

# An Overlooked Ottoman Inscription in Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif

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Along the west arcade of the Haram al-Sharif (Fig. 1) in Jerusalem is a 11th/17th century Ottoman inscription that curiously has been overlooked. The inscription has been in plain view, but somehow has escaped the attention of previous scholars, such as Max van Berchem in his *Corpus* 1927), Michael Burgoyne and Amal Abul-Hajj<sup>1</sup>, Yusuf Natsheh and the other authors of the *Ottoman Jerusalem book*<sup>2</sup>. Michael Burgoyne and Amal Abul-Hajj<sup>3</sup> noted the unpublished inscription that “commemorates the refacing of the east side of the west wall of the Haram al-Sharif in 1037/1628”, information repeated by Michael Burgoyne<sup>4</sup>, while Archibald Walls and Amal Abul-Hajj<sup>5</sup> also noted the existence of the inscription as “restoration text 1067/1656-57”. Mehmet Tütüncü did not include the inscription in his *corpus* 2006)\*, although he subsequently published the inscription in an article in Turkish in 2007<sup>6</sup>.

The text (Fig. 2) refers to the renovation of some bays in the western portico of the Haram al-Sharif at the end of Dhu al-Hijjah 1037/30 August 1628 by Bayram Pasha and Muhammad Pasha, the governors of Egypt and Jerusalem. The text at first glance may

look difficult to decipher, but it is in fact easy to read because the text parallels so closely the inscription on the nearby Sabil al-Sha‘lan that commemorates its restoration by the same two people in the same month and year<sup>7</sup>.

\* See Review this issue, Arabic section, pp 71-72.

1. Burgoyne and Abul-Hajj 1979.
2. Auld and Hillenbrand 2000.
3. Burgoyne and Abul-Hajj 1979, p. 121.
4. Burgoyne 1987, p. 152, fn. 29.
5. Walls and Abul-Hajj 1980, p. 30, no. LIX.
6. Tütüncü 2007.
7. Natsheh in Auld and Hillenbrand 2000, pp. 927-933, 1081, no. 36/3.



**Fig. 1.** Haram al-Sharif: Bay 16 with the Bayram Pasha inscription from the east



**Fig. 2.** Haram al-Sharif: The inscription of Bayram Pasha



**Fig. 3.** Haram al-Sharif: The inscription of Bayram Pasha in the Sabil Sha'lan



**Fig. 4.** Haram al-Sharif: Bay 16 with the Bayram Pasha inscription left (to Bay 13 with the inscription of Salah al-Din right) along the west portico of the Haram from the east

### The three-line inscription reads:

”جدد هذه اللواوين المباركة بعد انهدامها صاحب الخيرات والمبرات الوزير  
الاکرم والمشير الافخم حضرة بيرام باشا محافظ مصر المحروسة بمباشرة حضرة  
محمد باشا محافظ القدس الشريف في ختام ذي الحجة الحرام سنة سبع وثلثين والف«

“Renewed these blessed bays after their collapse the one of charitable deeds and good deeds, the wazir <sup>2</sup>the most noble and the most grand counselor, his excellency Bayram Pasha the governor of Egypt, the protected, under the direction of his excellency <sup>3</sup>Muhammad Pasha, the governor of Jerusalem the noble, at the end of Dhu al-Hijjah, the inviolate, year seven and thirty and one thousand”.

The inscription closely parallels the four-line inscription on the nearby Sabil Sha‘lan<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 3), although the two inscriptions vary in the flowery titles they use. But it is remarkable how different the two inscriptions appear. The three lines of the portico inscription are written within cartouches, and the date is spelled out in words, rather than with numerals, as is the case in the Sabil al-Sha‘lan inscription. It is difficult to imagine that the two inscriptions were produced by the same craftsman.

Bayram Pasha and Muhammad Pasha, the two people mentioned in the inscription, are well-known figures. Bayram Pasha, the governor of Egypt, was involved in a number of building projects in Jerusalem and the Haram<sup>9</sup>. According to the Ottoman Islamic Law Court records (sijill 113:248) in November 1627 he donated funds to the qadi of Jerusalem for charitable purposes. Some of those funds went toward restoring the main entrance of the Masjid al-Aqsa, restoring the Sabil Sha‘lan, and rebuilding seven derelict bays in the portico located close to Bab al-Nazir

at a cost of 600 qirsh asadi (sijill 113:448). Those seven derelict bays must clearly be the bays mentioned in the inscription. Muhammad Pasha, the governor of Jerusalem between 1036/1626 and 1043/1633, was also involved in numerous building projects in Jerusalem<sup>10</sup>.

The inscription refers to the renovation of bays *lawāwin*, singular *lwān*). The inscription seems to be in its original location along the interior face of the west enclosure wall of the Haram compound, exactly half way between Bab al-Nazir to the north and Bab al-Hadid to the south, facing the Sabil Sha‘lan and the northwest arcade and steps leading up to the Dome of the Rock platform, as well as the adjacent Mihrab and Mastabat Sabil Mustafa Agha<sup>11</sup>, and so the renovated bays that the inscription refers to must surely be bays along the north part of the west portico.

But the architecture of the bays today does not readily reveal which bays were renovated in 1628. Our inscription is located below bay 16<sup>12</sup>, right where Michael Burgoyne noted the meeting of two separate sections of the portico – bays 11 to 16 (Fig. 4) to the north and bays 17 to 44 to the south – both of which he attributed to the 14th century. It might be tempting to assign bays 11 to 16, along with the dismantling of at least one further matching bay to the south that he noted evidence for, to the renovations that the inscription records, but that conclusion does not obviously follow from his architectural description.

8. Natsheh in Auld and Hillenbrand 2000, pp. 927-933, 1081, no. 36/3.

9. See Natsheh in Auld and Hillenbrand 2000, pp. 913-914.

10. Natsheh in Auld and Hillenbrand 2000, pp. 807, 917-918.

11. Natsheh in Auld and Hillenbrand 2000, p. 1003, no. 55/13.

12. Using the numbering of Burgoyne 1987, pp. 192-194.

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