

SOME ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS OF MEDINAH OF THE EARLY YEARS OF HIJRAH

IT was only by accident that I came across the inscriptions on which I am going to speak this afternoon.¹ I must confess in the very beginning, that I am neither an archæologist nor have I had any training in or previous experience of the sort of work I had to do in this connection. As these inscriptions are in Medinah, and ordinarily European scholars do not get the opportunity of visiting this region, I decided that it would be worth while to attempt to study them as best I could rather than wait indefinitely for the arrival of persons better qualified for the task. And I feel grateful and honoured to find myself amongst you and to address this learned gathering.

After my wandering in Hedjaz for about three months, I came to Medinah in February last. I was studying the site of Mount Sal' just outside the northern wall of the city of Medinah; and this in connection with a lecture which I had to deliver at the Sorbonne on the battlefields of the time of the Prophet.² When I was climbing a rock of this mountain, I noticed several old writings on it. At first I thought they were merely inscribed by passers-by from among the thousands of the pilgrims who have been visiting Medinah for the last thirteen centuries. On a second visit to the same site, I discovered a host of other inscriptions even on the heights of the mountain. Accidentally I deciphered the names of Abū-Bakr and 'Umar together in one of these inscriptions, and it was enough to provoke a more serious study. I searched for the other inscriptions which I had neglected previously and tried to decipher their contents. I found about a score of them on the various rocks of Mount Sal', of which only four or five are legible. Others are almost wholly effaced by the work of sun and rain and the disintegration of the rocks. There may be many more and one may still decipher them all by a painstaking study coupled with experience and mechanical facilities. I possessed none of these. Even with my small camera I am not very expert. I venture anyhow to present before you the results of this first effort of mine.

When you leave the city of Medinah from the northern gate, called Bāb-ash-Shāmīy, you see at a distance of about a furlong or so a big

1. Lecture delivered at St. John's College, Oxford, on 11th May 1939, at 12 noon.

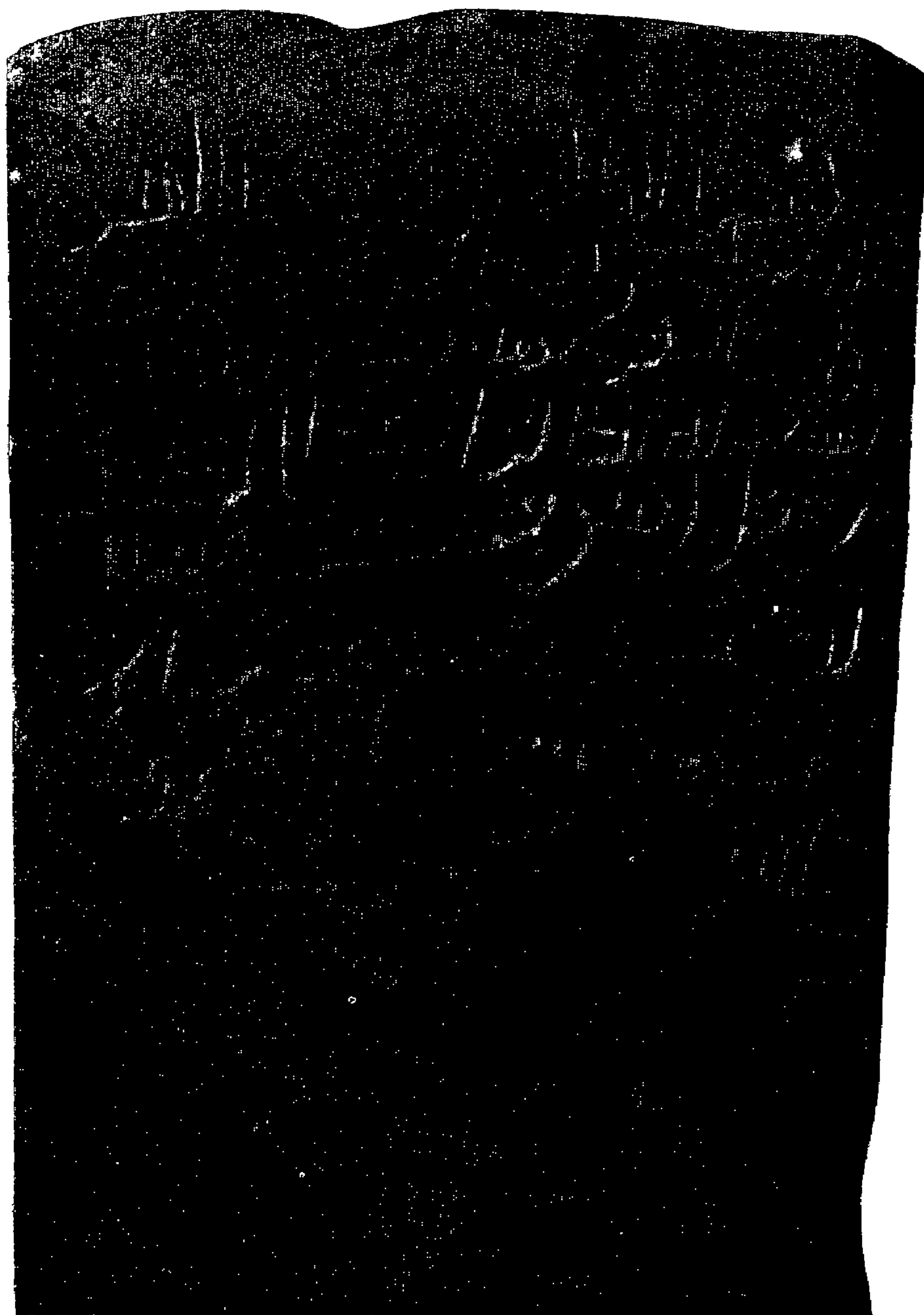
2. *Les Champs de bataille*, etc., published in the *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 1939.

mountain rising on your left hand. There is a magnificent fort on the summit in a commanding position, still in good repair and garrisoned, and consequently one cannot in the ordinary course of things get the facility of visiting the summit of the mountain but one must content oneself with the slopes around. Taking your route to the west along the city-wall, you soon reach a small pass in the mountain leading to the historic colony of the tribe of Banū-Ḥarām. The graveyard of the tribe still exists; and a pavilion, constructed not very long ago, commemorates the site of their meeting-place or club. It is on both sides of this pass and also towards the summit that one finds inscriptions most numerous. It is the inscriptions of the southern corner of the mountain on which I am going to speak presently. There are others on the western slopes, but their writing is much obliterated.

In the year 5 H., when a coalition of the Meccans, the Kinānah, the Ghatafānids and others besieged Medinah, the Prophet Muḥammad had just completed the digging of a trench along vulnerable points of the city. There has been much divergence of opinion among Muslim savants of recent years as to where exactly this *khandaq* or trench was dug. After these 1,353 lunar years since this siege, no traces of the trench may be expected to exist. Even the authors of the early eighth century of Hijrah found no remnants of it. In tracking the site, I have followed the classical historian of the city of Medinah, al-Matarīy. He was born in the last years of the seventh century and wrote a classical history of the monuments of the City of the Prophet. This work has ever proved indispensable to all later writers on the subject. I saw in the Shaikhul'islām library at Medinah a magnificent MS of this work called *At-ta'rif bimā ansat al-hujrah min ma'ālim dār al-hijrah*. According to this and other historians, mount Sal' was the base of Muslim operations during the siege of Medinah in the year 5 H.

We know from the historic constitution¹ of the city-state of Medinah, promulgated by the Prophet soon after his migration to that place, that the Muslim volunteers in war were to fight and were to be relieved by a sort of relay system. Again, in a siege of several weeks, fighting could not have gone on incessantly, and the soldiers passed their leisure hours in the club of the Banū-Ḥarām and elsewhere. Hence no wonder if some of these inscriptions originated at that time, and if some of the digging and boring implements were improvised for engraving writings on the rocks around. The first question that arises in this connection is whether the people of Medinah could at all read and write at this early date. There is an interesting passage in the *Miftāḥ as-Sa'ādah* of Tāshkoprizāde (I, 74-75) as to the introduction of writing in Mecca and Medinah. He mentions that Abū-Sufyān-ibn-Umayyah, uncle of the famous Abū-Sufyān-

1. Text in Ibn Hishām's *سيرة* and Abū-'Ubaid's *كتاب الأموال*. For detailed discussion see my paper in the Proceedings of the first conference of Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif and Wellhausen's *Gemeindeordnung von Medinah*.



Text —

TOMBSTONE OF CAIRO dated year 31 H.

- (سطر - ١) بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا القبر
 (٢) لعبد الرحمن بن حلد الحمرى اللهم اعمراه
 (٣) وادخله في رحمة منك وايدا معه
 (٤) وقل آمين وكتب هذا
 (٥) لكتب في حمادى الآ
 (٦) ثلثين
 (٧) حرمن ست احدى و
 (٨) ثلثين

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا
 لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَبَارَكْ فِيهِ
 لَنَا وَلِالْإِسْلَامِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا
 لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ
 لَوْلَا إِذْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ
 لَبَدَلْنَا دِينَنَا لَمَّا
 كُنَّا كَافِرِينَ
 اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ
 عَلَى نَبِيِّهِ مُحَمَّدٍ
 وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَوَحْدِهِ
 إِنَّكَ أَعْلَمُ الْغُيُوبِ



ibn-Harb, had studied Arabic writing in Yeman and from him many young men learned it in Mecca, including his nephew Abū-Sufyān and the son of his nephew, the future Khalīfah Mu'āwiyah. And it was from the father of Mu'āwiyah that the future Khalīfah 'Umar learned it. The people of Medinah, however, first learned it from a Jew, and at the time of the migration of the Prophet about a dozen people, whom the author names, could read and write there. The Prophet gave a great stimulus to literacy in Medinah and in the year 2 H., he went so far as to demand from his prisoners of the battle of Badr a promise to teach writing to Muslim children at Medinah as a ransom. About the same time the Quran (2:282) enjoined that all transactions on credit should be made by means of written documents. In an article which I have recently contributed to our Hyderabad quarterly magazine, *Islamic Culture*, on the Educational Policy of the Prophet, who although himself supposed to be an *Ummī*, illiterate, had had his very first revelation with the command to read (*iqra' bismi rabbik*). In brief, there is every reason to believe that many people could read and write in Medinah in the year 5 H., the time of the siege of Khandaq with which we are now concerned.

We must be very cautious in dating the inscriptions, especially early Arabic ones which have not yet been greatly studied and the characteristics of which are little known.

It is a commonplace that there was no era among the Muslims of the time of the Prophet or even until the year 16 H., and no wonder, therefore, that our inscriptions bear no dates. The only means of determining the date of such inscriptions will be, I suppose, a comparison with the writings of early Arabic papyrus, and the few inscriptions, documents and coins we have until now recovered. The condition of the rock is also to be considered.

Leaving aside the inscription of the year 17 H., which though published, has not yet been studied by me personally, the earliest Islamic inscription known to me is the tombstone of a certain 'Abdurrahmān bearing the date of the year 31 H. and now preserved in the Arab Museum of Cairo (Cf. Pl. 2). I am grateful to Prof. Wiet, the Curator of this museum, who furnished me with a photograph of this inscription. Again, we have two¹ pretended originals of the letters of the Prophet addressed to foreign potentates in the last days of the year 6 H., I mean the letter of Muqawqis of Egypt, (Pl. 3a and b) and the letter of al-Mundhir-ibn-Sāwā of Bahrain, (Pl. 4). The former was published in the J. A. (1854) and the latter in the ZDMG (1863). Further, we possess also the copies of the Quran

¹ Prof. Margoliouth was kind enough to draw my attention and introduce me to a Scotch Orientalist Mr Dunlop who has acquired the pretended original of the letter of the Prophet addressed to the Negus of Abyssinia. Mr. Dunlop assures that he is going shortly to publish the document in the JRAS. He has sent me a handwritten copy of the contents of the letter and has very obligingly promised to furnish me soon with a photographic copy of the same. It would not be courteous on my part either to utilise this photo or to express my opinion on it before Mr. Dunlop publishes his promised article along with the document.

attributed to the 3rd Khalīfah 'Uthmān, and preserved until the great war in Medinah (Pl. 5) and Tashkend.

We can also profitably study in this connection the gradual development of the Arabic alphabet, with the help of the inscriptions of Zebed (dated 511 A.C.) and of Harrān (dated 568 A.C.) and the script of the Umayyad coins of the last quarter of the 7th century (second half of the first century of Hijrah). We have to fill the gap between the date of the inscriptions and the coins, a gap which coincides with the period with which we are now concerned, from imagination.

The *Encyclopædia of Islam* (s.v. Arabia) has furnished us with a comparative table of the letters of the alphabet employed in these inscriptions and on coins and papyrus. A young Egyptian Semitist, Mr. Khalīl Nāmi, who is actually working on south Arabic inscriptions, has also recently published a work on the history of the Arabic script with the title *Aṣl al-khatt al-'arabī wa ta'rīkh tatawwurihi ilā mā qabl al-Islām*, containing similar tables. One may disagree with certain minor details of the tables of both these works and one would like corrections as well as additions. In a brief discourse like the present one further reference is, however, not possible.

I think it will suffice this afternoon to speak on some of the salient points of the material I have just referred to. I begin with the two original letters of the Prophet which were written only one or two years after the battle of Khandaq.

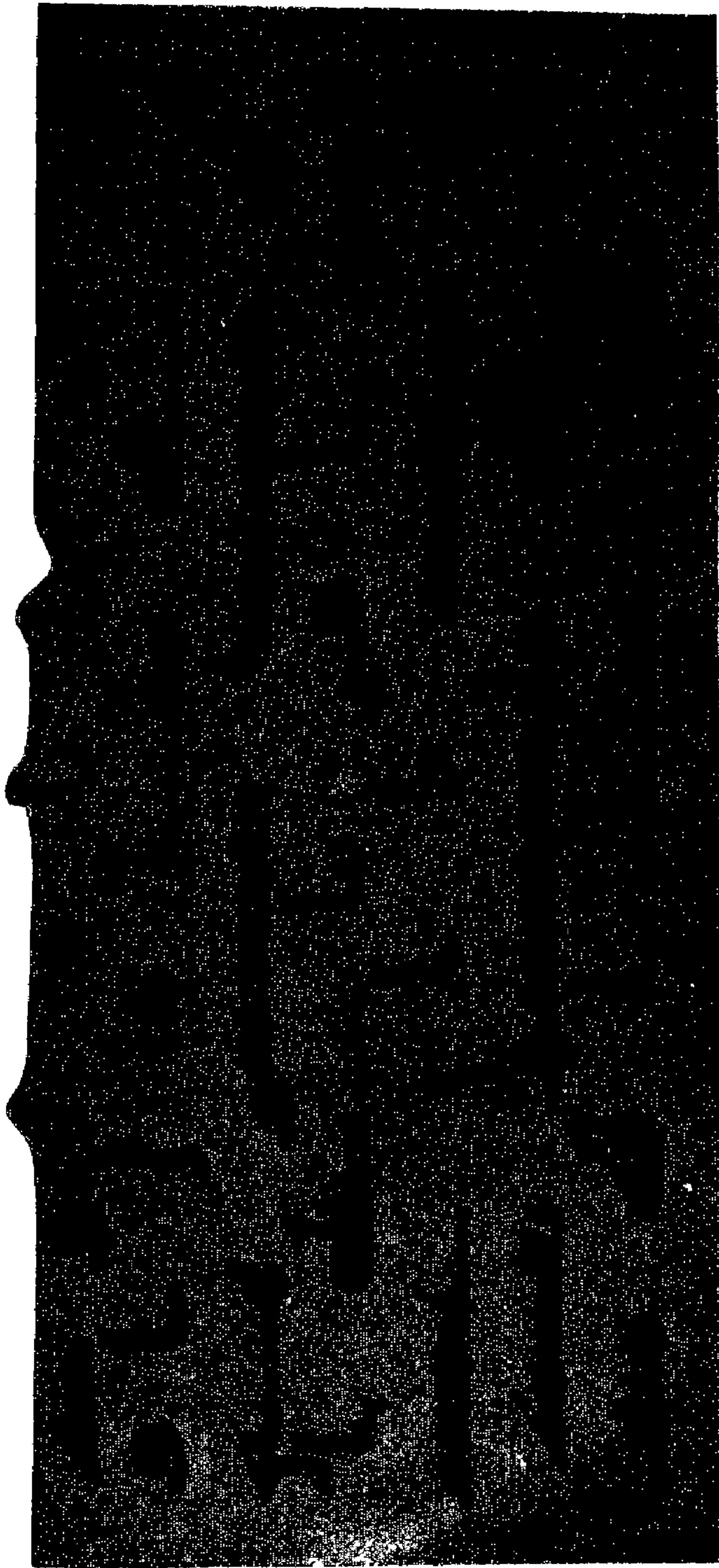
First the famous letter addressed to the Muqawqis of Egypt. (Cf. Plates 3a and b).¹ As is known, it was accidentally found in a convent near Akhmīm in Upper Egypt. Barthélemy, the French Orientalist, found in this convent a MS. the binding of which was effected by pasting several papers one upon the other on two sides of a sheet of parchment. These papers bore Coptic letters and curiosity led Barthélemy to disjoin them all carefully. The innermost stuff, the parchment, bore Arabic characters and was later deciphered as the letter of Muḥammad addressed to Muqawqis.

The author of the article *Muḳawḳis*, in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* has given an imposing list of those who have studied the parchment in question and rejected its authenticity. I must confess, I was very much disappointed when I consulted the works referred to in the *Encyclopædia*.

First Becker. He has only one line in the introduction to his *Papyrus Schott Reinhardt* (I, 3, n. 3) to the effect that "Probably it is a leaf of some note-book of hadith (*Traditionszettel*)."² I am afraid the late German Minister of Education had not even seen the photograph of the original. A *Traditionszettel* cannot bear the mark of a seal at the end of the letter.

Amélineau (J.A., 1888, p. 392) has no more solid basis for his passing remark on this parchment than the following words: "But I cannot accord this letter any historic value; I regard it even as completely

1. One may notice there the difference between a traced copy and a photograph.



THE QURAN OF THE CALIPH UTHMAN

Reduced copy of the lower half of a page from the original transferred from Mevlana's Tintul during the Circum-

Text -

(۲) ن فی م ا ف ا ا
(۳) و د ا ا ا ا علی ا
(۴) ف م ک م م م م م

(۱) من فرسا ، معود
(۳) و ک ک ک ک ک ک
(۵) لله ک ک ک ک ک ک
(۶) - لله و ا

apocryphal. The important rôle which Muqawqis has played, renders it easily comprehensible why a legend was created at his expense." No more reasons are given.

Karabacek had promised in his *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mazjaditen*, (Leipzig, 1874, p. 34-35) to write on the subject a special monograph, but to my knowledge he has not been able to do so. All that he has written along with this promise is that it was in his opinion written in a script not so old as the early years of Hijrah. May I be permitted to remark that opinions may differ, but I must not take your time with a comparative study of the scripts here.

Jirjizaidān dared to deny in 1904 (cf. *الامال Monthly Magazine*, Cairo) the very fact that the letter was published in 1854 in J.A. I do not know if he has ever written anything on the subject after Prof. Margoliouth had assured him of the fact in a letter.

Caetani (cf. *Annali dell'Islam*, anno 6) has also nothing to say on the subject of the parchment. He resents only that a patriarch should have sent two Christian slave girls to a pagan Arab—meaning the Prophet—and murmurs at the difficult question of the identity of Muqawqis.

Prof. Wiet, in a note on the passage concerned in the *Khiṭaṭ* of al-Maqrīzīy, has mainly two objections, viz.:—

1. The letter of Muqawqis, with the exception of the address, is word for word identical with the contents of the letters supposed to have been addressed by the Prophet to the Negus and to the Emperor Heraclius.

2. In spite of the fact that the letter in question is known to have been sold to Sultān 'Abdulmajīd I, a similar letter is still to be found in the possession of an Egyptian gentleman in Cairo.

But Prof. Wiet has not given any further details of this second copy. As for his first objection, regarding the identity of the contents, may I not reply that the three letters in question were written on the same day, addressed to three princes all of whom were Christians, and were written for exactly the same purpose of exhorting them to embrace Islam. Such similarity of text is not excluded even in 20th century diplomatic correspondence.

Lastly, Nöldeke, in the first edition of his *Geschichte des Quran*, (1860, p. 140) remarked: "there is nothing to doubt as regards the authenticity of the letter, whose text is to be found in so many of the best Arabic sources." But Schwally, in the 2nd edition of the same work (p. 190, n. 3) has formulated three objections which I shall consider one after the other:—

1. "In those days *Tonsiegel* was in use, that is, the seal was stamped on a sort of clay, and not a seal with ink."

Schwally has given no reference as to the source of his information. Ordinarily a clay-seal could be used for the envelope and not for the inner letter. Further, Ibn-'Asākir assures us that the Prophet had recourse to clay-seal only once because he had not then his seal at hand and this for

the treaty of Ukaidir. (Cited by Ibn-Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, s.v. Wahb-ibn-Ukaidir.) I am afraid, even this one instance is doubtful and may be attributed to false deciphering of the MS. on the part of the editor of Ibn-Ḥajar's work. For the passage in question has also been cited in *Kanzul-'ummāl* (V, Nos. 5660, 5661, 5704) on the authority of the same Ibn-'Asākir, and we read there *ختمه بظفره* (i.e., sealed it with his nail-impression—an antique usage¹ among the Semitic people, especially of Ḥīrah the country of origin of Ukaidir)—and not *ختمه بطينة* (i.e., sealed it with clay) as in the printed edition of Ibn-Ḥajar. The similarity of the graphic forms of the two words *بظفره* and *بطينة* in manuscripts is not difficult of demonstration. Further, a classical author (Ibn-Rustah in his *Geography*, p. 192, cf. also ath-Tha-'ālaby in his *Latā'if-al-ma'ārif*, cited by al-Kattānī) assures us that a clay-seal was first used among the Muslims by the Khalīfah 'Umar. Moreover, the incident recorded by Ibn-Ḥajar has been mentioned by Ibn-Sa'd (*Ṭabaqāt*, II/1, p. 120) and al-Wāqidīy (*Maghāzī*, MS. Brit. Mus. fol. 231 a) and they both agree on the word "nail-impression." Unfortunately the abridged edition of Ibn-'Asākir's *تاريخ دمشق* (vol. 1, p. 115), when mentioning the treaty of Ukaidir, does not mention the seal at all.

2. "Such a formal letter must contain the name of the scribe and the name of the bearer."

I am afraid Schwally was thinking of the 20th century credentials or at least the foreign department of the Byzantine Empire. The Arab Foreign Office of the time of the Prophet, when only six years had passed since his migration to Medinah, was in fact called upon for the first time in the Arabian history to address a letter to a foreign prince, and it was even with difficulty that the Prophet was persuaded to have a seal engraved for him bearing his name.

3. "Probably the script of the documents in those days was not so definitely Kufic as in the pretended original."

I need not take up your time in discussing a point on which the author himself is not sure.

In fact, the document in question needs to be re-studied by competent scholars before we can finally dispose it of.

As regards the second original, the letter addressed to al-Mundhir-ibn-Sāwā, Persian governor of the province of Bahrain, (Pl. 4,) there is only the small note of Fleicher, the editor of ZDMG, which was later included in his *Kleinere Schriften*. This note has been characterised by Schwally (op. cit.) as a "vernichtende Kritik," an annihilating criticism. Let us see what it was.

In fact, Fleicher had received a letter from the attaché of the German Embassy in Constantinople saying that an Italian had brought there from Damascus a document on parchment, for sale. The German correspondent enclosed also the photo of a traced copy (*Durchzeichnung*) of the original

1. Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, I, 179. Also Krückmann, Ch. Edwards and others

which Fleicher reproduced in the ZDMG along with his remarks. The editorial note began by saying that the Italian owner seemed to have wished to ascertain whether the hen still lived which had given such a nice golden egg to the seller of the letter of Muqawqis. All that Fleicher has to say may be analysed as follows :—

1. It is known that the Prophet sent a letter to al-Mundhir yet its text is nowhere preserved in Arabic histories.

2. The first few lines are clear and legible, consisting of the name of the sender and the addressee yet the rest is nothing but lines imitated after Arabic script.

3. In this latter portion there are a few Arabic words which one can discern yet there are such grave spelling mistakes that they cannot be attributed to an Arab scribe.

The first objection that the text of the letter has not been preserved in Arabic sources, is due to lack of search. For as-Suhailiy, Ibn-Ṭūlūn, al-Qalqashandīy Ibn-al-Qaiyim and a number of others have quoted the complete text of the letter ; and such an old author as Ibn-Sa'd has given copious extracts. Our sources are quite unanimous in the wording of the contents of the letter which is perfectly corroborated by the original in hand.

The second objection must be simply set aside because with a little pain one can read every word of it from the beginning to the end. The admission that in what appeared to be Arabic-looking nonsense one can still discover some phrases in good Arabic script, is enough to suggest that what remains can also be deciphered ; and is in fact deciphered.

That there are spelling mistakes may be due to bad tracing and nothing else. Fleicher had found only four such instances in the document concerned. Of these al-Mundhir (first word from the right of the second line) is written with (ز) and not with the correct (ذ). This is clearly due to the age of the document, and the ink has faded out, as is evident from many other portions of the document. A dash of hardly a millimetre distinguished between these two letters. I think the same reason must be attributed to the double sign for the letter (ي) in غيره (cf. 3rd line, fifth word from the right). The folding of the document may have produced this sign which the tracer regarded as forming part of the writing. Or is it merely a mistake of the copyist ?¹ That the (هـ) in (اشهد) is written with a (ع) (cf. 1. 3, 7th word), is not true. For the scribe has always,—and to be precise, 6 times in this document,—used the same figure for the letter (هـ). The same shape of (هـ) repeats itself in the letter of Muqawqis which I have just spoken of. The last spelling mistake is said to be the word *fa-ammā* which has been written with (ع) instead of the correct

1. Incidentally I may refer you to an old Arabic inscription, discovered in Palmyra by Prof. Sauvaget. We find there a similar mistake and the word آمين has been written آمين cf. *Inventaire des Inscriptions de Palmyre* par J. Cantineau, p. 51 (Beyrouth, 1933)].

(١) (cf. l. 4, 7th word). This is but a grave misapprehension on the part of the German Orientalist. For the misread (ع) belongs in fact to the preceding word and the (ع) of Fleicher is in fact the (له) of the word (رسوله). It is curious that Fleicher reads the first circle as (ع) and the second circle in the same word as (م). In fact the scribe has always written the letter (ه) in this document with similar circles. I may point out that there is very little difference between the final (ه) and the middle (م) in this document (cf. l. 2 المنذر and l. 10 الحزبة).

I must again repeat that this criticism of mine does not signify that I am fully convinced of the authenticity of the document concerned. I simply want to emphasise the need of further study of it, since what has up till now been written is not free from grave doubts and the points raised in these studies may easily be explained.

A comparative study of the script of our inscriptions with that of the documents to which I have referred in the beginning, will not be possible here. I prefer that some expert and more competent scholar should undertake the task. I should like at once to pass to the inscriptions which are the main object of the paper.

As remarked above, these inscriptions are considerable in number. Of these, near the summit of the southern end of Mount Sal' (Pl. 6) we find about half a dozen inscriptions not very far from each other. There are places in this part of the mountain where the rock does not require evening for the purpose of inscribing words. It resembles slate-stone. It is in fact on such portions of the rock that we find these inscriptions.

Near the summit, of which I have just spoken, there is a big rock in the shape of the capital letter L. The lower part or the base presents a big couch on which a dozen of people can easily sit and take rest (Pl. 7). The perpendicular part of the rock bears on the right hand an inscription of 4 lines (Pl. 8), which I have read as follows :—

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Night and day 'Umar | امسى واصبح عمر |
| 2. and Abū-Bakr take shelter (?) | وابوبكر يتودعان (يتوبان؟ يتضرعان؟) |
| 3. with God from every | الى الله من كل |
| 4. thing unpleasant. | ما يكره |

Its dimensions are 28½ inches broad and 21 inches high.

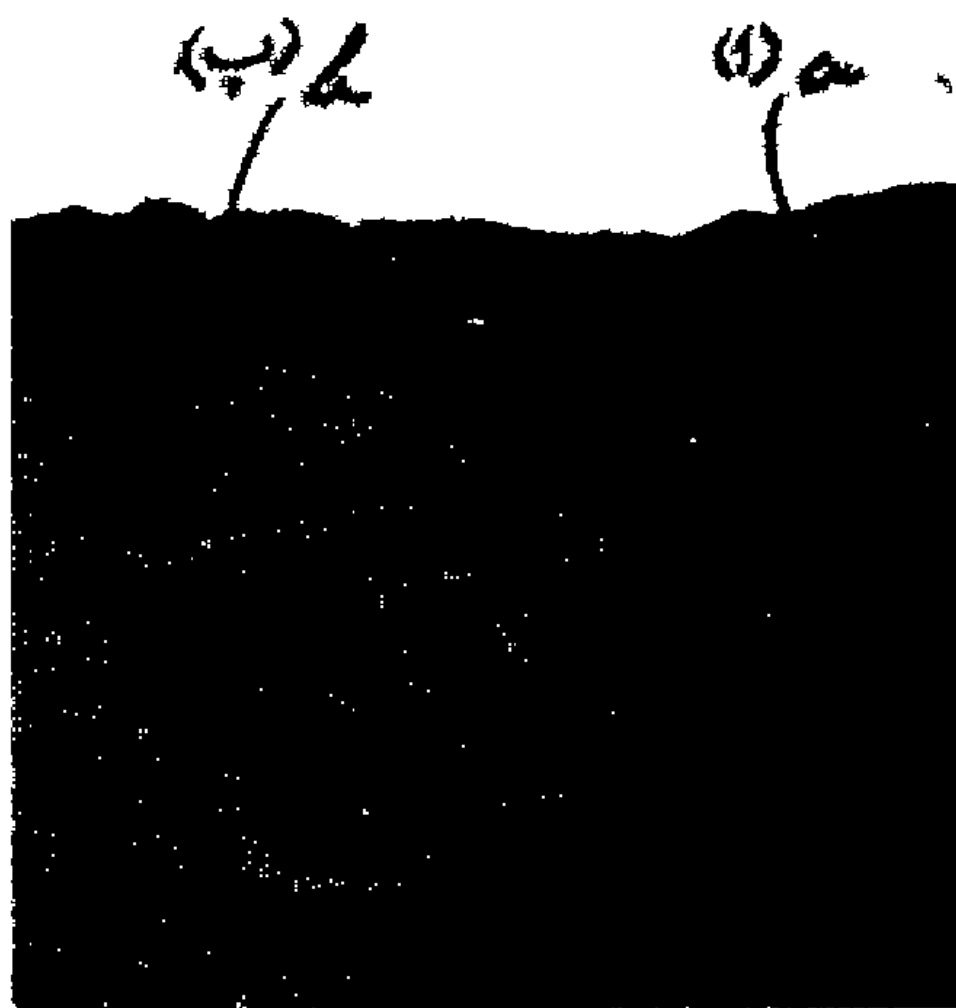
About fifteen years ago, this inscription was discovered and first published in the *Mir'āt al-ḥaramain* of Ibrāhīm Rif'at Pāsha, who accompanied his Khedivial master in the Hajj. His rendering of the last word of the second line is (يشكوان) in which I differ from him. In 1935, a young scholar of Medinah, 'Abdulquddūs al-Hāshimīy, too, published this inscription in his history of the monuments of Medinah (*Āthār al-Madīnah*). He has reproduced the photo of Ibrāhīm Pāsha's work, which has become

Pl 6

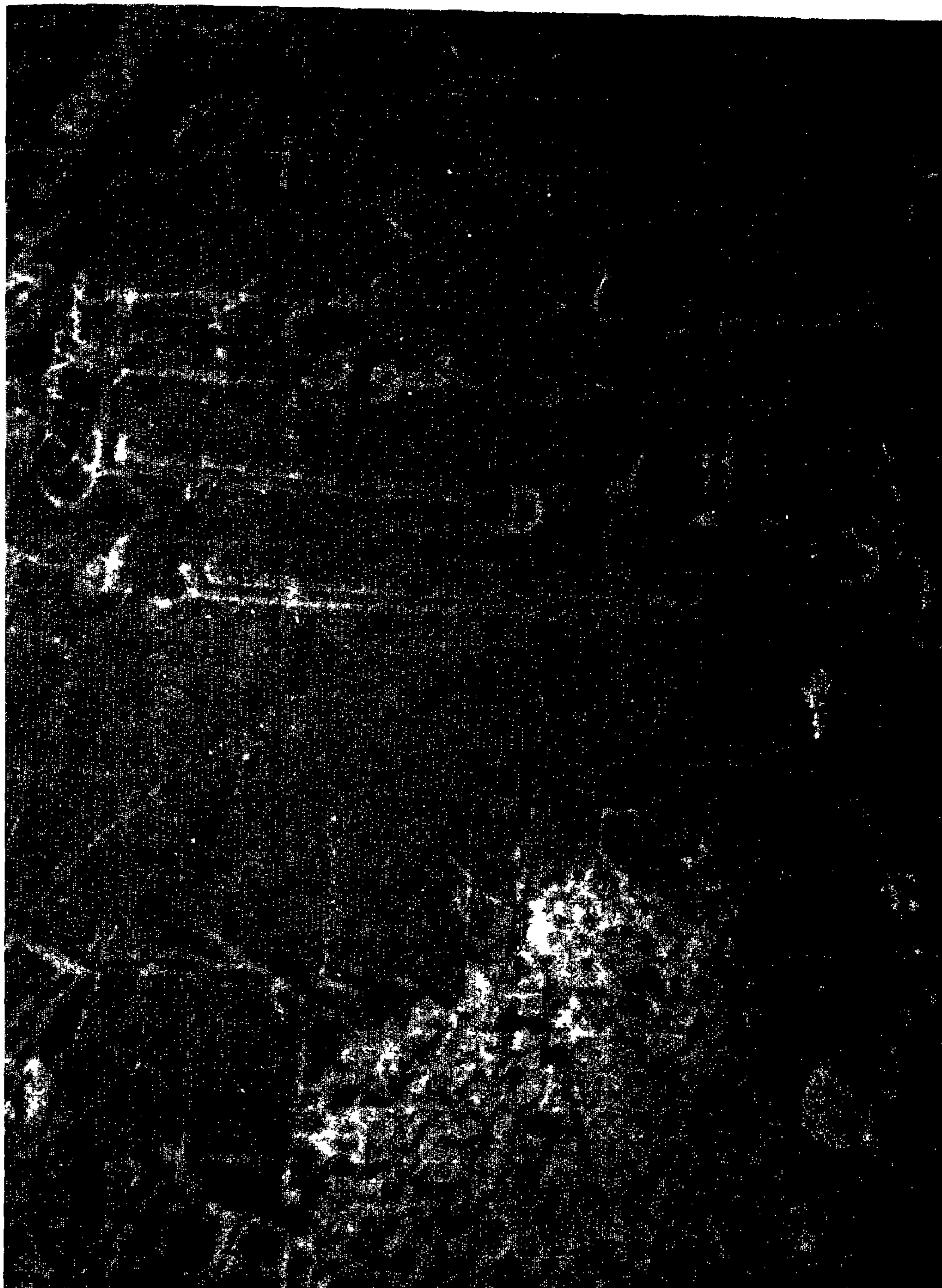


SOUTHERN END OF MOUNT SAL

Pl 7



SITE OF INSCRIPTIONS A & B



INSCRIPTION A



illegible, and he has quoted the reading of the same author without any further remarks. Mr. Ibrāhīm Ḥamdī Qarpūtlī, present Curator of the Shaikhul-islām Library of Medinah told me personally that it was he who had first discovered this inscription. I am afraid the visit of so many enthusiasts has led somebody to scratch on the writing to render it clearer for photography, and in fact I found the writing fresher here than elsewhere.

On the left hand of the same rock, there is a double inscription (Pl. 9), in at least two handwritings. The right-hand portion, written in magnificent Quranic type, has suffered much owing to the disintegration of the rock. I could decipher only as follows :—

1. Wise.

حكيم

2. And believes in the.

ويؤمن بالـ

3. 'Umar son of al-

عمر ابن الـ

4. Bakr.

بكر

The left-hand portion, a big inscription of about a score of lines, consists of signatures, many of which have been effaced by the hand of Nature. Probably part of the right-hand portion has crossed this inscription and consequently they cannot date from the same time. The dimensions of the whole of this double inscription are 63 inches broad and 47 inches high. In this first communication, my reading must naturally be defective. It is as follows :—

1. I am 'Umārah

انا عمارة

2. son of Ḥazm. I am

بن حزم انا

3. Maimūn

ميمون . .

4. I am Muḥammad son of

انا محمد بن

5. 'Abdullāh. I am M

عبدالله انا م

6. son of 'Awsajah.

بن عوسجة

7. I am Khalaf.

انا خلف

8. I am Sulaimān al-Ahmar (?) I am . .

انا سليمان الاحمر (؟) انا . .

9. I am Sahl son of

انا سهل ابن . .

10. I am Ma'qil al-Juhanīy. I ask . .

انا معقل الجهني اسعد

11. O God . . I am . .

يا الله (؟) انا

12. I am Sa'd son of Mu'ādh.

انا سعد بن معاذ

13. ... son of ... I am... ابن أنا
14.
15. I am 'Alīy son of Abū-Ṭālib. أنا على بن ابو طلب
16. M Muhammad. م محمد

I have not found time, since my return from Medinah, to make a close study for the identification of these personalities. All these names are very common among the Muslims of the early days. The jolly fellow 'Umārah-ibn-Ḥazm, who tops the inscription, had according to historians taken an active part in Badr as well as Khandaq. Al-Wāqidīy records that when Zaid-ibn-Thābit was sound asleep after some digging of the *khandaq*, 'Umārah did not hesitate to conceal the clothes and armours of Zaid, who was terrified when he awoke. As for Khalaf, he is better known as the father of Aswad. He was the son of 'Abd-Yaghūth, and not unnaturally he did not like to associate himself with such un-Islamic polytheistic names. As regards Sulaiman al-Aḥmar, the reading is doubtful. It has, however, been suggested to me by an eminent Professor in Paris that we are dealing here with Salmān-al-Fārsīy with a *kunya* not known to us. With the exception of Ma'qil-al-Juhanīy, other names occurring in the inscription are too well known to require mention.

I have still grave doubts in dating this inscription. If someone like to take it as originating from the time of the battle of Khandaq, it will be easy for him to explain the name of the Prophet Muḥammad-ibn-'Abdillāh and also the grammatically false 'Alīy-ibn-Abū-Ṭālib. For during some leisure when relieved from duty, some soldiers first may have inscribed their names, saying that I am so and so and their comrades followed suit. The Prophet may have passed by the spot during his inspections, noticed his soldiers busy inscribing, and in order to participate in their enjoyment asked some of his companions to add his name also. Many others present may very likely have filled the space at once with their signatures. Moreover, the importance of the expression أنا (i.e., I am so and so) should not be lost sight of.

At almost the end of the left-hand portion of the inscription, I have deciphered 'Alīy-ibn-Abū-Ṭālib. Apparently this is a grave mistake of grammar, something like saying "corpus christus" instead of "corpus christi." But I can refer you to the following quotations to explain it:—

1. Al-Balādhurīy in his *Futūḥ* (p. 60) quotes:—

”وقال يحيى بن آدم: وقد رايت كتابا في ايدي التجرائين كانت نسخة شبيهة بهذه النسخة وفي اسفله: وكتب على بن ابو طالب - ولا ادري ماذا اقول فيه“

The editor of *Futūḥ* has added here in a foot note a remark of Ibn-'Asākir citing further cases of documents containing "ابن ابو"

2. Aṣ-Ṣafadīy in his *Wafī-bil-wafayāt* (I, 39) says:—

”وبعضهم: يكتب على بن ابو طالب رضى الله عنه ويلفظ به ابي - بالياء“

3. Al-Kattānī quotes in his very interesting work called :
” التراتيب الادارية والعمالات والصناعات والمتاجر والحالة العلمية التي كانت على عهد
تأسيس المدينة الاسلامية في المدينة المنورة “

(Vol. I, p. 155) as follows :—

” وقد ذكر ابن سلطان في شرح الشفا في مبحث فصاحته عليه السلام ان ابن ابي زيد
حكى في نوادره عن الاصمعي عن يحيى بن عمر أن قريشا كانت لا تغير الاب في الكنية : تجعله
مرفوعا في كل وجه من الجرو والنصب والرفع . ٥٠ - اي كما يقال على بن ابوطالب . وقرى ثبت يدا
ابولهب “

4. Further, while editing the letters of the Prophet, I came across four or five instances when *ibn-Abū-Tālib* or *ibn-Bū-Quhāfah* has been written. (Cf. my *Documents sur la Diplomatie musulmane à l'époque du Prophète et des Khalifes Orthodoxes*, documents No. 21, 22, 33 and 80). The letter of *Tamīm-ad-Dārīy* preserved by *Faḍlallāh al-'Umarīy* in his *Masālik'al-abṣār* will, however, be found in the document No 33 of my Corpus.

5. The well-known Iranian scholar Mr. M. A. Qazvini told me recently in Paris that there is a Quran preserved in some shrine of Irān which bears the words (وكتب على بن ابوطالب) at the end. The pious and orthodox possessors had much embarrassment and took pains to explain that in ancient times the letter (ى) must have been written in the shape of the modern (و). I have not seen this copy of the Quran personally nor its photographs, yet concerning the name of a scribe at the end of this copy of the Quran I may refer you to the article *al-Juhanīy* in the *Ansāb* of *as-Sam'ānīy*, which says that in the time of the author of this work there was extant a copy of the Quran at the end of which was written (وكتب عقبة بن عامر بيده), and that the owners were sure that it was written by that famous companion of the Prophet. I mean to emphasise that the name of the scribe in the copies of the Quran was not rare in classical times.

6. Mr. Qazvini has further drawn my attention to the common expressions *Bāyazīd*, *Bū-Sa'īd*, *Balḥārith*, etc., which never change in the different cases like the City *Bukair* in Egypt. *Ibn-Jubair*, however, being a stranger, had made it in his *رحلة Travels* to decline.

Coming to some other inscriptions ; some feet below this rocky couch there are several other inscriptions. My readings are as follows :—

1. Inscription C :—

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. May God accept from 'Umar ! | يقبل الله عمر |
| 2. May God treat | الله يفعل |
| 3. 'Umar with forgiveness ! | عمر بالمغفرة |

2. Inscription D :—

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. ... the believers. Admit me in the pious ! | المؤمنون الحق[ة] إلى بالصلح[ين] |
| 2. May God make 'Umar from the people of paradise, | يجعل الله عمر من اهل الجنة |
| 3. [him and] Abū-Bakr, on account of the believers-like acts ! | [و] ابو بكر بعمل المؤمنين |

As for the expression “yaj'al Allāh... Abū-Bakr” instead of the more correct Abā-Bakr, I may refer back to what I have just mentioned in connection with the expression Ibn-Abū-Tālib, and also to Ibn-Hishām (p. 344 : ان الله جازلن بروا تقى ومحمد) and Ibn-Sa'd (I/2, p. 28-29 : ان الله لكم : ان الله جازلن بروا تقى ومحمد). (Dimensions : 31 inches by 9½ inches).

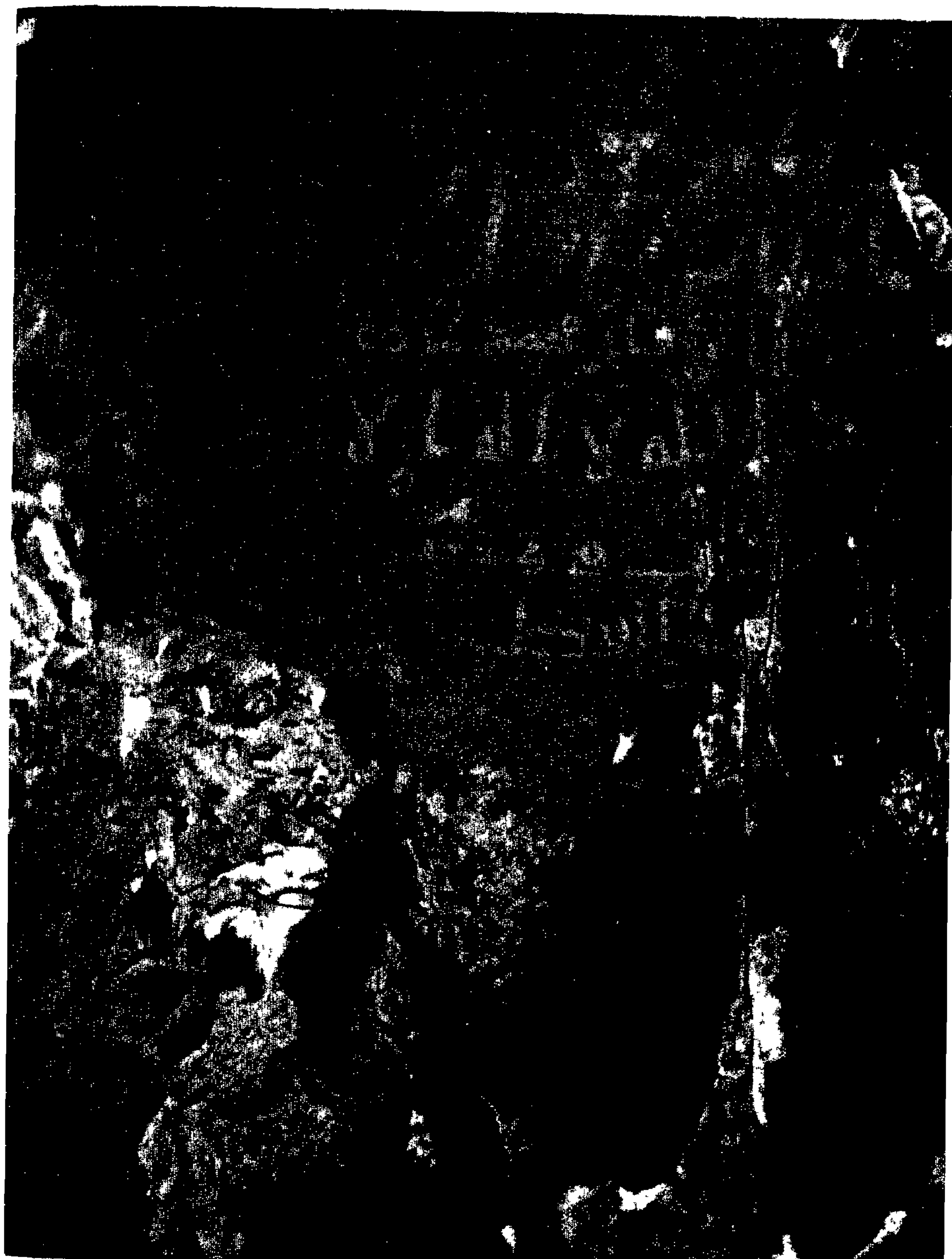
3. Inscription E (cf. Pl. 10) :—

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. × × × × | × × × × |
| 2. I testify that there is no God | اشهد ان لا اله |
| 3. [but G]od and I testify that that (sic) Muhammad is His servant. | [الا اله واشهد ان ان محمد (sic) عبده |
| 4. [and] His [Messenger]. With Thy mercy O God. There is no God but | [ورسول] به برحمتك يا الله لا اله الا |
| 5. [Him. I]n God is my trust and He is the Lord. | [هو عدا]ى الله توكلت وهو رب |
| 6. × × of the Exalted Throne. | العرش العظيم × × |

Apparently there are signs and words not belonging to the text of this inscription from which they differ even in handwriting and visibility. I have no great difficulty in finding myself in accord with Prof. Kraus of Cairo that some more ancient, perhaps a pre-Islamic or an uncouth inscription was effaced to find place for the one now existing. Or perhaps a man with bad handwriting began to inscribe and another, more proficient, completed the work.

Note the expression (ان محمد) and not the classical (ان محمدا).

It is interesting to note that almost everywhere the name of 'Umar is present. If we have here the handwriting of the famous Khalifah, I shall not be astonished, because of his restless nature and his mastery of calligraphy of which he was among the foremost of those who had learnt this art at Mecca before the advent of Islam. His intimate friendship with Abū-Bakr and the veneration which he had for his senior friend, explain the combination of these two names in several of these inscriptions and the precedence given to Abū-Bakr's name. And in fact al-Wāqidiy in



INSCRIPTION E.

his *Maghāzī* says that during the campaign of Khandaq Abū-Bakr and 'Umar never parted: they worked together, they walked together and they sat together. And that Abū-Bakr often climbed the summit of Mountain Sal'.¹

This is my first communication of the inscriptions of which only one has previously been published. I hope to be able to continue the study of the subject with the help of scholarly suggestions which I trust will not be lacking in aid of this scientific work in these difficult times.²

M. HAMIDULLAH.

”وكان أبو بكر وعمر لا يتفرقان في عمل ولا مسير ولا منزل ينقلان التراب في ثيابهما يومئذ
من العجلة إذ لم يجدوا مكانا لتلاعبة المسلمين .. ورايت أبا بكر وعمر واقفين على رأسه
(محمد i. e.) ينحيان الناس أن يمروا به فينهبوه .. فكان أبو بكر رضي الله عنه يقول ..
لقد كنت أوافي على سلع فأنظر على بيوت المدينة فإذا رأيتهم هادين حمدت الله

(MS. Brit. Mus. fol. 103, 105. cf. also *Sirah Shāmīyah* (MS. Qaraviyīn.)

2. P. S. These words uttered in May last, are truer still now that a war has broken out in which my own State has joined hands with its British and French allies. At that time, however, I had in my mind the decreasing interest shown by European countries in Oriental studies.