete. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, this is yet another striking example of usage of *tabula ansata* at this church. Moreover, the bird pattern used in this decoration is interesting for it is repeated in a similar fashion on another finely-cut stone slab used at the easternmost pier of the southern arcade.

The ashlar is placed vertically on the pier. It has a rectangular frame (0.4mx0.55m), and within this frame an encircled pattée cross relief in the middle, approached by two birds from both lower sides, and two more pattée crosses to the upper sides of the central cross figure are placed (fig. III.44). The layout of the bird patterns suggests that this ashlar is supposed to be in a context where it is located horizontally, rather than vertically (fig. III.45). Therefore, the ashlar might be spolia, which suggests that this pier was re/built out of spolia.

If the ashlar did not originally belong to the pier, which is a very likely situation, its original provenance should be determined. Since a

pattée cross is a rather general pattern, the bird pattern might be a more solid point of reference. A previously published bird pattern from Tur Abdin is located on the sanctuary of the conventual church of Mor Yaqub in Salah.[315] On the left pier of the sanctuary apse archivolt, on the panel of the pier, there are six birds (possibly doves) carved in a way that they are on top of each other (fig. III.46). The monastery is known to have been founded before 421, but was reported to have been renewed in the mid-8th century.[316] Mundell-Mango and Keser-Kayaalp suggest the possibility of a 6th-century dating for the decoration of this church.[317] Other two lesser known bird patterns used in architectural sculpture are observed at the church of el-Adhra in Hah. One is located in one of the niches of the exterior projecting arches, on the scond floor of the church; the other one is at the top end of the cross relief on the apse conch of the church.[318] The decoration of this church was dated to the 7th century,[319] but the typologies of the two bird patterns are distinct from the one at the church of Mor Dimet. Nevertheless, existence of the pattern in architectural sculpture in settlements very close to the village of Zaz is striking.

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[315] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 12.
[316] Ibid. 161; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 194.
[317] *Continuity*, 122; *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 112.
[318] de Courtois, *Les Derniers Araméens*, 115, 120
[319] Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, 127

The bird pattern, specifically doves, represents death, the Holy Ghost or Christian soul.[320] An example comes from Palmyra; a 2nd-century funerary relief depicts a young girl with a dove in her hand and a branch in the other.[321] A bird pattern is used on the pavement of a tomb in Edessa, dated tentatively to the 5th-6th centuries by Mundell-Mango.[322] Although the style of the bird is different than the one observed in the church of Mor Dimet, this example is relevant, for it shows the usage of bird pattern in funerary contexts, not only in Tur Abdin, but in wider northern Mesopotamia. Peacocks were also used in funerary contexts (fig. III.47).[323] Thus, the stone slab bearing the decoration of a cross flanked by two birds might be a gravestone or another object used in a funerary context. This suggestion yields the question of possible burials in or around the church of Mor Dimet, the notion which will be discussed shortly.

The southern arcade is abundant in decorative items, consisting of reliefs and incised carvings. One of them, a relief of a framed pattée cross with a floral pattern on its right lower quadrant, is embroidered on an

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[320] Harvey Weiss, *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria. An exhibition from the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums; Syrian Arab Republic.* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985): 395; Peña, *Christian Art*, 176; Griffith, *Sign Language*, 21.
[321] Weiss, *Ebla to Damascus*, ill.187.
[322] *Continuity*, 124.
[323] Marlia Mango, "A Sixth-century Funerary Relief at Dara in Mesopotamia" JOB. 24. (1975): fig.4.

ashlar used at the lower section of the middle southern pier[324] (fig. III.48, III.49). The pattée cross pattern is frequently used as a decorative item in Tur Abdin. 17 out of 21 crosses Palmer published are pattée crosses, with minor variances.[325] Therefore, it is difficult to propose a specific dating for the decoration based on its typology. Nevertheless, the style of embroidering is similar to the decorations on the door lintels, which were previously discussed and argued to be contemporary with the original church. Thus, the decoration on the pier as well might be from about the same time period.

The second decorative item located on the south arcade, on the second easternmost pier, ca. 1.5m above the floor level of the church, is a cross framed in two squarish patterns, which make a 90° angle with each other. The projecting corners of patterns are pointed, giving the impression of a star. There is a cross relief in the middle. The cross is a Greek cross with equally long arms, but each of the arms is widened in the center, reminiscent of again a star. Whole of the pattern was embroidered with a low-relief technique, like the previous reliefs mentioned. There appears to be a short inscription or a group of symbols on the right-hand side of the decorative item; it can not be deciphered (fig. III.50, III.51).

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[324] Previously in this section I have argued that this is an unusual place for a decoration, which might indicate rebuilding or usage of spolia.
[325] *Monk and Mason*, 198.

The decoration has very rare comparisons from within Tur Abdin, and shows similarities with some decorations from northern Syria (fig. III.52, III.53). The examples from Tur Abdin come from the monastery of Mor Yakub at Salah and the church of Mor Serkis and Bakhos in Hah. The similarity is between only the frames of the images –square-on-square. They have been published by Palmer (fig. III.54).[326] It is interesting to see that these examples were and are present on relatively earlier buildings, geographically close to the church of Mor Dimet. The other examples, from northern Syria, date to the 5th century. They, like examples from Tur Abdin, are similar to the decoration only in terms of the frame pattern, within the frame, there are generally ornamented types of crosses. However, in the early examples the frames are embroidered in a more detailed fashion and are further encased in a circular frame. The relief in the church of Mor Dimet appears more simplified and coarse.

Yet another artistic, and chronologically later, milieu in which there are frequent usages of this specific pattern is the Islamic art. Square-on-square pattern is densely embroidered in a wide scale of contexts varying from floor mosaics, façade reliefs, panels to tiles and dishes, from the 8th century onwards.[327] The version in the church of Mor Dimet is simpler, like it is compared to the earlier *comparanda,* however.

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[326] Ibid.

[327] Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art*, fig. IV6, 48, 82, 98, 104.

There are three incised decorative patterns on the west side of the middle southern pier. These three ornamental items form a different group of decorations which is separated from the previously mentioned ones in terms of masonry technique. They are smaller in size and have been embroidered with the usage of incision technique. In location, size and carving technique they are close to each other, but they have different patterns from one another.

Two of them are located next to each other on an ashlar; the third one is below the former two. They all have circular layouts. Among this group of patterns, the one on the upper left (0.3m in diameter) is a six-armed cross with a zig-zag ornamented circular frame. The pattern next to it (0.17m in diameter) is a star pattern. The item below these two is a sea-shell pattern (0.2m in diameter) (fig. III.55).

At first sight they might seem to be regular common decorative patterns. But, the combination of these three specific figures in some other decorations strikes attention. For instance, in Syria, the combination of these three patterns appears to decorate door lintels of some ecclesiastical and secular buildings, majorly dating to the 5th - 6th century (fig. III.56, III.57).[328] In these examples all of the three patterns are used together. It is also striking that square-on-square pattern is also used together with the

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[328] Peña, *Christian Art*, 76, 153, 175.

three patterns (fig. III.56). This might indicate that the patron (or the stone mason) at Mor Dimet might knew about these usages.[329]

III.6. The Roofing System of the Church

Recent restorations at the church of Mor Dimet revealed that the church's nave was enclosed with a stone-vault and covered with red brick work[330] (fig. III.58, III.59). A section of the brick work is still visible; it appears to start where the upper walls of the interior arches make a slight curve to the ceiling. Brick work covers the nave from the east to the west end. Extensive usage of linear bricks is seen at the nave covering of the church of Mot Dimet. Rows of bricks are aligned in a regular fashion, yet whether there were specific patterns is not clear. Majority of the ceiling has fallen down; fallen bricks are observed to have been employed during repairs in the church interior. Within the texture of the enclosure wall, possible pantiles (curved bricks) are observed. These might as well be originally belonging to the roofing system. Thus, the enclosing brick work might comprise of linear bricks as well as pantiles; however, the location of the pantiles on the ceiling is not clear.

Some of the churches, which are geographically close to the church of Mor Dimet, for instance the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi, have

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[329] I shall discuss the issue of patronage below.

[330] The narthex's ceiling might be similar; it was not stripped off from its cement cover by the time I had my last visit to the building.

elaborate brick works on their ceilings, which Palmer and Keser-Kayaalp argue to be dating to the 8th century.[331] This might be the time period in which the church of Mor Dimet was vaulted with brick work. However, the extant sections of the ceiling of Mor Dimet seems to lack ornamentation or any specific patterns, which makes comparing difficult. In fact, the brick vaults of the previously-mentioned churches have pantiles on their edges, and generally in the main body of the patterns. The edges of the brick work at the church of Mor Dimet seem to not have that specific pattern, which might indicate a different time frame. Nevertheless, I would suggest, the material and the seemingly fine work observed at the church's vault indicate that the church of Mor Dimet as well might be considered among the other brick-vaulted churches of Tur Abdin (for examples see fig. III.60, III.61)

Building technique of original nave enclosings of Tur Abdinian churches is a non-concluded debate. As mentioned earlier, during the discussion on interior arches, it is a general consensus that originally in Tur Abdin the nave of churches could be covered with timber or oak.[332] This practice is claimed to be abandoned with the introduction of barrel vaults (with brick work) in a later time. Mundell-Mango does not conclude on the time frame in which the barrel vault was introduced, but

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[331] *Monk and Mason*, 134; *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 102. The latter author's argument is based on the typology of the bricks used.
[332] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii.

she indicates the existence of wooden roofs by the 15th century.[333] Keser-Kayaalp dates the brick works observed in main village churches of Tur Abdin to the 8th century, challenging Koch's previously-put argument and methodology, which had been based on the reading of "John of Mardin built or repaired many churches in the 12th century".[334]

The church's roof is flat. It is elevated on the nave, which is supported by higher arches in the interior. It has been smoothed with cement by Abuna Yakub after he moved into the complex. It is reached through a modern set of stairs on the upper floor of the church.

Flat roof appears to be the most common modern practice of enclosing buildings in Tur Abdin as well as in northern Syria and Mesopotamia[335]. However, in antiquity pointed roofs might have also been used frequently, at least in major public buildings in urban centers in the region, as in some mosaics and manuscripts some buildings are depicted with pointed roofs.[336]

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[333] Ibid. ix.

[334] *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 101-2.

[335] Author's observation during field trips to the region.

[336] G. W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late antiquity to Islam*. (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 11, 16, 21, 24, 27, 67, 68, 118.

III.7. The *Beth Slutho*

A *beth slutho*, literally "house of prayer", is an outside oratory used for outside prayers when weather allows.[337] It generally appears as an exedra with an apse, on the south of hall type churches in Tur Abdin, as observed at the church of Mor Sobo in Hah, Mor Quryakos in Arnas, Mor Azizael in Keferzi.[338] The *beth slutho* of the church of Mor Dimet is located on the south of the church, but it is not separated from the church architecturally; it shares a wall with the church (fig. III.62). It rests on a rectangular space measuring 3m by 4m. It has a slightly raised floor. It is built up of medium-sized stones. It has an archivolt built with ashlars. The archivolt has two plain capitals; the one on the south pier of the archivolt was placed down the pier, probably during a repair of the church. There is an inscription on this relocated capital; it is illegible, however.

The apse conch of the *beth slutho* bears a niche on its eastern center, ca. 0.8m above the floor level. The niche is 0.2m deep; it has a narrow outcrop on the low end; and it is determined by ashlars, like an arch. There are two more niches on the conch, one on each side of it. These niches are monolithic, rectangular recesses placed within the texture of the wall. They measure 0.15mx0.2mx0.7m. All the three niches must be built

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[337] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, x.
[338] Ibid.

together with the *beth slutho*, since they are integrated into the latter's texture, rather than being hollowed out later (fig. III.63).

The *beth slutho* bears two simple decorations. An encircled pattée cross relief (0.14m in diameter) is located on the left pier of the archivolt. It does not appear to have a pair on the right pier; however, originally there might have been one, since, as mentioned above, the right side of the *beth slutho* appears to have been heavily rebuilt, in a time period which cannot be determined. The second decorative item is located on the right of the central conch niche. It is an encircled six-armed cross incision (0.16m in diameter). It appears to have a pair on the other flank of the niche; however, the pair was damaged (fig. III.64).

There is a Syriac inscription on the floor of the *beth slutho*. It reads as the following:

"These arches were (stabilized?) with the supervision (of) (the believing people of) Zaz in 1967"

This must be the time in which the floor of the *beth slutho* and the portico, which is discussed below, were cemented, and possibly some repairs were done at the church.

I suggest the *beth slutho* is contemporary with the church, since its apse is aligned with the original sanctuary of the church, and its archivolt is built with same type of ashlars used in the church interior. Moreover, the eastern exterior wall of the *beth slutho* is physically aligned and

texturally identical with the exterior of the east wall of the church. However, it does not provide much further specific information which would help towards a better classification or dating. It does not have the regular apse conch crosses, which many other *beth sluthos* have, and which have been dated to the 6th to 10th centuries by Mundell-Mango (fig. III.65).[339] Neither does it have any other specific decoration. The cross relief on the left of the archivolt is a basic, common decoration; the capitals are not ornamented.

All of the examples of *beth slutho* Bell has examined are in the form of exedras unconnected to the church.[340] *Beth slutho* as a free-standing exedra outside the church is a frequently observed structure; it can be seen namely in Mor Sobo in Hah, Mor Dodo in Basebrin, Mor Azizael in Keferzi, Mor Quryakos in Arnas.

Majority of these examples of *beth sluthos* are built with ashlars, adorned with elaborate crosses on their conches, and have ornamented archivolts. The *beth slutho* at the church of Mor Dimet does not appear to have these features. Ashlar was used to a reduced extent, ornamentation of the *beth slutho* is simple and its archivolt only has two plain capitals. In terms of the organization of the conch, on the other hand, the *beth slutho* at the church of Mor Dimet is curiously similar to that of the church of Mor

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[339] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 104; Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, 125.
[340] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, x.

Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas; both of them have one central niche and two smaller niches on both sides of the conch (fig. III.66).

The church of Mor Shemun d-Zayte has been dated to the 8th century.[341] A specific dating for the *beth slutho* of the church has not been mentioned, but I, disagreeing with Wiessner's ground plan[342], suggest it is contemporary with the church, thus dates to the 8th century, since the cornice used at the conch of the *beth slutho* is similar to the frame of the church entrance in terms of material and carving style. This shows that *beth slutho* with three niches on its conch, without an elaborate cross relief is a type used in the 8th century.

Bell suggests that exedras were added to churches, later, probably not until the late 9th century.[343] Palmer shows that this generalization may not always be valid, by underlining that the *beth slutho* in Heshterek was probably built together with the church, in 771/2, according to an inscription, comprising the earliest dated beth slutho in the region.[344] As explained above, I suggest that *beth slutho* of the church of Mor Dimet was also contemporary to the church itself.

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[341] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 213.
[342] *Kultbauten,* Teil2, 169.
[343] *Churches and Monasteries,* 14.
[344] Plamer, *Monk and Mason,* 211-2; Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture,* 104.

III.8. Observations on the Funerary Practices at the Church of Mor Dimet

Wiessner reports that there are three burials in the interior of the church of Mor Dimet; one belonging to a certain "Rahib", one of the other two belonging to a companion of Mor Dimet.[345] Sinclair also mentions about a burial in the church interior belonging to a "comrade" of Mor Dimet.[346] I have identified three structures in the church interior, under the north arcade, which are possibly burials.

One of the possible burials is below the westernmost northern arch. It is ca. 1m high and 0.7m wide. It has an irregular shape; it is plastered on the surface with modern cement, date of which can not be determined. The other two possible burials are below the two easternmost arches of the north arcade. Both of them are in the form of raised platforms, extending from one pier to the next; the easterly one is 0.3m high and the other is 0.6m high. Both of their surfaces are smoothed with cement.

The only direct indicator of a burial in the church of Mor Dimet is an inscription engraved on the second easternmost arch of the northern arcade (between the two possible burials). The inscription reads as follows:

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[345] *Kultbauten*, Teil2, 153. It is not clear whether he was informed by a local guide or if he deciphered some inscriptions.
[346] *Eastern Turkey*, vol.3, 319.

"[...] Zakhary, the son of Lazarus, went out of this world [...] departed to his lord, the year 320 of the Arab. Alas! Let [...] reads pray for him"[347]

This epitaph indicates that there is at least one burial in the church of Mor Dimet. Thus, the question remains whether there are other indications of burials in or around the church.

As explained previously, the stone slab placed vertically on the easternmost pier of the southern arcade originally might have belonged to a funerary context. Another possible object with a funerary connotation is the stone object placed at the courtyard entrance.

There are two stone objects placed on both sides of the courtyard entrance at the church of Mor Dimet. The one on the south side has a specific shape which yields further interest. It is a semi-cylindrical monolithic stone piece. It appears to have been broken on one side; but the other side of it has three round outcrops projecting out of the cylindrical main body. A pattée cross and an inscription, which is now illegible, have been carved on it (fig. III.67, III.68).

The object is curiously similar to some previously published grave casket lids, such as the one belonging to Mor Yakub in Nisibis and the one from Syria, published in the online Gertrude Bell archive (fig. III.69, III.70).[348] Peña also published a 6th century reliquary from Syria, which has

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[347] This inscription has also been published by Palmer (*Monk and Mason*, 218).
[348] http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/index.php, Album C, C_029.

a very similar form with the possible unpublished reliquary in the courtyard of the church of Mor Yakub in Nisibis (fig. III.71).[349] One of the examples of usage of this specific pattern in funerary contexts in Tur Abdin is observed at the church of Mor Aho in Dersalib (fig. III.72).[350] Other examples from Tur Abdin have been located in the burial chamber of the monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin.[351]

The object at the church of Mor Dimet is similar to the *comparanda* mentioned here in terms of general layout of the object; however, it does not have the central, cornered projection which most of the comparisons appear to have. The former has less fine edges. Nevertheless, the *comparandum* situated at the church of Mor Aho, together with the one at the church of Mor Dimet reveal that the shape became less detailed with smaller round projections (*acroteria*) on the two ends and a smooth main body surface. Therefore, I suggest that the object at the church of Mor Dimet was also originally funerary-related object, possibly a grave casket lid.

Date information is not indicated with Bell's photograph for the sarcophagus published. Koch shows that this specific pattern of sarcophagus, without much decoration, was used for noble burials in Egypt and Syria in 4th-5th century, which, in my opinion, appears to be

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[349] Peña, *Christian Art*, 133.
[350] Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 209.
[351] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 68.

origins of usage of it in Tur Abdin.[352] Peña mentions a 6th century timeframe for the reliquary he publishes.[353] The church of Mor Aho in Dersalib was possibly founded before mid-6th century; this gives a *terminus post quem* of 6th century for the burial.[354] Mor Yakub's sarcophagus has not been dated. The saint died a martyr's death in the 4th century; the decorations of the baptistery have been dated to the 4th century by Mundell-Mango; however, the earliest written evidence indicating the church mentions the 8th century, in which the north church was built.[355] The north and the south churches are connected to each other through arches as well as an underground pass within which the sarcophagus lies, as seen in the ground plan.[356] However, it is likely that the sarcophagus was at the church before the north church was added. Therefore, a clear timeframe for the usage of the specific pattern observed on these funerary objects is difficult to determine. Based on the more securely dated material, a *terminus post quem* of the 6th century can be proposed for the possibly funerary object at the church of Mor Dimet.

The existence of burial indicators in or around the church of Mor Dimet does not directly testify two more burials in the church interior.

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[352] Guntram Koch, *Erken Hıristiyan Sanatı*, translated by Ayşe Aydın, (İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayinlari 2007), 172.
[353] Peña, *Christian Art*, 133.
[354] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 162.
[355] *Continuity*, 120; Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 173.
[356] Ibid. 71.

Nevertheless, they are significant for they show the close relation between churches and funerary practices. In terms of placement of holy bodies, decorative patterns and objects and the functions of specific componenets, such as the *beth slutho,* testify this close relationship.

III.9. Proposed Dating for the Church

There has been no specific dating proposed for the church of Mor Dimet. Wiessner states that the church belonged to the "classic type of tripartite-sanctuary churches of Tur Abdin".[357] It is not clear which time period he refers to. Sinclair claims that the extant church must be "medieval, although it could be standing on earlier foundations".[358] He does not provide a more precise dating, or state on what he bases his argument. Palmer, in the "Recorded building in Mt. Masius (Tur Abdin to Mt. Aglosh) before 1200", lists the church as "932- Church of Mor Dimet at Zaz".[359] He indicates the date as a *terminus ante quem* for the church. He analyses the inscription which mentions this date (year 320 of Arabs), but he does not discuss the dating of the church. These three publications are the only scholarly studies which provide a time frame for the church of Mor Dimet.

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[357] *Kultbauten*, Teil2, 144-153.
[358] *Eastern Turkey*, 319.
[359] *Monk and Mason*, 195.

One of the most significant information about the possible date of the church is provided by the epitaph inscription which was introduced previously in this chapter. According to this epitaph the church had been erected by 932. This gives a solid *terminus ante quem* for the church of Mor Dimet. Nevertheless, the architectural surveys conducted on-site, with the help of comparative material gathered from other ecclesiastical buildings in Tur Abdin indicate a more specific time frame for the church[360].

Mor Dimet originally was conceived as and still is a hall-type church with a longitudinal nave long on the east-west axis and a narthex to the south of it. Main village churches[361] in the vicinity have same type of ground plans, with minor differences. Namely, church of Mor Addai in Heshterek, Mor Quryakos in Arnas, Mor Azizael in Keferzi and Mor Shemun-d-Zatye in Habsenas are among the closest examples to the church. As mentioned before, these churches and many other main village churches are generally accepted to be dating to the 7th and 8th centuries, a time period in which Tur Abdin is accepted to be flourishing in terms of architecture, under the Arab rule which started in the mid-7th century.[362] I suggest the church of Mor Dimet should be contextualized in this period

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[360] I acknowledge that utilizing *comparanda* for analyzing a building might be misleading. Because, in Tur Abdin ground plans, building techniques, materials and decorative patterns were kept and practiced for long periods of time with some level of change (Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, 127), which might result in confusing chronologies.

[361] Almost every Christian village in Tur Abdin seem to have had a main church, which is probably the oldest ecclesiastical structure in the village; it is generally larger than the other churches of the village and enclosed with a wall.

[362] Bell and Mango, *Churhces and Monasteries*, vi; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 147.

and among the previously mentioned constructions of main village churches in villages of the plateau.

When compared to other main village churches, church of Mor Dimet is an average sized church, which has many similarities with other churches of the plateau. The interior arches of the church are very similar to the ones in the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi.[363] The arrangement of the western façade of the church of Mor Dimet is also similar to the church of Mor Azizael, although the windows of the latter are more decorated. An attached *beth slutho* is seen at the church of Mor Dimet, like at the church of Mor Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas.

On the other hand, the above mentioned churches have specific common features which the church of Mor Dimet appears not to have. For example, the commonly-seen apse conch crosses, which are dated to the 6th to 10th centuries, do not appear to have been used at the church of Mor Dimet.[364] Neither does the elaborate apse and capital moldings of these churches (dated to 6th to 8th centuries) appear to have existed in the same church.[365] In majority of the churches the nave is separated from the narthex with doors, but it is separated with an arcade in the church of Mor Dimet. Yet another difference is the complexity of their side-chambers,

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[363] Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, fig.17.
[364] Ibid. 125.
[365] Ibid. 125-127.

compared to relatively plain, small side chambers of the church of Mor Dimet. These differences might be indicators of a few possible situations.

One of the possibilities is that the church of Mor Dimet is chronologically later than these churches. Mundell-Mango showed in one of her studies how classical usages of sculpture seem to be replaced with simpler, more abstract usages of patterns in time.[366] Although this might be interpreted as a linear relationship between time and simplicity in decorations, this assumption might be misleading. As the same study mentions, there are simple decorations in early centuries of Christianity and revival of classical usages in medieval architecture.[367] Such differences may occur due to stone masons or patrons with different cultural backgrounds, shifts in financial sources or shifts in tastes, subjects which this study does not deal with.

Another possible situation is that the church have been ruined and repaired many times that specific features have been lost. Previously in this chapter, multiple times I have mentioned discrepancies within the church architecture. Thus, the church originally might have had similar features with the above mentioned 7th-8th century churches and the features have been eroded through time, as the church was being rebuilt

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[366] Ibid. 127.
[367] Ibid. 129.

multiple times. For example, the interior arches, piers, or other architectural features might have been object of repairs.[368]

Although it might be not appropriate to propose a precise dating based on similarities, the church can still be placed among the main village churches, constructions of which appear to have started in the 7th century and must have kept through the 9th century, after which a recess in the plateau is thought to have followed, based on lack of inscriptions.[369] Starting from the 9th century, due to oppressions imposed by Arab caliphs, major building activities were not common, except for repairs or small-scale monasteries nearby villages.[370] Moeover, a decrease in economic prosperity is accepted to have occurred in the plateau, which would make it unlikely to carry out a building project of a church like of Mor Dimet in Zaz.[371] When the list of recorded buildings provided by Palmer is considered, one sees that after late 9th early 10th century, the building projects in and around Tur Abdin appear to consist of either repairs and renovations or minor buildings and additions to already-existing structures.[372] Thus, the church of Mor Dimet, I suggest, was not erected in the latter period, but it is a building dating to the preceding centuries, like

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[368] This theory has been proposed by Sinclair, who suggests that the both halls and eastern end of the church could have been rebuilt in the medieval period. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, 319

[369] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 217-8.

[370] Ibid, 188.

[371] Ibid.

[372] Ibid. 195.

many major structures, especially village churches, of Tur Abdin. A closer look at the dedication of the church and the known history of the village might also throw light onto the issue.

Mor Dimet was a healer saint from Amida.[373] He is generally accepted as to have lived in the late 4th-early 5th century, although his life might be attributed to a later time period.[374] He was converted to Christianity as a result of one of his dreams; relocated in Tur Abdin; started living an ascetic life in a cave with his disciple Adai; and he served as a healer recluse.[375] His commemorative day is the 24th of September according to the annual liturgical cycle of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church).[376]

Three churches and one monastery have been recorded to have been dedicated to this saint. Besides the church in Zaz, the other two churches are in Arbo (modern Taşköy, Mardin) and Der Hadetke (abandoned village, Mardin); the monastery dedicated to Mor Dimet is in Qillit. The church in Arbo is very similar in ground plan to previously-mentioned possibly 7th-8th century hall type churches. The church

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[373] Parmentier, *St. Dometios*, 285; Gabriel Akyüz, *Tüm Yönleriyle Süryaniler* (İstanbul: Anadolu Ofset, 2005), 125. John of Ephesus mentions an archbishop Dimet, from the monastery of Aphthonia which was founded in Kenneshre on the Euphrates (*Lives*, 502, 502 n.4, 587). His martyrdom or Persian origins are not mentioned. Therefore, it must be a different person from the saint attributed to the church.

[374] *History of Mor Domitios the Healer,* translated by Alice M. Taylor from the Syriac, pp:20, facs:1 (London: Luzac and Co., 1938), Preface.

[375] Ibid.

[376] I would like to thank Abuna Gabriel Aktaş, priest of the village of Baqisyan, for giving a copy of the calendar to me.

dedicated to the saint in Der Hadetke is a smaller hall type church with a simpler ground plan. The transverse-hall type church (claimed to belong to a monastery) in Qillit is a small church with a rock-cut sanctuary. None of these churches have been dated by previous scholarly works. Nevertheless, the possibility that the one in Arbo can be placed among the early main village churches of 7th-8th centuries of Tur Abdin might indicate that churches were dedicated to this saint in this time interval. Moreover, since a saint is likely to be dedicated churches to during the development or a revival of his cult, like of Mor Gabriel in the 8th century[377], churches dedicated to Mor Dimet might date to approximately the same time period, which is, according to the church in Arbo, likely to be around the 8th century.

The place of the village of Zaz within the ecclesiastical context of Tur Abdin might also shed light onto the issue. I suggest the village of Zaz flourished, if it ever existed, with the increase of Christian population in Tur Abdin[378]. Malfono[379] İlyas İran from the village of Keferzi published a book, "Kfarze Köyünün Tarihi"[380] in which the same author explained the history of Keferzi (2007). In his book, İran describes the foundation of

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[377] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 156.

[378] Palmer suggests that "Zazabukha" which Assurnasirpal II records to have subdued in the 9th century BCE was the village of Zaz (*Monk and Mason*, 29). There is no material evidence to testify this theory today.

[379] "teacher" in Syriac

[380] "The history of the village of Altıntaş" in Turkish

four villages in the region, one of which is Zaz.[381] According to the life story of Mor Yuhanun Dekfone[382], Zaz was founded by a converted pagan named Zoz, in 360 CE.[383] This is the time which precedes or barely intersects with the foundation of major ecclesiastical monuments of the region, such as the monastery of Mor Yakub in Salah or the monastery of Mor Gabriel in Qartmin.[384] Yet this information does not reveal much about pre-Christian, pagan villages of the region; nor does it about the time in which more villages could have started to be founded with the conversion of increasing numbers of people into Christianity.

Zaz is geographically very close to well-known early Christian settlements of Tur Abdin, such as Hah, Salah, Heshterek and Habsenas; yet it appears to have been overshadowed by the fame of these settlements. Very few Christian sources mention the village[385].

Regarding ecclesiastical architecture, five buildings have been associated with the village of Zaz. In addition to the church of Mor Dimet, which appears to be the main ecclesiastical building of the village, three other churches and one monastery has been mentioned in the previously

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[381] *Kfarze*, 19.
[382] I was not able to read this story.
[383] *Kfarze*, 19.
[384] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 161-2.
[385] Life of Mor Yuhanun Dekfone; in the Preface of "The Book of Life" Palmer notes that a manuscript belongin to Zaz, which was copied in AD 1600 (*Monk and Mason*, microfiche H, 1).

published works[386]. The churches are dedicated to Mor Gabriel, Mother of God, Mort Smunni; the monastery is said to have been called "the Monastery of Cross".[387] Palmer explains how during the plague of 774 relics of Mor Gabriel were transmitted among the villages for expectancy of some cure; he adds that dedication of a church in Zaz to Mor Gabriel might be explained with this event. The church of Mor Gabriel, which is in a ruined situation now, was a small transverse-hall type church, located on the south slope of the mound on top of which rests the church of Mor Dimet. If indeed a small-scale church is dedicated to Mor Gabriel in the late 8th century, the village must have had a main church by that time.

Thus far, the discussions elaborated on the epitaph inscription in the church of Mor Dimet, the same church's architectural features and comparisons with other ecclesiastical architecture from within Tur Abdin, other churches dedicated to Mor Dimet in Tur Abdin and the ecclesiastical context of the village of Zaz. Based on these discussions I have suggested that the church of Mor Dimet should be contextualized within the main village churches which appear to have been built in the 7th to 9th centuries, with a *terminus ante quem* of 932 represented by an epitaph engraved on one of the interior piers of the church.

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[386] I did not have the chance to survey any of these buildings.
[387] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 18 n.63, 156, 216; Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 201; Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, Teil1&2.

III.10. The Question of Patronage for the Church of Mor Dimet

The architectural sculpture and the date provided with the funerary inscription at the church of Mor Dimet bring forth enquiries about patronage and origins of artistic influences at the church. Previously it has been stated that certain patterns used at the architectural sculpture of the church reveal the personal tastes and decisions of the patron[388], rather than a unified, standardized code of symbolism in Tur Abdin. One of the decorative items yielding this conclusion is the use of the *tabula ansata* with figural representations rather than inscription. Two architectural sculpture at the church, both of which has been suggested to be originally contemporary to the church, bear this decorative pattern; one on the exterior of the main door lintel of the church and one on the door lintel of the entrance of the southern sanctuary chamber. Similar examples from Tur Abdin have neither been recorded by previous scholarly works, nor been encountered by me. Nevertheless, the pattern's resemblance to a 9th-century Abbasid Qur'an manuscript representation was noted.[389]

The other conspicuous decorative item was the camel figure on the main door lintel of the church. It was previsouly explained that this representation possibly stemmed from the life of the saint Dimet. The

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[388] Here, I use the term "patron" to refer to the individual(s) deciding on the architectural typologies or sculpture of the church of Mor Dimet. I do not use the term mutually exclusive with "stone mason" or "architect", but I use the term to refer to all possible individuals in charge.

[389] Ettinghausen et. al. *Islamic Art,* fig. I19.

decision of the decorating the church in accordance with the saint's life shows that the patron was informed on the manuscript which represented the saint's life. This may indicate that the patron came from a monastic background or he was a tradesman, since after the Arab conquest church building activity and manuscript production was in the patronage of tradespeople.[390]

Yet another decorative item with conspicuous comparisons is the composition of a star, sea-shell figure and encircled six-armed cross, located on the west side of the second westernmost pier of the southern arcade. Although each of the patterns are encountered separately in numerous contexts, the usage of these three figures together is a frequent decoration style observed on especially door lintels in Syria (5th-6th century), as Peña demonstrates.[391] It should also be noted that the uncut acanthus adorning two pier capitals in the church interior found close comparisons in again from Syria.

Last but not the least issue to be emphasized in the current section is the date mentioned in the funerary inscription at the church of Mor Dimet. The inscription is provided a date of "the year 320 of the Arabs". This date corresponds to 932 AD. This is a striking case, as pointed out by Palmer, since very few inscriptions are dated with the Islamic calendar in

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[390] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, vi.
[391] Peña, *Christian Art*, 76, 153, 175.

Tur Abdin.[392] Indeed, both before and after this date, most of the inscriptions are dated with the Greek calendar while being coposed mainly in Syriac; examples are the oratory and possibly the church of Mor Addai in Heshterek in 771, oratory of the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi in 934.[393]

Whose choice was to provide a dating according to the Islamic calendar at Zaz? And how can the architectural sculpture of the church, which almost always finds a close comparison outside of Tur Abdin, generally in Syria, be interpreted? I suggest that the answers of these questions might be searched within the patronage of the church. Architectural sculpture observed at the church might suggest that the patron was likely to be informed about the artistic usages in Syria, which was, by the time the church was built, under the Arab-Islamic rule. This may explain the decorative preferences at the church. The early Christian style usages, such as the uncut acanthus or the combinative usage of star, shell and encircled six-armed cross, had been already in Syria at the still-extant Christian buildings; the Islamic usages, such as Qur'an manuscripts, was possibly developed or brought into the region of Syria by the latter faith; and both of these streams of artistic usages might have been observed by the patron of Tur Abdin. In other words, the patron of

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[392] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 218.
[393] Ibid. 211-2; Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 14.

the church of Mor Dimet possibly had been (and even trained) in Syria and was exposed to both the Christian and the Islamic artistic tastes.[394]

Mundell-Mango states that after the Arab conquest of Tur Abdin building activities were carried out in the region by tradesmen; a prominent example of this is Mor Shemun d-Zayte in the 8th century, who was once the bishop of Harran and who engaged in trade and numerous building activities in Tur Abdin.[395] The patron at the church of Mor Dimet as well might have been one of these tradespeople who had been in Syria.

Since Islamic art started flourishing in Syria in the 8th century[396] (note that the Qur'an *tabula ansata* manuscript was dated to the 9th century), the patron, under the supervision of whom the church of Mor Dimet was erected, must have been in Syria in the 8th-9th centuries, which was proposed as the possible dating of the church of Mor Dimet in the previous section. The use of Arabic calendar in the 10th century in Zaz, on the other hand, shows that the connections between the Syrio-Islamic world and the village were possibly pertained through a few more generations in the village.

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[394] On the issue of artistic influences: Jonathan Bloom, "On the Transmission of Designs in Early Islamic Architecture" *Muqarnas*, vol.10 (1993): 20-28.
[395] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, vi.
[396] K.A.C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (USA: Penguin Boks, 1958), 156; Suzan Yalman, *"The Art of the Umayyad Period"* (661-750): http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/umay/hd_umay.htm

The situation of patronage at the church of Mor Dimet in Zaz shows that, as stated previously, decoration of churches, and even possibly the architecture of them, in Tur Abdin, relied on personal decisions of patrons; they seem not to have been unified under a central ecclesiastical authority. This observation was shared for churches in Syria by Loosely, who bases her argument on the existence of *bema* in a small number of churches in the region.[397] Although some ecclesiastical buildings bear similar architectural or decorative patterns,[398] the church of Mor Dimet shows that church building in Tur Abdin might have still been a process conducted individually, rather than a plateau-wide project, and this situation was not confined to only the plateau but was possibly valid for a wider geography.

III.11. Later Additions to the Church

There must have been multiple additions and alterations to the church in the medieval period; the inconsistencies within the church architecture testify this. However, a repair or addition occurring in later eras, after the church was built, can not be precisely identified, except for three major

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[397] Emma Loosely, "The Early Christian Bema Churches of Syria Revisited" *Antiquity*, vol75.289 (Sep. 2001): 509-10. "Bema" is explained as "horseshoe-shaped structure in the nave that mirrors the curve of the apse. Entered via steps at the east end, it provided benches for the clergy and a pulpit at the west end that was used for scriptural expositions and homilies." (ibid.).

[398] As discussed by Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*; Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*.

additions to the church; the "tower" in probably the medieval period and the portico and the upper storey in the 20th century.

III.11.1. The "tower"

The "tower" is a circular wall attached to the church's south-west corner. It is ca. 5.5m in diameter. It narrows down in size as it reaches the upper parts (making almost 20° angle with the vertical normal); thus, it resembles a round tower. It is as tall as the church. It has been constructed of medium to small sized stones, with a fashion that they become smaller on the upper sections of the structure. It has been partially plastered. This plastering work is identical with the one on the second floor of the church and on the southern section of the enclosure wall, which indicates a common period of restoration. Four window openings are located on the "tower"; two big and one small on the south façade and one big on the west façade (fig. III.1, III.73, III.74)

Originally the "tower" had two entrances; one from the ground level, from east, and one from the church interior, as mentioned previously, from north. Both of the entrances are abandoned today. The structure has a modern entrance from the west façade. Wiessner's plan indicates the "tower" as inaccessible. Therefore, both of the former entrances must have been abandoned by the beginning of 1980s, and the

modern entrance must have been pierced later than that time, since it is the time around which Wiessner published his book.

The west façade of the church shows that the "tower" was added later to the church. Ashlars used at the lower parts of the west façade of the church are not used on the "tower". The entrance from the interior of the church also appears to be opened later, not being contemplated during the construction of the church, as it does not have any sort of frame or other determining feature. Moreover, the stairs leading up to this entrance, must be blocking the western entrance of the church. Since the western entrance looks integrated with the western wall, it must be the stairs, thus, the "tower" which was added later.

The "tower", which is a significant part of the church's architecture, is not a common ecclesiastical architectural pattern used in Tur 'Abdin. There are only three more ecclesiastical buildings which bear the same type of structure in Tur Abdin; the church of Mor Afrem in Bote, the church of Mor Hadbshobo in Aynwerd and the church of Mor Aho in Bashqo (fig. III.75-III.77)[399]. On the latter church resembling a fortress, towers were used on each of the four corners. At the church of Mor

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[399] The former has only been published by Wiessner (*Kultbauten*, Teil2): but the author did not discuss the existence of a tower-like structure, although he published a church plan showing the "tower"; the latter two churches have been published by Anthony Comfort, whose discussions I shall refer to below. Anthony Comfort, *Roads on the Frontier between Rome and Persia: Euphratesia, Osrhoene, Mesopotamia from AD 363 to 602* (unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Exeter: Dec. 2008).

Hadbshobo two gigantic towers were used. The enclosure wall of the same church also bears towers at the corners. All these four villages are geographically close to each other; all the four churches have hall type ground plan and the "towers" were added at the corners. All of the "towers" have the same height with the church, or are slightly higher than the church. Moreover, the building techniques of these "towers" appear to be similar. They are all built out of medium-to-small sized stones. They are all double-storeyed with small windows. Therefore, it can be suggested that these architectural structures were introduced to the churches around the same time, serving for a common purpose.

In his dissertation, Comfort proposes that the towers of the church of Mor Hadbshobo and the church of Mor Aho might have been fortifications and that the edifices been fortified by early Byzantine emperors around the late-4th century.[400] I disagree with him; for it appears like we do not have almost any structures solidly pre-dating the Arab conquest in Tur Abdin.[401] Besides, none of these churches are stated among the imperial benefactions of Byzantine Emperors to Tur Abdin in the 5th and 6th centuries, the predominant example of which is the monastery of Mor Gabriel[402]; nor are they mentioned together with the well-known fortified settlements or castles, such as Dara, Rhabdios or

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[400] *Roads on the Frontier*, 209.
[401] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, vi.
[402] Ibid. v.

others which Procopius mentions to have been built or refortified by Justinian in the 6th century.[403]

In the Book of Life, it is mentioned that churches such as Mor Aho and Mor Dodo in Basebrin were strengthened with towers on their enclosure walls in 1167.[404] The record shows that some of the major towers in the region could have been built in the 12th century. It is interesting that the towers at these churches have been on one hand described as a defensible fortress, and on the other they have been attributed to recluse monks. Theophanes Confessor, an 8th-century chronicler, also writes about monks guarding towers during the siege of Amida by the Persians in 503.[405] There are also records of towers used only as hermitages. Some early records of stylite columns in Tur Abdin are that mentioned in the life of Mor Yakub of Salah, dating possibly to the 4th century according to his life, and that of Mor Gabriel in Qartmin.[406] A well-known example of stylite columns in Tur Abdin, which is extant today, is the one of Lazarus in Habsenas, dated by an inscription to the 8th century.[407] Stylite columns appear to have been a significant part of sacred topographies in northern Mesopotamia. These examples show that towers had both defense and ecclesiastical functions, since possibly as early as the 4th century. A further

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[403] Procopius, *Buildings*, vol.II, 99, 127, 129.
[404] Book of Life, 5.
[405] Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, 54.
[406] St. Jacob the Recluse, 157; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 100-3.
[407] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 105.

question is when tower-like structures were attached to churches like at the church of Mor Dimet.

Abuna Yakub claims that the "tower" of the church of Mor Dimet was built to physically support the church after the sack of Timur of the region[408], an event occurred in the 14th century.[409] There are no written sources or material evidence testifying the addition of "towers" to ecclesiastical architecture in the region following the sack of Mongols. The latest time period suggested for the building of these structures is proposed by Sinclair, who claims the "towers" of the church of Mor Dimet were built during the First World War; he adds that, however, it is possible to suggest any date post-17th century for these structures.[410]

Last but not the least issue that should be raised is the typological origin of "towers". The above-mentioned primary sources do indicate the existence and usage of towers in and around Tur Abdin; however, they do not provide a description of it. Thus, it is not clear whether "tower" in the sense of circular walls attached to the churches at corners has been actually used since the early centuries; and if it has not, what the origin of "tower" at the church of Mor Dimet is. The answers to these inquiries might be provided by early Islamic architecture. It is seen that numerous 8th-century palatial architecture from the Umayyad period are adorned

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[408] Abuna Yakub, in discussion with the author, April 2010.
[409] Gregory Abu'l Faraj. *Chronography*, vol.II, xxxi-liii.
[410] *Eastern Turkey*, vol3, 319.

with "towers" on corners as well as main body of walls. Some examples of 8th-century Umayyad buildings bearing circular towers are Qasr al-Hayr East, Kasr Kharana, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Mshatta and Ukhaydir (fig. III.78).[411] It is significant to note that some of these monuments were emphasized for their resemblances to churches in and around Tur Abdin in terms of some architectural features.[412] "Tower" might be seen as yet another resemblance. For instance, in Mshatta, a possible 8th-century-Umayyad palace, towers are abundantly used, adjoining the main enclosure wall of the structure. The intermediate towers measure ca. 5.25m in diameter (almost identical with the "tower" at Mor Dimet).[413] Although towers used on this and like Islamic monuments vary in size and are more abundant per each building, the origin of the notion of supplying churches with towers on corners might be the Islamic monuments, possibly adopted in a later period.

Tur Abdin architecture has not been thoroughly analyzed by previous scholars on the grounds of its resemblances to Islamic architecture. But it is known from the Book of Life that Islamic architectural presence (mosques) was recorded in Tur Abdin in the 12th century.[414] This gives us a *terminus ante quem* for introduction of Islamic

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[411] Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art*, 36-53.
[412] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 77-8; Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, 127.
[413] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 125.
[414] Book of Life, 4,5.

architecture into Tur Abdin and reflections of it on ecclesiastical architecture on the plateau. It would probably be appropriate to conclude that the origins of "tower" should not be associated with a one way influence into Tur Abdin. Even though Islamic architecture appears to bear some close resemblances, this might be disguising. It is generally accepted that early Islamic architecture evolved in the hands of Syrian-Christian, Persian and Coptic builders.[415] Ecclesiastical and military architecture of Syria, as well as Persian architectural features, appear to have been adopted by the Umayyads.[416] Therefore, "towers" attached to churches in Tur Abdin might be adopted due to the Roman military architecture, which had location-wise close examples around Tur Abdin,[417] and Islamic architecture, which appears to have reinforced the practice of adjoining towers.

III.11.2. Portico

The portico, on the south façade of the church, is a rectangular space 10m long and 3.2m wide from the interior. It leans on the "tower" on the west and terminates with the apse of the *beth slutho* on the east (fig.

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[415] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture*, 156-7; Richard Yeomans, *The Story of Islamic Architecture* (UK: Garnet Publishing, 1999), 27.
[416] Ibid.; Garth Fowden, *Qusayr Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (USA: University of California Press, 2004), xxii-xxiii.
[417] Some well-known examples are fortress at Dara and Amida, both pre-dating the Umayyad architecture.

III.1). It has three arches which rest on four square piers. Each pier is 1m thick and 2m far from each other. These piers carry the masonry vaults of the portico and connect to the southern wall of the church with squinches. Squinches form semi-arches on the southern wall of the church. The piers and arches of the portico were built with finely-cut ashlars; the vaults are stone masonry, white plastered on the surface. A mechanical water pull-out system was established at the floor of the portico in 1968, the date which was engraved on the floor[418] (fig. III.79).

The portico was built in 1924. This information has been provided to us by a Syriac inscription engraved on the second western pier of the portico. The inscription reads as the following:

"These arches of Mor Dimet were constructed with the care of father Gabriel, son of deacon Zakkai, during the repairs of the village. Stone mason Melkho, son of father Gabriel.[...]in the year of 1924"

What is worth further analysis is the practice of dressing of the *beth slutho* with a portico, which is not a common architectural feature in Tur Abdin. The earliest recorded portico in Tur Abdin is at the monastery of Mor Gabriel, dating to the 8th century.[419] This is a portico without a *beth slutho*, since monasteries do not appear to have *beth sluthos*. Other two examples of monastic churches with porticos at their entrances are the

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[418] As mentioned before, the floor of the beth slutho, apparently also of the portico, was cemented in 1967.

[419] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 194.

church of Mor Yakub in Salah and Mor Serkis and Bakhos in Hah. Porticos at village churches exist only on three churches, to my knowledge: the church of Mor Quryakos in Anhel[420], Mor Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas and Mor Dimet in Zaz. All the three porticos at these churches terminate with a *beth slutho* on the east ends. The two former churches have been dated to the 8th century, but their porticos have not been discussed.[421] Only the latter of the three porticos have been dated; the one in Zaz to 1924.

Portico-*beth slutho* must be a later phenomenon in the architecture of Tur Abdin, since porticos appear to be only in early monastic churches of the plateau and *beth sluthos* generally are in the form of free-standing exedras. Furthermore, I think *beth sluthos* started to be encased with porticos in yet later times, possibly as late as the 20th century. Palmer discusses how, in the late 7th century, building of a portico appear to be a reflection of Greco-Roman (not native Tur Abdinian and Syrian) culture; he even reminds the reader that Syriac had no native word for "portico".[422]

III.11.3. The Upper Storey of the Church

The church has an upper storey, which was probably built together with the portico in 1924. It is a rectangular space on the south façade of the church, spatially corresponding exactly to the portico lying beneath it (fig.

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[420] Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 221.
[421] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 213.
[422] Ibid. 201, 204.

III.1). Thus it does not intersect with the narthex of the church, which also testifies that it was a later addition. Its entrance is from south, through a modern stairway leaning to the portico (fig. III.80). This set of stairs has been built in 2005, replacing an old stone stairway, which is seen in Wiessner's and Keser-Kayaalp's photographs, latter of which is unpublished (fig. III.81). The stairs leading from the upper storey to the church roof was built in the last decade by Abuna Yakub.

The upper storey has majorly been built up of medium-sized stones. It has two windows on the south façade and ashlars determine these windows, like they do the entrance. These ashlars are the same type of ashlars used on the arches and piers of the portico. The upper storey was plastered from the exterior. This plastering, as mentioned previously, is identical with the plaster observed on the exterior of the tower and some parts of the enclosure wall.

The upper storey is divided into two chambers with a masonry wall. The eastern section of the upper storey is a room measuring 3mx4m. On the north of this chamber, modern stairs leading up to the roof of the church is located. The eastern division is connected to the western room with a wooden door. The western room is also a rectangular room (3mx6.4m). Both of the rooms are white plastered from the interior. On the west wall of the western chamber there is an abandoned door, which shows that the upper storey was connected to the "tower" (fig. III.82).

There is a basin-like recess on the north wall of the east room. Abuna Yakub states it was the cavity in which oil was burned to gather light. There is a Syriac inscription on the south wall of the eastern chamber interior. A part of the inscription appears to be cut off. The remaining section of the inscription reads as *"[saint's?] room (cell) was built"*. No date information is present.

The upper storey was not directly connected to the sanctuary, as it is the case in majority of the upper-storey chapels of churches.[423] Nor does it have an apse or any other liturgical component. Therefore, it was probably not contemplated as a chapel. Abuna Yakub states that the upper storey was used as a "medrese"[424] when he was a child, in the first half of the 20th century. It is out of use today. Nevertheless, existence of access from outside of the church into the upper storey might indeed indicate the possibility of public access to that part of the church.[425] In my opinion, parallel to what Abuna Yakub states, it was only a supplementary chamber[426].

What I have observed in the villages of Tur Abdin is that the main church of each village has supplementary chambers, not necessarily as a

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[423] Natalia Teteriatnikov, "Upper-storey Chapels Near the Sanctuary in Churches of the Christian East". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*. 42 (1988): 65-68.
[424] "school" in Syriac
[425] Ibid. 67.
[426] By the term "supplementary" I refer to chambers with not a direct liturgical function, but chamber which are added to churches for non-liturgical purposes, such as, in the case of Tur Abdin, classrooms; this is not a used term in literature.

second storey. The upper storey of the church of Mor Dimet should be analyzed in this context; that is, as a supplementary structure, rather than a second floor. As I have mentioned above, main churches of Tur Abdin villages are not solitarily churches, but are church complexes, comprising of various structures with different functions, such as classrooms or guest houses.

Supplementary structures can be above the actual church, like in the church of Mor Dimet, or in another location within the external walls of the church. For instance, in the churches of Mor Afrem in Bote and Mor Azizael in Keferzi there are supplementary chambers on the upper floors of the churches, whereas in the church of Mor Eliyo in Baqisyan the classroom, the only addition to the church, is on the opposite of the church in the courtyard. As cited earlier, Keser-Kayaalp states that these structures seemed to be later additions to churches,[427] whereas Bell argued that some of these structures, like a house for priest, could have been always there, due to continuation of ancient traditions.[428] Although the upper storey at the church of Mor Dimet is a 20th century addition to the church, agreeing with Bell, I suggest that adding non-liturgical functions to churches was an ancient tradition in Tur Abdin, which continued

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[427] *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 96.
[428] *Churches and Monasteries*, 13.

throughout the history. Therefore, a solely modern contextualization of the "medrese" of the church of Mor Dimet would be a reductive approach.

John of Ephesus informs us about ecclesiastical spaces used as places for teaching in the 6th century.[429] Moreover, among the collection of 5th-6th century Syrian typica Vööbus published, one promotes the education of lay children in monasteries.[430] These examples show that ecclesiastical milieu was seen also as an educational ground, a notion which appears to be pertained throughout history. Nevertheless, one should note that the two 6th-century examples states monasteries as places to provide education. Although education at monasteries has continued, adding educational functions to village churches might be an integral part of monastic education. In the life of Mor Shemun d-Zayte (d. 734) it is recorded that he founded a school in the village of Habsenas.[431] In the Book of Life existence of village schools, teachers and scholars in villages of Tur Abdin in the 15th century are indicated.[432] These examples show that village schooling could be an ancient tradition in Tur Abdin, dating as early as the 8th century.

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[429] *Lives*, 89.

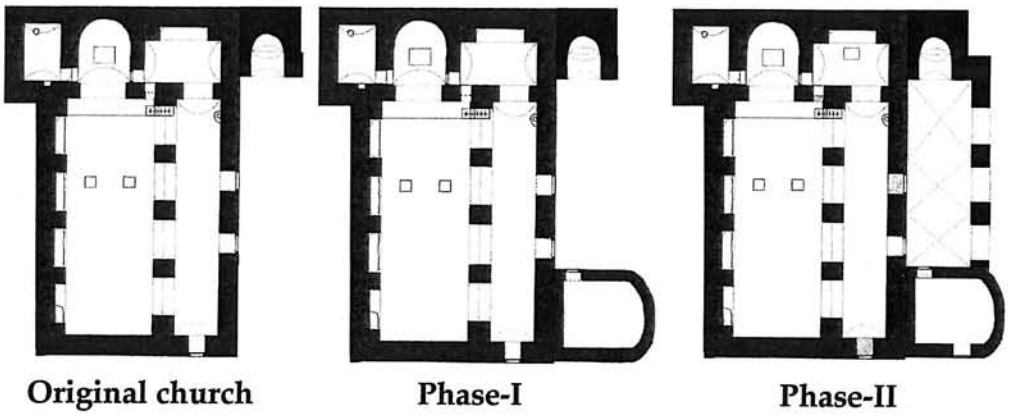
[430] *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:* a complete translation of the surviving founders' typika and testaments, ed. Angela Constantinides Hero (Washington, D.C. : Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 40.

[431] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 164.

[432] Book of Life, section E2, microfishe to Palmer, *Monk and Mason.*

I suggest that, although the extant "medrese" at churches of Tur Abdin might be modern, village church education is an ancient tradition which survived through the modern era in the region. It might have been originated as a reflection of monastic education. Ancient authors do not seem to inform us about whether village schools were confined to male students or not in antiquity. Nevertheless, the practice today does include female and male children of villages. It appears to be associated with the survival of the Syriac language which is not taught officially in Tur Abdin. Thus, village schools can be considered as significant tools of identity and cultural survival and continuity in the region.

The church of Mor Dimet have shown that the church of Mor Dimet was originally a hall type church, lying on an east-west axis, with a nave, a narthex to the south of it and a tripartite sanctuary corresponign to the east end of the former two sections. It also possibly beared a *beth slutho* attached at the south-east corner. It possibly dated to the 8th or 9th century, although it has a terminus ante quem of 10th century. Through the history, the church was expanded by the attachment of a "tower" at the south-west corner and a portico and an upper storey (Plan III.2).



Plan III.2. Possible building phases of the church of Mor Dimet (May 2010)

CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF THE COMPLEX AT ZAZ AND CHURCHES IN TUR ABDIN

Thus far the complex at Zaz and the church of Mor Dimet, which comprises the focal point of the former has been described and discussed. A complete analysis of the historical value and religious value of the site would necessitate integrating the contemporary situation of the site into the discussion. Therefore, the current chapter aims at providing brief introductions to the contemporary situation of the village of Zaz, the modern usage of the complex and the recent restoration process of the church.

Zaz, a predominantly Syrian Orthodox village until the last decade of the past century, was abandoned in 1993, with the immigration of the population of the village to some urban centers in Europe[433]. Locals of Tur Abdin testify this event, and they add that Kurdish Moslem families

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[433] Interviews with villagers and clergy from the region show that majority of immigrants from Tur Abdin resettle in cities in northern Europe; this phenomenon has also been mentioned by Mor Gregorios Yuhanna İbrahim in *Foreword to Syrian Christians Under Islam* (ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001): 8).

started moving into the village and settling in the buildings former Christian families of the village had abandoned.

Governmental reports on population counts show a sharp decrease in Zaz's population between the years 1990-2000. Indeed, the population of the village drops from 288 to 147 between 1985 and 1990; and it drops from 147 to 63 in the following five-year period (It is not clear in the reports if these 63 people are remaining Syrian Christians or newly-settled Kurdish Moslem individuals)[434]. The demographic shift in the history of the village of Zaz is not a unique event. A general decrease in village populations, which has been documented by governmental reports, strike attention. Moreover, some villages appear to be totally abandoned in the region, an example of which is the village of Arbo (modern Taşköy), which seems to have had a population of 56 in the year 1990, and is not included in the population reports of 2000[435].

The dramatic demographic shift in the village of Zaz, like in other settlements, might be due to a number of reasons, including economic restraints, socio-political issues or others. It is reported that since the 1940s high level of migration out of Tur Abdin has been occurring.[436] The dynamics behind these migrations are beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, they appear to have attracted attention of scholars. For

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[434] Reports derived from http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/nufusmenuapp/menu.zul
[435] ibid.
[436] Mor Gregorios Yuhanna İbrahim, *Foreword*, 8.

instance, Van Rompay, despite not focusing on specifically demographic shifts, briefly addresses the contemporary issues such as diaspora communities and established institutions by the former.[437]

What is worth analyzing in the case of Zaz is the coming of the two Syrian Orthodox individuals, Abuna Yakub and the nun, back to their village of origin, Zaz. Moreover, they have revitalized the church of Mor Dimet, in which, according to Abuna Yakub, used to live a Moslem family when the former two individuals arrived at the village. The current chapter aims at recording this very revitalization process, as a result of which the church of Mor Dimet was transformed into a church complex in a currently predominantly Moslem, previously Syrian Orthodox village of Zaz.

The coming of Abuna Yakub and the nun appears to have resulted in a series of repairs, constructions and other organizations. Majority of these undertakings have been explained in the previous two chapters. To give a brief repetition, the residential building was added to the complex; the "crypt" was excavated and was consecrated as a chapel; church's roof was cemented; a modern opening leading from the upper storey of the church to the roof has been constructed; an entrance to the "tower" has been pierced on the west façade of the church; old set of stairs leading to

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[437] Lucas Van Rompay, "Syriac Studies: The Challenges of the Coming Decade" *Hugoye* vol10.1 (2007).

the upper storey was replaced with a modern one; modern entrances have been added to the enclosure wall; the bell tower was erected; and the courtyard was decorated with various stone objects. The recent repair process of the church appears to the final step until 2010 in the transformation process of the church complex.

IV.1. A Brief Biography of Abuna Yakub and His and the Nun's Relation to the Church of Mor Dimet

Yakub Kurt was born in 1946 in the village of Zaz[438]. His parents, Shemun and Shmunni, were laymen. He received his initial education in the village. Following his military service, he went back to Tur Abdin, and entered the monastery of Mor Malke on the south escarpment of Tur Abdin. Having stayed at the monastery for a few years, he relocated at the monastery of Mor Gabriel. He was ordained as a priested-monk at the latter monastery. In the 1970s, he started serving as the local priest of the village of Hah, dwelling at the monastery adjoining the church of el-Adhra therein. The nun was as well a member of the convent. In 1995, Abuna Yakub and the nun departed from the village of Hah[439] and resettled in Sweden. Having lived abroad for slightly more than 5 years,

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[438] Based on conversation with Abuna Yakub, April 2010.

[439] For confidentiality issues, the possible details of this event will not be published in this work.

they came back to Tur Abdin and resettled in the village of Zaz, at the church of Mor Dimet in 2001.

The two individuals appear to sustain their religious qualifications; they call each other *abuna* ("our father"), and *deyroyo* ("nun"); the villagers at Hah and Zaz as well comply with these titles while addressing these individuals. The monk and the nun also appear to sustain the relevant monastic dressing code.

In the Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents, a collection of typika[440], there are frequent references to clothing; but the regulations about monastic dressing appear not to describe the garments.[441] In fact, canons seem to generally state that clothes of monks and nuns should be simple, not much ornamented, plain colored, cheap and durable. Further information about dressing styles is not provided. Thus, specific references to the origins of monastic dressing patterns in the region can not be gathered. Nevertheless, modern presentations of the monastic dress code can be considered to identify the two individuals' clothing patterns.

Some photographs published within secondary literature provide insight about a group of specific features in terms of modern monastic dressing. For instance, monks seem to have a black hair cover with white

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[440] "A set of regulations prescribing the administrative organization and rules of behavior of a cenobitic monastery as well as its liturgical observances" (Alice-Mary Talbot, "Typikon, Monastic", *ODB*).

[441] *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 109, 113, 114, 151, 164, 382, 464, 511, 788, 822.

star-looking crosses on, whereas priests generally appear to have either plain black cap or a black felt hat. Nuns tend to cover their hair with a black scarf, which comes horizontally straight on the forehead and tightened at the back of the head. Both monks and nuns appear to wear black or other dark colors, such as dark blue. Another source to identify modern monastic dressing is provided by the monastery of Mor Gabriel's website. Although the site does not provide specifications about the dressing style of monks and nuns, the section in which they introduce priests working under the monastery clarifies that priested-monks wear a head cover with crosses, whereas ordinary priests' head covers are plain black[442]. According to this presentation on the official website of the monastery, Abuna Yakub appears to belong to the former group, which consists of priested-monks.

Existence of people with conventual titles in a complex might bring forth the question whether to identify the contemporary usage of the complex as a monastery. However, the complex in Zaz functions as the household of the two individuals, rather than a monastic complex. Thus, it fits well within the personal observations of Bell, who repeatedly states, as cited in the chapter II, that many churches in northern Mesopotamia and Asia Minor have been conjoined with houses of clergy members or laymen

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[442] http://www.morgabriel.org/priests.html

who take care of the church, both in antiquity and in modern times.[443] As stated previously, Bell's suggestions appear to stem basically from her observations; and the issue is still an overlooked and non-concluded matter within the scholarly works. Nevertheless, existence of a residential quarter inhabited by the clergy member who takes care of the church is what seems to be the case for the complex in Zaz. As I have explained in the chapter II, there are various practices in Tur Abdin, in terms of residence – church relation, and the church of Mor Dimet can be categorized among those churches which have an annexed permanent residential quarter.

The situation of the church of Mor Dimet is beyond the discussion on how to identify the complex. What is observed at the church of Mor Dimet is a conspicuous practice of celibacy. There might be various dynamics and driving forces behind the settlement of these two individuals residing at the complex, an issue which will not be discussed due to the privacy demands of the two individuals. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the monk and the nun spiritually justified, to at least themselves, that it is an ecclesiastically-accepted situation for them to dwell by a church together. It is possible that this justification was based on the Scriptures or other church-historical literature, which Abuna Yakub

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[443] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 13; Bell and Ramsay, *Thousand and One Churches*, 24.

and the nun must have had familiarized themselves with during their conventual education. Therefore, it is worth to examine what literature brings forward out of early celibacy practices or teachings about spiritual marriage, which appears to the proper way of defining the situation at the complex in Zaz.

Murray explains how in the formative era of the Syrian Christianity, marriage was seen lawful, if not encouraged, by Aphrahat and Ephrem, formers of the early Syriac literature.[444] The same author points out that one could have a good Christian way of life by either through virginity (*btuluta*) or holiness (*qaddişuta*), the latter of which means being married but renouncing sexual intercourse, like "members of the "Covenant" (*Qyama*) of committed celibates".[445] Early formers of the Syriac literature, which seems to have evolved around ecclesiastical frameworks, appear to accept marriage, and at the same time stress the importance of renouncing sexual intercourse.[446] Aphrahat apparently encouraged an open marriage among male and female members of the Covenant, rather than a close relationship without marriage among

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[444] Robert Murray, "Earliest Syriac Christianity". *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*. edited by Nina G Garsoian, Thomas Mathews, Robert Thomson. (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 6.
[445] Members of the Qyama are called *bnay* and *bnat Qyama*, which literally means "sons and daughters of the Covenant" (ibid. 6).
[446] Ibid. 7.

them.[447] The specific religious Syriac term *ihidaya* ("single man") is accepted to be used to refer to the chaste lives of holy men, which means both separation of the opposite sexes, but also domination of sexual urges, which is yet another "invisible enemy".[448]

An indispensable dimension of this discussion is the property ownership. The residential quarter is owned by the monk, Yakup Kurt, as a private estate[449]. Thus, the residential quarter and the church officially are under the authority of different bodies. Because, the current restoration of the church is being done under the supervision of the bishopric of Tur Abdin, which testifies that the church belongs to the Syrian Orthodox foundations. The rest of the discussion is allocated for the recent restorations of the church of Mor Dimet that started in February 2010.

IV.2. Recent Restorations at the Church of Mor Dimet

The church of Mor Dimet was a decorated and possibly an active church until 1990s, as seen in a photograph published by Hollerweger.[450] Thus, it is seen in the photographs published in the current study that the

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[447] Ibid. 8.
[448] Ibid. 8; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 111 (quoted expression belongs to the latter author in the cited page).
[449] Abuna Yakub, in discussion with the author, April 2010.
[450] *Tur Abdin*, 204.

church was deserted, compared to its previous state, in 2009, although it had been cleaned and partially repaired by Abuna Yakub by then.

In early 2010, with the initiative of Bishopric of Tur Abdin and Syrian Orthodox foundations, the church has started to be repaired and restored.[451] In April 2010, the restorations were still continued; therefore, the end result can not be published in the current work. Nevertheless, restorations undertaken so far have revealed many features of the church architecture and they are worth recording, for they show which features are attributed to or stressed about churches by the local ecclesiastical authorities.

The repair of the church of Mor Dimet does not appear to be a simple process, but rather it brings forward some architectural features of the church, which must have been thought to be important. Some of the major changes in the church interior are as follows. The modern iconostasis was demolished and the sanctuary of the church was revealed. The interior cones of the three windows on the west façade have been enlarged. All of the interior façades have been filled with white plaster between the stones; the arches were covered with a thin layer of white plaster. The plaster which previously covered the brick work of the vault has been removed; the bricks were cleaned. All of the architectural

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[451] The well-known examples of the Syrian Orthodox foundations are Mardin Süryani Kadim Deyrulzafaran Kilisesi Vakfı and Istanbul Süryani Kadim Vakfı (www.deyrulzafaran.org)

sculpture, reliefs and incisions decorating the church interior have been reinforced. The epitaph inscription on the second eastern arch in the northern arcade has been reinforced. Two of the three burials have been removed from their places; Abuna Yakub guesses that they would be replaced at the monastery of Mor Gabriel.

The church of Mor Dimet is by no means a solitary building project in Tur Abdin. On the contrary, intense building activity is observed in the region currently. Bishoprics and Syrian Orthodox foundations are engaged in many architectural projects, most of which are repairs and restorations of ecclesiastical buildings. Moreover, many members of the diaspora community of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Tur Abdin appear to come back to Tur Abdin in the recent years, for either temporary stays or permanent resettlements.[452] This phenomenon also must have contributed to planning and financing building projects. Some of the larger restoration projects have been recorded, while small-scale repairs are carried out without proper recording.[453] Nevertheless, the information provided on the website of Deyrulzafaran monastery shows that for physically deteriorating monuments, the bishoprics generally contemplate an emergency plan, apply to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and gather a committee to carry out the project. Financial support appears to

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[452] Van Rompay, *Syriac Studies*; author's observation.
[453] Based on a telephone interview with the bishopric of Tur Abdin located at the monastery of Mor Gabriel, June 2010.

be raised from the foundation, from laymen or from the revenoues of entertainment organizations.[454] The revitalization process observed in Tur Abdin should be contextualized not as a free-standing phenomenon, but as a reflection of recent political dynamics, especially of EU adaptation process of Turkey. Especially since 1999 a series of regulations within the constitution of Turkish Republic have been undertaken; some of these altered laws enables and encourages certain activities of different ethnic groups within the state.[455]

When the restoration process at the church of Mor Dimet is compared to other restored churches in Tur Abdin, it can be interpreted as that churches are attempted to be given certain architectural character and rather standardized features. Although this is a massive topic beyond the scope of the current work, I would still like to emphasize some general observations. Some common themes re/created in church interiors in Tur Abdin are as the following:

- Excessive usage of white plaster in the interior, in a way that it does not cover the entire surface but rather fill within the building materials

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[454]http://www.deyrulzafaran.org/turkce/manastir/haberdetay.asp?id=105&kategori=TANITIM

[455] Hakan Taşdemir, Murat Saraçlı, "Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye Perspektifinden Azınlık Hakları Sorunu", *Uluslar arası Hukuk ve Politika*, vol2:8 (2007): 33-4.

- Either white plaster-smoothed ceilings or uncovered brick-work of the vault
- Revealed sanctuary, no use of iconostasis
- Enlarged window cones
- Colorful decorations in forms of textiles or paintings

In addition to redesigning the interiors of the churches, it is generally observed that certain remains of the original church, such as baptismal basins, column capitals etc. are placed in the narthexes or courtyards.

These repair processes, which are seen not only at the church of Mor Dimet but in many churches of Tur Abdin, appear to be undertaken in an attempt to identity building in the region through standardization of ecclesiastical spaces, according to my observations. Although there were possibly certain ways of organizing and decoration the church interiors in Tur Abdin have been established for centuries, church interior of a Syrian Orthodox church in Tur Abdin has now certain material connotations, such as a predominantly white interior with colorful decorations or finely-shaped windows which are much larger on the interior than they are on the exterior.

In addition to the creation of modern, almost standard church interiors, the possible attempted connection with the ancient past strikes attention at the churches of Tur Abdin. As stated previously, in the narthexes and courtyards of churches, objects, such as old monolithic

baptismal basins, ornamented column capitals or other materials which are seemingly reminiscent of the past, are exhibited. Well-known example of this phenomenon is at the Deyr Zafaran monastery, in which ancient baptismal font, throne of the bishop and various other objects are kept and exhibited. The monastery is one of the major tourist destinations on the south-east Turkey.[456] When the touristic value of this building is considered, one might think that it is natural for them to carry out this sort of exhibition of ancient objects within the monastery. However, in village churches, which possibly do not receive as much tourists as Deyr Zafaran does, the same tendency of integrating the ancient remains into the modern sacred spaces is frequently observed. For instance, the courtyard of the church of Mor Hadbshobo in Aynwerd is abundant in various, possibly ancient column capitals; in the narthex of the church of Mor Yuhannon in Qillit again an ornamented column capital is placed, like in the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi and Mor Quryakos in Arnas. Possible baptismal basin of the church of Mor Yuhannon in Mzizah is placed right opposite to the modern baptismal font in the narthex.

The church complex in Zaz has been revitalized in the last decade by a Syrian Orthodox monk and a nun. The two individuals, who were originally from the village of Zaz, settled in the village in 2001,

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[456] http://www.mardin.gov.tr

constructing a residence attached to the church. They repaired the church, which had been deserted for almost a decade, while constituting an outstanding example of a celibate life flourishing around the very church of Mor Dimet. While they were modifying the site based on their needs and tastes, the Syrian Orthodox foundations and the bishopric of Tur Abdin initiated a more systematic restoration of the church. The architectural features emphasized as a result of the restoration process are striking for they are observed at many other churches' restoration process. These common grounds on which church restorations take place in Tur Abdin bring forth the possibility of a contemplated standardization of ecclesiastical structures and identity building through architecture, notions which possibly will be subjects of more extensive studies in the near future.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETING THE NOTIONS OF MONASTIC SPACES, BURIALS IN CHURCHES AND HIEROTOPY OF TUR ABDIN

In the preceding sections of this work, the architecture, history and contemporary situation of the church complex at Zaz have been described and discussed in detail. Some of the discussions have yielded questions about more general issues regarding architectural or religious practices and conceptions in Tur Abdin. This chapter aims at addressing and interpreting some of these questions and interpreting some practices observed in throughout this study, and tries to contextualize them within the general context of Tur Abdin. These questions, debates or discussions will not necessarily find an answer in the current work, but supposedly provide insight about overlooked issues within this or other scholarly works.

V.1. Rethinking Monastic Settlements and Communities

In the second chapter various rock-cut sections within the limestone base, both from the vicinities of the church of Mor Dimet and from other

locations in Tur Abdin were discussed. During these discussions, some of these spaces, such as Beh Werki, were tentatively identified as monastic spaces, whereas some other rock-cut spaces were not concluded on their possible monastic associations. Nevertheless, it was shown that some of the generally agreed features of monastic settings, such as a certain physical distance from village settlements or standardized architectural features, may not always be observed in some of the monastic settlements. Likewise, it was indicated that a clear distinction between monasteries and villages in Tur Abdin in antiquity might have barely existed. In the current section, some of these issues will be elaborated on.

It has been pointed out that physical features of monastic settlements in northern Mesopotamia, thus in Tur Abdin, are not always standardized and regularized.[457] Monks lived in a large spectrum of places, from defense towers to caves and tree trunks.[458] It should be noted that it is this time period and religious milieu in which St. Symeon originated the tradition of dwelling inside a column (4th century).[459] This leads to the questioning of previously assumed architectural features of monastic settlements, such as church typologies. The question was already put forward by scholars about the so-called monasteries of Cappadocia.[460]

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[457] Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 49-50; Elif Keser-Kayaalp, *Rock-cut Complex*, 277.
[458] Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, 54; John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 57.
[459] Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.13.
[460] Ousterhout, *Byzantine Settlement*, 176.

Ousterhout underlines that some settlements which had been previously identified as monasteries in Cappadocia could actually be residential buildings. He bases his argument on the possible similarity between spatial settings of the two types of architecture, namely the monastic and the residential. However, a similar questioning, to my knowledge, has not been raised for Tur Abdin. This questioning is necessary for the context of the plateau; because, many settlements seem to have been identified as a monastery based on their architectural features; and this approach overlooks some possible monastic settlements which may not have clearly distinguishable physical features.

Bell is accredited for making the distinction between the so-called monastic and parochial types of churches, transverse-hall type and hall type respectively, in the region.[461] Her work and theory dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. Later on, Mundell-Mango has shown that this distinction does not always apply, since a monastery, namely the monastery of Abraham of Kashkar, has a hall type church.[462] Likewise, the possible monastic settlement of Beh Werki also has two churches with two opposite ground plans, as mentioned in chapter II. Keser-Kayaalp, although acknowledging the strength of Bell's observation, hesitated using

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[461] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, viii.
[462] Mundell-Mango, *Deux Eglises*, 58.

the terms "monastic" and "parochial" for the two types of ground plans.[463] In my opinion, prior to the discussions on ground plan typologies, the assumed distinction between monasteries and villages, monks and laymen, in antiquity should be reconsidered.

Syrian asceticism emerged and flourished in a milieu which was characterized by the land's situation as an insecure frontier between the Roman and Persian worlds.[464] John of Ephesus, as Ashbrook-Harvey points out, shows that Syrian ascetic life was not confined to the desert; it was practiced solitarily or as a group; outside the society or within it.[465] It, from the beginning, coexisted with the village.[466] Since the early decades of Christianity monks in northern Mesopotamia and Syria appear to have had various social functions within the society. They were intermediaries between the community and the imperial authorities; held judiciary positions; healed the sick; solved economic conflicts; and occasionally participated in military defense.[467] Monasticism does not seem to have been separated from the milieu which modern thinking would define "secular". John of Ephesus refers to Amida as "the city convent".[468] This

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[463] Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 94.
[464] Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 58.
[465] Ibid. 43.
[466] Ibid. 53.
[467] William Frend, "The Monks and the Survival of the East Roman Empire in the Fifth Century", *Past & Present*, 54 (Feb. 1972): 3-24; *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), 14, 29; Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism*, 49.
[468] Lives, 571.

expression reveals how abundant monasteries were and how they characterized the region with their existence.

Rather than conceptualizing a dual world of monastic and lay men, it appears to be a better approach to think of multiple closely-interrelated layers within society in terms of religious ranking. The practice of *bnat* and *bnay qyama* is a direct reflection of this. As was discussed previously, the terms refer to a group of believers, literally "sons and daughters of the covenant", who do not necessarily participate in a monastic life, but practice various types of asceticism; thus they constitute a religious layer between monks and laymen.[469] Torjesen discussed how celibacy practiced by clergy resulted in a distinguished group between laymen and monastics,[470] which constitutes yet another example of layers in the social system.

In addition to multiple religion-related layers in the society, the relations between monastics, clergy and laymen appear to have been closely-knit. John of Ephesus mentiones, several times, laypersons being educated, healed or even entertained at monasteries.[471] The clergy appears to have been in close contact or have even lived at the monasteries. The institution of priested-monks clearly constitutes a common area between

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[469] Murray, Earliest *Syriac Christianity*, 6-7.
[470] Karen Jo Torjesen, "Clergy and Laity" *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 389-405.
[471] Lives, 43, 106, 89.

the clergy and monastics. Moreover, John of Ephesus informs us about clergy members dwelling at monasteries with the statement "(there was a)... chorepiscopus in a monastery in a village."[472] The same author also mentions hermitages used as churches, even congregations gathered before these churches.[473] These types of relations appear to have been not confined to antiquity. Book of Life informs us that in the 18th century a monk was the "steward of the church of Mor Dodo" in Basebrin.[474] As mentioned previously, the church of Mor Dodo was most probably a non-monastic church. Therefore, that the church was served by a monk shows the close relation between the monastic individuals and villages.

It is also a matter to discuss how static monastic communities and settlements were. Although there were clearly monasteries established and functioned, ancient authors frequently mention about mobile monks, founding "monasteries", leaving the monasteries and resettling in other locations for various reasons such as persecutions or seeking of spiritual employment.[475] This situation can be interpreted as many monastic communities or individuals not being settled, but rather mobile. Thus, in many occasions, what is referred as a "monastery" by ancient authors

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[472] Ibid. 125; "chorepiscopus" is an ecclesiastical title used to refer to the highest office for married clergy in the Syrian Orthodox Church (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, Abbreviations, Microfishe).
[473] Ibid. 117.
[474] *Book of Life*, 15.
[475] John of Ephesus, Lives, 42, 177, 106; Qartmin Trilogy, xvi-xvii; The Acts of the Martyr Habib, available at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/habib.html; St. Jacob the Recluse, 162-3

might not have many specific architectural features; this might make identification or even realization of monastic settlements difficult in the modern surveys and analyzes.

In the existence of a complex societal texture which consists of various groups differentiated from one another through religious practices, it is difficult to assure definite architectural patterns for monastic versus other settlements, such as villages. Therefore, I suggest that architectural terms such as village church, monastic settlement, hermitage, should be reconsidered; and clear distinctions among them, especially while identifying buildings or sites, should not always be assumed. Moreover, surveys of sites should not be confined to buildings but be intergrated within its landscapes in order to have a better understanding of the extents of the sites.[476]

V.2. Burials in Churches

One of the relatively underrepresented subjects within studies about Tur Abdin is the practice of burials in churches.[477] Burial chambers

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[476] This suggestion was previously presented also by Loosley for Syrian monastic spaces. Emma Loosley and Niall Finneran, "Monastic Archaeology in Syria. Excavations at Dayr Elian al-Sharqi, Qaryatayn: A Preliminary Report on the 2001, 2002 and 2003 Field Seasons", Levant, vol 27 (2005): 54-5.

[477] Goldfus recently pointed out the low number of studies concerning burials in churches in the East, compared to the studies about the same subject in the West. Haim Goldfus, "Burials in Ordinary Churches and Monastic Complexes of Byzantine Palestine: A Synthesis" *Akten Des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses Für Christliche Archäologie Wien 19.-26.9.1999* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), 411. Therefore, the

in monasteries of Tur Abdin, *beth qadishe* (literally "house of saints"), have been discussed frequently.[478] To give a brief summary, it is an adjoining chamber in monasteries, generally located by one of the conventual churches. It generally bears numerous tombs within it. These tombs are in the form of benches (referred to as "beds" in Syriac) placed in the wall niches. *Beth qadishe* generally does not have a sanctuary or altar; therefore, it is architecturally not considered as a church. Not every monastery has a *beth qadishe,* for instance, the monastery of Mor Yakub in Salah or Mor Abrohom in Midyat do not appear to have burial chambers, whereas the monastery of Mor Gabriel and Deyrulzafaran do have this feature.

Although some monasteries may not have a *beth qadishe,* ancient sources inform us about the existence of the feature and the practice of burials in monasteries almost as early as the existence of the Christian faith in Tur Abdin, similar to other regions of the Christian geography.[479] In the life of Samuel, it is recorded that a "house of saints" was built beside the church of the Mother of God at the monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin in the 5th century and it was already densely used in the fist half of the same century.[480] John of Ephesus tells about holy men being buried

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neglect of the subject does not appear to be confined to Tur Abdin, but to the East in general.

[478] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 9, 10; Palmer, *Monk and Mason* 54, 58-62, 68-9

[479] Goldfus, *Burials.*

[480] Qartmin Trilogy, xxx, lix.

on the spot in their monasteries upon their decease.[481] The former source also indicates the existence of burial chambers in monasteries other than of Mor Gabriel by the 7th century.[482] The fact that numerous *beth qadishe* is extant today and are still in use show the continuity of the practice.

Scholarly literature about burials in Tur Abdin is basically confined to inscriptions, specific decorations or discussions on possible funerary function of the *beth slutho*, as explained in chapter III. Although funerary inscriptions from Tur Abdin have been published;[483] some funerary decorations from the region have been analyzed;[484] and the possible funerary function of *beth slutho* has been discussed,[485] no scholars seem to have questined the significance of integrating burials into liturgical spaces in churches. In other words, existence of burials in the naves or even sanctuaries of churches has not been raised as a research question. This practice appears to be rooted in ancient customs and thus it throws light into conceptions about sacred spaces in Tur Abdin and in wider northern Mesopotamia.

The church of Mor Dimet in Zaz has had possibly three burials on the north of the nave. The church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi has a burial on the north of the nave as well. The church of Mor Yuhannon in Qillit has a

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[481] Lives, 118.
[482] Qartming Trilogy, lxxvii.
[483] Pognon, *Inscriptions Semitiques*; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, Appendix.
[484] Mundell-Mango, *Funerary Reliefs*.
[485] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 136.

burial in its south chamber, on the east side. There are three burials in the narthex of the church of el-Adhra in Hah; the narthex of Mor Serkis and Bakhos in the same village also bears a burial on the north side of the narthex. Two burials in the church of Mor Dodo in Basebrin are located on the south side of the nave. In the same village, almost every church within the village bears a burial; most of the burials are adjoined with sanctuaries of these churches. Some of these churches are too narrow to carry out any liturgical ritual; thus, they stand as grave chambers also functioning as chapels, with a determined sanctuary and often at least one altar. [486]

Although some of the burials inside non-monastic churches are later than the building of the church or are even modern, the notion of placing burials in ecclesiastical spaces appears to have deep roots within the history. The sources indicate the function of relics in the prayer spaces, which might be the origin of the practice of burials inside churches. Paul the Anchorite, a monk from the region of Sophanene, the region to the north of Amida, converted a cave into a chapel; he also hanged a bag of relics in this chapel and prayed.[487] During an epidemic that occurred in the region in the 8th century, some of the monks at the monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin take up the deceased body of Mor Gabriel, bring it to

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[486] Identifications of these burials have been provided by villagers. Some of the burials have been mentioned by scholars previously. If they bear any specific inscriptions or decorations, this information was provided; however, none of them have been discussed any further, to my knowledge.

[487] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 114.

the church, "stood it up against the north chanting stand" and prayed.[488] This 8th-century practice shows that relics (in this case the whole body) of a holy person is brought into the church, placed to the "north" of the nave and prayed metaphorically together with in order to make the most out of the saint's holiness.

It is not clear when burials started to be placed inside the churches. As Palmer points out, majority of village churches are dedicated to a saint whose relics are claimed to be at the church;[489] therefore, burials, at least placement of relics, inside the churches must be as early as emergence of village churches in Tur Abdin. In the Trilogy it is noted that there was once a debate on the holy body of Mor Simeon; a group of monks attempted to take the body from the monastery of Mor Gabriel and enshrine it in a village church, while others opposed to this attempt claiming that if the body had belonged to them it would have been in their village or church.[490] This event indicates that depositing holy bodies in village churches was practiced in Tur Abdin as early as the 5th century. Written indicators of burials, epitaphs, however, appeared in the region later times.

One of the possible earliest epitaphs from Tur Abdin comes from the templon-screen (the panel separating sanctuary from the nave) of the

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[488] Qartmin Trilogy, xci.
[489] *Monk and Mason*, 136.
[490] Qartmin Trilogy, lii.

church of Mor Quryakos in Arnas. The monk commemorated with the epitaph passed away in the 8th century, whereas the epitaph was engraved on the templon-screen in the 10th.[491] It is not clear if the burial of the holy man was located inside the church. The other epitaphs from the 8th century are located on the outside oratories of churches in Tur Abdin.[492] Therefore, burials inside and outside the churches must have coexisted. This situation brings forth the question on who has the right to be buried inside the church.

Goldfus, based on his extensive research on burials in churches in Byzantine Palestine, suggests that patrons, donors or other individuals financially supporting the church building gained the right to be buried inside the churches.[493] He does not mention if these burials of "unholy" individuals were confined to the narthex of the church.[494] Nevertheless, the practice of burials of founders and donors in the narthex, rather than the nave, appears to be a common practice in the Byzantine Empire.[495] This practice does not appear to be the case for Tur Abdin. Unless the founders or other donors are also clergy members or other holy individuals, they are not buried inside the churches in the plateau.

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[491] Palmer, *Monk and Mason,* 209-10.
[492] Ibid. 211.
[493] Goldfus, Burials, 414-5.
[494] Presumably he answers this question in his dissertation thesis, which I was not able to consult.
[495] Paul Magdalino, Graduate Seminar Lecture, ARHA 507, Koç University, Spring 2010.

It can be suggested that a sort of hierarchy is being established based on the location of burials in Tur Abdin. The saint who dies in a village, relics or high-ranked members of clergy might be buried in the church interiors; and thus are integrated into the liturgical sacred space. The relatively low-ranked clergymen and the general public, on the other hand, might be buried in the courtyards of churches. Also, in the existence of multiple churches in a village, general public and members of clergy might be buried in different church courtyards. In the village of Basebrin, burial of an infant was located in the courtyard of a small church in the village, whereas the burial of a priest was in the courtyard of the church of Mother Mary, which is one of the prominent churches of the village.[496] This example also supports one to be inclined to conclude about the establishment of a sacred hierarchy through burials in Tur Abdin.

V.3. Reflections on Hierotopy of Tur Abdin

Analyzing spaces and landscapes with a hierotopical approach has recently been brought forward by Lidov.[497] He suggests an approach towards sacred spaces as deliberately created areas with their visual, audio and tactile components, and fosters enquiries about the human creativity behind the process/es through which spaces were made

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[496] Based on the information provided by villagers and local guides.
[497] Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006).

"sacred".[498] His publication, which consists of numerous works on Byzantine sacred spaces, has initiated ways in which scholars can conceive and approach monuments, spatial settings or landscapes. Tur Abdin, generally accepted as Mount Athos of the East, has yet not been a subject of a hierotopical analysis. The current section constitutes a brief introduction to the hierotopical context of Tur Abdin, by taking the complex at Zaz as a base.

Today, a modern paved road connects present-day towns of Midyat and Dargeçit (Kerburan). It deviates from the main road reaching Diyarbakır to the north, and leads to the northeast following a natural pass among the medium-height elevations of the plateau. Midyat and Dargeçit are two important centers of social and commercial life. Therefore, many people from the villages take this road on a frequent basis. Taking this road, in the present day, means moving through many small villages scattered along the road, resembling deserted clusters of stones from afar. At a certain point, the road converges to the hills, and passes very close to the village of Gülveren; this is the first close sight to any of the villages around this area. This is where the passenger on the road visually encounters actual people and buildings. After this village, one major structure dominates the scene: the church of Mor Dimet. The

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[498] Ibid. 32-5.

landscape becomes relatively flat and the entire plain lies at the feet of this structure. About ten minutes of visual dominance of the building, when one moves with an automobile, must have been much more powerful back in time when people mobilized with beasts of burden or on foot.

The village of Zaz is situated to the north of the road, 1 km. into the plain, on the skirts of a mound. The village consists of dwellings and ruins, the structures which all located on the south-west, west and north sides of the mound, leaving a solitary space to the church on the top of the mound. As explained in the fourth chapter, major demographic changes occurred in the recent past; the village was abandoned by Christians and has been inhabited by the Muslim Kurdish. Although the number of the revitalized buildings is increasing, majority of the buildings are still in ruins. Therefore, the village resembles an extension of the church, the structure which has the largest and the most solid appearance on the mound. The bell-tower of the church is the focal visual point in this village, in the absence of a minaret or any other pointed structure.

The extent of the spatial setting of the complex is demarcated by the enclosure wall, the structure which strictly separates the village from the private sphere and the church. Although the wall sets a clear distinction between the exterior and the interior, it does not appear to be an absolute separation of the complex from the outside world. Because, outside this wall, there are spaces used by the inhabitants of the church, such as

barracks for animals or small fruit gardens. Therefore, the enclosure, together with the entrances on it, enables a spatial communication with the extensions of the complex while still encapsulating the sacred.

The concept of "sacred hierarchy" mentioned by Popović is vividly observable once one enters through the main gate of the complex.[499] The wall being the indicator and initiator of the sacred realm, the structures within the setting of the complex establishes the hierarchy, the system which places the enclosure wall at the bottom and the church on top. The entrance hall, the residential building, the courtyard, decorative structures and the crypt appear to be placed as intermediate structures in this hierarchy. Popović states that, in a Byzantine monastery, anything except than the church and the cell of a holy man is not considered as a sacred space, but rather a place built for pragmatic reasons.[500] The case of Mor Dimet reveals a tradition not in line with the Byzantine case.

The word "making" is a very relevant one when referring to the sacred space in the complex and the church of Mor Dimet. The explanation lies in the recent history of the building. When Abuna Yakub and the nun resettled at Zaz, they cleaned, restored and reshaped the church and its surroundings according to their needs and faith. When they

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[499] Svetlana Popovic, "The Byzantine Monastery: Its Spatial Iconography and Sacredness", *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 159, 162.
[500] Ibid. 169.

moved in the church and the enclosure wall had been extant. They extended the northern wall of the church and connected it to the enclosure wall, placing a residential building on the north-west corner; they placed their private zone within the physical boundaries of the sacred space, in the interior of the enclosure wall.

The initiative of making the space into a sacred milieu is observed in further arrangements as well. One of the most prominent structures within the complex is the "crypt", the underground chamber which the last inhabitants unearthed in 2003. As discussed earlier, the "crypt" was possibly a hermitage or a chapel originally. It was cleaned and reconsecrated by Abuna Yakub. The below quotation provides an appropriate insight about how to approach the placement of this crypt in the process of re/creating the church of Mor Dimet.

"...the presence of a cave, much like the presence of a relic, imparted sacredness in a distinctive way to the church in question."[501]

Abuna Yakub, with an in-depth pride and protectionism, seems to have excavated and repaired this crypt; placed an altar and a book-rest in it; re-consecrated it as a church and built his house above it. Meanwhile, the church was also repaired as explained in the previous chapter.

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[501] Slobodan Ćurčić, "Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian Hierotopical Synthesis" *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 216-236.

Final touches of the transformation process are the stone objects placed at the courtyard of the church. Two of them are located at the entrance of the courtyard and a third one is located on the south side of the courtyard. They appear to be spolia; possibly a monolithic book-rest, a grave casket lid and a *guda.*[502] The striking situation is that they have been placed within the immediate vicinity of the church in a way that they do not have a specific practical function, yet they characterize and determine the sacred milieu.

The former two objects, the book-rest and the possible grave casket lid have been placed at the entrance of the courtyard. Five steps lead from the residential quarters up to the courtyard of the church; and the objects, placed at the upper final row, spatially determine this passage, a dynamic space as Popović identifies.[503] Their elevated solid existence, accompanied by crosses engraved on them, welcomes one into the sacred milieu. Conceptions, which were just exposed to the enclosure wall and the residential quarters in the process of approaching the church, are dominated by these two objects, the initial embodiments of the faith before the church.

Passing through the two objects, and stepping into the courtyard, the vision of the person is now dominated by three elements: the church

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[502] Please refer to chapter I and II for descriptions and identifications of these objects.
[503] *Byzantine Monastery*

that corresponds to the entire north side of the courtyard, the eastern plains and horizon lying beyond the enclosure wall and the *guda* to the south of the entrance. The latter object, which is normally placed in the church interiors or at the *beth slutho* to lay books on, is placed, in the context of the church of Mor Dimet, at the far southern end of the church courtyard; it visually determines the extent of the sacred space. The two objects at the entrance and the *guda* on the south side of the courtyard on one hand give the feeling of initiation of the sacred, and on the other direct the conception towards the focal sacred point, which is the church.

The external setting of the church of Mor Dimet, which has been explained so far, exemplifies the general tendency of organizing sacred spaces in Tur Abdin. The courtyards, which almost always have one entrance, are generally abundant in numerous objects most of which do not have direct functions. As explained in the previous chapter, spolia from the church, out-of-use book-rests or *gudas* are placed in the courtyards in a way that they are integrated into the spaces; and they can be conceived as intermediary levels in the sacred hierarchy, which start at the outer walls of the courtyard, proceed through the courtyard entrance, through the faith-related objects, through the church entrance and narthex and terminate with the sanctuary and the altar.

After this brief reflection on hierotopic issues at the monument-level, it is significant to consider the sacred setting of Tur Abdin on a

macro scale, in order to have an understanding relatively closer to the full hierotopical picture. Similar to the sacred hierarchy established through various architectural features of a monument or site as suggested above, the plateau of Tur Abdin represents a hierarchy among settlements, sites and monuments, in line with topographical qualifications.

Almost every village is located on a hilltop in Tur Abdin.[504] Roads ascend to hills to reach the villages. Almost each village, which population-wise is or was Christian, has a main church; the church constitutes the focal visual point with its solid, bulky presence, among the closely-clustered smaller-sized dwellings. The church is generally located at the highest topographical point in a village; and it is reached through the village. That is, one has to take paths from among the dwellings in a village to approach the main church. This organizational and spatial setting manifests the primary sacred position of the village church in a settlement; it is protected, by a buffer zone between the outer world and the church itself, yet visually revealed and ascended.

Other churches in a village also contribute to the sacred setting. In many cases, there are a few small-sized churches around the village, determining the sacred and spiritually-protected territory. The village of Basebrin is a clear example to this situation; the village is almost

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[504] Palmer, Monk and Mason, 107-9; author's observation.

surrounded by small chapels. While the village settlements appear to be organized around a main village and small chapels, almost every village is associated with a higher embodiment of the faith, which is mostly a monastery or another holy site.

Palmer refers to the organization type by which villages are located nearby monastery/ies as "satellite" arrangement.[505] He righteously observes that the village and the monastery were closely related both in social and physical terms in antiquity.[506] The material evidence found on the plateau in the present-day testifies this. The monasteries are all visible from the villages to which they are "satellites". On the contrary to the assumed feature of a monastery to be secluded, the monasteries in Tur Abdin are most of the time integral parts of visuals spaces. They occupy generally somewhat higher topographical elevations compared to villages, claiming their climactic places in the sacred hierarchy.

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[505] *Monk and Mason*, 28.

[506] Ibid. 110-111. This arrangement observed in Tur Abdin was also practiced in Egypt. Joseph Patrich, "Monastic Landscapes" Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan and Carlos Machado (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004): 422-3.

CONCLUSIONS

The main focus of this thesis is the study of an underrepresented ecclesiastical monument in Tur Abdin, namely the church of Mor Dimet in the village of Zaz, to the north-east of the present-day Midyat. This thesis has documented the architecture of the church, based on on-site architectural surveys and comparisons with other ecclesiastical monuments in the vicinities. The church's building phases have been identified and its dating was reassessed. The architectural analysis of the monument has been contextualized within the general architecture and history of Tur Abdin. This thesis has also discussed the contemporary situation of the monument in terms of its physical layout and social meanings. The final aim of this thesis has been to address some questions and suggest interpretations regarding some underrepresented subjects such as monastic spaces and communties, burials in churches and hierotopical context of Tur Abdin, with the intention of prompting further research on the region.

The church of Mor Dimet has been built on a limestone base, which comprises rock-cut spaces, such as a winery and possible hermitages,

likely to predate the church. The building is a hall type church with a longitudinal nave lying on an east-west axis, a narthex to the south of it and a tripartite sanctuary corresponding to the east end of the nave and the narthex. The church has three entrances, two on the south façade and one on the west façade. The monument is built up of ashlars and medium to small sized stones. The church's interior is characterized by intense use of arches built of ashlars. The sanctuary of the church is tripartite, consisting of a horseshoe-shaped apse and two side chambers flanking the former. The interior of the church is abundant in architectural sculpture. Two of the pier capitals are adorned with double-row uncut acanthus; both of the southern entrances bear decorations in the form of low relief; moreover, numerous reliefs and incised carvings are located on the interior piers. The church also has a *beth slutho* (outside oratory) adjoining the former on the south-east exterior corner. The *beth slutho* comprises an apse and it has a conch with three niches; it bears rather simple architectural sculpture.

Architectural features of the church of Mor Dimet are common for main village churches of Tur Abdin, most of which have been dated to the 7th-8th centuries, based on inscriptions or architectural features such as sculpture, by the previous scholarly works. Although the church of Mor Dimet differs from the previously-published main village churches in terms of architectural sculpture or placement of the outside oratory, it is

likely to be contemporary to, or only slightly later than, these churches. This suggestion is based on the church's average size, building technique of the interior arches, its gabled west façade, the organization of entrances and usage of brick to cover the nave vault. Along with the comparisons of the architectural features, the history of the village, the scarce mentions about the life of the saint Dimet, and the rock-cut architecture present at the complex do not counter this suggestion.

It is proposed that the church was possibly built ca. 8th- 9th centuries, parallel to the chronologies of the well-known village churches of Tur Abdin, such as Mor Qurkayos in Arnas, Mor Azizael in Keferzi, Mor Shemun d-Zayte in Habsenas and others.[507] The time period, during which most of the mentioned churches were possibly built, requires further analysis. In the mid-7th century Moslem Arabs conquered northern Mesopotamia. This incident appears to have removed the Roman-Persian frontier, which had been affective in social, economic and religious issues for the centuries that had preceded. Tur Abdin is generally accepted to have flourished under the Arab rule, a situation visible through intense building activities in the region. The church of Mor Dimet is yet another example that represents architectural practices, decorative styles and inter-cultural influences in Tur Abdin in the late antique and early medieval

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[507] For dating of these churches: Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 14, 99; Mundell-Mango, *Continuity*, fig. I7; Palmer, Monk and Mason, 211; Elif Keser-Kayaalp, *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, chapter3.

period. The conclusions drawn out of the architectural analysis of the building, however, are not confined to the mentioned time period; it reflects upon the architectural and religious history of Tur Abdin with regards to both the earlier antiquity and the contemporary era.

Having been built in an era associated with prosperity and autonomy in Tur Abdin, the church has undergone numerous architectural changes in the centuries ahead. A tower-like structure has been added to the south-west corner of the church. It is not clear to trace back the origin of this architectural practice which is seen on only three more churches in Tur Abdin; nevertheless, the frequent usage of this structure in the 8th-century Umayyad buildings is striking and this may constitute the origin of the practice in Tur Abdin.[508]

The other major addition to the church is the portico and the upper storey, both of which are dated to the early 20th century with an inscription indicating the building of the portico. The physical arrangement and the building material used reveal that the upper storey was most probably contemporarily built with the portico. The upper storey added functions to the church, which were probably not directly related to the liturgical practices. Indeed, the space was used as a *medrese* (classroom) to teach Syriac to the children of the village. This information has been provided

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[508] Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art*, 36-53.

by Abuna Yakub. The ancient practice of education at churches appears to take place based on modern dynamics such as intention to pertain the survival of the Syriac language, identity and culture.

One of the more general interpretations the monument manifests is the fact that rock-cut spaces (not necessarily referred to as "architecture") are integral parts of the sacred spaces as well as they are to daily life in Tur Abdin. The possible winery, the "crypt", cisterns and other structures in the immediate vicinity of the church show that bedrock has not been conceived only as a solid foundation; it was integrated, with various functions, into the sacred milieu. Ancient authors frequently refer to rock-cut spaces used as cisterns, hermitages, chapels, dwellings or shelters; and the church of Mor Dimet has shown that this tradition, although to a certain degree decayed, has been practiced into the modern day.[509]

This research has also pointed out that in terms of architectural typologies and sculpture Tur Abdin still offers a vast research area. The closest description of a winery, which reads as very identical to the one at Zaz, comes from Asia Minor.[510] One of the major architectural features of the church, the "tower" finds a close representation in the 8th-century Umayyad buildings. Architectural sculpture of the church, which is majorly in forms of shallow reliefs or incisions, are reminiscent of some

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[509] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 57, 114, 117.
[510] Bell and Ramsay, *The Thousand and One Churches*, 559.

works observed in 5th-6th century Byzantine Syria.[511] These comparisons have shown that architecture in Tur Abdin has not been developed over a single source, but rather is a mosaic of various influences from various time periods.

Abuna Yakub, a native of the village of Zaz, served the community in Tur Abdin as a priested-monk for more than thirty years. In the last decade, Yakub and a possible nun have revitalized the church of Mor Dimet, which had been deserted for a few years. The two members of the Syrian Orthodox church started dwelling at a residential building adjoining the church. This incidence has added a contemporary dimension to this study.

The dwelling of a monk and a nun at a church brought forward the question of celibacy practices in both present-day and ancient Tur Abdin. It has been presented that ascetic practices, such as renunciation of bodily desires, have been executed not only by monks but by lay persons and clergy in antiquity. The situation observed at the church of Mor Dimet appears to be a reflection of these established conceptions about celibacy practices in the region.

The recent revitalization processes, by which especially the interior of the church has been dramatically altered, resulted this study adopt yet

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[511] Butler, *Early Churches*, 50; Tchalenko, *Eglises*, 4, 39.

another dimension, which is the contemporary phenomenon of constant restorations and revitalizations observed at many ecclesiastical buildings in Tur Abdin.[512] With the initiations of the Syrian Orthodox foundations or local individuals, many churches and monasteries on the plateau are undergoing restorations, as a result of which standardized appearances of edifices seems to be contemplated. This phenomenon might be explained as an attempt at identity building and a desire to legitimize the Syrian Orthodox presence in the region.

In addition to the analysis of the church and interpretations deriving from it, in the light of material evidence surveyed and explored in Tur Abdin during the field trips, this thesis has indirectly reflected upon some religious practices in both ancient and the present-day Tur Abdin. Although this study has not thoroughly discussed the issues, it has aimed at addressing some questions and reappraisals regarding monastic spaces and communities, burials in churches and hierotopical context of Tur Abdin. The architectural features of monastic settlements, such as church typology or physical distance to villages, which were discussed by

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[512] The notion of revitalization is not confined to architecture; many literary works published on Tur Abdin appears to attempt at re-discovering the culture, religion and the history of the region. Some examples of these works are Hans Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin: Living Cultural Heritage* (Linz: Freunde des Tur Abdin, 1999); Sébastien De Courtois, *Les Derniers Araméens: Le Peuple Oublié de Jésus.* (France: La Table Ronde, 2004); Efrem Barsavm, *Saçılmış İnciler: Süryanilerin Yazınsal Tarihi* (İstanbul: Resim Ofset, 2005).

previous scholarly works,[513] appear to be not standardized and needs rethinking. Likewise, relations between monastic individuals and laymen in antiquity were probably not clearly defined. Monastic individuals had multiple functions in society; dwelled in various sorts of places physically distinguished from one another, such as tree trunks or caves. They were closely related to lay persons and were many times mobile. Thus, I suggest that identification and description of monastic settlements and communities should be not always based on architectural grounds, but rather be contextualized within social and religious conceptions and practices.

Another underrepresented issue this thesis has attempted at addressing is the burials within church interiors, a practice which has not derived scholarly attention, unlike the burials chambers in monasteries have been. Many churches in Tur Abdin bear burials in their naves or sanctuaries.[514] This study suggested that it is a practice possibly rooted in attitudes towards relics and holy bodies, which appear to have been a significant dimension of prayer and ascetic life in Tur Abdin.

The final interpretation this thesis has brought forward is the hierotopy of the Tur Abdin plateau. Solidly introduced by a recent work

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[513] Bell and Mango, *Churches and Monasteries,* viii, 56; Keser-Kayaalp, *Rock-cut Complex,* 277 n.30

[514] For instance, the church of Mor Azizael in Keferzi, Mor Yuhannon in Qillit, Mor Dodo in Basebrin and smaller churches in the latter village have burials in their naves, sanctuaries or side chambers.

by Lidov, hierotopy, systematic analysis of sacred spaces, has taken its place within scholarly methodologies used to study monuments, their spatials settings and interactions with the landscapes. The study has attempted to provide an introduction to a hierotopical analysis of Tur Abdin by discussing the remaking processes of the church of Mor Dimet and the relation between topography and ecclesiastical architecture. It has been noticed that every village is adorned with a main church, usually placed at the topographically highest point of the landscape, and is further surrounded by relatively smaller churches and chapels, which assumingly provided a spiritual protection and determination of the physical boundaries of the settlement's territory. Furthermore, almost every village is associated with a monastery or another sacred space, which is physically distant from but visually approachable by the village. The establishment of a sacred hierarchy through topographical qualifications and spatial organization of villages and monasteries has been suggested.

FIGURES

Fig. I.1. Google Earth view of Mesopotamia and Syria, Tur Abdin marked (downloaded Dec. 2009)

Fig. I.2. Google Earth view of Tur Abdin (downloaded Dec. 2009)

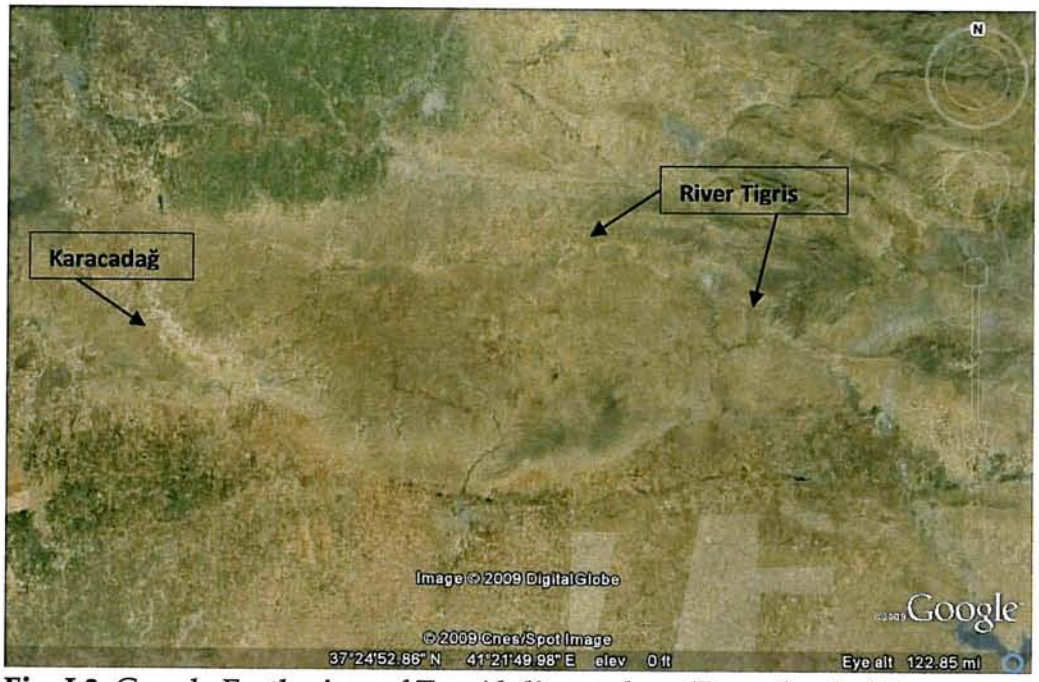

Fig. I.3. Google Earth view of Tur Abdin, at close (Downloaded Dec. 2009)

Fig. II.1. The village of Zaz, from the main road, from SW (Nov. 2009)

Fig. II.2. The village of Zaz and the church complex, from SW (Nov. 2009)

Fig. II.3. The village road and dwellings, from the terrace of the complex, looking W (Apr. 2010)

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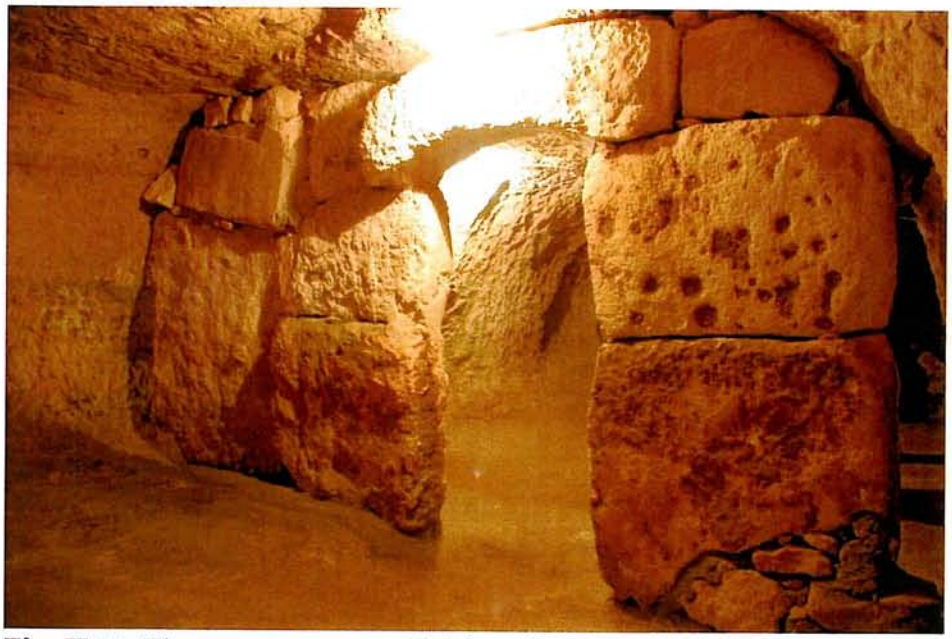

Fig. II.14. The crypt, eastern division, from NE (Nov. 2009)

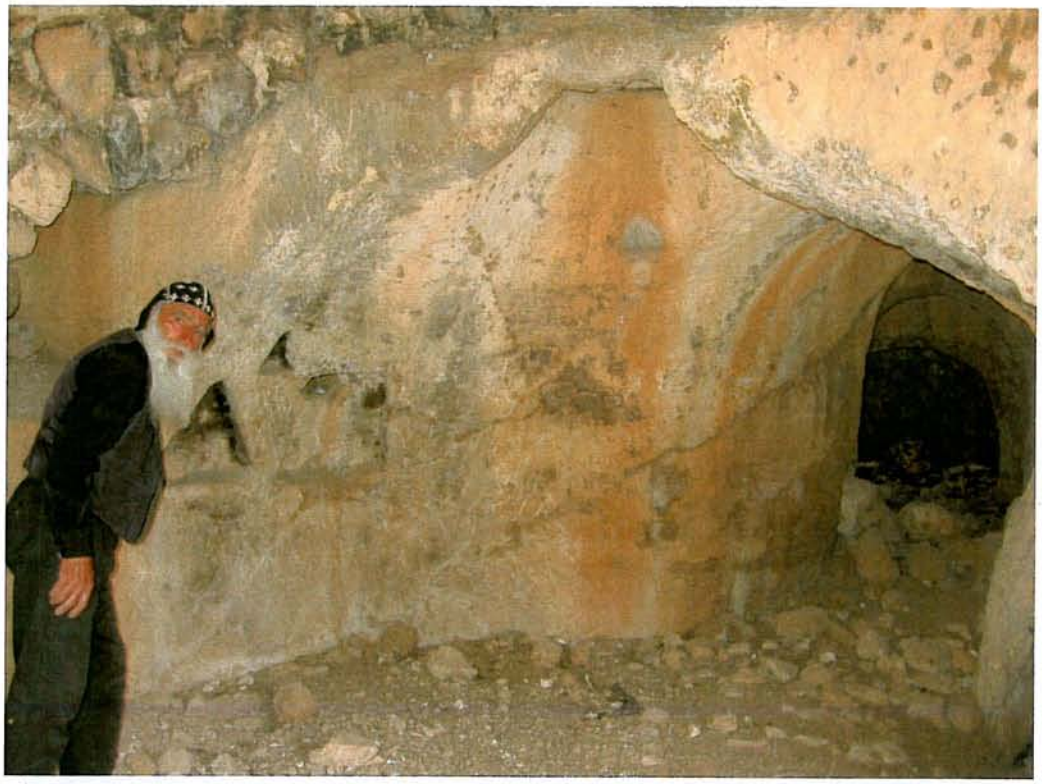

Fig. II.15. Rock-cut extensions of the "crypt" ("underground tunnels"?) now abandoned (unpublished photograph by Elif Keser-Kayaalp, 2005)

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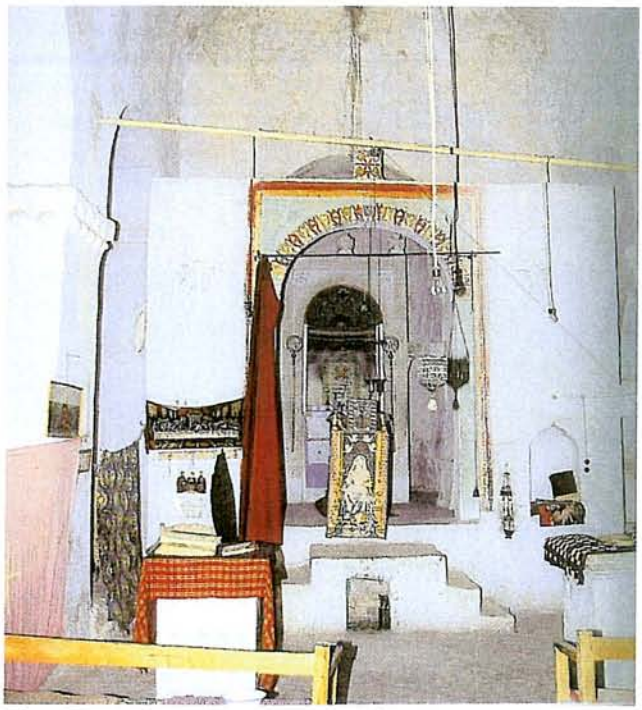

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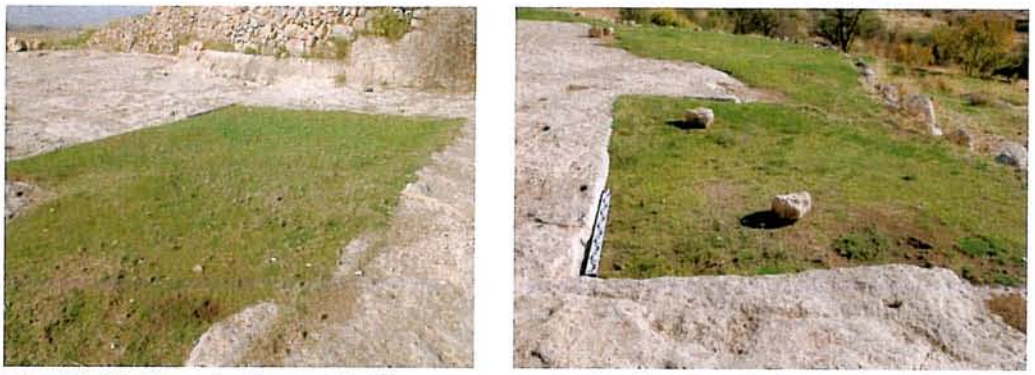

Fig. II.45. Regularly-cut hollow spaces on the limestone base, S of the church complex (Nov. 2009)

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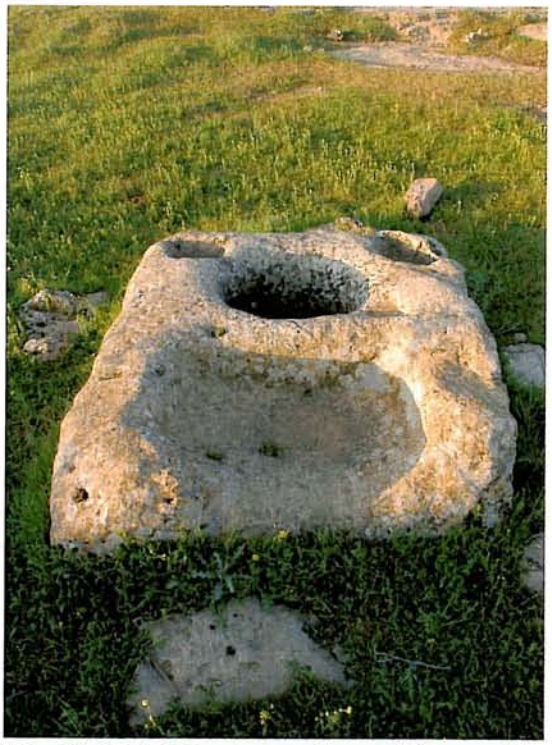

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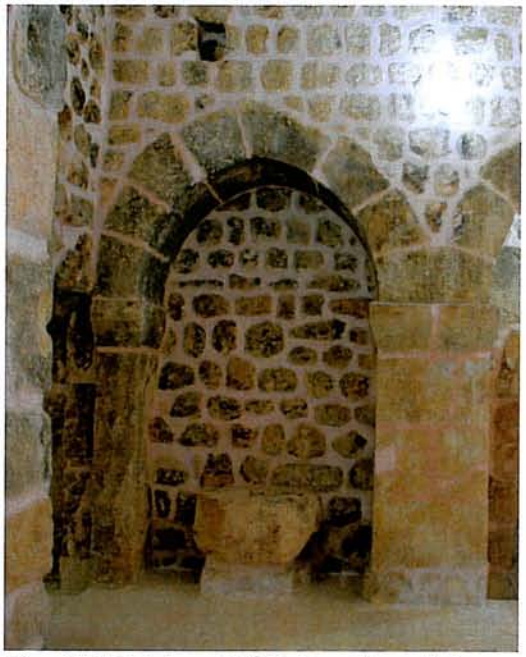

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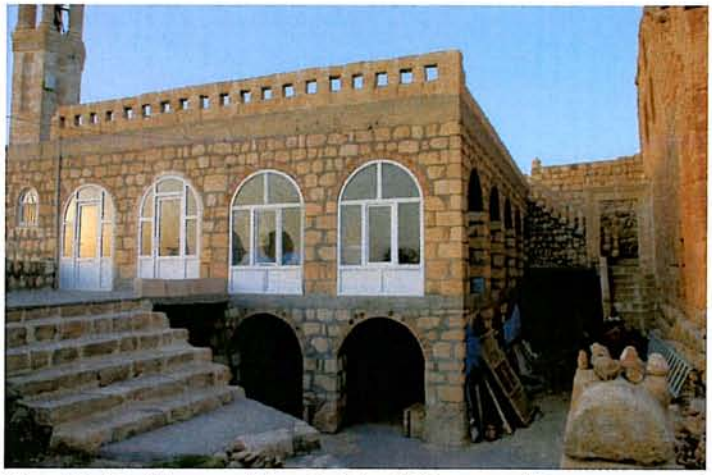
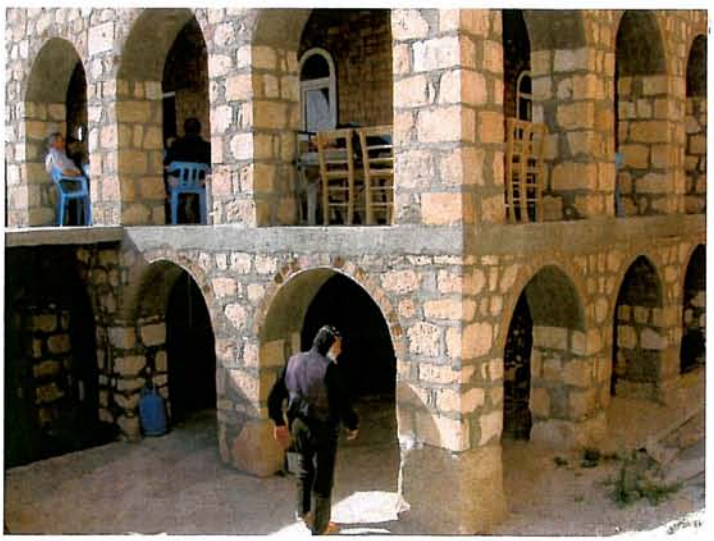


Fig. II.62. The residential building and its terrace, from SE (Nov. 2009)



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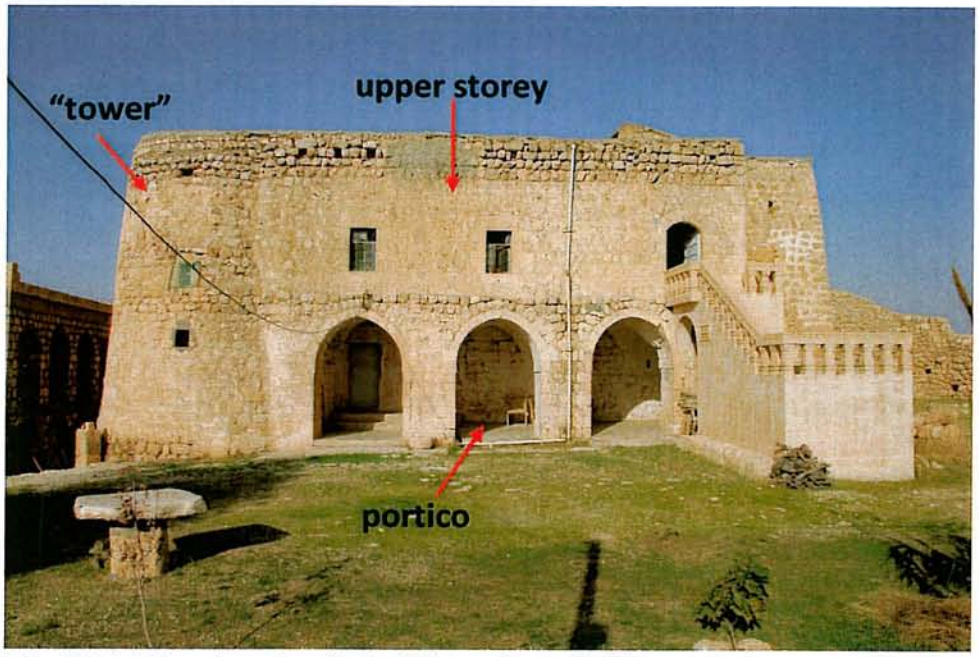

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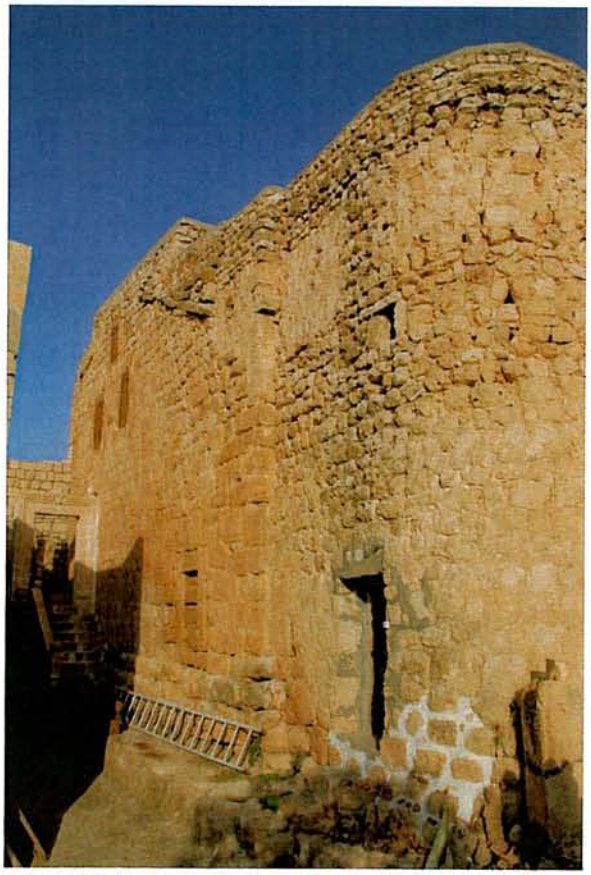

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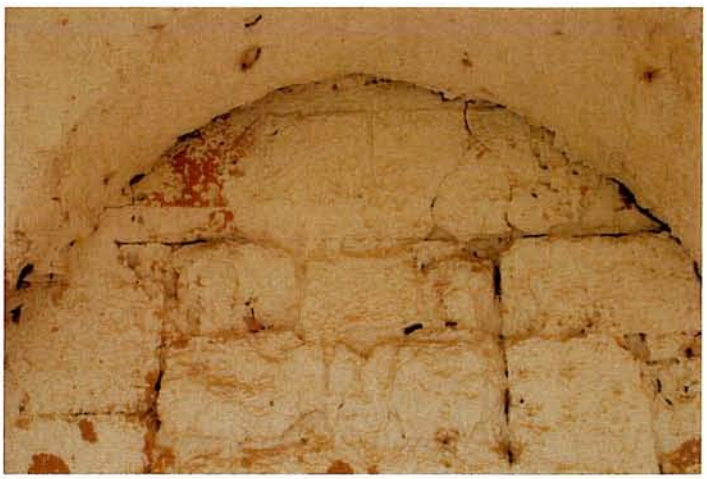

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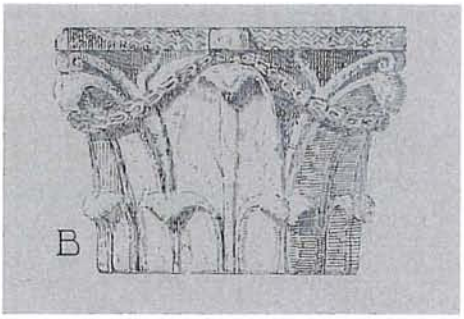

Fig. III.38: Column capital, Ksedjbeh, 5th century, N Syria (After Butler, *Early Churches*, Ill. 47-B, p.50)

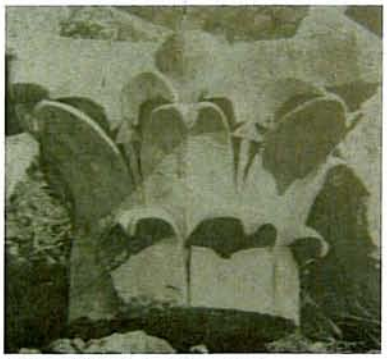

Fig. III.39: Capital, church of Julianos, 5th century, N Syria (After Tchalenko, *Eglises*, fig. 13, p.4)

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Fig. III.56. Door lintel of the church at Burjke, N. Syria (After Peña, *Christian Art*, 76)

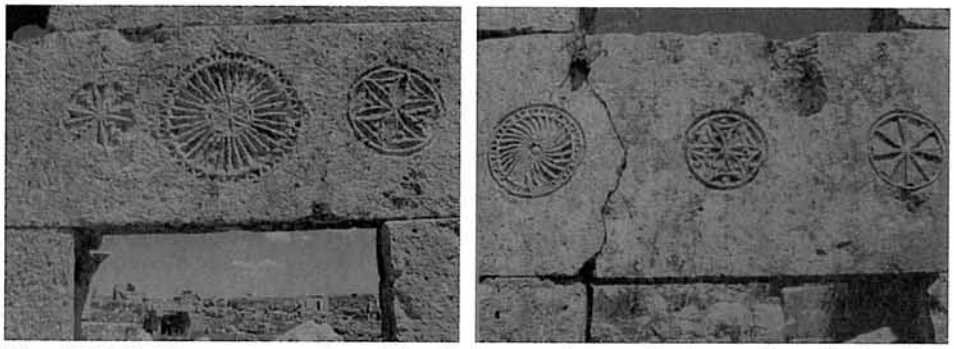

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Fig. III.59. Brick work of the vault, detail (Apr. 2010)

Fig. III.60. Brick vault of the south chamber of the church of Mor Yuhannon, Qillit (Apr. 2010)

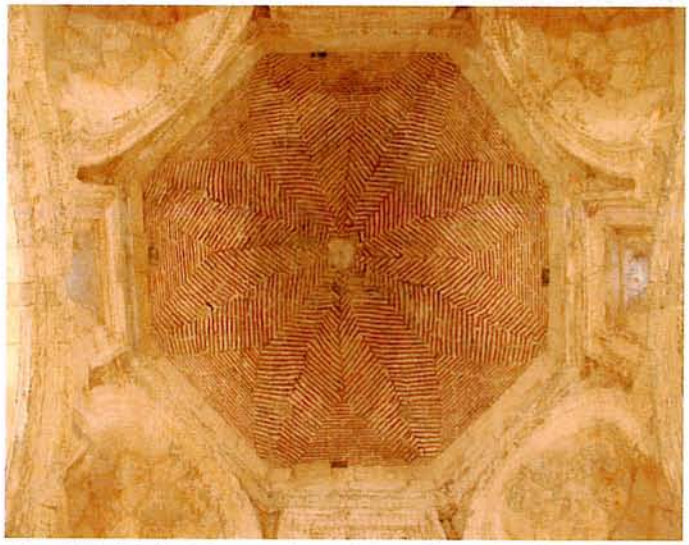

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Fig. III.72. Burial of Mor Aho, Dersalib (After Hollerweger, *Tur Abdin*, 209)

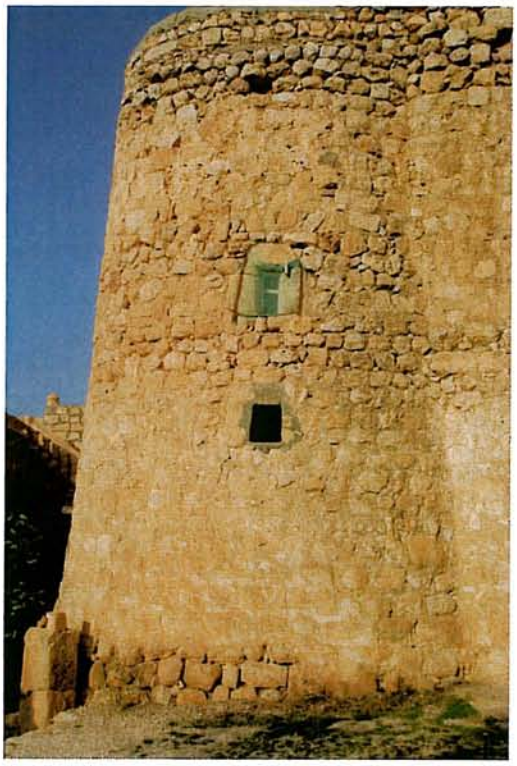
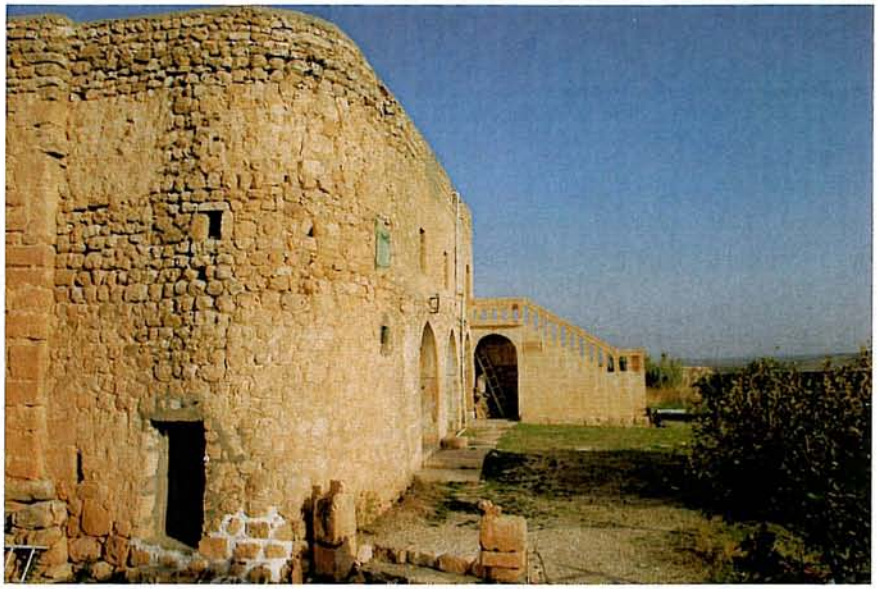


Fig. III.73. The "tower" from S (Nov. 2009)



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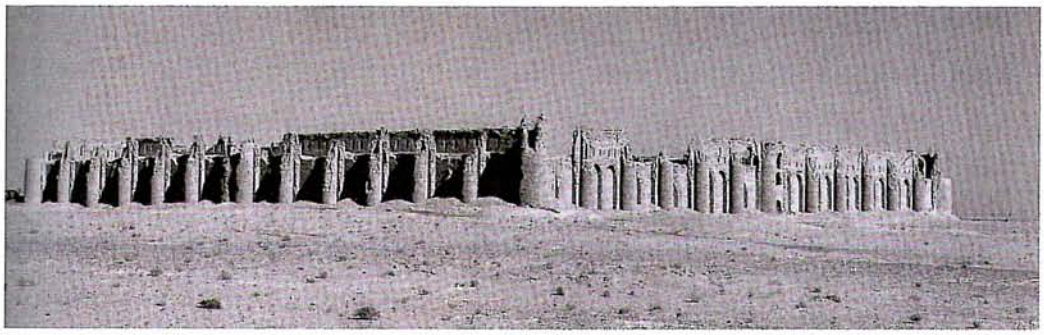

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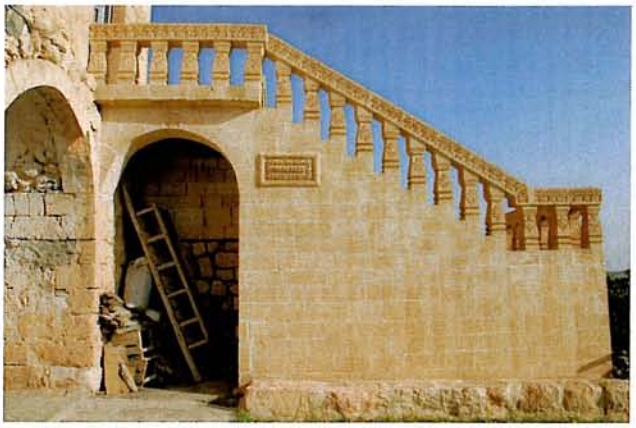

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