

ANDREW PALMER



The Syriac Letter-Forms of Ṭūr 'Abdīn and Environs

"Ṭūr 'Abdīn and Environs" designates a region between the present Syrian-Turkish border at Qamishliye/Nusaybin and the curving course of the Tigris between Diyarbakır and Cizre in south-eastern Turkey. Nusaybin (= Nisibis) contained Christians from an early date. Its fourth-century bishops were a power in the land; it is probably they who encouraged the monks to colonize and convert the highlands to the north. This they did so thoroughly that hardly a trace remains of the former pagan cults. By contrast, ancient Christian buildings survived into the Islamic period; indeed, many of those standing today were built under the Arabs. From 363 the area was the furthest eastern bulwark of the Roman empire, dominated, after the loss of Nisibis to the Persians, by Amida (= Diyarbakır); as such it enjoyed a certain general fame, being mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, Sozomenos, Prokopios, Theophylaktos Simokattes and others. Imperial benefactions to the chief monastery are recorded in the early fifth century and again in the early sixth century. The region was relatively prosperous again under the Ummayyads; but Abbasid rule brought creative building to an end around A.D. 800. Thereafter geographical isolation aided the ancient Aramaean inhabitants to survive in their wholly or partly Christian villages until the present century; but a population drain of recent date towards "the West" has brought this rare culture to near-extinction. More detail and further literature can be found in Andrew Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Ṭūr 'Abdīn*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, 39 (Cambridge, 1989) and Helga Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Ṭūr 'Abdīn: Eine altchristliche Bevölkerungsgruppe zwischen Beharrung, Stagnation und Auflösung*, Das östliche Christentum, n.F. 34 (Würzburg, 1984; reprinted at the Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, Glanerbrugstraat 33, 7585 PK Glane/Losser, NL).

The present article is the fourth of a series of studies devoted to the palaeography and epigraphy of the region. My "Corpus of [Syriac] Inscriptions from Ṭūr 'Abdīn and Environs", *OrChr* 71 (1987), pp. 53-139 (reference numbers A. 1-20, B. 1-13, C. 1-14 and D. 1-15, extensively illustrated) forms a preliminary collection of pre-Ottoman Syriac inscriptions to be used with H. Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la*

The regional emphasis is new in Syriac palaeography, but it needs no apology, since it has proved essential in Greek and Latin palaeography and epigraphy. As far as epigraphy is concerned, I would like to go even further, and suggest that, like dialects, letter-forms can differ from village to village and from monastery to monastery. In several cases the epigraphic production of one community is concentrated on one or two monuments over a number of centuries, so that, to name one example, the letter-forms of the eighth-century inscriptions on the conventual church of the monastery of Mor Jacob the Recluse outside the village of Şalaḥ may have been used as a model for the tenth- and eleventh-century inscriptions on that church.

Some inscriptions are painted on stone, on brick, or on plaster (*dipinti*) and reflect very closely what must have been the script used in codices at the time. Unfortunately many of the Eṣṭrangēlō codices themselves have perished, the earliest we have from Ṭūr ʿAbdīn being of the eleventh century. Another medium is plaster, moulded while wet into the forms of very large letters on the ceiling of a room or the underside of an arch; here it is possible that the scribes who turned their hand to this work translated the minute muscular movements they had learned into visible changes of angle, which would be turned into smooth curves on a smaller scale by the flow of ink and the

¹ N.B. For no good reason I omitted P.33-5, P.53, P.54 and P.92-4 from my list at the beginning of "A Corpus of Inscriptions...", *OrChr* 71 (1987), p.53; I take this opportunity of correcting some misprints in that article: (p.57) for 'E GOMAL, read 'E/GOMAL; (p.81) for 1085/5 read 1084/5; (p.91) for dead read deed; (p.92) for [and acc]ept us read [*and acc*]ept us; (p.116) for , read ; (p.134) for 1102/3, read 11?2/3; (*ibid.*) for Rub[el, read Rubel.

flexion of the nib. As for the inscriptions engraved with a chisel, some of them are remarkably fine; others are clumsy, and in such cases it is possible that abnormal letter-forms may have been unintentional.

Dating inscriptions on the evidence of their letter-forms is harder than might be supposed, partly because of the paucity of dated examples, but chiefly because of the conservatism so characteristic of an isolated area. But before I present the results of my analysis letter by letter, from OLAF to TAW, let me recapitulate what is known about the history of the scribal arts in Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, since that must be the background to our investigation.

Around 390 two famous scribes, Samuel and Jonathan, left the monastery of the Edessenes outside Amida to join a new community around John Urṭoyō, the hermit, outside the same city; they were thus co-founders with John of the monastic house to which John of Ephesus belonged in the sixth century. When he wrote down the tradition of this monastery concerning its founders in about 565, he could boast that it still possessed codices produced by Samuel and Jonathan². Edessa, the city after which their former monastery was named, was the dominant force in the world of Syriac book-production at that time, so it is not surprising that the late fourth- and early fifth-century manuscripts of Edessa and of Amida resemble one another closely³. Amida in turn must have been, after the loss of Nisibis, the chief source of influence on calligraphy in Ṭūr ʿAbdīn; but influence from across the Persian border cannot be ruled out, since there was certainly contact, albeit confined to polemics, between the chief monastery on the plateau and a Nestorian monastery on the southern escarpment around A.D. 600⁴. Besides, refugees from Byzantine religious persecution built up considerable communities, predominantly of a monastic character, in Persian territories bordering on Ṭūr ʿAbdīn during the sixth century⁵; and the indications are that ordinary monks could pass the border freely in time of peace⁶.

In the late seventh and early eighth century we encounter Simeon of the Olives, an enigmatic figure — half saint, half entrepreneur —, who used his influence with the Arab authorities and the Syrian Orthodox patriarch to invest in urban development and to direct the flow of cash to his own monastery, Qartmīn, in the heart of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn. This diversion of urban

2 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the eastern saints*, ed. E.W.Brooks, *PO* 17.1, 18.4, 19.2 (1923-5), with English translation: chapter 58.

3 W. H. P. Hatch, *An album of dated Syriac manuscripts*, *Monumenta palaeographica vetera*, 2nd series (Boston, 1946), plates I and III.

4 Thomas de Marga, *The Book of Governors*, II.18 (ed. E. A. Wallis Budge, London, 1893, p. 90; ed. P. Bedjan, Paris, 1901, p. 86).

5 See my *Monk and Mason*, chapter 5: "Monastic rivalries".

6 Elijah, *Life of John of Tella*, ed. E. W. Brooks, *Vitae virorum apud monophysitas celeberrimorum*, CSCO 7: text, and 8: Latin translation (1907), pp. 71-2 (Syriac).

wealth may explain the rich architecture of the plateau in the eighth century. Simeon enriched the library of the Abbey of Qartmīn with more than 180 volumes, some of them copied by himself, others by Mor Daniel of Kendirib (a village in ʿAbdīn) and by his pupils Timothy, Job and ʿIyōr, all priested monks from Ḥabsenus (Simeon's own village, near Kendirib), others again by Joshua, Simeon and Ḥoyê, monks of Kfartevnô, a monastery outside the gate of Ḥarran, near Edessa (Simeon of the Olives was made bishop of Ḥarran). He is credited with the introduction to ʿAbdīn of the practice of "reading with points", by which we should understand "diacritical points"; possibly, as we shall see, the points in question were an East-Syrian device, learned by Simeon during one of his sojourns in the former Persian territories⁷.

In the later tenth century monastic settlers from ʿAbdīn were among the West Syrians who migrated to Melitene after its reconquest by the Byzantines; many other settlers came from Tagrit and other parts of Iraq. Around 1000 there was a movement to revive the ancient Estrangelô script in its purity, originating apparently in Melitene, perhaps through the personal influence of the patriarch, Athanasius V, who may himself have been a native of Ṣalah in ʿAbdīn. In a record made at the Abbey of Qartmīn the calligraphic revival is attributed to John [of Bêth Svīrīnâ], who was ordained by the same patriarch as bishop of ʿAbdīn. This John had a nephew called Emmanuel, who "was given the perfect grace of calligraphy" and bequeathed seventy codices to the Abbey of Qartmīn, where he worked. Of these 17 survived in 1169; and the Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Afrēm Barṣawm, attests the survival of two codices written by Emmanuel into the twentieth century⁸.

One of these is the Berlin MS. Sachau 304, now in East Berlin (Plate 1). Sachau himself doubted the attribution of this manuscript to Emmanuel and dated it to the thirteenth century. His dating is based on the similarity

⁷ The *Life of Simeon of the Olives* by Job of Ḥabsenus has undergone a number of interpolations: see my analysis in *Monk and Mason*, chapter 5, section 2. A free transcription is printed by Bishop P. H. Dōlabani, *History of the Holy Abbey of Qartmīn* [Syriac] (Mardīn, 1959), pp. 125-60; from this it has been summarized by S. P. Brock in *OstSt* 28 (1979), pp. 174-9. I have photographs of the Mardīn (Syr. Orth.) MS. 8.259, which was used by Dōlabani.

⁸ Gregory Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, ed. J.-B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy (Louvain, 1872-77), vol. 1, cols. 417-9, translated in my "Charting Undercurrents...", *OrChr* 70 (1986), p. 53, with some comments on the text and the origins of the calligraphic revival; I. E. Barṣawm, *Monograph on the region of ʿAbdīn* [Syriac] (Lebanon, 1964; reprinted in 1985 at the Bar-Hebraeus Verlag), p. 93; *id.*, *Histoire des sciences et de la littérature syriaque* [Arabic] (Aleppo, 1956²), pp. 28 and 367: the second manuscript was in the monastery of St. Mark in Jerusalem and is now numbered 12/21 in the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate at Damascus; O. Parry, *Six months in a Syrian monastery* (London, 1895), p. 337, claims to have seen a Gospel-Book at the Saffron Monastery written ca. 1044 by "Bishop John of Mor Gabriel" (but Qartmīn Abbey was not yet called "Mor Gabriel" in the eleventh century: see my *Monk and Mason*, chapter 5, notes 57 and 58).

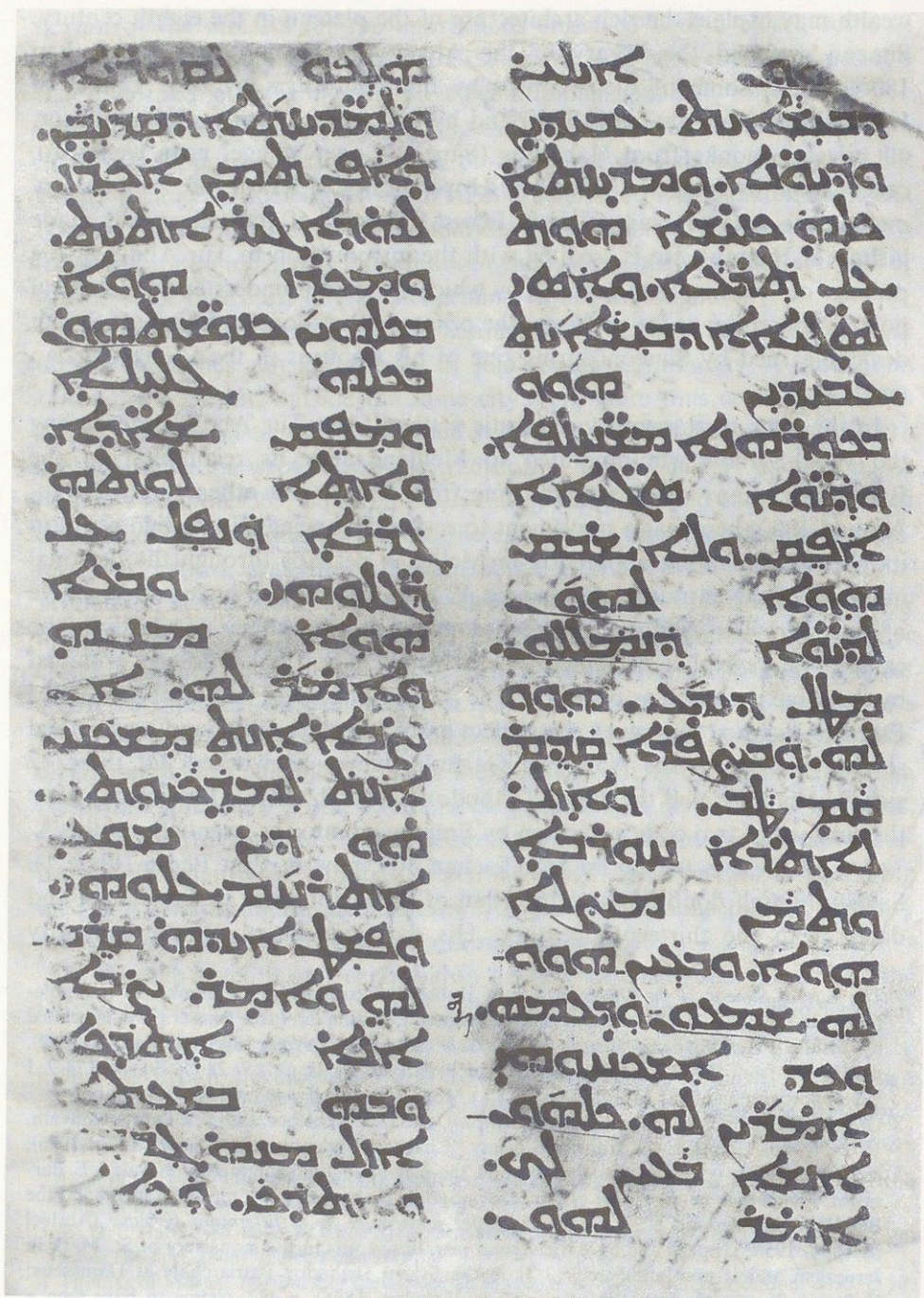


Plate 1

Berlin MS. Sachau 304, fol. 32b

between Sachau 304 and Sachau 322, of 1240/1, which is definitely from Ṭūr 'Abdīn. This very similarity, which is very striking, argues that MS. Sachau 304 comes from the same district and monastic milieu; yet Sachau's argument against the attribution to Emmanuel rests on the assertion that MS. Sachau 304 must be an East-Syrian lectionary, because (1) it contains predominantly eastern saints' names and (2) it was restored by a Nestorian bookbinder⁹.

A note on fol. 195a, in the hand of Najmō of Gaṣlūnā, who restored the binding, reads:

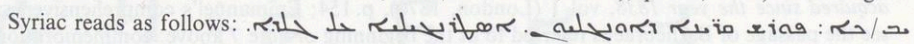
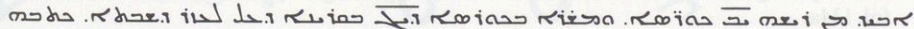
"This Holy Gospel was written out by Emmanuel, monk [and] deacon, the son of the brother of John, bishop of the holy abbey of Qartmīn and of Ṭūr 'Abdīn [sic]".

The following folio, which is the last, bears a note explaining that four quires were burned by "certain individuals" (or perhaps, by "solitaries"). The most obvious explanation is that Najmō found among the pages which were beyond repair one bearing Emmanuel's original colophon and copied this out on fol. 195a before destroying it. He was faithful in his transcription, even to the extent of calling Qartmīn, which was Syrian Orthodox, "holy". Moreover, the spelling of Ṭūr 'Abdīn with OLAF instead of 'Ê is known only from a few witnesses in Ṭūr 'Abdīn itself between the late ninth and the early thirteenth centuries¹⁰. To maintain that this colophon is a forgery we should have to suppose that Najmō did a great deal of research to make it a convincing one. Emmanuel was indeed known from the Chronicle of Barhebraeus, but Barhebraeus does not say that Emmanuel was a deacon, nor that his uncle was bishop of Ṭūr 'Abdīn, although this was his official title. Emmanuel was indeed a deacon, as is shown by the only surviving colophon in his hand, that of the second codex signalled by Barṣawm: Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, 12/21¹¹. Even if such an elaborate forgery

⁹ E. Sachau, *Die Handschriftenverzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin, XXIII: Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften* (Berlin, 1899), No. 14, p. 27. J. Leroy, *Les Manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient* (Paris, 1964), Plates 12, 125 and 126 represent (in black and white) some of the splendid naive miniatures, which must be attributed, on the authority of Barhebraeus, to Emmanuel's brother Nīhē; Leroy's version of the colophon (p. 370) is inaccurate.

¹⁰ See my "Corpus of Inscriptions . . .", *OrChr* 71 (1987), B. 11; Barṣawm, *Monograph*, pp. 91-2; the *Life of Philoxenos of Mabbūh*, in Harvard Syriac MS. 38, foll. 111b-121b (Dr. S. P. Brock gave me a copy of his transcription of this text); the legend concerning John of Kfonē, in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. syriaque 379, foll. 1a-6a (F. Graffin, S.J., made a transcription of this fragment for me); a manuscript at Anḥel dated 1210 (see note 21).

¹¹ The colophon of Dam. Syr. Orth. 12/21 was copied out by the author of a hand-written catalogue in Syriac, translated into Arabic in a biography of the patriarch Afrēm Barṣawm by Metropolitan Būlos Bahnam (see *OrChr* 62 (1978), p. 203, no. 18 and R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin/New York, 1976), p. 441, n. 94). The original

Syriac reads as follows:  

[illegible]

Table A
Large letters from inscription B. 12 (1031-5); bracketed, from A. 15 (1033/4);
small letters at right from Berlin MS. Sachau 304

Table A), are found in monasteries near Qartmîn, Kfarzê, Zâz, Ḥabsenus and Hasankeyf (Ḥesnô d-Kîfô): this suggests that monks were trained centrally, in the “scriptorium” at Qartmîn. The micro-regionality of epigraphic “schools” observed in earlier centuries at Ṣalaḥ and in non-monastic context at Hâḥ and Heshterek does not apply here.

There is also a great likeness between the hand of Emmanuel and that of Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS. 12/8, of A.D. 1055, which was produced in the monastery of Mor Aaron, near Melitene, the house to which the patriarch Athanasius Ṣalḥoyô was attached. This monastery had other things in common with Ṭūr ‘Abdîn and with Qartmîn in particular, as I have shown¹⁴. Yet there are some significant differences between the scripts. Both have the pointed SEMKATH, unattached on the left, which is known from the eighth- to tenth-century inscriptions of Ṭūr ‘Abdîn; and both have the thickened lines and sharply pointed corners which may be indicative of a certain eastern influence. But only Emmanuel has the isolated NUN with round head and horizontal tail, the latter of which corresponds to a form used in some early inscriptions of Ṭūr ‘Abdîn; and he uses a more complex system of diacritics, apparently related to the Nestorian, and perhaps deriving from the eighth-century innovation ascribed to Simeon of the Olives (see above). Where the Melitene manuscript has large points only, not making a difference between the “basic” diacritics (DOLATH/RISH, *syomê*, punctuation marks) and those which distinguish (e.g.) *haw* from *hû* and *hwô* from *howê*, Emmanuel uses the large points only for the “basic” diacritics, reserving small points for the latter category and for “Nestorian” vowels, supplemented by lines which indicate half-vowels and stressed syllables.

Up to this point we have been considering the history of the most ancient script, which Barhebraeus, in the passage referred to, calls *kthîvtô destrongîliyâ*, whereas Bar ‘Alî, the Syriac lexicographer, calls it *kthîvtô ewangeloytô*, i.e., the script used in writing the Gospels (for the ancient script was still used for the Gospels when quicker hands more economical of space had been invented for other books)¹⁵. Barhebraeus’ *destrongîliyâ*, from which the European scholarly term “Estrangelô” is derived, is a corruption, probably phonetic rather than scribal, of the phrase *da-sreṭ-ewangeliyâ*, meaning “which is termed the Gospel Script”. This script is distinguished from later Syriac scripts by its squareness and its openness, which makes the derivation of the word Estrangelô from the Greek *strongylos* (“round”) absurd¹⁶.

14 “Charting Undercurrents...”, *OrChr* 70 (1986), pp. 51-65.

15 Bar ‘Alî is cited by the *Thesaurus syriacus*, ed. R. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1879-1901; reprinted by G. Olms in 1981), under the word “Estrangelô”.

16 J. S. Assemani asserts this derivation in his *Bibliotheca orientalis* (Rome, 1719-28), *Dissertatio de Monophysitis*, p. 74 and vol. 3.2, p. 378; a contemporary European scholar (not J. D. Michaelis, who agrees with Bar ‘Alî) noted anonymously in the margin opposite the latter

Barhebraeus says that Estrangelô had fallen out of use more than a hundred years before Bishop John's restoration of it in the scriptorium of Qartmīn. But another script, more rounded and closed, was in use from at least the eighth century onwards. Adapting a term coined, in Latin, by Ceriani, I call it the Medial Script¹⁷. European palaeographers have usually failed to distinguish it from the Estrangelô in their terminology, while Payne Smith classifies it, quite wrongly, as a Nestorian script¹⁸. Section C of inscription A. 2, dated A.D. 739/40, at Ḥāḥ in Ṭūr 'Abdīn, seems to provide a somewhat similar epigraphic variation on the Estrangelô at an early date. A. 13, of A.D. 961/2, incorporates some elements of the Medial Script, as does A. 18, of A.D. 1188/9; and its influence can still be traced in D. 14, of A.D. 1442/3. Surviving manuscripts document a flourishing school which cultivated this script in Ṭūr 'Abdīn between the late twelfth century and A.D. 1567/8. This seems to be the place to set out this evidence in full. (The manuscripts designated as BN are in the Syriac collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris)¹⁹.

The first sign of the renewed interest in books is the industry of two bookbinders at Qartmīn Abbey, Rabban Gabriel and his brother, Rabban Elisha, of Bēth Svīrīnâ, the sons of the brother of the bishop of Qartmīn, John, who repaired 270 volumes at the Abbey alone. Gabriel was already active in 1168/9²⁰; in 1176/7 he commissioned the Bodleian MS. 163 from the monk Aaron, the son of the priest Sabrūn, from Kfarbabâ; although this village is uncharted, the association of the codex with Ṭūr 'Abdīn is assured by the mention of Gabriel and of his uncle John, bishop of Ṭūr 'Abdīn. Gabriel was later partially responsible for binding a new codex, containing Anaphoras for the use of a priested solitary in the monastery of Our Lady of the Dripping Grotto, above the Saffron Monastery; this codex was finished in 1181/2 at Qartmīn Abbey by the scribe Simeon of Ḥāḥ, a priested monk²¹.

passage in the copy now in the library of Christ's College, Cambridge: "Hoc ego primus ostendi: a me habuit Wilkinsius: ab eo Assemanus"(!).

17 A. M. Ceriani, *Monumenta sacra et profana ex codicibus praesertim Bibliothecae Ambrosianae* (Milan, 1861), vol. 2, fasc. 2, p. xviii. J. P. N. Land, *Anecdota syriaca*, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1862), p. 78, calls these letters "semiminuscula"; elsewhere I have seen the term "sertoid".

18 See my "Charting Undercurrents ...", *OrChr* 70 (1986), p. 43, note 27.

19 Cf. H. Zotenberg, *Manuscripts orientaux: catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandâïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1874); all the manuscripts referred to here, except those referred to in note 21, I have examined myself. For photographs of BN 31, 39, 46 and 54 see Hatch, *Album*, Nos. 88, 86, 89 and 85.

20 Baršawm, *Monograph*, p. 93; cf. *ibid.*, p. 52, and *Chronique de Michel*, register of ordinations, XLI.18. In this connexion it should be added that the patriarch Michael I (1166-88) ordained a monk from Qartmīn to the see of Ḥesnô d-Zaïd, who was known as "Joshua the Scribe" (*ibid.*, XLII.28).

21 Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, pp. 206-7; I am grateful to Prof. Dr. H. Kaufhold for drawing my attention to this manuscript and for informing me of the existence of a manuscript in the

In 1190 Joseph of Ḥesnô d-Kîfô, a priested monk of the Monastery of the Cross, wrote BN 39; the same Joseph, by then an old man, whose sight was failing, wrote BN 35 in 1201/2²². In 1191/2 Joshua, the son of John, from Rumanah, wrote BN 54 for a certain Rabban Barṣawmô of Olîn. BN 41 was written before 1194 in the monastery of Mor Jacob of Serûgh “on Mount Īzlô, near the village of Bêth Diyûpê” (= Bêth Debeh/Badibbê), for in that year died the scribe, Rabban Simeon, the son of Ḥoyê of Mîdun, a monk of Qartmîn. The same scribe penned BN 30, which was bought in 1197/8 by “Lazarus and Gabriel, the sons of Joseph, from Arnas”. Simeon, from Mardîn, wrote out BN 31 for Theodore, the son of Abû’l-Faraj, from Ṣalaḥ; and in 1218/9 BN 46 was copied at the Saffron Monastery (Dayr az-Za’farân) by Simeon of Kfar Saḷtô (possibly identical with the scribe of BN 31). All these places are in or near Ṭūr ‘Abdîn, although the exact site of Kfar Saḷtô is unknown. The manuscripts all contain scriptures from the New Testament. To this collection in Paris may be added the Crawford Apocalypse, edited by Gwynn: the scribe, a monk called Stephen, tells us that he was trained by his paternal uncles, Mas’ûd, John and Simeon, and two unnamed maternal uncles, all monks. Gwynn remarks that Rabban Simeon of Mîdun had a brother John who was also a scribe and that these are likely to be Stephen’s uncles²³.

The Medial Script is uniform in character in all these manuscripts, though some of them also employ Bishop John’s fine Eṣṭrangêlô for special purposes. These two scripts are exemplified from select MSS. out of the above group in the comparative Tables B and C. The Table on the Medial Script also shows the alphabets of the following: a note dated 1210 on fol. 5a of the Vatican MS. siriaco 13; British Library Add. MS. 18,714, a Gospel lectionary written in 1214 at the monastery of Mor Malkê by Simeon, the son of Abraham, of Arbô; fol. 50b of the Berlin MS. Sachau 214, a funeral rite copied in 1248 by a scribe from ‘Aynwardô in the monastery of Mor Lazarus near Ḥabsenus; and the Berlin MS. Sachau 236, a hymnary written by a certain Ṣlîvô in 1567/8. Sachau remarks that this last attests the use of parchment and of the “Eṣṭrangêlô Script” (*sic*) in the high glens of Ṭūr ‘Abdîn several centuries after both were abandoned on the plains of Mesopotamia and Syria²⁴. As can be seen from the Table, this script hardly changed at all in four centuries.

village of Anḥel, which was written at the monastery of Mor Sharbêl near Midyat in 1210. Not having examined the former I cannot say what script it is in; the latter is in the Medial Script, with notes at the end in Eṣṭrangêlô.

22 On these two manuscripts see F. Nau, in *ROC* 19 (1914), pp. 386-8, and in *Journal Asiatique* XI.5 (1915), pp. 491-2, with p. 495 on BN 31.

23 J. Gwynn, *The Apocalypse of St. John in a Syriac version hitherto unknown* (Dublin and London, 1897), pp. cxvi-cxvii.

24 Sachau, *Verzeichnis*, pp. 66-75 (No. 20), esp. p. 74, col. 2. Sachau 236 is illustrated in Hatch, *Album*, no. 94. See also perhaps the following manuscripts from Ṭūr ‘Abdîn: a) Gospel-Book




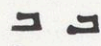
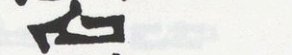











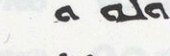

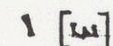


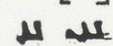
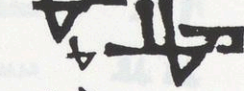



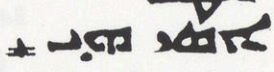



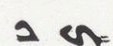



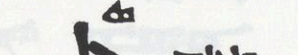

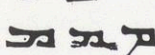











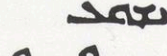


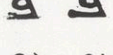
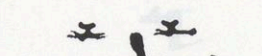




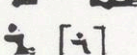


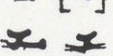
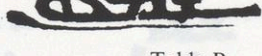


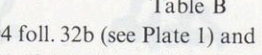
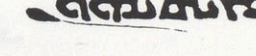

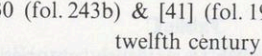
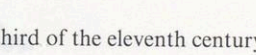

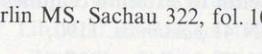
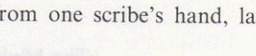
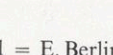


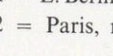








(1)	(2)	(3)
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		

Table B

1 = E. Berlin MS. Sachau 304 foll. 32b (see Plate 1) and [106a] (first third of the eleventh century)

2 = Paris, mss. syriaques 30 (fol. 243b) & [41] (fol. 193b), both from one scribe's hand, late twelfth century

3 = W. Berlin MS. Sachau 322, fol. 102b, dated A.D. 1240/1



























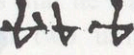
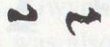

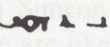
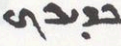






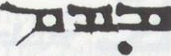



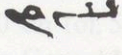












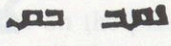

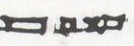









(1)	(2)	(3)
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		

Table C

The Medial Script, twelfth to sixteenth centuries (left page)

1 = BN 41 *passim* ca. 1190;

2 = BN 30, fol. 244a, 1197/8;

3 = Vatican sir. 13, fol. 5a, 1210






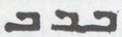


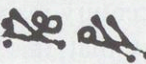









































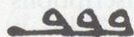









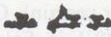





(4)	(5)	(6)
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		

Table C

The Medial Script, twelfth to sixteenth centuries (right page)

4 = Br. Lib. Add. 18,714, fol. 192b, top right, 1214;

5 = W. Berlin, Sachau 214, fol. 50b, 1248;

6 = W. Berlin, Sachau 236, fol. 259b, 1568.

The Medial Script is so called because it is situated midway on the scale of development between Eṣṭrangēlô and the Plain Script (*serṭô pshîṭô*); the latter is often referred to by modern scholars simply as Serṭô, which just means "script". The Old Plain Script is represented in our area by a painted inscription of 759 or 760 (A. 6), although the first line or so is in Eṣṭrangēlô, and by one ninth-century manuscript from Qartmîn (Plate 2)²⁵. Comparison with Plate 3 shows that this script was also relatively stable between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. The earlier of the two scripts (Plate 4) in the British Library Add. MS. 17,265 (undated) belongs in this category; but perhaps the bulbous end of the tail of the GOMAL, which we do not find in the ninth-century manuscripts, was borrowed from the revived eleventh-century Eṣṭrangēlô of Qartmîn, where this manuscript was written.

The later script in Add. 17,265, which Wright dates by the form of the shĪN to the thirteenth century, belongs to a different, and much less stable type, which may be classified as the "New Plain Script". This script merits a separate study²⁶.

The survey of epigraphic letter-forms from dated inscriptions which follows here is designed to help with dating undated inscriptions. Those letters which are of no use in dating are omitted; they are BĒTH, GOMAL, DOLATH, ZAY, KOF, ʿÊ, PÊ, QOF, and RĪSH. The archaizing movement of Bishop John had its effect on epigraphic letter-forms, creating a style so uniform that it is impossible to give guidelines for dating; except, of course, that an inscription in this tradition can easily be recognized as such (e.g. by comparison with Table A) and dated after ca. 1000. Diacritical points, beyond the "basic" ones, are not engraved until after this date; and stone-masons in this "calligraphic" tradition tend to be more concerned about lay-out, to the extent of abbreviating a word by one letter in order to make the lines equal, which never occurs in the earlier period. Inscriptions after this date are therefore omitted from the survey, as are all inscriptions of which the date is not quite certain, *dipinti*,

in ʿAynwardô, written A.D. 1210 at Qartmîn, parchment (Barṣawm, *Monograph*, p. 133; Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen*, p. 72; B. Harb, "Unbekannte Hss. im Tūr ʿAbdîn", in *III Symposium Syriacum 1980*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 221, pp. 349f. (with another date and incorrect conversion); b) Gospel-Book in Midyat, written A.D. 1227 in Ṣalaḥ, parchment (Barṣawm, *Monograph*, p. 133 (written in Ḥāḥ?); Harb, *loc. cit.*, pp. 351f. (with incorrect conversion); c) Mardin Orth. 38 (the number is not altogether certain), Gospel-Book, written A.D. 1230 in Ṣalaḥ; d) Berlin, Sachau 15, written A.D. 1240/1 in Ṣalaḥ; e) Gospel-Book, Dam. Syr. Orth. 12/6, written A.D. 1314/5 in Dayr az-Zaʿfarān (see the catalogue cited in note 11 and Barṣawm, *Histoire*, p. 491, nos. 156 and 157; also I. Armalet, *Machriq* (1913), pp. 567f. (then still in Qeleth).

25 British Library Add. MSS. 17,210 and 17,211; see Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 2, pp. 548-50.

26 Professor Kaufhold and I between us have collected a good deal of material for the study of the New Plain Script, but we have no immediate plans for using it.

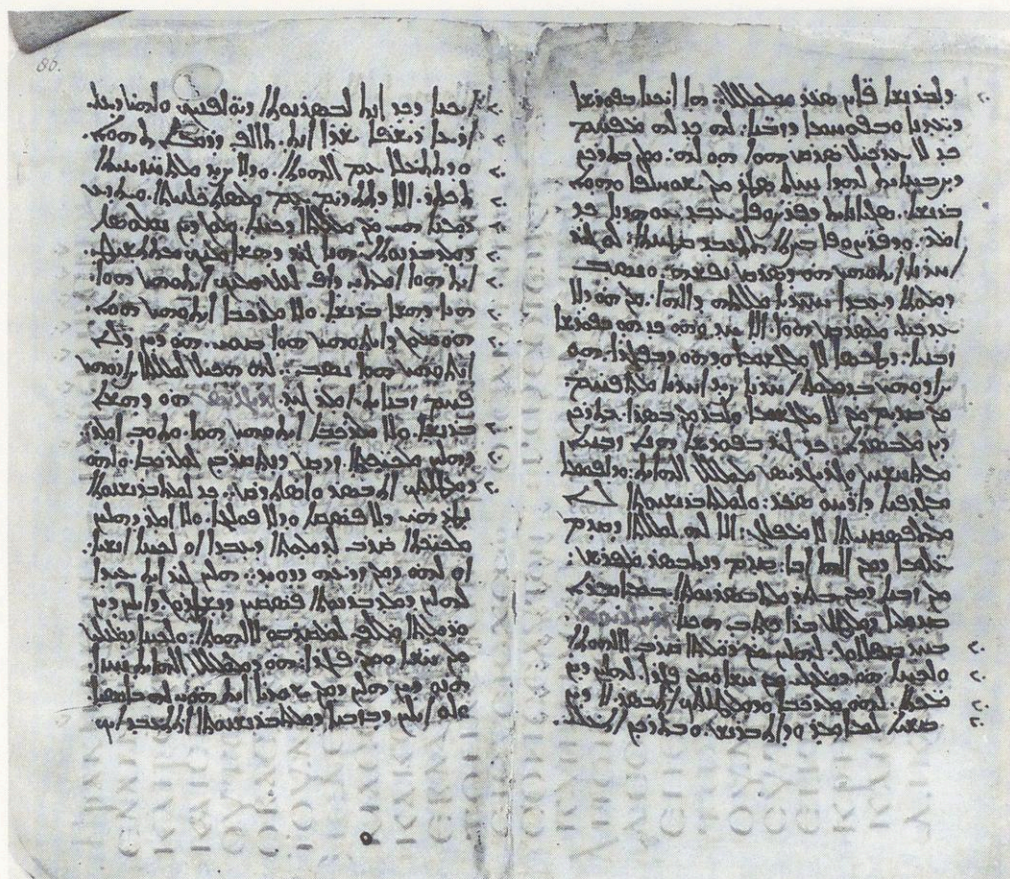


Plate 2

British Library, Add. MS. 17,211, foll. 85b-86a, of the early ninth century

and all those of which I have no photograph or squeeze. (Occasionally this rule has to be relaxed, because the sample is patently incomplete). Also excluded from the analysis is the oldest Syriac inscription yet found in Tūr 'Abdīn, A. 1 of 534; it stands in isolation, since we know no inscription after it until the early eighth century. The inscriptions used here cover the eighth and the tenth centuries (Table D):

A. 2 Ḥāḥ 739/40

B. 1 Ṣālah 752-5

A. 3 Qartmīn 757/8

A. 4 Amida (Dara?) 759 or 760

A. 6 Qartmīn 776/7

A. 7 Kfarbê 778/9

B. 11 Qartmīn 887-96

P. 24 Ṣālah 908

P. 25 Ṣālah 912

A. 10 Mīdun 911 or 914

A. 11 Zâz 932

A. 12 Kfarzê 934/5

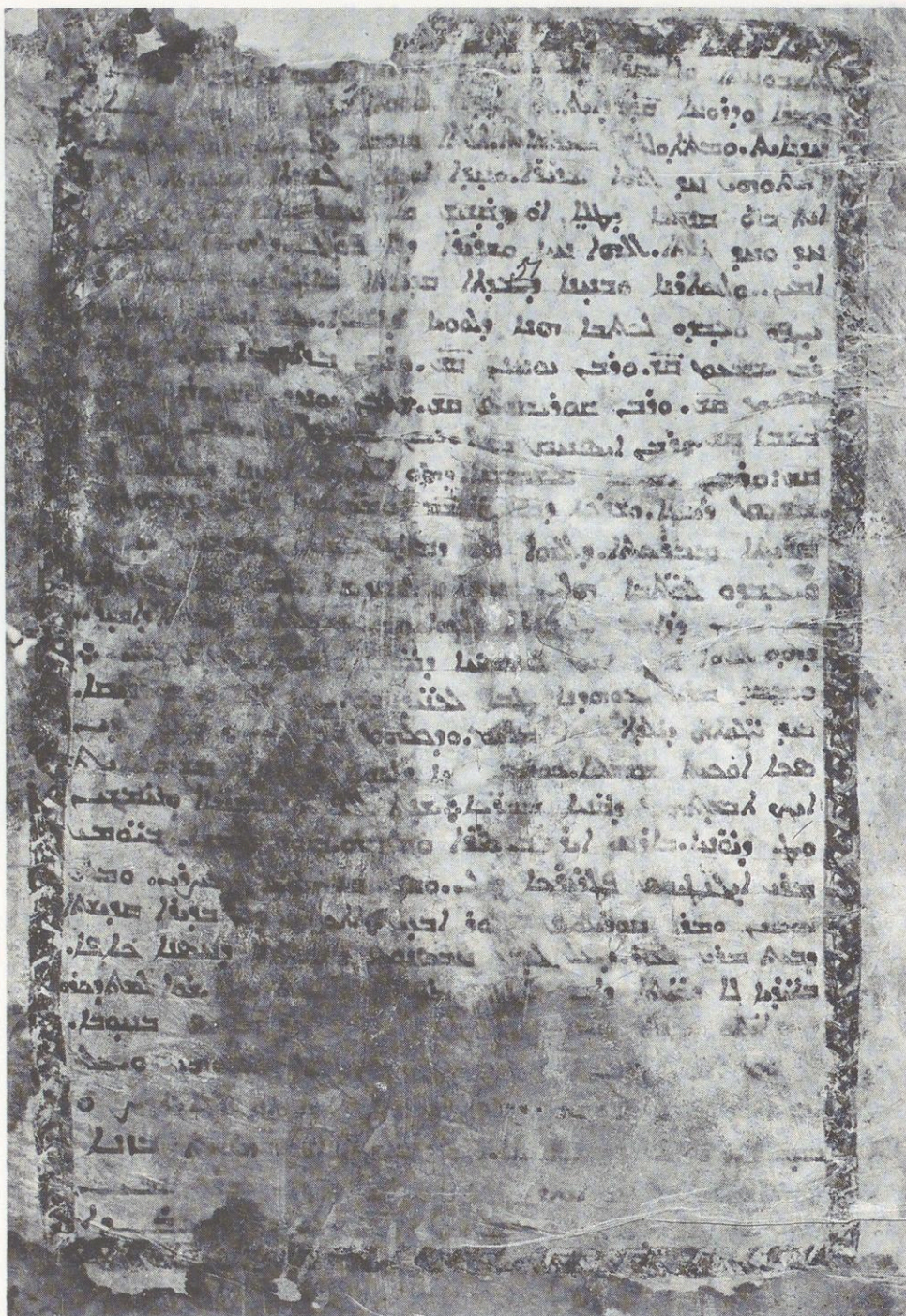


Plate 3

West Berlin, MS. Sachau 214, fol. 51a

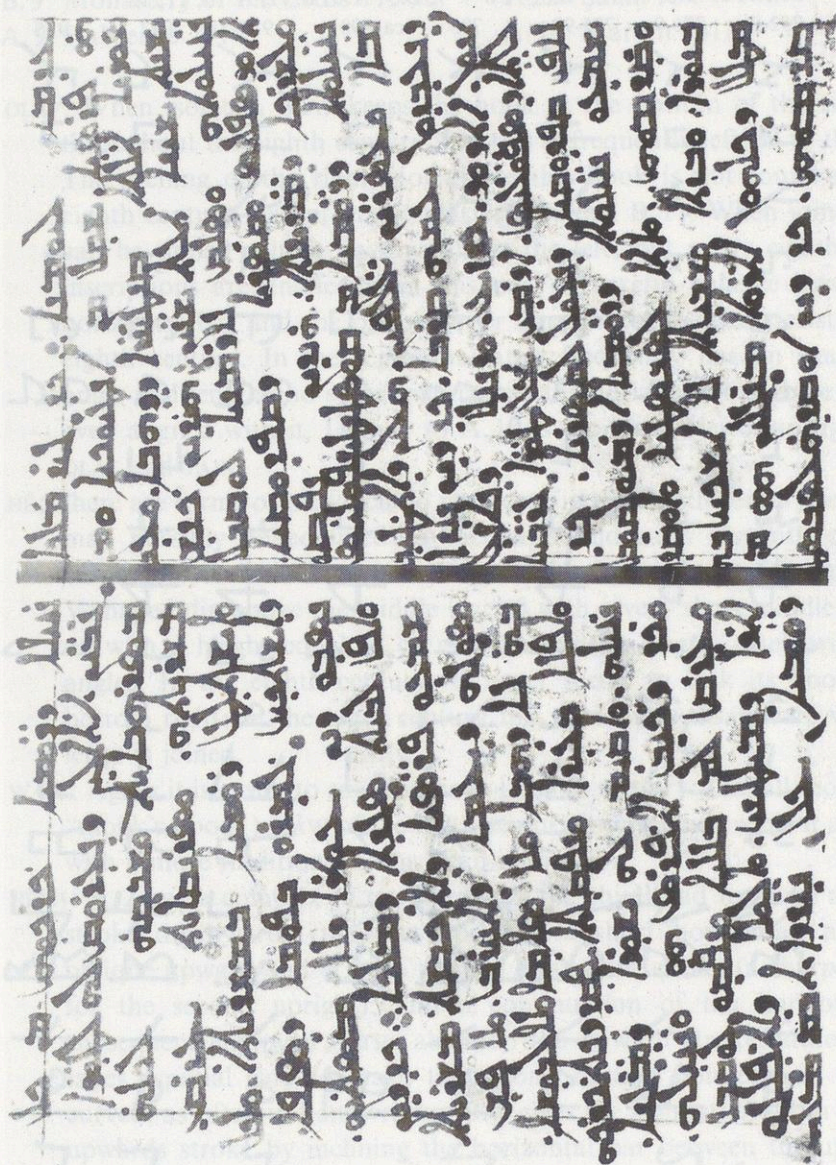


Plate 4

Br. Lib. Add. 17.265 (undated), foll. 5b-6a (earlier hand)

A. 8 Qartmīn 784/5	P. 23 Ṣalaḥ 938
B. 9 Monastery of the Cross 775-90	P. 22 Ṣalaḥ 954
A. 9 Habsenus 791/2	A. 13 Mardīn 961/2

OLAF: When isolated, OLAF keeps the hook at the bottom of the right foot throughout the eighth century, but this is frequently left off in the tenth. The arching of the right foot above this hook is not found after the eighth century, except in the plaster-moulded B. 11. When joined, OLAF can be tipped a little downwards at the left; but many eighth-century inscriptions are unaffected in this way. A careful balance between the horizontal bar and the oblique riser appears to be characteristic of the eighth century. In the tenth the latter frequently has an exaggerated angle and length and sometimes causes the horizontal bar to be tilted or even aligned with it. Unique to A. 10 is the quasi-Nestorian ligature of OLAF and TAW.

HÊ: There are forms of HÊ which do not occur in the eighth century and which may possibly be confined to the tenth and early eleventh centuries, before the revival of pure Eṣṭrangēlô. In this category fall: HÊ with a V-shaped dip above the middle leg; HÊ with a very short middle leg; and HÊ with a height equal to or greater than its length, often with sharp angles. In the eighth century HÊ never seems to lack its hook at the bottom right; in the tenth century this sometimes disappears when the letter is joined.

WÂW: Again it is easier to say what is not eighth century: the tall, pointed (or "monk's-hood") WÂW of the tenth-century inscriptions, while it alternates with a more traditional form, is an innovation.

HÊTH: A. 2 has a complex HÊTH, for which the chisel had to make a vertical stroke downwards (the first upright); a short horizontal; a slightly oblique upward and a more vertical downward stroke (a sharp "tooth" for the second upright); and a continuation of the horizontal. All subsequent engraved HÊTHS abandon the upward stroke, although B. 9 takes especial care to make the second upright pointed and its angle curved, as often in handwriting. B. 1 gives the suggestion of an incipient upwards stroke by inclining the horizontal bar between the uprights a little; it also softens the angle between the second upright and the following horizontal with a short oblique stroke. A. 7 and A. 8 exaggerate the sharp corner at the bottom of the first upright; A. 8 inclines the "horizontal" upwards and extends it under the second upright. It is these refinements, if anything, which are characteristic of some eighth-century inscriptions; whereas the tendency in the tenth century is to make the second upright parallel to the first. Nevertheless A. 11 does incline the second upright.

ṬĒTH: Of the two engraved types of ṬĒTH present in the eighth century only the rectilinear type (three straight lines) is found engraved in the tenth century, though B. 11 (moulded in plaster) does have curvilinear elements in the lower register. In both periods ṬĒTH is joined on the horizontal and is rectilinear above the baseline.

YŪDH: A. 11 first shows the wedge-shaped YŪDH. Final, unjoined YŪDH always has a horizontal tail, but final joined YŪDH has a downward inclination as late as A. 7; with this exception a long, thick horizontal tail seems to be the norm from A. 6 onwards. (A short, thin horizontal tail is already found on joined YŪDH in B. 5 and B. 7, which seem to be contemporary with B. 1). YŪDH is occasionally tucked right under RĪSH or DOLATH (B. 1, A. 3) and were it not for a similar, though less pronounced phenomenon in the undoubtedly later C. 2 (visible in Bell's photograph as well as on Pognon's drawing), one might think it a characteristic of the mid-eighth century.

LOMADH: Is it significant that A. 9 and B. 11 have LOMADH with a vertical hasta, which is not found before the late eighth century?

MĪM: Non-final MĪM can be drawn with parallel legs and a perfectly horizontal upper bar; this is particularly pronounced in A. 10, but the tendency is already suggested by B. 8, which seems to be contemporary with B. 1.

NŪN: Final unattached NŪN takes various forms: starting just above the baseline and trailing back at a shallow angle in an almost straight line (B. 1); like this, but with a sharp hook at the top end (A. 6); like the first, but with the tail curving up towards the horizontal (B. 3 - painted); starting under the foregoing letter and tracing a straight horizontal at the bottom of the range (A. 5 - in Pognon's drawing). There is too little evidence to allow the conclusion that it tended with time to approach the horizontal; but it does seem significant that this is one of the characteristics of Emmanuel's final unattached NŪN in Berlin MS. Sachau 304 and of that in the contemporary inscription B. 12.

SEMKATH: Both the rectilinear form which makes the "cat's ears" into two triangles (A. 10) and that which makes the right "ear" triangular and the left round (A. 11, A. 12) seem to be phenomena of the tenth century. The open SEMKATH, in which the cleavage does not join the horizontal base, is seen in A. 6 and in A. 12.

ṢODHÊ: Ṭūr 'Abdīn epigraphy knows ligatures of YŪDH, NŪN, LOMADH, 'Ê, and QOF with a following ṢODHÊ. It is a relatively rare letter, so the fact that attached ṢODHÊ with a "horn" at the right is not attested before the tenth century may not mean anything; the first example is A. 10.

SHĪN: The ancient form has a horizontal base, vertical stem and two "branches". By a movement from the base of the stem directly to the top of the left

branch, across to the top of the right branch, and straight back down to the base of the stem a triangle is formed around the character. If the stem and branches are then removed, the triangle which remains is referred to as a "hollow" SHĪN. The triangle can be tall and thin with a dip in the top; the centre can be excavated; the point at the bottom can be truncated or open. The last appearance of the hollow SHĪN in the known inscriptions is in A. 10. Thereafter, we find only the ancient forked form. (B. 9 has an interesting final form of the hollow SHĪN).

TAW: The general tendency is, as usual, to simplify: five or more changes of direction are involved in the eighth-century forms; sometimes five, but usually less, in the tenth-century forms. TAW seems to be characterized in the eighth century by a near-vertical hasta and a loop that begins and ends its circuit with horizontal strokes; by contrast, the hasta of TAW in the tenth century is often so far inclined that the loop rejoins it at a sharp angle from below, the middle-height horizontal being entirely to the right of the hasta. In this later form the loop tends to become a triangle. The fact that P. 23 contains the "earlier" form, although it is of the tenth century, may be due to local conservatism, which took as its model the eighth-century inscriptions on the same church (B. 1-8). B. 1, A. 6 and A. 8 show that the angle of the TAW, taken on its own, cannot decide the date. A. 3, A. 6 and B. 9 sometimes lack the horizontal stroke at the top of the loop; but the simple triangular loop is not attested in the eighth century. A. 10 is the first to show another form of loop, also triangular, in which a diagonal stroke is made upwards from the base of the hasta, then a long horizontal right across the hasta.

N.B. References in my article "Charting Undercurrents...", in *OrChr* 70 (1986), pp. 37-68, to the "Excursus on the Syriac letters of Ṭūr 'Abdīn", which was originally to be included in my book, *Monk and Mason*, can be found in the above, as follows: n. 62 refers to pp. 71-74, including some additional comments on the passage from the Chronicle of Barhebraeus, not a "commentary" as such; n. 69 refers to p. 74 and Table A; n. 73 refers to p. 73 and Table B. At the end of that article I wrote: "it is not yet clear where the *Qartmīn Trilogy* will appear". It is now certain that it will appear in microfiche, with the Prolegomena, at the end of my *Monk and Mason*, and it is expected that it will appear again, somewhat modified, with other hagiographical works in the CSCO.