In his book Ancient libraries of Iraq from the earliest times until the year A.H. 1000 (A.D. 1591), the Iraqi historian and bibliographer Gurgis Awwad provides some interesting data concerning the history of the Monastery of Bâqûqâ and its library. These data have to be taken into account when deciphering and evaluating an old Arabic owner’s entry on fol. 54b of MS Syr. 341 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Peshitta code-number 8al). The note is hardly legible to the naked eye but can be read with some difficulty with an uveol-lamp. It appears to have remained unknown to the biblical scholars and art historians who have studied this ancient illuminated codex. My attention was drawn to it by my colleague K. D. Jenner, of the Leiden Peshitta Institute, during our visit to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in August 1983. To him I also owe much of my bibliographical knowledge concerning this manuscript.

Before I discuss the owner's-entry itself it may be useful to present an annotated translation of the passage of Awwad’s book:

The library of the Monastery of Bâqûqâ. This monastery (once) existed in Bâqûqâ in the country of Adiabene, near the left border of the Upper Zâb, at (the distance of) a journey of seven hours to the West from (the City of) Irbil. The Monastery of Bâqûqâ was founded by

---

4 Cf. E.I, s.v. “Irbil” (art. of D. Sourdol).
the monk Sabar Yashûc Al-Awânî in the 7th century A.D. During the lifetime of its founder it (already) housed fifty monks. Thereupon it was also known as the “Monastery of Sabar Yashûc”.

Some of the Arabic “Monastery Books” make mention of this monastery. Ibn Fadl Allâh al-‘Umarî, quoting from Ibn al-Mustawfi’s “History of (the City of) Irbil” (which dates from A.H. 634/A.D. 1236) describes it as “existing until this very day and containing many monks”.

As far as we know, there are three histories of this monastery in Syriac. The first of these was composed in poetry by Jibrâ’îl Qamsâ Al-Mawsîlî, in ca. A.D. 1281. The second is by an anonymous author. This second history was published by Alfonso Mingana in Al-Mawsil. The third is a compendium containing reports on the most famous men of this monastery since its foundation until its last days. It has not been published, although a French translation of it by the great scholar Addai Scher was printed as an independent article of his.

In this monastery there was a library which has been lost by the vicissitudes of time. Of it no more than tiny and insignificant bits have survived. From among these are: (1) a copy of Explanations of

---


6 Cf. the historical-biographical treatise on the founders of monasteries of Isho’danâ, metropolitan of Al-Baṣra (who wrote this text after 849-50), originally written in Syriac but translated into Arabic and published by L. Cheikho in Al-Najm 9 (1937), 10 (1938), and 11 (1939); republished separately in Al-Mawsil, 1939, with the title Al-Duyûra fî mamlakatai al-Furs wa-¸l-Arab (original edn by P. Bedjan, Paris, 1901, with the title Liber fundatorum monasteriorum in regno Persarum et Arabum.


9 Ibn Fadl Allâh al-‘Umarî, k. Masâlik al-abṣâr fi mamlakat al-Furs wa-¸l-Arab (original edn by P. Bedjan, Paris, 1901, with the title Liber fundatorum monasteriorum in regno Persarum et Arabum.

10 He had been a monk in Beth Qoqa; cf. A. Baumstark, Geschichte der syrischen Literatur (Bonn, 1922), p. 323, no. c; cf. p. 205 (poetical treatise of Sabrîshô Rostam also dealing with Beth Qoqa).

11 Cf. A. Mingana, Sources syriaques 1 (Leipzig, 1908), I, 1, Măhiba-Zkha (texte et traduction). According to Awwad, the Mosul manuscript is dated 1907. The text of the chronicle of Irbil is found on pp. 171-220 of that edition.