

A BYZANTINE CHURCH AT UMM ER RÛS.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A.

THE accompanying plate represents the ground plan of a small church that has recently been discovered at Umm er Rûs, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Beit Nettif and $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Deir Abân (Inch Survey, Sheet 17), in the course of agricultural operations. From the nature of the ground in the neighbourhood it is obvious that it formed part of an extensive series of monastic buildings, the foundations of which would no doubt be discoverable by excavation.

The church was an early Byzantine building of simple character, consisting of narthex, nave with side aisles, and chancel. There were two pillars on each side of the nave; the bases of three remain.¹ These no doubt supported a dome. The walls, to a large extent, consist of mud, with stone and plaster facing: the door jambs alone show good building with well dressed stones. (This is characteristic of early Byzantine work in Palestine.) It is noticeable that the doorways from the church to the narthex, and from the narthex out, are not opposite one another. There is a plain window, blocked up, in the west wall of the narthex beside the door, but no other opening is to be found in the existing portions of the walls. The maximum height of wall remaining is 5 feet.

At the east end of the south aisle is a shaft communicating with tombs under the church. It would be necessary to clear this out in order to explore them properly.

The chancel was screened with an eikonostasis, the sockets of which remain. It is raised two steps above the level of the nave. As tesserae of the mosaic pavement can be seen running under the steps, it is possible that this was an alteration subsequent to the completion and paving of the church.

¹ The south-eastern base has completely disappeared, but is shown in its proper place in the plan. The moulding of these bases is shown with the plan (above the apse of the church).

In the south-west corner of the south aisle is the usual drain for carrying off water used for washing the mosaic floor.

The patterns of the mosaic pavement are shown in the plan, but it is impossible to indicate differences of colour within the limits of the scale. The following list of the colours employed is therefore appended:—

Ground Colour.—Yellowish white throughout.

In the Chancel.—Large square in apse, blue line; cross of bluish grey stone (not mosaic); rectangles in corners of cross, red surrounded by blue line. [Mosaic fractured at ends of cross.] Small crosses at angles of square, dark blue with W-shaped finials in red; colours of small ornaments between them similar; dots on south side, blue. Knot between large square and ornamental cross west of it; a band of black, red (double width), yellow, black interlacing with a similar band having brown instead of red. [The latter runs north and south. The colours are enumerated from the outside edge inward here and in all similar cases.] Cross and inscriptions: cross, indigo line; circles upon keys and lozenge, brown; rectangles on keys red, with indigo margin. Hebrew inscription indigo, the others red. Scroll red; leaves and fruit blue; vase blue lined; the upper compartments red, of the five lower the first, third, and fifth yellow, brown, and yellow; the second and fourth red.

In the Nave.—Small squares at the ends of the keys of the cross; background of crosses blue, twists upon them red and yellow; yellow spot in the centre of each loop and between each pair and the edge of the cross. In the angles of the cross, lozenges blue, red, and yellow. Large cross; blue outline; guilloche blue, red (double width), yellow, blue. Angle pieces and V-shaped edge ornaments blue and yellow and red and yellow checker alternately. Central square blue and yellow checker in north-east and south-west quarters, red and yellow in the others. Ends of the horizontal keys, blue and yellow. A red line (broken in places by fractures, subsequently repaired with coarser mosaic) runs between the top of this cross and the eikonostasis. Square in north-west corner of cross; margin blue, corner spots red, outer guilloche, east and west members blue, yellow, red (double), blue; north and south members blue, yellow, indigo, blue. Circular segments between guilloches red on yellow ground; inner guilloche as outer (north-west member of inner same colours as west member of outer, and so on). Triangular dots in angles of inner guilloche blue, with red bases. Square, south-west corner of cross. Margin blue, corner-pieces red, with blue base and perpendicular; the members of the guilloche four square with the church blue, red (double), yellow, blue; the others blue, indigo (double), yellow, blue. Centre a checker of red and yellow with a blue lozenge and central dot marked on it. Red line between these squares and the large rectangle between them. Large rectangle below cross; all diagonal lines blue, all vertical and horizontal lines red. Blue line round whole. The dots are small lozenges of four tesserae each, blue and red in alternate squares (blue in the north-east square). Guilloche at entrance, blue, red (double), yellow, blue. Red checker in the centre. Rectangle containing crosses: blue margin, crosses red and blue alternately (the two at the ends of each, red). Lozenges between, blue, red, blue.

In the North Aisle.—Row of dots in the corner, two blue tesserae, one red in each. End crosses indigo, blue, red, yellow. Between aisle columns, margin of rectangle red and blue; squares blue, red, yellow, blue; lozenges blue, red, yellow.

In the South Aisle.—Between aisle columns, twist and included knots blue, yellow, red (double), yellow. Cross in circle at end, red; dots in corners blue, red; three crosses at top central blue (on foot blue, yellow, red), others red.

In the Narthex.—Margin of square blue; guilloche, first and third members blue, red (double), yellow, blue; second and fourth green instead of red. Crosses in circles green and red alternately. Central cross red.

Dimensions of the church:—Length of nave, 32 feet 6 inches; total breadth of nave and aisles, 28 feet 10 inches; aisles, 5 feet



FIG. 1.—INSCRIBED FRAGMENT OF TOMBSTONE AT UMM ER RÛS.

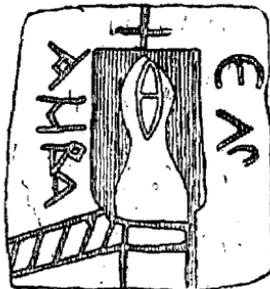


FIG. 2.—INSCRIBED STONE AT UMM ER RÛS.

10 inches across; depth of chancel, 16 feet; narthex, 7 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 30 feet.

The inscriptions in the mosaic at the east end are four in number—two in Syriac, one in Hebrew, and one in Greek. The three former are very obscure, and were probably set by some person unable to read them. I will not venture to say more than that the lettering in the longer of the Syriac inscriptions is not altogether inconsistent with a translation of the Greek legend, which also shows signs of illiteracy. It reads: + **KYPOY** (*sic*) **IQANNOY**.

The lower fragment of a tombstone (Fig. 1) was found

lying on the fractured part of the mosaic south of the cross in the chancel. It is broken in two pieces. It bears the lower part of a moulded panel and the inscription—'Ἐπὲρ σωτηρίας Εὐγένειας ἔλπιδι (sic) Ἄ[μην].

Perhaps the most interesting object in the church is a small cubical block of stone standing in the south-east corner of the north aisle. It bears engraved a design on its upper surface (Fig. 2) which seems to represent a human bust in a panel;

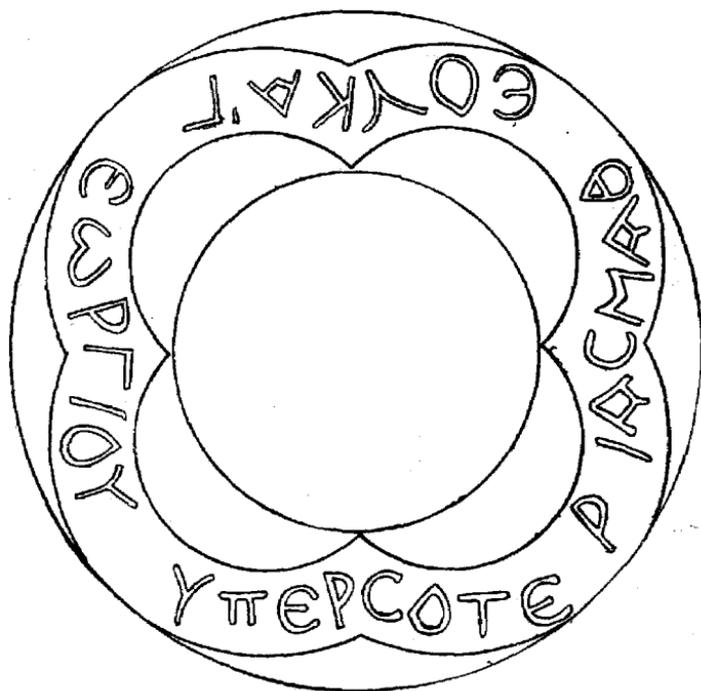


FIG. 3.—GREEK INSCRIPTION ON FONT AT MALKATHAH.

instead of a face is the letter θ . There is an inscription on the sides of the panel; the portion to the left seems to read **AMBA**, but that to the right is defaced. The ladder-like object on the left shows traces of red colouring. A squeeze is forwarded with this paper.

The discovery of an inscribed font at Malkathah, about a mile southwards from Umm er Rûs, may here conveniently be recorded. At this place there are extensive, but much dilapi-

dated, ecclesiastical remains, and also a large cave adapted as a columbarium. The font is cylindrical below, quatrefoiled above, and on the lip (Fig. 3) bears in five ornamental capitals the inscription— $\Upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \sigma\omicron\tau\epsilon\text{---}\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma\ \text{Ma}\theta\text{---}\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \text{T}\text{---}\epsilon\omega\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu.$ ¹

NOTE ON THE INSCRIBED JAR-HANDLE AND WEIGHT FOUND AT TELL ZAKARĪYA.²

By Prof. C. CLERMONT-GANNEAU, LL.D.

THE excavations recently undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund at Tell Zakariya do not yet seem to have settled the question of the site of Gath.³ At least, however, they have established the fact that an important Biblical city was erected there, the identity of which has still to be determined, and they have brought to light some objects of interest, two of which are of exceptional value, by reason of the Hebrew inscriptions in Phœnician characters which are engraved upon them. I beg to offer a few words of explanation upon these two objects.

I. THE HANDLE OF THE ROYAL JAR OF HEBRON.

The enigmatic symbol accompanying the inscription is nothing but the *Egyptian scarab with four wings expanded*, seen from behind, with head on high. To be convinced of this it is sufficient to compare it with that which is engraved on the seal of Abd Hadad, which I have published

¹ See "Revue Biblique Internationale," 1896, p. 273.

² See *Quarterly Statement*, April, 1899, pp. 104 and 107.

³ This topographical problem, as is well known, has given rise to numerous hypothetical and very divergent solutions. There is one that I do not remember to have met with before and which may, perhaps, be worthy of consideration. May not Gath possibly be, quite simply, Beit Jibrin? Certainly a serious preliminary objection presents itself at once: Gath is clearly distinguished from Eleutheropolis—Beit Jibrin—by the Onomasticon. But is this a sufficient reason for rejecting the hypothesis? The contradictions and halting attempts of the authors of the Onomasticon on this point show that they did not exactly know where to locate Gath. Beit Jibrin was certainly the site of an important town; now, the equivalent of the site and name of Betogabra does not occur again in the Bible, and, on the other hand, the name of Gath disappeared early. May not the second name have replaced the first, just as, during the Greek period, it was itself replaced by Eleutheropolis? May not Gath, the home of Goliath ("the giant") subsequently have been called "the city of giants" (Betogabra). The proximity of Moreshat and Beit Jibrin and the expressive determinative added to the name of the former city—Moreshat Gath—are to be observed.